

2008 Education Budget Vote Debate

The budget vote debate is the biggest education political event. This year was no different, drawing directors of School governing body federations, union leaders, leaders in civil society, directors of statutory bodies (UMALUSI, SAQA, SACE, NSFAS, NBFET and CHE).

The debate involves over 50 members of parliament, the 9 provincial MEC's and, the Minister and her deputy and this year, the Deputy President was also in attendance. This political moment is usually the signal of all the big government plans for education. Unlike previous years, this debate was a potential farewell do and in that regard it was much tamer than debates gone by.

The Minister spent a significant part of her speech highlighting her achievements in Higher Education. There was also a strong message sent that, we will not tolerate unqualified unmotivated teachers in the future. 2013 has been set as a deadline year. From the debate, there were recurrent messages that if people did not shape up they would be shipped out come 2013.

Being the political hawk that I am, I could not help but notice the complete lack of reference to the state president in the debate. The closest anyone came to mentioning Thabo Mbeki was an indirect reference to the state of the nation address. Instead, various political figures, including adv Gaum (former MEC for Education in the Western Cape) spent some time, mentioning statements from ANC President Jacob Zuma.

One important development was the shift in language. I like to believe that organizations such as the CIE and other civil society organization have played a part in shifting governments approach. The Minister made a statement that we need a 'call to build a new character and new opportunities'. Other MP's spoke about the need for caring government. The Bill of responsibility received prominence being cited by various members.

Another key development in the debate, was the Ministers introduction of the plan for an inspectorate and the initiation of a renewal plan for technical high schools. The Minister noted in this part of her speech, that this was a legacy she would leave for her successor.

All opposition parties voted for the budget, the first time this has happened in our democratic history. The DA have traditionally rejected the budget. Sandra Botha leader of the DA had a rather nasty fall, while hurrying out of the chamber but graciously picked herself up and rejoined the proceedings. In previous years the ANC would have made a mockery of this but this time, there was deep concern and compassion in the house. Education has, it would seem, changed Parliament and built community.

Total Budget Allocation

R 123.056 billion

National Share

R 18.857 billion

Provincial Share

104.198 billion

School Feeding Budget

R 493,255 million

HIV/AIDS conditional grant

Increased by R10.2 million

Recapitalisation of FET

R 795 million

Adult Literacy

R 350 million

EMIS (Education Management Information System)

R 21 million

FET examination preparation

R 81 million

IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System)

R 29 million

Systemic Evaluation

R 50 million

School Sport

Our learners are participating in the South African Schools Soccer World Cup Competition

No fees

5 million learners in fee free schools.