

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

PERFORMANCE AUDIT-2021

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON THE REGISTRATION, SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOLS AND INDEPENDENT COLLEGES BY MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

2021 PUBLICATION

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an analysis of the auditor general's report on the registration, supervision and monitoring of schools and independent colleges with the thrust of assisting citizens to identify major weaknesses in the internal control system (ICS) of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education so that remedies can be expeditiously implemented. The Findings of the report signal a betrayal of the ordinary citizens by the duty bearers that are entrusted to safeguard the right to education as enshrined in Section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Consistent with the provisions in Section 309 (2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and Section 10 of the Audit Office Act [Chapter 22:18], the Auditor-General (AG) prepared and submitted the report of value for money audit on the registration, supervision and monitoring of schools and independent colleges by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE).

MoPSE is mandated to provide equitable, quality, inclusive, relevant and competent driven primary, secondary and non-formal education in Zimbabwe. The education system should also be accessible, affordable and enable citizens to participate in the socio-economic transformation of the nation. The Ministry is also responsible for registering, monitoring and supervising all schools

and independent colleges to ensure that there is quality education. This is in fulfilment of provisions of Section 75 of the Constitution which confers the right to a basic State-funded education, including adult basic education on Zimbabwean citizens and permanent residents. This Section also confers the people with the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions of reasonable standards, provided they do not discriminate on any grounds prohibited by the Constitution.

Following a public outcry on the sprouting of unregistered schools and lack of supervision and monitoring of these schools and independent colleges in the country which compromised the quality of education offered in the country, the AG undertook a performance audit. The audit was driven by the desire to assess the extent to which MoPSE was registering, monitoring and supervising schools and independent colleges. The Audit was also meant to proffer audit recommendations for improvement, where necessary. The audit covered the period January 2016 to March 15, 2019.

The timeliness of the audit is put to question as the audit report dated July 2020 was only tabled in Parliament in June 2021. Timeliness in audit reports is critical and an important factor on the usefulness of information and recommendations made to both the Ministry and other external stakeholders.

2 REGISTRATION OF SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE

Schools in Zimbabwe are registered with the MoPSE hence they are known as formal schools. Individuals or business people can open a school with approval from the MoPSE and these are known as 'colleges' or 'independent' schools that are not formal. These colleges or type of schools have been added to Zimbabwe's education system and are usually located in the heart of the city or residential homes as well as in church buildings.

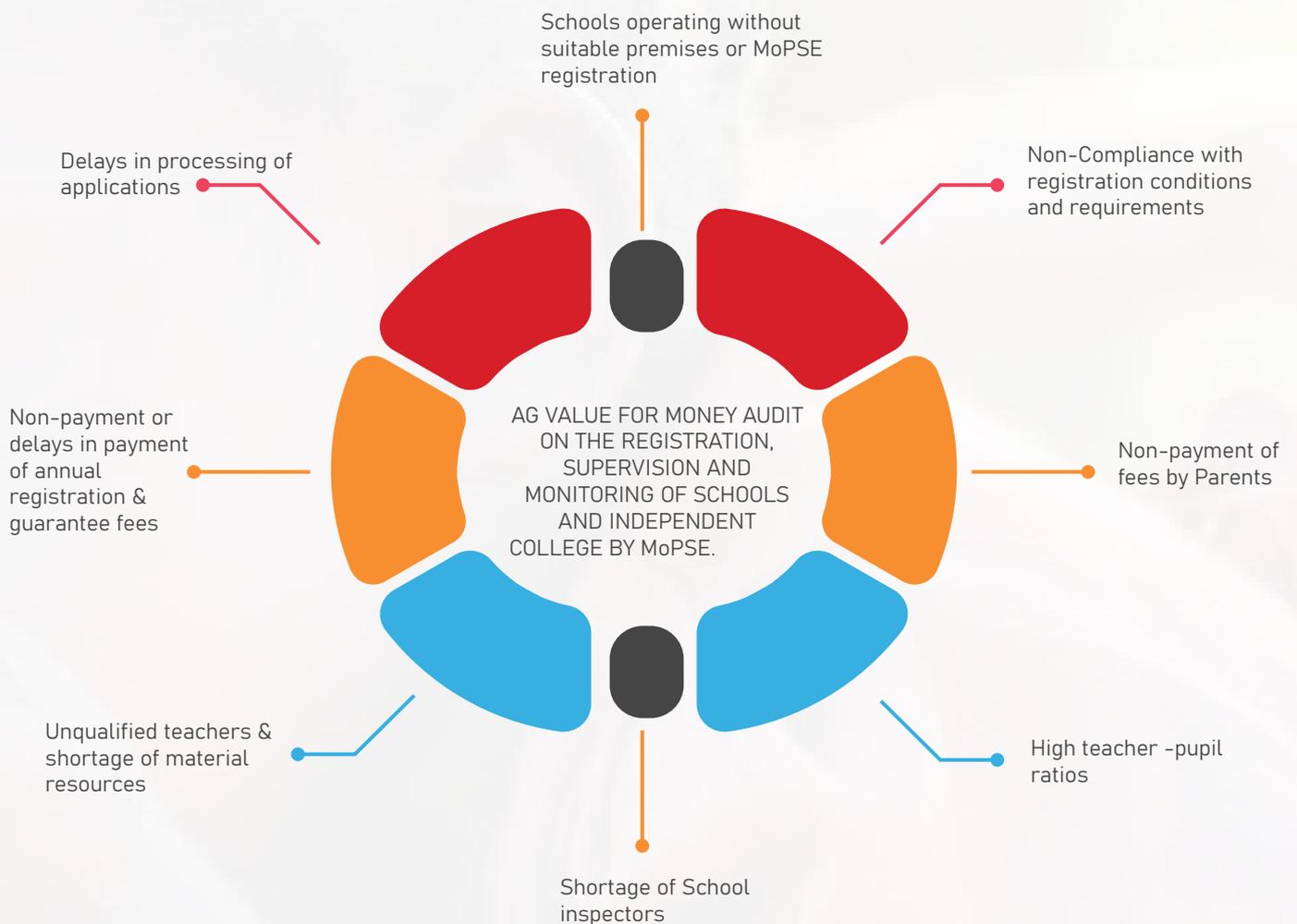
The registration of all new schools is a legal requirement in terms of the Education Act and no new school shall be allowed to operate until it has been registered, as provided for in Section 15 of the Education Act [Chapter 25:04]. The registration certificate is issued by the Secretary for MoPSE after he/she is satisfied, that the school meet conditions as specified in policy circular 73 of 1991 in terms of buildings, ablution facilities among other things. Unregistered and Non-compliant schools and colleges with respect to annual remittances are closed by the District Schools Inspector (DSI) in accordance with section 42 of the Education Act [Chapter 25:04], The timelines for the processing of applications at Head Office must be 3 months for establishment and 4 months for registration or re-registration. Registered schools and colleges are supervised and monitored by trained inspectors from MoPSE as provided for in section 66 of the Education Act [Chapter 25:04].

Teachers for both government, church and council schools are recruited by Government while independent colleges and private schools recruit their own teachers with the approval from the Ministry. According to circular number P17 (staffing procedures in private colleges and schools) the teachers should be qualified to teach the subjects. Responsible authorities are not permitted to recruit teachers from other countries unless it can be shown that no suitable teachers are available locally.

3 AUDIT FINDINGS

The audit revealed a number of weaknesses on registration, supervision and monitoring of schools and independent colleges as summarised on fig 1 below:

FIG 1: SUMMARY OF AUDIT OBSERVATIONS



Delays by the MoPSE in processing applications

Delays by MoPSE in processing of the applications for registration, re-registration and establishment of schools and independent colleges, with some applications outstanding for as long as 24 months against the stipulated 3 months for establishment and 4 months for registration or re-registration led to the sprouting of unregistered schools and colleges operating from unsuitable premises such as backyards and garages. Such schools often employ unqualified teachers thereby negatively affecting the quality of education given. The AG also noted that some colleges like Herentals rode on the initial licence to open various other branches without approval. The bureaucratic and red tape system of movement of applications through all governance layers from District, Province up to Head Office also contributed to the delays, in addition to late payment of registration fees by clients

Schools operating without suitable premises

Some schools and independent colleges without suitable premises were registered in stark violation of provisions of Section 14(4)(a) of the Education Act [Chapter 25:04]. Unsuitable premises violate the health rights of the kids especially the girl child, as proper sanitation facilities are important for their health, safety and dignity. This denies them space to manage their menstrual hygiene and keep them in school so that they can be able to learn, decide, lead and thrive. Some independent colleges and ECD centres commenced operations on the basis of a health certificate and/or a Local Authority license without obtaining a registration certificate from MoPSE, violating Section 15 of the Education Act. The inadequacy of classroom facilities has seen some using tuckshops and disused beerhalls with no lighting or open spaces while some resorted to double and triple sessions (hot seating) in order to accommodate the high number of learners.

Non-Compliance with registration conditions & requirements

Absence or inadequate monitoring mechanisms led to some institutions registered as secondary schools enrolling learners for both ECD and primary school level without applying for another registration certificate as stipulated in the regulations. Moreover, the recruitment of grade ones by ECD registered institutions did not comply with regulations for running primary school services in terms of space, classrooms and enrolment. This exposes students to unsuitable environments for education thus compromising their right to education and health. Absence of heavy deterrent fines for the schools and colleges led to the breaking of the regulations.

Shortage of School Inspectors

The Audit disclosed that there is acute shortage of school inspectors and this affected the monitoring and supervision of schools by the Ministry. In some districts, School Inspectors were hiring the services of some of the headmasters to assist which compromises outcomes of the inspections. In addition, the quality of subject teacher supervision or inspection by school inspectors in secondary schools was compromised because inspectors were supervising subjects that they did not specialise in. Scenarios where primary school trained inspectors were inspecting secondary schools and vice versa were noted thereby negatively affecting the quality of inspections.

Non-payment or delays in payment of annual registration and guarantee fees

Statutory Instrument 371 of 1998 states that fees are supposed to be paid not later than the 1st of January of every year but some registered colleges were not timeously paying both annual registration and guarantee fees. This prejudices Government of much needed resources to fund various activities especially schools monitoring and protection of the pupils. MoPSE efforts to collect these debts and/or to de-register the defaulting colleges were not proved and of concern is that it eventually sought approval to write off these debts resulting in loss of public resources.

Erratic inspections which compromise quality of education

Due to shortage of vehicles, school inspections are erratic and this compromises the education of children enrolled at schools and colleges as the Ministry is not ensuring that quality services are offered. Deficiencies at schools such as inadequate textbooks, classrooms, computer laboratories, science kits, toilets, unqualified teachers, misplaced teachers or teachers not implementing the competence-based curriculum or not using the right skills and methodologies have a bearing on schools pass rates and quality of school graduates.

High Teacher-pupil ratios

Enrolment figures in most Government and Local Authority schools that were visited were way above the available teachers and infrastructure. This may result in outbreak of diseases as the facilities will be congested. This was caused by the Ministry's delay to construct more schools or approve applications for those establishing schools and independent colleges.

Unqualified teachers and shortage of material resources

It was observed that some schools and independent colleges were recruiting unqualified or untrained teachers. In some secondary schools, teachers were taking on subjects that they did not specialise in and there were also some misplaced teachers who were qualified to teach at secondary but were teaching at primary schools and vice versa. Added to this is the observation that the competency-based curriculum was being partially implemented because of shortages of material resources like textbooks, science kits, geography and agriculture equipment. The Audit noted that some schools and independent colleges did not even have science and computer laboratories while most colleges did not have agriculture gardens and sporting grounds.



Others issues

- Parents were not paying school fees and levies for their children resulting in schools being owed lots of monies.
- A lot of satellite secondary schools were not examination centres despite having huge enrolment figures and a number of learners sitting for 'O' and 'A' level examinations.
- No universal code of ethics for teachers in the country. While MoPSE enforced the Public Service Regulations for all teachers in formal schools, some Private colleges have their own code of conduct while some do not even have and as a result cases of child abuse or improper association with learners by teachers go unreported or are reported to the responsible authorities who sweep them under the carpet. The Ministry does not have the power to conduct disciplinary hearings.

Ministry has power to investigate breach of the Public Service Regulations or code of ethics in formal schools who use PSC code of conduct.



4 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Unregistered schools continue to crop up because of absence of deterrent measures. Moreover, bureaucracy in the registration process create good grounds for corruption. There is therefore need to address the highlighted inefficiencies if the quality of education in Zimbabwe is to be improved in line with SDG number 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all.

To realise the basic human right to education, improvements on the registration, supervision and monitoring of schools is necessary. In that regard, the following action items are recommended to MoPSE and Parliament of Zimbabwe:

Conclusion

There is blatant disregard of regulations

Schools infrastructure deficit

Recommendation

Parliament, through the Portfolio Committee of Primary and Secondary Education should ensure that MoPSE implements the AG recommendations and send quarterly reports to Parliament on progress made in that regard.

Ministry of Finance, through the National budget should support phased establishment of Government schools to cover the school's deficit, estimated at 2056. With Government schools, it is easier to ensure progressive realisation of the right to education, especially the basic State-funded education, including adult basic education. Parliament, through the power of the purse as enshrined in Section 305 of the Constitution read together with Section 28(1) of the PFMA should ensure that the budget has adequate provision for such. While independent colleges have come in to fill the gap that is there in terms of number of schools, the Ministry has not played its role to ensure that the quality of service offered is up to standard.

| Conclusion | Recommendation |
|--|---|
| Understaffing of MoPSE | Parliament, through the Portfolio Committee should engage the Ministry of Finance and the PSC to ensure that unemployed qualified teachers are engaged and that MoPSE get treasury concurrence to fill in critical vacant posts of school's inspectors |
| Impunity amongst those that run unregistered schools | Parliament, as custodians of the constitution in terms of Section 119 of the Constitution should oversee the implementation of the provision on imposition of penalties provided for in Section 15 (6) with regards running of unregistered schools where a fine not exceeding level six shall be imposed. |
| Inadequate schools monitoring | MoPSE should step up its enforcement efforts through adequate monitoring of schools and colleges to ensure that they abide by the registration requirements. To achieve this, District inspectors should be capacitated with suitable vehicles. These Inspectors should supervise subjects that they specialised in during training at colleges. Each school is inspected at least once a year so that the quality of education is not compromised. This will improve the quality of inspections, inspection reports and recommendations proffered. |

ANNEX 1: PICTURES COURTESY OF AUDITOR GENERAL

Picture 1: A Fully Packed Classroom at Vision Academy with chairs only and no desks



Picture 3: Pupils Attending Lessons while Seated on the Floor.

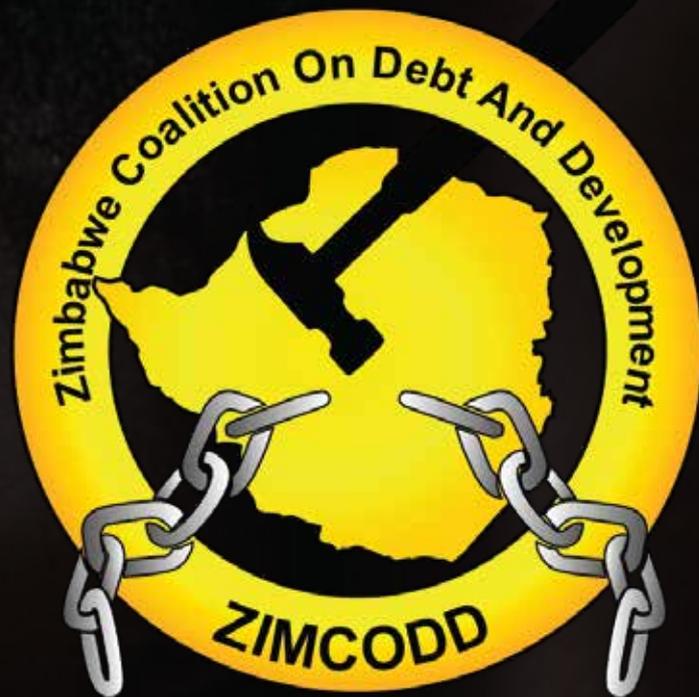


Picture 6: Pupils Attending Lessons outside/outdoors



Picture 2: One of the Classroom Facility at Vision Academy made up of hard boards





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