

Responses of the Ministry of Education to the Public Accounts Committee Questions

The Ninth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the CAPE Scholarship Programme as reported on in the Special Audit Report within the Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 2019

Subject Matter	Committee's Recommendations	Responses
Scholars' National Service Obligation	<p>Observation: <i>i. Despite the annual monitoring which gives rise to the SATD's Achievement Report, there were still consistent challenges in terms of some scholars not carrying out the required national service after benefiting from a CAPE scholarship. This brings up the issue of whether the existing penalties for non-compliance are sufficiently dissuasive.</i></p>	<p>The SATD will continue to train staff to identify and treat with defaulting scholars in a timely manner.</p> <p>The MOE will seek to provide the SATD with its full complement of staff.</p>
Monies Owed by Defaulting Awardees	<p>Observation: <i>i. The Committee welcomes the news that the GORTT has been repaid two-thirds of the total sums owed by defaulting awardees and is hopeful that the remaining one-third will be received without further delay.</i></p>	<p>a. For the period 01/03/2022 to 31/12/2022, the MOE recovered - TT\$4,886,523.48. Amount outstanding – TT\$15,708,949.45, which represents scholars that are currently repaying with active Repayment Agreements.</p> <p>b. The SATD has been actively pursuing defaulting Scholars by:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">i. Enforcing the terms and conditions of the Scholarship Agreement.</p>

	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>v. The MOE should report to Parliament on the following by January 31, 2023:</p> <p>a. Further progress made in collecting the \$20,595,472.93 that remained outstanding as at February 2022 from defaulting awardees, including the sums collected and the sums still outstanding, if any; and</p> <p>b. The systems put in place to ensure that scholars' debts do not become statute-barred.</p>	<p>ii. Creation of databases and systems to detect breach cases within the standard operating timeframes.</p> <p>iii. Awareness Programme- Drafting and reviewing the breach sections on the SATD Website. Availability of the FAQ's and other material on the online forums to remind recipients of their obligations.</p> <p>iv. Review of the Standard Operating Procedures to update problematic areas and gaps.</p> <p>v. Increase in the allocation of staff to the Breach Unit to oversee projects that are critical to the functioning of the Division.</p>
National Development Needs	<p>Observation:</p> <p>i. It was previously noted as Issue 2 – Defaulting Awardees that some scholars did not return to carry out obligatory service after their studies because their field of study was not in demand in Trinidad and Tobago. This, combined with the fact that two-thirds of scholars who do fulfil their obligatory service are in fact not placed according to national development needs calls into question whether the effectiveness as well as the value for money received by the nation from the CAPE Scholarship Programme have been reaching their full potential.</p>	<p>i. A critical review of the National Development list should be undertaken to accurately reflect the current needs of T&T. This should encompass collaboration amongst key stakeholders to ensure alignment with the priority areas of development as set out the strategic plan Vision 2030:</p> <p>a. Collaboration with Ministry of Planning and Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Service Commissions Department.</p> <p>b. Creation of an action plan for collaboration with these agencies.</p> <p>c. The award of scholarships continues to be in line with the development needs currently identified.</p> <p>d. Stricter measures for awardees to remain in studies within cognate groupings.</p>

	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>i. The MOE should indicate to Parliament the action to be taken to strengthen the alignment of scholarship recipients with Trinidad and Tobago's national development needs by January 31, 2023.</p>	<p>e. Review of the policies governing the award of scholarships to ensure that scholarships offered under the CAPE Scholarship Programme are offered to pursue areas of study that are aligned with the priority areas of development.</p>
<p>Recordkeeping</p>	<p>Observation:</p> <p>i. The Committee welcomes the savings realised by the MOE via the development and rollout of its in-house SATTIS filing system.</p> <p>Recommendation:</p> <p>i. The MOE should report to Parliament on the measures it plans to undertake to strengthen the effectiveness of the SATTIS system by January 31, 2023.</p>	<p>i. System development – Based on the ICTD project mandate, completion of development functionalities of SATTIS is prioritized. The expansion of the current functionalities of SATTIS will further aid with improving the Division's payment process, service delivery, ability to report and monitor compliance of the policies and procedures.</p> <p>ii. Compliance and ownership strategies - Staff training and reinforcement of the mandatory use of the system to increase accuracy, which creates a data gathering process that is error free and ensures completeness of records.</p> <p>iii. Periodic audits of the Division's information to determine how the processes can be improved and costs (in relation to breach and detection of non-compliance) reduced.</p>
<p>Human Resource</p>	<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>i. The MOE should submit a status update to Parliament on the implementation of measures to address the SATD's human resource challenges by January 31, 2023.</p>	<p>Actively pursuing the filling of vacant HR Adviser positions through the PSC and submitting internal recommendations for acting appointments to the PSC.</p>