



Executive Summary

Of “Loose Papers and Vague Allegations”

A Social Audit of the Safety and Sanitation Crisis in Western Cape Schools

The title of this report makes reference to the ways in which this social audit has been referred to in the media by the MEC for Education in the Western Cape, Debbie Schafer. Both the MEC and the Western Cape Premier, Helen Zille, have repeatedly questioned the credibility of our data and the capacity of young black people to produce a rigorous account of their experiences of the safety and sanitation crisis in Western Cape schools. We are confident that readers of this social audit report will be satisfied that the MEC and the Premier are mistaken.

On 31 October 2014, over 3,000 learners and parents marched on the provincial legislature to deliver a set of demands to the Western Cape MEC for Education. This march was the culmination of months of mobilisation around issues our members identified as most hindering education in their schools: poor sanitation, insecurity at and on the way to school, teacher shortages, discriminatory teenage pregnancy policies, and the illegal use of corporal punishment. While these actions resulted in a number of victories in specific schools, systemic issues remained. At a mass meeting in early 2015, Equalisers in the Western Cape consolidated the previous year's campaigns around the two broad issues of school safety and sanitation.

EE Gauteng had successfully used the social audit technique in 2014 as part of its own sanitation campaign. This campaign worked to hold the Gauteng Department of Education publicly accountable for its failures regarding school sanitation, ultimately securing commitments to upgrade and maintain sanitation infrastructure. Inspired by this victory, EE Western Cape launched its own social audit in August 2015. Working with partner organisations, EE audited 244 schools serving 217,388 learners between September and November 2015.¹

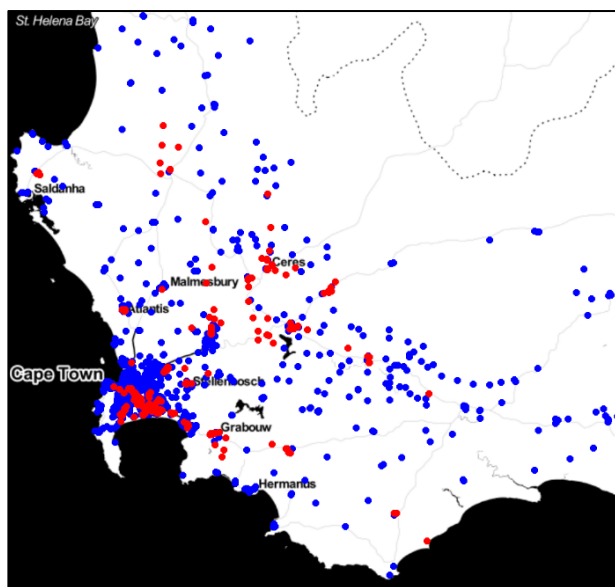


Figure 1 Schools Audited as Part of Social Audit (Schools in Red Are Audited, Schools in Blue Are Unaudited)

The audit process involved interviewing administrators, recording of physical observations at schools, and having learners complete questionnaires about their experience of education conditions. EE worked with partner organisations, particularly the Social Justice Coalition and the International Budget Partnership, to develop the forms used in this process and to train auditors. Social audit training sessions were intensive, requiring audit teams to conduct mock surveys inside a real school, overseen by experienced social auditors.²

Committed to gathering a representative sample of the province, special attention was paid to auditing rural areas. In this regard, partnerships with the Triangle Project, the Women on Farms Project, and members of the Methodist Church were essential. This coalition coordinated the training of auditors and auditing of schools together with community members. Simultaneously, EE community organisers and facilitators led the audit work in the four Metro districts.

Given the large size of the sample – 912 learner questionnaires, 220 administrator interviews, and 229 physical inspections – as well as the similarity between the

¹ For a full background to the experience leading up to EE's Social Audit, refer to section **8 Introduction**.

² Section **12 Methods** includes a full review of the Social Audit's process from audit training to data analysis.

sample's demographics and the population of schools,³ it is possible to make strong estimates as to the conditions of schools in the Western Cape.

The data gathered by audit teams was bolstered by an extensive literature review⁴ and other original research. This included an analysis of national and provincial education and infrastructure budgets⁵ and in depth interviews with representatives of the WCED's School Safety Programme and the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention.

Furthermore, EE filed 14 Promotion of Access to Information requests with the WCED in late 2015. Among other things, these requests included information on existing school safety interventions, data on burglaries and vandalism, and school budgets for 70 schools. The budgets were of particular interest as, in previous interactions, school leaderships at several schools have alleged that lack of funding is the principle cause of poor sanitation and safety conditions. These requested school budgets represented a randomised stratified sample.

The full report and findings, including the survey instruments and methodology, have been reviewed by six education and research experts: Rajendra Chetty (CPUT), Shaun Franklin (WISER, Wits University), Zukiswa Kota (PSAM, Rhodes University), Ursula Hoadley (UCT), Sara Muller (UCT), and Debra Shepherd (AMERU, Wits University).

The findings from the social audit are extensive and are reviewed in detail in section **14 Findings** in the full social audit report. Below is a brief taste of the disturbing state of affairs revealed by our data.

KEY SECURITY FINDINGS

1. Learners are unsafe at school and unsafe going to/from school

The social audit revealed that an estimated one in six learners and administrators feel unsafe at school in the Western Cape. This feeling is justified, as according to both administrators and learners, violent events are common at many schools. Furthermore, according to the WCED's own records, 22% of schools are considered "High Risk" and another 39% are considered "Medium Risk". This risk is concentrated in poorer urban schools: nearly half (45%) of urban quintile 1-3 schools are "High Risk" compared to just 13% of urban quintile 5 schools. As a result, secondary school learners at quintile 1 urban schools are more than six times as likely to feel unsafe than at quintile 5 urban schools (**Figure 2**).

³ As visible in **Appendix I** of the full report, and discussed at length in section **12.2.5 The Demographics of the Data Sample**.

⁴ For a discussion of several of the key background conditions that shape sanitation and safety in schools refer to section **9 The Social Structure**. For a review of the existing literature on safety in schools as well as current WCED interventions see section **10 School Safety: Existing Research and Programmes**.

⁵ Section **11 Infrastructure Background** includes this analysis of government infrastructure budgeting.

Moreover, the audit found that:

- An estimated two in five learners have experienced, and three in five have witnessed, a violent event.
- One in ten learners in the sample have personally been assaulted.
- At half of schools sampled, at least one learner reported being or seeing someone threatened.
- At a third of schools sampled, at least one learner reported being or seeing someone mugged.
- At two thirds of schools sampled, at least one learner reported being or seeing someone physically assaulted. Of those, nearly half included an assault with a weapon and one in ten included an assault with a gun.
- These statistics are even worse for urban and secondary schools.

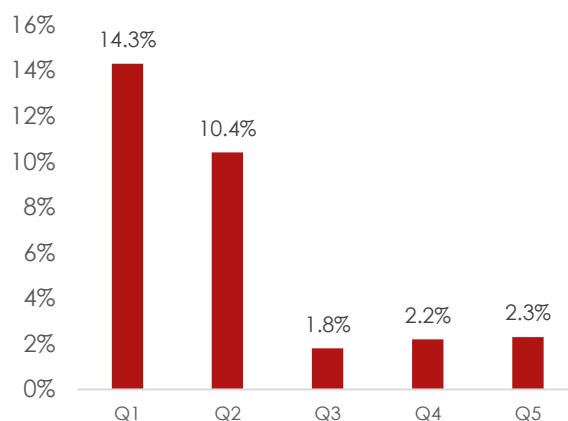


Figure 2 Percent of Urban Secondary School Learners Who Feel Very Unsafe by Quintile

Furthermore, our audit found that two thirds of learners walk to school and more than 80% travel unaccompanied. As a result, it is no surprise that one in four learners feel unsafe on their way to school. Again, urban secondary school learners suffered the most from exposure to violence on the way to school, with at least one learner at 93% of urban secondary schools witnessing or experiencing a violent incident while in transit.

2. Sexual harassment and rape is taking place in schools

At 16% of schools surveyed, at least one learner reported being or seeing someone sexually harassed. Moreover, 4% of secondary school administrators reported a rape occurring at the school in the last year. This is despite it being well-established that sexual assault and rape are significantly underreported.

3. Corporal punishment is rife in the Western Cape

Underreporting is more likely where trust in educators is broken, which is likely common due to the prevalence of corporal punishment. Despite corporal punishment being illegal, the audit found that:

- Learners are beaten at 83% of schools sampled.
- This is a daily occurrence at 37% of schools.
- At more than 90% of schools with corporal punishment, teachers use some type of weapon.

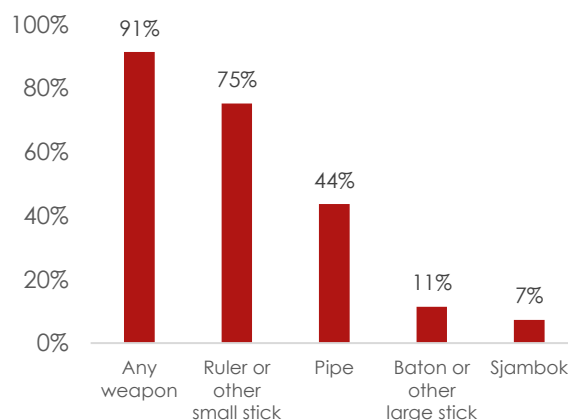


Figure 3 Percent of Schools Using Weapons at Schools with Corporal Punishment

Principals and teachers are the main individuals to whom learners are meant to report violent events. The reporting systems and structures that the WCED has in place are severely undermined by a situation in which learners in such a high proportion of schools can expect to be beaten by the same individuals entrusted with their safety.

4. Lack of access control facilitates violent crime and costs us millions each year

The audit found that a worrying proportion of schools lack the capacity to control who comes in and out of school premises:

- Only about half of school fences were considered sturdy enough to keep intruders out, with 42% having gaps or holes.
- More than half of the schools surveyed lack a full-time security guard.
- Three quarters of these lack functional CCTV cameras.
- More than half of learners feel that law enforcement is only visible around the school when something has already happened.

This in turn contributes to theft and the damage of school infrastructure. According to the WCED's own data, schools in the province lost R35.2 million (an average of R22,889 per school) to burglaries and vandalism between 2013 and 2015.

This loss is concentrated in poorer schools: two-thirds of quintile 1-3 urban schools reported a case, while only a third of quintile 5 schools did. Furthermore, these figures reflect only those events that were reported. Our findings indicated that nearly half of cases of burglary or vandalism go unreported.

5. Discrimination is disturbingly common

One third of learners report being discriminated against in Western Cape schools. Discrimination is worse in urban schools, but neither the wealth nor phase of the school appears to affect its occurrence. Comments collected by auditors reflect that this abuse is carried out both by teachers and fellow learners, and is often on the basis of gender, race, sexuality, language and nationality.

6. The WCED is placing the responsibility for school safety on principals, teachers and SGBs, but is failing to provide adequate support

The social audit and the WCED's own documents suggest a serious lack of funding and capacity for school safety at every level. The WCED's Safe Schools Programme (SSP) employs just 46 staff to serve over 1,600 schools. Just eight of these coordinate work at district-level and only 25 conduct fieldwork at school-level.

This means that each SSP district coordinator is responsible for school safety at 200+ schools, and each fieldworker for 65+ schools. When, according to the WCED's own records, 22% of schools are considered "High Risk" and another 39% are considered "Medium Risk", it seems that schools are largely being left to fend for themselves.

Principals, teachers and SGBs, already responsible for the most under-resourced sector of the education system, are being left with the bulk of the responsibility for school safety. Educators, particularly at poorer schools, are not capacitated for the development and execution of crime-prevention strategy.

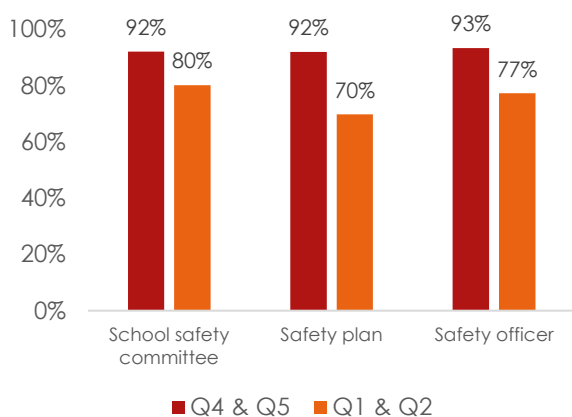


Figure 4 Percent of Schools with the Safety Structure and Where Administrators Were Aware its Function

Forty-three percent of schools have not had teacher training on safety in the last two years. Moreover, wealthier quintile 4 and 5 schools are 18% more likely to have had a training in the last two years than quintile 1 and 2 schools. Similarly, while more than 92% of quintile 4 and 5 schools had a school safety committee⁶ and administrators were aware of its function, this was true at only 70% of quintile 1 or 2 schools. As visible in **Figure 4**, similar divergences were visible for other structures.

7. Learners don’t currently use the Safe Schools Call Centre

The SSP has a Safe Schools Call Centre located in the WCED head office in Cape Town. The WCED states that “the Safe Schools’ Call Centre receives calls from learners experiencing any form of abuse, and provides a contact point for reporting burglaries, vandalism and other incidents...” and that is intended for coordinating, supporting, and making referrals to various and relevant stakeholders.

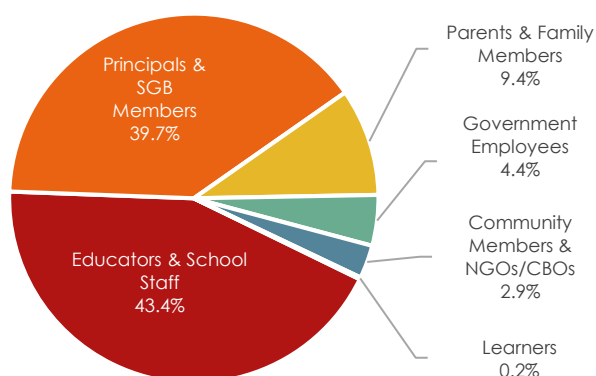


Figure 5 WCED Safe Schools Call Centre by Reporter Type for 2013/14 and 2014/15

WCED data shows that the call centre is almost exclusively used by principals and school staff. This could be explained by the fact that the largest volume of calls received by the centre concern reporting burglary/vandalism.

As **Figure 5** shows, learners by far make the least use of the call centre – just twelve calls in two years. Although the Safe Schools Call Centre is not necessarily targeting learners only, it is concerning that despite high levels of violence in schools, learners are not

using this resource. This is particularly troubling in regards to the illegal practice of corporal punishment in schools.

It should also be noted that, despite this significant mandate, the call centre staff consists of only five trained psychologists to serve 1600+ schools.

8. Economic privilege is a major determinant of school safety

Data from an extensive literature review, the social audit and the WCED’s own documents, confirm that learners in urban township schools are the least safe in the province:

⁶ The School Safety Committee is comprised of a range of different stakeholders in the school environment, including: parents, learners, educators, principals, members of the SGB and SMT, etc. The School Safety Committee is responsible for designing and implementing a School Safety Plan as well as collecting ongoing data to assess its effectiveness.

- Just 13% of urban quintile 5 schools are considered “High Risk,” while nearly half (45%) of urban quintile 1-3 schools are “High Risk.”
- Urban secondary school learners at quintile 1 schools are six times more likely to feel unsafe than those at quintile 5 schools.
- Quintile 1 and 2 schools were 23% less likely than average to have a security guard.
- Over the last three years 44% of schools experienced a case of burglary and vandalism but two-thirds of quintile 1-3 urban schools had an incident. Moreover, the wealthiest urban schools experienced only an average R11,154 loss to burglary and vandalism during the three-year period, while quintile 1 to three schools lost R31,300. This is despite evidence of significant underreporting.

KEY SANITATION FINDINGS

1. Only one in four schools have sanitation infrastructure for disabled learners

By the WCED’s own admission, more than half of schools (58%) lack a toilet with access for persons with disabilities. The findings of the audit are no less dramatic:

- At 74% of schools in the sample there was no toilet for persons with disabilities .
- This was even worse for rural schools, where 86% of the sample lacked a toilet for persons with disabilities.

Serious steps need to be taken by the WCED and DBE to address this. Reports by Human Rights Watch and the DBE itself reflect that mass exclusion of disabled learners from schooling is underway in South Africa.

2. Sanitary pad provision is inadequate and hugely unequal

It is well-established that learners miss days of teaching and learning over the course of their school careers due to lack of sanitary pads and other feminine hygiene products. The social audit found that:

- While 64% of learners do have some access to sanitary pads at school, in at least 15% of schools, learners must purchase the sanitary pads from the administration.
- In at least 8% of schools, access to sanitary pads exists solely because of donors – such as Procter and Gamble [Always] – providing free sanitary pads to the school.
- Inequality in sanitary pad access is enormous. While only one in five learners going to quintile 5 schools report no access to sanitary pads, more than half of learners at quintile 1 schools reported lacking access.

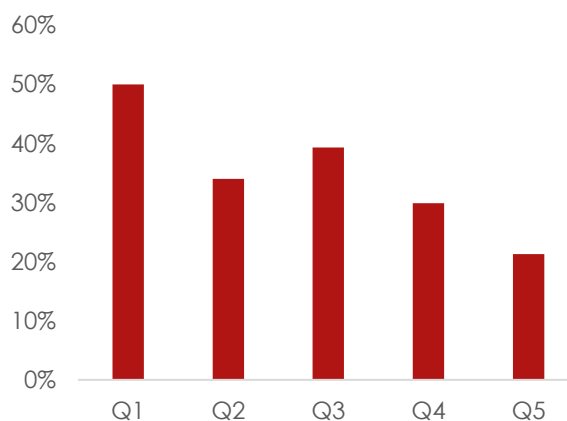


Figure 6 Percent of Schools Without Sanitary Pad Access by Quintile

- Only a third of all female learner toilet blocks had a sanitary bin. This could be a contributing reason for the high number of non-functioning toilets, as the disposal of sanitary pads in toilets leads to toilet blockages and breakages.
- While only 8% of female learner toilet blocks at quintile 1 schools had a sanitary bin, 72% of female learner toilet blocks at quintile 5 schools did: a nine-fold difference.

3. More than half of schools fail to meet minimum learner to toilet ratio

Without accounting for broken toilets, 42% of Western Cape schools sampled do not have enough toilets and urinals to meet the WCED minimum of one toilet for every 35 learners. When one accounts for the fact that 43% of toilets are broken, this number increases to 57%.

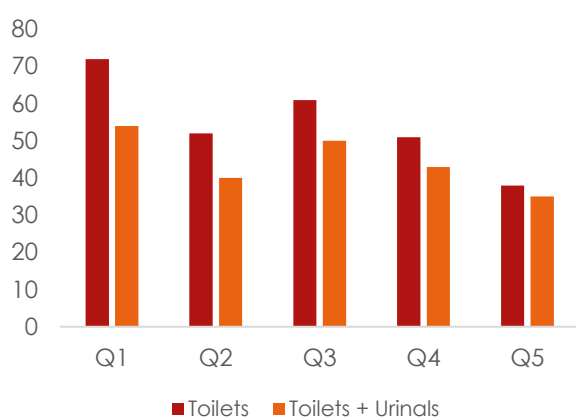


Figure 7 Median Number of Learners per Working Toilet by Quintile

4. There is distinct inequality along economic lines in access to decent sanitation.

The median number of learners per working toilet at an urban quintile 5 schools is 36, while at urban quintile 1 schools it is 54. The same inequality exists when one looks at the condition of toilet blocks - half of learner toilet blocks at quintile 5 schools are in good condition while only 17% of quintile 1 learner toilet blocks are.

5. Lack of maintenance staff and funding is likely contributing factor to poor access and conditions

The poor condition of the toilet blocks may be the result of a lack of funding for maintenance staff:

- Schools have on average 214.2 learners per maintenance person, with a quarter of schools having more than 296 learners per maintenance staff.
- Conditions are worse in urban areas, where there is an average of 245 learners per maintenance person, and almost one in ten have more than 400 learners for each maintenance staff member.
- There is one school in our social audit sample that has 1,206 learners per one maintenance staffer. It is no surprise then that 43% of the toilets at that school were broken.

6. Learners lack toilet paper and soap

More than a quarter of learners surveyed reported that there was no toilet paper in their bathrooms. Four in five reported no soap.

GENERAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF WESTERN CAPE SCHOOLS

1. An estimated 8% were built entirely out of inappropriate materials

These schools require attention under the *Regulations Relating to Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure*. As per those regulations, these schools should be replaced before November 29 2016. Furthermore, 21 schools on private land have been unreasonably excluded from the backlog of school planned for upgrades.

2. Only 41% of schools surveyed were built entirely out of appropriate materials

In this audit, container classrooms were considered partially inappropriate structures as there are many schools where auditors reported principals and teachers complaining that some of these container classes have been in place for years, some even before 1994.

The WCED continues to roll out new container classrooms en masse. In certain circumstances this can be justified, but it is unacceptable that these temporary structures be used on a permanent basis.

The *Norms and Standards* state that schools must be replaced within the first three-year time frame if they are built entirely from mud, asbestos, metal, wood, or other inappropriate material.

While this deadline is unlikely to be met, there is another key problem. The law does not currently say that the government must fix unsafe schools that are built *partially* from these inappropriate materials. That means that where schools have one or two solid structures, but the rest of the school is built from unsafe structures, these structures may not be fixed. The Equal Education Law Centre is in the process of challenging this flaw in the law.

3. The WCED will not upgrade infrastructure for public schools on private land

In their *Strategy for the Elimination of Public School Infrastructure Backlogs in the Western Cape*, the WCED has said that it will exclude government schools on privately-owned land from the infrastructure upgrades set out in the *Norms and Standards*. This alleged loophole allows the WCED to wash its hands of responsibility for 266 schools, 16% of all Western Cape Schools. As a result, more than half of schools the WCED identified as having inadequate fencing were eliminated from the backlog because they are on private land.

In **Appendix G** of our full social audit report, EE and its partners at the Equal Education Law Centre show that the argument that the province is not responsible for school structures on private land is extremely dubious. The duty of the State to provide for every person's right to a basic education includes ensuring that learners have access to a safe learning environment that advances a learner's dignity, and promotes the best interests of the child. This is not limited to learners educated on publicly owned land.

4. Many schools still lack libraries

Just 42% of learners reported having access to a library that was well-stocked with books. Though this is not entirely because of a lack of libraries:

- 21% of learners reported that their schools lacked a library.
- 11% reported that their library was locked or used for purposes other than a library.
- 8% reported that they were not allowed access to the library because there was no librarian.
- 19% reported that the library is poorly stocked.

This situation is worse in rural schools, at 30% of rural schools learners report no library at all.

5. The majority of learners still report no access to a computer lab with internet

This is despite 91% of learners reporting that their schools have computers. There are a number of reasons learners are deprived of access: computers are limited to those in a computer related course, there is a lack of teachers to supervise learners using the equipment, computer access is limited to a certain grade or only to staff, and the computers are in disrepair. A further 12% of learners report access to a computer lab without internet.

Conditions are worse in rural areas where 14% of learners report that their school has no computer lab.

6. Many schools still lack sports fields and recreational facilities

No access to a sports field was reported by 25% of learners. For the majority of those learners, being without access was a result of their schools not having a sports field (55%) – for the rest of learners there was a field but they did not have access to it. Of those learners who do have access to a sports field, 44% report that it is in poor condition.

Rural schools were less likely to have sports fields than urban schools: with 18% of rural learners reporting that their schools lack a sports field, compared to only 13% of urban learners.

SCHOOL BUDGETS ANALYSIS

1. Inequitable Allocations

The WCED provides substantially more in funding to quintile 4 and 5 schools than prescribed by the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NSSF). There is a need to demand more clarity on how exactly the WCED is determining per learner allocations and the overall school funding process. This is especially a concern as most quintile 1-3 schools rely on NSSF funding for more than 70% of their funding, while only a third of quintile 4 and 5 schools do.

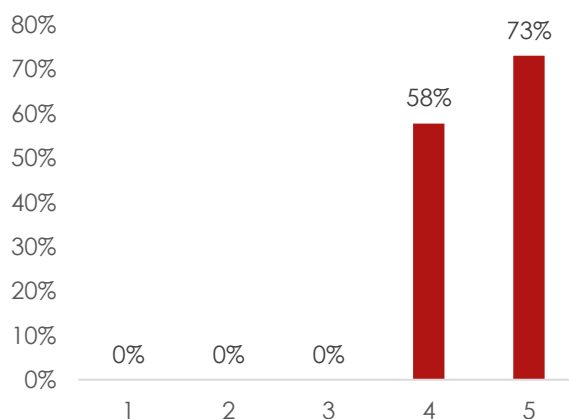


Figure 8 Percent WCED Funding per Learner Exceeds DBE Recommendations by Quintile (2015)

2. Day to day maintenance allocations may be insufficient

Schools appear to be failing to raise the revenue to pay for necessary maintenance, resulting in budget deficits.

It is very likely that the 6% recommended by the WCED is not sufficient for maintenance expenditures, especially at schools attended by the children of the working class. More than half of quintile 1-3 schools spent above the 6% recommendation, while only a third of quintile 4 and 5 schools did.

Instead of instituting punitive measures to discourage overspending, the WCED needs to provide additional subsidy support towards this allocation as well as provide guidelines to schools on how to accurately budget and plan for maintenance. Increased support by the WCED to schools for regular and consistent maintenance of school repairs is far more cost efficient in the long run.

3. More security funding is needed

Expenditure on security is a recurring non-personnel item which consists of a considerable amount of some school budgets. A third of schools spent more than R30,000 on security.

Furthermore, while quintile 4 and 5, and quintile 1-3 schools had similar median spending per learner on security (R22 and R24.5), wealthy schools had more of a capacity to spend substantial sums when needed: 16% of wealthy schools spent more than R100 per learner on security, while only 3% of poor schools did. This is despite poorer schools having a greater security need.

Regular additional subsidy support from both the DBE and WCED, targeted at high risk schools, is needed.

4. NNSSF allocations for poorer schools are not keeping up with inflation

NNSSF allocations are not keeping up with inflation and therefore unlikely to be sufficient to cover most of the school's expenses. As visible in **Figure 9**, This is especially true for lower quintiles. The WCED is encouraged to annually raise per learner allocations above, or at least at, the financial year's inflation rate.

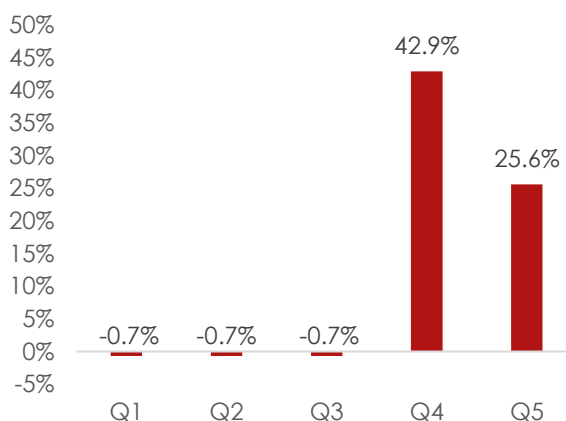


Figure 9 Percent Increase in NNSSF Allocations in 2014/2015, Adjusted for Inflation, by Quintile

5. There is evidence that schools are using of non-personnel funding for salaries, undermining their ability to provide maintenance or security

Three schools of the 13 no-fee secondary schools in the sample used a substantial portion (17% to 24%) of their discretionary funding on personnel.

The WCED must ensure that all schools in the province are supplied with an adequate number of educator and non-educator personnel in order to prevent diversion of funds away from critical non-personnel materials and services.

CONCLUSION

For over a year, EE has been working to engage the WCED on issues of safety and sanitation. While officials have at times responded positively and addressed some of our concerns, too often the reply has been that these issues are isolated incidents or that the responsibility falls on the schools, not the State. However, this social audit proves that the problem is systemic and requires a structural solution. The problem is not one bad teacher who is beating a child in his or her care, but rather teachers at four out of five schools disciplining through abuse. It is not incompetent principals failing to maintain their fences, it is a system in which half of schools lack the resources to properly secure the school premises. It is not naughty learners vandalising the toilets, it is that one in ten schools have more than 400 learners per maintenance staffer.

Instead of shifting the blame to teachers, schools, “absent fathers,” and “youth delinquents”⁷, the Western Cape government should accept its responsibility to ensure that the youth in its care receive the quality education they are guaranteed by the Constitution. While the extent of the crisis demonstrated in this report means that realising this right might take time, this is not an excuse for complacency. Rather, it is a demand for urgency. Therefore, EE and its supporters will continue to mobilise in the communities most affected, and in society more broadly, to pressure the provincial government of the Western Cape to reckon with the findings of this report.

Though our demands for equality have often been casually dismissed by the political leadership of the WCED, including the MEC of Education Debbie Schafer and the Premier of the Western Cape Helen Zille, our positive experiences with the bureaucracy of the WCED, from earnest principals to supportive senior officials, gives us hope. We are committed to taking whatever further steps are necessary to chart a just and equitable way forward for poor and working class learners in the Western Cape. Our goal is that this report will contribute to that effort.

⁷ Western Cape Premier Helen Zille quoted in Mzimang, Sisonke. 10 July 2016. “The DA’s racially loaded guns.” *City Press*.