



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Education Tower, #5 St. Vincent Street,
Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

Tel: 1(868)622-2181

www.moe.gov.tt



E: 7/3/1

August 18, 2017

Ms Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Parliament
Level G-8, Tower D
The Port of Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Ms Sampson-Meiguel

Request for a Paper Responding to the Recommendations Contained in the
Seventh Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the
Examination of the Report of the Auditor General

Reference is made to your correspondence on the subject matter at caption, dated May 26th, 2017.

Please find attached the Paper prepared by the Ministry of Education, responding to the recommendations/comments contained in the Report. The response has also been sent electronically as requested.

Should you require further information, please contact Ms Lisa Henry-David, Director (Ag.), Educational Planning Division at lisa.henry-david@moe.gov.tt or 622-2181 ext. 2342.

Yours respectfully

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Education



MOE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SEVENTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

PAC Response August 2107

Educational Planning Division
8/10/2017

Internal Audit	2
Overpayments	2
Storage	3
Pension and Leave	3
Structure of the Ministry	4
Contracts not produced	5
Project Monitoring	6

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE SEVENTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

Recommendation	Response
Internal Audit	
1. The Permanent Secretary should prepare a request for the Financial Management Branch of the Treasury Division in the Ministry of Finance to assist with the training of persons currently in the Internal Audit Unit.	Training in Financial Management was conducted for senior officers in 2016. The Ministry will contact the Financial Management Branch for training of its junior staff of the Audit Unit. Additionally officers will be recommended for training when offered by the Public Service Academy.
2. The Public Service Commission should hire more adequately qualified persons to fill the unit's vacancies so that the Internal Audit function can be executed with credibility.	The Personnel Department determines the level of qualification and experience required for all the positions in the Internal Audit Unit. The Ministry of Education has no control over recruitment.
3. The Internal Audit Unit should be strengthened to ensure not just efficiency and effectiveness but compliance of other units in the Ministry.	A new structure was proposed to strengthen the unit, however in the interim Human Resource Division will seek to fill all existing vacant positions in conjunction with the Service Commissions Department.
Overpayments	
4. The Ministry should implement more stringent checks on their records aimed at monitoring overpayments occurrences. Monthly checks should be performed by the MOE's accounting department so that there can be early detection of overpayments and it can be dealt with immediately.	An overpayment register is in place, and it is maintained on a daily basis. The amount and date of the overpayment along with the date the letter was sent to the officer informing of the over payment and requesting that they make arrangements to repay are recorded on the register. The Ministry is, however, guided by Section 85 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, with respect to the recovery period, which can be more than two (2) months.
5. The Ministry should establish an overpayment register or if already in existence, updated and maintained to monitor the existence and recovery of overpayments.	
6. Additional measures should be implemented to ensure that repayments are recovered within two (2) months after the overpayment has been discovered. The amount and the date of the overpayment should be recorded in the overpayment register and the person involved should be notified and arrangements made for the recovery of the funds.	

Recommendation	Response
7. To eliminate the lag times between the transferring of information from the schools to the district offices and then to the Ministry, the Committee endorses the Ministry's use of emails, phone calls and faxes to acquire information faster but feel strongly that a digital solution to this problem is not too challenging to implement and this will ensure greater accuracy and precision.	The Ministry has launched a new email platform called Microsoft O365 which include email accounts for all corporate staff at the Education Towers A and B, staff at our District Offices, Schools Faculty and eventually students. O365 also includes Sharepoint and one-drive for the sharing and storing of data and publications as well as intranet pages for internal data sharing.
Storage	
8. The MOE should pursue the implementation of an automated document management system that is incorporated with an integrated management information system. This will give managers a proper system of data storage whilst facilitating the monitoring of the organization as a whole	An Education Management Information System (EMIS) is presently being considered under a loan arrangement which is being negotiated with the Inter-American Development Bank at this time. Such a system will be utilized as the central database and repository for all data in the Ministry inclusive of schools/students. iGOVTT is working with the Ministry on this project to streamline the dataflows and store corporate data.
9. The Permanent Secretary should liaise with the Minister of Finance on the matter of amending Financial Regulations 135 – 137 to include the ability to not hold documents for at least 60 years and the ability to use electronically stored data in place of the original version.	The Permanent Secretary will liaise with the Minister of Finance on the issue of amending Financial Regulations 135 – 137.
Pension and Leave	
10. The Ministry should make every effort to ensure Pension and Leave of all officers are updated regularly and that Pension and Leave files are thoroughly checked and audited internally before submission to the Comptroller of Accounts within the stipulated deadlines.	The Ministry has commenced the thorough checking and auditing of all pension and leave files prior to submission to the Comptroller of Accounts and is working to improve the system of updating pension and leave records of all officers in accordance with the stipulated deadlines.
11. Pension and Leave records of retirees should be submitted to the Comptroller of Accounts by the stipulated 3 months before the respective retirement dates.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation and is taking steps to implement such registers.

Recommendation	Response
12. A better communication strategy should be developed between the MOE and Comptroller of Accounts to ensure the timely processing and granting of pension and leave claims for retirees. This can be achieved by identifying an individual in the Ministry to act as a Liaison officer with the Comptroller of Accounts or relevant agency.	The Ministry has officially nominated the Administrative Officer II, of the Pension and Leave Unit, as the Liaison Officer between the Ministry of Education and the Comptroller of Accounts to facilitate the timely processing and granting of Pension & Leave claims for retirees.
13. These systems are manual and archaic. An automated system is now a necessity.	The Ministry is eager to move toward automation to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in the processing of Pension and Leave records. However, funding for this initiative is not available at this time. Additionally, Financial Regulations mandates that hard copy of the documents/forms are presented to the Comptroller of Accounts for processing of officers retirement benefits.
Structure of the Ministry	
14. The Public Service Commission should make the outfitting of the MOE with proper staffing a priority because the MOE's function is a critical component in the development of the minds of this country's future leaders.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation.
15. The Personnel Department should draft more attractive compensation packages for the vacant permanent positions in the MOE so that the Public Service Commission will find it easier to fill the vacancies. This will serve to boost the staff compliment and increase the productivity of the MOE.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation.

Recommendation	Response
16. The MOE should notify the Public Service Commission at most five years in advance and highlight that within that 5 year timeframe the number of individuals at the various levels in the ministry that are going to approach retirement so that replacements can be organized ahead of time.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation. A such, the Ministry of Education has submitted to the Director of Personnel Administration a listing of all officers within the MOE who are due to retire within the five year period from the year 2017 to 2021.
17. The MOE should establish a mentorship programme where before a person retires they could be partnered with a younger/newer employee so that the older worker could train the younger employees so that they can tap into their expertise and gain insightful information on how do the jobs before the older employees leave.	A mentorship programme is to be established and incorporated in a succession plan to be developed by the MOE.
Contracts not produced	
18. The continuous updating and maintenance of a Contract Registers as required by Financial Regulation 129 (1) and (2) needs to become a priority in the MOE to ensure that proper records are being kept of the contracts executed and the parties involved. A contract register is important because it lets you know evaluate your suppliers based on seasonality, quantities and prices. It can also help an organization standardize on consistent contract terms and conditions.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation and is
19. The Permanent Secretary should reinforce the need to have more regular checks on the records of the executed contracts the MOE is engaged in. Regular checks will ensure that every contract entered into, was properly stored and accounted for in their contract registers.	The Permanent Secretary is implementing measures to ensure more regular checks on the records of the executed contracts are conducted
20. Proper training should also be provided by the Financial Management Branch of the Treasury Division in the Ministry of Finance, for persons responsible for maintaining these registers. Also, if the legislation that requires documents to be stored in its	The Ministry will contact the Financial Management Branch for training of its staff in the maintenance of the contract registers. Additionally, officers will be recommended for training when offered by the Public Service Academy.

Recommendation	Response
original form is amended by the Attorney General, through usage of electronic data instead of hard copy, the ability to maintain the registers will be greatly improved.	
21. Implementing electronic storage wherever possible will also make it easier to be access, tracked and update the contract registers which will in turn prove to be a major advantage to both the entity and the AGD because information will be presented in a timely manner.	The Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation.
Project Monitoring	
22. The Ministry's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit needs to closely monitor every project the Ministry is engaged and conduct site visits as necessary. Value for money should be ensured in every decision and every project which is chosen to be done. When this is done projects will finish within the given time, costs will decrease and less time wasted.	The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (staff complement two) is not equipped for monitoring technical construction projects. This falls under the purview of the Programme and Project Monitoring Unit (PPMU) and Education Facilities Planning and Procurement Division (EFPPD). In each case officers will seek to carry out these functions despite the dearth of suitably qualified staff.
23. The Ministry should notify Public Service Commission about the vacancies in the Educational Facilities Company Limited (EFCL) ¹ so that additional, qualified staff can be provided for the vacancies therein.	The Ministry has, on several occasions, written to the Director of Personnel Administration requesting that the vacancies in our Education Facilities Planning and Procurement Division (EFPPD) be filled.
24. With respect to areas where the current staff maybe lacking in competency, the PSIP Unit of the Ministry of Planning and Development can provide the required training to strengthen the staff in weak areas as well as expand the scope of the MOE.	While the Ministry is in agreement with this recommendation, it is not always possible to release officers for training due to the limited number of available staff in that division. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to have our staff trained.

¹ This should read Education Facilities Planning and Procurement Division (EFPPD). EFCL is a special purpose company an thus staff are not recruited through the Public Service Commission