

State of Basic Education in Eastern Cape

Presentation at the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

- PSAM welcomes the 'Report on the State of Education' by the EELC.
- This is important in providing lessons for the 6th administration and proves further the need for the realisation of quality education.
- We recommend that the 6th administration implements the recommendations made in the report. In particular, in relation to the adoption of norms and standards for resourcing.
- This presentation is a reflection of the planning, budgeting, expenditure and performance contexts in relation to the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape Province.
- Briefly, the state of basic education in the Eastern Cape is characterised by the lack of proper planning; context of budget cuts/reductions; underspending and poor performance.
- These conditions lead to the unrealized state of quality basic education.

Context of the Lack of Proper Planning

- Planning within the education context is important for the realisation of access to quality education.
- It is particularly important for the DBE to know what it is they need to deliver on a needs-basis.
- However, while the ECDoE outlines what it wants to achieve, there is continued lack of proper planning in outlining clearly when it plans to achieve what is plans.

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- For example, in order to assess the context of planning within education in the Eastern Cape, in 2018, the PSAM produced a [Strategic Plan Evaluation \(SPE\)](#) to assess the degree of alignment between the following planning documents:
 - Revised Strategic Plan 2015/16-2019/20;
 - Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2018/19;
 - Operational Plan (OP) 2018/19;
 - Schooling 2025: Action Plan for improving basic education in South Africa;
 - Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019; and
 - The National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030.

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- Using all these planning documents, the SPE evaluated whether the one-year plan (OP) was consistent with the longer-term planning frameworks.
- The evaluation assessed whether the performance targets set out in the plans were Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reliable and Timely (SMART).
- In our analysis of the planning documents, we found that some targets were not SMART – in other words, they were not time-bound.
- It was unclear how some targets were going to be attained in the financial year.

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- For example, in its 2018/19 OP, the department provided annual and quarterly targets of 10 special schools to be upgraded.
- It was unclear how 10 special schools would be upgraded per quarter when the annual target is 10.
- In other words, how is it possible that the department would have an annual target of 10 special schools to be upgraded and yet plan to upgrade 10 schools per quarter?
- Is this a case of poor planning as defining the state of our education system?

Context of budget cuts/reductions

- In addition to the lack of proper planning, the unrealized state of quality basic education in the Eastern Cape has been affected by the implementation of budget cuts.
- While the budget allocations to Programme 6 (Infrastructure Development) of the ECDoE increased during the 5th administration, from R1.10 billion in 2014 to R1.58 billion in 2019/20, it is worth noting that the ECDoE experienced budget cuts between 2017/18 and 2018/19, specifically for infrastructure development.
 - The budget allocation decreased from R1.65 billion in 2017/18 to the adjusted budget of R1.59 billion in 2018/19.
 - This decrease continued until the current financial year, where the allocation to the programme decreased by 1% in nominal terms, from the *adjusted budget* of R1.59 billion in 2018/19 to R1.58 billion in 2019/20.
 - In real terms, this decreased by 3% to R1.55 billion. It appears that the 5th provincial administration experienced budget cuts.

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- It is concerning that the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme had its budget allocation decreased both in nominal and real terms.
 - For example, the allocation to the ECD programme decreased by 17% in nominal terms, from the *adjusted budget* of R723 million in 2018/19 to R602 million in 2019/20.
 - In real terms, the allocation to the ECD programme decreased by 19% to R589.49 million in 2019/20

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- Also, the Eastern Cape experienced budget cuts to the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG), by 6% in nominal terms, from R1.58 billion in 2017 to R1.479 billion in 2018.
- In real terms, the EIG decreased by 9% to R1.440 billion in 2018.
- In our budget briefs, we noted that the budget reductions were going to affect the realisation of the rights of learners to quality basic education, through the delayed delivery of infrastructure projects, for example.
- We also explained [that the reduction](#) in the EIG, which has a history of underperformance, will result in projects that are currently underway being delayed.

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- In addition to the budget cuts implemented in the EIG, we noted that the budget allocations to the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities grant of the ECDoE [have been decreased in both nominal and real terms between 2018 and 2019.](#)
- For example, in nominal terms, the allocations to this grant decreased by 2% from R25.77 million in 2018/19 to R25.18 million in 2019/20; while in real terms, this was a 4% decrease to R23.91 million.
- Therefore, the budget cuts will have a negative impact on the realisation of quality education.
- It is worth mentioning that decreasing budget is not a solution to address the problem of poor spending.
- What is required rather is for the 6th administration to provide technical assistance to the department to ensure that performance is improved.

Context of irregular/unauthorised spending; underspending and poor performance

- It is also worth mentioning that the state of our basic education has also been characterised irregular and unauthorised expenditure.
 - For example, in 2018, the ECDoE did not take effective and appropriate steps to prevent unauthorised expenditure amounting to R57.6 million.
- While South Africa is seen as having some of the highest rates of universal access to primary education, with Gross enrolment rates in primary schools having increased from 88,1% in 2002 to 94,2% in 2015 (StatsSA, 2016), public schools continue to face infrastructure challenges.
- For example, in January 2018 the DBE in its National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) reported that out of the 5 400 schools in the Eastern Cape, 1 945 schools used pit latrines, 154 schools had no electricity.
- This state of education is not favourable for the realisation of quality education.

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- In addition to the lack of proper planning and continued budget cuts/reduction, the state of education in the Eastern Cape continues to be characterised by poor spending and underperformance.
- While the ECDoE spent 99.4%, which is R32.5 billion, of its allocated budget of R33 billion in the 2017/18 financial year, underspending was recorded in: [Programme 1 \(Administration\) by R83.3 million and Programme 5 \(ECD\) by R92.8 million.](#)
- It is worth mentioning that in the [2016/17 financial year, programme 5 also experienced underspending by 23% \(R130.5 million\) from the adjusted budget of R580.4 million.](#)
- In its [2017 Expenditure Tracking Report](#), the PSAM reported the failure of the ECDoE to meet targets where it provided 88 public ordinary schools with adequate sanitation against the planned target of 246 schools.
- The failure of the ECDoE to meet its targets continued until the last financial year.
- For example, the 2018/19 Adjusted Estimates of Provincial Revenue and Expenditure, reported the following (shown in Table 1 below) poor mid-year performance on delivering basic services to schools.
- This further perpetuates the condition of **unrealised quality of education** in South Africa.

Table 1: ECDoE Provision of Basic Services to Schools, Targets vs Performance 2018/19

	2018/19	
	Target	Performance
Provision of water supply to schools	169	17
Electricity supply	32	13
Sanitation facilities	169	14
Classrooms built	221	143

Recommendations and Conclusion

- Clearly, the state of education in South Africa is characterised by the lack of proper planning, budget reductions and poor performance.
- The state of basic education is defined by a mutually reinforcing cycle of under-performance, under-resourcing, and under-delivery
- As such, the 6th administration should ensure that more focus is placed on adequate funding and better spending.
- Improving the state of South Africa's education system will require dedicated effort to addressing the lack of proper planning, budget reductions, underspending and poor performance.
- The national treasury should consider inflation when allocating funds to departments, especially considering its impact on the delivery of services by departments.
- Moreover, the technical capacity of the ECDoE should be strengthened so that projects can move faster, as explained by President Cyril Ramaphosa in the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA).

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- The National Treasury should ensure that there is sufficient funding for the historically disadvantaged province of the Eastern Cape, especially given the lack of proper sanitation in most schools of the province.
- The ECDoE should ensure that its performance targets are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reliable and Timely (SMART). For example, it should be clear how many ECD centres will be upgraded per quarter.
- The department should take effective and appropriate steps to prevent unauthorised and irregular expenditure, as required by the PFMA.

THANK YOU!