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Classroom Crisis
The State of School Infrastructure in the Eastern Cape

November 2005

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Acknowledgements

I am much indebted to Mbasu Voyi, project co-ordinator at the PSAM, for his assistance with the planning and implementation of this research report. I am also indebted to Dr Neil Overy, Senior Research Editor at the PSAM, for his helpful suggestions, and for editing this report.

In addition, I would like to thank all the school principals and educators interviewed by the PSAM. Their experiences have made a valuable contribution to this report.

I would also like to thank the Eastern Cape Department of Education for its cooperation and for providing the PSAM with a letter which enabled it to gain access to schools in the Province.

Glossary

CS	Combined School
DoE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
DPW	Eastern Cape Department of Public Works
ECSBP	Eastern Cape School Building Programme
EDO	Education Development Officer
EFMS	Education Facilities Management System
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
IDIP	Infrastructure Delivery Improvement Plan
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IMT	Interim Management Team
Infrastructure Plan	Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft.
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NDOE	National Department of Education
NDPW	National Department of Public Works
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PIA	Principle Implementing Agent
PRPU	Physical Resource Planning Unit
Sadtu	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SGB	School Governing Body
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SNP	School Nutrition Programme

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Key Findings and Recommendations

- **Infrastructure Backlog**

Finding

Despite a presidential injunction to address mud and structurally unsafe classrooms by 2005, there are currently 572 “disaster schools” in the Eastern Cape. In addition, 1 279 schools are without water, 1 177 schools are without adequate sanitation, and 1 952 schools are without electricity.

Recommendation

It is imperative that the Department prioritise the provision of infrastructure over the next ten years by ensuring that the Physical Resources Directorate is provided with adequate human and financial resources.

- **Inadequate Funding**

Finding

Over and above its complicated apartheid inheritance, the Department’s consistent failure to secure adequate funding for infrastructure has resulted in the current crisis in education infrastructure in the Eastern Cape. The Department has spent R2.5 billion over the past eleven years. It anticipates that over R15 billion is required over the next ten years to address the province’s education infrastructure needs.

Recommendation:

The Department must secure adequate funding to address the infrastructure needs of schools. In addition, the Department must ensure that this funding is fully utilised and not spent on anything other than infrastructure. To this end, the PSAM recommends the creation of an Infrastructure Conditional Grant. This is because, in terms of section 24(1) of the Division of Revenue Act (DoRA) 2004, conditional grant allocations may only be used for the purposes stipulated by the conditions of the grant. In addition, in terms of section 21(1) and (2), national departments may withhold funds if the department fails to comply with these conditions, or fails to spend previously transferred funds.

- **Overspending on Personnel**

Finding

Severe budget cuts to the Department’s infrastructure budget are the result of over spending on educator personnel. The Department over spent its personnel budget by R1.06 billion from 2001/02 – 2003/04. In order to address its overdraft, the Department severely reduced the infrastructure budget by nearly 50 percent in 2004. The Department’s failure to budget for salary arrears, together with its inability or unwillingness to rationalise its personnel, has significantly contributed to over spending on personnel. In previous financial years, over spending on personnel crowded out spending on non-personnel, i.e. infrastructure.

Recommendation

It is imperative that the Department address educator personnel expenditure in the Department. The Department must reach an agreement with teachers’ unions over the number of funded educator posts, and ensure that adequate funding is secured to

address salary arrears, etc. The Department should also ensure that person-to-post matching is completed, and that all staff additional to the establishment are either trained to be absorbed into vacant posts, transferred to other departments, or given severance packages.

- **Non-Educator Personnel Vacancy Rates**

Finding

According to the norms and standards for personnel costs in the Education Sector, 85 percent of personnel funds must be allocated to educators, and 15 percent to non-educator personnel. The Department has consistently under-budgeted and under spent on non-educator personnel. This has led to a vacancy rate of 60 percent in the administrative arm of the Department.

Recommendation

The Department must strive to bring the personnel budget in line with the norms and standards for personnel costs in the Education Sector.

- **High Vacancy Rates in Physical Resources Directorate**

Finding

There is a 54.17 percent vacancy rate in the Physical Resources Directorate at provincial level, with only 11 of 24 posts filled. In addition, the Department is severely understaffed at the district level, with “very few, if any, of the Physical Resource Planning posts” filled at district level.¹ Many district personnel also lack the capacity to fulfil their mandates.

Recommendation

If the Department is serious about its plans to address the infrastructure backlog by 2014, it must ensure that the Physical Resources Directorate is fully staffed and capacitated at both provincial and district level. The PSAM recommends that one of the conditions of the Infrastructure Conditional Grant should be the filling of all critical posts in the Physical Resource Planning Unit. Funding specifically for this purpose should be made available through the Conditional Grant. The Department must also plan and budget for the upgrading of district offices.

- **Skills Shortage**

Finding

The Department experiences critical skills shortages at district level. Despite this, the Department has failed to spend most its Financial Management and Quality Enhancement conditional grant. The Department has spent only R38.52 million, or 36.15 percent, of a total grant allocation of R106.55 million over the last three financial years.²

Recommendation

The Department must fully utilise the Financial Management and Quality Enhancement Condition Grant in order to address its skills shortage at all levels.

¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 42.

² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Reports, 2002/03, p. 215, 2003/04, pp. 105, 107, 2004/05, p. 157.

- **Poor Planning**

Finding

The decision to provide those mud/temporary structured schools prioritised by the Department with three classrooms, six toilets, an office, water tanks and a fence has not been sufficiently thought through and is counterproductive to the Department's attempts to efficiently and effectively address school infrastructure over the longer term. Firstly, three classrooms are insufficient to address the needs of many mud structured schools. The provision of insufficient infrastructure to more schools, instead of providing adequate infrastructure to fewer schools, will reduce the pressure from school principals, school governing bodies and the media to provide adequate infrastructure. Secondly, the limited facilities will be over-burdened, particularly regarding toilet facilities, thereby increasing maintenance costs for the Department.

Recommendation

The Department should reconsider its decision to address mud/temporary structured schools in a piecemeal fashion. The Department should investigate the possibility of fully addressing each school in a single intervention. In addition, the Department should consult extensively with the staff of each of the 572 mud/temporary structured schools in order to find the most acceptable, and achievable, way forward.

- **Poor Monitoring**

Finding

The Department's capacity constraints at district level prevent the Department from effectively monitoring the implementation of the Eastern Cape Schools Building Programme.

Recommendation

Once again, the Department must ensure that district offices are provided with adequate human and physical resources to fulfil their monitoring mandate.

- **Poor Communication**

Finding

There is a manifest breakdown in communication between the Department and the schools in the province regarding the roll-out of the Department's infrastructure plans. This is despite the fact that systems are in place to facilitate discussions and information sharing. In addition, there is a duplication of function between the Department and the Independent Development Trust (IDT) as the latter employs social facilitators who replicate the mediator role of district officers. Poor communication between the Department and the IDT further frustrates infrastructure service delivery.

Recommendation

The Department should make a concerted effort to address problems with communication within the Department. In particular, the Department should investigate the possibility of whether social facilitators may be tasked with the responsibility of keeping schools well informed as to delays, plans, etc. in the roll-out of the Department's infrastructure plans. In addition, the Department should explore how it can improve communication with the IDT.

- **Costs and Benefits of Expanded Public Works Programme**

Finding

The implementation of EPWP principles in the building of schools has been poorly planned and uncoordinated, and has delayed the delivery of school infrastructure to these “disaster schools.”

Recommendation

The Department should reconsider the benefit to communities of employing EPWP principles against the very real danger mud/temporary structured schools pose to learners. In addition, the Department should factor in the significant delays caused by EPWP methods in the current Infrastructure Plan.

- **Psychological Effect of delays and unfulfilled promises**

Finding

The Department’s failure to address the infrastructure backlog within stated timeframes has resulted in low morale and frustration amongst many educators, who continue to teach in unacceptable and often dangerous conditions.

Recommendation

The Department should commit to realistic timeframes when reconsidering the 2005-2014 Infrastructure Plan. The Department should also resist making unrealistic commitments, at whatever level, to individual schools. In addition, the Department should increase the quality of reporting so that schools are, firstly, aware of the extent of the infrastructure backlog, and secondly, aware of the Department’s attempts to address it.

- **Limited Capacity of the Department of Public Works**

Finding

The Eastern Cape Department of Public Works experiences critical staff shortages which prevent it from fulfilling its mandate to provide infrastructure for the Department of Education. In 2004/05, the DPW had a vacancy rate of 31.16 percent, with 1 896 vacancies. The DPW acknowledges that its ability to manage the infrastructure projects of other departments has been constrained by its inadequate staffing and skills base.

Recommendation

The Department of Public Works must prioritise the filling of vacant critical posts, and ensure that, where functions are outsourced, service level agreements include the transfer of skills from consultants to departmental staff.

Introduction

“The Department came into existence only in 1995. The new Department of Education was charged firstly with the normal public responsibility of delivering educational services to citizens in the Province, ensuring compliance with the Constitution and the educational policy directives of the new Government. Secondly, the Department inherited gross educational inequalities ... It had to manage the merger of six different educational structures and cultures of previous education departments of the apartheid regime ... Several years have elapsed in the history of the Department, and some accomplishments have been made. However, with continual management crises and resource demands, expectations were generally unfulfilled, the reconstruction of education was slow and the reconstitution of a unified and viable administrative structure and culture in the department was retarded.”³
Interim Management Team, 2004.

The Constitution of South Africa states that every South African citizen has a right to “basic education” and to “further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.”⁴ This mandate is carried out by the National Department of Education, and nine provincial departments of Education. It is clear that a fundamental pre-requisite for the delivery of effective education is the existence of suitable and safe school infrastructure. The Eastern Cape Department of Education is mandated, in terms of the South African Schools Act, to provide infrastructure that facilitates the provision of quality education. This Act states that provincial MECs must “ensure that there are enough school places so that every child who lives in his/her Province can attend school.” In addition, provincial MECs “must provide public schools for [the] education of learners out of funds appropriated for this purpose by the provincial legislature.”⁵ Despite this mandate, there are currently over 572 mud-structured schools deemed “completely unsuitable for teaching and learning,” and a backlog of over 14 000 classrooms in the Eastern Cape province.⁶ According to Provincial Treasury, the illiteracy rate of the Eastern Cape was 42 percent in 2001, while “a staggering 23% of the population had no formal education whatsoever.” The Eastern Cape Department of Education estimates that there are 661 386 learners without adequate classrooms, and 271 638 learners without access to adequate toilet facilities.⁷

³ Report: Work of the Interim Management Team: Eastern Cape, Nov. 2002 – Mar. 2004, pp. 55-56. In the wake of consistent reports of failed service delivery and corruption in the Eastern Cape, President Thabo Mbeki deployed the IMT to the province in an effort to deal with the chronic management and administrative problems being experienced in the province. The IMT was specifically mandated to tackle the challenges of failed service delivery, poor back office support and inadequate discipline within four departments (Health, Education, Social Development and Public Works).

⁴ South African Bill of Rights, 29(1)(a) and (b).

⁵ South African School's Act, Clause 3(1) and Clause 12(1).

⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 106.

⁷ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, Preliminary Draft, 2005 -2014, p. 10.



Learners at the recently built Bantwanana Junior Secondary School

The legislated segregation of education in South Africa, following the 1953 Bantu Education Act, resulted in gross under funding for the education of 70 percent of the country's population. In the 1970s, for example, per capita spending on what was previously classified as 'black education' was one-tenth of spending on 'white education.' This disproportionate funding led to, amongst other things, hopelessly inadequate school infrastructure in areas defined by the apartheid government as 'homelands'.⁸ The Eastern Cape Department of Education has been particularly disadvantaged with regard to school infrastructure by this apartheid legacy. According to the provincial Department, 60 percent of schools in the Eastern Cape were inherited from the former Transkei area, "the most disadvantaged homeland under the apartheid Government."⁹ The Transkei received the lowest budgeted per-learner funding out of all homeland Education Departments. This resulted in most schools consisting of mud structures, because "the task of providing school infrastructure rested largely on the shoulders of the poverty-stricken communities of the region."¹⁰

However, it is not only the province's apartheid inheritance that has led to the current school infrastructure crisis. Inadequate budgeting and failed service delivery have exacerbated the problem. The Department of Education has recently committed itself to address the infrastructure backlog by 2014, at an estimated cost of over R15 billion. It is the aim of this report to interrogate the Department's plans, questioning their feasibility in light of its past performance and funding challenges. The report will also investigate other key challenges faced by the Department in its effort to ensure that all school children have access to adequate school infrastructure.

⁸ http://www.stanford.edu/~jbaugh/saw/Lizet_Education_Inequity.html. 'Homelands' were later defined by the apartheid regime as 'Bantustans'.

⁹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, *A Transformation Agenda for the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2005 – 2014*, p. iv. The apartheid government introduced legislated territorial segregation along language and cultural lines with the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. This Act saw the creation of 'independent' (in the eyes of the apartheid state alone) 'self governing' states within South Africa. In effect they were little more than grossly under resourced cheap labour pools for South African industry.

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/classroom/pages/projects/grade9/lesson6/06-divide-rule.htm>

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 12.

I. The Current State of School Infrastructure in the Eastern Cape

“By the end of this financial year [2004/05] we shall ensure that there is no learner and student learning under a tree, mud-school or any dangerous conditions that expose learners and teachers to the elements.”

President Thabo Mbeki¹¹



Grade 9 classroom, Maganise Junior Secondary School

In May 2004, President Thabo Mbeki made a commitment to eradicate mud and structurally unsafe school buildings by the end of the 2004/05 financial year. There are currently 572 schools labelled “disaster schools” (which range from mud structures that have collapsed, to existing structures where roofs have been damaged and which “pose extreme danger to the lives of learners and educators”¹²) in the Eastern Cape.¹³ In addition, 1 279 schools are without water, 1 177 are without sanitation, and 1 924 are without electricity.¹⁴

The Provincial Department of Education estimates that more than R15 billion is required to eradicate the total backlog in school infrastructure.¹⁵ While this figure significantly exceeds previous estimates made by the Department, it includes, besides classrooms, water, sanitation and electricity, the overwhelming need in the province for resource centres, computer and science laboratories, and office space.¹⁶ The estimate also includes a much needed maintenance budget, emphasised by the fact that the number of “disaster schools” has nearly doubled over the last two financial years.¹⁷ According to the 2004/05 Annual Report, the state of the Department’s capital infrastructure¹⁸ (summarised in Table 1 below) is poor, with 84 percent of all buildings being very weak (mud), weak or in need of repair.¹⁹

¹¹ Thabo Mbeki, “Address of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, to the first joint sitting of the third democratic Parliament,” 21 May 2004.

¹² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 107.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 105, 107.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft, pp. 10-12.

¹⁷ In 2003, it was reported that there were only 238 “disaster schools”, as opposed to 572 reported in 2004/05. Eastern Cape Department of Education, Strategic Plan, 2004-2007, p. 118.

¹⁸ In the Department’s Annual Reports, “Capital Infrastructure” refers to school buildings.

¹⁹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 107.

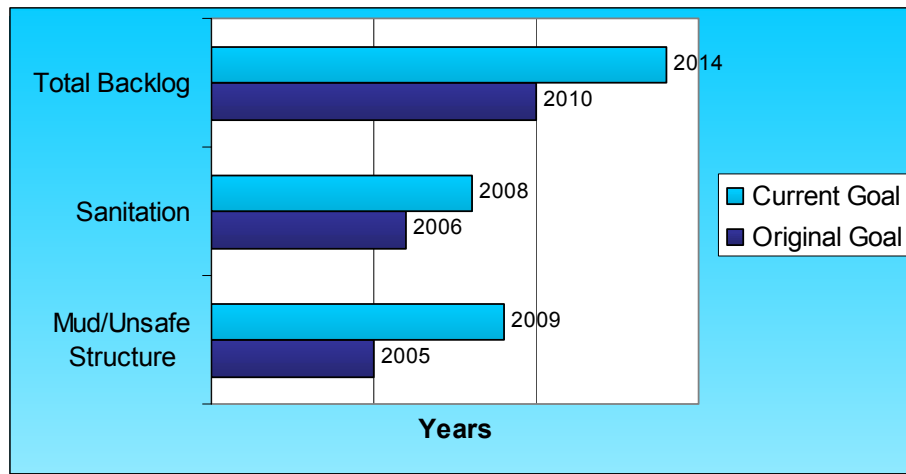
Table 1: Current state of the Department’s capital Infrastructure²⁰

Condition	Number	%
Very Weak (Mud)	939	14.9
Weak	3 148	49.8
Needs Repair	2 207	35.0
Good Condition	963	15.2
New Building	52	0.9
Being Upgraded	201	3.0
No Response	0	0

In March 2005, the Eastern Cape Education Standing Committee compiled a report based on their visits to 126 schools in the province. The Committee argued that, notwithstanding the Department’s efforts to provide infrastructure for schools, the condition of educational infrastructure, especially in rural areas, remained “pathetic.”²¹

Despite the immense infrastructure need in the Province, the Department’s infrastructure budget of R462 million was slashed to R277 million in 2004/05, when the Department surrendered money to the Provincial Treasury in order to clear the Department’s overdraft.²² This seems to contravene Section 43(4)(c) of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act No. 1 of 1999) which states that savings in an amount appropriated for capital expenditure may not be reallocated to current expenditure. According to the Department, 99 projects were put on hold, and no new projects commenced in 2004/05.²³ Effectively, the Department’s “belt tightening” measures meant that it would not meet previous infrastructure service delivery commitments, nor Presidential Priorities regarding mud structure schools and sanitation. The Department had aimed to eradicate the sanitation backlog by 2006, and mud/unsafe structures by 2008,²⁴ as well as the total infrastructure backlog by 2010.²⁵

Graph 1: The Department previous and current infrastructure goals



²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Announcements, Tablings and Committee reports, 15 Mar. 2005.

²² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 104.

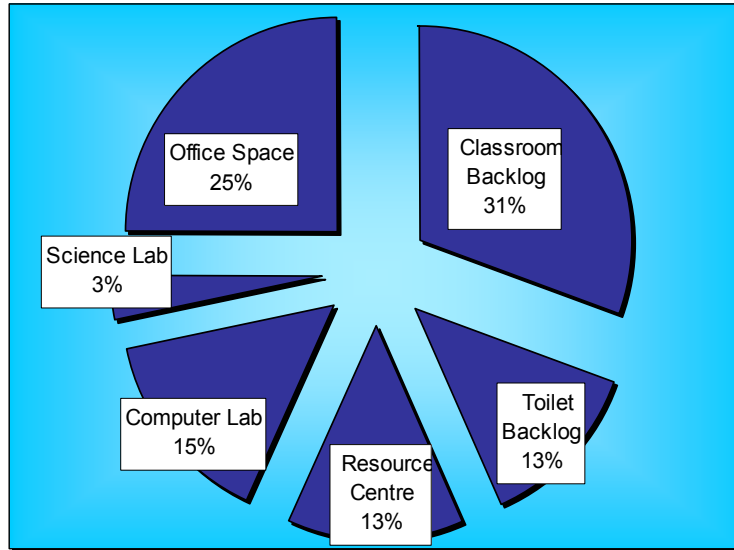
²³ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 115, and Annual Performance Plan, 2005/06, p. 69.

²⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Performance Plan, 2005/06, p. 69.

²⁵ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 128.

The Department's new goals, proposed in the 2004/05 Annual Report, are to eradicate the total infrastructure backlog over a period of 10 years (by 2014), with milestones set for the eradication of mud structures by 2008, and water and sanitation backlogs by 2009.²⁶ In order to achieve these goals the Department will have to build over 14 000 classrooms and 57 000 toilets at a cost of nearly R5.5 billion. The Department will also have to provide 3 885 resource centres, 4 903 computer laboratories and 1 042 science laboratories. In total, the Department estimates that a "frightening" amount of R12.7 billion is required to address backlogs.²⁷

Graph 2: Summary of Backlog Costs²⁸



In addition, the Department will require R1.5 billion for repairs, and a further R1.6 billion for upgrades. "Upgrading" refers to facilities which are "no longer considered functional or economically repairable, eg: mud structure schools/ classrooms." The cost of providing electricity, water, and fencing is included under "upgrading." This brings the grand total required by the Department to eradicate all backlogs in infrastructure, upgrade schools, and maintain existing infrastructure in the province to R15.87 billion.²⁹

²⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 104.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 11 -12.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, pp. 11, 13.

Table 2: Breakdown of Total Infrastructure Requirement³⁰

		Quantity	Cost
Backlogs	Classroom Backlog	14 631	3 862 584 000
	Toilet Backlog	57 001	1 635 928 700
	Resource Centre	3 885	1 693 779 733
	Computer Lab	4 903	1 921 976 000
	Science Lab	1 042	408 464 000
	Office Space	547 137	3 173 392 280
Total Backlog			12 696 124 713
Total Repair			1 510 829 967
Total Upgrade	Mud, water, electricity and fencing		1 660 040 404
Grand Total			15 866 995 084

Maganise Junior Secondary School³¹

Maganise Junior Secondary School in the Libode District is one of the schools requiring “upgrading,” a euphemism when one considers the extent of the school’s need. After Lusikisiki, Libode district has the greatest need for school upgrading in the province. According to the Infrastructure Plan, a total amount of R149.29 million is required to upgrade inadequate infrastructure in the district.³² The 2005/06 Budget Statements stated that Maganise JSS was one of 58 mud structure or unsafe schools due to be upgraded in 2005. For each of the 58 projects, contractors were due to be on-site by April 2005, and the projects (entailing 3 classrooms, 6 toilets, an office, water tanks and a fence) were to be completed by 31 December 2005.³³



**Tornado Damage:
Classrooms at Maganise JSS**



³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ EMIS: 400448.

³² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, p. 12.

³³ Eastern Cape Budget Statements 2005/06, pp. 380 – 397.

The PSAM visited Maganise JSS in October 2005. The school, attended by 515 learners, has been devastated by three tornadoes which have reduced one block of classrooms to little more than dangerous debris. According to the school's principal, Ms Tobeka Vapi, it has been this way since 2003. She noted that while discussions had been held with the Independent Development Trust (IDT), no work had begun at the school.³⁴ The effect of the school's appalling infrastructure on the learning environment was obvious as several classrooms had to accommodate more than one grade, making teaching almost impossible. Ms Vapi said that the condition of the classrooms aggravated the health of learners and educators. She said that excessive sick leave was taken by educators, and remarked that she had lost three educators to pneumonia in 2004 alone.³⁵



Overcrowded and unsafe classrooms, Maganise JSS

While the Department's Infrastructure Plan differentiates between mud or unsafe school structures and "disaster" schools (damaged by tornadoes or heavy snowfalls), Maganise JSS has not been prioritised as a disaster school and therefore has not had access to the "special provincial allocation" allocated for emergency interventions.³⁶ The school has overcrowded the safest of the temporary structures with the younger grades, while the oldest learners are accommodated in the precarious zinc structure, depicted above.

Maganise JSS, is one of over 800 schools³⁷ in desperate need of infrastructure in the province, and vividly depicts the "mammoth" task facing the Department. The Department's Infrastructure Plan prioritises eight objectives, the first of which is the elimination of the classroom backlog "within a reasonable timeframe" (2008) and the second, the replacement of unsafe structures, such as mud structures.³⁸ The former will be addressed through the Department's conventional building programme, with necessary facilities being provided for each school in a single intervention in accordance with norms and standards and levels of service outlined in the Infrastructure Plan. The latter, mud structured schools, are to be addressed in line with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) principles. According to the Department, "this is to a much lower specification than the conventional programme," and will involve "labour intensive

³⁴ The IDT has been contracted by the Department of Public Works to be the implementing agent for the Department of Education's school building programme. See page 36 for a fuller description of the IDT.

³⁵ Interview with Ms Tobeka Vapi, Principal of Maganise JSS, 26 October 2005.

³⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 - 2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 31.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 29.

methodologies” targeting the unemployed, the poor and marginalised sectors.³⁹ The EPWP is a national initiative by the Department of Public Works which will be evaluated in terms of its role in regard to school infrastructure later in this report.

It is the aim of this report to question the feasibility of the Department's new infrastructure goals, in light of the challenges it currently faces. The following section will evaluate the Department's overall performance in the 2004/05 financial year and situate this within the context of the Department's performance since 2001/02 when the first commitments to address the infrastructure backlog were made.⁴⁰

II. Past Performance

The provincial Department of Education argued that despite the impact of budget cuts to its infrastructure programme, it managed to achieve the following in 2004/05:

- Complete 107 schools, which included the provision of 665 new classrooms and 121 new staff rooms and offices;
- Build 68 new strong rooms and store rooms, 23 laboratories and 18 computer laboratories, 1 559 toilets and 617 water tanks;
- Renovate 357 classrooms, 24 staff rooms and offices, 27 store rooms and strong rooms, as well as 10 laboratories and 448 toilets.⁴¹

Sakumlandela JS⁴²

One of the schools to benefit from the Department's infrastructure programme was Sakumlandela Junior School in Diphala Village near Whittlesea.



Sakumlandela Junior School: before and after.

Sakumlandela Junior School was started in 1997. The school used a nearby concrete structure for classrooms until the community built a shack (shown above left) in 2003. Classes were held there until May 2005 when the school moved into new buildings shown above right. The impact on the learning environment, educators explained, has been positive, as learners were now easier to teach and more eager to learn, while the morale of educators had improved dramatically.

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 30 and 35.

⁴⁰ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2001/02, p. 61.

⁴¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 105.

⁴² Provincial EMIS Number: 601060.

However, the school's principal, Mr Oliphant, raised several concerns with the new building. The original budget for the project, he said, had been R2.2 million but due to budget cuts this had been reduced to R1.8 million. This resulted in the Department not being able to build a computer room or a science laboratory, despite Mr Oliphant's assertion that the Department had promised to do so. While the school buildings were properly fenced, neither the fields nor the school's valued garden were fenced in. Mr Oliphant argued that the Department had not properly secured the property, or provided a caretaker or maintenance plan for the school. He also argued that he had very little input into the design of the school, and felt that he should have been consulted since he knew best what the school needed.⁴³

The effect of the Department's slow service delivery during 2004/05 was sorely felt by other schools across the Eastern Cape. The PSAM visited two schools situated in the Queenstown District: Zolani Junior Secondary School and Sibuyele Combined School. Like Maganise JSS, both schools were meant to be provided with three classrooms, six toilets, an office, water tanks and a fence, between 1 April and 31 December 2005.

Zolani Junior Secondary School⁴⁴

Zolani JSS, situated in Sada Township near Whittlesea, consists of 11 zinc structured classrooms which, according to the school's principle, Mr Ndamane, have been condemned by an inspector. In winter, the zinc structures are so cold that learners are sent home. In summer, lessons are often held outside in limited shade because the over-crowded classrooms become unbearably hot. In windy weather, the classrooms are dusty and, when it rains, lessons are cancelled because of leaking roofs. "So you see," Mr Ndamane explained, "there is no weather that is suitable for us." He also argued, echoing the principal of Maganise JSS, that the health of learners and educators was compromised by the conditions which contributed to a decrease in the school's enrolment in 2005.



Section of the converted garage used for storage, Zolani JSS

According to Mr Ndamane, the Department had made repeated promises to address the school's infrastructure needs. In November 2004, the Department built new toilets at Zolani. Before these toilets were built, there were only two functioning toilets for over 630 learners. Educators had to use toilets at their own homes, or those of neighbours. Frustrated with the Department's repeated failure to fulfil its promises, the school installed electricity with its own funds, and converted an old garage into an office and

⁴³ Interview with Mr Oliphant, Principal of Sakumlandela JSS, 20 June 2005.

⁴⁴ EMIS: 600952.

storage room. Before the garage was converted, the principal previously used his car as an “office” after a fire in 2000 gutted the room they had originally used. Mr Oliphant said that the Department was aware that the school was using school fees in an attempt to address their infrastructure needs themselves.

Mr Ndamane was shocked to hear that the Department had prioritised Zolani School and budgeted R1.06 million for building three classrooms, six toilets, an office, a fence and water tanks. Since 2000, Mr Oliphant said he had made requests to the Department to address the infrastructure issues in the school. He was not aware of the Department’s plans, and was frustrated because he felt that three classrooms for a school of over 600 learners would be grossly inadequate. He said the Department had promised an entire new school, although they never committed to this in writing.

According to the Department’s documents, building should have begun on 1 April 2005. However, in June 2005, when the PSAM visited the nearby site allocated for the project, there was only an empty field with a soccer pitch at one end. The school’s senior staff expressed dismay at the state of the school’s infrastructure and the apparent indifference of the District Office and the Department of Education. Mr Sili, the vice principal, said that communication between the Department and the school was a challenge, despite Department employees visiting the schools in response to requests. He argued that these visits often ended with verbal commitments by the Department to address the school’s infrastructure needs, but nothing was ever done.⁴⁵ When the PSAM contacted Mr Ndamane four months later, in October 2005, he said that on 24 August 2005 the Department had come with surveyors and had inspected the site. However, despite promising to build the school, nothing had been done and there had been no further response from the Department.⁴⁶



Site identified for the construction of new school buildings for Zolani JSS.

Sibuyele Combined School

The PSAM also visited Sibuyele CS in the Who Can Tell location, near Queenstown, which has 693 learners, from Grade R through to Grade 12. According to the school’s principal, Mrs B. Njuli, the Department erected ten ‘bungalows’ in 1993 which are now dangerously over-crowded and structurally unsafe. They are also unbearably cold, with broken windows and doors offering little protection from the winter cold. When it rains, learners are sent home because teaching cannot continue due to leaking roofs. Last

⁴⁵ Interview with Mr Ndamane, Principal of Zolani JSS, and Mr Sili, Vice-Principle of Zolani JSS, 20 June 2005.

⁴⁶ Telephonic Interview with Mr Ndamane, 10 October 2005.

year one of these 'bungalows' collapsed. Mrs Njuli said that fortunately this occurred on a weekend and therefore none of the Grade R learners, who were taught in the classroom, were hurt. Only four of the school's toilets are usable, and are in a shocking condition making them a health hazard to both learners and educators alike. In 1999 there were only four toilets for over 600 children, two of which were unusable.

These conditions result in even the most dedicated educators becoming de-motivated. One educator remarked that it was 'very pathetic' that children had to learn in such conditions. Mrs Njuli argues that if teachers could leave for better schools they would, which would result in the school closing down. "Everyone wants to go," she said, "but they don't know how or where to go." Mrs Njuli said that while absenteeism amongst younger learners is limited, because they receive food through the Department's School Nutrition Programme and the surrounding community is very poor, conditions affect enrolment numbers. Yet, despite this appalling learning environment, 38 out of 45 learners passed Grade 12 last year and a few students have gone on to study at tertiary institutions.



Learners at Sibuyele huddle around a fire made on the classroom floor

Educators at the school argued that they were frustrated at the lack of communication between the school and the Department. The principal argued that they were "treated like kids". She observed that whatever the Department gives them, they take with or without explanation, "because we have nothing," she said. According to Mrs Njuli, the school had been assessed, but after making his assessment the Department employee never returned. The school had never been formally informed of the Department's plans to address its infrastructure needs this financial year, nor were they consulted during the planning process. The educators argued that three classrooms would be hopelessly inadequate, since 80 percent of the school were housed in the nine remaining structurally unsafe 'bungalows'. Mr Hechtor, acting director of the Physical Resource Planning Unit in the Department, said that a political decision had been made to provide each of the mud structured schools with three classrooms, six toilets, an office, water tanks and fencing, instead of addressing the entire school once-off. This approach is outlined in the Eastern Cape School Building Programme's Implementation Plan which states that "[i]n the drive to eliminate mud schools a three block module is proposed that has a standardised design, uniform costing, [and] which creates allowance for variations that may arise from site specifics."⁴⁷ However, this approach has not been carefully thought through. Firstly, three classrooms are not going to address the needs of many mud structured schools. In providing inadequate infrastructure to more schools, instead

⁴⁷IDT, Eastern Cape School Buildings Programme – EPWP, IDT Internal Programme Implementation Plan, 2005/06, p. 6.

of adequate infrastructure to fewer schools, the Department will not ease the pressure placed on the Department by schools to address their infrastructure needs. Secondly, the limited facilities the Department proposes building will be over-used, particularly toilet facilities, thereby increasing maintenance costs. While schools should not make unrealistic demands of the Department, after persevering in unacceptable conditions for so many years, their requests should not be disregarded because of limited resources.

Mrs Njuli said that she has been repeatedly told since 1994 that her school was “number two” on the Department’s priority list, but nothing has ever come of it. Here, again, educators expressed their hopelessness at the Department’s repeated failure to fulfil its promises and its seeming indifference to the school’s desperate need.⁴⁸ The PSAM contacted Mrs Njuli in October 2005. She said that while promises had been made by the Department in September and again in October, nothing had been done.⁴⁹

The Eastern Cape media has also tracked the Department’s slow delivery of school infrastructure in the province. After waiting 14 years for the Department to renovate Solomon Mahlangu High School in Kwanobuhle near Port Elizabeth, educators resorted to repairing the dilapidated buildings themselves. The school had only 26 classrooms to accommodate 1 300 learners, sewage bubbled up through 14 manhole covers, toilets were blocked and many of the classrooms had no electricity, according to one media report. It was little wonder, then, that the matric pass rate had plummeted from 60 to 40 percent between 2002 and 2003. Despite repeated promises by the Department, the school had yet to be repaired. Khaile said that when the Department heard about the school, it had taken action immediately, placing the school in the “infrastructure development plan receiving the same priority as the other schools around the province that [were] in a similar or even worse condition.”⁵⁰

In another report, conditions at Nkosinathi Primary School in Berlin were so bad that educators resorted to teaching outside. The school was over-crowded and understaffed with 450 pupils and only five educators, including the principal. According to the Department’s 2004/05 school building programme, Nkosinathi Primary School was due to be upgraded between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007. However, the project has been put on hold because of budget cuts.⁵¹ The principal claimed that the Department had done nothing but make empty promises for ten years.⁵² The dilapidated school structure with its muddy floor and broken window panes, and the overworked, discouraged educators struggling to teach outside it, paint a discouraging picture of education in the Eastern Cape.

2000 - 2004

The Department’s attempts to address critical classroom shortages and mud/temporary structured classrooms, while commendable, are hopelessly inadequate in light of the overall need. The following graph shows the infrastructure budget and expenditure of the Department from 2001/02 to 2004/05, as well as the total budget required to address backlogs, repairs and upgrades, and the MTEF infrastructure budget in 2004/05.

⁴⁸ Interview with Mrs B. Njuli, Principal of Sibuyele Combined School, 21 June 2005.

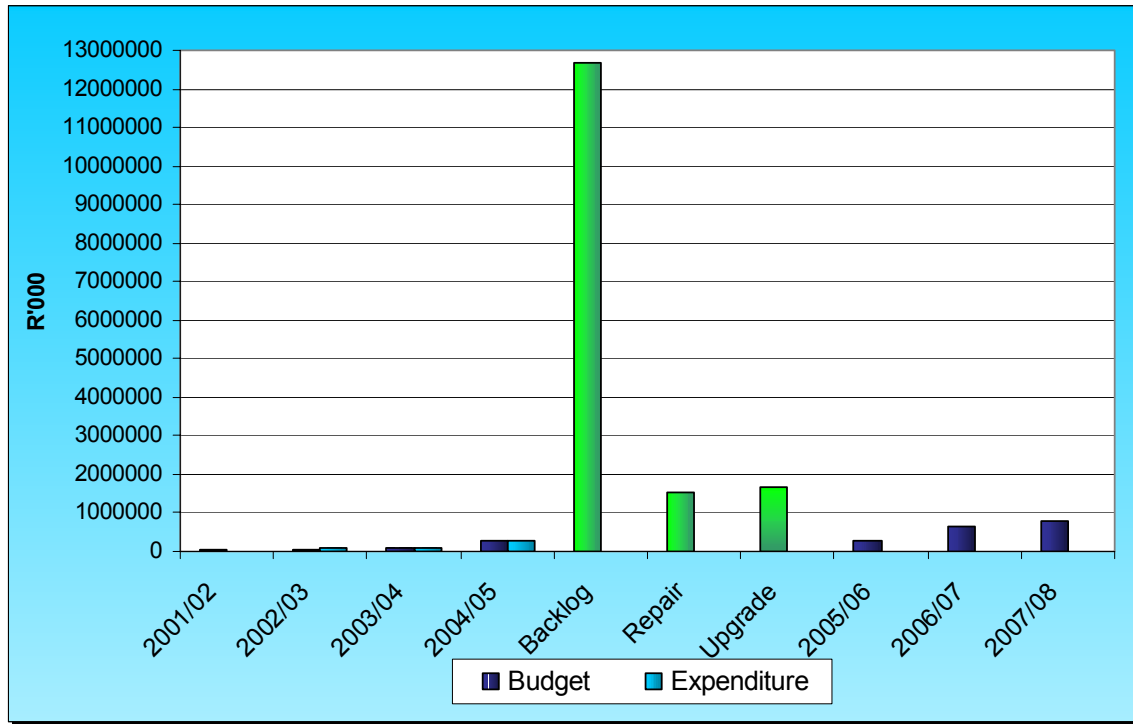
⁴⁹ Telephonic interview with Mrs B. Njuli, Principal of Sibuyele Combined School, 10 Oct. 2005.

⁵⁰ “Despairing teachers get hands dirty” *Sunday Times*, 22 Aug. 2004.

⁵¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, School Building Programme, 2004/05.

⁵² “Empty promises empty classrooms,” *Daily Dispatch*, 20 Jan. 2005.

Graph 3: Infrastructure Budget and Expenditure⁵³



As early as February 2000, the National Education Portfolio Committee reported on the “shocking levels of degradation” in schools in the Eastern Cape.⁵⁴ After visiting schools in the Eastern Cape, the Committee said that in certain schools, “the building authorities maintain that a number of classrooms in several schools should in fact be condemned.” “All these schools,” the report continued, “are government assets and it is clear that the lack of funding for emergency renovations has reached unacceptable proportions.” It became apparent to the Committee that to address the classroom backlog, the Department needed R450 million per annum over a period of ten years. It also found that the Department needed R900 million per annum for non-personnel expenditure for the Department “to function normally, i.e. for normal repairs to be carried out.” However, it went on to note that with regard to infrastructure, in 1998 “the department was allocated R500 million and in 1999 it was cut to R200 million. In 1999, the Department requested R20 million, but for the first time in three years, the Department only managed to receive R5 million for 6 400 schools for maintenance and for emergency repairs.” According to this same report, in the 1998/99 and 1999/2000 budgets, no funding was set aside for any capital programmes.⁵⁵

In the 2001/02 financial year, the Eastern Cape Department of Education aimed to provide adequate basic infrastructure for all learners by the year 2010.⁵⁶ In order to address the total infrastructure backlog, the Department estimated that it would require

⁵³ Eastern Cape Budget Statements, 2005/06, p. 321; Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 12.

⁵⁴ Education Portfolio Committee, Committee Report on visits to Eastern Cape and KwaZulu. Natal, 15 Feb. 2000.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2001/02, p. 61.

R4.49 billion.⁵⁷ It became apparent to the Department that the amount of funding needed to address the backlog in school infrastructure was overwhelming. Even if the Department could secure R4.49 billion over a period of five financial years, it would not be able to deliver the infrastructure within that time-frame due to capacity constraints. Instead, the Department adopted a multi-year approach, aiming to eradicate Quintile 1 (schools run under trees, in ‘hutments’ and in structurally unsafe buildings) between 2003 and 2005.⁵⁸

The Department estimated that R1.2 billion was required to address Quintile 1,⁵⁹ effectively committing the Department to budget R412 million each year for three financial years (2002/03 - 2004/05). In 2001/02, the Department adopted the following budget which included routine maintenance as well as new infrastructure projects:

Table 3: MTEF Infrastructure Budget⁶⁰

Financial year	Budget Adopted (R'000)
2002/03	300 000
2003/04	348 000
2004/05	370 000
Total	1 018 000

This budget, even if it was solely dedicated to addressing Quintile 1, was clearly insufficient to address the Department’s infrastructure needs. In total, the Department under-budgeted for educational infrastructure in 2001/02 by over R218 million for the MTEF period.

In the 2001/02 financial year, the Department spent a mere 10 percent of its R221 million budget for land and buildings.⁶¹ The Department claimed that the unspent amount (R198 million⁶²) was committed in terms of the Tender Board.⁶³ In terms of the Cash Basis of Accounting,⁶⁴ the Department could not record this amount in its financial statements because it had not been paid over to a third party. The Department stated that it had provided, together with the European Union (EU), new infrastructure, new classrooms and major renovations in 250 schools in the 2001/02 financial year.⁶⁵ According to the Department, these projects were rolled out two months before the end of the financial year.⁶⁶ The Department argued that this was why, despite being committed, the funds were reflected in the financial statements as unspent.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 84.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 84.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 88.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 125. The line item “Land and Buildings” indicates the Department’s Infrastructure Budget or Expenditure.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 126.

⁶⁴ In terms of this accounting system, the Department only accounts for transactions on receipt or payment of funds and does not recognise, for instance, funds that are committed but not yet paid and funds that are owed to the Department but not yet received.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 39.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 82.

According to the 2002/03 Annual Report, the Department's goal to eradicate Quintile 1 by 2005 would require it to provide new infrastructure for 1 313 mud schools, 118 zinc schools, and 81 schools classified as "other" - a total of 1 512 schools or 9 835 classrooms - within three financial years at a cost of nearly R1.1 billion.⁶⁷ If the Department were to achieve its goal, it would have to spend R360 million on mud-structures in the 2002/03 financial year and budget that same amount for the following two financial years.⁶⁸

In addition, however, the Department's strategic planning was also informed by its commitment to eradicate the total infrastructure backlog by 2010, an ambitious goal which required the Department to replace mud and temporary structured classrooms, as well as build 14 970 classrooms, provide 2 852 schools with water, 2 866 schools with electricity, and 42 405 toilets. A further 1 895 schools required fences, and 2 935 schools needed telephones, bringing the anticipated cost in 2002/03 to over R3.8 billion.⁶⁹ The Department would have to spend, over and above the R360 million for mud/structurally unsafe classrooms, R344 million on the total infrastructure backlog excluding mud-structures each financial year from 2002/03 until 2010.⁷⁰ The Annual Report states that expenditure "would have to be maintained and increased" if the Department wanted to realise the eradication of backlogs,⁷¹ and indeed, the expenditure would have to be increased significantly to over R704 million for the following three financial years in order to address both the infrastructure backlog and mud structures. Moreover, this R704 million would not cover the maintenance of existing infrastructure.

According to the 2002/03 Annual Report, the Department budgeted R67 million for Land and Buildings, and overspent this budget by 4 percent (or R2.7 million).⁷² The Department reported that it completed 177 of a targeted 184 schools; a further 46 schools were still under construction and would be completed in the following financial year.⁷³ According to the Department, R10 million was spent on 720 schools for minor repairs.⁷⁴ Despite these achievements, in order to eradicate the infrastructure backlog by 2010, as well as address Quintile 1 by 2005, the Department would have to budget at least R1 billion for infrastructure in 2003/04 to maintain the required rate of service delivery in order to achieve its infrastructure service delivery goals.

In 2003/04, the Department revised its goal to eradicate Quintile 1 by 2005. The Department's new goal, according to the 2003/04 Annual Report, was to eradicate "all of the almost 8500 mud-structured classrooms by 2008 and provide sanitation and water to all schools by 2006."⁷⁵ A number of factors contributed to this re-evaluation. Firstly, in

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 131.

⁶⁸ This amount excludes a necessary 5 percent annual escalation of building costs, as detailed in the Eastern Cape Department of Education's Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 32.

⁶⁹ The Department estimated that R4.5 billion was required to address the total infrastructure backlog the year before.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 131. The Department would have to spend R704 million each year (from 2002/03 – 2004/05) in order to achieve its goals of eradicating Quintile 1 by 2005, and the total infrastructure backlog by 2010.

⁷¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2002/03, p. 130.

⁷² Ibid, p. 151.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 111.

December 2002, the newly formed multi-sectoral Interim Management Team (IMT) was appointed to assist the Education Department with, amongst other things, the development of plans to address service delivery backlogs. The IMT was also expected to establish and maintain systems that ensured sustainable management structures as well as to monitor the use of conditional grants. The Department hoped that the IMT would also assist it in establishing a database system.⁷⁶ Secondly, towards the end of 2003, Nomsa Jajula was appointed as MEC for Education. Her first policy speech in March 2003 announced that R448 million had been allocated to the physical infrastructure programme in the following financial year (2004/05), a dramatic increase from the R84.91 million allocated in 2003/04 to school infrastructure.⁷⁷ Thirdly, in the 2003/04 financial year, the Department developed the Education Facilities Management System (EFMS) which, the Department claimed, enabled it to establish a comprehensive database of all its public schools through site visits, photos and sketch plans of the schools' layout.⁷⁸ Mrs Jajula said before its completion that the system would allow the Department "to aggressively analyse its current educational needs" as well as provide accurate information on infrastructure for the Department's database.⁷⁹ The Interim Management Team reported in March 2004 that "of all the work that is done by the Department, this is one area [physical planning unit] that has been handled efficiently." It also reported that the physical planning unit "functions responsibly".⁸⁰

In the 2003/04 financial year, the Department spent R77.8 million (81.75 percent) of its Land and Buildings budget.⁸¹ In light of the magnitude of the infrastructure backlog, it is of concern that the Department failed to spend its entire Land and Buildings budget. Of even more concern is that R15.5 million (16.28 percent of the Land and Buildings budget) spent on infrastructure was considered by the Auditor-General to be irregular expenditure.⁸²

According to the Department, it completed 46 (of a targeted 50) primary schools and 18 (of a targeted 22) secondary schools, and installed 490 (of a targeted 693) water tanks.⁸³ The Department claimed that 1500 schools benefited from minor and emergency repairs and reported that 219 schools were still under construction and would be completed in September 2004.

Consistent under budgeting and poor service delivery will ensure that the Department does not achieve its long-standing goals to eradicate the total infrastructure backlog by 2010, mud structures by 2008, and sanitation by 2006. Severe budget cuts in 2004/05 confirm this fact. The Department's past performance does not inspire confidence in its ability to achieve its new goals set out in the 2004/05 Annual Report. The projections for the education infrastructure budget detailed in the Department's Infrastructure Plan mean that it cannot possibly meet its targets:

⁷⁶ "Education team to speed up service delivery" *Daily Dispatch* 10 Dec. 2002.

⁷⁷ "R341m drive to improve EC education" *Daily Dispatch* 13 Mar. 2003.

⁷⁸ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 110.

⁷⁹ "New impetus to tackle school building backlog," *Daily Dispatch* 26 May 2003.

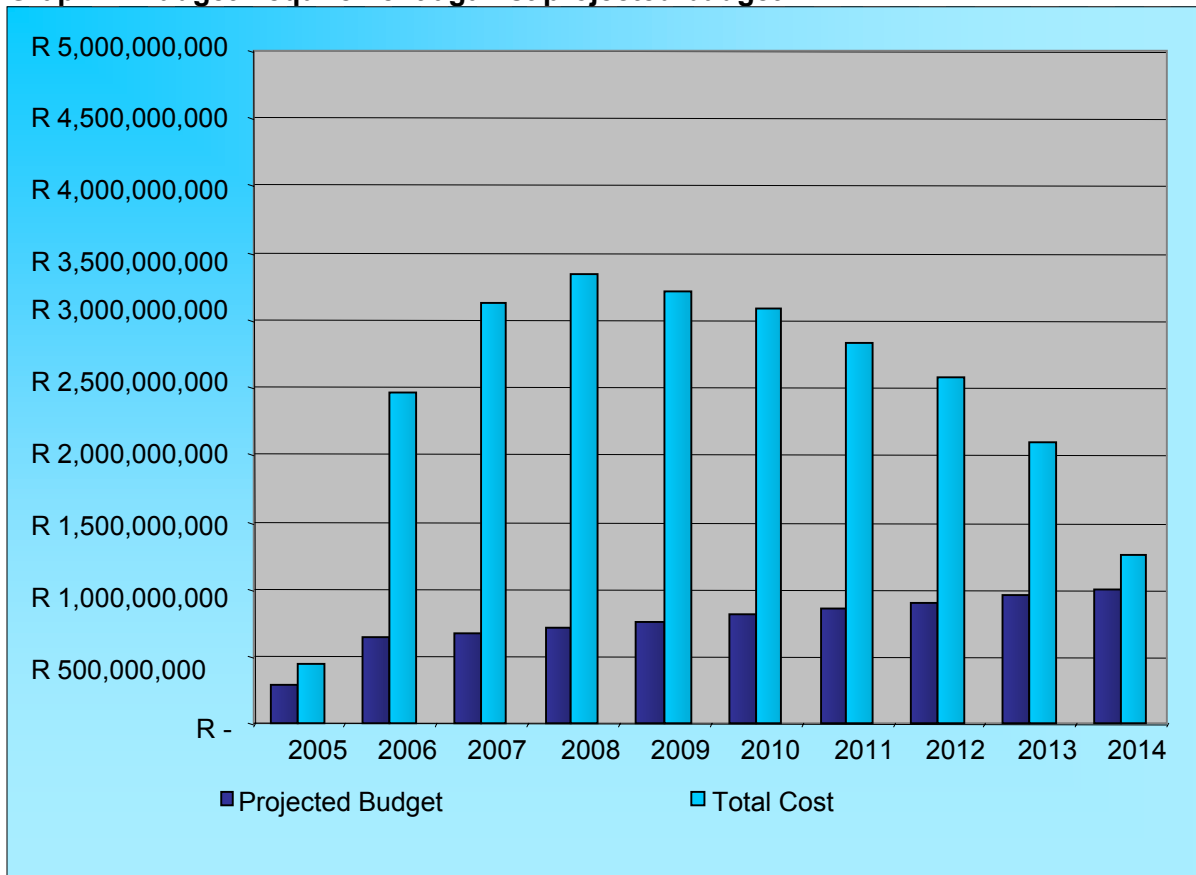
⁸⁰ Interim Management Team Report, March 2004, p. 80.

⁸¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 138.

⁸² See Appendix A. Irregular expenditure, other than unauthorized expenditure, is expenditure "incurred in contravention or not in accordance with a requirement of any applicable legislation." Public Finance Management Act, Chapter 1, section 1.

⁸³ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 45.

Graph 4: Budget Requirement against projected budget⁸⁴



The Department, if it is to eradicate the entire backlog in ten years, requires “a maximum annual budget of R3.3 billion in Year four and a total ten-year budget requirement of R24.4 billion.”⁸⁵ The Infrastructure Plan states that “clearly this is not achievable in the current circumstances where indicative annual budgets are in the order of R500 – R600 million.”⁸⁶ According to the Infrastructure Plan, this situation appears to leave the Department with three options: they can increase the budget allocation for infrastructure, reduce the quality of the infrastructure delivered, or further push back the target dates. While the Infrastructure Plan states that the solution will “probably have to be a combination of all three possibilities,” it does acknowledge that communities will only be satisfied with the first option: an increase in the budget allocation for infrastructure. Yet even if the Department was to receive the required R24.4 billion over the next ten years, it is unlikely to achieve these service delivery goals unless the following challenges, outlined in Section III below, are addressed.

⁸⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 34. It is important to note that the Department’s backlog, repair and upgrading costs will significantly increase over time if an adequate maintenance plan is not fully funded.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 32. The amount of R24.4 billion includes the maintenance budget required by the Department, in addition to upgrades, backlogs, and repairs.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

III. CHALLENGES

Personnel

In 2004/05, the Department introduced “extensive belt-tightening measures” in order to address the Department’s overdraft of R638 million. This decision meant that the Department would not meet President Mbeki’s commitment that, by 2005, no child would learn in a mud or structurally unsafe school or under a tree. In November 2004, the Department’s Standing Committee called for “national intervention” with regard to school infrastructure, because of the extent of the classroom backlog in the province.⁸⁷

Unrestrained over spending on personnel in previous financial years was the principal cause of the Department’s overdraft. The Department admitted that one of the main causes of over spending on personnel was because it

did not manage its Human Resources properly. Annual processes of declaration and distribution of posts according to the available budget was not done properly, if at all. This was compounded by the issuing of unfunded bulletins, leading to the appointment of staff without budget. Even worse, funds were taken from non-educator personnel budgets to fund educator posts, leaving the administration with a very high vacancy rate of up to 60% in some sections, effectively crippling the support arm of the Department.⁸⁸

The final IMT report states that “according to the national guidelines the division of the education budget should be... 85% for personnel expenditure and 15 percent for non-personnel expenditure.”⁸⁹ From 1995 to 2000, the Department’s personnel expenditure accounted for around 95 percent of the budget, leaving a mere 5 percent for non-personnel expenditure.⁹⁰ More recently, the Department’s personnel budget increased from 86.13 percent of the total budget in 2003/04 to 87.16 percent in 2004/05.⁹¹ In 2004/05, with the introduction of belt-tightening measures and this significant increase in the personnel allocation, the Department did not over spend its personnel budget for the first time in four financial years.

⁸⁷ “EC education backlog needs national intervention,” *Daily Dispatch*, 4 Nov. 2004.

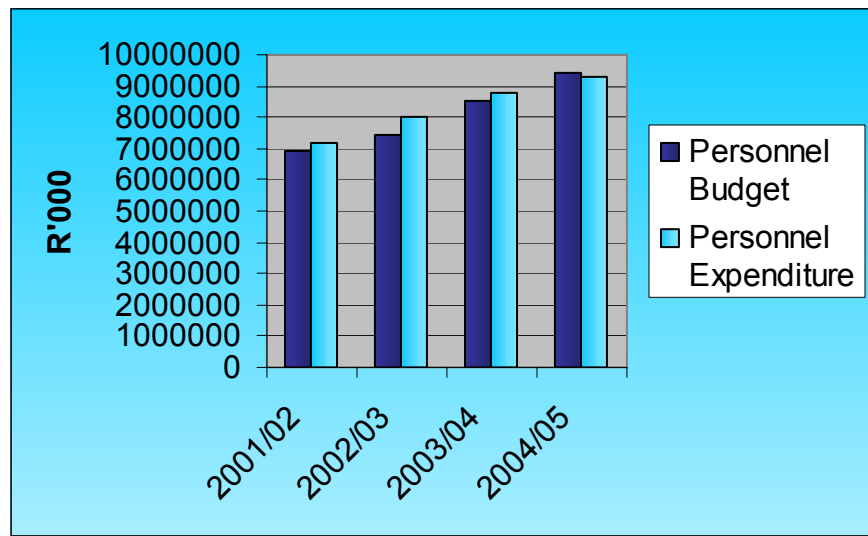
⁸⁸ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Performance Plan, 2005/06, pp. 7-8.

⁸⁹ Report on the Work of the IMT, Nov. 2002 – Mar. 2004, p. 62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 56.

⁹¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Reports, 2003/04, p. 138, and 2004/05, p. 129.

Graph 5: Personnel Expenditure against personnel budget 2001/02 – 2004/05.⁹²



The Department acknowledges that it “has been overspending on personnel for most of its short history.”⁹³ There are at least two significant contributors to overspending on personnel. Firstly, the Department has overspent on educator personnel. Secondly, the Department has struggled to reduce the number of excess staff in its employ. Both these factors will be discussed below.

The Department has been at loggerheads with the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (Sadtu) since 1999 over outstanding payments to educators for pensions, cash bonuses and salary adjustments.⁹⁴ It was reported in 2002/03 that the Department required R190 million to make outstanding payments to 9 000 educators. However, the provincial Treasury is reported to have turned down the Department’s request for this money because of the Department’s poor financial management.⁹⁵ Treasury superintendent-general, Monde Tom, was quoted as saying that every year the Department had to pay more than 10 000 backlog claims to educators because of its “flawed” financial management system. According to Tom, the Department did not even know the total number of its employees, making duplicate claims difficult to identify.⁹⁶ In addition, the Department did not know how many backlogs it had to pay and had no systematic plan to deal with the problem.⁹⁷ Amidst mounting frustration, Sadtu called a strike which would place Grade 12 examinations in jeopardy, a tactic that would be repeatedly used in the ensuing financial years. In a desperate bid to prevent a strike a week before matric examinations, the Department agreed to pay all backlogs.

In the following financial year, 2003/04, the Department needed to make R109 million worth of backlog payments to educators.⁹⁸ This figure rose to R500 million in 2004/05.⁹⁹

⁹² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Reports, 2001/02, p. 125, 2002/03, p. 151, 2003.04, p. 138, 2004/05, p. 129.

⁹³ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Budget and Policy Speech, 2005/06, p. 7.

⁹⁴ “Sadtu threatens legal action over salaries,” *Daily Dispatch*, 24 Sep. 1999.

⁹⁵ “Teacher’s strike will go ahead says Sadtu,” *Daily Dispatch*, 24 Sep. 2003.

⁹⁶ “Treasury won’t bail Education,” *Daily Dispatch*, 02 Oct. 2003.

⁹⁷ “Teacher Strike looms in dept financial mess,” *City Press*, 05 Oct. 2003.

⁹⁸ “Teachers ‘will get paid by Christmas,’” *Daily Dispatch*, 26 Nov. 2003.

Despite these commitments, the Department failed to budget for the backlogs in both instances. This was despite recommendations made by the Department's Standing Committee to do so. In 2004, the Committee instructed the Department to either eliminate the outstanding backlog payments in the 2004/05 financial year or make sure that these were budgeted for in the 2005/06 financial year.¹⁰⁰ This repeated failure to properly address educator salary backlogs has seen the Department's relationship with Sadtu deteriorate in 2005/06, with Sadtu recently calling for the dismissal of both the MEC for Education, Mkhangeleni Matomela, and the Head of Department, Dr David Edley. While an intervention from the National Department of Education prevented another teachers' strike during the Grade 12 examinations, Sadtu continues to reject the Department's attempt to rationalise its educator personnel.¹⁰¹

In addition to the issue of outstanding payments, Sadtu has also frustrated the Department's attempts to rationalise the number of unfunded educator posts. In response to "the growing awareness of crisis conditions in the former homeland education systems," the Department employed 10 000 additional educators between 1994/95 and 1997/98.¹⁰² As previously noted, the Department acknowledges that the appointment of these and other educators without first securing sufficient funds contributed significantly to its over spending on educator personnel.¹⁰³ However, the Department's attempts to bring the number of educators into line with available funding, has met with fierce resistance from Sadtu. It was reported that, according to Sadtu provincial secretary-general, Mxolusi Dimaza, the union rejected any attempts by the department to reduce the number of posts for teachers in any form.¹⁰⁴ Sadtu has also rejected the Department's efforts to redeploy educators from schools where numbers have dropped, to other schools where there was a need for more educators. MEC Matomela claimed that this failed redeployment had cost the Department "more than R600 million."¹⁰⁵

The Department's failure to address over expenditure on educator personnel has had a negative impact on the Department's already overcommitted infrastructure budget, with budget cuts reducing the allocations, in some instances by nearly 50 percent. In the 2003 Strategic Plan, the proposed budget for 2004/05 for infrastructure was R680 million¹⁰⁶ – a generous estimate for the amount required to address the infrastructure backlog. The Department also set aside R100 million for routine and minor maintenance for 2004/05.¹⁰⁷ However, in the following year's Strategic plan (2004), the proposed budget for 2004/05 was reduced by more than 50 percent to a mere R330 million.¹⁰⁸ Such a dramatic cut is a consequence of belt-tightening measures which have been

⁹⁹ "Teachers hit out over R180m pay shortage," *The Herald*, 15 Nov. 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Eastern Cape Standing Committee on Education, Resolutions Report, 13 Dec. 2004, p. 98.

¹⁰¹ "Axing education bosses will not solve anything," *Herald*, 5 Nov. 2005.

¹⁰² Eastern Cape Department of Education, A Transformation Agenda for the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2005 – 2014, p. 17.

¹⁰³ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Performance Plan, 2005/06, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ "Axing education bosses will not solve anything," *The Herald*, 25. Oct. 2005.

¹⁰⁵ "Stubborn teachers' cost province R600m – MEC," *The Herald*, 8 Nov. 2005. The Department was forced to pay temporary teachers to fill vacant posts at schools to which educators should have been redeployed.

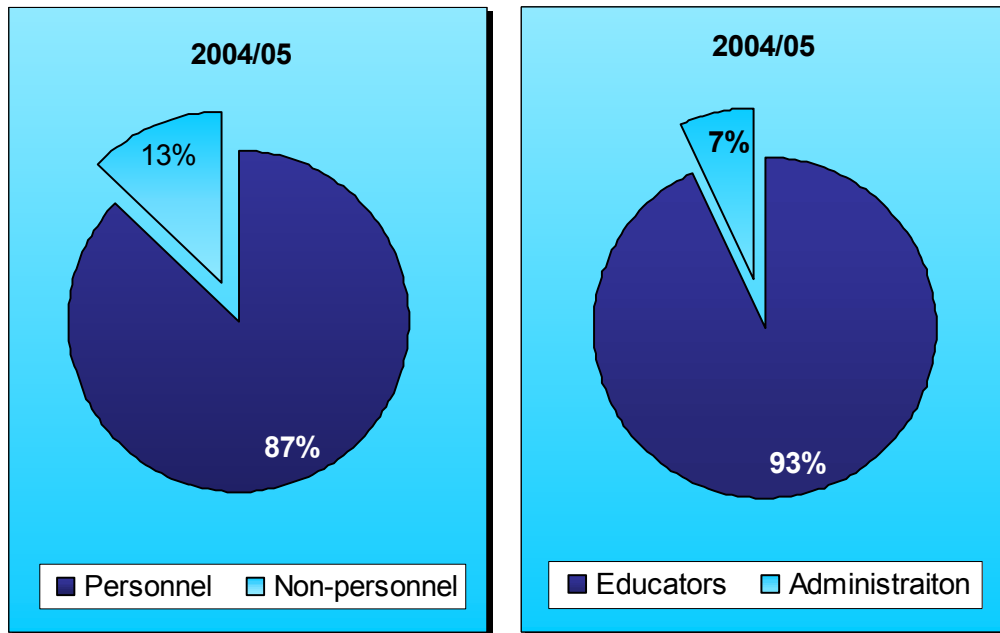
¹⁰⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Strategic Plan, 2003, p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Strategic Plan, 2004-2007, p. 121.

introduced because of the Department's deficit which has accrued over the previous two financial years to nearly R1 billion.¹⁰⁹

Graph 6 and 7: Division of Budget Allocations for Personnel



The second significant contributor to overspending, apart from educator salary arrears, is the Department's failure to address the number of staff additional to the establishment. In the 2003/04 financial year, the Department, with a vacancy rate of 21 percent,¹¹⁰ had 3 122 employees who could not be absorbed into the Department's organogram (i.e. excess employees).¹¹¹ In 2004/05, this number dramatically increased to 13 850 staff additional to the establishment, despite a vacancy rate of 11.57 percent.¹¹²

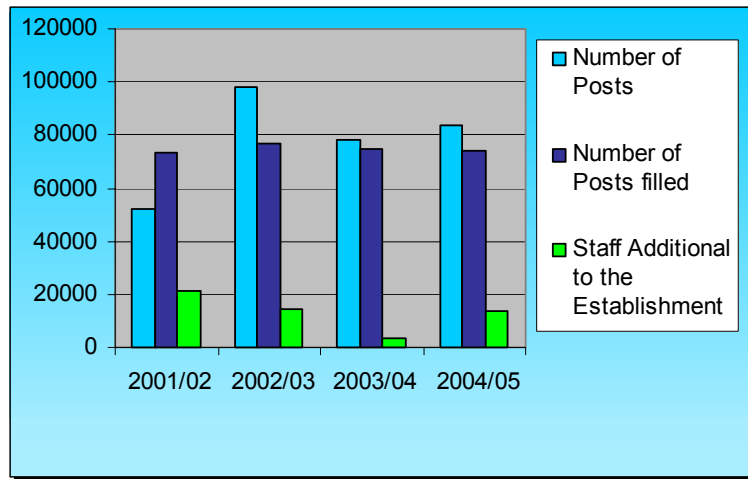
¹⁰⁹ "EC Education dept faces R1bn deficit," *Daily Dispatch*, 12 Jul. 2004.

¹¹⁰ In 2003/04, the final IMT report cited a 21 percent personnel vacancy rate for Education, contradicting the Department's reported 4 percent vacancy rate for the year under review. Final IMT Report, 17 March 2004, p. 26, Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 172.

¹¹¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2003/04, p. 172.

¹¹² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, pp. 174, 178.

Table 10: Vacancies and staff additional to the establishment



According to Resolution No. 7 of 2002, section 7.4, staff additional to the establishment are considered to be “excess employees.” However, excess employees “are not automatically redundant in the public service.”¹¹³ It is the Department’s responsibility to either redeploy excess staff, or grant severance packages or early retirement to excess staff. In addition, “employees who unreasonably refuse to be redeployed will be deemed to have resigned.”¹¹⁴ The Department’s repeated failure to address the issue of excess staff is in contravention of Resolution 7 which should have been implemented 15 months after 6 March 2002.¹¹⁵ In addition, according to the 2004 – 2007 Strategic Plan, the Department “has also been asked to absorb surplus staff from other departments.”¹¹⁶ It is highly problematic that the Province should ask the Department of Education to absorb the excess staff of other departments, given the Department of Education’s consistent over expenditure on personnel and the negative effects this has had on the Department’s ability to fulfil its mandate. The IMT argued that the Department “missed the opportunity afforded by Resolution 7 to rationalise its personnel.” They added that “the backlogs with regard to human resources management and administration, especially the processing of appointments and other personnel related payments, are unacceptable.”¹¹⁷

In line with the norms and standards for personnel costs in the Education Sector, the Department should allocate 85 percent of the total personnel budget to educators, and 15 percent to non-educator (administration) staff. However, according to the 2005/06 Annual Performance Plan, the Department “is standing at 93% for educators whilst the administration staff stands at 7%.” According to the Department, this has led to a vacancy rate of more than 60 percent for administration staff.¹¹⁸ The Department, in the 2004/05 Management Report, noted that “unfilled management positions at head office

¹¹³ Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council, Resolution No. 7 of 2002, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 8.1(j).

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 3.

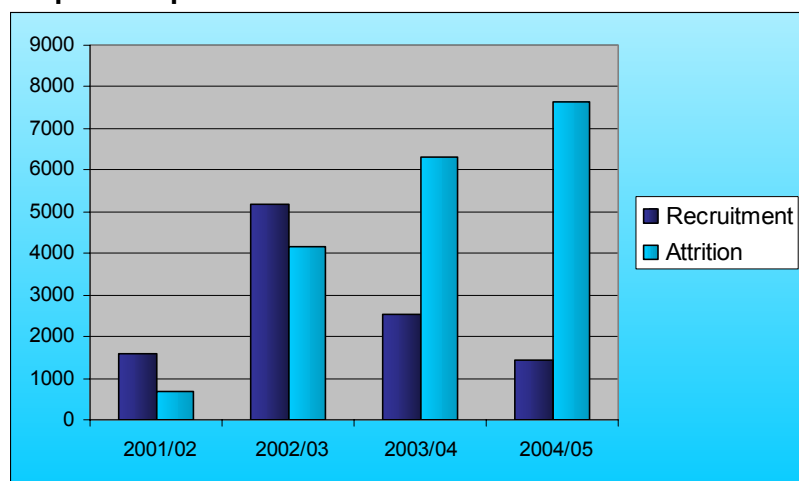
¹¹⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Strategic Plan, 2004 -2007, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Report: Work of the Interim Management Team: Eastern Cape, Nov 2002 – Mar 2004, p. 59.

¹¹⁸ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Performance Plan, 2005/06, p. 14.

and district offices,” and a “high vacancy rate in the financial management branch both at head office and district offices,” had led to capacity constraints in 2004/05.¹¹⁹

Graph 9: Department of Education Attrition and Recruitment.



In the Infrastructure Plan, the Department suggests that the “most effective short term solution (and possibly also long term) to human resource shortages, is to outsource the requisite functions to suitably skilled organisations or individuals.”¹²⁰ Given the on-going nature of the Department’s infrastructure needs, the Department should not look to outsourcing as a permanent solution to its current human resource needs. Rather, the Department should develop an effective recruitment and retention strategy and ensure that adequate funding is available to fill all vacant posts at both provincial and district level. In addition, the Department should make full use of the Financial Management and Quality Enhancement conditional grant to capacitate existing staff. The Department has spent only R38.52 million, or 36.15 percent, of a total grant allocation of R106.55 million over the last three financial years.¹²¹ With over 13 000 excess employees in its employ, it is alarming that the Department has not used this conditional grant to train and equip excess staff to fill vacant posts.

Should the Department make use of consultants, this should only be considered as an interim measure. When entering into any agreements with consultants, the Department should ensure that skills are transferred from consultants to departmental personnel by stipulating this in service level agreements signed between the Department and consultants. In addition, it is imperative that the Department closely monitor compliance with service level agreements to ensure that the Department is receiving value for money.

Physical Resource Planning Vacancies

If the Department is to effectively implement the current infrastructure plan, it must address the problems of over spending on educator personnel (which crowds out

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 117.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 44.

¹²¹ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Reports, 2002/03, p. 215, 2003/04, pp. 105, 107, 2004/05, p. 157.

infrastructure allocations), and high non-educator vacancy rates. In particular, vacancies in the Physical Resource Planning Unit, which significantly affect the Department's ability to fulfil its commitments to address the infrastructure backlog, must be addressed. In March 2004, the IMT found that "most of the posts to expedite the process of upgrading and [the] maintenance of buildings [were] vacant."¹²² Despite this, the IMT reported that the Physical Resource Planning Unit "performs its functions responsibly."¹²³ According to the Department's Infrastructure Plan, the unit currently experiences a vacancy rate at provincial level of 54.17 percent, with only 11 of a total 24 posts filled. The Department admits that the unit "is severely understaffed."¹²⁴

The Unit's current personnel constraints have three major implications for the execution of the Infrastructure Plan:

1. Planning
2. Monitoring
3. Communication

The Department of Public Works (DPW) is the principle implementing agent for the Department of Education, and is responsible for approving the designs of education infrastructure, procurement, and the administration of contracts. The DPW has sub-contracted "most of its implementation functions" to the Independent Development Trust (IDT). The Department of Education, however, is responsible for the planning and monitoring of this implementation.¹²⁵

Because of limited human resources, the Unit relies heavily on the Education Facilities Management System (EFMS)¹²⁶ to "support planning, delivery management, maintenance and asset management."¹²⁷ However, according to the Department, the EFMS needs to be updated urgently in order to accurately inform infrastructure plans. The Department estimates that upgrading and maintaining the EFMS, "together with the training and mentorship of personnel" (to capture information and draw informative reports from it) will cost the Department R4.5 million over a two-year period.¹²⁸

The Department's planning process also requires the involvement of district officers, whose role it is to review the priority list drafted by Head Office with communities and communicate their inputs to the Department.¹²⁹ It is also at District level where the Department monitors the quality of infrastructure service delivery. However, as the Infrastructure Plan concedes, there are only four Control Works Inspectors in the entire

¹²² Report: Work of the Interim Management Team: Eastern Cape, Nov. 2002 – Mar. 2004, p. 60.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 80.

¹²⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 42.

¹²⁵ Report: Work of the Interim Management Team: Eastern Cape, Nov. 2002 – Mar. 2004, p. 38.

¹²⁶ The EFMS is a planning tool that enabled the Department to "establish a comprehensive database of all its public schools through site visits, photos and sketch plans of the schools' layout." Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 103.

¹²⁷ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 43.

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp. 43, 45.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

province.¹³⁰ In addition, the Infrastructure Plan states that “very few, if any, of the Physical Resource Planning posts are filled at district level.”

According to the Infrastructure Plan, in districts without works inspectors, the physical resource planning function is performed by a variety of persons, “hence no one person acquires the necessary skills to support the function.” In August 2004, the Department’s Standing Committee found that there was “a huge shortage of Education Development Officers (EDOs)” amongst the districts. This is worrying, given that EDOs are the point of contact between schools and the Department, and play a critical role in ensuring communication between the two parties. In addition, they noted that some EDOs lacked “the necessary capacity and knowledge required to support schools in an efficient and effective manner.”¹³¹ In December 2004, the Department’s Standing Committee noted that “district offices, especially in the eastern parts of the province, were hugely under-resourced with respect to human [and] financial resources, office accommodation and equipment.” The Committee instructed the Department to develop a plan to address these shortages.¹³² The Department argues that, while it is critical to the success of the Infrastructure Plan to have dedicated physical resource planning personnel, “training programmes for district physical resource planning personnel tend to be inconsistently or poorly attended.”¹³³ In addition, the Department noted in the 2004/05 Annual Report, that “infrastructure deficiencies at most district offices” pose a serious challenge to the Department, especially given the fact that the Department of Public Works “does not budget for District Offices maintenance”, placing an additional burden on the Department’s limited financial resources.¹³⁴

Understaffed and ill-equipped personnel at district level have not only affected the Department’s ability to monitor service delivery, but communication within the Department too. The challenges of communication and monitoring are closely linked. Despite assurances from a District Officer and the acting director of the Physical Resource Planning Unit that schools are fully aware of the Department’s infrastructure plans, the PSAM found communication to be an enormous challenge between the Department and schools. Where schools are not aware that contractors should be on site by the 1 April 2005 (in the cases of Zolani JSS and Sibuyele CS), there is no possibility that they could alert the Department that the contractors had not yet appeared.

The principal of Zolani JSS, Mr Ndamane, said that since 2000 the school had made repeated requests to the Department to address the infrastructure needs of the school. Mr Ndamane said that he had frequently contacted the District Officer, Mr Kali, regarding the state of the school’s infrastructure. The principal and his colleagues felt that communication was a challenge in the Department. Mr Ndamane argued that when, in

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 42.

¹³¹ Resolutions/Recommendations of the Portfolio Committee on Education, 20 Aug. 2004, p. 1.

¹³² Resolutions/Recommendations of the Portfolio Committee on Education, 13 Dec. 2004, p. 99.

¹³³ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 43. This poor attendance indicates a failure on the part of the Department to discipline officials at district level, and seems to suggest a certain level of contempt on the part of district officials for such training programmes. However, it is possible that staff shortages prevent district office staff from properly attending training programmes.

¹³⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, pp. 107, 117.

frustration, he appealed to Head Office for assistance, those they bypassed (circuit managers and district officers) were offended.¹³⁵



The Principal and Vice-Principal show records of departmental visits (left) and one of the zinc structured classrooms (right), Zolani JSS.

The PSAM found similar sentiments at Sibuyele Combined School. The principal, Mrs B. Njuli, said that they had worked with four different Education Development Officers. In frustration the school had appealed to Sadtu to assist them, having been “number two” on the Circuit Development Forum list since 1994.¹³⁶ Mrs Njuli said that there were no structured meetings with the Department and, when asked whether she was aware that the Department planned to address the school’s infrastructure during the 2005 calendar year, she said that this had never been formally communicated to her; she had only heard “rumours.” Here, again, the feeling amongst educators was that they could not go directly to Head Office, or even the District Officer, with their long-standing complaints without causing offence.



Collapsed classroom, Sibuyele Combined School

Mr Kali, District Officer for the Queenstown District, (under which both Zolani JSS and Sibuyele Combined School fall) said that “there was no way that the school will not know.” He was resolute that the Department’s communication strategy was effective. He said that each circuit, which is comprised of between 20-30 schools, creates a priority list which is taken to a District forum where a second priority list of all the schools

¹³⁵ Interview with Mr Ndamane, Principal of Zolani JSS, 20 Jun. 2005.

¹³⁶The Department of Education divides schools into circuits. A school infrastructure priority list is drawn up by each circuit. All the circuit managers of a particular district meet and establish a district priority list which is then taken to Head Office, where a draft priority list is created. This process, while democratic in its attempts to prioritise the infrastructure needs of schools, means that a school may not be prioritised by Head Office, despite being prioritised by the circuit.

in the district is created. After this, the list is sent to Head Office which constructs the provincial priority list which is later confirmed by the Independent Development Trust.¹³⁷ However, interviews with school principals indicate that there is a break down somewhere in this communication strategy.

Poor communication between the Department and schools is not particular to the Queenstown District. The principal of Maganise JSS in the Libode District, Ms Vapi, said that the Department was like “a brick wall; I couldn’t interact with them.” There was no response to her letters and she said that the District Officer was unhelpful and often uninformed himself. In desperation, Ms Vapi stated that she approached IDT directly, breaking with the communication protocol, and discovered that the infrastructure project for Maganise JSS was to go to tender in two weeks. She contested the Department’s plans to build three classrooms with IDT and succeeded in convincing them to build nine. According to Ms Vapi, communication was a major challenge in the Department because while the Department controlled the funding and prioritisation of schools, she felt that Head Office did not really know the extent of the situation on the ground.¹³⁸

When the PSAM questioned the Acting Director of the Physical Resource Planning Unit, Mr Leon Hechtor, about whether schools were aware of the Department’s infrastructure plans, he affirmed that there was no reason that they should not be informed. He said that school building forum meetings were held regularly, but if principals failed to attend these, then they would not be well-informed. He doubted the sincerity of the school’s ignorance, but said that, if they really did not know where they featured on the infrastructure priority list, the Education Development Officer would be to blame, because the EDO is responsible for communication between the Department and schools.¹³⁹ With 30 Education Development Officers in each district, and given the lack of capacity at district levels, it is more than likely that the communication breakdown occurs at this level.



Grade 9 Classroom, Maganise JSS

According to the Department, the physical resource planning unit requires a staff complement of 255 at an estimated cost of R29 million per annum.¹⁴⁰ However, the Department notes that, despite being “badly understaffed,” this situation is unlikely to

¹³⁷ Interview with Mr Kali, District Officer, Queenstown District, 20 Jun. 2005.

¹³⁸ Interview with Ms Vapi, Principal of Maganise JSS, 26 Oct. 2005.

¹³⁹ Interview with Mr Leon Hechtor, Acting Director of Physical Resources, 1 Nov. 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p.41.

change in the near future, “given budget restrictions and other constraints.”¹⁴¹ It is also unlikely to change given the Department’s attrition and recruitment mentioned previously.

External Capacity Constraints

In addition to capacity constraints within the Physical Resource Planning Unit, the Department faces capacity challenges external to the Department. External capacity constraints may be divided into two categories: the lack of capacity in the Department’s implementing agents, and the lack of capacity in the province.¹⁴² It is imperative that these are taken into account when considering the feasibility of the Department’s Infrastructure Plan.

As we have seen, the Department of Public Works (DPW) is the principle implementing agent for the Department of Education, and like the DoE, it experiences critical staff shortages. In 2004/05, the DPW had a vacancy rate of 31.16 percent, with 1 896 vacancies. The DPW acknowledged that its ability to manage the infrastructure projects of other departments was constrained by inadequate staffing and skills within the Department. The DPW said that it also faced challenges with ineffective in-house teams.¹⁴³

While the DPW directly manages a few infrastructure projects, the Infrastructure Plan notes that it has “sub-contracted most of its implementation functions to the IDT.”¹⁴⁴ The IDT, in turn, contracts consultants and contractors for specific projects. There is a tripartite Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Department of Education, the DPW and IDT, with IDT acting as principal implementing agent (PIA). To date, the IDT has been made responsible for infrastructure projects to the value of R1.89 billion (2000/01 – 2006/07).¹⁴⁵ The Infrastructure Plan seems to indicate, however, that this arrangement does not always operate smoothly. The Infrastructure Plan states that the SLA “will be strengthened in 2006/07 to enable the DoE to deal more firmly with under-performance by the PIA before it gets to the stage where dispute is required.”¹⁴⁶

The PSAM found that, here again, there was a lack of communication between the Department of Education and its implementing agents. As early as March 2003, the Department of Education’s Standing Committee instructed the Department to “ensure that there [was] proper co-ordination and communication between itself and the Department of Public Works in respect of the infrastructure needs of the Department.”¹⁴⁷ The IDT informed the PSAM that, despite regular contact with the Department, communication was problematic. In addition, the Department’s budget cuts had severely impacted IDT, who had to introduce austerity measures regarding personnel. In

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 43.

¹⁴² This refers to the capacity of businesses within the Eastern Cape to provide the skills and materials needed to build schools: electricians, brick layers, brick makers, plumbers, etc.

¹⁴³ Eastern Cape Department of Public Works, Strategic Plan, 2005 – 2009, p. 49.

¹⁴⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 38.

¹⁴⁵ IDT Eastern Cape School Building Programme, Programme Implementation Plan, phase 1 to 4, 2005/06, p4.

¹⁴⁶ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005 – 2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷ Resolutions/Recommendations of the Portfolio Committee on Education, 21 Mar. 2003, p. 6.

2003/04, according to IDT, the Department's freezing of funds meant that IDT had to pay for projects already out to tender until funding became available. The Department did not consult with IDT before introducing budget cuts.

The IDT acknowledged that communication with schools was also a challenge. When asked whose responsibility it was to communicate information regarding infrastructure projects to schools and their communities, the IDT said that it was the responsibility of Education Development Officers. However, the IDT employs social facilitators for each infrastructure project whose role it is to liaise with School Governing Bodies regarding the implementation of infrastructure projects. Despite this duplication of function, it appears that communication still breaks down between the Department/IDT and schools in the province.

Expanded Public Works Programme

Mud and temporary structured schools pose a particularly difficult challenge to the Department. As previously noted, there are over 800 mud/ temporary structured schools in the province.¹⁴⁸ When questioned why mud-structured schools visited by the PSAM had not been addressed in the 2005 calendar year as planned, the IDT explained that a decision had been taken by the Department of Education to address mud and temporary structured schools using the Expanded Public Work Programme (EPWP) principles. The IDT claimed that this had led to delays.

As previously noted, the EPWP is a national initiative by the National Department of Public Works. President Mbeki formally announced the EPWP in February 2003 during the State of the Nation address. The principle aim of the programme, he said, was to "ensure that we draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive work, and that these workers gain skills while they work."¹⁴⁹ Education was targeted as one of a number of strategic partners able to implement EPWP principles. The EPWP targets women contractors, and aims to build the capacity of local communities through the use of local suppliers and materials. Local entrepreneurs receive training through learnerships, and labour intensive methodologies, targeting the unemployed poor, women, youth, and the disabled, are promoted.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ President Mbeki, State of the Nation Address, 14 Feb. 2003.

¹⁵⁰ IDT, Eastern Cape School Buildings Programme – EPWP, IDT Internal Programme Implementation Plan, 2005/06, pp. 5-6.



Bantwanana JSS

Bantwanana Junior Secondary School

Bantwanana JSS, in Mqanduli, was the Department's pilot project for the application of the EPWP principles into the school building programme and is presented as a success. Premier Balindlela said in her 2005/06 Policy Speech that the success of the Bantwanana JSS project "will be rolled out to the other areas to eradicate mud schools and other community infrastructure backlogs in the Province."¹⁵¹ This commitment is echoed by the Department of Education in the 2004/05 Annual Report when it states its intention to roll out the 2005/06 infrastructure programme using the EPWP approach.¹⁵² According to the school's principal, Ms N. Yawa, the local community was capacitated to make bricks from local soil, and trained in brick-laying, carpentry, and painting during the Bantwanana JSS project. However, the construction of the school led to numerous delays. Training began in 2004, and the school's success was reported in the media in November 2004.¹⁵³ However, when the PSAM visited the Bantwanana JSS in October 2005, the school had not yet been completed.



Incomplete, Bantwanana JSS

The IDT, responsible for ensuring the implementation and co-ordination of the EPWP principles, argues that while the concept is worthwhile and undoubtedly benefits communities, it has indeed led to delays. In addition, the IDT argued that the

¹⁵¹ Premier Nosimo Balindlela, Eastern Cape Policy Speech, 2005/06, 16 Mar. 2005.

¹⁵² Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004/05, p. 104.

¹⁵³ "New school design seeks to end mud structures," *Daily Dispatch*, 19 Nov. 2004.

implementation of the principles was not well planned, as the system had not been well thought through prior to implementation. It had taken longer than anticipated to get 50 learners to be trained, while the learnerships were for high-level contractors which inevitably took more training and was, therefore, more time-consuming. Mr Hector, acting director of the Physical Resource Planning Unit, confirmed that the application of EPWP principles to school infrastructure had not been properly planned. He stated that programme implementation had occurred ahead of the necessary legislation, resulting in delays, which meant that 37 of the 53 tenders for mud structured schools would now be addressed using the conventional method. These delays also resulted in the IDT encountering expenditure problems. Because the IDT could only put contractors on-site once they had participated in the learnership programme, delays meant that the IDT would not be able to fully utilise its allocated budget in 2005/06. To increase expenditure, the Department decided to increase the number of schools to be addressed in 2005/06 from 50 to 87 to avoid under spending. This meant that, while the construction of schools got off to a slow start, the first phases of construction (planning, consulting, etc) would be conducted for more schools in 2005.

The feasibility of the Department eradicating the infrastructure backlog by 2014 is also determined by the capacity in the province to provide resources and skilled personnel. While it is hoped that the EPWP will make some progress in this area, the Infrastructure Plan notes that more will have to be done to expand the capacity of the industry.¹⁵⁴ In order to do this steadily, it is vital that the Department secure steady funding. In addition, as the Infrastructure Plan notes, the Department must also consider the sustainability of the province's economy through expanding capacity. While the Department will always have to maintain its infrastructure, the overall infrastructural needs of the province will dramatically decrease once backlogs have been addressed.

Psychological Effects of Delays

The challenge facing the Department is that, while the application of EPWP principles benefits communities, it is also true that mud/temporary structured classrooms are unsafe and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. At each mud or temporary structured school visited by the PSAM, educators expressed their frustration and disappointment in the Department's repeated failure to fulfil long-standing promises. Standing in the centre of the zinc classrooms of Zolani JSS, the vice-principal, Mr Sili, spoke of the numerous promises made by the Department to provide proper infrastructure. He felt that even the district office did not care about their situation, and concluded: "There is no hope." At Sibuyele Combined School, Mr Sili's sentiments were echoed in the words of Mrs Njuli, the principal, as she showed us the school. Again and again she spoke of the "pathetic" condition of the school's infrastructure, wondering how the Department could allow children to learn in such conditions. The principal of Upper Gqaga PJS, Mr Solani, articulated the most disturbing consequence of repeated delays and unfulfilled promises. He was under the impression that in 1996, instead of providing his school with desperately needed infrastructure, the Department chose to build at another school nearby. "When they took the building to the other school," he said, "it says that we are not people who should have such things."

¹⁵⁴ Eastern Cape Department of Education, Infrastructure Plan, 2005-2014, Preliminary Draft, p. 33.



Mud and Zinc structured classrooms, Maganise JSS

Conclusion

The Department cannot afford to make unrealistic commitments regarding school infrastructure. While certain factors, such as population shifts and tornadoes, are beyond the Department's control, it must take all challenges into account in the 2005 - 2014 Infrastructure Plan. In addition, while the attainment of adequate funding is key to the success of its implementation, the Infrastructure Plan requires that the Department address a number of challenges if this funding is to be utilised effectively and efficiently. In particular, the Department must ensure that funding allocated for infrastructure is used for that purpose. Recent "belt tightening" measures negatively impacted the appointment of senior staff and middle managers and led to the Department's infrastructure programme being "put on hold."¹⁵⁵ The creation of an Infrastructure Conditional Grant may be most beneficial to the Department in addressing the challenge of over spending on educator personnel, and the subsequent under spending on non-educator personnel and infrastructure. The grant must, however, be guided by well-informed conditions that speak to the real needs and capabilities of the Department's Physical Resources Directorate. Funding for the recruitment and retention of critical staff in the Directorate could also be provided through the Infrastructure Conditional Grant. This would have the effect of increasing the possibility of the Department achieving the infrastructure service delivery timeframes outlined in the Infrastructure Plan. Finally, the Department must address break downs in communication within the Department, and between the Department and its implementing agents. It is critical that the Department monitor the satisfaction of schools and seriously consider their complaints or requests, regardless of the enormity of the infrastructure backlog in the Province. The Department must ensure that schools are well-informed of the Department's plans and progress in addressing their infrastructure needs.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 9.