

Education to remain a priority in 2021

While education continues to be a priority, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni has announced that government will in the next three years trim expenditure in the learning and culture function.



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The Minister revealed this while delivering the 2021 Budget Speech, in Parliament, on Wednesday.

Over the medium term, the learning and culture function accounts for R1.23tn (23.5%) of the consolidated expenditure.

“The function will continue to receive the largest share of government spending over the period, rising from R387.2bn in 2020/21 to R416bn in 2023/24,” said the National Treasury in its Budget Review report.

Expenditure in this function is driven by the basic education sector.

In the basic education sector, compensation of employees in provincial education departments remains the largest spending category, representing 51.2% of total functional expenditure.

“Low compensation growth of 0.8% over the MTEF [Medium Term Expenditure Framework] period, combined with early retirements, will reduce the number of available teachers. This, coupled with a rising number of learners, implies larger class sizes, especially in no-fee schools, which is expected to negatively affect learning outcomes,” noted the document.

Over the medium term, R36.7bn will be allocated to the Education Infrastructure Grant, which will be used to roll out new school infrastructure and maintain existing infrastructure.

Projects funded by the School Infrastructure Backlog Grant will end in 2022/23 and funds will become part of the Education Infrastructure Grant from 2023/24.

“This will consolidate school infrastructure spending within provincial education departments. To maintain meals for about 9 million learners at 19,950 schools each year, the national school nutrition programme grant will cost R25.5bn over the medium term.”

In the post-school education and training sector, slower growth in subsidies and grants for universities, technical and vocational education and training colleges, and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme will require a review of student enrolment growth and bursary allowances.

The Budget Review says institutions will need to contain costs such as staff numbers and salaries, and develop ways of using information and communication technology more effectively to enhance blended learning.

During this period, spending from the skills development levy is projected to increase by 10.2% annually.

Sector education and training authorities will fund skills programmes, learnerships, internships and apprenticeships, and workplace experience, the report indicates.

Over the period, R65.5bn will help an estimated 89,000 new artisans to register for training, develop 71,500 qualified artisans and provide more than 320,000 work-based learning opportunities.

The sports, arts and culture sector will continue to focus on social cohesion.

An allocation of R33.7bn over the medium term will support community library services, heritage legacy and job creation projects, school sport and indigenous games, and help drive transformation in sport.

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