

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**EDUCATION POLICY PAPER  
(1993 - 2003)**

**NATIONAL TASK FORCE OF EDUCATION  
(WHITE PAPER)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**INTRODUCTION**

As a national community, we are fully committed to the view that all our citizens, regardless of their gender, class, culture, ethnic origin, etc, have the ability to learn and should be provided with the opportunity to develop that potential to the fullest. We also recognize this as the only true guarantee of the kind of personal and social efficacy needed to sustain and improve our democratic way of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

These philosophical commitments and understandings and the socio-economic realities of our time place a heightened responsibility on the state to ensure that an efficient and equitable system of basic education is established and maintained in Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed this is the true implication of a commitment to "sustainable human resources development."

The importance of human resources has long been recognized and throughout our history, efforts have been made to promote their 'development', through education. But the task remains urgent and unfinished. Indeed it will always be urgent and unfinished, pressing and on-going, involving and requiring the meaningful participation of all if it is to be adequately and completely addressed.

What do we want from our education system? We all hope that our education system will establish and maintain the ethical and moral values necessary for civilized interpersonal and intergroup relationships in our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. Our educational arrangements themselves must be marked by a technical and professional proficiency and a participatory style of operations and ought to promote the personal and social efficiency necessary for successful nation building.

Further, it is expected that the curricular offerings in the education system will address adequately, the goal of all-round development, but with the economy and effectiveness we are now seeking to establish in the national economy as a whole.

**Finally all of these tasks must be accomplished through procedures which emphasize the need for accountability and constant improvement at all levels and at every stage of the educational enterprise. These are therefore recommendations for a vigilant and purposeful monitoring and evaluation capability and effort, buttressed by an Educational Management Information System that would keep the national community informed, promote its much needed involvement and secure its indispensable support for what, after all, is a national educational effort.**

**With our house in this type of order we can meaningfully and confidently engage in dialogue with lending and donor agencies, finance houses etc, on the international scene.**

- 2. These plan proposals address the foregoing tasks and concerns. They are presented in three major sections.**

**Section I sets out the major issues which need to be addressed and the parameters within which they have to be planned for, and programmed.**

**Section II outlines a system of resource management for a restructured and professionalised Education Service with the planning, policy reform, programming and project management capabilities that are necessary for the successful accomplishment of tasks set out in Section I.**

**Section III addresses the delivery system. It speaks to the types of learning environment, programmes and courses of studies (curricula), assessment tools and practices, transitional and articulation mechanisms and procedures, institutional management, teacher preparation and formation practices, materials, cost management and cost savings activities, governance and financing mechanisms that must be put in place at all levels of the education system. These measures will improve school effectiveness, enhance learning achievement and by implication lead to a decline in the cost per graduate in the system as a whole.**

## **SECTION I - THE ISSUES**

**Educational planning in Trinidad and Tobago today has to be seen against the background of several major issues.**

1. **The government's vision of a society in the 1990's and beyond marked by sustainable growth with equity (Medium Term Policy Framework 1993 - 1995 and Rolling Framework 1994-6) and sustainable growth to be generated by, in the final analysis, a human resource development trust at the centre of which is, a humane system of education and training. Sound and accessible education, is also seen as central to the achievement of social equity.**
1. **In the population at large there is a legitimate expectation, bred largely from government commitment, policy and practice in the past, for the provision of heavily subsidized and equitably distributed educational provision up to at least secondary level.**
1. **Demographic trends and projections indicate quite clearly that there will be substantial shortfalls in provision at primary (where provision is almost universal) and at secondary level (where there is a provision of upwards of seventy percent of the relevant age cohort) and that current and future provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education will remain woefully inadequate if expansion does not take place at this level by the year 2000 unless additional accommodation is provided.**
2. **Our economic circumstances over the last decade have affected adversely, the capital and recurrent provisions for educational development. This has resulted in deterioration of the learning environment in some schools and to a lowering of morale in the teaching service, failure to attract and retain the most qualified graduates into that teaching service, etc. Moreover these circumstances make it necessary for educational planners to emphasize the importance of improving effectiveness and managing costs in their planning and programming as they seek to achieve the national objectives of equity and efficiency.**
3. **Our learning systems, over the last two decades have not generated the expected quality of graduates in the proportions which our levels of educational expenditure per pupil have led us to hope for, and it is generally recognized that they do not cater as efficiently as they might for those who are 'educationally at risk' broadly speaking, as well as more particularly, for those individuals in our community with special needs.**
4. **In the past our record with policy reform in education has also left something to be desired. We failed to deal adequately with the innovations set out in the Draft Plan (1968 - 83, and for a very short period (1971 - 74) turned towards the micro-planning and participatory style of operations so sorely needed in educational ventures, but jettisoned that approach in the 1975 - 82 period of the oil boom.**

**In the period of adjustment, stabilization and sustainable growth, the task of improving the system through judicious investment in those areas which can most**

enhance learning achievement will call for the development of a different policy environment and policy reform capability with the requisite planning and programming skills and abilities.

The recommendations in this section relate to these foregoing issues and can be summarized in the following manner:

1. There is an urgent need to put in place an enabling policy environment and a policy reform capability at Central Administration supported by divisional and school-based management practice. This would generate the institutional strength necessary for sustained efforts at improvement and for actively engaging the involvement and support of the public at large in the educational effort. This issue is dealt with in detail in Section II - Resource Management in Education.
2. We must broaden access and improve quality simultaneously in accordance with social demand if we are not to experience further deterioration in our levels of learning achievement., We must invest in inputs such as improved learning environments, the upgrading, recruitment, retention, etc. of teachers, educational administrators, planners, etc., make increased provision for Early Childhood Care and Education and put in place improved student personnel and support services, if we are to achieve the optimum mix of human and physical resources necessary for enhancing learning and lowering the cost per graduate in the system.

**Significant investment must be made if these efficiency gains are to be achieved.**

3. We need to treat the system as one tightly articulated unit, divided into levels and stages for convenience, but necessitating an evenness of commitment, performance and productivity of the highest quality at every point. Measures to ensure the type of transition and articulation arrangements that this requires are set out in Section III.

4. **Personal and Social development are best promoted by the preventative type of discipline that is immanent in humane, caring and developmental systems marked by a genuinely participatory culture. The systems of governance, of professional control, of timely diagnoses of problems and of preventive acceleration of learning that we have suggested in Sections II and III, speak directly to the establishment of such an ethos and climate in our schools and other educational institutions.**
  
5. **Management of costs. We have suggested practical means of reducing the cost of this improved quality of education where ever possible. Suggestions for increasing access, (e.g. establishment of a minimum accommodation capacity of 800 pupils) at secondary level, purchasing of places in private schools; policy incentives to encourage private sector and community participation in the resourcing of educational activity) for cost recovery in the further education sector and for reducing the cost of provisioning the system as a whole through improved management practices have been set out in detail and fully operationalised in the Action Plan.**
  
6. **Finally, the need to monitor and evaluate progress in relation to clearly stated criteria of achievement and to provide that information to all interested publics as well as finding means to integrate such findings into the decision making process is critical and recommendations for a Research and evaluation capability as well as a Management Information System (in which we include library and information services) have been incisively put.**

## **SECTION II - RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION**

**All these recommendations rest on the successful accomplishment of the tasks set out in Section II.**

### **i. Human Resources**

**human  
efficient  
educational**

**Since the education system is at the heart of the critical humanresource development thrust, then effective and management of the human resources within the service itself must be established and sustained.**

**This calls for the following improvements:**

- **The existing diffuse policy authority for human resource management in the educational service must become more focussed and professionally controlled**

from within the educational service itself. This would ensure that primary educational goals are given the priority they deserve.

- Specified minimum levels of professional preparation and formation for specific tasks must be set out and achieved by personnel in the educational service within the plan period.
- Establishment of a unifying structure to nurture professional collegiality, provide an appropriate degree of professional control in relation to responsibility and accountability and allow for the establishment and enforcement of a code of ethics which can enhance the status of employees within the educational service.

i. **Human Resource Management Functions**

**A Human Resources Department must be set up within the Educational Services to carry out the following tasks:**

- **Planning: Setting goals and objectives, managing staff development activities and engaging in job design, redesign, etc.;**
- **Establishing and executing recruitment, selection, induction policies and procedure, and systems of performance appraisal, staffing, enabling retention and the requisite commitment and performance of personnel in the educational service.**
- **Bargaining strategies that are carefully planned and administered so as to reduce the disruptions in service and amount of valuable time lost.**
- **The establishment of compensation schemes based on a clear delineation of the types of academic attainments, professional competencies and relevant experience that are valued in the educational service, with clear indications of the monetary and non-monetary rewards they will attract. To give full realization to the foregoing, assessment centres for the assessment of 'qualification' and 'disqualification' (as against certification) for specific posts, the unification and systematization of the categories of teachers in the system and the kernel of a new classification scheme has been proposed.**
- **Other management functions related to the issues of tenure, continuity of service and the management of**

personnel records that would also form part of the remit of the Human Resources Department.

- **The Teaching Service Commission should be renamed the Educational Service Commission (ESC), to reflect the unified structure. It should now be engaged in recruitment, selection and review of personnel at the higher levels of the educational service - which is above the level of Principal. This would relieve that agency of some of the time consuming tasks such as interviewing which can be quite competently handled at the divisional level. Such a reorganization would provide the opportunity for broader participation in the decision-making in the system, save time and ensure that the new ESC can concentrate on those functions related to ensuring that in the final analysis the public interest is well served.**

**i. Restructuring the System**

- a. **The unified Educational Service should be restructured to promote systematization, professionalisation, an improved quality of work life for all and the infrastructural support for an ever improving policy reform capability.**
  - i. **The unified educational service should be relatively autonomous within the public service. It should be given its subventions and responsibilities for its own budgetary arrangements and the power to enter into contracts for the delivery and development of its programmes and projects.**
  - ii. **At Central Administration, the Chief Education Officer should be vested with the responsibility for the normative primary goals for the educational service.**
  - iii. **In order to increase participatory decision-making in the system, a phased process of decentralization based on eight Divisions each with advisory divisional boards with a membership reflecting community interests should be pursued.**
  - iv. **A body should be set up to review and redraft where necessary the legal instruments which may need to be**

- modified if the restructuring process is to be accomplished.
- v. **Twelve major areas of functioning have been identified and the divisional structure at Central Administration should be reorganized to ensure that these areas are adequately services.**
  - vi. **A Student Support Services Division should be established at Central Administration.**
  - vii. **Changes at Central Administration should be given top priority in the restructuring effort.**
  - viii. **A system of school-based management with School Boards should serve as the foundation of the decentralization process. It should be provided with adequate support services.**
  - ix. **A Research and Evaluation Unit should be established at Central Administration with responsibility for the development of a research agenda and its prosecution through collaboration with other appropriate agencies in the system.**
  - x. **Central to the functioning of the entire system will be a reorganized Library and Information System, adequately staffed and suitably networked to ensure equitable distribution of services across and within the educational divisions and educational institutions.**

### **SECTION III - THE DELIVERY SYSTEM**

**In this section proposals are set out which translate the general educational goals into programmes of teaching and learning for the schools.**

**A National Curriculum Council has been proposed as a mechanism that would promote renewal of the curriculum in keeping with the demands of a changing environment.**

- o **Curriculum goals set out encompass consideration of the following:**
  - i. **The necessity to ensure that a programme of values education (multi-cultural sensitivities, aesthetic**



development, religious understanding, etc) is a foundational element in the curriculum.

- ii. That a well thought-out language policy is developed encompassing all levels of schooling.
- iii. That a sensitivity to the significance, importance and limitations of educational and other new technologies be reflected in teacher training programmes and teaching and learning strategies.
- iv. That the importance of sound foundation in the early years be reflected in programmes and curricula at Early Childhood Education.
- v. The need to ensure that in basic education students acquire the necessary higher-order literacy, problem-solving and social skills that they would need to function in a socio-economic environment which puts a premium on action oriented individuals, imbued with the self-confidence and social competencies needed for survival in a pluralistic, global village.

- **Early Childhood Care and Education**

**The true importance of care and education get emphasis. For this reason the children (0 - 5 years) as well as their caregivers, parents and the wider community are targeted if the holistic development of the child is to be successfully achieved.**

**These objectives are reflected in the broad composition of the proposed National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCECCE). This body encompasses representatives from Ministries of Health, Education, Finance, from associations and organizations involved in Early Childhood Education in both the private and public sector and from religious, parental and professional organizations.**

**This level of education must serve as the cradle for the establishment of a genuinely collaborative model for the delivery of childcare and education, a model that should come to characterize the higher levels of education. The proposals set out should stimulate this development and integrate child (services, health, safety and nutritional services) and forge and organic link between home and school, school feeding and agricultural production and the public and private sectors.**

- **Primary Education**

**The proposals for the development of primary education focus on the necessity to ensure that at this level the foundation developed at ECCE is built upon and where it does not exist, care is taken to accelerate learning and social development so that those at risk can be fully catered for.**

**At this level, it is how students are instructed that will determine how and whether the skills and competencies they develop will endure. For this reason, the following have been addressed in detail:**

**(i) Access Issues: The need to ensure that all children are provided with primary education, that the cost of primary education to needy families is not prohibitive (provision of school feeding, subsidized transport, etc), that sound instructional management practices are pursued linking schools to their relevant communities and ensuring sound teaching and learning and finally that under-performing schools are rendered more. These measures are calculated to ensure effective demand for schooling and improved learning achievement at the primary level.**

- i. The need to refurbish and repair those primary schools that are now not suitable as learning environments for the delivery of a sound education that will endure.**
- ii. The necessity to ensure smooth transition within the primary system and from it to the secondary level through adequate diagnostic, remedial and developmental practices and assessment modalities that are formative. (It is in this regard that there are proposals for the transformation of the Common Entrance into a national attainment test by 1998).**
- iii. The curriculum recommended pays attention to breadth ensuring that a place is found for the aesthetics, pastoral provisions and general personal and pro-social development. However basic literacy and numeracy skills have been given pride of place in keeping with the recognition that the kernel of a sound general education ought to be fully developed at this level.**

**o Secondary Education**

**Secondary education should eventually benefit from the improvements (alluded to above) at Early Childhood**

**and primary levels. However within this level there is need for more efficient use of resources currently being allocated. The major measures suggested are:**

- i. Improvement of teacher competencies through pre-service and in-service programmes of training.**
- ii. All secondary schools to establish plans and programmes to ensure a smooth transition for primary students.**
- iii. The reorganization of the secondary curriculum and the introduction of a National Certificate of Secondary Education to give appropriate emphasis to a common core of academic subjects while promoting personal and social development and introducing technology studies as part of the common core.**
- iv. The introduction of the NCSE with a credit system will enable freer movement within the system of education and facilitate the provision of more meaningful "sound chances" in a more flexible and open secondary system.**
- v. The development of the 'post-primary centres' into integrated secondary schools to provide an opportunity for vocational preparation and/or re-entry to the secondary mainstream.**
- vi. Development of partnerships with the private sector through which the state can purchase secondary school places and so offset the capital and recurrent costs involved in 'providing' school buildings and employing additional staff.**
- vii. The expansion; extension of existing secondary schools which now house less than 800 students to provide additional places at this level.**
- viii. The construction of schools in Caroni, Tobago and North Eastern Counties to ensure a more equitable divisional transition rate from primary to secondary school.**
- ix. The development and implementation of a philosophy and a set of teaching and learning strategies based on it, for addressing the psychological and social challenges faced by adolescents in the secondary school. This will assist in ensuring that their personal and social needs are served and that the humane, preventive discipline that should challenge learning societies is put in place.**
- x. Deshifting should be facilitated by the foregoing measures.**

- o Pupils with Special Needs**

**A comprehensive set of proposals have been set out for the delivery of appropriate and professional services to our learners with special needs:**

- i. Mainstreaming of children with special needs except for severe cases will be the norm.**
- ii. Diagnostic Prescriptive Centres must be established to provide the necessary support services to schools, to educate the public at large about their responsibilities and to provide central administration with information about the training needs for the system.**
- iii. All schools must develop clearly articulated plans and programmes for children with special needs.**
- iv. Special schools must continue to provide specialized services and should be given the requisite financial and technical assistance. They should also be provided with access to training programmes mounted by the state.**

○ **Further Education**

**The Further Education sub-sector has developed in response to demands for second chance primary and secondary education. Its ad hoc development now requires state intervention to promote articulation among programmes and courses and accreditation and validation processes that would enhance efficiency and output in this sector.**

**The improvements will only be forthcoming if within that sub-sector, policy analysis and policy reform capacity is developed and a coherent set of plans, programmes and projects elaborated. In such a context, more astute management and governance can be implemented, cost recovery schemes can be carefully executed and programme relevance and efficiency can be achieved.**

**Consideration should be given in this sub-sector to the implementation of the Community Colleges as recommended by the Community College Task Force.**

○ **Teacher Education and Development**

**In order to ensure that professional control is realized, the proposals set out under the Human Resources subsection have been reinforced by more detailed proposals designed to improve the effectiveness of the teaching service while managing to keep costs within tolerable levels.**

**These proposals emphasize the necessity for pre-employment training, orientation/induction programmes, secondment, selection and incentives schemes, etc. which can change the nature, and dynamics of teacher participation, commitment and productivity.**

**Allied to this, in keeping with the need to attain an optimum combination of inputs, we emphasize:**

- **the need for an adequate modeling of teacher supply and demand dynamics in Trinidad and Tobago; and**

**(ii) the need for a vibrant materials production thrust based on an instructional materials sector study.**

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