

R224-million earmarked for education programmes left unspent – Gavin Davis

Gavin Davis |
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Minister Motshekga must answer for R224 million cut from Basic Education budget

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With the education of our children a paramount priority, it is unconscionable that money allocated to it should go unspent.

Yet, this is exactly what has happened.

R224 million in conditional grants to provincial education departments were declared unspent over the last six months and National Treasury has cut the same amount from the basic education budget for the remainder of this financial year.

This quarter of a billion rand underspend emanates from key education programmes, including:

- R163 million from the Education Infrastructure Grant;
- R30,2 million from the Maths, Science and Technology (MST) Grant;
- R18,3 million from the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) Grant; and
- R12,3 million from the HIV and Aids (Life Skills Education) Grant.

The Eastern Cape was responsible for over half the underspend (R127.5 million), while Limpopo and the North West underspent by R38.8 million and R36.4 million respectively. The DA-governed Western Cape, by contrast, underspent by just R60 000.

It is no good, as Deputy Minister Surty attempted in Parliament last week, to simply blame errant provincial departments for the underspend. It is up to the national department to protect its investment by ensuring that conditional grants are spent effectively.

Indeed, as the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) [stated](#) earlier this year: “*National departments should not abrogate their constitutional responsibility towards provinces.*” Indeed, according to the FFC, the national department must “*ensure that adequate provision has been made to support, monitor and oversee provincial performance as well as prescribe funded and enforceable norms and standards.*”

It is our view that Minister Motshekga should have done more to ensure that the money for the conditional grants was utilised for its intended purpose.

We therefore call on the Minister to explain:

- what steps her department took to support, monitor and oversee provincial performance as well as prescribe and enforce norms and standards;
- what plans and actions she intends to implement next year to ensure that provinces fully utilise their conditional grants, including enhanced oversight of poorly performing provincial education departments; and
- whether her department has the necessary skills and systems in place to ensure the monitoring of conditional grant expenditure in the provinces.

We cannot allow money earmarked for important education programmes to go unspent and, as a consequence, be cut from the education budget. Up until now, Minister Motshekga has generally been seen as a steady hand on the education tiller. These budget cuts as a result of underspending are a sign that the cracks are beginning to show.

Issued by Gavin Davis, Shadow Minister of Basic Education, DA, 2 December 2015

<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/r224million-earmarked-for-education-programmes-lef>