

SPEECH BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL EDUCATION MEC, HON. KWAZI MSHENGU, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2020/21 BUDGET SPEECH

Speaker of the Legislature, Hon. Nontembeko Boyce

KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Hon. Sihle Zikalala

Chairperson and Members of the Education Portfolio Committee, Hon. Sibiya

Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Members of the Legislature

Mayors, Councillors and Amakhosi

Head of Department of Education, Dr E. V Nzama

Senior Management of the various Departments

Our Social Partners

Labour Movement

Members of the Media

Distinguished Guests

Learners and Educators from various schools

Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

We once again rise with vigour to present to this house the 2020/2021 Budget Statement that is centred around our endeavour to strengthen the improvement of our education system and the lives of all our learners, who in an unprecedented manner this year, have had to face one of the most challenging periods in recent history.

Madam Speaker, it is common knowledge that we present this budget statement against the backdrop of the very tumultuous period for our country in general and for the education system in particular because of the global pandemic, the COVID-19.

Not even in the days of apartheid, not even during the most perilous and difficult days of the state of emergency did we see the whole country shutting down all public and private schools for more than a month.

The COVID-19 has wracked havoc in the education sector. Schools had to be closed before the due date and have not opened up to today. The time lost for teaching and learning will have negative impact to the learners and their developmental needs.

During the period of lockdown, the department introduced a number of interventions aimed at mitigating against the time lost for teaching and learning in the classroom. These interventions included radio lessons, virtual lessons and making study materials available through the KwaZulu-Natal Funda Portal. The partnership with Vodacom also allowed our learners to access the study material through the Vodacom e-School, which is available for free to those who are Vodacom subscribers.

We concede that these interventions were not able to substitute the classroom method of teaching and learning. Given the socio-economic challenges afflicting many parts of the Province, there are learners who could not have access to these online facilities due to the lack of connectivity and the cost of data.

We want to thank our educators, who are our most valuable resource, for the sacrifices that they made and their commitment during radio lessons and all manner of virtual lessons that took place during the period in question.

As we prepare for the re-opening of schools, amid the continued rise of infections, we are called on to work extremely hard to ensure that our schools are safe for the educators, learners and non-teaching personnel in our schools.

The collective effort will be our shelter against this deadly virus. We have committed that no school in KwaZulu-Natal will be opened if it does not comply fully with the non-negotiable (s) as agreed to by all stakeholders in the sector.

Madam Speaker, we are quite aware that this is not a period for any lapses as the COVID-19 virus has not been defeated. This is a period where we are required to demonstrate discipline in action.

It is after collectively surviving fearful moments and emerging victorious from a war or collectively surviving the period like the one we see that creates a permanent national bond of unity where race, class, creed, colour and gender orientation means nothing, where only life matters, and everyone is looking for a way out.

Madam Speaker, we are not here to lament but to assure this House and the people of KwaZulu-Natal, that like a phoenix, we are going to rise from the proverbial ashes.

We are the product of the great warrior men and women who defied unspeakable odds to attain what was previously thought to be impossible.

We are inspired by our revolutionaries like Cde Solomon “Kalushi” Mahlangu who, while staring at death, neither shivered nor wavered in his convictions of the legitimacy of equality for all the people of South Africa. We are of the people who made untold sacrifices, leaving this country, going to unknown lands, to fight for the liberation of the entire people of South Africa.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The year 2020 marked the beginning of a five (5) year planning cycle for Government. This cycle is preceded by a lot of hard work in evaluating the performance of Government in various sectors and factoring in new priorities. As the Department of Education, we had our own strategic planning session which looked at the various layers of the department. It is against this backdrop that the Department decided to review its vision and mission.

We felt that we needed to have a vision and mission that talk directly to what we are about as the Department; teaching and learning. We deemed it necessary to ensure that, putting the classroom as the center of focus in whatever that we are doing, had to be in the heart of our vision and mission.

To this end, the vision of the department has changed and now is, **“to be an innovative hub for quality teaching and learning that produces learners to exploit opportunities for lifelong success”**. The mission has also changed and now is **“to facilitate quality teaching and learning in a conducive classroom environment”**.

It is from this vision and mission where we seek to be joined by all stakeholders and communities alike to make our classrooms resourceful, stable, harmonious and fulfilling places of innovation where only teaching and learning take center stage. To realize this, we must engage in conversations and actions that must switch in the direction of the classroom - from teaching methods and approaches, promoting appropriate class sizes in various subjects and most importantly improving feedback mechanism. To this end, learners and parents should get feedback on time after every assessment activity. In the same, active involvement of parents in the education of their children remains cardinal.

LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

A researched report done by the Nelson Mandela Foundation titled **“Emerging Voices, A report on Education in South African Rural Communities”** makes a telling observation of the interconnectedness of education and obtaining socio-economic conditions.

The report found that *“When the community goes without water or electricity, the schools also suffer. Schools are inseparable from the communities they serve, and, without a holistic approach to the general conditions of poverty, neither the school nor the community can address the challenges.”* (*Emerging Voices, A report on Education in South African Rural Communities, Chapter 2*).

This finding is further reinforced by one of the leading Education Specialist, Prof Mary Metcalfe who, in one of her articles, observed that *“Differential provincial performance is an outcome of underlying social, economic and educational inequalities...it is a reality that education performance correlates with socioeconomic status; that schools serving wealthier communities perform better than schools serving poorer communities. Higher levels of poverty translate into fewer home and community resources available for supporting learning, substantially reduced exposure to reading, higher levels of family and community stress, higher level of malnutrition, and less access to health care and social services. The social consequences of this are felt in classrooms and the burden is carried by teachers.”*

The period of lockdown has exposed these realities in a manner never seen before. Whilst schools are closed, children from affluent families attending well-resourced schools continued with lessons through virtual platforms and privately arranged sessions. They continued to do work, submit and receive feedback.

Regrettably, the same cannot be said with regard to majority of children in rural and township areas because of power socio-economic conditions. For these children, the closure of schools means another battle for survival; these are children who come from families where living literally means avoiding death.

If we are to achieve the objective of equalizing education, we must uplift the standard and quality of education in historically disadvantaged areas. We need to modernize the method of teaching and learning in those areas. This state of affairs calls for greater cooperation and integrated planning between Department of Education and other Departments.

The District Development Model, as adopted by government, should be used to improve the conditions of education in disadvantaged areas. The District Development Model will help facilitate integrated planning so that there is no school built where there is no plan by municipality to connect water, electricity or other basic needs.

Where there is coordinated development of the area, it will ease the task of retaining suitable qualified teachers in deep rural areas of our Province.

PROGRESS MADE ON THE COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE 2019/2020 BUDGET POLICY STATEMENT.

▪ *Improvement of Matric Results*

We committed towards achieving nothing less than **80%** in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) results. Today, it is common knowledge that indeed we met this target by obtaining **81.3%** which was for the very first time in the history of this Department in the Province. What is even more pleasing is the fact that these positive results were coupled by the increase in Bachelor passes from **38 573** in 2018 to **44 153** in 2019 as well as an increase in Diploma passes from **31 222** in 2018 to **32 696** in 2019. This is indeed a sign that the education system is maturing.

These improved results were made possible by the meticulous implementation of the Provincial Academic Improvement Plan. The activities contained in the plan were informed by the comments made by the markers and moderators during the 2018 National Senior Certificate marking session. The plan was also informed by the strengths and weaknesses of the 2018 Academic Improvement Plan as well as the gaps identified in performance in common assessments in terms 1, 2 and 3.

The plan was used to develop district plans, and to develop subject improvement plans. The School Management Teams (SMTs) used the District Academic Improvement plans to specifically develop school improvement plans and subject improvement plans for their particular schools.

We also want to give credit to the teachers who worked extremely hard and at times under extreme difficult conditions for us to achieve these results. These are men and women whose development of a new man in South Africa rest on their shoulders. Without their hard work and dedication, the whole system will collapse.

We undertake to spare no effort in improving the conditions of our teachers and learners at the classroom level in particular.

- ***Performance of new Technical Subjects***

We are pleased to report the improvement in the performance of learners in the new 12 subjects, which include amongst others, Specializations in Civil Technology, Electrical Technology and Mechanical Technology, Technical Mathematics, Technical Sciences, Sign Language, Digital Systems, Fitting and Mechanic, Welding and Metal Working, Electronics and Technical Science there has been a significant improvement.

We are also encouraged by the fact that we managed to maintain a **100%** pass percentage in Sign Language. This, however, is more important given the recent announcement by the President of the Republic, His excellency, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa that Sign Language will become an additional official language. Also worthy of noting is that almost all of the subjects were passed above **80%** with the exception of Technical Mathematics which was passed at **38.08%**. We are also prioritizing the up-skilling of educators in these subjects so that they become the best in teaching them.

- ***Coding and robotics***

We committed to pilot the introduction of Coding and Robotics at foundation phase as part of aligning with the demands of the 4th Industrial Revolution. To this end, we would like to report to this House that **60** primary schools, **55** multi-grade schools and **08** special and full-service schools in Grade 7 have been identified to pilot the teaching of these subjects. The training of Subject Advisors and Teachers was undertaken in February 2020. We were intending of officially launch this programme at the beginning of the second term but were disrupted by the lockdown.

- ***Modernizing tools of teaching and learning***

As part of modernizing methods of teaching and learning, we launched e-learning at eMadungeni Secondary School last year, 2019. The facility of e-learning includes the provision of computers loaded with digitized text books and interactive smart boards. Embedded to is this is the programme called **Office 365** which allows shared tuition by different schools. It also allows learners to record lessons and replay them at their own leisure.

I must, however, concede that we have not realized optimal use of this platform. The disjuncture between ICT Unit, Teacher Development and Curriculum Management has been our weakest point in this regard. We have corrected this anomaly and are confident that going forward the programme will be fully utilized to achieve better results.

▪ **Provision of infrastructure and building of schools**

Ladies and gentlemen, you will remember that last year we made it abundantly clear that we are taking very seriously the issue of expediting the provision of the state-of-the-art infrastructure to schools including building the new ones. What is of great importance is the fact that all the schools that we are building currently and those that we have just built have the equipment and the technological advances that are consistent with the demands of the current epoch.

To this end, Honorable Members, we are proud to report to you that the following schools have been successfully been completed:

- La Mercy MST Academy in Pinetown District at a cost of R252 million.
- New Mahlabeni Primary School in Umkhanyakude District at the cost of R39 million.
- KwaMbonambi Secondary School in King Cetshwayo District at the cost of R39 million.
- Holinyoka Primary School in Zululand District at the cost of R41 million.
- Ntshongo Secondary School in Harry Gwala District at the cost of R18 million.
- Nqobane Primary School in Pinetown District at the cost of R56 million.
- Phumelela Secondary School in Umzinyathi District at the cost of R31 million.
- Incophelelo Primary School in Umlazi District at the cost of R17 million.
- Mbuyiselo High School in Ilembe District at the cost of R17 million.
- Velangaye High School King in Cetshwayo District at the cost of R95 million.

We are proud of the work that has been done in giving life to these schools that are now at the center of benefiting throngs of our learners with knowledge that will lead to them becoming some of the highly competitive learners we have in the Province.

THE RECRUITMENT, UTILIZATION OF TEACHERS AND IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Department of Education is committed to ensuring that there is no class without a teacher. As such, last year we managed to look at all the schools that would need additional teachers for the 2020 academic year. This has led to the creation of 400 teaching posts to provide for small and non-viable schools that are multigrading. Part of these posts cater for schools that experienced unexpected increase in learner enrollment.

I want to indicate that specific shortages continue to be seen in the area of gateway subjects such as Mathematics and Physical Science. Unfortunately, this has been compounded by the introduction of 12 new technical subjects like Technical Mathematics and Technical Science, which are related to Mathematics and Science although with marked differences.

In order to mitigate this, the department is targeting learners who are doing well in gateway subjects and offers them bursaries to study to become teachers. We have also, carefully, resorted to employing the services of qualified foreign nationals on contracts pending the graduation of South Africans who then take up those positions annually. The department will, in due course, be joined by four Cuban Mathematics experts who will be utilized mainly for upskilling our own teachers in Mathematics and Science. We hope this will speed up the process of having our own teachers that are fully qualified and capable to teach these subjects.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

In terms of teacher development and support, we have maximised our efforts in curbing unprofessional conduct in schools by ensuring that principals are capacitated on co-operative discipline. This found expression in the programme that dealt with the induction of **1 191** newly appointed School Management Teams (SMTS). Furthermore, **1 496** newly appointed post level (PL1) educators were capacitated in this regard.

An advocacy campaign was conducted in the first two quarters of 2019 to enhance support through District Teacher Development Centers (DTDCs). The campaign targeted both officials and educators, aimed at maximizing the utilization of the DTDCs by creating awareness of the resources and support that is available in these centers. In total, the advocacy campaign reached **6 770** educators, SMTs, officials and out-of-school youth.

Last year we announced that La Mercy Academy will be turned into a Teacher Development Centre. However, due to evolution of thought and conditions, we have decided to leave La Mercy Academy to be a specialized school of innovation. We will work towards preparing Dokkies Building to be the Teacher Development Centre.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

Madam Speaker, we are on record as having publicly indicated that we take very seriously the Early Childhood Development (ECD). Consistent with this, we have sought to ensure that we train ECD practitioners from ECD centres that cater for Pre-Grade R and so far we have trained 1 737 practitioners towards an NQF Level 4 qualification by the uMfolozi, uMgungundlovu and uMnambithi TVET Colleges.

In 2019, there were **3 982** schools with Grade R classes and **27** subsidised community-based sites servicing **185 048** learners. ECDs have seen **98** per cent of learners receive formal Grade R education. In December 2019, salary adjustments were implemented for **3 197** qualified ECD practitioners from **R7 250** to **R7 760** while **2 049** increased from **R7 750** to **R8 300**. The increase in the stipend for these practitioners is dependent on the NQF level and experience and these adjustments were backdated to April 2019.

We know that the stipend of ECD practitioners remain a challenge and a thorny issue. We will continue to engage will all the affected stakeholders with the view of making conditions better in line with qualifications obtained.

NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

We have taken very seriously the issue of ensuring that allocations to schools are done timeously so that schools will be able to do what they are expected to do. Our seriousness on this issue has led to us increasing the allocation. Accordingly, the department has allocated an amount of **R2. 2 billion** as opposed to the **R2. 1 billion** which was allocated in the previous financial year for funding to schools, in line with the Provincial resource targeting list. From this amount, schools in Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 will receive a total share of **R1. 98 billion** which is a substantial increase from the **R1. 9 billion** which was allocated in the previous financial year.

NEW SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLS TO BE REHABILITATED

As we continue to build new schools across the length and breadth of our Province, we have improved planning of the types of schools to be built. As opposed to leaving everything to Infrastructure Unit, the type of schools to be built are now a collective input of all the units in the department. Each and every new school to be built should, amongst other things, have the following: Media Centre/Computer Room, a library, Science Laboratory, quality sports fields and properly defined subject combinations.

We will no longer build schools which are just walls and chalk boards. Going forward, it should be possible to find a school in rural and township areas which corresponds in great material terms with historically advantaged schools – if not better.

Ladies and gentlemen, the following schools are currently under construction:

- Sinothando Secondary School in uMgungundlovu District with an estimated cost of **R32 million**.
- Open Gate Special School in uMgungundlovu District with an expected cost of **R59 million**.
- Collingwood Primary School in uMlazi District with an estimated cost of **R93 million**.
- Solomon Mahlangu Primary school in Pinetown District which will cost the Department **R61 million**.

- Dingukwazi Secondary School in Zululand District which is set to cost the Department **R90 million**.
- Pholela Special School in Harry Gwala District which is going to cost the Department an amount of **R109 million**.
- Xoloxolo Primary School in Harry Gwala District expected to cost the Department **R56 million**.
- YWCA Special School in aMajuba District expected to cost the Department **R75 million**.
- Lloyds Primary School in iLembe District expected to cost the Department **R51 million**.
- Fundokuhle Secondary School in uMzinyathi District which is set to cost the Department an amount of **R56 million**.

It is worth sharing with this House, Madam Speaker, that whilst mobile classrooms provide a temporary relief to some of our over-crowded schools, they are an eyesore for us that need to be dealt with urgently. It is for this reason that we have resolved to also focus our energies in eradicating mobile classrooms and replace them with properly built classrooms. To this end, we would like to share with the House that the following schools have been targeted for our urgent attention:

- Amaoti Secondary School in Pinetown District
- Celani Primary in aMajuba District
- Novuka Primary in uMgungundlovu
- Qantayi Secondary in King Cetshwayo District
- Siphumelele Secondary in King Cetshwayo District
- Solomon Mahlangu Primary in Pinetown District
- Vimbukhalo Primary in uThukela District

FOCUS SCHOOLS AND THREE STREAM MODEL

The Department has committed some of the 2020/2021 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) Infrastructure Budget on the establishment of the focus schools, namely: Agricultural School of Excellence in uMgungundlovu District, Maritime School and School of Autism, both in uMlazi District. In all these schools, we can report that suitable plots of land have been identified for the construction of the schools. The appointment of the professional teams has been concluded. The appointment of contractors will be effected in 2020/2021 financial year.

The Department is further investigating the suitability of establishing a focus school of mining, which will be responsible for expertise relating to beneficiation.

With regard to the Three Stream Model, the Department will be turning some existing schools into schools that will focus on technical, vocational and occupational skills. These will be schools of specialization in line with the demands of the economy during this period. We will also work closely with the industries to better understand their needs and future skills.

LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In our quest to ensure that all learners with special needs are also taken care of in our crusade to change the face of education in KwaZulu-Natal, we have dedicated much of our energies and resources in improving many of our Special Schools. This is evidenced by the fact that in the last couple of years we have been able to build and improve many out of the **74** special schools we have in the Province.

Out of this **74** schools, we can proudly indicate that we have **8** schools for the deaf and **5** schools with units for deaf learners. We also have **2** schools for the blind and **5** schools with units for blind learners.

On top of this, we have **41** schools for learners with severe intellectual disability, **69** schools with autistic learners and **45** of these schools have units for autistic learners. We also have **4** schools for skills development, **6** schools for specific learning disability.

Furthermore, we pride ourselves for the strides the Department has made which have led to **62** care centers being built in the Province. We have also been able to improve all the **24** Special School Resource Centers as a way of ensuring that learners with special needs and inclusive education remain top of our priority aimed at changing the face of education in the Province.

We have made it our priority to also adequately resource all these schools. This includes making sure that we procure all the necessary Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) for these schools. In addition, in November 2019 we bought **8** busses and distributed them to different special schools as per the needs analysis, which brought the number of the buses that we have for special schools in the Province to **124**. We are also delighted to announce that we have recently procured **15** more buses which, if we did not go through the lockdown, we would have received by now.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SCHOOLING SYSTEM

Ladies and gentlemen, over the past few years we have noted a decline in the enrolment particularly in some of the schools in rural areas. The reality of the situation is that there are schools that are currently not viable and something has to be done about them as speedily as possible. This matter, as some of you might be aware, is dealt with under the programme that is called Transformation of the Schooling System (TSS), which entails the maximum provision of access to quality basic education through resource provisioning.

In the previous year, we indicated that over 900 schools were declared non-viable and were due to be closed. I have since directed that we re-assess all these schools to satisfy ourselves that indeed they qualify to be closed through an objective process. Whilst the process of re-assessment is still underway, I can report that we have taken a decision that so far 18 schools do not qualify to be closed and therefore should be re-opened and re-modeled.

The Department cannot afford to loosely close schools whilst there is pressure to build more. It will only be those that meet the objective criteria of closing a school and all legal processes should be followed.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Honourable Members, school safety remains one of our challenges as the Department and this requires all of us to work together in a more coordinated manner than ever before. It is public knowledge that incidents of school violence, vandalism, theft and bullying have been reported more often lately in comparison with the previous years. This militates against our quest for provision of accessible and quality education. Unfortunately and of grave concern, is the fact that we have seen a number of schools in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal continue to be soft targets for criminals. In as much as many people believe that deployment of security guards in schools is a panacea for this problem, recent events where security guards themselves were butchered and killed by criminals, point to the fact that the problem is much bigger than having warm bodies at the school gate. We always say that schools are the microcosm of our societies and the problems and scourges that we find in communities unfortunately find their way into school premises. This means that we need to re-engineer our society and fix the social fabric of the very societies where our schools are located.

In our quest to deal with this challenge, the Provincial Executive Council approved a multi-pronged Schools Safety Strategy which is anchored on the following:

- Deployment of Community Based Volunteers to all our schools. These are volunteers that have and will be trained by the Department of Safety and Community Liaison. They are trained in combating various forms of crime in our communities.
- Properly fencing all our schools so that there is clear entrance and exit points and all outsiders coming into schools should be properly registered.
- Establishment of Safety School Committees to be composed of various organs of society.

- Working with the police to ensure they regularly patrol and maintain visibility around schools as well as ensuring timeous response.

We will continue to improve on the implementation of this strategy and building on what has already been done, we should complete the recruitment of all Safety Volunteers for our schools. The re-fencing of our schools with a more durable and reliable fence is underway and its pace will be determined by availability of budget.

We call on our communities to join hands with us and refuse to be the market of stole properties.

Ladies and gentlemen, few months ago, we re-launched the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) in Sibusisiwe Hall, Mandeni, as a way of adding to the catalogue of solutions that we are implementing to turn the tide against anything that has a negative impact to quality education. We are persuaded that through this campaign, which is aimed at mobilising all structures and communities to play a meaningful role in education, we are collectively going to find a way to deal with this challenge once and for all.

READING FOR MEANING

Despite the fact that South Africa is ranked very highly, at **95%**, in terms of literacy, disappointingly, some researchers report that literacy of younger individuals is still on the decline. Recent surveys have found that **29%** of the Grade 4 learners are illiterate, while another **48%** do not have reading comprehension skills. The researchers have discovered that part of the problem is in fact due to multilingualism in this country.

For example, approximately **70%** of learners in the 1st to the 3rd grades receive education in an African Language. When they reach Grade 4, however, lessons are given in English. As a result of these learners having not yet accomplished reading comprehension in African languages and not being fully fluent in English, literacy is much more difficult for them to achieve.

According to researchers, if this problem persists, South Africa could find itself with lower literacy rate in the future. The recommendations of Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) speak to strengthening of teaching of reading by training teachers to improve their pedagogical content knowledge in the foundation phase and African languages.

Recently, we held the Read Aloud Campaign that saw all of us reading stories to primary school learners in the Province. This campaign and many others like it are good and are to be encouraged if we are to cultivate a strong culture of reading among our learners. We should, therefore, challenge all of you Honorable Members to also work with us side by side on our crusade to improve the reading in our learners.

In our Province, we have resolved to work towards a goal of having learners at age of 10 able to read for meaning in both IsiZulu and English. This decision is informed by the urgent need to de-colonize education and also taking into account that English remains a dominant language of trade in the world.

We have since developed a Comprehensive Reading Strategy and have also procured necessary material, such pictographic dictionaries with both IsiZulu and English, for the foundation phase. We will also partner the Department of Arts and Culture for better use of community libraries by our learners during weekends and holidays.

ADVANCEMENTS IN THE INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY (ICT) AND THE 4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (4IR)

With the world changing very fast in the field on Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) taking center stage, we have seen an importance of also catching up with the speed at which the advancements in these two areas are moving. It is for this reason that we are serious about making strong investments in technology and internet connectivity to lay a solid foundation for a future that is underpinned by innovation and is digitally inclusive.

We have worked hard to build an integrated ICT package that will enable us to continuously modernize methods of teaching and learning.

We are proud to share with you, Honourable Members, that the Department was able to set aside **R49, 8** million in the 2019/2020 financial year to rollout an e-Learning Solution to **100** schools. We are going to first pilot this in **50** schools in uThukela District and **50** schools in uMzinyathi District. This e-Learning Solution will provide a full ICT package which will see each school receive **40** devices to host educational and digital content, **40** computer monitors, a projector, a projector screen and other accessories. There will also be a thorough training of teachers in this regard.

This kind of a solution is also able to cater even for schools that still have challenges with network connectivity. The loaded digital content of this solution, which is in line with CAPS, can also be translated into IsiZulu for better understanding.

With the easing down of lockdown, we should be able to unveil this project in due course.

Madam Speaker, during this financial year, we are going to have a three-week workshop under the banner of Coding like a Girl. In this Coding like a Girl concept, which is as a result of our partnership with Vodacom, we are going to put together under one roof, **900** girl learners from disadvantaged communities.

These girls are going to be taught thoroughly in the subjects of Coding. This is one indicator, Honourable Members, that when we talk about the introduction of Coding and Robotics, we are not punching above our weight but we have a programme and plans of having these critical subjects rolled out. By the time these girl learners come out of the Coding like a Girl programme, they would be equipped with skills to start their own websites from scratch and each girl will come out of the programme with her own website established by her through the knowledge acquired in Coding like a girl.

Together with Vodacom, we are also going to embark on the e-school supplementary online platform which is going to provide educational material from Grade R to Grade 12. This is an e-learning resource which will include sim cards with curriculum content which will be given to learners without data and content costs. Much as this is going to assist learners in mastering curriculum, thereby enhancing outcomes, it is also going to motivate learners not to shy away from technology and to also embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

CREATING A FERTILE GROUND FOR LEARNING

We have made it our business to making sure that our learners are provided with everything that will make their journey in education a much enjoyable one. It is for this reason that we are continuing to do all we can in ensuring that we provide them with a plethora of services that are outside of our core business which is teaching and learning. Amongst those enablers of total creation of fertile ground for learning are the following:

- **National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP)**

National School Nutrition Programme **has been** allocated **R1.718** billion for 2020/2021 financial year for all learners in Quintiles 1 to 3 including some in Quintile 4 and 5 schools. With this programme we provide learners with balanced and nutritious meal every day. This programme, ladies and gentlemen, is primarily aimed at seeking to alleviate short-term hunger at school, improve learner attendance and participation in class, provide support to learners from child-headed households and contribute to the overall improvement of learner attainment. The NSNP grant provides nutritious meals to approximately **2 336 282** learners in approximately **5 342** schools throughout the Province. We will continue making sure that this programme is amongst those that we pride ourselves with both as the Department and the entire government.

- **Learner Transport**

Madam Speaker, in recognition of the long distances travelled by our learners to access education in our Province, the Department continues to provide learner transport to qualifying learners who travel long distances to school. However, the budgetary constraints continue to be a major factor in preventing the Department from rolling out this programme optimally.

In the 2020/21 financial year, with allocation of **R367 Million**, we were able only to provide transport to **58 908** learners. We have **117 248** learners who are on the waiting list, who are currently excluded from the learner transport programme as a result of budgetary constraints. The amount that is required to cover these learners is estimated at **R910 Million** per annum. Notably, this figure excludes learners who have not applied for learner transport, who, on their own, are likely to run into thousands.

- **Sanitary Towels Dignity Programme**

Honourable Members, it is public information that KwaZulu-Natal is still leading the pack when it comes to the distribution of sanitary towels to all the needy learners in all the quintile 1 to 3 schools and some in quintile 4. Following our notable success in the delivery of sanitary towels, the programme has since been rolled out nationally and has been taken over by the Department of Women, Persons with Disabilities and Children within the Presidency.

However, as the Province we are still playing a major role in the coordination of the programme which, last year, saw approximately **956 000** girl learners benefiting in all the 12 districts in the province. We are pleased that for the 2020/2021 financial year, KwaZulu-Natal has been allocated **R48 million**. This will indeed go a long way in helping us bring back the dignity of thousands of our girl learners who, for many years, had a challenge of not having access to proper sanitary towels.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES (CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES)

Madam Speaker, we sent a directive to all our infrastructure colleagues that none of the new schools that we are going to build, are going to be built without a proper playing fields for our learners. In doing this, we intend also to build fields for sporting codes which were previously not dominant in particular communities.

This is important, Honourable Members, because in creating a balanced human being, we need to appreciate the role that is played by sports, arts and culture in enriching our society. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Sport and Recreation, Arts and Culture is being reviewed to enhance cooperation.

We will also work with Municipalities to build fit-for-purpose sporting fields that can be shared by schools and communities.

Honourable Members, our learners continue to make us proud by representing and succeeding in Provincial, National and International competitions alike. To this end, I would like to shower with accolades the following learners who are amongst those that put together an outstanding performance in various stages:

- Bulelani Mnguni from Mathubeszwe High School got first position in the letter writing competition.
- In a Letter to the President, Siphokuhle Mdlalose from Mangalisa Primary School also took first position at the Provincial level.
- How can I forget about our girl learners from Mathubeszwe High School who scoop the coveted internal Moot Court Competition which took place in Poland, beating United States of America in the finals.
- Nozipho Dube from the very same school, Mathubeszwe High School, has qualified to represent the country in The Federal States of Germany.
- Sureshka Naidoo and Caitlin Schwarzer of Eden College who are amongst the winners in the 5th International School Moot Competition in Gdynia in Poland.

These are but few of our achievements in this area, including our national dominance in the South African Schools Choral Eisteddfod (SASCE), which is one of the Ministers' flagship programmes on social enrichment, aimed at promoting unity in diversity, national reconciliation, positive values, a new South African national identity, social transformation and social cohesion among the school going youth of South Africa

2020/ 2021 BUDGET ALLOCATION

The allocated budget for the department in the current financial year is **R57 246 803**
 (Fifty Seven Billion 246 million and 803 thousand Rands)

PROGRAMMES	BUDGET ALLOCATION	
1. Administration	R1 951 813 000	One billion 951 million and 813 thousand rands
2. Public Ordinary School Education	R48 345 958 000	48 billion 345 million and 958 thousand rands
3. Independent School Subsidies	R91 411 000 000	91 million and 411 thousand rands
4. Public Special School Education	R1 390 787 000	One billion 390 million and 787 thousand rands
5. Early Childhood Development	R1 443 566 000	One billion 443 million and 566 thousand rands
6. Infrastructure Development	R2 377 679 000	Two billion 377 million and 679 thousand rands
7. Examination And Education Related Services	R1 645 589 000	One billion 645million and 589 thousand rands
Total	R57 246 803 000	Fifty Seven Billion 246 million and 803 thousand rands

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, Honorable Members, in February 2020 we issued a circular where we urged all senior officials of the Department, from the Head of Department to Assistant Directors to adopt a school.

In this circular, we directed the adoption of a minimum of five schools, while Chief Education Specialists, Circuit Management Center (CMC) Heads, Deputy Managers and Assistant Managers must adopt a minimum of three schools. There is a set criterion that we have put on this Adopt A School programme. All the schools identified for adoption should be submitted to DDGs and the programme will be a standing item in the MEC's Management Meetings. Honorable Members, we want to make it very clear that with this programme we mean business. We will also ensure that everyone in the Department complies and that more efforts are put in ensuring that the programme ultimately has produces the desired results.

We do this because we want, among other things, to impress on our officials that regardless of their positions and their roles in the Department, they must also understand that whatever they do should in some way have an impact on the classroom, since the classrooms remain the epicenter of everything we do.

To this end, Madam Speaker, we don't think it would be too late for us to request all the members of this House to do the same and adopt a minimum of five schools. This, we believe, will help us to uplift the standard of education and increase performance, especially to those schools that are struggling.

At this moment, Madam Speaker, let me hasten to pay tribute to the entire leadership collective of the African National Congress for always showing us the way in times of darkness. To the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Hon. Sihle Zikalala and the entire Executive we thank you for your consistent guidance. To the Speaker of the Legislature, Hon. Boyce and all the Members, we say thank you for your wise counsel and leadership. We also would like to shower with accolades the Chairperson of the Education Portfolio Committee, Hon. Sibiya and all the Members for always helping us navigate our way through.

The Head of Department and his entire management collective have also been good to work with. Their resilience and hard work have inspired me greatly. Indeed, this Department is in good hands. I certainly would not be doing any justice if I do not shower with accolades all our teachers who work beyond the call of duty to ensure that our learners are better prepared for the future. The same goes to all organized labour organizations and social partners for always showing that education is not only close to their hearts but that it is indeed a societal issue.

My family have been the pillar of strength throughout and I would like to commend them for always encouraging me and giving me hope in times of doubts.

To all our learners, we wish you good luck. These may be the difficult times in the history of humankind as we battle the Coronavirus, but we are quite certain that working together and observing all the regulations and protocols we will emerge victorious in the end.

I thank you.