

School Monitoring Survey reveals mixed bag of results

A survey taking stock of the progress made in terms of service delivery has revealed that the Basic Education Department (DBE) is making headway in providing libraries or media centres to schools.



© Wavebreak Media Ltd – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

Commissioned in 2017 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the national survey, known as the School Monitoring Survey (SMS), sought to measure the progress of ordinary public schools towards achieving the key goals and indicators set out in the Action Plan 2019, as well as the Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014-2019.

The 2017 SMS builds on SMS 2011, which allows the department to track delivery progress.

Library access increases

Delivering a presentation on the findings of the survey at a briefing on Monday, the Basic Education Department's Director for Research, Stephen Taylor, revealed that learner access to libraries increased from 45% to 62%.

“At a national level, learners’ access to libraries increased significantly from 45% in 2011 to 62% in 2017. It is encouraging to note that this increase has been largely pro-poor, with the largest improvements having been among Quintile 1 to 4 schools,” said Taylor.

Survey indicators

The survey focused on 13 indicators, most notable among them being the percentage of schools where all allocated teaching posts are filled; the percentage of teachers absent from school on an average day; the percentage of schools where the School Governing Body (SGB) meets the minimum criteria of effectiveness and the percentage of schools which comply with nationally-determined minimum physical infrastructure standards.

“We use the survey results to improve our planning in a bid to turbocharge the system towards greater efficiency,” said Motshekga.

A further accomplishment is a substantial increase in the percentage of schools where the SGB meets the minimum criteria of effectiveness, with the largest improvements seen among Quintile 1 schools.

More teacher posts filled, but absenteeism up

Although not strictly comparable, the survey also suggests that there may have been improvements among the number of schools where all allocated teaching posts were filled.

In 2011, the percentage of schools where all allocated teaching posts are filled was at 69% and in 2017, improved to 78%.

But despite the progress made, the SMS also showed areas that require improvement and further support.

On infrastructure, the survey showed that only 59% of schools comply with nationally-determined minimum physical infrastructure standards.

Teacher absenteeism has also peaked by 2% from 8% in 2011 to 10% in 2017.

Finally, the 2017 SMS also provided insights on some interesting trends concerning school management practices, such as the increased practice of centralised procurement of textbooks by provinces, as well as the relative importance placed on various school management documents.

Concluding the briefing, Minister Angie Motshekga acknowledged that the survey presented a mixed bag, adding that more work needs to be done.

“The information provided by the 2017 School Monitoring Survey will enable the department to fulfil its mandate of monitoring and evaluating education provision across provinces.

“The survey will assist in informing the next administration where to focus and areas that require improvement,” said Motshekga.