NFER
International
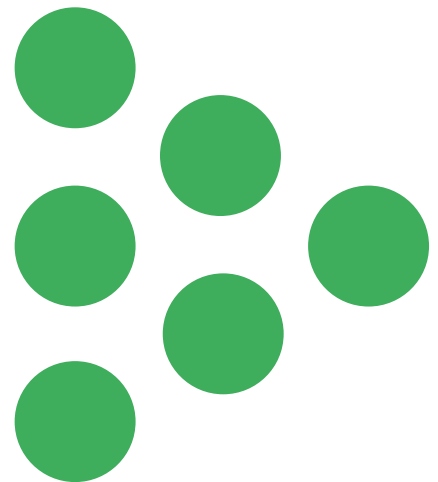
Inspections and improvements in Ugandan secondary schools – an analysis of policies and practices

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Inspections and improvements in Ugandan secondary schools – an analysis of policies and practices[1]

Gustavo Henndel Lopes, Katarzyna Kubacka, Jessica Chu, Geeta Gambhir

With contributions from María A. Galvis and Juliet Kyoshabire Kotonya

Contents

Acronyms

BOG	Board of governors
BRMS	Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSO	Civil society organisation
DEO	District Education Officer
DES	Directorate of Education Standards
DFID	Department for International Development
EMIS	Education Management and Information System
EPG	Education Partnerships Group
ESCC	Education Sector Consultative Committee
ESSP	2017/2018-2020/2021 Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
I&I	Inspect and Improve programme
IIS	Inspection Information System
IO	PEAS Inspection Officer
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOPS	Ministry of Public Service
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NSA	Non-state actor
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PEA	Political economy analysis
PEAS	Promoting Equality in African Schools
PPP	Public-private partnership

PS	MOES' Permanent Secretary
PSI	Department of Private Schools and Institutions
PTA	Parents-teachers association
QI	Quality indicator
SHC	School Health Committee
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TOC	Theory of change
TPP	The Policy Practice
TWG	Technical Working Group
UK	United Kingdom
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene

1   Introduction

This report presents findings and recommendations from a political economy analysis (PEA) conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda. Our research looked at the Inspect and Improve (I&I) programme, which has been co-designed by Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS), an education charity based in the United Kingdom (UK), and the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) of Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES). The two organisations have partnered in I&I to advance school leadership and learning outcomes in Ugandan secondary schools.

As with other PEAs of education, our report examines how socio-political and economic factors shape the conceptualisation, formulation and implementation of education policies and interventions. As a result, this PEA can support policymaking and programme design and implementation. For example, it can be used to ground policies and programmes in the local context; inform projects that respond to local realities; and guide the selection of strategic routes for agenda-setting and decision-making (Novelli et al., 2014; Daoust and Novelli, 2020).

This NFER brief can support I&I in linking its school-level work with its growing focus on strengthening the Ugandan education system[2]. Following over a decade's experience operating its own low-cost secondary schools in Uganda, PEAS launched I&I with DES in early 2019. The programme combines the Ugandan government's reformed secondary school inspection framework with PEAS' approach to developing secondary school leaders' management practices. It has been operating as a pilot in an increasing number of schools. I&I has plans to expand its participation in the Ugandan education sector over the years by generating and sharing learnings that support schools and system-level improvements in education quality at a large scale.

Applying a political economy perspective, this research is not bound to any particular area of (international) education theory or policy, for instance, those on education accountability or quality. It has instead considered them as factors that, with others, influence stakeholders, institutions and systems relevant to school inspections and improvements. There are several advantages to looking at education from this (political economy) angle. In practice, it aims to be flexible and avoid predetermined problem formulations and preconceived solutions to complex developmental processes like those tackled by I&I. Moreover, the methodological approach aligns with the exploratory nature of PEA and the I&I programme and aims to understand the link between secondary school improvements and school inspections in Uganda.

---

[2] NFER has previously served as a Learning Partner to PEAS and I&I's independent evaluator.

2 Methodology

2.1 Conceptual framework

2.1.1 Political economy analysis approach

This research used an applied political economy approach to explore critical patterns of interaction between contextual factors, formal and informal institutional arrangements and stakeholders relevant to secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda. The approach drew on the works by Hudson and Leftwich (2014) and the UK's The Policy Practice (TPP) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (TPP and ODI, 2021).

As part of this approach, our research included looking into information that is often overlooked in technical, policy-oriented works. Some use an iceberg analogy in which PEA aims to understand the information that might typically be hidden underwater whereas other approaches tend look at what is above the surface.

2.1.2 Education-system lens

To account for the multi-tiered nature of education systems, our research explored three interrelated educational contexts (Figure 1) (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) that form the background of school inspections and improvements. These are:

- **Policy implementation and practice:** schools and their immediate settings, for example, families, communities, and local government administrations
- **Agenda-setting:** where policy ideas emerge and gain traction, for example, a multi-stakeholder forum or governmental consultative committee
- **Policy formulation:** settings and mechanisms for policy propositions to take shape and progress through decision-making processes.

Figure 1 Educational contexts explored in the PEA
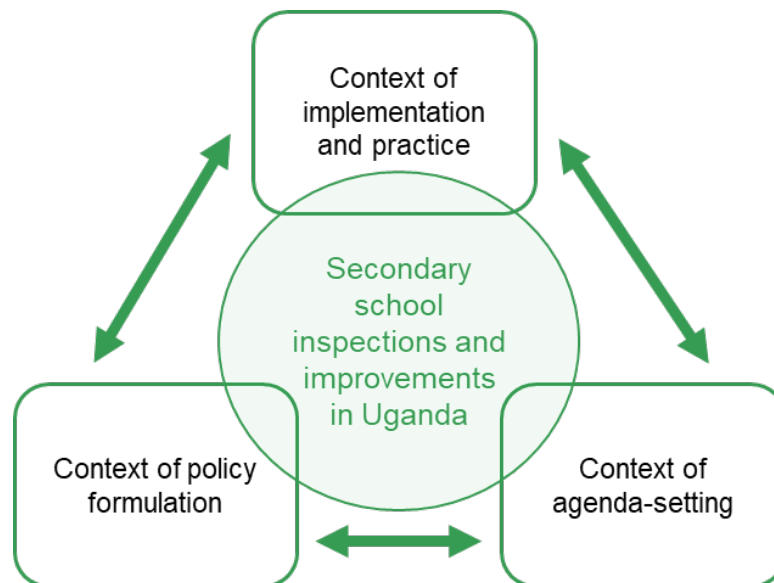
2.2   Research design

We structured this research project as an exploratory case study. This is a flexible, adaptive research design suitable for under-researched topics and allowing for flexibility in terms of research hypotheses or questions (Streb, 2010). As part of this design, we opted for a four-phase approach to data collection, analysis and reporting that allowed us to refine our contextual understanding of secondary school inspections and improvements as we proceeded.

2.2.1   Phase 1: Desk review and consultation sessions

Within the first phase, we carried out a desk review of three types of documents and conducted remote consultation sessions from July to September 2021. Table 1 indicates the goals of each element of this phase.

Table 1 Summary of research phase 1[3]

Phase 1 stage		Number of references or sources	Goal
Desk review	Academic and grey literature review	5	Explore key topics around the political economy of education quality and accountability in Uganda.
	Policy review	19	Identify main policy guidelines around secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda.
	Local press review	21	Find recent information on secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda, mainly linked to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
Consultation sessions		5	Gather nuanced views on the topics above; identify outstanding themes and consultees' areas of interest and work.

At the end of this phase, we prepared an internal inception report that consolidated findings and reflections and informed the goals and approach to primary data collection.

2.2.2   Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews

The project's second phase comprised nine semi-structured interviews conducted between November and December 2021. Due to the study's exploratory nature and the fact that primary data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented travel, the interviews were remote, and interviewees were identified from a convenience sample. This began with a set of purposively selected interviewees and was followed by snowballing to identify further interviewees.

---

[3] Annex A lists the data sources.

The interviewees came from three types of settings of interest to this PEA (see Annex A for the full list of interviewees):

- National civil society organisations (CSOs), with four interviewees
- Different divisions of the Ministry of Education and Sports, with three interviewees
- International organisations, with two interviewees.

The interviews explored each interviewee's:

- Roles, responsibilities and ways of working at different levels across the education system, including in relation to secondary school inspections and improvements
- Involvement with MOES Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and other central government committees
- Views on the secondary school inspection system
- Views on the scalability of I&I or related interventions.

2.2.3 Phase 3: Thematic data analysis

The project's third phase (January to March 2022) started with a thematic analysis of interview data using a coding framework developed in-house and derived from our conceptual framework (Section 2.1). As part of this analysis, we examined the coded contents for emerging themes, first by summarising the coded data from each interviewee into key points – the themes – and then compiling the themes mentioned by a standalone or multiple respondents. After that, we critically appraised the compiled themes to identify information gaps.

To complement the thematic analysis where appropriate, we re-assessed the secondary data and insights from the desk research and consultation sessions (Section 2.2.1). From that we generated emerging findings and recommendations during workshops and meetings among research team members.

2.2.4 Phase 4: Reporting

Phase four of the research corresponded to the reporting stage between March 2022 and May 2023. We first prepared an internal draft report consolidating the research findings from a political economy perspective. This PEA report then served as the basis for writing up the present report. The preparation of both reports involved an extensive interchange of ideas among those involved in the research project to refine findings and recommendations. The final report underwent internal and external reviews.

2.3   Limitations of the study

This research intends to inform I&I, as well as other stakeholders interested in the topic, of ways to transform secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda. As an exploratory study, it is not a comprehensive or exhaustive review but offers select insights based on the scope of the research. Our research covered different educational contexts relevant to I&I and their interconnectedness (Section 2.1.2). Hence, the study has not intended to concentrate on any single one of the contexts. Three limitations (see Table 2) should therefore be considered when interpreting the findings and recommendations. Further research should explore ways to build on our study to expand its scope and address the limitations.

Table 2 Limitations of the study

Limitation	Rationale
Limited range of interviewees	Given the exploratory nature of the study along with the use of a convenience sample (Section 2.2.2) and resource constraints, our analyses cannot disaggregate results according to characteristics like interviewees' socioeconomic status, geographic location (for instance, remote vs centrally located) and gender. It can also not provide in-depth insights into the views of particular stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the study has not included respondents from certain key government units such as the MOES Secondary Education Department, the office of the MOES' Permanent Secretary (PS) and district-level administrators. Similarly, we have not interviewed representatives from multilateral donor organisations working on school inspections and improvements. To mitigate the lack of insight from such stakeholders, our desk research was designed to provide more background context to our findings to complement our primary data collection.
Lack of familiarity with I&I programme	Our interviews revealed that several respondents did not know the I&I programme and/or PEAS. Therefore, such interviewees explored the topic of inspections and how these might contribute to improvements from a more general standpoint instead of through I&I's perspective. On the one hand, this has usefully grounded our appreciation of I&I in a systemic understanding of school inspections and improvements in the country. On the other hand, it has not always made it possible for the research team to centre I&I more in some of the findings.
Timeliness of the research	Our study provides a snapshot analysis of a programme still in development - I&I -, so we have been limited in how much we could offer a long-term perspective on the research topic.

3   The Ugandan school inspection and improvement cycle

This section briefly explains two key concepts for our report, namely, those of a secondary school inspection visit and a School Improvement Plan (SIP) in the context of Uganda, focusing on the link between them. These two processes form the bedrock of a typical school inspection and improvement cycle and are therefore key to understanding the report as a whole.

3.1   School inspection visit

The secondary school inspection cycle begins with an inspection visit[4] by a DES inspector, who assesses the extent to which the school meets standards (i.e., minimum requirements) and the quality of educational provision as per quality indicators (QIs) (MOES, 2012f). After this visit, the inspector produces an inspection report identifying both the school's areas of strength, which it should build on, and its improvement needs.

The inspection system's tools, standards and QIs have covered various areas for many years, for instance (MOES, 2012f):

- School governance, including statutory compliance and the participation of governing bodies
- School management, for example, finances, human resources, and teaching and learning monitoring
- School sanitation, nutrition, health, safety, and security
- Teachers' subject knowledge, assessment practices, lesson planning and classroom management skills
- Use of classroom resources, the wider school environment, and co-curricular activities
- Pupil learning and attainment
- Parental and community relations with the school.

In the late 2010s, the Ugandan government reformed the school inspection framework together with international partners (EPG, 2021a, 2021b; MOES, 2017). The new framework measures school effectiveness by collecting school-level data on fewer focus areas to inform improvements at the school, sub-national and national levels (EPG, 2021a, 2021b). The focus areas are:

- Teacher attendance
- Student attendance
- Student achievement
- Teaching quality
- Student behaviour
- Student safety.

3.2   School Improvement Plan (SIP)

The inspection report informs the preparation of a School Improvement Plan consolidating the improvements a school sets out to achieve, including the respective targets, measures (indicators),

---

[4] Locally also termed an 'external evaluation' (MOES, 2012f).

steps, timelines, resources and people involved. Of note, the SIP does not necessarily reflect all improvement needs raised during an inspection but only those the school will have identified as a priority within its available resources (MOES, 2012a). The preparation of a SIP can be a highly participatory process bringing together a range of stakeholders like headteachers, members of school governing bodies, inspectors, parents, caregivers, and community leaders. Moreover, as per DES' policy, finished SIPs need to be made public and communicated as widely as possible to school staff, pupils, parents, school governing bodies, local leaders, and authorities, among others (MOES, 2012a).

Where a SIP is produced from inspection report recommendations, a follow-up inspection visit (return visit) is expected to check on progress (Figure 2). The inspection process acknowledges that certain improvements are more challenging to achieve than others and may need to remain in the SIP for more than one inspection cycle (MOES, 2012a).

Figure 2 Sketch of a secondary school inspection and improvement cycle
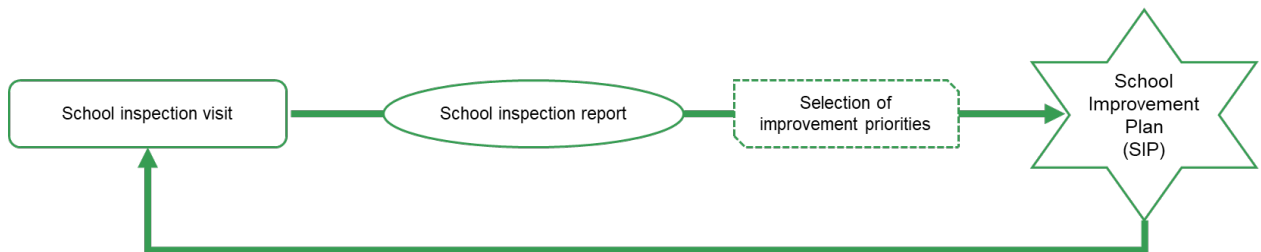
Inspection reports are one of the main drivers of SIPs, so much so that 'any suggestions [on improvements] made by inspectors should be prioritised' (MOES, 2012a). That said, as Figure 3 illustrates, other processes like national school policy reviews and school self-evaluations can also feed into a SIP (MOES, 2012a).

Figure 3 Different processes, including school inspections, that can inform a SIP
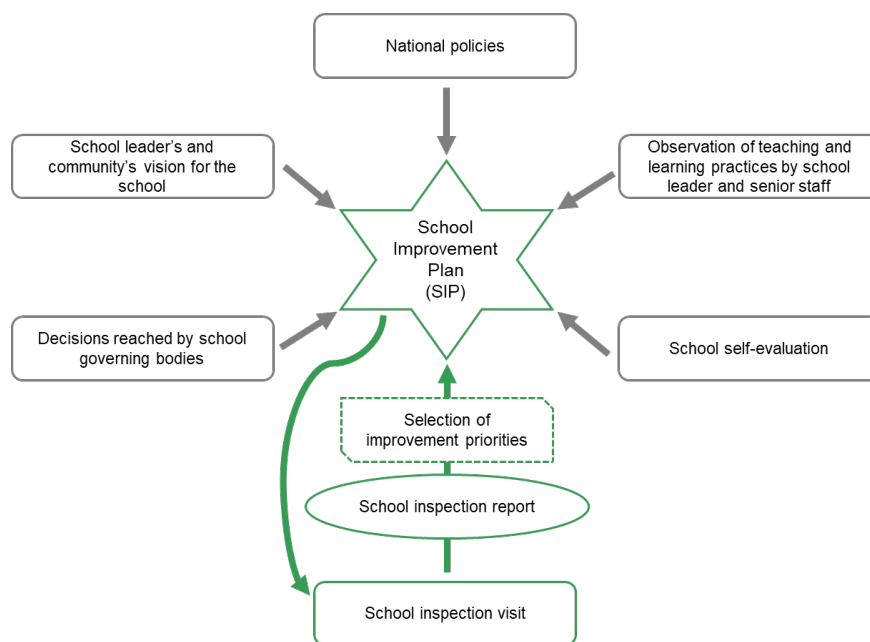
4 I&I in the context of school inspections and improvements

In this section we discuss the backdrop to and some features of PEAS and the I&I programme that have set them apart from other secondary schools and the inspection and improvement system in Uganda. These shed light on how the programme fitted in with the broader education system up until this PEA's data collection (Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) and form a basis for I&I's scale-up and system-strengthening perspectives.

4.1 PEAS' background in Uganda

PEAS and I&I have set a benchmark for secondary education quality and accountability in Uganda

Since its foundation in 2008, PEAS has built dozens of secondary schools in Uganda and currently operates a network of 30 secondary schools in rural and low-income areas of the country. These schools formerly operated in the framework of the Ugandan state's public-private partnership (PPP) system for secondary education before they became private institutions following the discontinuation of the PPP system in the education sector (Box 1).

Box 1 The changing landscape of Uganda's public-private partnership (PPP) schools

The Ugandan state put universal access policies for primary and secondary education in place in 1997 and 2007 respectively. Universal Secondary Education (USE) was largely implemented through public-private partnerships to help expand secondary school enrolments. Education quality improvement initiatives soon followed, with accountability principles featuring high in the secondary education sector's agenda. This brought together the MOES and international stakeholders who were also part of the roll-out of secondary PPP schools, for example, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID, now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, FCDO); Ark's Education Partnerships Group (EPG); and PEAS. Their collaboration extended right through the reforms of the secondary PPP schools' framework (2016-2018) and the secondary school inspection system (2017-2019) (Hares and Crawfurd, 2018).

The expansion of PPPs coincided with the Ugandan government's long-held pledge to phase out the PPP school system and establish secondary government schools in each sub-county. A phase-out period for PPPs took place between 2018 and 2021, and initial joint plans between the MOES and international partners to work on secondary school improvement mechanisms have lagged behind.

At this time, PEAS, who up to then had specialised in building and running its network of low-cost PPP schools, set out to further its impact in Uganda by sharing best practices and pioneering new approaches to deliver education. In 2019, PEAS and DES then partnered to develop the I&I model as a pilot, building on a small but growing body of favourable evidence (Crawfurd, 2017; EPRC, 2018).

A study of PPP schools in Uganda found that school management standards were higher in PEAS schools than in government, private, and other PPP schools (Crawfurd, 2017). It also found that

higher learning outcomes were positively associated with high school management quality. The latter was the object of an external evaluation of PEAS schools that found several aspects of school management that set PEAS' performance apart from comparable government and private schools, notably PEAS' approach to school inspections and the accompanying package of support and follow-up, which included support for learning and development of strong school leaders, teacher support and training, accountability measures and child protection (EPRC, 2018). These features ultimately went on to underlie much of I&I's design.

4.2 The I&I programme

I&I is a package of support mechanisms structured around the inspection process but focused on assisting schools in realising school improvements

As part of its aim to expand access to quality education in Africa, PEAS seeks to achieve impact beyond its schools by sharing effective practices from its school network and establishing local partnerships, particularly around school inspections and improvements. This is an area where PEAS stands out and one the Ugandan government wants to leverage for improving education quality in the country (Box 2).

I&I uses DES' secondary school inspection tool in combination with the school improvement planning and monitoring tools that PEAS utilises in its network of schools. Both partners contribute staff members to I&I: DES deploys its inspection team while PEAS calls on its technical support teams, school leaders and in-house school inspectors to help run the programme. The programme offers school leaders a support package to strengthen their capacities to identify and carry out post-inspection improvements (Table 3).

> **Box 2 I&I as a pathway to innovation in Uganda's education sector**
>
> Research shows that governments may innovate in education by collaborating with non-state actors (NSAs) (Kubacka et al., 2021). In Uganda, PEAS has partnered with the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) of Uganda's MOES via the I&I programme since 2019 to strengthen the support and supervision provided to government schools and further develop the capacities of school leaders to drive school improvements.

Table 3 Phases and activities of the I&I pilot

Phase	Activities
Phase 1: School inspections	One-day inspection visit carried out by DES' and PEAS' staff employing DES' inspection tool to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. Delivery of an inspection report to the school leaders. Discussions with the school leadership team.
Phase 2: SIP development	SIP development workshop offered to school leaders. Development of a SIP signed off by PEAS and DES outlining improvement goals and strategies. For the I&I pilot, PEAS adapted the SIP to the areas covered by the DES inspection tool.

Phase 3: School improvement support visits	Support for schools to implement the SIP and monitor progress over three academic terms: - One or two visits per term to the improving school by a PEAS Inspection Officer (IO) - Weekly phone calls between the improving school's school leader and their PEAS school leader mentor (peer headteacher) - One or two observation visits by the improving school's school leader to a PEAS school (the peer headteacher's school).
Phase 4: Final inspection and closure visit	Assessment of school progress against SIP goals. At the time of this study, Phase 4 had been postponed due to COVID-19-related school closures.

By adding on various highly specialised interventions at multiple stages along both the inspection and the improvement stages, I&I retains the inspection system's basic structure but runs the inspection cycle differently to non-participating schools (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Inspection and improvement cycle for a school participating in I&I
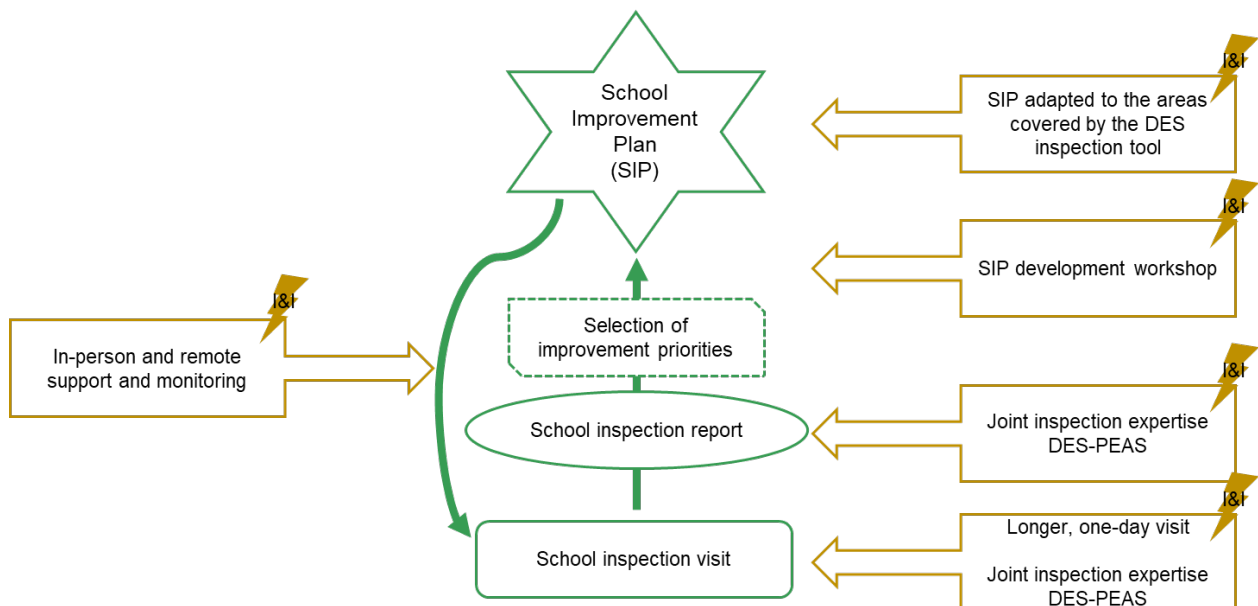
I&I works with individual schools but aims to scale up its approach and reach a system-level impact

I&I's theory of change (TOC) targets school- and system-level changes. In participating schools, the programme aims to improve leadership and management practices and lead to observable improvements in the school's practice areas. In I&I, these improvements are measured by comparing a school's year-one and year-two inspection scores. The expected impact is twofold: bringing long-term improvement to learning and teaching outcomes in participant schools; and scaling the programme up to achieve a broader, systemic impact (Chu, Galvis and Kotonya, 2021).

The programme has gone through several phases. In the first phase, in 2019, it launched a pilot intervention to improve school leadership and management quality in ten government schools in Eastern Uganda. The pilot intended to test the effectiveness of various approaches to providing school support and inform PEAS' goal to partner with the government sector to improve education quality (Chu, Galvis and Kotonya, 2021). In the second phase, the programme expanded to an additional 40 Ugandan schools in 2021 (NFER, 2022a, 2022b; Kotonya et al., 2023). I&I's third phase started in 2022 and reached 200 schools (NFER and PEAS, 2022). In line with its TOC, the programme is also looking to scale its reach across Uganda and within the government system in areas of work around school leader support where PEAS could add value[5]. In general, I&I's system-level work is still open and the present study contributes to that work.

---

[5] For example, safeguarding and instructional leadership, about which PEAS has been in advanced talks with the MOES.

5   School inspections as a gateway to school improvements

In this section we summarise key findings on the practice of secondary school inspections and improvements in Uganda. The findings focus on the link between 'inspections' and 'improvements' as much as possible - as opposed to treating them separately - and cover aspects from different contexts and levels across the secondary education system (Section 2.1.2). The findings stem from data collected and analysed via all the methods used in this research (Section 2.2).

There has been a growing focus on school inspections as a tool to support education quality in Uganda

Following the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and USE in 2007, the Ugandan government has allowed for the private provision of education by community-founded schools, faith-based schools, privately owned schools and schools run under PPP agreements to accommodate the increased demand for schooling. This expansion in school access has been accompanied by efforts to ensure education quality, including by means of inspections, which leading Ugandan education texts describe as either 'quality control' (The Education Act, 2008: 7) or 'quality assurance' (MOES, 2017: 83).

For instance, The Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008 is a foundational piece of legislation for inspections (The Education Act, 2008). It has established DES to oversee school inspections, setting out inspection-related roles, responsibilities, and the powers of different actors across the education system. Inspections were also part of the 2016 election manifesto of Uganda's ruling party – the National Resistance Movement (NRM) – where it announced institutional reforms to improve DES' ability to compel action on inspection report recommendations (NRM, 2016). Not least, inspections feature in education policy and planning documents, for example, the 2017/2018-2020/2021 Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), which pointed to inspections as critical drivers of efficiency and effectiveness of education service delivery. Building on an analysis of the inspection system's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), the ESSP set out four strategic interventions to strengthen the school inspection system (MOES, 2017):

- Increase school inspection frequency to at least two inspections per term per school;
- Inspections to emphasise leadership quality, management quality, teaching and learning processes and pupil achievement;
- Link the Inspection Information System (IIS) to Uganda's Education Management and Information System (EMIS);
- Establish DES as a semi-autonomous body in charge of inspecting and supervising public and private institutions and with the power to require district officials to action inspection-report recommendations[6].

The literature on education accountability stresses that school inspectorates in low- and middle-income countries tend to examine material inputs more than processes influencing teaching and learning quality (UNESCO, 2017). These studies argue that such inspections are not conducive to

---

[6] NRM's 2016 manifesto also mentioned this reform.

school improvements. In contrast, in higher-income countries inspections are geared towards that goal through accountability policies that hold education stakeholders, in particular school leaders, accountable for results (such as pupil test scores).

Uganda has been noted in the literature among countries with ineffective inspection practices (Sasaoka and Nishimura, 2010; UNESCO, 2017). However, its secondary school inspection framework is not centred on basic inputs, as evidenced above. This focus beyond material inputs is also apparent in instructions DES provided to school leaders in as early as 2012 on how to prepare a SIP: 'Your plan should be about more than improving buildings. It should be about improving how young people learn, their achievements, health and security' (MOES, 2012a: 14). These examples suggest that a more complex set of factors affect school inspections' outcomes in the country.

At the school level, inspections are prone to issues that affect schools' ability to improve

Headteachers are entrusted with a central role in Uganda's school inspection system. Some interviewees spoke of them as 'the first inspectors' of schools, which places a responsibility on them to monitor standards in their schools. This is in alignment with The Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008 (The Education Act, 2008), which requires them to work with school management structures such as the board of governors (BOGs) and parents-teachers associations (PTAs) to support school monitoring and management, including to communicate and demonstrate approaches to school improvement, safeguarding and Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

At the same time, our interviewees expressed concerns over headteachers' preparation and opportunity to take part in inspections and initiate school improvements. This includes, firstly, concerns over how headteachers could meaningfully participate in the inspection process given that they face issues such as:

- Not being aware of the focus of the inspection
- Lacking the opportunity to prepare for the inspection
- Not having a clearer set of expectations and requirements of the inspection
- Needing support to assess better the safety and gender aspects of school facilities and teaching methods
- Not receiving timely post-inspection feedback.

More generally, school inspection visits may be further affected by issues involving inspectors and headteachers. Interviewees mentioned several challenges:

- Headteachers often seeing inspections as 'fault-finding' or judgemental practices that consume resources and time without adding value
- Instances when an inspection is scheduled and attended but not carried out genuinely due to complicity between inspectors and school leaders
- Cases when inspectors skip over school issues due to feeling pressured by school leaders[7]

---

[7] Raising the (said low) professional scale of district inspectors vis-à-vis school leaders was suggested as a potential way to help inspectors overcome such pressures.

- Historical low levels of engagement and dialogue between DES and headteachers' representatives, which was said to compromise the credibility of inspections in the view of school leaders.

These issues, in turn, impair inspection visits' ability to act as support functions for school processes, making it harder for a culture of improvement to thrive in and around schools.

Schools are in charge of improvements once an inspection report is released, but their capacities to implement improvements are variable and can be limited

While inspections come under the purview of the inspection system, our interviewees expressed that school improvements are, primarily, a responsibility of each school, with the headteacher and the school governance bodies responsible for taking forward inspection report recommendations and the SIP. Against this school-centred backdrop, the availability of funds is an important enabler of improvements, with many interviewees acknowledging that schools may not have the financial resources required to implement post-inspection improvements. When asked whether the costs to implement SIPs are harder for some Ugandan secondary schools compared to others, an interviewee replied: 'Yes. We have small and big schools. There are those which can easily afford, there are those which may not afford'. The interviewee caveated their statement with the outlook that poorer schools might be able to fund at least some post-inspection improvements if they can be convinced of the benefits of doing so. This remark opens up questions about school leaders' motivations as determinants of school improvements. Such considerations have not been explored in our study.

Another factor influencing a school's capacity to implement a SIP is the school leader's foundational leadership and management skills and their time in the role. As pointed out in an evaluation of I&I, less experienced I&I school leaders may find it harder to implement a SIP than the more senior ones (Chu, Galvis and Kotonya, 2021). The school leader's experience and time in the role also appear to influence the type of improvements they focus on, with better-prepared I&I school leaders tending to focus on larger, more strategic improvements (Chu, Galvis and Kotonya, 2021). On a related note, we were told that the MOES and its Secondary Education Department allocate specific funding to support recommendations, notably in areas such as training for headteachers and teachers, but interviewees reported that this does not often happen in practice.

Private and government schools face different constraints in financing improvement initiatives

Across the public and private sectors, Ugandan schools rely on parents' financial contributions[8] for aspects such as attracting and lodging teachers, utilities and school administration, delivering tutoring lessons, student welfare (particularly school meals), and running boarding facilities, among others (The Education Act, 2008; Kjær and Muwanga, 2019; Tromp and Datzberger, 2019). Our interviewees also highlighted these different cost implications. Given that attempts to raise schooling costs for poorer communities are a complex and politicised matter (Kjær and Muwanga, 2019), the question of how schools can fund improvement initiatives remains open. This is especially concerning for schools that target more impoverished communities, those in rural settings and those

---

[8] Beyond tuition fees in private schools.

operating under the USE policy. As a result, our respondents suggested that a one-size-fits-all approach to school improvement support may therefore not be realistic. Most interviewees emphasised the need for greater involvement from the government to support improvements, both in terms of funding and in channelling other support mechanisms to identify and support schools with the poorest inspection results.

Another example of differentiated challenges stems from the COVID-19 period, when the Ministry of Health (MOH) mandated school safety measures in the form of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that DES had to monitor as part of school inspections. The SOPs were required for a school to reopen and concerned aspects like the availability of hand-washing equipment, social distancing, isolation centres and limits on visitors, among others. While the government rolled out emergency funds to government schools so they could meet the MOH's standards, some private schools faced difficulties financing SOPs by themselves and therefore struggled to prepare for school return.

The inspection system faces capacity bottlenecks that affect school improvements at large

There was a common view among respondents that more inspectors are necessary so that all schools can be inspected as often as required by policy. As we were told, this would require support from the government on the supply side to increase recruitment and on the demand side by better articulating a career path for inspectors. The MOES' 2017 policy presented in the ESSP aimed for at least two secondary school inspections per term[9] and set a target of 100 per cent of secondary schools being inspected that frequently by 2020 from a baseline of 80 per cent in 2015 (MOES, 2017). Nonetheless, our data makes it clear that owing to bottlenecks in the inspection system the frequency of inspections is much lower in practice than in policy, with one yearly inspection being cited as the more realistic figure. Of particular concern for school improvements, one interviewee said that follow-up inspection visits get deprioritised compared to the initial inspections. Others talked about a shortage of inspectors, for which DES has presented the case for an increased recruitment budget to the relevant parties in the MOES while proposing a deployment of retired headteachers and inspectors to ease the shortfall of inspectors. The latter measure was seen as sub-optimal by a respondent who opined that allocating fewer schools to each inspector would be preferable to enhance inspection quality. Still, a few interviewees made a case for better resourcing of the inspection system, particularly transportation for inspectors, to respond to the challenges of reaching schools.

Interviewees also cited the need to upskill inspectors and train newer recruits so they can engage with schools in an approachable, professional way and better assess schools' progress towards minimum standards, improved teaching and management practices, and the safety and gender aspects of school facilities and pedagogies. The result would be longer and more detailed inspections than are currently conducted. This links to the constraints mentioned above that inspectors face when conducting inspections.

---

[9] Uganda has three school terms a year.

The availability and sharing of school inspection data is seen as a pending driver of school improvements

Interviewees also discussed ways in which a better flow of inspection data across different tiers of the education system would provide stakeholders with evidence from school inspections that could inform policy and help increase budget allocations to the inspection system. We focus on two information pathways:

1. Sharing school inspection data among sub-national- and national-level stakeholders

Interviewees highlighted the need to share inspection data at the district level to support improved communications between central and local governments. However, as we were told, communications on policy and inspection reports from the MOES to the districts can be ineffective. Whereas at the primary level there is a District Education Officers (DEOs) forum for this type of communication, at the secondary level that functionality is unclear, something an interviewee considered as a potential area of improvement. There were also recommendations for inspection data to be presented with district- and regional-level disaggregation

Furthermore, some responses pointed to a desire for national-level inspectors to play a more prominent role in disseminating their aggregate reports to national-level stakeholders. There was also a suggestion for the inspection reporting process to be centralised to avoid the risk of local-government education officials and politically related school owners acting unprofessionally during the inspection reporting stage and thereby impairing the quality of inspection reports.

2. Ensuring that information travels back downward to support inspectors.

Interviewees expressed that inspectors need school data such as a school's context, background information and previous inspection results to travel back downwards to them so they can perform their jobs at best. This would also create an impetus for follow-up inspection visits. Finally, responses stressed the need to disseminate inspection reports more frequently.

6 Linking secondary school inspections to school improvements at the system level

Looking at secondary school inspections and improvements from a higher, system-level perspective brings out factors relevant to understanding and partaking in large-scale works in this field. Here the emphasis is on underlying stakeholder and policy aspects of inspections and improvements. This section complements the previous one and provides essential inputs for the recommendations presented in the next section.

Even though DES leads on inspections, its operations are co-defined with other government stakeholders

The inspection system for secondary schools is centralised on DES[10], whose focus is on setting and monitoring educational standards and quality for all schools. DES' activities encompass three main areas summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 DES' scope of activity around secondary school inspections

Activity	Description
Inspecting schools	Upon inspecting a secondary school, DES consolidates a set of guidance and recommendations into the SIP, which serves as a benchmark in a follow-up inspection visit.
Reporting and communicating inspection results	DES writes up and disseminates secondary school inspection findings among MOES departments and stakeholders at the school and district levels.
Raising policy matters	DES leverages inspections to draw attention to areas of policy significance, such as school management, teaching and learning quality.

While DES's findings and recommendations are intended to support school improvement and inform policy decisions, DES has no direct responsibility for either of these areas[11]. As a result, DES' activity scope is limited, and decisions on inspections and improvements are spread over multiple stakeholders.

Inspection findings are addressed by schools with support from other MOES divisions, for example, the Secondary Education Department when it comes to government secondary schools or the Department of Private Schools and Institutions (PSI) when private schools are involved. Central and local government stakeholders, such as DES, the regional DES officers and district-level officials are responsible for inspection visits and verifying post-inspection progress[12] towards compliance with national standards and regulations. In turn, school leaders, parents, communities and civil society

---

[10] And for tertiary institutions likewise, unlike for primary education, where local governments (district-level) may pass by-laws and have their own localised interventions.

[11] The support to SIP development (Table 3) brought in via I&I, for example, is for the moment limited to schools taking part in I&I.

[12] Verifying progress made on SIPs is not a designated role of DES.

are expected to take on functions of continuous monitoring and supervision centred on education quality and relevance.

Other ministries have a significant say in the governance and management of topics with direct or indirect links to school inspections and improvements. For example, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED) is involved in allocating budgets for inspections (MOFPED, 2020), while the Ministry of Public Service (MOPS) provides instructions on school-staff performance management and accountability enforcement (MOES, 2020a).

Similarly, the management of school closures and reopening with the outbreak of COVID-19 has involved the MOH, which mandated school safety measures in the form of SOPs. DES was made responsible for monitoring compliance with SOPs as part of school inspections. Where further health-related measures were expected to be implemented in schools, there remained uncertainty (at the time of this research) as to the extent to which the responsibility for monitoring these services and practices would fall within the mandate of school inspections. This regarded, for instance, the provision of psychosocial support for post-COVID-19 school re-entry and the introduction of School Health Committees (SHCs) to provide pupils with guidance on sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

School improvements often involve addressing policy needs and coordinating stakeholders situated across the school system

The work necessary to bring improvements to fruition may go beyond the inspection mechanism and the school level, often requiring significant coordination among actors across the education sector. Examples provided by various respondents included:

- Basic requirements and minimum standards (BRMS) not being in place in certain schools, for instance, some schools operate with non-compliant physical infrastructure
- SOPs not being in place during the pandemic, for example, COVID-19-compliant facilities for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)
- Teachers resorting to corporal punishment to discipline pupils
- Schools charging or raising fees irregularly
- Difficulties in addressing hunger, school feeding and their link to student attendance
- Situations resulting in school dropout
- Challenges to keeping girls in education
- Teacher absenteeism and attrition.

Given their complexity and prevalence, such situations are partly outside a headteacher's mandate or power and fall under what was referred to in certain interview responses as 'policy matters' or issues 'of policy nature'. DES provides advice on such issues while also relying on various other stakeholders to bring solutions to fruition. For instance, the MOES PSI and the Secondary Education Department undertake post-inspection activities in private and government schools respectively, and the MOES Gender Unit supports schools in establishing gender-responsive strategies. Similarly, and despite the centralised management of the secondary education sector, local district authorities retain a role in secondary school inspection communications by coordinating exchanges among schools, local and regional administrations and the MOES. Parents, school governance bodies, community members and even the pupils are often drawn into the solution.

The distinction between policy matters and school-level issues is not clear-cut. While schools themselves can always raise concerns with DES or other MOES divisions directly, most situations DES takes on are carried forward by inspectors when they go back to schools to disseminate inspection findings. The solution to such cases will often involve multiple stakeholders, with considerable scope for negotiation and finding creative solutions. Our primary data collection yielded especially illustrative examples:

> *If you go to a school which is under Universal Secondary Education and you find the learners are being charged, and you make an observation. What should be done? Now, the headteacher would tell you: 'These learners are supposed to eat, and we charge them for food, and food - in the Act - is a responsibility of the parent, and that's why we are charging the parent'. Then they say: 'Can the Minister, can the Ministry guide on school feeding? How do we feed the children?' So that now, the Ministry now, that becomes a policy matter: the school is trying to help the children, so that they have mid-day meal, but they are charging the parents, and the parents are not supposed to be charged. They will send away the children because they have not paid [...] money for food. And for us, under USE, you are not supposed to send away a child. USE is supposed to be obstacle-free education. And therefore now, the Ministry has to come up with a policy guidance on school feeding. How do the parents handle? Do their children come with packed food? Or do the parents make an organisation so that they can collect money together and feed their children at school? Now, that's now become a policy matter. (interviewee)*

> *You'll find, at the school, the teachers are punishing the children, caning them, and the Directorate of Education Standards say: 'No, this is not authorised, is not allowed, you're not supposed to cane students'. So the issue is: what should the headteacher do? The headteacher says: 'The teacher has punished a child, has caned a child, what do I do?' The headteacher has no mandate to dismiss a teacher. (...). But now the Ministry is supposed to take action: can the Ministry guide on what should be done if you find a teacher punishing a child like that? (...). It's not a question of punishing that teacher - have you guided him on what else he can do in case he finds a child at fault? So the Ministry now comes up with a policy guidance on alternative punishment for a child. So now it's not the cane, but there could be another way of dealing with the child. [Ugandan interviewee]*

Moreover, our research also suggests that the role of third-sector organisations in inspection-related school improvements was unclear. The civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that took part in our data collection do not have direct involvement in the inspection and improvement cycle, although their work could contribute to school improvement mechanisms. They can play a role in improvements at the grassroots level, for example, by raising awareness of resource gaps and other issues on the ground to the MOES. Their limited involvement seems somewhat contrary to government policy (as per the ESSP), which includes enabling meaningful participation of civil society organisations in monitoring and inspecting education services.

Stakeholders looking to work at the education system level need to engage with a formal hierarchy of settings in the MOES to progress proposals and requests

For the secondary school inspection cycle to drive school improvements further, two conditions appear as key:

1. Running initial and follow-up inspection visits more frequently and to higher performance standards. This requires the government to budget towards an expanded secondary school inspection and improvement effort
2. Informing solutions to policy matters detected and affected by secondary school inspections and SIPs. This depends on data availability, evidence-based policymaking and stakeholder coordination from the school level through to the national government.

Both aspects require deeper involvement with a select number of MOES units (MOES, n.d.), Technical Working Groups and other committees that work on policy areas of strategic interest to inspections and improvements. In the MOES, there are various opportunities to present evidence and raise awareness of topics, with the complementary aim to influence key stakeholders to adopt particular ways of thinking and budgets.

The process of effecting change at the ministry level generally proceeds through a hierarchical set of stages involving a series of TWGs and other committees through which policy proposals move. Interviewees described a set of stages with responsibilities documented as part of the overall policy process (Figure 5). Typically, an item is first discussed at the department level in a Department Working Group and, if successful, passes to the Directorate Working Group (MOES departments are subordinate to their respective directorates). Next, the PS invites all the MOES directorates and departments to present items for consideration in the higher-level groups. The first is the Sector Policy Management Working Group, followed by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Working Group, where budget decisions are dealt with. From the M&E Working Group, proceedings can flow through either the Senior Management Meeting or the Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC)[13]. The former meeting is composed of just MOES stakeholders; foreign partners have a representation in the ESCC only. If an item is approved by either of these groups, it passes to the MOES Top Management for ultimate resolution.

Figure 5 Hierarchy of stages to process proposals and requests in the MOES

---
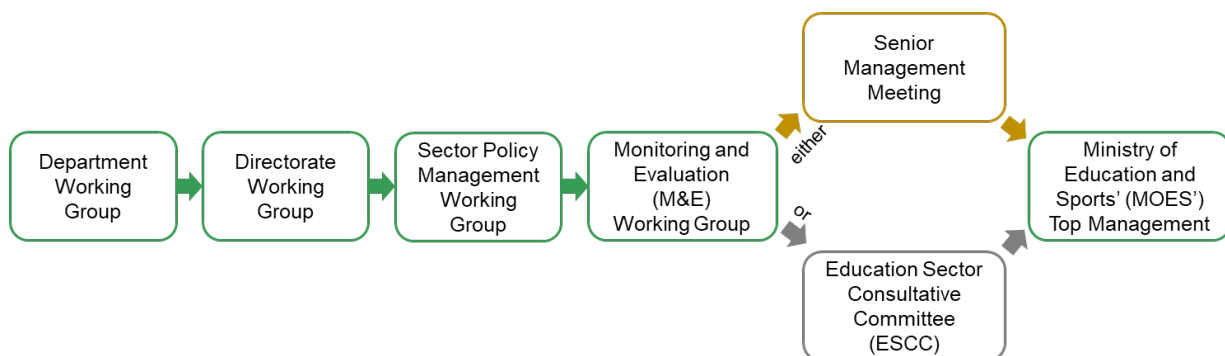
[13] We have not investigated the criteria determining whether to run an item through the Senior Management Meeting or the ESCC.

This process was generally accepted by interviewees, who did not seem to contest its workings. However, there was some concern around repetition and efficiency, for instance, issues cleared at one level might be reopened at a higher level, leading to lengthy meetings. We were also told that TWGs might not meet regularly. That said, interviewees emphasised the importance of TWGs and the other committees for engaging with system-level and policy matters in the MOES. At the same time, they noted that the topic of inspections was not featured in the TWGs.

7 Conclusions

Our research shows that, in line with government guidelines for Uganda's secondary education sector, school inspections are a core school improvement mechanism whose outcomes depend on very context-specific factors. In particular, our findings suggest that for secondary school inspection cycles to be conducive to widespread school improvements, there needs to be extensive coordination of different stakeholders, including school leaders, school staff, school communities, district officials, school inspectors, MOES divisions and policymakers.

At the school level, inspections reveal issues that can often be (partly) tackled within schools and by school leadership teams, provided support is available. For instance, high levels of teacher absence may decrease in an inspected school if headteachers receive training and standards on how to monitor teacher attendance better. Other challenges - as our research finds - involve multiple actors and levels in and around the schools, including at the national level. In order to resolve these challenges, effective stakeholder coordination is required. For example, in schools where inspections reveal that teachers cane students, school leaders may need additional guidance from the MOES on how to effectively instruct teachers in alternative means of discipline. Conversely, inspectors' ability to conduct fruitful school assessments can be affected by limited communication of school-level data from the ministry level. Driving secondary school quality at scale through school inspections therefore requires consideration of the ability of the secondary school sector as a whole to facilitate school improvements.

Our research suggests that Ugandan policy texts around secondary school inspections and SIPs are broadly fit for purpose[14]. However, it points to the need to strengthen policy implementation. We have found that this implementation is undermined by an insufficient recognition of the complexity of the link – currently captured in SIPs – between school improvements and school inspections, particularly in light of the different needs, facilitators and barriers facing different types of Ugandan secondary schools. Thus, there is a need for acknowledging and factoring in whole-system approaches to improvement issues. Notably, there appear to be important gaps around the coordination mechanisms for stakeholders across all levels of the secondary education sector (including in and around schools). Inadequate coordination poses a risk that the policies[15] might remain on paper rather than lead to changes in teaching and learning environments.

I&I has successfully driven improvements in a subset of Ugandan schools by working with them to implement strengthened inspection and improvement cycles, further develop headteachers' school management capacities and, ultimately, change school-level practices and attitudes. As the programme expands, it will likely encounter more – and more complex – coordination challenges than currently. Thus, going mainstream can be expected to increase the complexity of the coordination necessary among different stakeholders involved in inspecting and improving schools. This will require a strategic revision of the intervention so I&I can maintain its school-level expertise while adapting to working with and through the Ugandan education sector's governance system.

---

[14] We do not imply that there would not be room for improvement, though.
[15] By 'policy' we do not only mean a policy text such as a piece of legislation or a ministerial decree. In this research, we look at 'policy' as per our conceptual framework, in particular Section 2.1.2.

Such revision can contribute to, for example, strengthening I&I's standing in the sector and securing government resources for more regular and consistent inspection visits.

8 Recommendations for I&I's scale-up and system-strengthening work

The I&I pilot has proved it can foster a thriving school improvement culture in its current scale of operation. Moving forward, I&I's ability to scale up, influence education policy and practice and effect widespread system-level change will be influenced by resource levels as well as the broader socio-political context in which it operates. I&I is in the process of consolidating the lessons learned and successes of its original approaches to ready itself for the next stage of development. Its future approaches will need to be realistic and relevant to PEAS, DES, the wider MOES and schools' mission and vision. This ambitious task will require prioritisation and strategic use of available resources. Therefore, rather than suggesting a multitude of measures, we have focused our recommendations on a few courses of action that we consider most realistic and useful for the next stages of programme development.

Whilst recognising the wide range of stakeholders who have a role in successful school improvement, I&I should continue to focus on providing a role model for secondary school inspection and improvement practices

I&I should aim to strengthen the *practice* of inspections and improvements across Uganda's secondary education sector. The focus on practice rather than policy will more quickly lay the foundations for the scale-up of the programme and sustain its expansion. In so doing, it will also provide a bedrock for I&I to feed into policymaking over the long term. This will require a focus on:

1. The practice of high-quality inspections, SIP preparation and SIP implementation. This can broadly build on I&I's accumulated experience, with the caveat that new provisions by PEAS and DES be in place to operationalise the increased scale of activities, which will be substantial.
2. The coordination of the stakeholders needed for inspections and SIPs to be effective, particularly in and around schools, for example, schools' governing bodies, parents and community members, BOGs, district officials, etc. This will require PEAS and DES to select promising approaches, some of which may not yet have been formally assessed. I&I's stakeholders' contextual knowledge is likely to be the way forward for that.

Our research shows that resources and capacities may be an issue for schools of different types. Thus, I&I will need to prioritise those practices that can be successful and cost-effective in each case.

I&I should engage ambitiously with various education stakeholders by leveraging its track record

PEAS and DES are able to strengthen I&I's credibility among stakeholders at different positions within the secondary education sector to address the fact that I&I may not be fully known across the Ugandan education sector. This can leverage the programme's role and potential in contributing to system-strengthening. Uganda's education stakeholders could benefit from learning more about what I&I has already achieved at the school level to make an argument for an expanded, adapted intervention. We propose targeting two groups of audiences, in particular:

1. MOES' TWGs. These are important formal fora at the MOES where one can present initiatives, disseminate results (notably evaluation findings) and propose new ideas. They are also critical settings for unlocking financial and stakeholder support.
2. PEAS' and DES' existing connections and networks. The goal is to raise I&I's overall profile and identify supporters of the intervention at all education sector levels who could be advantageous for I&I.

I&I should continue and increase its efforts to raise the programme's profile by working strategically on the programme's reputation and acceptance

I&I has been continuously working to raise its profile across Uganda's education system and cement stakeholders' perceptions of its success. As the programme expands, this work should also include strategies to mitigate any negative perceptions or dissenting voices which are likely to appear in any operations at scale. Such perceptions could risk limiting buy-in at I&I's multiple levels of work, from schools to TWGs and other government bodies.

Any impact and dissemination campaigns should consider the critical, generic perceptions towards foreign private-sector providers' motivations to operate in education in Uganda. In our study, interviewees expressed these views in generic terms, not directly towards I&I. However, ensuring wider engagement will depend on I&I's ability to demonstrate its commitment to the right to education along with equity and inclusion values, which tend to be at the core of concerns around non-state actors' engagement in education (Kubacka et al., 2021). PEAS' good reputation in the county and successes in engaging with government so far will be useful pieces of evidence in these campaigns.

I&I will also need to convince stakeholders who, regardless of the programme's successes, may have a pre-determined distrust towards inspections' ability to drive improvements across different school types, particularly the poorest ones. I&I will need to make out a case for school improvements as not simply ensuing from judgement and assessment but also from school leaders', inspectors' and school communities' being taught how to translate inspection recommendations to SIPs and practice. It will also need to respond to school leaders', teachers' and inspectors' expectations regarding inspection exercises, which may not always be favourable.

I&I needs a strategic agenda for research, evaluation and learning to prepare for and execute its next strategy

In order to demonstrate its impact and the use of evidence throughout its scale-up, I&I will need a robust research, evaluation and learning agenda as the basis. This will also be a useful basis for its engagement with all types of stakeholders, including government and potential international donors. This agenda will allow I&I to refine its theory of change as it further develops and ensure clarity as to what kind of school improvements the programme can and cannot achieve as well as the drivers and stakeholders responsible for those. Moreover, the agenda should cover schools of different types, particularly the most disadvantaged ones, which places school sampling at the agenda's core. This will then help the programme demonstrate the link between I&I interventions and their outcomes, which is critical for TWGs and, more widely, to inform system-level decisions. Table 5 suggests items for the agenda broken down into four areas: programme evaluations; school leaders; SIPs; and institutionalisation and policymaking.

Table 5 Proposed research, evaluation and learning agenda items for I&I's scale-up

Rationale	Topics
Programme evaluations • Generating evidence about I&I's impact on school improvements across different school types. • Gateway to TWGs, which regularly work with evaluations and research.	• Programme relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and/or sustainability
School leaders • Framing and refining I&I as a learning experience for school leaders and inspectors. • Informing I&I's school engagement strategy.	• What motivates and drives school leaders and inspectors to engage with I&I. This will reveal their incentives to join the programme and their needs, which can then inform I&I's design and continuous improvement. • What knowledge and skills headteachers and inspectors participating in I&I have gained, particularly from training sessions, tools, guidelines and systems supporting school improvement.

SIPs
 	
• Framing and refining I&I as a culture of school improvement.
 	
• Better understanding what issues can remain within the control of schools, and which ones require coordination with a wider range of stakeholders.
	• How SIPs are generated in reality, with particular attention to whether and how that varies across school types.
	
	• Mechanisms enabling and constraining improvements, what improvements can realistically be expected, how improvements happen, who needs to be involved and what it takes to promote them – again, this should cover a varied school sample. Some mechanisms worth investigating are:
	
	  - Building school leaders' capacities in areas with gaps that influence their ability to implement SIPs
	
	  - Bringing together and coordinating parents, community members, school governance structures and district stakeholders for acting on SIPs
	
	  - Finding school-level solutions to policy issues that influence SIP implementation
	
	  - Improving a school's resource levels or use

	- Calling school leadership to account for progress on implementing SIPs (where accountability is enforced). • How data from SIPs can be (dis)aggregated and analysed to surface system-level information that can be used in policy formulation and resource allocation for school improvements.
Institutionalisation and policymaking • Preparing a strategy for embedding I&I's most promising lessons learned and approaches to school improvement in Uganda's education policy, drawing on the present report and the PEA approach.	• How I&I can tap into formal and informal mechanisms of institutionalisation in Uganda, so it feeds more decisively into education policymaking (this draws on the present report and PEA approach). • A stakeholder survey among schools and civil society to learn more about their views on I&I. • Stakeholder analysis with government and MOES actors to help devise a PEA-informed engagement strategy.

References

Bowe, R., Ball, SJ and Gold, A. (1992) *Reforming education and changing schools: case studies in policy sociology*. London: Routledge. [Online]. Available at: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IIfCDgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=pt-BR&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Chu, J., Galvis, M.A. and Kotonya, J. (2021) *Evaluation of the PEAS-DES Inspect and Improve project. Endline report*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). [Online] Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4621/evaluation_of_the_peas_des_inspect_and_improve_project_endline_report.pdf (Accessed: September 2021).

Crawfurd, L. (2017). 'School management and public-private partnerships in Uganda', *RISE Working Paper 17/013* [online]. Available: https://www.riseprogramme.org/sites/www.riseprogramme.org/files/publications/RISE_WP-013_Crawfurd.pdf [12 April, 2019].

Daoust, G. and Novelli, M. (2020) *Background study on political economy of education tools*. Political Economy of Education Research Network, PEER working paper 1. September 2020 Draft 2. [Online]. Available at: https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/courses/20396/pages/topic-1-the-political-economy-of-education-in-times-of-conflict-crisis-and-pandemic (Accessed: April 2021).

Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) (2018) *Evaluation of the PEAS network under the Uganda Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme: Endline Evaluation Survey Report* [online]. Available: https://www.peas.org.uk/s/PEAS_Endline_Final_Report__March_16__2018.pdf [12 April, 2019].

Education Partnerships Group [EPG] (2021a) *Uganda: reforming the secondary school inspections system*. [Online] Available at: https://epg.org.uk/portfolio/uganda-reforming-the-secondary-school-inspections-system/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Education Partnerships Group [EPG] (2021b) *Uganda: school effectiveness measure of performance for secondary schools*. [Online] Available at: https://epg.org.uk/portfolio/uganda-school-effectiveness-measure-of-performance-for-secondary-schools/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Hares, S. and Crawfurd, L. (2018) *The British government's new plan to get children learning*. Available at: https://arkonline.org/blog/british-government%E2%80%99s-new-plan-get-children-learning (Accessed: 4 February 2022).

Hudson, D. and Leftwich, A. (2014) *From political economy to political analysis*. United Kingdom: The Development Leadership Program (DLP). [Online] Available at: https://www.dlprog.org/publications/research-papers/from-political-economy-to-political-analysis (Accessed: July 2021).

Kjær, A.M. and Muwanga, N.K. (2019) 'The political economy of education quality initiatives in Uganda', in Hickey, S. and Hossain, N. (eds.) *The politics of education in developing countries: from schooling to learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kotonya, J., Gambhir, G., Agarwal, M. and Kubacka, K. (2023) *Learning Partnership for the Inspect and Improve Programme. Final Report*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). [Online] Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/5359/learning_partnership_for_the_inspect_and_improve_programme_final_report.pdf (Accessed: June 2023).

Kubacka, K., Asghar, A.J., Price, P., Lopes, G. and Lindsey, S. (2021) *Analysis of international civil society organisations' engagements around non-state actors in education*. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). [Online] Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380089 (Accessed: November 2022).

Ministry of Education and Sports [MOES] (n.d.) Appendix A. *Approved macro structure for the Ministry of Education and Sports*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Structure-MoES.pdf (Accessed: September 2021).

Ministry of Education and Sports [MOES] (2012a) *Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 1: how can we improve our school? A guide to school self-evaluation and planning for improvement*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-can-we-improve-our-school-part1_tcm76-38166.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012f) *Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 6: how well we inspect? A guide to external evaluation*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-we-inspect-part6_tcm76-38171.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

Ministry of Education and Sports [MOES] (2017) *Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2019/20*. [Online] Available at: https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/uganda_education_sector_strategic_plan_2017-2018_2019_2020.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

National Foundation for Educational Research [NFER] (2022a) *Learning Partnership for the PEAS-DES Inspect & Improve programme. Case study brief: the use of digital tools and platforms in Inspect & Improve programme. August 2022*. [Online] Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bb62f04a0cd2750983df97c/t/6310a5600e3f6325545d3dd1/1662035296849/I%26I+Digital+Case+Study+Learning+Brief_NFER.pdf (Accessed: September 2022).

National Foundation for Educational Research [NFER] (2022b) *Learning Partnership for the PEAS-DES Inspect & Improve programme. Sustainability case study brief. August 2022*. [Online] Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bb62f04a0cd2750983df97c/t/6310a59764eb71426931fcb4/1662035352227/I%26I+Sustainability+Case+Study+Learning+Brief_NFER.pdf (Accessed: September 2022).

National Foundation for Educational Research [NFER] and Promoting Equality in African Schools [PEAS] (2022) *Inspect and Improve (I&I) Programme. Phase III. Baseline World Management Survey results. July 2022*. [Online] Available at:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bb62f04a0cd2750983df97c/t/62e01136de4e3a516a35ec8e/1658851638679/Phase+3+I%26I_Baseline+dashboard_Final.pdf (Accessed: September 2022).

National Resistance Movement [NRM] (2016) *NRM Manifesto 2016-2021*. [Online] Available at: http://library.health.go.ug/publications/policy-documents/nrm-manifesto-2016-2021 (Accessed: August 2021).

Novelli, M., Higgins, S., Ugur, M. and Valiente, V. (2014) *The political economy of education systems in conflict-affected contexts: a rigorous literature review*. Education Rigorous Literature Review. United Kingdom: Department for International Development (DFID). [Online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/the-political-economy-of-education-systems-in-conflict-affected-contexts-a-rigorous-literature-review (Accessed: March 2021)

Sasaoka, Y. and Nishimura, M. (2010) 'Does universal primary education policy weaken decentralisation? Participation and accountability frameworks in East Africa', *Compare*, 40:1, pp. 79-95.

Streb, C.K. (2010) 'Exploratory Case Study', in Mills, A.J., Durepos, G. and Wiebe, E. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp. 403-406.

The Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008 [The Education Act, 2008]. Available at: https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmis/views/a405b30b-1536-464f-8d1b-b640d4536489%253B1.0 (Accessed: August 2021).

The Policy Practice (TPP) and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2021) *Political Economy Analysis in Action online training course*. [Training materials used throughout the 2021 course; unpublished].

Tromp, R.E. and Datzberger, S. (2019) 'Global Education Policies versus local realities. Insights from Uganda and Mexico', *Compare*, doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1616163.

UNESCO (2017) *Accountability in education: meeting our commitments. Global Education Monitoring Report, 2017/8*. Paris: UNESCO. [Online] Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259338 (Accessed: August 2021).

Annex A. Data sources

This annex provides further information on the data sources that have informed this research project. It is divided into two types: secondary data sources that have informed phase 1 of the study and primary data sources (respondents) included as part of phase 1's consultations and phase 2's interviews.

Secondary data sources

Sources used for the academic and grey literature review

Kjær, A.M. and Muwanga, N.K. (2019) 'The political economy of education quality initiatives in Uganda', in Hickey, S. and Hossain, N. (eds.) *The politics of education in developing countries: from schooling to learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prinsen, G. and Titeca, K. (2008) 'Uganda's decentralised primary education: musical chairs and inverted elite capture in school management committees', *Public Administration and Development*, 28, pp. 149-164.

Sasaoka, Y. and Nishimura, M. (2010) 'Does universal primary education policy weaken decentralisation? Participation and accountability frameworks in East Africa', *Compare*, 40:1, pp. 79-95.

Tromp, R.E. and Datzberger, S. (2019) 'Global Education Policies versus local realities. Insights from Uganda and Mexico', *Compare*, doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1616163.

UNESCO (2017) *Accountability in education: meeting our commitments. Global Education Monitoring Report, 2017/8*. Paris: UNESCO. [Online] Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259338 (Accessed: August 2021).

Sources used for the policy review

Begue-Aguado, A., Byamugisha, A. and Muhwana, W. (2018) Independent assessment (appraisal) report on the Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2020, Uganda. Commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID) in Uganda on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Education Development Partners Group. [Online]. Available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-8-Uganda-ESP%20Appraisal_0.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

Cambridge Education (n.d.) *All change: strengthening the primary education system in Uganda*. [Online] Available at: https://www.camb-ed.com/intdev/article/560/all-change-strengthening-the-primary-education-system-in-uganda (Accessed: August 2021).

Education Partnerships Group [EPG] (2021a) *Uganda: reforming the secondary school inspections system*. [Online] Available at: https://epg.org.uk/portfolio/uganda-reforming-the-secondary-school-inspections-system/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [FCDO] (2021) *Logical framework 204641 (Published - July, 2021)*. [Online]. Available at: https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204641/documents (Accessed: August 2021).

IEG Review Team (2021) *Uganda - UG GPE Teacher and School Effectiveness (English)*. Washington: World Bank Group [WB]. [Online] Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/933781624637744738/Uganda-UG-GPE-Teacher-and-School-Effectiveness (Accessed: August 2021).

Ministry of Education and Sports [MOES] (2009) *Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators for Education Institutions*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Final-Copy-BRMS.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012a) Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 1: how can we improve our school? A guide to school self-evaluation and planning for improvement. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-can-we-improve-our-school-part1_tcm76-38166.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012b) Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 2: how well is our school led? A guide to evaluating and improving leadership and management. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-well-is-our-school-led-part2_tcm76-38167.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012c) Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 3: how well are our learners doing? A guide to evaluating and improving learners' understanding, attainment and wider achievements. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-well-are-our-learners-doing-part3_tcm76-38168.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012d) Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 4: how can we improve our teaching? A guide to evaluating and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-can-we-improve-our-teaching-part4_tcm76-38169.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012e) Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 5: how well do we support our learners? A guide to evaluating and improving access, equity and inclusion. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-well-do-we-support-our-learners-part5_tcm76-38170.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2012f) *Evaluating and improving the quality of education. Part 6: how well we inspect? A guide to external evaluation*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/how-we-inspect-part6_tcm76-38171.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2017) *Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017/18 - 2019/20*. [Online] Available at: https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/uganda_education_sector_strategic_plan_2017-2018_2019_2020.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2020a) *Performance Management Guidelines for Tertiary Institutions and Schools*. [Online] Available at: https://www.education.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Performance-Management-Guidelines-May-2020.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

MOES (2020b) NRM Presidential Manifesto 2016-2021. Education and Sports Sector accomplishments. Presented by the Minister of Education and Sports. [Online] Available at:

https://www.education.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Final_MES-v10-Presentation-for-Manifesto-Week-May-2020_22052020-compressed.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [MOFPED] (2020*) Education and Sports Sector. Semi-annual budget monitoring report. Financial year 2019/2020*. [Online] Available at: https://www.finance.go.ug/sites/default/files/Publications/Education%20and%20Sports%20Sector%20Semi-Annual%20Budget%20Monitoring%20Report%20FY2019-20%20.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

National Resistance Movement [NRM] (2016) *NRM Manifesto 2016-2021*. [Online] Available at: http://library.health.go.ug/publications/policy-documents/nrm-manifesto-2016-2021 (Accessed: August 2021).

O'Donoghue, J., Crawfurd, L., Makaaru, J., Otieno, P. and Perakis, R. (2018) *A review of Uganda's Universal Secondary Education Public Private Partnership programme*. [Online]. Available at: https://epg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EPG_Uganda-Secondary-PPP-Review_2018.pdf (Accessed: August 2021).

The Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act 2008 [The Education Act, 2008]. Available at: https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmis/views/a405b30b-1536-464f-8d1b-b640d4536489%253B1.0 (Accessed: August 2021).

Sources used for the press review

Abet, T. (2020) 'Can govt-aided schools run without extra fees?', *Daily Monitor*, 24 November. [Online] Available at: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/can-govt-aided-schools-run-without-extra-fees--3208744 (Accessed: August 2021).

Daily Monitor (2020) 'Private school owners fault government on inspection', *Daily Monitor*, 5 August. [Online] Available at: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/private-school-owners-fault-government-on-inspection--1915732 (Accessed: August 2021).

Editor (2020) 'Make inspection of schools routine', *Daily Monitor*, 4 December. [Online] Available at: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/editorial/make-inspection-of-schools-routine-3218094 (Accessed: August 2021).

Independent Reporter (2019) 'Gov't launches new secondary school inspection system', *The Independent*, 22 November. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/govt-launches-new-secondary-school-inspection-system/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Independent Reporter (2020a) 'Joint spy team deployed to monitor schools operating illegally - Enanga', *The Independent*, 20 October. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/joint-spy-team-deployed-to-monitor-schools-operating-illegally-enanga/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Independent Reporter (2020b) 'Ministry to display lists of approved schools on notice boards, public spaces', *The Independent*, 15 October. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/ministry-to-display-lists-of-approved-schools-on-notice-boards-public-spaces/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Independent Reporter (2021a) 'Increase capitation before abolishing extra-charges in public schools – Educationists', *The Independent*, 13 May. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/increase-capitation-before-abolishing-extra-charges-in-public-schools-educationists/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Independent Reporter (2021b) 'Inspectors accused of turning blind eye as schools reopen for all learners', *The Independent*, 16 April. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/school-inspectors-are-on-the-spot-for-looking-on-as-schools-stealthy-sneak-in-non-authorized-learners-in-february-the-cabinet-approved-the-reopening-of-schools-in-a-staggered-manner-that-will/ (Accessed: August 2021).

Maractho, E.C. (2021) 'Why we should fix the inequality PLE breeds', *Daily Monitor*, 26 July. [Online] Available at: https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/commentary/why-we-should-fix-the-inequality-ple-breeds-3487070 (Accessed: August 2021).

Mugoya, M. (2021) 'Free quality education is not achieved with promise', *The Observer*, 17 February. [Online] Available at: https://observer.ug/viewpoint/68495-free-quality-education-is-not-achieved-with-promise (Accessed: August 2021).

Nangonzi, Y. (2020a) 'COVID-19: 30,000 learners to miss final exams over inspections', *The Observer*, 28 October. [Online] Available at: https://observer.ug/news/headlines/67141-covid-19-30-000-learners-to-miss-final-exams-over-inspections (Accessed: August 2021).

Nangonzi, Y. (2020b) 'Government speaks on school fees, dead year', *The Observer*, 30 September. [Online] Available at: https://observer.ug/news/headlines/66775-government-speaks-on-school-fees-dead-year (Accessed: August 2021).

Talemwa, M. (2015) 'School inspectors blame parents for poor learning outcomes', *The Observer*, 26 October. [Online] Available at: https://www.observer.ug/education/40627-school-inspectors-blame-parents-for-poor-learning-outcomes (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2020a) 'Ministry of Education admits school inspectors are incompetent', *The Independent*, 11 December. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/ministry-of-education-admits-school-inspectors-are-incompetent/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2020b) 'Education Ministry revising School Management Committee guidelines', *The Independent*, 26 February. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/education-ministry-revising-school-management-committee-guidelines/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2020c) 'Education standards unit to conduct inspection as schools flout SOPs', *The Independent*, 20 November. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/education-standards-unit-to-conduct-inspection-as-schools-flout-sops/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2021a) 'COVID-19: What went wrong with the school surveillance protocols?', *The Independent*, 11 December. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/covid-19-what-went-wrong-with-the-school-surveillance-protocols/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2021b) 'Rubirizi RDC closes school for flouting Covid-19 SOPs', *The Independent*, 8 May. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/rubirizi-rdc-closes-school-for-flouting-covid-19-sops/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2021c) 'Ministry yet to release updated SOPs ahead of reopening for non-candidates', *The Independent*, 25 February. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/ministry-yet-to-release-updated-sops-ahead-of-reopening-for-non-candidates/ (Accessed: August 2021).

The Independent (2021d) 'ANT calls for more support to rural schools to improve performance', *The Independent*, 22 July. [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.ug/ant-calls-for-more-support-to-rural-schools-to-improve-performance/ (Accessed: August 2021).

URN (2020) 'Minister Janet to embark on countrywide tour over school fees', *The Observer*, 17 February. [Online] Available at: https://observer.ug/education/63555-minister-janet-to-embark-on-countrywide-tour-over-school-fees (Accessed: August 2021).

Primary data sources

Consultation sessions

- Expert on the Ugandan education sector
- PEAS consultee (United Kingdom head office)
- PEAS consultee (Uganda office)
- DES consultee (regional level)
- DES consultee (national level)

Semi-structured interviews

Independent interviewees from:

- A teachers' professional association
- An association of educational CSOs
- An association of school administrators
- The general education sector and with a leadership background in the teaching profession

Independent interviewees from:

- Ministry of Education and Sports

Independent interviewees from:

- A foreign donor (country-based)
- I&I programme

Evidence for excellence in education