Introduction

The Namibian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC) recognizes that, as indispensable resources in any education system, teachers who are qualified, motivated, appropriately compensated and professionally supported are vital for effective learning. This is reflected in both the number of teachers employed and the size of the salary budget (known as the compensation budget). Of the 37,612 personnel employed in the MoEAC, 25,394 are teachers. This constitutes 67.5 per cent of all staff members in the ministry. Teacher salaries in primary and secondary schools amount to N$5.7 billion (approximately US$438 million), or 83.8 per cent of the N$6.8 billion (about US$523 million) spent on staff salaries within the ministry. Compared to other upper-middle income countries, the salaries of qualified teachers in Namibia are competitive (MoEAC, 2017). The Namibian education system is also characterized by low learner-teacher ratios across all the 14 regions, which is conducive to effective teaching and learning.

However, as is common to most education systems, Namibia’s MoEAC faces a number of challenges that can undermine its ability to deliver the most effective, efficient and equitable services. These relate mostly to payroll and teacher placement, and include: the incongruent capturing of teacher-related data between the Annual Education Census (AEC) and the payroll system; the ratio of personnel expenditure and non-personnel expenditure; the relatively high number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers; and the unequitable distribution of teachers across education levels and regions. The AEC is the most important source of detailed information about each school. This information is a critical pillar of a sound Education Management Information System (EMIS) for each region and the country. The AEC and the Fifteenth School Day Report comprise EMIS reports, which are of value to the management and administration for regional and national planning, for the governance of schools and for the supply of school resources.

About this brief

This brief:
- analyses the current payroll data system
- looks at the salary bill
- looks at the allocation of teachers across education levels and regions
- examines the issue of unqualified and under-qualified teachers
- makes recommendations to policy-makers about how to identify and address challenges and seize opportunities.
According to the Public Expenditure Review (PER) of 2017, the MoEAC’s payroll system appears to function well in terms of its primary function of paying salaries. However, the effectiveness and efficiency of the payroll system is rarely monitored or analysed. This means that data manipulation or incorrect data entries can go unnoticed, which could cost the ministry and the government significant amounts in public funds.

Another challenge is the inconsistency in data capturing between the payroll system and the AEC. While ideally both should match, this is not always the case. Figure 1 shows the differences for 2014, with the number of teachers captured by each system. (Each dot in the graph represents a school.) The graph shows that there are variations in both directions, but the general trend is that the number of teachers captured on the payroll is higher than those captured in the AEC.

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The number of teachers captured on the payroll is generally higher than the number on the AEC.

This means that overall, there could be a large number of ‘ghost teachers’.

The lack of regular monitoring of the payroll system means it is possible for data to be manipulated and for errors to go unnoticed.

The data provided by the payroll system and the AEC often do not match.

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Figure 1: Number of teachers by school according to payroll data and the Annual Education Census, 2014


The 2017 PER found almost 20 cases in which seven or more teachers at a school were on the payroll but were not counted or listed by name in the AEC. This inconsistency between the two systems, which shows higher numbers reflected on the payroll, raises the crucial question of whether there are ‘ghost teachers’ on the payroll. Removing these individuals from the payroll results in significant payroll savings for the MoEAC. In the first year of investigation alone, the ministry was able to save over NAD24 million (MoEAC internal analysis, 2018, unpublished data).
Namibia is currently experiencing low economic growth, combined with government budget cuts across sectors. Government revenue is expected to decline over the next few years. These unfavourable economic conditions will continue to put pressure on government finances and consequently, on education spending. To optimize the use of resources without compromising on the quality of service delivery, it is important that personnel spending – by far the biggest budget item for basic education – is efficiently managed.

Personnel spending includes spending on salaries, pensions, overtime and other conditions of service. Non-personnel spending includes spending on textbooks, stationery, water, electricity and maintenance of facilities, including hostels. The MoEAC also needs to achieve the optimal balance between personnel spending and non-personnel expenditure, such as teaching and learning materials. Studies have shown that increased spending on personnel does not necessarily lead to the best outcome, and that spending on good-quality textbooks and other learning material can yield significant benefits.

As Figure 2 shows, personnel spending is significantly higher than non-personnel spending for all levels and across regions. At the national level, personnel spending is five times more than non-personnel spending. At the regional level, spending on personnel is eight times more than non-personnel spending in Omusati, Oshikoto and Zambezi regions.

Figure 2: Personnel and non-personnel expenditure in primary and secondary education, by region, 2013/14 (NS million)
Source: Expenditure data obtained from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (2016)
It is important to note that some regions do not follow the post-provisioning norms of 2001, the system which allocates the number of teachers and staff to all public schools. Often there are more teachers at a school than the number allocated in the provisioning norms. The misalignment between the budgetary process and the official allocation of posts per school contributes to the ballooning of the salary bill. This, in turn, limits spending on important non-personnel items such as textbooks, stationery and other teaching and learning materials.

**Distribution of qualified teachers across levels and regions**

The distribution of qualified teachers across education levels and regions is disproportionate.

**Distribution across education levels**

According to AEC 2016, the proportion of qualified teachers in secondary schools is 91 per cent, compared to 78 per cent in primary schools. The particularly low number of qualified teachers in the lower grades, where foundational education is delivered, denies the country the full benefits of investment in early education. However, it should be noted that the MoEAC has undertaken to address this through the introduction in 2016 of an in-service teacher diploma in junior primary education. The ministry is also looking at deploying qualified retired teachers, where appropriate.

**Distribution across regions**

Across regions, at the primary school level, the proportion of qualified teachers ranges from 63 per cent in Kunene to 88 per cent in Khomas and Oshana regions. And at the secondary school level, the proportion of qualified teachers ranges from 84 per cent in Kavango West to 97 per cent in Oshana. The regional difference of 20 percentage points for primary and secondary education is alarming, as the disproportionate allocation of teachers contributes to the perpetuation of regional inequalities.
Unqualified and under-qualified temporary teachers

Namibia faces a dramatic skills shortage in the basic education sector, especially in the early phases of learning. To meet the high and growing demand for teachers nationally, the MoEAC allows for the recruitment of teachers on a contractual or temporary basis. The appointment of temporary teachers is at the discretion of the school principals and boards, and the criteria for appointing temporary teachers are less stringent. While some temporary teachers are qualified, this practice can lead to the appointment of un- and under-qualified teachers, and thus undermine the quality of teaching and learning.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of temporary teachers in each of the 14 regions in 2014. Though most teachers are permanent, many are temporary teachers. Proportionally, there are more temporary teachers in the Kunene region, making up 31 per cent of all teachers in the region.

Figure 4: Number of temporary and permanent teachers by region, 2014
Source: Public Expenditure Review of the Basic Education Sector in Namibia, 2017

To benefit optimally from the appointment of temporary teachers, evidence shows that the management and training of temporary teachers can enhance educational outcomes. A study in Guinea found that the involvement of teacher unions and training of temporary teachers before deployment helped to improve educational outcomes. Studies in Kenya and Mali showed that community involvement in monitoring the appointment, absenteeism and time on task of temporary teachers contributed to improved educational outcomes in these countries.
### Recommendations

**Verify and monitor payroll numbers:** The MoEAC should investigate cases where payroll numbers exceed the AEC numbers at particular schools. It could start with cases where there are considerable discrepancies. Once discrepancies have been identified, there should be further investigation and visits to the schools concerned to identify the source of the discrepancy and take action.

**Improve data management to avoid discrepancies:** To avoid discrepancies between payroll and AEC data, there should be regular monitoring and cross-checks to match pay-points with schools. There should be regular comparisons of payroll and AEC data for all schools. For this to succeed, it is critical that reliable data are collected, verified and released in a timely manner, observing the motto: “this year’s data, this year.”

**Manage the salary bill:** The MoEAC should enforce the 2001 post-provisioning norms and ensure that no more teachers are appointed above the allocated number. This should apply to both qualified and unqualified teachers. This does not mean that no new teachers can be appointed, but teachers should be appointed in line with the post-provisioning norms and only to replace teachers who have left.

**Develop and implement a policy for employing and developing temporary teachers:** To address the current shortcomings in the appointment and management of temporary teachers, the MoEAC should develop a policy for temporary teachers. The policy should address issues covering professional development, including induction training, involving the community in monitoring teaching, and strengthening data reporting systems related to temporary teachers.

**Ensure the equitable distribution of qualified teachers:** To reduce the appointment of un- and under-qualified teachers and to improve the equitable distribution of qualified teachers, the MoEAC should accelerate the provision of in-service professional development programmes and use retired professionals where practical. This focus should be on pre-primary and primary education, where the need is greatest.

**Promote accountability:** Scale up and implement programmes which capacitate and encourage all stakeholders in education, including school administrators, schools boards, learners and school communities to adopt accountability as its key operational principle.

### Endnotes

5. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is the division within the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture Head Office and regional offices responsible for producing, managing and disseminating of education data. EMIS is the primary national process for collecting and reporting data related to schools in Namibia. An important function of the EMIS is that education regions collect data twice a year from all state and private schools in Namibia. These two reports are vital tools that enable education planners to develop plans responsive to the needs of children in their given context and thus improve the quality of service delivery in education. The Fifteenth School Day survey features all the vital information about schools in the country as recorded on the 15th school day every year. The Annual Education Census (AEC) is a comprehensive survey of all state and private schools in Namibia. The Annual Education Census is completed by all schools in the country on a specific day, usually in September.