

ACTis provides risk analysis and early intervention recommendations against state capture and corruption in South African government institutions

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

ACT | ACCOUNTABILITY TRACKER

ISS | INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Gauteng Department of Education

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About the Institution

The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is mandated to provide, manage and support public basic education in Gauteng. This includes providing schools, educators, and learners with support, governance oversight, and implementation of the national education policy set by the Department of Basic Education. The Department reports to the Gauteng Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education. The accounting officer is the Head of Department. The Department’s expenditure for 2024/25 was R65.8m.¹ Its budget for 2025/26 is R68bn, about 40% of the Gauteng Provincial Government’s total budget.²

Flag Status

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
								
Improper appointments	Co-opting key functions	Climate of fear or favour	Corrupt awards	Financial malpractice	Obstructing accountability	Manipulating perceptions	Private gain	Shadow network

ISS Analysis

- ACTis has raised two flags for the GDE and placed two under monitoring.
 - Institutional instability at the senior management level weakens continuity, decision-making authority and effective oversight. This may create conditions in which governance safeguards are more easily bypassed, and accountability is diluted.
 - Governance weaknesses may be undermining procurement integrity and internal controls. The recurrence of linked entities across multiple contracts, combined with evidence of shared directorships and prior involvement in irregular contracts,
- suggests that the same network of actors may be benefiting from repeated awards. Rather than isolated incidents, procurement irregularities may reflect a pattern through which connected suppliers can secure multiple contracts over time.

 - Obstructing accountability may allow procurement risks to persist without corrective action.
 - Financial and procurement systems should be closely monitored, especially given that the GDE accounts for approximately 40% of the Gauteng Provincial Government’s budget.



- The impact of governance failures is significant. In late 2025, the Department reportedly failed to pay service providers

supplying food to children under the School Nutrition Programme, risking service disruption.³

Findings

Flag #1

Improper Appointments



The flag is being monitored due to acting appointments and high vacancy rates.

- The current Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at GDE, Omphitlhetse Mafora, has been acting in the position since November 2023, when the previous CFO, Johan van Coller, was seconded to the Office of the Premier.⁴
- The GDE has experienced high vacancy rates at the level of Deputy Director-General (DDG) over the last two years. According to the 2024/25 Annual Report, the Department recorded a 33% vacancy rate at the DDG level, with four of the six funded posts filled.⁵ In 2023/24, the Department had a 40% vacancy rate at that level, with three of the five funded posts filled.⁶

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards



The flag is raised due to indications that connected suppliers have been irregularly favoured with several contracts.

- Allegations have emerged of procurement irregularities in the GDE's 2025 contract awards to service providers supplying school nutrition. Court papers and a letter sent to Premier Panyaza Lesufi by rival bidders reportedly claimed that some of the 49 awarded entities were non-compliant with tax regulations, deregistered or not listed on the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) database. The letter to Premier Lesufi alleged that certain successful bidders had links to politically connected individuals. Three companies allegedly share the same director. One of these is Mbembest Industries, of which Thabang Mbembele is the director, according to CIPC records.⁷
 - Mbembele is also the director of Pro-Serve Consulting, a company that has done extensive work for Gauteng provincial departments. In 2021, the SIU found that Pro-Serve's appointment to help refurbish the AngloGold Ashanti hospital was 'flawed, unlawful and invalid' and froze the company's bank accounts.⁸ According to Pro-Serve's website, the entity has several ongoing infrastructure projects with the GDE.⁹



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

- GDE contracts for security services at schools, valued at R106m, were flagged as irregular by the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) in the 2024/25 audit.¹⁰ In November 2025, the Department released a statement acknowledging non-adherence to emergency procurement requirements for the security tender. They stated that consequence management was being undertaken.¹¹
- In the 2024/25 audit, the AGSA identified non-compliance with procurement requirements, including the use of deviations instead of competitive bidding, awarding contracts to unregistered contractors, and evidence that some contracts were not awarded in a cost-effective or fair-price manner.¹²

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice



The flag is raised due to systemic weaknesses in financial management.

- In the 2024/25 audit, the AGSA found material weaknesses in internal controls, resulting in non-compliance with applicable legislation and findings on the annual performance report. These were attributed to inadequate oversight of compliance by the accounting officer, ineffective monitoring by senior management, and deficiencies in the preparation, reliability and definition of performance reporting information.¹³

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability



The flag is being monitored for a wider pattern that the Department is avoiding scrutiny.

- The GDE has reportedly failed to comply with a court order regarding school nutrition contract awards (see Flag #4: Corrupt Awards). In May 2025, the Johannesburg High Court ordered the GDE to release bid adjudication records, evaluation scorecards, allocation details and award criteria for the contract. In September 2025, the Department had reportedly failed to comply with the order, with key procurement documents still outstanding. The Department reportedly maintained that parts of the requested record were not available or could not be produced.¹⁴



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

Recommended Actions

	DUTY BEARER	ACTION(S)	ASSOCIATED FLAGS
1.	Gauteng Department of Education	- Prioritise filling vacancies at a senior level. - Strengthen procurement and finance controls.	Flag #1: Improper Appointments Flag #4: Corrupt Awards Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
2.	Special Investigating Unit	Prepare and submit a Proclamation to investigate the 2025 school nutrition tenders as well as other large tenders flagged as irregular by the AGSA.	Flag #4: Corrupt Awards



Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

The 9 Flags

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

Improper appointments, dismissals or failure to remove individuals in senior positions may be used to drive a corrupt agenda.

Flag #2

Co-opting Key Functions

Informal control may be established over critical functions within the institution to abuse them.

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour

The working culture favours loyalty over duty; alignment with a corrupt agenda is rewarded, and resistance is punished.

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards

Contracts, licences, partnerships, loans and/or investments may be awarded irregularly and repeatedly benefit the same actors.

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice

The institution's financial management practices may be abused to advance a corrupt agenda.

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability

The institution's internal operations might be deliberately obscured to hide potential misconduct.

Flag #7

Manipulating Perceptions

A public narrative that frames misconduct as innocence may be promoted.

Flag #8

Private Gain

Illicit gains may be distributed to benefit the same actors.

Flag #9

Shadow Network

The same public and private actors may collude to gain control over an institution's assets and functions, benefiting repeatedly.

About ACTis

What is ACTis?

The Anti-Corruption Tracker Information System is an initiative of the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Project at the Institute for Security Studies. It provides analysis on corruption and state capture in South Africa, to inform early intervention and enforcement. It utilises a system of indicators and an AI-driven data-collection and analysis tool, validated by human experts. It identifies risks within individual government institutions and produces actionable recommendations to address them, with a view to disrupting patterns of state capture and corruption.

Findings are shared directly with government and other duty-bearers, civil society organisations, the media and the public, empowering authorities to intervene, strengthening accountability, and enabling citizens activism.

Links to ACTis Information:

Further project information may be found at the following links:

[Terms and Definitions](#)

[Project Methodology and Analytical Framework](#)

[About the Anti-Corruption and Accountability project](#)

[About the Institute for Security Studies](#)

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Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring

References

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Flag raised



Flag lowered



Under monitoring