

Comprehensive Evaluation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme

Theme: “Efficacy of School Inspection in Supporting the Delivery of UPE”

Abstract

At the introduction of UPE, much responsibility was conferred on the inspection function to particularly quality assure the inputs, processes and outcomes of the UPE. While there have been significant achievements by the education inspectorate, mainly arising out of the reforms undertaken, increasingly, the education inspection function has been cited as a weak link within the interventions to improve education outcomes and achieve UPE objectives. This brief provides policy advice on strengthening the school inspection function based on the findings of the recently concluded independent comprehensive evaluation of UPE policy undertaken by NPA. From the evaluation, it was found that the directorate of education standards (DES) and the local authorities' education departments have limited capacity in terms of human, transport and financial resources to undertake school inspection as defined in the existing guidelines. Besides, the relevant laws (Education Act, 2008 & Local government Act) do not provide an accountability mechanism that enhances coordination and collaboration between the centre (policy makers) and the local governments (implementers of policy). This policy brief recommends that: the education Act and LG Act should be amended to provide for a legally binding coordination and collaboration mechanism that among others compels LG inspectors to report to both the LG hierarchy and the DES; DES should be elevated to an independent non-Ministerial entity reporting directly to Parliament; and the average cost of inspecting a school be raised from UGX 56,000 to a minimum of UGX.152,292.

Introduction

In 1997, the government of Uganda rolled out UPE to among others enable all school-age-going children enrol and complete the primary education cycle. This policy move led to exponential increments in enrolment that outpaced resources available for policy implementation. This conferred a critical role to the inspectorate arm to, within the prevailing circumstances; enforce quality standards of particularly the primary education to realise the UPE objectives. Nonetheless, the reported declining

education standards particularly in primary education in Uganda would partly imply a weak inspection function. This necessitated the assessment of the efficacy of current inspection regime for achieving the desired goals of the UPE as part of the comprehensive evaluation of UPE policy undertaken by NPA.

The evaluation entailed the use of secondary data, gathered through documentary reviews of particularly inspection reports from the DES, NAPE reports from UNEB and data from the EMIS of the MoES; and primary data collected through a survey of primary

schools, the ministry, departments and agencies in the education sector and local governments across Uganda.

Key Findings

1. **The inspection function is acutely under-resourced both in terms of Human and Financial resources to effectively and efficiently deliver its mandate:**
 - i) **In terms of financial resources, DES and LGs are acutely under-financed to undertake school inspection as required by the inspection guidelines.** Currently, the budget provision for the inspection function is UGX 56,000 per primary school which is about a third of the minimum estimated cost of UGX152,292. It is thus not surprising that inspectors particularly at the LG's work in a very constrained environment characterized by poor and failing transport facilities, limited funds for maintenance and mileage, and congested office spaces without the basic secretarial facilities for typing and copying of documents, which have negatively affected their morale and effectiveness.
 - ii) **In terms of Human resources, despite a marked improvement in the national average for inspector-to-primary school ratio (currently at 1:60), LGs and DES are understaffed to effectively execute their mandate.** Even the current criteria for allocation of inspectors perpetuate allocative inefficiencies since they do not fully take account of the number of schools in the inspector's area of jurisdiction. Rather, more emphasis is placed on the geographical size and region. This results into extremely high and low inspector-to-primary school ratio ratios amongst the districts
 - iii) Additionally, the professional capacity of inspectors is limited. Most of the inspectors have at best undertaken a teacher training course and are without any specialised training to transform
- them into professional inspectors. Besides, it is not a requirement for one to have undertaken an accredited course in school inspection to become a school inspector. Without an institutionalized arrangement for mandatory specialized training to re-orient newly recruited inspectors into professional inspectors, this challenge is more likely to continue.
2. **The quality of inspection and the corresponding reports is poor, limiting the realization of inspection mandate.** Contrary to the requirement that schools should be inspected at least twice a term, on average most (71%) of the primary schools are inspected only once in two terms. Additionally, it was noted that rural-based districts had only 12% of their schools inspected in two terms. In terms of the quality of inspection, it was noted that inspection reports were of poor quality (only 1 in 5 inspection reports submitted by LGs in 2017 were rated good and with relevant evidence to inform remedial actions for school improvement).
3. **Inspection invokes negative connotations in the minds of those that are inspected.** The entities inspected view inspection as a fault-finding exercise in disregard of the available guidelines that promote it as support service. For instance, many head teachers and teachers regard inspection as being synonymous to policing. This is against a backdrop of inspection reports mainly carrying recommendations aimed at disciplining or punishing poor performers.
4. **The findings and lessons from Inspection reports are not used to inform school improvement planning.** Contrary to the inspections' guidelines, primary schools do not have improvement plans detailing the agreed upon interventions and actions to address the areas of weakness arising from a school inspection. This implies that school inspection is regarded as an end and not a means.

5. **Weak institutional architecture.** The current institutional architecture of the inspection function where the inspectorate at the district reports to the DEO and the latter reports to the CAO (who is under no legal obligation to share the reports with the DES), has weakened the inspection function. Additionally, the requirement that the DES reports to the Permanent Secretary, MoES, breeds a moral hazard that negatively impacts on the quality of inspection and education standards. This is against the backdrop of lack of separation of roles between the delivery (implementation) function and the quality assurance function in providing UPE.
6. **School self-evaluation, a more cost-effective complement to external inspection, is not being optimized by DES, LGs and the schools.** As well, there is remarkable ignorance amongst school staff on how to conduct school self-evaluation. This contradicts the sector strategic direction that requires head-teachers to be the first-line inspectors of their schools besides the external inspections.
2. **Revise the schools inspection and monitoring budget to keep pace with the unit cost of inspection such that the minimum cost of inspecting a school is raised from UGX 56,000 to UGX 152,292.**
3. **Fill the staffing gaps in the inspection function** by urgently recruiting an additional 163 inspectors in order to lower the inspector-school ratio to at least 1:44. Similarly, staff shortage at DES (16 vacancies) needs to be urgently filled. Further, staffing levels for school inspectors within LGs and DES should primarily be determined by the number of schools.
4. **The minimum qualification for Inspectors should be an accredited inspection qualification** and DES/MoES should ensure that all existing inspectors are retrained to attain this minimum qualification. Besides the baseline teaching qualifications and teaching experience, it should be mandatory for inspectorate candidates to either hold accredited qualifications in school inspection/supervision and or school improvement planning; or to commence training on recruitment.

Policy Recommendations

1. **In line with international best practice, and for poses of addressing conflict of interest within the inspection accountability system, the Government should consider elevating the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) to an independent Non-Ministerial entity reporting directly to Parliament.** Furthermore, at the local authority level, the inspectorate should be a directorate independent of the general education office to separate delivery (implementation) and quality assurance of the education service, such that the directorate of school inspection is answerable to the district council.
5. **Leverage ICT in the inspection function to standardize the inspection process and enhance real-time data transmission** for prompt monitoring of school level quality indicators. There is need for the MoES to fast-track the roll-out of the ICT-based inspection system being piloted under the UTSEP project.
6. **In light of the budgetary and human resource constraints, school self-evaluation should be optimized to complement external inspection.** DES should foremost build capacity of headteacher and or senior teachers to become first line inspectors followed by development of the school-self assessment evaluation framework to guide schools on objective self-evaluation.

Conclusion

In general, whereas school inspection remains one of the most critical interventions for improving and upholding education standards, this evaluation reveals that the current state of primary school inspection is weak and unable to facilitate the provision of quality UPE. It is clear that the institutions directly charged with inspection are

significantly incapacitated to effectively execute the inspection function. This threatens the achievement of the UPE objectives. Going forward, to improve quality of UPE, the inspection function needs to be prioritised with a view of being capacitated to effectively and efficiently execute its mandate.

References & Useful links

1. National Planning Authority (2018) *Efficacy of School Inspection in Supporting the Delivery of UPE*
2. Government of Uganda (2008) *The Education Act.*
3. Ministry of Education and Sports (2010) *Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) Baseline Report.*
4. Directorate of Education Standards (2017) *A National School Inspection Report on the Quality of Primary Education Service Provision for FY2016/17.*

Acknowledgement

Drafting Team	Dr. Hamis Mugendawala; Winnie Nabiddo; William Epiaka; Sufian Kabagambe; Gyaviira Dhikusooka; Sam Kasule; Allan Kayongo; and Cotter Nassango
Editorial Team	Dr. Joseph Muvawala; Mr. Sanon Dhizaala; Dr. Patrick Olowo; Asumani Guloba; Winnie Nabiddo and Cotter Nassango
Approved by	NPA Executive Authority and Expanded Board



NATIONAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

Planning House , Clement Hill Road Plot 17
P.O. Box 21434.Kampala - Uganda
Tel: +256 414 250 229 / 0312 310 730

Learn more at:

Learn more at: www.npa.go.ug  www.facebook.com/NPAUGANDA  [#NPA_UG](https://twitter.com/NPA_UG) For any queries Email: research@npa.go.ug