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### **CITY PLANNERS**

**Scarce and critical skills  
Research Project**

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# **CITY PLANNERS**

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**Report for the Human Science Research Council Study on Scarce Skills  
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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>An overview of planning and the planning profession</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Claims of a shortage of planners</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Is there a shortage of planners?</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<i>How many are there?</i> .....	10
<i>Assessing the planning capacity shortfall</i> .....	14
<i>How many planners are needed?</i> .....	20
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	25
<b>Why is there a shortage of planners?</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<i>Contextual conditions: the demand for planners</i> .....	26
<i>The supply of planners</i> .....	30
<i>Supply/demand mismatches</i> .....	35
<i>Working conditions and salaries</i> .....	37
<i>Migration</i> .....	39
<i>Demographic factors</i> .....	40
<b>The impact of capacity shortfalls</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>Initiatives to address capacity shortfalls</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Sources</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<i>Interviews and Discussions</i> .....	48
<i>References</i> .....	49
<b>Appendix A: Comparison of SAQA and Planning School Graduate Data</b> .....	<b>53</b>

## Tables

Table 1: Availability of Planners by Race, 1994 and 2004 .....	12
Table 2: Graduates by Race, 1995 and 2004 .....	12
Table 3: Municipal Planning Capacity Outside of Metropolitan Areas 2006 – Some Indicators .....	15
Table 4: Categories of Municipal IDP capacity.....	17
Table 5: Provincial IDP Support Capacity .....	18
Table 6: Job Titles in Sunday Times Adverts .....	20
Table 7: Regional Distribution of Jobs Advertised (2004-6) and Non-Metro Municipal Vacancies 2005 .....	21
Table 8: Qualifications Requested in Sunday Times Adverts for Planners....	22
Table 9: Planning Capacity Required per Municipal Type .....	23
Table 10: Number of Planning Graduates by Qualification, 1995 to 2004 .....	30
Table 11: Changing Number of Planning Students Across Planning Programmes .....	32
Table 12: Planning Graduates 2003-6.....	33
Table 13: Growth in Planning Student Numbers 2003-6.....	33
Table 14: Growth in New Enrolments in Planning Schools 2003-6.....	34
Table 15: Planning Graduates by Race, 1995-2004 .....	34
Table 16: Remuneration levels in Sunday Times Planning Job Adverts 2004-6 .....	38
Table 17: Graduate figures: SAQA and Planning School Data, 2003 and 2004 .....	53

## Figures

Figure 1: Graduates by Race, 1995 and 2004 .....	12
Figure 2 Adverts for Planners April 2004-Sept 2006.....	21
Figure 3: Growth in Building Plans Passed in the Nine Major Cities, 2002- 2004 .....	29
Figure 4: Number of Planning Graduates by Type of Qualification, 1995-2004 .....	31
Figure 5: Planning Graduates 2003-6 (Planning School data).....	33
Figure 6: Planning Graduates by Race, 1995-2004 .....	34

## INTRODUCTION

City planning is the smallest of the professions studied by the HSRC. By 2004, according to data from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (SAQA, 2007), there were some 3790 graduates. Perhaps as a consequence, there is a paucity of data sources which can be used to analyse the extent to which a shortage exists, and the few studies of the profession are largely qualitative. It has also received little media attention, and is not a well known profession. City planning – or town/urban and regional planning (or simply ‘planning’ as in the 2002 Planning Professions Act) – was nevertheless designated as a ‘scarce skill’ in the context of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) and the Joint Initiative on Scarce Skills (JIPSA). Lack of planning capacity was seen as constraining development in two main ways: through slow processing of land development applications, which was seen as holding up development; and through the lack of transformation of South African cities, perpetuating conditions such as long and costly travel to work, with impacts on labour costs. In addition, the focus on infrastructure led development would also require increased planning capacity, in addition to engineers.

The nature of planning work has evolved over time in South Africa, as it has internationally. Under apartheid, planning was focused largely on the design and layout of settlements, and on the management of land use change. In addition, although planners were involved in the design of apartheid towns, cities and regions, and in the development of townships, most attention was paid to areas designated for whites. Planning in the post-apartheid period is far broader, and has diversified in various ways. While settlement design and land use management are still significant, there is much greater focus on broader development agendas, including developmental and participatory approaches. Considerable attention is now paid to the development needs of the poor and to redressing the spatial effects of apartheid. Thus strategic planning for the future development of cities, towns and regions is an important focus, as is the revitalisation of historically marginalised areas such as townships, informal settlements, and rural areas. Planning of this sort includes not only physical design, but also the integration of policies, programmes, and development initiatives within particular areas. Although planning as defined in the Planning Professions Act 2002 focuses largely on spatial planning, many planners are involved in far wider arenas. Statutory Integrated Development Planning (IDPs), intended to direct the work of municipalities and other agencies in their area, has become an important thrust for planners, although other professions also work on this terrain. Many planners have moved into areas such as local economic development, environmental management and housing. Planners have also played key roles in many of the area based development initiatives, such as the special integrated presidential programmes (SIPPs), the urban renewal programmes (URP), and the regionally based spatial development initiatives (SDIs). Thus planning as a field is relatively diffuse, and overlaps with other areas of skill and training, although there is arguably a fairly clear core.

In the late apartheid era, it was assumed that the demand for planners post-apartheid would grow considerably due to the diversification of the field and a focus on the needs of the majority, rather than the minority. A study of the demand for planners in 2001 (Todes et al, 2003), however, found that this expectation had not been realised. The fact that planning has been defined as a scarce skill by ASGISA and JIPSA suggests that this situation has since changed – that there might be a growth in the demand for planners which has not been matched by supply.

This paper explores whether this is the case. It uses SAQA's data on graduates, supplemented by data from planning schools and previous research to discuss supply issues. The Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) and Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) provide partial figures for conditions in local government, possibly the most important sphere of employment for planners. Vacancy data as reflected in adverts for planners in the Sunday Times provides some indication of trends. Due to the paucity of hard data on the demand side, the research has relied to a greater extent on qualitative interviews with key respondents, including the representatives of the planning profession and registration council, a selection of private consultants, senior planners in some of the metropolitan municipalities and provincial governments, and some researchers and academics who are close to these processes. Some 16 people were interviewed. A full list of respondents is contained in the reference list. JIPSA committee meetings on town and regional planning were attended, and documents and minutes produced for JIPSA were collected. In addition, the paper draws on the limited research conducted on these questions in the past, including a recent study on development planning capacity in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (Wendy Ovens and Associates, 2006).

The paper is structured as follows. The second section provides an overview of planning and the planning profession in South Africa – its scope, qualifications, registration requirements, and organisation. The third section examines why shortages are perceived to exist, while the following section uses quantitative and qualitative data to explore how real this perceived shortage is. The fifth section lays out reasons for the shortage, examining supply and demand factors, as well as other conditions. The sixth and seventh section considers the impact of the shortage, and initiatives to address it. The paper concludes by drawing together the main strands of the study.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF PLANNING AND THE PLANNING PROFESSION**

In 2002, the Planning Professions Act defined planning as follows after much debate:

'the initiation and management of change in the built and natural environment across a spectrum of areas....in order to further human



development and environmental sustainability, specifically in the fields of:

- (i) the delimitation, regulation and management of land uses;
  - (ii) the organisation of service infrastructure, utilities, facilities, and housing for human settlements; and
  - (iii) the co-ordination and integration of social, economic and physical sectors which comprise human settlements,
- through the synthesis and integration of information for the preparation of strategic, policy, statutory and other development plans within the South African development context'

Planning in this definition is concerned with land development, with both the management of change on a day to day basis, and with proactive future planning. It is intended to co-ordinate and integrate development. Although the Planning Professions Act provides the legal definition of planning, many planners work beyond the realm of land development as indicated above, in areas such as LED, housing, environmental management, and most importantly in IDPs.

Spatial planning as understood in terms of the Planning Professions Act, would be a component within broader processes of Integrated Development Planning, which deals with the overall priorities and development directions of a municipality, and its appropriate management. In terms of the Municipal Systems Act 2000, its focus is 'faster and more appropriate delivery of services and providing a framework for economic and social development in a municipality...Integrated development planning can contribute towards eradicating the development legacy of the past, making the notion of developmental local government work and fostering co-operative governance' (DPLG, 2001, p.16). IDPs are also intended to play a key role in inter-governmental planning and co-ordination. This broader sphere of planning however is also occupied by other professionals, particularly those with development and municipal management expertise in the case of IDPs. Similarly, planners work alongside professionals with other skills bases and training in areas such as LED, housing and environmental management.

In the recent deliberations of the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for planning, spatial planning is seen as the core focus for planning education, and as the discussion below indicates, it is also the main set of skills that are seen as being in short supply, although commentators point to a shortage of LED practitioners (Davies, 2007), and weaknesses in the capacity of those undertaking IDPs (Coetzee, 2007).

The Planning Professions Act provides for a system of registration of planners, and allows for the reservation of work for them, although no such definition of work exists as yet. The previous 1984 Town and Regional Planners Act did not define work that could only be done by planners, and simply reserved the title of town and regional planners for those registered in terms of the Act. The South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) was established in 2004 in terms of the Act, replacing the previous South African

Council for Town and Regional Planners (SACTRP). SACPLAN is responsible for the registration of planners and the accreditation of planning education, inter alia. SACPLAN has taken some years to be established, and there was something of a hiatus in the accreditation of planning schools, however this has begun to occur over the past year. In the meantime, accreditation under the previous SACTRP stands. New registrations of planners are also proceeding, but many planners who qualify for registration are unregistered, and there are several cases in which people are employed to do planning work without the necessary qualification. The numbers of registered planners are in the order of 1800, well below potential. In effect, there is little to compel registration or the use of registered planners, although this is likely to change in future. The effective 'deprofessionalisation' of planning is a concern for SACPLAN, and for the South African Planning Institute (SAPI), which represents the profession.

Apart from 'candidate planners' who are in training, the Act provides for the registration of two categories of planners: technicians and professional planners. Registration in either category requires education at a SACPLAN accredited training programme at tertiary level (to National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 6 for technicians, and NQF level 7 for professional planners), two years practical training, and the passing of a competency test, although this latter provision has not yet been implemented. There are four main educational routes towards registration:

- Three universities of technology offer 3 year national diplomas in planning, the second year of which largely involves supervised on the job experience. These diplomas provide the educational basis for registration as technicians.
- Graduates of university of technology national diplomas may go on to study towards a BTech in planning, which, under the 2002 Act, provides the educational base for professional registration. This differs from previous practice, where a university degree was required.
- Four universities offer 4 year undergraduate/honours degrees in planning, which provide the educational base for professional registration.
- Five universities offer 2 year Masters degrees in planning, which are open to graduates from other disciplines. These degrees also provide the educational basis for professional registration.

There are also some non-accredited planning courses, although these may become accredited over time.

Planning educators face a difficult task since the range of skills required for planning are diverse, and the field has broadened significantly over time. A set of broad competencies were developed by planning schools in 2000, and their validity was generally confirmed in a study of employers by Faling (2002). The formal process of defining competencies through a SGB was delayed, and the process is still in its early stages. Thus agreement on the range of skills and competencies required has still to be established, although there seems to be consensus that the focus should be on spatial planning.

This is also likely to be the arena in which any job reservation for planning will occur.

Institutionally, SACPLAN and the Planning Professions Act fall under the Department of Land Affairs (DLA)<sup>1</sup>. DLA is also responsible for the 1995 Development Facilitation Act, interim legislation which remains to be replaced by national legislation on spatial planning and land use management. A White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management was passed in 2000. In the absence of national legislation, the complex, fragmented and unequal system of apartheid land use management remains – a concern also raised by AsgiSA. Planning is a small component of a department that is concerned primarily about agriculture and land reform. Planning in the form of IDPs has been a major focus of the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), as has Urban Renewal, while responsibility for sustainable human settlements falls under the Department of Housing, and environment impact assessments, which overlap significantly with assessments of planning applications, falls under the Department of Environment and Tourism. The effective fragmentation of responsibility for planning, and the lack of a strong institutional base for it, has long been a concern for the profession.

## **CLAIMS OF A SHORTAGE OF PLANNERS**

The idea that there is a shortage of planners came from ASGISA, and was taken up subsequently by JIPSA. ASGISA documents themselves mention planning in three ways:

- 1) The apartheid spatial form, with its impacts on distance to work, and costs of labour, is noted as one of the binding constraints to growth.
- 2) The regulatory system, and particularly planning (and including environmental assessment, which occurs in parallel to planning assessment), was mentioned as a further binding constraint to growth. In 2005, claims were made that some R80b investment was being held up by problems in this arena (Harrison et al, forthcoming). Improvement in planning and zoning capacities is mentioned as part of the proposed solution.
- 3) Planning was seen as a scarce skill necessary for an infrastructure led growth path, along with engineering.

Urban and regional planning was identified as one of the first priorities for JIPSA. At the launch of JIPSA (27 March 2006), the Deputy President, the Hon. Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, identified these skills as critical and scarce. She argued that they were essential in achieving national targets for economic growth and for the creation of sustainable human settlements. At the first meeting of the JIPSA advisory group on urban and regional planning, the SAPI chairman, Ashraf Adam, linked concern about capacity scarcity to

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<sup>1</sup> This has been the case for historical reasons. Most professions in the built environment fall under the Council for Built Environment, under the Department of Public Works.

the first two problems linked to planning above. An initial business plan developed for this group argued that:

‘An effective, responsive and robust planning system is essential for sustainable economic development in South Africa. Firstly, the compilation of strategic plans for municipalities and regions provides an essential framework for both public and private investment in infrastructure, land development and urban or rural renewal. If these plans are unreliable, incoherent or ambiguous investors in both the public and private sector are reluctant to commit resources wholeheartedly to these projects. Secondly, the regulatory framework for considering and approving applications and proposals to develop land or invest in infrastructure has to be implemented efficiently, quickly and consistently. This is necessary firstly to ensure that actual patterns of physical development are consistent with the applicable plans and objectives but also to reduce the considerable holding costs that developers – from both the private and public sectors – have to bear, thereby releasing those resources for other purposes.’ (Berrisford, 2006, p.1)

This document however did not accept that there is necessarily a shortage of planners. Rather, it pointed to problems in the regulatory system for planning, and in the organisation of the planning profession, including registration and the definition of planning skills. Whether or not there is a shortage of planners remained an open question, and it was argued that in the absence of legal and other reform, there would be little point in scaling up the number of planners. Subsequently, however, concerns have been expressed that there might well be a shortage of planners. In the absence of good data, JIPSA is considering commissioning a detailed study to quantify the extent to which a shortage exists.

There are currently no good data sources on this question. The Department of Labour’s (DOL) Master Scarce and Critical Skills list (August 2006) gives a required figure of 50 urban and regional planners. This figure is recorded as being based on data from Local Government SETA (LGSETA), but is incorrectly reported: the correct figure is a requirement for 300<sup>2</sup> planners (Davies, 2007). LGSETA figures reflect requirements against municipal organograms, but mediated by provincial workshops to interrogate actual requirements. In the case of planning, however, the figure of 300 includes staff requirements in planning departments, and will include a range of other skills such as building plan inspectors and the like, who are not necessarily planners. Figures may however under-reflect the need since positions that are taken by unqualified people will not be shown as a vacancy (Davies, 2007). The Construction SETA and the Department of Science and Technology are recorded as ‘flagging’ urban and regional planning on the DOL list. No other official sources exist on whether planning is in fact a scarce skill, or the size of the shortage.

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<sup>2</sup> Data for municipalities which had submitted required information. It excludes the City of Cape Town, which, as indicated below, has a significant shortage of planners according to interviews.

## IS THERE A SHORTAGE OF PLANNERS?

### How many are there?

The total number of planners registered with SACPLAN as of June 2007 was in the order of 1800 (Dacomb, 2007). In May 2007, some 1599 people were members of SAPI, of whom 49 were retired, 89 were student members, and 57 were associate members (i.e. not qualified planners). The Association of Consulting Town and Regional Planners (ACTRP), representing private firms, had 220 members, and each firm is likely to have at least 2.5 principal planners (Dacomb, 2007), so firms registered with the ACTRP are likely to have at least 550 planners, in addition to junior planners. No gender or race breakdowns were available. As noted earlier, these numbers are likely to be significantly lower than the actual number of planners since many planners have not seen the value in registration with any institution. In 1999, for example, a survey of planners known to be operating in KwaZulu-Natal (Harrison and Khan, 2002) found that only 63.5% were registered with the then SACTRP, and only 44% of planners were members of SAPI. Berrisford (2006) estimated that there are about 3500 qualified planners in South Africa, assuming that around half of all planners were registered.

SAQA's (2007) graduate database<sup>3</sup> provides the best source of data on the likely number of planners in South Africa<sup>4</sup>. It incorporates data previously collected by the HSRC, going back to 1965, and has a dedicated analysis for 'town and regional planning'. Figures will reflect the total production of planners over the 40 year period from 1965-2004. On their data, there were some 3790 graduates by 2004. The actual figure for registrable planners is likely to be slightly lower since not all qualifications enable registration, but numbers here are likely to be small. According to data provided by planning schools, some 301 planners graduated in accredited programmes in 2005 and 2006 (excluding those with existing qualifications in planning), and a further 34 graduated in non-accredited courses. Thus the total number of planners in 2006 would have been around 4125, not very much higher than Berrisford's estimate. These figures do not take into account those who have retired, have left the profession, or have emigrated. There are no available figures on any of these dimensions. While the numbers of the former are likely to be small, since the real growth of the profession and of graduate numbers has been since the 1980s<sup>5</sup>, anecdotal evidence suggests that emigration is likely to be significant, particularly since the demand for planners in English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) has been high in recent years. At the same time, there is also

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<sup>3</sup> The SAQA data on 'availability' tracks graduates on an individual basis, so graduates with more than one degree are not duplicated. Data on annual number of graduates however record all graduates, irrespective of prior qualifications. Prior to 1986, data was based on a graduate survey. While response rates were high, growth since then might be overestimated (SAQA, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Due to the small size of the profession, data from the labour force survey is not usable. Planning is combined in 2141 with architects and traffic planners. In total numbers are small and LFS results vary significantly from year to year.

<sup>5</sup> Several of the planning schools were only established after the late 1970s.

something of an influx of planners from other parts of Africa, but numbers here are likely to be low, and certainly less than emigrants.

According to SAQA data (Table 1), some 71% of planners were white in 2004, and only 19% were African (and 9% were coloured or Indian)<sup>6</sup>. Although there is an overwhelming dominance of whites in planning, the picture has changed since 1994, when 90% of planners were white, and only 5% were African (and 3% were coloured or Indian). Under apartheid, Africans had to apply for permits to study planning, since courses were all at institutions which were then designated for whites, and the first African planner only graduated in 1981 (Badenhorst, 1995). African planning technicians were first admitted to one of the technikons in the late 1970s, and most employment for Africans in these years was in the former homelands. From the early 1990s, however, the number of black students in planning schools has increased significantly, rising from 30% in 1994 to 78% in 2003 (Todes and Harrison, 2004). This shift is beginning to be evident in graduate numbers, where the proportion of white graduates dropped to 30.7% by 2004<sup>7</sup> (Table 2), but it remains to be reflected fully in the overall population of planners. SAQA figures also show a rising proportion of women in planning, although they accounted for only 34% by 2004 – up from 28% in 1994.

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<sup>6</sup> There were a total of 721 African planners, and a further 320 coloured and Indian planners.

<sup>7</sup> Some 55.5% of graduates were African, with the remainder being coloured or Indian

**Table 1: Availability of Planners by Race, 1994 and 2004**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1994 (%)</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2004 (%)</b>
<b>African</b>	112	5	721	19
<b>Coloured</b>	24	1	148	4
<b>Indian</b>	55	2	172	5
<b>White</b>	2009	90	2702	71
<b>Unknown</b>	44	2	48	1
<b>Total</b>	2244	100	3791	100

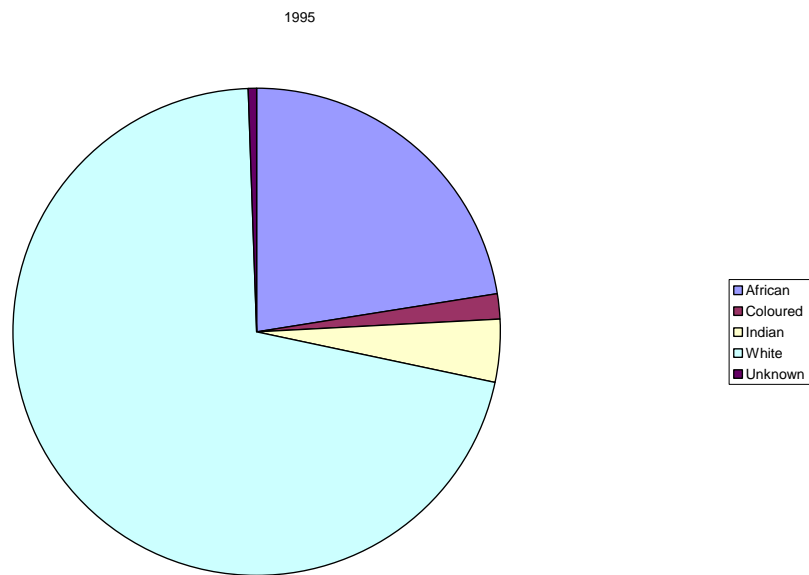
Source: SAQA (2007)

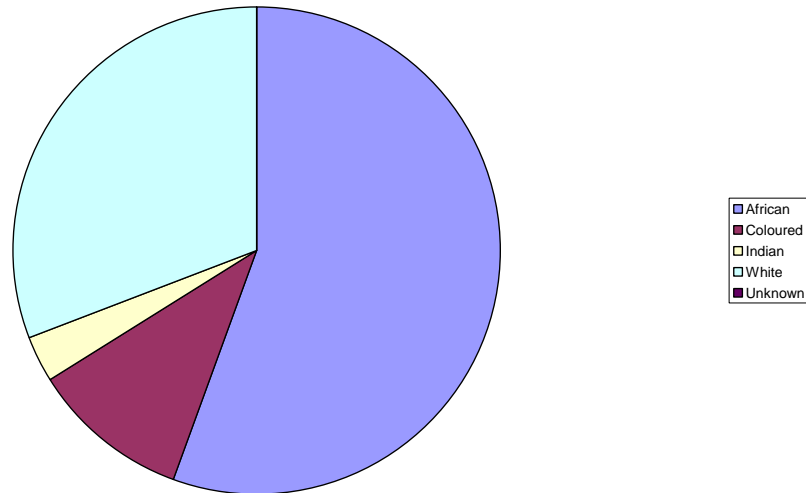
**Table 2: Graduates by Race, 1995 and 2004**

	<b>1995</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>African</b>	47	85
<b>Coloured</b>	3	16
<b>Indian</b>	9	5
<b>White</b>	148	47
<b>Unknown</b>	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>153</b>

Source: SAQA (2007)

**Figure 1: Graduates by Race, 1995 and 2004**





Planners work in a range of spheres, both public and private. It is not clear what the distribution of planners between the public and private sector is. Surveys of SAPI members by Badenhorst in 1983 and 1993 showed a shift from planning as a predominantly public to private sector activity (Badenhorst, 1995). In 1983, some 33.9% were employed in the private sector, compared to 49.6% in the public sector, and 16.5% in other institutions. By 1993, these proportions had shifted to 47.7% in the private sector, 40.6% in the public sector, and 11.4% in other organisations. Badenhorst's 1993 survey was undertaken in a period in which considerable privatisation and out-sourcing was occurring in planning. By 2001, this picture seemed to have changed, with a decline in the number and size of the private sector. Todes et al's (2003) study of the market for planners suggested that planners were more often employed in the public sector, although hard figures were not available. This situation may have changed since then, and all private sector firms interviewed reported a huge growth in demand for their services, and that of the private sector in general. Berrisford's (2006) estimate for JIPSA suggested that 57% of planners might be in the private sector, and only 34% in the public sector, but this is acknowledged to be complete guess work. It seems unlikely that trends have shifted so far towards the private sector.

Within the public sector, most planners work in local government, but there are also substantial numbers in provincial planning (and sometimes housing, environment and economic development) departments, and in national government. Planners are also employed in parastatals, academic and research organisations, and in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Drawing on 2005/6 MDB material, which provides data for the 272 non-metropolitan municipalities, some 682 people were employed to undertake the planning function and a further 232 were brought in as and when needed. Thus a total of 914 people were employed in local government outside of the 6 metropolitan municipalities. It is not possible to establish whether people employed in planning have planning qualifications, as the MDB data does not



provide this information. It is estimated that around 380<sup>8</sup> people are employed in planning positions in the metros, thus the total number of people in planning positions in local government is likely to be of the order of 1294.

### **Assessing the planning capacity shortfall**

It is difficult to quantify the extent of the shortage of planners, but available data and interviews do seem to suggest that there is a shortfall, and provides some indication of the levels at which it exists. The following section presents available evidence, which while fragmentary, does begin to provide a sense of the shortfall.

As indicated above, local government is probably the most important sector where planners are employed. Interviewees argued that while capacity shortfalls for planning exist in all types of municipalities, conditions are generally better in the metros, and worse in the smaller and more rural municipalities. None of the three metros interviewed (City of Cape Town, City of Joburg and eThekweni) however are employing the full complement of staff on their organogram. In all three cases, the process of amalgamation of various entities in 2000 had led to a moratorium in employment of planners and/or a decline of planners as very slow processes to replace staff were coupled with significant attrition as planners moved into the private sector or to positions in other authorities. Capacity levels dropped substantially, and together with cumbersome regulatory systems, resulted in slow processing of development applications (Sim et al, 2004).

Since then, Joburg has been able to argue for significant increases in employment, and are now at around 75% of capacity. Gaps are primarily at the level of more skilled and experienced staff. Although it would be possible to find staff to bring numbers up to 100%, it would be difficult to find the level of skills and experience needed. Turnover is high, with significant competition for staff between the three metros in Gauteng.

In eThekweni, capacity levels have recently increased from 50% to 60%. They would like to move to 75% of the figures on the organogram, but there are budget constraints, and they are concerned about bringing in inexperienced staff who would be difficult to mentor and manage. Experienced and skilled planners are not easily available. There is also a concern that despite staff shortages, some staff under-perform, and there is an unwillingness to bring in further staff who might be unproductive. Nevertheless, they are under pressure and this is affecting the quality and efficiency of planning and environmental assessments. This has been exacerbated by the growing number of applications.

The City of Cape Town is experiencing a significant capacity constraint, particularly as the strength of building boom has placed huge demands on the

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<sup>8</sup> Based on figures for eThekweni and the City of Joburg, which each have around 70 planners. These figures differ from numbers for planning departments, which are far larger. It can be expected that Nelson Mandela metro will have far fewer planners.

municipality, but has also expanded the demand for private sector work, and hence the competition for planners. Capacity levels are around 35-50% depending on the unit, and jobs are being advertised nationally to find the necessary skills.

The situation is worse outside of the metros, particularly in more rural and peripheral municipalities, although some larger cities face serious shortages of planners. For instance, in Buffalo City, some 47% of the 36 planning positions were vacant in 2005. A staff of 14 (3 planning professionals and 11 technicians) are responsible for the land use management function covering a population of 702 279. Parnell et al (2007) comment that most of this staff came from the previous East London Transitional Council, and might have been adequate for this area, but it now has to cover a far larger area, including King Williamstown, Bisho and large rural and semi-urban areas. Planners now have to deal with legislation covering all of the previous entities, and are highly stretched in this context. Staff turnover is high, and the training of new staff takes time and resources.

According to the MDB's municipal capacity reports, there were some 310 municipal planning vacancies in 2005. Although this number is similar to figures from the Local Government SETA, it does not include the 6 metros. MDB data also shows that while almost all municipalities provide a planning function, only 30.4% of municipalities say that they have adequate staff to perform the function, and 58% say that they do not have adequate staff to do so<sup>9</sup>. Some 20.3% have no full-time staff, and rely entirely on external providers. Table 3 provides an overview of the situation. Insufficient staff (often in combination with insufficient budgets and/or equipment) is a reason for a failure to provide a planning service to all parts of the municipality in 30% of municipalities. Although municipal capacity reports indicate that most municipalities have some capacity to deliver the planning function, it is problematic or uneven in several districts.

**Table 3: Municipal Planning Capacity Outside of Metropolitan Areas 2006 – Some Indicators**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Dedicated budget for planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 169 (61.4%) municipalities have a dedicated budget</li> <li>• 69 (25%) municipalities use part of another budget</li> <li>• 37 (13.4%) municipalities did not answer the question</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Staff adequacy to perform the planning function</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84 (30.4%) have adequate staff</li> <li>• 165 (58%) do not have adequate staff</li> <li>• 26 (9.4%) did not respond</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Availability of full time staff to perform the planning function</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 159 (57.8%) use full time staff only</li> <li>• 48 (17.4%) use full time staff and external when needed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<sup>9</sup> The remaining 9.6% did not respond to the question.

- 56 (20.3%) no full time staff, use only external
- 12 (4.3) did not respond

**Source:** MDB Capacity Assessments (2005/6)

The IDP is one significant element of planning practice, although other professions also play an important role here as indicated above. The MDB's (2005/6) national report indicates that a large number of IDP Manager posts are not filled, and further that people in this position frequently have limited experience and qualifications which are inappropriate to the position in terms of their level. Some 62% of IDP managers have 5 years or less experience in local government, and only 14% of IDP Managers have experience related to planning and development. Unfortunately, the MDB data does not provide information on the qualifications, skills and experience of people filling the planning function beyond the IDP Manager.

While the MDB data provides a useful overview of the situation, in some respects it underestimates how problematic conditions are. An in-depth study of municipal development planning capacity in KwaZulu-Natal by Wendy Ovens and Associates (2006) provides a greater understanding of the issues. KwaZulu-Natal is generally seen as one of the stronger provinces in terms of planning, particularly since it has a well established and long-standing provincial planning department (the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs) which is highly proactive. It has played an active role in developing and supporting municipal planning capacity. In relation to KwaZulu-Natal, the MDB assessments do point to problems of limited budgets for planning, and poor staffing in some of the more peripheral areas, but the Ovens report goes much further.

It examined 7 municipalities in some detail, and concluded that in most districts, there is a lack of spatial planning capacity, and a lack of staff with relevant planning qualifications. There is an absence of experienced personnel who can do the integrated and strategic planning that is required in terms of current legislation. Thus work undertaken tends to meet minimum legal requirements, rather than fulfilling actual intentions. Although posts might be filled, staff are not necessarily appropriately qualified, and there has been a tendency in some places to fill positions on a political basis, rather according to appropriate qualifications and skills. Further, senior municipal managers do not always understand the planning function and what is required, and do not given it the attention or support it needs. Only a small proportion of staff has a planning qualification, and in some cases staff employed have a lower level of qualification than what is needed. In some cases, staff are attempting to upgrade their qualifications, but courses are not easily accessible. Where planners are employed, they are usually overworked, and vacant posts are common. Municipalities also lack enforcement capacity. In some municipalities, all planning is outsourced to the private sector, raising potential conflicts of interest when the same firm acts for private developers as well as the municipality. There is also little emphasis on skills development or attention to addressing skills gaps within the

municipalities studied, apart from in eThekweni metro, which styles itself as a learning organisation.

A study in 2003 by the CSIR on IDP capacity (Coetzee et al, 2004) as the first stage of a capacity building programme found significant deficits in municipal capacity. Municipalities were assessed against four categories of municipal capacity with regard to IDPs (Table 4). The study found that only 7% fell into category 4, where municipalities are able to undertake and implement a good IDP. Some 20% lacked the basic resources to do so (category 1), while 53%<sup>10</sup> fell into Category 2, requiring support to produce a good IDP, and the remaining 20% were able to produce a good basic IDP, but were unable to implement it (Coetzee and van Huyssteen, 2004).

**Table 4: Categories of Municipal IDP capacity**

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	MUNICIPALITIES %
1. Municipality requires support before it is ready to start doing IDP	The municipality does not have the basic resources e.g. finances, skills, and knowledge to undertake an IDP. If the key structural matters are not tackled, it is not possible for municipality to make any progress on owning and driving the IDP. NB: the municipality might contract the IDP to a consultant but it is not owned or controlled by the municipality because it lacks structural capacity.	7
2. Municipality ready to start but needs support to complete a good basic IDP	The municipality has in place the finances, skills, political will to drive the IDP process. They produce an IDP that does not have proper form or commitment to inform their implementation. NB: they can use consultants for parts of the IDP but are beginning to drive an adequate IDP Planning process themselves.	53
3. Municipality able to complete good basic IDP but needs support to implement.	The municipality has driven the process of IDP producing an IDP that supports a practical programme of delivery. It cannot deliver more than 30% of their planned programme because of lack of capacity to manage the implementation whether internally or using external contractors.  Can use consultants for planning and implementation but still do not control or deliver the implementation.	20
4. Municipality able to complete good basic IDP and implement.	Municipality is driving and managing a good basic IDP and delivering a substantial part of its annual programme.  Use consultants for some part of planning and implementation but control the consultants and processes internally.	20

Source: Coetzee and van Huyssteen (2004)

<sup>10</sup> The evaluation process was undertaken by PIMS centres, which classified 33% of municipalities as category 2, and 40% as category 3. Overall project assessors however argued that half of those in category 3 should really have been categorised as category 2.

Provincial capacity to support IDPs in many provinces was also seen as wanting in several cases, with understaffing, lack of skills and experience, and high staff turnover (Table 5). Although the situation may have changed since the assessment, it does give a picture of conditions.

**Table 5: Provincial IDP Support Capacity**

<b>Province</b>	<b>Provincial IDP Support Capacity</b>
Eastern Cape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated IDP unit and extremely limited capacity to support integrated development planning and implementation. Plans to establish IDP Unit when new departmental organogram is operationalised 1 April 2004.</li> <li>• Lack of provincial staff to deal with IDP, internally and also externally.</li> </ul>
Free State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IDP Support Unit should consist of 5 persons: the IDP Co-ordinator and four staff members. The unit currently only consists of 2 permanent staff members and one person helping out. A new IDP co-ordinator was recently appointed, but needs support to tackle the challenges in the province.</li> </ul>
Gauteng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal IDP Support Unit with 3 staff members; position of IDP Coordinator (Deputy Director) vacant at present.</li> <li>• Continuous turnover in staff with subsequent lack of experience and skill.</li> <li>• Gauteng does have a Municipal Institutional Support Centre (separate Unit from IDP Support), which does also cater for IDP support. Support delivered by consultants appointed in municipalities, some problems experienced in this regard.</li> </ul>
Kwa-Zulu Natal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated team of skilled professionals (15 staff members dedicating approximately 30% of time to IDP support). Most of the staff has been exposed to IDP training. Most staff has been involved in IDP since 2000/2001, ensuring a continuum of skills and experience.</li> </ul>
Limpopo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very small team available to provide support at municipal level – only the provincial coordinator with one assistant (latter spending more or less 50% of time on IDP assistance). Requires support in terms of skills, personnel number, authority, geographic spread.</li> </ul>
Mpumalanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small team but with high turnover, need more experience and skills to support properly.</li> </ul>
North West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial IDP Unit with limited capacity in place, Turnover in staff has been high: recently lost 2 experienced staff members. The Unit presently consists of one newly appointed, fairly inexperienced staff member.</li> <li>• Need for technical support and training.</li> </ul>
Northern Cape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small unit of four people. A new IDP co-ordinator has been appointed recently.</li> <li>• The unit is committed but need training and support to develop the appropriate support capacity.</li> </ul>
Western Cape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small team of dedicated staff (2) need to support many municipalities, limited time available per municipality.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Adapted from Coetzee and van Huyssteen (2004)

In a recent report on urban land management (Parnell et al, 2007)<sup>11</sup>, the limited number of planners at provincial level was noted as a problem, slowing planning approvals. For instance, Joburg claims that the Gauteng province has a two year backlog of applications to process due to capacity constraints. A similar situation pertains in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. In the Eastern Cape, there are only 3 planners covering the needs of the whole province, while in KwaZulu-Natal numbers currently sit at 7 qualified planners. In the case of KwaZulu-Natal, capacity constraints are the result of a three year moratorium on employment in the context of departmental reorganisation, and current levels are seen as way below needs (Brooks, 2007). Although a new organogram is being approved, recruitment processes could take up to a year to fill new posts. Nevertheless, this department at least has several staff at senior level who are highly experienced. It is worth noting that KwaZulu-Natal's staff requirements in its draft new organogram are for some 73 non-administrative staff in its municipal strategic planning, spatial planning and land use management sections, although this includes technical planners and assistants, and posts which do not have to be filled by planners (such as around IDP support). Western Cape provincial departments dealing with planning also note shortages of planners and difficulties in recruiting them, particularly at more senior levels. Junior staff often stay only for short periods of time and then move to other areas of the country.

Several interviewees argued that in many municipalities and provinces the need for planners is not recognised or understood. Thus staffing levels are low, and the range of tasks that planners might perform are neglected. Some argued that several national departments would also benefit from a greater use of planners, with their potential to co-ordinate across sectors, institutions and spatially.

In general terms, planning shortages are at the level of more skilled and experienced people, rather than at entry level. Given that black planners have only recently come into the profession, the shortage of black planners at this level is particularly notable. There has been a tendency to push graduates into higher level positions than they have experience for, and given shortages, there is often insufficient mentoring. The private sector also experiences constraints in their capacity to mentor new staff, and some have difficulty in finding experienced planners, particularly black planners. One respondent commented that they could not compete with the much higher wages in the public sector. Others point to the difficulty of finding middle to senior level staff who can run projects. Some firms experienced difficulties in finding particular sets of skills, and a few respondents are employing people with qualifications outside of planning, either due to the skills needed (e.g. architects) or due to their availability. In several cases, planning firms have remained relatively small, and senior planners frequently set up on their own, although firms however have grown in recent years.

Although there are still many problems with the skills available for IDPs, most respondents argued that it is particularly spatial planning skills that are in

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<sup>11</sup> The study focused on Joburg, eThekweni, Buffalo City, Mangaung and Cape Town

short supply, ranging from strategic planning, to land use management, to practical design, and implementation.

## How many planners are needed?

### ***Vacancy data***

As indicated above, LGSETA data (2006) gives a figure of 300, while MDB data suggests a figure of 310, excluding the 6 metros. These figures however reflect departmental requirements (i.e. for all staff within departments, not only planners) and may thus overestimate requirements. Nevertheless, they do not include needs in other spheres of government or outside of it. Department of Labour's database on adverts from the Sunday Times Business Section provide another source of data, but it needs to be recognised that many organisations do not advertise in the Sunday Times as it is too costly. In many cases, recruitment will occur through networks or local advertising. The Sunday Times data for the period April 2004 – September 2006 was analysed for SASCO numbers 2141 and 3118. All job titles reflected a call for planners of some sort (see Table 6), but analysis may have missed some adverts classified under other SASCO numbers, for instance, the Department of Land Affairs's frequent adverts for 'planners'<sup>12</sup> do not seem to be captured here<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 6: Job Titles in Sunday Times Adverts**

<b>Job Title</b>
Assistant town planner/planning assistant
Town planning/development and planning officer
City planning/town planning technician
Junior professional planner
Town and regional/city/town/ regional/development planner
Planner
Town and transport planner
Urban designer
Senior planner/ town and regional planner
Principal professional planner/town and regional planner
Deputy chief town and regional planner
Chief town and regional planner
Local expert: development planner
Principal urban designer
Specialist/senior specialist: strategic urban planner
City spatial development and urban design manager

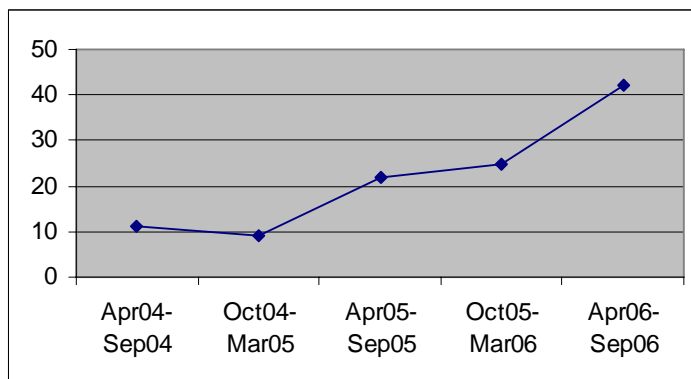
<sup>12</sup> In fact the planners required are often land reform specialists, although adverts also cover planning in the sense described in this paper.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the name of the advertiser is not captured for all adverts, but the term 'planner' only appears in 4 cases, one of which is a private company. Neither of the remainder are classified as a 'central government activity', as might be expected.

Over the period of study, some 109 jobs were advertised. Differences in the numbers between advertised jobs and actual vacancies will reflect differences in the time periods for the two data sets, other forms of recruitment than the use of national adverts, but also the fact that many jobs exist on organograms but there are no budgets or real intentions to fill them.

Importantly, the number of job adverts grew over the period of study (Figure 2), suggesting a rising demand for planners.

**Figure 2** Adverts for Planners April 2004-Sept 2006



**Source:** DOL Sunday Times Advert Database

Unfortunately, information provided on qualifications, experience, employer and location in the DOL advert database is not complete, but available data indicates that most employment advertised in this way is for middle to senior level professional planners. Using a combination of job title and years of experience<sup>14</sup>, some 61% of jobs were for people in senior positions and/or with 5 years experience or more. This is consistent with interviews, but is also to be expected in advertising in a national newspaper. Employment offered was largely in the public sector<sup>15</sup> (84%), primarily in municipalities<sup>16</sup> (61% of the public sector). The largest number of adverts were for jobs in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, and to a lesser extent in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. As would be expected these figures do not entirely correspond with the spatial distribution of municipal planning vacancies, although the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal emerge as important in both.

**Table 7: Regional Distribution of Jobs Advertised (2004-6) and Non-Metro Municipal Vacancies 2005**

Province	Jobs Advertised	%	Municipal Vacancies	%
KwaZulu-Natal	10	10.99	57	18.39
Western Cape	18	19.78	38	12.26
Limpopo	4	4.40	35	11.29
Gauteng	23	25.27	28	9.03
Mpumalanga	2	2.20	29	9.35

<sup>14</sup> Years of experience were only given in 28 cases.

<sup>15</sup> Public/private was only recorded in 78 cases.

<sup>16</sup> Actual employer was only recorded in 48 cases.



<b>Eastern Cape</b>	29	31.87	<a href="#">49</a>	15.81
<b>Northern Cape</b>	2	2.20	9	2.90
<b>Free State</b>	3	3.30	27	8.71
<b>North West</b>	0	0.00	38	12.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** DOL Sunday Times Job Advert database, Municipal Demarcation Board Capacity Assessments

Qualifications required were only captured in 49 cases. A specific degree or diploma in planning was mentioned only in 43% of cases, and in 21 cases, a further 18% mentioned a 'relevant qualification' or a 'formal qualification' (Table 8). This may reflect the general neglect of specific planning qualifications noted above, but could also indicate the way in which data has been captured.

**Table 8: Qualifications Requested in Sunday Times Adverts for Planners**

<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Planning diploma	7	14.29
Planning degree	11	22.45
Planning	3	6.12
Relevant qualification	5	10.20
Formal qualification	4	8.16
Tertiary qualification	1	2.04
Degree/diploma	10	20.41
Degree	7	14.29
Architecture, civil engineering, urban design	1	2.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** DOL Sunday Times Job Advert database

### ***Replacement Demand Requirements***

Unfortunately no data is available on replacement requirements, however as indicated previously, much of the growth of the profession has been since the 1980s. Some 52% of all planners and 88% of African planners who have graduated in South Africa have done so since 1991<sup>17</sup>. From this perspective, retirements are not a major concern in the immediate future, although obviously skills and experience are lost in this way. Some 3% of SAPI's membership, excluding students, is retired, and if this figure is applied to the total number of planners, then around 134 planners have retired. Over the next 10 years, a similar number is likely to retire. Emigration is probably a larger concern, but there are no estimates of numbers here.

### ***Norms***

No norms have been established with regard to the number of planners that are needed in various authority types. This is a significant gap in assessing the shortage of planners. Ovens and Associates (2006) attempted to delineate the type of planners needed for various municipalities. They develop

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, no graduate data prior to this is available. Based on SAQA (2007) data, and HSRC (1999)

the following typology (Table 9), and detail the skills and competencies of required of municipal planners, but do not estimate the number of planners needed for each type of municipality.

**Table 9: Planning Capacity Required per Municipal Type**

Category	Description	Qualification	Experience (Years)
1	Local municipalities which consist largely of traditional authority areas.	NQF 6 (diploma/degree) SACPLAN registration	5
2a	Municipal areas with one or more towns which are located former TBVC states	NQF 6 (diploma/degree) SACPLAN registration	5
2b	Municipal areas with one or more towns which are located outside of former TBVC states	NQF 6 (diploma/degree) SACPLAN registration	5
3	Municipalities with large towns	NQF 7 (degree) SACPLAN registration	7
4	Metropolitan municipalities	NQF 7 (degree) SACPLAN registration	10

**Source:** Wendy Ovens and Associates (2006)

In practice, skills and experience of planners (or heads of planning) are frequently far lower than required in Table 9 in categories 1-3, and as noted, not all municipalities have planners of any level. Further it should be noted that the numbers of planners employed per municipality are very low compared to developed countries.

***Policy Requirements and Anticipated Changes in the Requirements for the Profession***

In recent years, the main policy requirement that planners have focused on has been the production of Integrated Development Plans, which every municipality has to produce every five years, with an annual review. As previously noted, other professions are also involved here. No estimates were made of the numbers of planners were required for this task, but it should be noted that the Planning Information and Management Support (PIMS) set up to support IDPs worked on a model of an office with 2 planners in each district, which were later intended to be absorbed into the municipality. There is currently widespread concern about the quality of integrated development plans, and there are moves to introduce more 'credible' plans, based on stronger analysis, and with more specific and well developed plans. This is likely to increase the demand for planners, as well as other professionals.

Moves towards creating a stronger inter-governmental system of planning, linking departmental sectoral plans with better developed IDPs, provincial spatial development strategies (PGDS), and the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), could also increase capacity requirements.

Planners are also playing significant roles in the important policy areas of urban renewal, housing, local economic development and environmental management, but usually alongside other professionals, as noted above.

The production of Spatial Development Frameworks as part of the IDP is also a statutory requirement, but no estimates have been made of the numbers of planners required to undertake these plans, nor of land use management. Spatial development frameworks have tended to be quite broad, but there has been a move in recent years for better developed and more detailed plans. The DPLG's call for more 'credible' IDPs also includes far more detailed spatial development frameworks, which is likely to increase the demand for planners.

National legislation on land use management has been outstanding for several years, but most provinces and municipalities have some form of land use management system, which requires administration and decision-making by planners. In addition, a system of Development Tribunals, usually dealing with major land use applications, is in operation in most provinces, and this reportedly makes huge demands on planning capacity as processes work with short, legally defined time periods for decision-making, and tend to displace other needs (Sim et al, 2004). This system was however set up by the Development Facilitation Act, intended as interim legislation, and may be replaced or modified by national land use management legislation, although this is unlikely to reduce the requirement for planners.

The Planning Professions Act 2002 makes provision for work reservation for planners. While no such reservation currently exists, it is likely that in future particular types of work will be defined that will have to be signed off or undertaken by registered planners at different levels. This will enable SACPLAN to insist that registered planners occupy senior positions in planning authorities, and that firms undertaking these types of work contain registered planners at senior level. Given the tendency to disregard planning qualification or registration at present in many municipalities and other authorities, the implementation of this legislation could increase the demand for registered planners. Smaller municipalities in particular are likely to be affected by this provision, but even larger authorities might need to respond to this requirement. It is most likely that reservation would occur around spatial planning, particularly strategic spatial planning (including the production of spatial development frameworks), and land development, design and management (including settlement planning and design; land use planning, policy and management, inter alia)<sup>18</sup>.

According to one member of SACPLAN, some employers are now insisting on registration before certain posts can be filled. Within the private sector, it is not possible to procure professional indemnity insurance without registration, but this is becoming a government requirement when tender appointments are made for town and regional planners (Dacomb, 2007). Thus it is likely that planning registration will become more important in future.

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<sup>18</sup> These correspond to areas of focus emerging from the SGB for planning.

## Conclusion

The evidence available does seem to confirm assumptions that a shortage of planners exists, although it is difficult to quantify its extent. At one level, municipal planning vacancy figures are not purely for planners, and thus may overestimate the requirement, but at another, there are many cases where non-planners are employed in planning positions, so estimates of actual vacancies may be too low. There are also cases, such as the KZN Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (DLGTA), where a moratorium on employment due to restructuring has depleted numbers considerably, and positions have not been advertised for several years. In addition, in several instances, the importance of planning has not been fully understood, and levels of employment are lower than needs. Planners with limited experience or people without planning qualifications are being employed, particularly in the smaller municipalities, where there is no capacity to support or mentor them. Further, new or recent graduates are expected to move into high level positions for which they have little experience.

The shortage of planners seems to occur at the level of more senior and experienced planners, and from this perspective, Berrisford's (2006) argument that simply increasing the number of graduates will do little to address this shortage of skills is sound. Nevertheless, over the medium to longer term, the demand for planners is likely to be sustained or increased as infrastructure led growth, and a growing demand for property development seems set to continue. Further, planning is only now beginning to gain recognition as an important component of municipal management, and more generally as part of governance (provincial planning, inter-governmental co-ordination), and the requirements for planners are likely to grow as it becomes more entrenched.

It has not been possible to investigate fully regional differences in planning shortages. On the data available, Gauteng, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal appear to be the most important areas where there is a demand for planners, although it may well be the case that in other areas, the need for planners is not recognised. It is to be expected that there would be a significant demand for planners in Gauteng, and vacancies reflected in the Eastern Cape are likely to reflect its spatial marginality, and the difficulties of recruiting and maintaining staff there. Interviews with provincial government and the City of Cape Town suggests that while the need for planning is well established in the Western Cape, there are difficulties in recruiting and maintaining staff, particularly African staff, who tend to move to other parts of the country.

Although both interviews and available evidence do seem to suggest that there is a shortage of planners, attention must also be given to arguments that the problem is less one of a shortage of planners, and more a question of the legislation and systems in place, and the way planners are used. In part as a consequence of the lack of national planning legislation, a plethora of legislation derived from the apartheid era remains in place, and in many

municipalities, planning systems have not been amalgamated so several town planning schemes still exist. Several reports (Ovens and Associates, Berrisford, 2006, Watson 2006) and respondents argue that this situation increases the complexity, difficulty and knowledge required to undertake land use management. In addition, there is considerable overlap and duplication between land development applications required by planning and environmental management, putting pressure on existing capacity (Todes et al, 2005). This problem is recognised by ASGISA, which calls for regulatory reform. Further, some respondents and commentators (e.g. See Merrifield (2006) on the construction sector) question whether available staff are fully deployed: not all municipalities have systems in place to ensure this. Although these arguments are valid, it is unlikely that a rationalisation of planning systems, and even of planning and environmental systems, will lead to a significant reduction in the need for planners. Initiatives elsewhere to consolidate fragmented systems have not generally lead to a reduction in the requirement for planners, and the introduction of new systems is generally demanding on capacity, as new processes, procedures and ways of understanding and assessing are introduced (e.g. see Todes et al, 2007 on New Zealand). Hence while rationalisation is certainly needed and important, it cannot be expected to solve capacity shortfalls, at least in the short term. As will be discussed below, at present, current shortfalls together with problems with existing systems appear to be resulting in poor quality of planning, falling short of the intentions of legislation.

## **WHY IS THERE A SHORTAGE OF PLANNERS?**

### **Contextual conditions: the demand for planners**

Some of the reasons for the apparent shortfall in the number of planners have been alluded to above. In the transition from apartheid, it was assumed that a much larger number of planners would be required: to work with communities in developing plans to improve local physical as well as social and economic conditions; to plan new development areas; to integrate towns, cities and regions and to develop long-term plans that would help to restructure these areas away from their apartheid heritage; to undertake more developmental and participatory planning; to unify land use management systems and to reconstruct them in terms of a different set of values; inter alia. In practice, it has taken some time for these predictions to be realised, and in the interim, the demand for planners declined to 2001 (Todes et al, 2003).

While much of the legislation is now in place to move in these directions, it has taken some years for this to occur. Legislation for integrated development plans and spatial frameworks has only been in place since 2000, and legislation on land use management is still outstanding. In the early post-apartheid period, the main focus was on delivery, particularly housing and services, and while many planners were employed in relation to housing development (including in the layout of new areas), there was less emphasis on integrative planning. In many cases, the outcome of such development was to exacerbate apartheid divides. Land use management was almost

entirely neglected, with a greater focus in planning on facilitative, developmental planning (Harrison et al, 2007).

For some stakeholders, planning was associated with apartheid, and its potential for assisting in transformation was not recognised, thus it was downgraded in importance (Ovens, 2007). Spatial planning was often seen as associated with old style master planning, and in the early integrated development plans in the late 1990s, the criticism was that these were too much like old structure plans was common. Authorities emphasised that IDPs were management plans, and budgets replaced spatial plans as the main form of integration (Watson, 2002). Although the criticism of the way integrated development plans were done was valid, spatial planning in general tended to be marginalised in the process. Some of the large integrated projects, such as the Katorus, Alexandra, and Cato Manor Development Projects, all Presidential Lead projects, nevertheless did provide an alternative vision of and approach to planning, even if results were less transformatory and more limited than desired (Robinson et al, 2004). The marginalisation of planning, and the difficulties in moving towards desired ends did however contribute to a loss of image and identity of the profession (Harrison and Khan, 2002).

While the rise of the sustainability agenda has led to a resurgence of planning, and a growth in the demand for planning internationally, in South Africa, environmental management has developed in parallel to planning. Thus planning did not benefit from the growing importance of the sustainability agenda, and new regulations associated with it, although some planners have gone into this arena (Harrison et al, 2007).

In addition, in the early post-apartheid era, the economy grew slowly, and plans for housing and service delivery took some time to be realised, affecting the demand for the traditional areas of work of planners. The private planning sector came under pressure in this context, and many firms declined in size or disappeared (Todes et al, 2003).

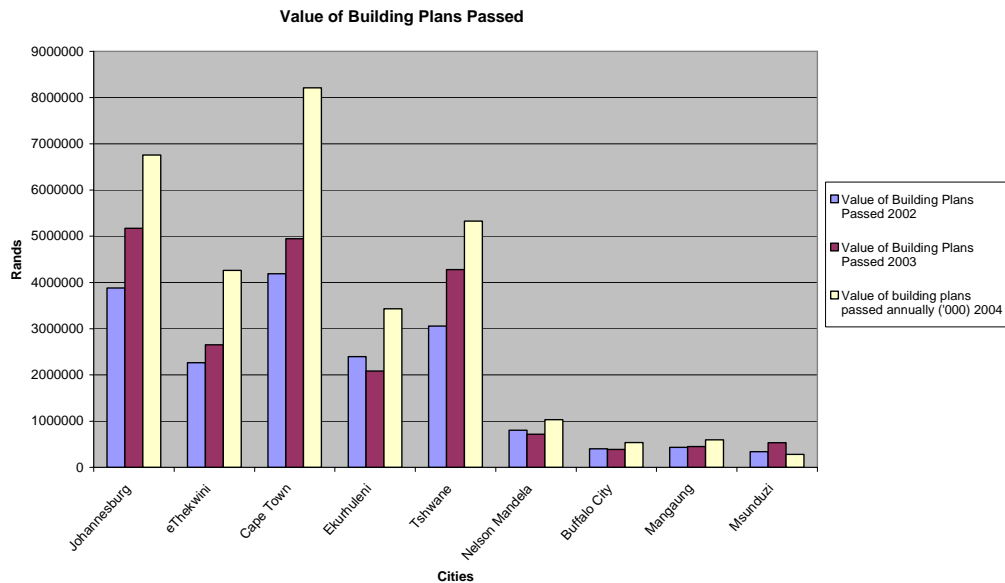
Local government, the main employer of planners, was subject to two rounds of reorganisation in 1996 and 2000. In many cases, these processes were associated with an initial freezing of positions, which, in some cases, lasted several years. In 2000, the amalgamation of various entities, with different conditions of employment presented particular problems, which have not always been resolved. In some municipalities constant political change also underpinned instability in employment of planners, amongst others. In these conditions, numbers of planners in several municipalities declined as experienced people left, and were not easily replaced. Within local government, employment of planners has been affected by the more general problems associated with a relatively unskilled and inexperienced management (LGSETA, 2006) and new councillors, who have not understood the need for planning, and the kind of skills required. The employment of un- and under-qualified people has occurred in this context. Some respondents argued that the proliferation of short courses in general fields of development planning (particularly integrated development planning) probably exacerbated

this tendency, as someone with a short course and no other qualification might be employed as a planner.

Since around 2002, the demand for planners appears to have grown. Perhaps the key reason is the boom in the economy, a strong dimension of which has been a property boom. There has been a significant growth in the number of applications for new development, and thus demand for increased capacity to process these applications. Figure 3 shows the growth in the value of building plans passed in the nine largest cities from 2002- 2004. The construction and property boom has been particularly strong in the major metros, and in Cape Town, interviewees argued that it is responsible for a significant growth in the demand for planning work and planners. This growth in demand affects both the private sector, which would be involved in submitting planning applications, and the public sector, which has to assess and respond to them. For instance, in KZN, the provincial Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (DLGTA) has faced a rapidly increasing number of planning applications for assessment. The value of applications has increased from R5b in 2004/5 to R7b in 2005/6 to R15b in the current year (Brooks, 2007).

In addition, rapid growth in new development areas is highlighting the need for proper spatial planning at a regional and sub-regional scale. For instance, in Gauteng, rapid, but fragmented growth without appropriate macro or even local planning occurred in the area between Johannesburg and Pretoria. The lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities and the associated congestion (inter alia) is emerging as a crisis in this area, for instance in Fourways. In eThekweni, the rising number of development applications in the Hillcrest/Kloof area led to a moratorium on approvals and the development of a detailed plan with which it applications could be assessed. In Cape Town, there is increasing demand for spatial planning frameworks from communities, portfolio committees and developers who want greater certainty over how particular areas are to be developed over the long term (Southworth, 2007). More generally, there is a growing recognition of the need to move beyond the rather broad spatial development frameworks which were done in the 1990s, to better researched and detailed planning, which is increasing the demand for planning work and hence planners.

**Figure 3: Growth in Building Plans Passed in the Nine Major Cities, 2002-2004**



**Source:** SACN (2006)

The current emphasis on infrastructure led development is also leading to a growing demand for planners to plan for new developments and to respond to plans. For instance, planners have usually been involved in planning for major developments such as 2010: in overall planning for the event in cities and initiatives to create a 'legacy' for the city; in redevelopment of areas around the stadia; for the stadia themselves; and in planning applications linked to these developments. Similarly for instance, planners are involved in projects such as the proposals for the new airport in Durban – in its design, in debates over the airport and the way it is developed, and in assessing and planning for its impact in the city.

Although national planning legislation is still outstanding, parts of the planning system are beginning to be put in place, and the various requirements for IDPs, spatial development frameworks, and land use management systems (in some provinces) are coming through. In addition, now that a level of delivery has occurred, there is growing concern in government with the quality of delivery, and the quality of places which are being created. There are several initiatives to address these issues (for instance the urban renewal nodes), all of which are leading to a growth in demand for planning work, both within the public sector, and outside of it. More generally, there is growing acceptance of the contribution that planning can make to transformation, and this is leading to a greater demand for planners, although there are also fears that expectations are overstated, and that given the complexity and difficulty of development, disappointment is inevitable (Oranje, 2007).



## The supply of planners

Table 10 and Figure 4 show the number of planning graduates by type of qualification from 1995 to 2004. Overall, the decline in the number of graduates from 1995 to 2004 is striking, suggesting that there may well be a supply problem. The decline in graduates is particularly evident for Masters students, and for university based B.Degrees/Hons. At the same time, the number of graduates in national diplomas and B.Techs has increased, suggesting a shift from planning education based at universities, to education at universities of technology, but this does not make up for the overall decline in output. If B.Techs and B.Degrees/Hons are taken together as the main graduate output for level 7<sup>19</sup>, there is an overall decline in graduate numbers from 1995 to 2004, albeit with a spike to 1998. Post graduate diplomas are excluded here since at the time, these were one year diplomas which did not lead to registration, and were later discontinued.

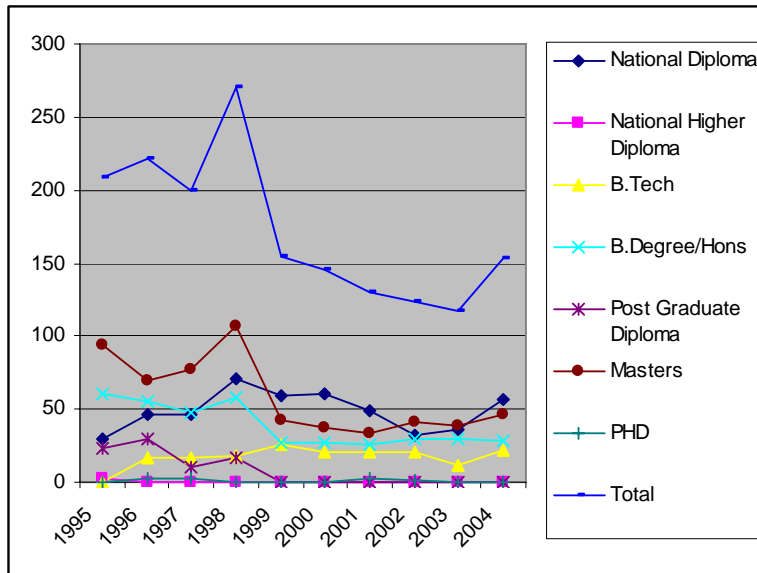
**Table 10: Number of Planning Graduates by Qualification, 1995 to 2004**

NQF level	Degree	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
6	National Diploma	30	46	46	71	59	61	49	32	36	57
7	National Diploma Higher	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	B.Tech	0	17	17	18	26	21	20	20	12	22
7	B.Degree/Hons	60	56	48	58	27	27	26	30	30	28
7	Post Graduate Diploma	23	30	10	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Masters	94	70	77	107	43	37	33	41	39	46
Above 8	PHD	0	3	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>153</b>

Source: SAQA (2007)

<sup>19</sup> National Higher Diplomas were discontinued after 1994, and were replaced with the B.Tech

**Figure 4:** Number of Planning Graduates by Type of Qualification, 1995-2004



**Source:** SAQA (2007)

These figures are broadly consistent with trends noted by Todes and Harrison (2004) based on overall student numbers sourced from planning schools for the 1994 to 2003 period. They noted a decline in student numbers in accredited professional planning programmes at universities, and a rise in the numbers of students at universities of technology and in non-accredited planning courses at universities. They argued that overall there was a shift in the location of students, rather than a decline in numbers. In fact, total numbers of students in planning programmes rose over the period (Table 11). This shift reflected a move towards planning education that was more accessible in terms of cost, location and entry requirements, but which also allowed quicker access to the labour market, since courses at universities of technology allow students to earn income from their second year of study. As they acknowledge, however, the apparent rise in student numbers was inflated by the shift towards part-time studies. In addition, planning, along with many other tertiary education courses, is affected by student drop-outs and failure to complete courses. Rates of completion were particularly low for a new planning programme which was not accredited at the time, and initially took in large numbers of students. Further, since students with some level of planning education are able to access employment, they may not complete degrees. This is particularly common at post-graduate level, where many students take some time to complete dissertations or fail to complete them at all.

Todes and Harrison (2004) attributed the decline in student numbers at universities to the market for planning and the growth of alternative outlets for students with similar interests, such as development students and environmental management. Drawing on HSRC's (1999) study of labour market trends, they noted that planning was seen as a relatively low growth

profession for the 1998-2003 period, with far stronger growth occurring in the fields of business, computer science, and some engineering sectors<sup>20</sup>. These expectations were also reflected in a shift in student enrolments towards commerce. It was suggested that students were probably shifting to careers with higher market potential, and thus away from planning. These patterns however do seem to be changing.

**Table 11: Changing Number of Planning Students Across Planning Programmes**

Year	Total	Accredited Professional Programmes at University				Non-accredited University Programmes <sup>21</sup>			Univ of Technology
		Total	Undergrad	Post-grad	% Afrik Univs	Total	Undergrad	Post-grad	
1994	680	434	284	150	56				246
1995	708	423	280	143	57				285
1996	704	386	263	123	55				318
1997	674	376	237	139	55	24	23	1	274
1998	760	400	225	175	51	45	44	1	315
1999	668	378	197	181	51	60	54	6	230
2000	709	360	171	189	51	97	81	16	252
2001	698	337	163	174	51	133	97	36	228
2002	759	335	164	171	52	156	116	40	268
2003	872	368	189	179	52	225	172	53	279

**Source:** Todes and Harrison (2004) based on data supplied by planning schools

All planning schools were requested to provide data over the 2003-2006 period for graduates, overall planning student numbers and intake. Figures for graduate numbers are not entirely consistent with the SAQA data base (see Appendix A which comments on the differences), but do suggest that graduate numbers have grown since 2003. Overall student numbers and student intake have also increased, and planning schools report a significant increase in applications for places. They argue that their students are finding it easy to access employment. Tables 12, 13, and 14 provide graduate, overall student numbers and intake for planning schools respectively over the 2003-6 period. It should be noted that figures for overall student numbers do not entirely match with those provided for the Todes and Harrison (2004) study, but the trends are clearly evident.

<sup>20</sup> Notably, low to moderate growth was expected in the civil engineering and construction sectors over the 1998-2003 period.

<sup>21</sup> At the time of the research, there was one non-accredited undergraduate programme, and three non-accredited post-graduate programme.

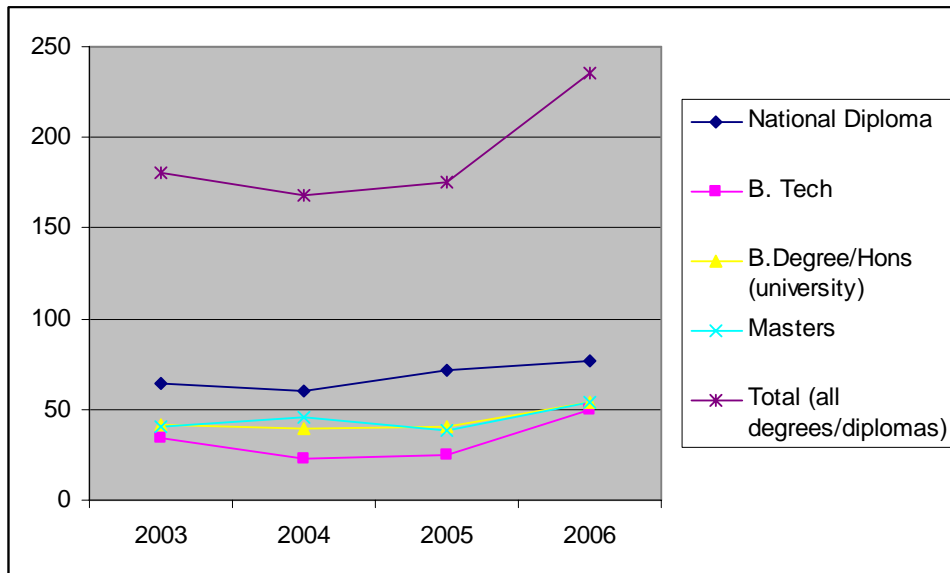
**Table 12: Planning Graduates 2003-6**

	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>National Diploma</b>	64	60	72	77
<b>B. Tech</b>	34	23	25	50
<b>B.Degree/Hons (university)</b>	42	39	40	54
<b>Masters</b>	40	46	38	54
<b>Total (all degrees/diplomas)</b>	180	168	175	235

**Source:** Planning Schools

**Notes:** Excludes thesis masters and PHDs. Includes non-accredited degrees

**Figure 5: Planning Graduates 2003-6 (Planning School data)**



**Source:** Data from Planning Schools

**Table 13: Growth in Planning Student Numbers 2003-6**

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Diploma	312	399	462	539
B.Tech	33	51	45	61
B.Degree	452	499	519	562
Masters	232	236	266	253
<b>Total</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>1185</b>	<b>1292</b>	<b>1415</b>

**Source:** Planning schools

**Notes:** Does not include Masters by Thesis and PHDs

Table 14: Growth in New Enrolments in Planning Schools 2003-6

	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Diploma</b>	97	132	144	145
<b>B.Tech</b>	4	16	11	21
<b>B.Degree</b>	176	163	146	211
<b>Masters</b>	42	41	26	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>417</b>

Source: Planning schools

Notes: Numbers include only available data. Data is missing for the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Diploma, B.Tech), University of Johannesburg (B.Tech) and University of KwaZulu-Natal (Masters). Excludes Masters by thesis and PHD.

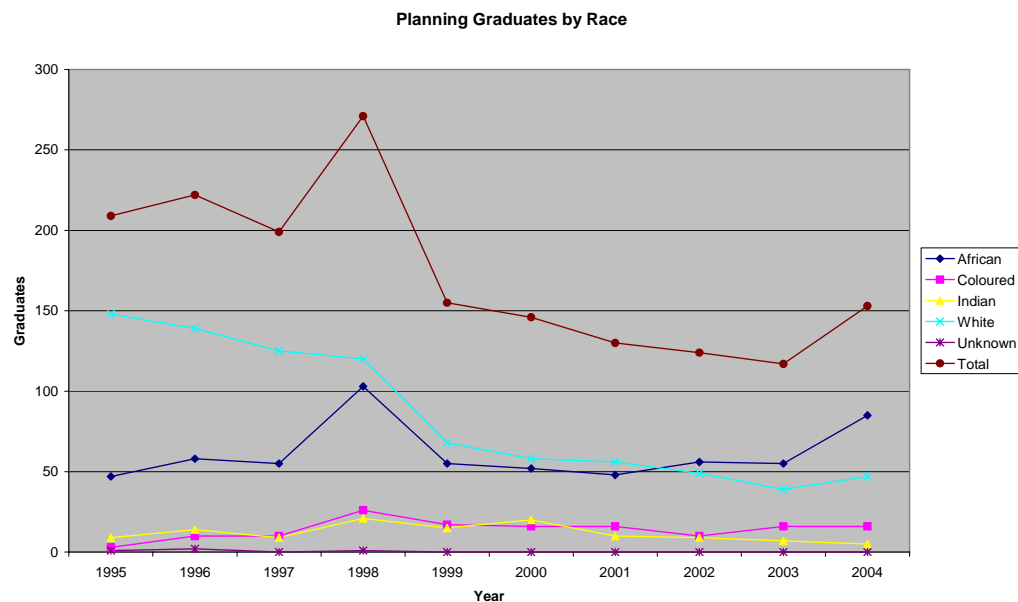
Table 15 and Figure 6 show the changing racial composition of planning students according to SAQA data. They reflect the sharp decline in the number of white students undertaking planning, a point also noted by Todes and Harrison (2004). The declining number of white graduates was only partially replaced by the growth of black graduates, whose numbers grew slowly over the 1994-2005 period, and this also contributed to the net decline in planning graduates over the period.

Table 15: Planning Graduates by Race, 1995-2004

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>African</b>	47	58	55	103	55	52	48	56	55	85
<b>Coloured</b>	3	10	10	26	17	16	16	10	16	16
<b>Indian</b>	9	14	9	21	15	20	10	9	7	5
<b>White</b>	148	139	125	120	68	58	56	49	39	47
<b>Unknown</b>	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>153</b>

Source: SAQA (2007)

Figure 6: Planning Graduates by Race, 1995-2004



Source: SAQA (2007)

The decline in the number of graduates produced by planning schools appears to have contributed to the current shortage of planners, but student intake and graduate numbers do appear to be increasing in the context of a growing market demand for planners.

### **Supply/demand mismatches**

There is ongoing debate in the international literature on how closely planning education should link to the immediate needs of planning practice (eg. see Poxon, 2001). In the South African context, there is a similar debate over the extent to which planning education should provide for immediately usable skills versus a basis for lifelong development in the field (Faling and Todes, 2004). A study by Faling (2002) of employer perceptions of planning education, which interviewed some 40 employers in the public and private sector with regard to university based education, found that they were generally positive about the relevance of planning education for the planning profession (82%), the preparedness of graduates (60%), and planning education's ability to educate planners for the future (76%). Concerns were however raised about an overemphasis on theory, and the inability of students to link theory to practice. Most respondents pointed to the need for a stronger link to practice, and for the development of more practical skills, including technical skills; quantitative analytical skills; managerial and communicative skills. Respondents who were critical of planning education questioned the extent to which planning schools were managing to inculcate core general competencies around critical, integrative and creative thinking; analysis; report writing; and understanding of policy and context (Faling and Todes, 2004).

Respondents for this study who were also employers of planners were asked to comment on the adequacy of planning education and the skills of graduates for both universities and universities of technology. The sample size is far smaller than the Faling (2002) study and thus carries less weight. Perceptions of university education were on the whole similar, although given the emphasis currently on spatial planning and land use management, the need for a stronger understanding of legal matters, property market dynamics, spatial planning, and physical design were much more prominent. Leadership skills were also raised as a need by some respondents. Two private sector respondents argued that they found it difficult to find planners with the necessary combination for the type of spatial planning they undertake – a mix of urban design, engineering, technical skills, and, in one case, as a strong conceptual base in spatial planning and planning values.

Urban design emerges as a specific gap, with only one institution (UCT) currently offering courses, and then only on top of a 6 year architectural degree. A new Masters course allowing entry from undergraduate architecture and planning is however planned by Wits for 2009.

Public sector authorities are generally happy with graduates from universities, albeit with qualifications as above. In some regions there are concerns about

graduates from universities of technologies, who, some respondents argued, lack sufficient technical skills (design, analysis, surveys), as well as writing and conceptual abilities. In others, authorities are satisfied with university of technology graduates, and there are strong links between universities of technologies and stakeholders.

In several cases, planning schools have links with employer bodies or advisory systems that allow for comment on curricula and courses. The system of accreditation also draws in practitioners to assess the adequacy of planning education. The current SGB process draws together various stakeholders, although one respondent argued that representation there was too limited. Overall, while there are some disjunctures between supply and demand, there does not appear to be a fundamental divide between planning education and planning practice, and there are various forums in place in which these issues can be addressed. Nevertheless, a large systematic survey of the needs of practice, and a broader discussion between planning education and planning practice, would be helpful.

Concerns should perhaps be raised about the decline of graduates from universities, particularly at post-graduate level. In the past, the work of technicians and professional planners was clearly demarcated, although there has always been movement in the system, with technicians becoming professional planners over time. In the current environment, differentiation of work occurs in various ways across institutions, but there is also greater fluidity, in part due to the lack of professional planners (Watson, 2006). Current demands are for both planners with a stronger technical base, but also for deepening and extending strategic planning, which requires a combination of high level conceptual and analytical skills, *inter alia*. In addition, the current quality of planning is lacking, and processes currently treated in a mechanistic way in some contexts (such as land use management) require the application of complex knowledge and judgement.

The research confirmed that the real demand currently is for more skilled and experienced planners. It needs to be recognised that formal education provides only a basis for lifelong learning. It takes years to develop real expertise given the diversity of planning and the range of skills involved; the variety of legislation which has to be mastered; the knowledge that needs to be built up; and the judgement that has to be developed. From this perspective, simply increasing the number of graduates will be insufficient, and setting in place strong systems of mentoring is important. Particular areas of skills and knowledge may however need to be developed.

In the Faling (2002) study, the importance of continuing professional development was raised by a number of respondents. In reality, planning education can only provide a limited core set of skills and competencies. Particularly since the profession is in constant evolution and change, ongoing needs for new areas of knowledge and skills will need to be addressed over the lifetime of professionals. The Planning Professions Act 2002 makes provision for CPD, but to date, there has been limited activity on this front, apart from refresher courses organised occasionally by universities, SAPI's

biannual conference, the activities of private conferencing organisations, and occasional seminars and workshops organised by universities, SAPI and the public sector.

## **Working conditions and salaries**

There are few studies of planners' perceptions of their working conditions, and no systematic data on salaries. A study by Harrison and Khan (2002) in KwaZulu-Natal in 1999 of planners' perceptions of change found a mix of positive and negative perspectives. While most saw the impact of changes in the broader environment as positive, many planners pointed to difficulties in their daily working life. Key problems noted in this regard included the confusion caused by rapid change in legislation and procedures; increasing work pressures and workloads; the weakness of the bureaucracy dealing with planning; affirmative action influencing promotion and appointment prospects; the low status of planners; poor financial rewards; the time consuming and difficult nature of community participation; and negative attitudes towards consultants. This survey occurred at a time of considerable change and uncertainty, when the market for planners was constrained, and larger private planning firms were unable to survive. Responses also reflected a predominantly white planning profession: black planners were far more optimistic. These perceptions are likely to have affected the numbers of entrants going into planning, particularly amongst whites, and is also likely to have contributed to movement into fields other than planning, and to emigration to places where planning is on the rise.

Since then, conditions have changed as the market for planning has opened up considerably. It is not clear however, to what extent the other conditions mentioned above still pertain. A report for JIPSA (Berrisford, 2006, p.7) argued that 'the absence of a clear legal framework for planning makes the practice of planning frustrating and unattractive... The planning profession is currently at a low-ebb, hampered by the emigration of experienced planners and failing to attract the brightest students into the profession. Morale is generally low, among planners in both the public and private sectors'.

Working situations for planners in the public sector are likely to be similar to other parts of the public sector. The tendency to move relatively inexperienced planners into senior positions, or to appoint them to small municipalities with no capacity to mentor them must create a stressful situation for these planners, but it is not clear whether or how this affects the supply of planners. One respondent argued that the experience of new planners was likely to be highly dependent on the particular manager they work under, and the particular part of the public sector they find themselves in.

The peripheral location of many municipal planning positions is also likely to be a contributing factor to planning shortages in parts of the country. There is no systematic data on this question, but some respondents did point to the difficulty of filling positions in some of these areas, and the high turnover in these locations.



There is insufficient data to comment on the extent to which remuneration levels are affecting the supply of planners. Certainly, the private sector has long complained about low levels of remuneration for public sector work, and their inability to charge professional fees, but there is no evidence on actual incomes and profits, particularly since the recent resurgence of the market for planning. In Cape Town, one respondent mentioned low salaries as a factor in influencing entrance into planning by black students, while another argued that the difficulty in attracting senior planners was due to the limits of the salary package available. Anecdotally, one planning graduate who had left the profession commented that most of his class had done so, one reason being the generally low remuneration levels. Remuneration levels on job adverts do not provide a good picture of salary levels. In the 29 cases where salaries were captured, they seem to vary considerably in terms of qualifications and experience (Table 16). Overall, however salaries seem to be low, but not all salaries are advertised, and in some municipalities they are very much higher.

**Table 16: Remuneration levels in Sunday Times Planning Job Adverts 2004-6**

Remuneration (pa )	Job Title	Qualification	Experience (yrs)
R84 561	Assistant town and regional planner	Tertiary qualification	
R98 964 – R109 320	Assistant town planning	Diploma/degree	3
R110 520	Development planning officer	Diploma	
R112 523-R124 254	Senior town planning officer	Degree	
R127 004 – R136 684	Town planning officer	Diploma	3
R127 176	City planning technician	Diploma	
R133 176	Town and regional planner	Formal qualification /degree /diploma	
R133 176 – R154 611	Principal town and regional planner		
R154 032 – R161 820	Senior town planner	B. degree	5
R154 703 – R278 830	Specialist: strategic urban planning	B. degree in planning	
R166 300 – R170 000	Town and regional planner	B. degree in planning	5
R180 000	Junior professional planner	B. degree in planning	

Remuneration (pa )	Job Title	Qualification	Experience (yrs)
R186 000	City planner	Degree	5
R186 000 – R195 432	City planner	Degree	5
R193 920	Deputy chief town and regional planner	Formal qualification	
R193 920 – R225 138	Specialist town and regional planner	Formal qualification /degree/diploma	
R219 768	Chief town and regional planner	Degree in planning	5
R220 000	Specialist town and regional planner	B degree	5
R261 961	Junior professional planner	B. degree	
R271 797	Specialist town and regional planner	Relevant tertiary qualification	5-6
R320 775	Development planner	Degree	

**Source:** DOL Sunday Times advert database, 2004-6

## Migration

There is no consistent data on the extent to which planning graduates have left the country, contributing to a shortage. As noted above however, the demand for planners has been high in English speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and the UK for the past few years, and it has been easy for planners to move, particularly those who are experienced. It is likely to be mainly white planners who have moved, and it could be estimated that as many as a quarter to a third of white graduates have left the country. This is likely to have contributed to the skills shortage, but given affirmative action pressures, it is also possible that these planners would not have been considered acceptable in high level public positions, and some might have moved in part as a consequence of these pressures.

There has been some in-migration from planners from other parts of Africa, but since planning is not considered a scarce skill by the Department of Home Affairs, this movement has been restricted. One respondent commented that the Department of Home Affairs had very little understanding of planning: when they had attempted to bring in a foreign urban designer, they were told to employ an engineer with a technical diploma who was unemployed in another city. It is unlikely that foreign in-migration has matched emigration of South African planners.

## **Demographic factors**

As noted earlier, under apartheid, planning was largely a white profession, and black planners could only enter into it in the 1980s. Not surprisingly then, there has been considerable pressure for affirmative action in the public sector and in tenders for the private sector. The perception that public sector positions for whites are restricted has probably contributed to the sharp decline in white student numbers, to movement outside of the profession, and to emigration, as noted above. It is not clear however whether the parts of the public sector have refused to appoint experienced white planners, leaving positions vacant, or occupied by people with far lower levels of skills or experience. This would require research in its own right. Given the current buoyancy of the market for planners, there is no obvious evidence of numbers of unemployed white planners, or private sector planners who are unable to find work. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the shift by many skilled and experienced planners (of all races) into the private sector has reduced public sector capacity to develop and nurture new generations of planners.

## **THE IMPACT OF CAPACITY SHORTFALLS**

Current expectations of the planning system are ambitious. Concerns have been raised about the lack of integrated development across spheres and sectors of government, and planning is seen as playing a key role in promoting integration. Intentions to create an intergovernmental system of planning, linking the work of national and provincial departments to provincial and local plans, as well as to the National Spatial Development Perspective, is affected by planning capacity, inter alia. According to Coetzee et al (2005)

'It is clear from the IDP Hearings so far that despite the success in extending infrastructure and services, and growing the economy, in general, the capability across government (national and provincial departments and municipalities) to plan strategically, project manage effectively and monitor implementation is uneven. Even where these capabilities are strong the integrated impact of government on communities in many cases needs to improve considerably. Key to this is the need for:

- individual departments and municipalities to improve basic management (financial, planning, institutional) and decision-making processes and capabilities that will enable better communication and coordination of implementation;
- improving governments impact on the ground and lessening the coordination burden on municipalities through better support and cooperation with municipalities from the rest of government;
- clearer geographically specific visions and frameworks from national departments and provinces to assist municipalities with the complexity of managing growth and development; and
- better decision-making at national and provincial government level since many issues effecting development within municipalities can only be resolved by decision-making processes elsewhere in government.

All of the above has consequences for the type of capability required across government for joint and integrated work. The work of line departments specifically has a limited spatial focus. A re-orientation of existing capacity and the drawing in of new capacity would be required if sector delivery is to contribute to building sustainable human settlements and viable local economies in the context of the specificities of the 53 geo-political units or impact zones’.

Plans to link national thinking in the form of the national spatial development perspective (NSDP) to provincial and local plans requires a good understanding of the space economy and an ability to think in spatial terms. These skills are lacking, affecting the production of provincial growth and development strategies (PGDS), but also the way sectoral departments relate to these processes. There is also a deficit of people with the skills to develop terms of reference for such exercises, and to lead and manage these processes (Coetzee, 2007).

A critical issue is that the quality of planning and decision-making is inadequate. Since 1994, there has been a slew of legislation attempting to engender a planning system which promotes development and sustainability. This system includes a new set of values and approaches, which requires that planners are able to exercise judgement in terms of normative principles, to involve communities and other stakeholders in planning processes, to think strategically, and to plan in ways which bring together various sectors and agencies. Creative and synoptic thinking is required. The new approaches to planning are therefore predicated on planners who are relatively skilled, and they are demanding in terms of time. The emphasis on participatory approaches, for example, is very time consuming for planners.

Lack of capacity is thus being seen as a major reason for the poor quality of integrated development plans (eg. LGSETA, 2006), which, despite their putative importance to municipal development, are seen as inadequately developed, and poorly linked to the actual functioning of municipalities. In part due to capacity constraints, many municipalities simply produce documents for purposes of compliance, rather than fulfilling their intentions. This is also noted as a problem in several other areas of planning, such as the development of spatial frameworks. These limitations are not simply the result of an absolute shortage of planners, but are also the consequence of poor skills and experience in this sphere. The devaluing of planning, and the tendency in some cases for these plans to be undertaken by people who have neither the qualifications nor experience to undertake them is problematic in this regard. In future, more ‘credible’ IDPs and spatial development frameworks are likely to be far more demanding of skills and experience.

Properly developed IDPs and spatial frameworks should provide a clear future development path for a municipality, its key priorities and values, and its major programmes into the future. Spatial frameworks should indicate where and how development should occur over space, and the phasing of various developments. They should provide a co-ordinating tool for infrastructure and property development, and a basis for site level decision-making. In the

absence of strong and defensible plans, as is frequently the case at present, there is a lack of co-ordinated development, and disjunctures between where various types of infrastructure are provided, and where development occurs. Social goals such as restructuring the city away from its apartheid legacy are also more difficult to achieve in a context where land development decisions are made on an ad hoc basis, often in favour of property developers. At the same time, there is no certainty for property developers on how particular developments are likely to be viewed.

Arguably, several of the facilities and services crises in Gauteng at present, such as congestion in some areas, the absence of schools, inadequate sewerage and energy capacity in others, are the result of the lack of planning and inadequate co-ordination between agencies responsible for infrastructure development. Development applications were dealt with on an individual basis, and were not assessed in terms of their impact on services, facilities and the environment, or the cumulative impact of growth in particular areas. Similar problems exist in several other cities too. Inadequate planning capacity is obviously not the only concern here: there are also limitations in the way systems are working beyond planning. Nevertheless, a spatial plan with agreement on how much of what kind of development should occur where would assist in improving co-ordination.

Decision-making about land development applications are also often done in a mechanistic way, without reference to the range of norms and principles contained in policy and legislation (Sim et al, 2004). Again this is not simply a question of the numbers of planners, but the fact that planners are highly stretched in many cases does mean that the quality of decision-making or advice is compromised. More generally, respondents pointed to the poor quality of reports as a consequence of capacity limitations.

Lack of capacity in planning also affects the quality of work undertaken in various developmental initiatives, such as the urban renewal nodes. Planning potentially plays important roles in reshaping particular parts of the city and in creating better places to live, and in the absence of capacity, these elements may be lost. For instance, too little attention has been paid to the design and layout of new settlements, particularly in low income areas – in part the result of a funding model which has attempted to reduce to the minimum professional costs. Layouts for low income settlements which would be done by a team of people in developed countries are produced rather quickly by a single planner. Capacity constraints, inappropriate funding models, and a lack of recognition of the significance of planning are limiting the extent to which it can help to create more livable places.

In addition, capacity limitations are affecting the time to process planning applications, with decisions taking as long as two years to finalise. This slows investment and development. It does however need to be acknowledged that the current complexity of the legislative system as a consequence of dual decision-making processes and the lack of legislative reform, is contributing to this problem. In addition, since planning applications are generally viewed by

a range of municipal departments, capacity limitations outside of planning also contribute to perceived planning failures.

In the smaller municipalities, there is sometimes inadequate capacity to undertake even standard planning, such as maintaining statutory land use schemes. Poor capacity also means an inability manage and use work undertaken by the private sector. Further, where no planners are employed in municipalities and all work is contracted out to the private sector, the private sector is both player and judge – a problematic situation. In municipalities where there is little understanding of planning, the knowledge and understanding needed to recruit appropriate people is also lacking. (Coetzee, 2007)

Capacity limitations mean that longer term training and support initiatives are difficult to implement. For instance, the PIMS centres, established in many districts to provide support to integrated development planning, were only successful in the 15-20% of districts where they were able to attract skilled and experienced staff (Coetzee, 2007). It is also clear that mentoring of new staff is not happening in many municipalities and firms since there is too little time and capacity to undertake this important task. This affects the long term viability of the planning system.

In addition, the emigration of skilled professionals and high turnover of staff is affecting the institutional memory of municipalities, reducing their effective capacity. Finally, capacity limits in government (at all levels) affects its ability to brief, manage and use the products of plans and documents produced by the private sector.

## **INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS CAPACITY SHORTFALLS**

The main focus of initiatives to address capacity problems has been around integrated development planning. The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) has undertaken fairly extensive initiatives focused on capacity building around IDP. Initial efforts focused on the development of guide material, training workshops for councillors, municipal managers and sector specialists, as well as the establishment of the PIMS centres to support integrated development planning in many districts. Staff in PIMS centres were also the focus of extensive training. An IDP Nerve centre providing information was established. Following a critique of local government capacity building initiatives, a National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government was developed in DPLG to 'establish an integrated capacity building structure and guidelines, which will steer all capacity building strategies towards enabling municipalities to fulfil their constitutional duties ... as developmental local government entities' (DPLG and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), 2004, p.5, cited in Goss and Coetzee, forthcoming, p.4 ).

From 2003-6, a Municipal IDP Support Project was undertaken by the CSIR for DPLG. Drawing on the National Capacity Building Framework of local government, it focused on capacity building focused at three levels: 'individual

capacity (an individual's technical and generic skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour), institutional capacity (an organisation's human resource capacity, strategic leadership, organisational purpose, support systems, financial abilities, by-laws, etc.), and environmental capacity (potential and competency found outside of municipalities' formal structures, such as tax base, demographic composition, and ecological and geological conditions)' (Goss and Coetzee, forthcoming, p.5). It analysed the state of IDP capacity in municipal and provincial government, and developed a complex set of support initiatives at these three levels.

The programme targeted both provincial and local government. It was largely successful, but support aimed at the institutional level was less successful, inter alia, as a consequence of institutional dynamics including staff turnover, organisational readiness, commitment by senior management, and political support (Goss and Coetzee, forthcoming). Thus deficiencies in human resources are also affecting the extent to which capacity building programmes are able to overcome capacity constraints.

DPLG has also developed a unit standard for integrated development planning, and is engaged in further training capacity building initiatives around IDP. Some provinces are actively involved in IDP support and training. Project Consolidate, aimed at supporting weak local governments attempted to improve the basic functioning of these municipalities. There are however almost no initiatives to address capacity shortages in relation to spatial planning, although some municipalities, such as Joburg, have their own training programmes. DPLG has given SAPI R1m to organise retired planners to mentor planners in weak municipalities, and to help them to clear backlogs of planning applications. This was initially intended to focus on Project Consolidate municipalities, but there will instead be an assessment of where it is most needed. Funding covers only disbursement costs (Adam, 2007).

An innovative proposal by the KZN DLGTA puts forward a shared services model for district municipalities and the local municipalities within their boundaries. This would cover a basket of functions, and would divide out functions that could be provided to all municipalities in the family of municipalities following an assessment of the capacities available in the various municipalities, their workloads, and the most logical location for particular functions. This would help to build a critical mass of planners in particular regions, and enable better mentoring, as well as help to ensure that planning services were undertaken on a more consistent basis. In addition, provincial and national departments linking to municipalities (such as land reform and environment) could link more closely to these offices.

As noted above, SACPLAN is focusing on promoting the registration of planners and the accreditation of planning schools, and is encouraging government to insist of planning registration for certain levels of planners and for planning tenders (Ngobeni, 2007). In future, it is likely to establish work reserved for registered planners, as provided in legislation.

The JIPSA advisory group on planning, is engaging with stakeholders around a set of priority actions suggested in the Berrisford (2006) report:

- to fast-track the definition of planning competencies. The Berrisford report noted that the SGB process had been slow, and JIPSA could strengthen it by sourcing and providing additional expertise to a group which is currently largely voluntary.
- to strengthen SACPLAN, which is experiencing organisational difficulties hampering its ability to carry out its legal mandate. The report suggested that JIPSA could also assist SACPLAN in reviewing the quality of planning education in South Africa; assist it to investigate the appropriate criteria for accreditation and registration; and to help it to finalise the rules and regulations in terms of which the Act is implemented.
- to promote the registration of planners, and the improvement of their skills, including the roll-out of top-up and continuing professional development courses. The report suggested that this could be supplemented by mentoring of inexperienced planners. It argued that these actions should be preceded by an audit of planners and people carrying out planning functions in South Africa.
- establish a bursary fund for planning students. The report noted that the planning profession struggles to attract high calibre students. Providing financial support to students would help to improve the competitiveness of planning relative to other professions.

JIPSA is also seeking a greater understanding of the extent to which a shortage exists, and may suggest interventions which go beyond these ideas.

In a report to JIPSA, Watson (2006) made the following additional recommendations:

- The targeting of financial aid to planning students, and the inclusion of planning on the National Research Foundation's list of scarce skills.
- Encouraging higher education institutions to focus resources on planning programmes in terms of staff and facilities
- Additional resources for continuing professional development of planners
- Raising the profile of the planning profession to promote it as a desirable profession for school-leavers
- Establishing partnerships between large metro municipalities and higher education to bring practical experience and skills into the training of planners
- Encouraging of mentoring of young planners within the public sector.

These recommendations are sound. From the analysis undertaken for this paper however, there does appear to be a real shortage of planners, although it is difficult to quantify its extent. Quantification will require far more extensive and detailed research than was possible here. Although the requirements for planning could be assessed against existing organograms, it has been argued that the need for planners is not necessarily recognised. It would be useful to develop appropriate benchmarks for the numbers of planners required (and



their skills) in different types of authority. The Ovens and Associates (2006) report goes some way to setting out the tasks and skills required, but needs to be taken further. It would be helpful to benchmark the number of planners required against standards in other countries.

It is clear that the main shortage of planners is at the level of more skilled and experienced planners. Improving conditions for planning and the recognition of the importance of planning may go some way towards preventing further attrition from the profession. Although affirmative action provisions within the public sector are understandable they have arguably driven some experienced and skilled planners out of the public sector, reducing capacity to mentor new staff. This needs to be reviewed.

There is considerable need for continuing professional development, particularly given the rising importance of spatial planning, and the need to reskill many planners who have not been working in these areas for years. There is no existing body which has the capacity to research the need for and take on the initiation of CPD, although some institutions, including planning schools, could undertake this with additional resources.

It seems likely that the output of tertiary institutions does need to increase, as the demand for planners seems unlikely to be of short term duration. Simply encouraging students to complete degrees may go some way towards improving output. Student intake into planning programmes seems to be rising, and this will require additional support to planning schools. It will also be important to attract stronger students into planning programmes. The current concern about the skills of graduates in part arises from the quality of students programmes have been able to attract over the last few years. It would be helpful to undertake extensive campaigns to improve the profile and awareness of planning (see also Odendaal, 2005). This is likely to be beyond the capacity of SAPI. Initiatives to reconsider planning education, and to include a stronger practical element in training will also require support. Resources in tertiary education institutions are inevitably rather limited, and beyond links with municipalities as suggested by Watson (2006), specific modules may need to be developed in conjunction with service providers on particular sets of skills.

Reference has been made to the numbers of non-planners who have been undertaking planning in municipalities. It would be helpful to bring these people into planning education programmes – to deepen and extend their knowledge of planning, and to extend their capacity.

Critically, systems to mentor young planners need to be established. The current concern about the quality of planning graduates in part reflects the fact that new graduates are frequently expected to take on more or move into higher level positions than they are prepared for – the result of the shortage of planners. A slower process of induction, with greater attention to careful mentoring seem importance, although this will be demanding on the capacities of authorities. Paid mentoring by the private sector may also need to be considered.

## CONCLUSION

While policy and legislation since 1994 seemed to broaden and elevate the role of planning, in practice planning went into decline for several years. The immediate demands of delivery, institutional restructuring, and an association of planning with apartheid in the minds of some stakeholders tended to marginalise its importance. There is however a growing recognition of its significance for government's attempts to create more integrated development, and more sustainable and liveable cities and regions. Coupled with economic growth, and in particular, the property boom, which is leading to a rapid rise in land development applications, the demand for planners is on the increase. The emphasis on an infrastructure led development path is likely to mean that this demand is sustained.

The evidence available does appear to indicate that there is a shortage of planners, although there is little systematic data enabling a quantification of its extent. A variety of sources indicate that there are vacancies according to official organograms, but also that the need for planners has not been sufficiently recognised, leading to an underuse of planners in a variety of areas. In addition, the need for planners is masked by the employment of people who have neither the qualifications nor experience for their positions. There is a need to benchmark the number of planners required against international practice. The number of planners employed to undertake particular activities and in various authorities is low, and this affects the quality of planning and its effectiveness.

The shortage of planners is not simply one of absolute numbers. Rather, the demand is for more skilled and experienced planners. Emigration, attrition from the profession, and movement out of the public sector, have contributed to deficits here. The lack of value accorded to planning for many years, and opportunities elsewhere, are factors. In the context of the shortages, new or recent graduates are being put into positions without the experience needed for them, and without sufficient mentoring. This does little to build skills, and arguably undermines their development. Skills and experience in particular fields are also lacking. Capacity deficits are worse outside of the cities, particularly in rural areas. Nevertheless, the cities are under pressure as a consequence of the property boom, and the complex development pressures that they face.

Capacity shortfalls affect the extent to which planning is able to play its intended role in development, as well as the quality of planning, and the time taken to process applications. The concerns raised by AsgiSA do seem to be justified in this context. Yet as several commentators have noted, there are a host of other problems affecting planning in the current environment: the lack of an adequate legal framework for planning; institutional problems; the broader capacity of the public sector, amongst others.

Although the capacity deficit is primarily at the level of more skilled and experienced planners, the decline in the graduate output of planning schools

does seem to have been a contributing factor. Both student numbers and quality declined for several years – seemingly the effect of the market for planners, opportunities in other areas, and the image of planning. Numbers here do appear to be growing again, but the relatively low output at universities and at post-graduate level is a concern, given the challenges in the field. There is also a need to improve the status and profile of planning to enable it to attract stronger students. Research does not suggest a huge disjuncture between planning education and planning practice, although there are areas in which planning education needs to be adapted. Forums are however in place to do this, but they may require extension and support.

Initiatives to address capacity problems have largely focused on integrated development planning. There has been very little attention to spatial planning, increasingly the field in which capacity constraints are experienced. Proposals with JIPSA suggest a range of important interventions, many of which are aimed at addressing problems in the profession, its definition, organisation, and registration. There is also a significant focus on continuing professional development, systems of mentoring and establishing bursaries for students. These proposals are sound, but could be extended in various ways. Initiatives will require resources, and will depend on acknowledgement of the importance of planning and of improving skills in the field, a strong institutional base for taking forward proposals, and cooperation between the various stakeholders.

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## APPENDIX A: COMPARISON OF SAQA AND PLANNING SCHOOL GRADUATE DATA

Table 17 provides a comparison between the SAQA data on planning graduates, and data provided by planning schools. It shows that whereas figures for Masters graduates are largely consistent, there are differences in figures for university of technology graduates for both B.Techs and diplomas. Figures for university based B.Degrees/honours are similar if only accredited (and all well established) programmes are included, but not if a recently established, but at the time unaccredited undergraduate planning programme is also included.

**Table 17: Graduate figures: SAQA and Planning School Data, 2003 and 2004**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
SAQA	National Diploma	36	57
Planning Schools	National Diploma	64	60
SAQA	B.Tech	12	22
Planning Schools	B. Tech	34	23
SAQA	B.Degree/Hons	30	28
Planning Schools	B.Degree/Hons (accredited)	28	25
Planning Schools	B.Degree (non-accredited)	14	14
Planning Schools	All B. Degrees	42	39
SAQA	Masters	39	46