

## **SCHOOL MONITORING SURVEY 2017/2018 – FEW SURPRISES IN SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE EASTERN CAPE – IMPROVED PERFORMANCE CRITICAL**

The Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) recognizes the acknowledgment by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga that the concern in the basic education sector remains the physical infrastructure. For example, in January 2018 the DBE reported that out of the 5 400 schools in the Eastern Cape, 1 945 schools still used pit latrines and approximately 154 schools had no electricity. Poor school infrastructure is found throughout the country, but the problem is particularly worse in the Eastern Cape where the majority of mud schools are located. The DBE has a history of poor performance, hence the low percentage (59%) of schools complying with the nationally determined minimum physical infrastructure standards, with the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal the lowest (both at 42%), as reported by the Minister of Basic Education. For example, on the target of building 100 schools in the 2014/15 financial year, the department only built 24 schools. Also, the department only managed to build 9 schools against a target of 50 schools in 2018/19.

In relation to the provision of sanitation to schools, 64 schools were reportedly serviced against a target of 285 in 2018/19. The situation in the Eastern Cape is made worse by the poor performance in the delivery and planning of school infrastructure. For example, in its 2017 Expenditure Tracking Report, the PSAM reported the failure of the ECDoE to meet targets where it provided sanitation to only 88 public schools against a target of 246 schools. This poor performance was attributed by the Department as a lack of capacity in contractors who are awarded tenders. While the access to sanitation in the Eastern Cape was 69.9% in 2017, the province continues to face poor performance challenges. It is worth noting that this is lower than other provinces and a national average of 79.9%. The Gauteng and Western Cape had the highest percentages of schools with sanitation at 97.8% and 96.3%, respectively. This situation shows that access to sanitation continues to be poor in the rural province of the Eastern Cape. The rights of many learners to education and human dignity continue to be violated because of the lack of sanitation facilities. Therefore, there is still more work to be done to ensure that the schools in the Eastern Cape comply with the nationally determined minimum physical infrastructure standards.

The survey also reports that access to libraries was much lower in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and North West than Free State, Gauteng and Western Cape. Approximately 62% of learners across the country had access to a school library/media, with the access for learners in Quintile 4 and 5 schools substantially higher than for Quintile 1, 2 and 3. While access to libraries improved over

time from 45% in 2011 to 62% in 2017, schools in the historically disadvantaged areas of the Eastern Cape Province continue to face lower access to libraries.

The survey results are extremely concerning and provide further evidence that the quality of education provided in many schools is seriously inadequate. In addition to the inadequate basic infrastructure and sanitation, teacher absenteeism contributes to the situation. The survey reports that there were large increases in teacher absence from school in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape. The PSAM recommends that the DBE implements routine and rigorous teacher assessment to support and correct areas where teacher absence may be contributing towards poor learner outcome. In particular, it is important to [address the lack of capacity to plan and budget effectively at various administrative levels of the DBE](#). This is crucial to address considering its impact on the implementation and completion of school infrastructure projects. Therefore, infrastructure is an important policy and budget priority.

In conclusion, the PSAM urges that in addition to reviewing the infrastructure funding, delivery, planning and maintenance (as the Minister proposes), the 6<sup>th</sup> administration should ensure that poor performance is addressed in order to realise quality education. Reviewing the infrastructure funding model will ensure that more funding is directed to the historically disadvantaged rural provinces. The National Treasury should play a leading role in this regard, through building capacity of the DBE for improved performance. Similar to this, President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), mentioned that government will strengthen the technical capacity of departments so as “ensure that projects move faster, building a pool of engineers, project managers, spatial planners and quantity surveyors – an action team that can make things happen faster on the ground”.<sup>1</sup> Strengthening technical capacity for departments will ensure that the poor implementation problem is addressed. In this way, government will ensure the targets for all schools to comply with nationally determined minimum physical infrastructure standards are more likely to be met.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://kznlegislature.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/190207-SONA-2019-v7-2\\_628.pdf](http://kznlegislature.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/190207-SONA-2019-v7-2_628.pdf)