

Research Findings: School Infrastructure in the Eastern Cape

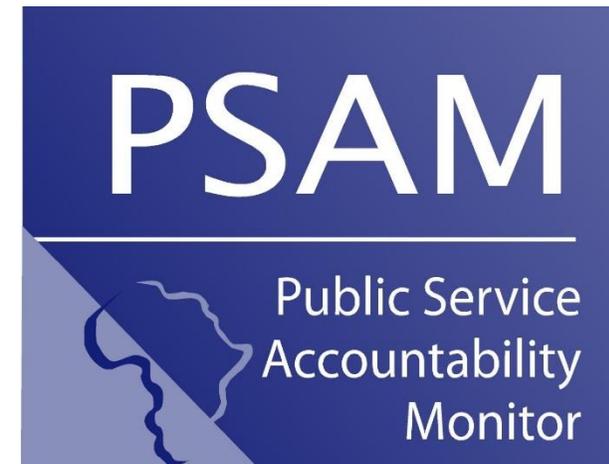
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Contact Details

e-mail: S.Fobosi@ru.ac.za

Phone: (046) 603 8885/8358



Introduction

- The South African Constitution commits government departments to the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights, including the right to education, healthcare, housing and social welfare, within available resources.
- Quality education for all remains unrealized in South Africa, where access to quality of education remains very poor in the most of historically deprived areas, with some schools even unable to meet the basic infrastructure requirements (i.e laboratories, libraries or internet connectivity).
- This condition results in learners experiencing learning deprivation, higher-grade repetition and dropout rates.

Findings

- Programme 6 (**Infrastructure Development**) of the ECDoE received an original allocation of R1 714 billion in the 2016/17 financial year. This was reduced by R35 million in the adjustment estimate to R1 679 billion. The Department was able to spend 1, 629 billion of the R1, 679 billion.
- The lack of adequate appropriate infrastructure in schools does not lead to the equitable access to education and resources. For example, the 2017 Adjusted Estimates reported that there is poor performance of the implementing agents in the delivery of water and sanitation facilities.
- It is explained, in the MTBPS that R7.3 billion that had been shifted to the provincially-administered education infrastructure grant, but had not been allocated to specific projects, be returned to the department's school infrastructure backlogs grant over the 2018 MTEF period.

Findings Cont'd

- The failure to allocate funds to projects requires explanation, and corrective action needs to ensure that when the R7.3 billion is allocated to the SIBG in 2018 MTEF, it is efficiently and effectively spent to respond to learners and educators most in need of support.
- While the Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba, explained in his Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) speech on 25th October 2017 that R44 billion would be spent on building new schools and refurbishing others, R415 million in-unspent funds was declared within the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG) according to the Adjustment Estimates that accompanied the MTBPS.

Findings Cont'd

- The underspending is explained as being due to delays in appointing contractors. This is unacceptable given the economic climate and needs of learners and teachers.
- Underspending was recorded in the **Infrastructure Development** Programme by R49, 853 million.
- The 2016/17 financial year was noted to having had under expenditure similar to the 2015/16 financial year due to delays in project delivery and subsequent underachieving of planned targets

Findings Cont'd: Table 1: EIG Expected Outputs vs Actual Outputs (2016/17)

| Expected Outputs | Actual Outputs achieved |
|---|---|
| Provision of water supply for the targeted 165 public ordinary schools | 77 public ordinary schools were supplied with water |
| Provision of electricity supply for the targeted 95 public ordinary schools | 10 public ordinary schools were supplied with electricity |
| Provision of sanitation facilities for the targeted 246 public ordinary schools | 88 public ordinary schools were supplied with adequate sanitation |
| Provision of classrooms for the targeted 509 public ordinary schools | 88 classrooms were built at public ordinary schools |
| Provision of specialist rooms for the targeted 83 public ordinary schools | 24 specialist rooms were built at public ordinary schools |
| Provision of Grade R classrooms for targeted 84 public ordinary schools | 19 Grade R classrooms in public ordinary schools |
| Refurbishment to a targeted 21 public ordinary schools | 23 public ordinary schools received scheduled maintenance |

Findings Cont'd

- What can be seen on this table is that the Department continues to face difficulties to meet the Actual planned targets.
- The Department also reported on the following achievements:

| The following achievements were also reported in the 2016/17 financial year |
|---|
| 10 new schools were completed and ready for occupation for in Public Ordinary schools including replacement schools |
| 30 new schools were under construction in public ordinary schools including replacement schools |
| 1 Hostel was built at a public ordinary schools |

- As can be seen here, the Department did not report planned targets, thus, making it difficult to gauge the actual performance.

Findings Cont'd

- There is a reported slow pace in the delivery of schools that are undergoing scheduled maintenance.
- The common challenges presented by the variances between planned targets and actual targets have to do with the non-performance of project contractors and poor project management practices.
- It is visible that the Department is facing difficulties with realising the planned targets.
- Moreover, the failure to set planned targets is making it impossible to gauge the actual performance of the **Infrastructure Development** programme.

Findings Cont'd

- In 2016, the ECDoE identified (initially) five priority hostels for refurbishment and or new construction. These hostels were Thubalethu High School, Nomsa Frans High School, Riebeek East High School, Makaula High School, and Smuts Ndamase High School. Two schools, that is, Clarkebury High School and Healdtown High School were later added.
- It was reported that these 7 are at various stages of construction and, four are undergoing design for construction in the 2017/18 financial year.
- The report of the Auditor-General notes that the construction contracts were reported to have been awarded to contractors that were not registered with the Construction Industry Development Board in accordance with section 18(1) of the Construction Industry Development Board Act of South Africa, 2000 (Act No.38 of 2000).

Findings Cont'd

Public libraries

- Last week Saturday, 11 November 2017, I read in the *Saturday Dispatch* that “fifteen Eastern Cape public libraries have been shut down due to a shortage of basic services such as water, electricity and ablution facilities. Details of the closures were revealed in a report which sport, recreation, arts and culture MEC Pemmy Majodina issued in response to questions at the Bhisho Legislature dated September 24”.
- The following are the 15 libraries closed with reasons:

Findings Cont'd

| 15 libraries have been shelved | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| EC libraries shut down | Reasons |
| 1. Sulenkama | No electricity. No water |
| 2. Bazindlovu Modular | No books. No electricity |
| 3. Lwandile | No water. No books. No electricity |
| 4. Nqeketho | No books. No electricity. No water |
| 5. Marhubeni | No books. No electricity |
| 6. Kwandevu | No water. No books. No electricity |
| 7. Mqhakama | Under renovation |
| 8. Mantlaneni | No electricity. No books |
| 9. Mango: Container Library | No electricity. No water |
| 10. Mpendla: Container Library | No water. No security. No electricity |
| 11. Sukude: Cointainer Library | No books |
| 12. Toekomotse: Container Library | Damage to structure |
| 13. Tokyo Sexwale | No explanation |
| 14. Mgwali: Modular Library | No electricity. No books |
| 15. Nqabarha: Modular Library | No books |

Source: The Saturday Dispatch, 11 November 2017

- It seems that the main reasons for the closure of the libraries are because there is no electricity, water, books and damage to structure. This is unacceptable! I am in contact with the Legislature to establish the contents of the findings.

Findings Cont'd

- By the 2nd quarter of 2016/17 Sports and Recreation Annual Report shows that the Department had only spent 34% of their budget for Programme 3: Library and Archive Services and that they were – at that point – underspent on Goods and services because of delays buying books, procurement issues.
- It seems then that there is poor spending, poor procurement practice and ultimately lack of delivery of books and services.
- It vital to note that public libraries are important for the learning development of the learners.

Findings Cont'd

Literacy and Access in a Digital Era

- Learning in the digital age is central to schooling, and is currently a main concern to educators and members of the public.
- However, the changes of communication channels in this digital age requires a major re-thinking of the nature of literacy and the pedagogy of literacy teaching and teacher education.
- The access to information technology is, particularly, divided between those who have access to the internet and those who do not.
- The following key achievements from the previous year 2016, were noted in the 2017/2018 Annual Performance Plan of the Eastern Cape Department of Education: 790 schools have connectivity for teaching and learning. Similarly, 958 schools were recorded to use electronic content in teaching and learning.

Findings Cont'd

- One of the challenges facing the Department in the Province, is the development of ICT infrastructure that is outdated and non-existent.
- The difficulty to access internet throughout the country, is becoming synonymous with economic access.
- In order to increase digital transformation in the whole country, equal emphasis needs to be allocated to digital skills development as is to infrastructure development.
- There is, thus, a need to bridge the digital divide in order to promote digital transformation throughout the country.
- Literacy in the digital age is affecting everything from access to information technology, to its use in teaching and learning.
- There is, thus, a need to explore the possibilities of digital resources for literacy in remote rural areas/communities in order to increase the accessibility to information and, access to news by the people in these communities.

Findings Cont'd

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development education goal (SDG 4) commits states to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels.
- It is important that all the schools in South Africa and abroad, have an internet connection irrespectively of their location or their size, in order to improve quality education.
- All schools must have a functioning computer laboratory and a teacher that is qualified to train basic computer literacy skills.

Recommendations

- There is a need for more financial management support in order to avoid under/over-expenditure and improve expenditure within the EIG.
- A Commission of Inquiry on the 15 EC public libraries closed must be established.
- It is high time that the Department of Basic Education (assisted by Treasury) address challenges in school infrastructure provisioning.
- In addition to the delivery of infrastructure projects and budget increase, it is important to address “the lack of capacity to plan and budget effectively at various administrative levels of the Department of Basic Education
- Addressing this is very important, considering its impact on the implementation and completion of school infrastructure projects. Just like the compensation of employees within the Department, infrastructure is an important policy and budget priority.
- Treasury must prioritise (and budget for) implementation of the Norms and Standards for school infrastructure

Recommendations Cont'd

- In addition to this, Treasury must clearly set aside budget allocations for the implementation of the Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure
- The Ministry of Finance must take immediate action to ensure that all school infrastructure funds are effectively spent.
- This means providing support to rural provinces in the form of increased allocations, and in assisting to address the lack of capacity to effectively plan, spend funds, and implement.
- The underspending by the Department is unacceptable given the economic climate and needs of learners and teachers.
- The inability of the Department to meet its targets in the delivery of projects will have implications for meeting future targets and, needs to be addressed for the progressive realisation of the rights of learners and teachers to quality education.

Recommendations Cont'd

- In order to address the inequalities of access to education, there is a need of a better targeting of public spending to disadvantaged groups to improve access to quality education
- This means that public spending policies should be able to achieve more equitable education outcomes.
- While there is evidence showing that budget and expenditure on education is in many cases not very progressive, it is important to note that increases in education spending directed at expanding access to education is critical in the context of huge inequalities.

Conclusion

- In addressing the school infrastructure challenges in the Eastern Cape, in particular, The PSAM puts emphasis on the obligation by public officials and private service providers to justify their performance in progressively addressing the socio-economic rights through the delivery of public services, state departments and private service providers responsible for the management of public resources must implement effective accountability and service delivery processes.
- On the school infrastructure, the National Development Plan 2030 is very clear that the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) must “ensure that all schools meet the minimum standards for infrastructure and commit to progressively upgrading each school’s infrastructure to meet optimum standards”.
- The safety of the learners must be taken into account when planning the infrastructure.
- Efforts should be directed at expanding access to quality education and resource allocation
- Provinces should ensure better use of the budget allocated in order to improve access to quality education.

Thank you