

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**NATIONAL REPORT
ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION
IN
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO 2004**

***“QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE:
CHALLENGES, TRENDS PRIORITIES”***

August 2004

Disclaimer:

Every effort has been made to reproduce the present report accurately. However, since it was obtained through OCR (Optical Character Recognition), errors of various sorts may occur. Appendix I (Actual Education Expenditure as Percentage of Total Government Expenditure and GDP for the Period 1994 to 2004) is not included.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report was developed according to the guidelines set by UNESCO for the preparation of such country reports. It seeks to provide some background information tracing the progress within the education sector at the turn of the 21st century; bearing in mind the critical developmental goals which inform such progress and focusing on Government's policy as seen by its commitment to achieving the millennium goals, the EFA goals and reaching developed country status as dictated by Vision 2020.

The education sector is high up on the national agenda as evidenced by its highest budgetary allocation of 13.5% in 2004. The education sector plays a key role in social transformation, since it provides children and young people with the necessary training and skills to be able to confidently enter the work force. It therefore has the major task of providing the country with its human resources for effective participation in socioeconomic activities at the local, regional and international levels. To this end heavy investment of the government in the education system is critical if Trinidad and Tobago is to reach developed country status by the year 2020.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for that segment of the education sector consisting of:

- 929 public and private Early Childhood Care and Education Centres serving 27,462 preschoolers;
- 481 public primary schools with a student enrollment of 136,374;
- 64 private primary schools with 4,662 students enrolled at 31 of these schools, for which data were received;
- 133 public secondary schools with an overall enrollment of 106,637 students, 62 of these schools have sixth forms which serve a student population of 8,131;
- 63 private secondary schools with a total number of 7,846 students enrolled at 31 of these schools for which data were available;
- There are also 46 Life Long Learning Centres at which there are 9,600 students.
- Two teachers' colleges with a combined enrollment of 567 teachers in training.

This system is supported by a teaching staff of 13,007 including 702 principals and an administrative arm of 3,000 civil servants.

At present the Ministry of Education is involved in a dynamic process of reform and modernization of its administrative structure and of the school sector. With the proposed introduction of an EMIS (Education Management Information System), the Ministry of Education is positioning itself to take up the challenges of the 21st century, towards attainment of developed country status.

For our young people this translates into the provision of a flexible/adaptable education system which gives them choices and opportunities to take risks and gain high levels of achievement. The education system must seek to establish a knowledge-based work force, one composed of individuals who can confidently step out into the real world and who are capable of taking up opportunities and dealing effectively with life's challenges.

Indeed, education for life, is what the education sector aims to achieve so that from early childhood through primary, secondary, post secondary and tertiary level, children and young people must be exposed to information and experiences which they can assimilate and which can effect positive behavioural changes based on positive attitudes. They must see themselves as being ready and prepared to reach their fullest potential and an effective education system must be the channel through which this goal is achieved.

Education seeks to ensure a balance between academic achievement and psycho-social development of the student. The Ministry of Education therefore, has initiated a number of programmes especially at the secondary level, through which it seeks to provide support for students who face personal and social challenges during their school life. The curriculum also seeks to

address some of these issues through Health and Family Life Education. There is also a strong emphasis on exposure of the students to technical and vocational education and development of life skills through the transformed school curriculum.

The modernization and reform of the education system started in the 1990s and is still a priority of the Ministry of Education. This is evidenced by the construction and refurbishment programme being executed at both the primary and secondary levels. Moreover while universal access to primary and secondary levels was achieved in the year 2000, much work still has to be done to ensure sustained access at these levels. To this end additional primary and secondary schools are still being built where necessary.

This national report takes account of the themes identified by UNESCO and focuses on the achievement of quality education for all, with special emphasis on young people. Themes which are presented include education and gender equality, education and life competencies, education and social inclusion and the professional development of teachers and other educators in the system.

In keeping with one of the major recommendations of the forty-sixth (46th) Session of the ICE (September, 2001), which relates to the “active participation of teachers in the processes of changing education systems,” the Ministry of Education has initiated many

training programmes at all levels of the system. At the secondary level many of these programmes are being conducted through the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) and range from training of teachers in curriculum writing as preparation for their involvement in the writing of new curricula for secondary schools, to preparation of teachers for the delivery of the new curricula in the various subjects. Training initiatives also include the preparation of senior teachers and administrators in school based management and administration.

Efforts are also being made by the Ministry of Education to deal with educating the out of school youth through media and radio programmes that provide them with information on areas such as parenting and sexuality. One cannot over emphasize the need to focus attention on these young people, who more than ever, need to be educated as a means of empowering themselves and raising their self-esteem. Since our young people hold the keys to the future of this nation, it is critical that their development be a prime focus for government.

To achieve its goals for developed country status by 2020, the Ministry of Education recognizes that a collaborative approach is required and often works with other line ministries such as Social Development, Health, Youth and Gender Affairs and National Security, to address specific needs of students. At present much

attention is being placed on school indiscipline and through a joint venture with the Ministry of National Security, work is being done to monitor the activities and reorient the thinking of students at seventeen (17) selected schools throughout the country.

With this type of co-operative approach, the Ministry of Education has been able to make inroads into dealing with social problems within the education sector. In terms of restructuring and modernizing the education system, strategic plans are intended to address the needs of the entire student population, since the operations of the education system are based on a philosophy of social inclusion, gender equality and social equity.

Therefore, while the document seeks to inform of the status of this country's education system, a broader perspective is necessary to understand that the school is a microcosm of society and that effectively addressing the needs within the sector, can lead to effectively handling issues affecting the quality of life of the community hence every effort is being made by the Ministry of Education to effectively provide for the needs of the beneficiaries of the education sector.

The Ministry of Education is in a privileged position, entrusted with planning for the current and future lives of its nation's children, a position that is taken very seriously, hence the reason for ensuring a balanced approach in addressing the needs of the sector.

Therefore, as we continue towards the road to developed country status by the year 2020 and the achievement of the Education For All (EFA) goals, it is important to note that all citizens have a part to play and from an examination of this document that fact is made very evident.

Within the education system, teachers play a central role as they are at the heart of the system and they interact with the student population on a daily basis. There is a responsibility to be good role models, to help shape and mould the minds of young people and therefore they can affect the actions of these individuals.

Furthermore, parents have a critical role to play since they are the first line of interaction and they have a critical responsibility to care for their children. Many of the social programmes of the Ministry of Education involve parents and training is provided for them to promote good parenting so that they can deal with their children's problems from the perspective of a 'family in crisis'.

It is through this type of united effort i.e. teachers working with parents that the education system can truly function effectively and can perform the role it has been entrusted with i.e. of providing the necessary skills and training to produce graduates who are capable of entering the labour force as an asset to the organization and the country as a whole.

The information in this document in large part, presents a holistic developmental approach to education, as espoused in the Education Policy Paper (1993-2003), and in keeping with the current strategic plan of the Ministry of Education (2002-2006). The document highlights the priorities and steps taken by the Ministry of Education to improve the education system, and therefore create a more productive education sector. In this way, the improvements within the system can lead to the establishment of an efficient human resource base as components of a strong and salient economy, and a society comprised of individuals who are ready to meet the challenges within the 21st century.

**NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 2004**
***THEME: "QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL
YOUNG PEOPLE: CHALLENGES,
TRENDS AND PRIORITIES***

INTRODUCTION

QUALITY EDUCATION

At the present time the Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a Quality Education Plan. The major objective of this plan will be the development of quality education in Trinidad and Tobago, with the ultimate goal of helping human beings become educated persons. Schooling is the preparatory stage which provides the means for continued learning and acquisition of skills to enable individuals to maximise their life opportunities.

The value of the quality education plan can be defined as "an excellent, superior, distinctive strategy, tactic or arrangement that facilitates the holistic development of a quality student and ultimately a quality citizen". This definition clearly articulates the vision of the Ministry of Education's strategic plan as well as that of the government's Vision 2020 Policy Document.

A SEAMLESS SYSTEM

One of the major goals of the education system is the establishment of a 'seamless' education system, whereby students transit smoothly from one level to another, i.e. from early childhood through primary and secondary levels to tertiary level. This system is premised on the notion of the student's readiness to advance to the next level at each stage of the process so that by the end of the secondary cycle students should be prepared and fully equipped either to enter the world of work or to continue tertiary education, having acquired the requisite qualities, attitudes and aptitudes required for success in their chosen options. Therefore, in such a system, it is critical that a solid foundation is laid for the student at the preprimary level.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY:

EDUCATION POLICY PAPER (1993-2003)

Globally education is seen as a vehicle for social change and progressive national development. Within this context, the education process in Trinidad and Tobago is guided by the philosophy of the education system that is enshrined in the Education Policy Paper (1993-2003), as developed by the National Task Force on Education. Today, the guidelines and principles laid down in this policy document are still relevant and influence the many changes which are taking place in the education sector.

Furthermore, the plans outlined in the Education Policy Paper are fully supported by the Ministry's Strategic Plan 2002-2006 which has as its mission "to lead the modernization and renewal of the system of education" in Trinidad and Tobago (see: *Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (MOE) 2002 — 2006, November 2002, Page 7*). In keeping with this mission the Ministry of Education seeks to nurture an education system that "maintains the ethical and moral values necessary for civilized interpersonal and intergroup relationships in our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society". (See: *Education Policy Paper (1993 — 2003), MOE, Page VII, Executive Summary*).

Additionally, in order to sustain its objective of providing quality teaching and maintaining a strong professional base within the sector, it is believed that the education system must be "marked by a technical and professional proficiency and a participating system of operations and ought to promote the personal and social efficiency necessary for successful nation building. (See: *Education Policy Paper (1993 — 2003), MOE, Page VII, Executive Summary*).

ADOPTION OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS – 2000

As a major tool in the governing policy for education, this country became a signatory at the Millennium Summit 2000 and

committed itself to the achievement of the eight (8) millennium development goals. Among the key areas of importance to the education sector as outlined in the millennium goals are the eradication of poverty, the achievement of universal primary education, promotion of gender equality, empowerment of women, combating HIV/AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability.

COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA GOALS):

In the year 2000 this country also made a commitment to achieving 'Education For All' (EFA) and as a signatory to the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, this country committed itself to the attainment of six (6) major EFA goals identified as follows:

- 1) expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- 2) ensuring that by 2015 all children especially girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- 3) ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- 4) achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

- 5) eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and
- 6) improving every aspect of the quality of education and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

ASPIRING TO VISION 2020:

Commitment to these international treaties must be viewed against the background of Vision 2020, a national policy document which has as its major goal “to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country by 2020”. This vision is high up on the national agenda and within this context there are many implications for developments within the education sector since education is seen as “a critical dimension of our positioning of Trinidad and Tobago for the global age.” (See: *Positioning Trinidad and Tobago for the Global Ages 2000 — 2020: A Vision*, Page 13.)

To achieve developed country status by the year 2020 the following goals have been placed on the national agenda:

- 1) the achievement of a high level of human development

- and standard of living;
- 2) full participation of citizens in the mainstream socio-economic activities
 - 3) strong and salient economy;
 - 4) good effective governance of the country;
 - 5) social cohesion;
 - 6) preservation of the natural environment; and
 - 7) efficient and effective social institutional structures.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2002 – 2006

In developing its Strategic Plan 2002 – 2006, the Ministry of Education was fully cognizant of the commitments already made in the education system to achieving the millennium development goals, the EFA goals and its own Vision 2020 objectives. Recognising that investment in human resource development can be used as a platform for taking Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status, much attention is placed on the education system since in the main, it provides this country with its human resources. In light of its pivotal role in national transformation efforts, therefore, the Ministry of Education adopted as its vision; “to be a pacesetter in the holistic development of an individual through an education system which enables meaningful contributions within the global context”. (See: *Strategic Plan 2002 – 2006 MOE, November 2002, Page 6.*)

In support of this effort the ministry’s Strategic Plan outlined four (4) major strategic objectives to be achieved by the Ministry of

Education over the 2002–2006 period. These are:

- 1) accessibility to educational opportunities for all;
- 2) delivery of quality education to citizens at all levels of the education system;
- (3) Sustainable policy development for the education sector;
- (4) Continuous alignment of the strategic direction in the education system with objectives set for national development.

THE REFORM OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM- 2002-2006:

For the period 2002 – 2006, the work of the Ministry of Education is focussed on the modernization and reform agenda as it pertains to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of education provision. On the quantitative side, the following priorities were set:

- 1) Continuation of the building of secondary schools under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) up to the year 2006 (in the first instance);
- 2) Continuation of the construction and outfitting of Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE centres);
- 3) Continuation of the construction of primary schools under the Fourth Basic Education Programme;
- 4) Establishment of an Education Facilities Management Division (EFMD) in the Ministry of Education to build capacity to ensure continuous upgrade, modernization and

maintenance of the school plant;

- 5) Expansion of facilities at existing secondary schools to ensure placement of all students exiting the primary system and to facilitate the deshifting of schools.

On the qualitative side the key priorities as identified by the Strategic Plan 2002-2006 are as follows:

- 1) Building of support to strengthen curriculum delivery at all levels;
- 2) Continuation of the design and development of curriculum for the secondary level up to Form 5;
- 3) Review of the curriculum of the Teacher's College and the setting of a new vision for teacher training and development;
- 4) Building of capacity for continuous assessment, testing and evaluation to support the curriculum goals, particularly as this relates to the primary level;
- 5) Enhancement of teaching and learning strategies;
- 6) Complete transformation of the ECCE system with attention to both curriculum as well as teacher preparation;
- 7) Strengthening of student support services.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

These quantitative and qualitative efforts are supported by a vigorous institutional strengthening framework that seeks to build capacity within the Ministry of Education and in schools. A professional development programme for Principals and School Administrators is already being implemented on an annual basis. Such training is being conducted in order to improve administrative efficiency at the school level and to build a platform for effective school based management.

RESTRUCTURING AND DECENTRALIZATION

System wide efficiency and effectiveness are expected to be achieved through a commitment to completing the restructuring and decentralization process within the Ministry of Education by the year 2006.

Two critical pre-requisites to the restructuring and decentralization processes are the completion of a process mapping of the Ministry's operations and the establishment of a fully operational Educational Management Information System (EMIS).

A comprehensive, communication strategy is also being put in place to support the Ministry's strategic plan, so that all employees and stakeholders would be fully apprised of the way forward for the

education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)

The new world economy, which is driven by globalization and rapid technological advancement, compels this country to transform its national economy to survive this dynamic world environment. Within the region, the introduction of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) will allow for greater access to goods and services and will increase demand for labour, and so set the stage for this country to participate in trade and economic activity with the other Caribbean nations.

This move towards a Caribbean Single Market and Economy is welcomed particularly since the country's present unemployment rate is 10.2%. This change will result in greater demands being placed on the Education system particularly in the area of provision of human resources, so that the system must produce graduates i.e. who possess the required skills and competencies to take advantage of these new opportunities. To this end, the Ministry of Education has sought to focus both on the quantitative and qualitative development of the education sector, and while student access is important, attention is also being paid to the qualitative aspects of education such as:

- the development of a new secondary school curriculum;

- curriculum relevance to ensure that the school curriculum is infused with the necessary academic and technological skills so that our young people can maximise their opportunities;
- the introduction of new examinable subject offerings at the secondary level such as Technology Education and Visual and Performing Arts
- the rationalization of specialized craft at the secondary level programme and its repositioning to the post-secondary level.

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION 2004

To achieve the transformation agenda for the improvement of the national economy, the Ministry of Education has been the recipient of sizeable increases in its budgetary allocations over the past ten (10) years. These increases were geared towards ensuring that the education sector has the requisite resources for developing this country's human resources in order to facilitate involvement in economic and social activities as an avenue towards this country's advancement to developed country status.

To this end, Government increased the annual budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Education from 9.5% in 2000 to 13.5% in 2004 amounting to TT\$2,841,179,433 (Appendix I refers.) [OMITTED]. Indeed, for the fiscal year 2003/2004 the Ministry of

Education received the highest portion of the national budget. Clearly this high level of investment in education reflects Government's commitment to supporting the education sector as the key means of ensuring social transformation through human resource development in its attempt at bringing this country to developed country status by the year 2020.

RESTRUCTURING EFFORTS – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Against this background, much attention continues to be paid to the Ministry of Education and the role of the education sector as a change agent. To achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in its operations, steps are now being taken to restructure the administrative arm and technical units of the Ministry.

With restructuring and decentralization high up on the Ministry's agenda, the Ministry of Education proposes to undertake a number of initiatives aimed at achieving "better organisational performance, better management of schools and a higher level of effectiveness throughout the system". (See: *National Consultation on Restructuring and Decentralization of the Ministry of Education, June 2003, Page 1.*)

At present a number of workshops are being held, and through the work of Organization and Development (OD) Consultants and the Ministry's Restructuring and Decentralization Action Unit (RDAU), Ministry staff is being provided with the opportunity to understand the

decentralization process and give feedback accordingly.

In terms of achieving quality education, a decentralized system is expected to reduce bureaucracy, empower line managers, support school based management, maximise the response rate and facilitate problem solving at the decentralized levels of the region, district and the school.

Additionally, it is anticipated that through these processes the education system would be transformed into “the most efficient arrangement of organizational entities so that each might best concentrate on its appointed task.” (See: *National Consultation on Restructuring and Decentralization of the Ministry of Education, June 2003, Page 3.*)

THE CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM – 2004

The Legal Framework of Education

The functions, powers and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education are articulated in the Education Act No. 39:01 of 1966. The Act specifies that the Ministry exists to assist the Minister of Education in the discharge of his/her responsibilities. With respect to Tobago, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Act No. 40 of 1996 devolved responsibility for the administration of education, including curriculum to the THA.

The Education Act gives the Minister of Education responsibility for ensuring the effective execution of government's education policy. As such, the THA and the Ministry of Education share a collaborative relationship in order to ensure standardized practices in the education system.

Under the current government administration, the Ministry of Education has responsibility for administering education policies at the preprimary (early childhood), primary, secondary and post secondary levels. With respect to tertiary level education, this ministry has responsibility for providing teacher training for secondary school teachers at the university, primary school teachers, at the teachers' training colleges and for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) teachers/caregivers.

However, Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has overall responsibility for all the other aspects of tertiary level education.

The following major areas fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education:

- Setting of educational policies and strategies;
- Defining curriculum and other norms;
- Overseeing the quality of educational services provided by public and private sector institutions;
- Planning, programming, budgeting, implementing and monitoring the education system.

As the ministry seeks to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the educational needs of its client population, improvements are now being made throughout the sector.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)

In 1996 the Fourth Basic Education Loan was negotiated between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). This loan funded the four (4) main components which sought to:

- 1) increase Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE);
- 2) improve teaching and learning quality at the primary level;
- 3) upgrade the physical environment for teaching and

learning; and

4) provide educational management and institutional strengthening for the ECCE sector.

Under the Fourth Basic Education Loan over sixty (60) new ECCE Centres were established and fully equipped. Today there are one hundred and sixty-seven (167) public ECCE Centres with an enrolment figure of 7,000 children. This number represents approximately 73% of children within the age group 3-4 years old. More work is being done in the area including the preparation of a Green Paper on the proposed standards for regulating early childhood services, which was put up for public comment. A national consultation will be held shortly, to obtain public feedback on this document. Since the Ministry of Education is seeking to achieve universal access to ECCE on a phased basis, as a step towards establishing a 'seamless' education system, efforts are continuing to improve the delivery of services provided by ECCE centres, whether Government owned or privately-operated and to expand access to ECCE facilities particularly in disadvantaged communities. Plans are in train for the construction of an additional forty-three (43) ECCE centres in 2005. The training of ECCE caregivers is also ongoing.

PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

With a current enrolment figure of 136,374 students in the 481 public primary schools, universal access to primary school education has

been achieved since the year 2000, and through its refurbishment and modernization work at schools, the Ministry of Education is seeking to sustain its commitment to provide a school place for every child as part of its programme of ensuring quality primary school education for all.

As part of its ongoing aim of maintaining quality schools, the Ministry is at present refurbishing over one hundred and twenty-six (126) primary and thirty-four (34) secondary schools and has an ongoing school rebuilding programme for replacement of dilapidated schools.

In keeping with rapid technological changes, the Ministry of Education is seeking to equip primary schools with the necessary technology to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a knowledge-based workforce. To this end, a large-scale plan has commenced at the primary school level to provide schools with computers and computer aided instruction and management software. The process is ongoing since the schools have to be refurbished prior to the installation of the computers. To date one hundred and twenty-four (124) primary schools have been equipped with a total of 1,499 computers.

Under the Improving Teacher Learning Component of the World Bank Fourth Basic Education Project, the primary school social studies syllabus was revised and distributed to schools. This component also included the provision of textbooks to primary school

students.

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

Enrolment Level

With the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in the year 2000, guaranteed places for all students sitting the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) was achieved. At present the enrolment figures for the 133 public secondary schools stands at 106,637 students. Furthermore, to sustain its commitment to USE, the Ministry of Education also purchases school places for 7,766 secondary students at private institutions since there are insufficient places at the public secondary schools.

SECONDARY EDUCATION MODERNIZATION PROGRAMME (SEMP)

Under Secondary Education and Modernization Programme (SEMP) which commenced in 1999, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago embarked on one of the largest restructuring and modernization programmes of the education sector.

Under the construction component of this programme eighteen (18) secondary schools were constructed thus increasing the number

of available school places by nine thousand, nine hundred and seventy-five (9,975) and bringing the number of public secondary schools to its current figure of one hundred and thirty-three (133) schools with an overall enrollment of one hundred and six thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven (106,637) students.

Under this component over one hundred (100) secondary schools will be upgraded and refurbished and additional facilities will be provided at double shift schools to facilitate their conversion to single shift schools. The objectives of SEMP, as the body enlisted with the responsibility for some critical aspects of the reform process, will continue to seek to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) the reform and expansion of the secondary school system that will result in five (5) years of high quality secondary education for all the nation's children regardless of the social and economic status;
- 2) the creation of a curriculum that is relevant to the very demanding and dynamic world of work; and
- 3) the development of teaching technologies that will produce graduates who can adapt to the rapid changes being brought about through technological advances and globalization.

In 2003, as part of the school based management initiative under SEMP, Local School Boards were established in ten (10) public secondary schools. The functions of these Boards are to:

- 1) assist in the development of the school's policy and improvement plans;
- 2) assist in raising funds for the school;
- 3) monitor operations for quality education in the teaching service; and
- 4) advise and make recommendations.

To fully operationalize the functions of the Local School Boards, a Local School Board Unit was established in April 2004 within the Ministry of Education with the appointment of a Programme Manager. A WorkPlan for the Unit is now being developed and should be implemented in the near future.

OTHER AREAS OF SCHOOL SUPPORT

At all levels of the education system the following support is provided:

- 1) School Transport Service – Currently over 200 maxi taxis transport 21,500 students daily, and 15,000 students are transported by PTSC buses at an annual cost of TT\$30M;
- 2) School Nutrition Programme . This programme provides daily breakfasts for 31,761 students and daily lunches for 96,447 students from Early Childhood to Secondary Levels.
- 3) the Textbook Rental Programme provides essential

textbooks on loan to 175,000 primary school students, 75,000 secondary school students and resource materials to 46,260 students of special schools and Early Childhood Centres.

4) Book Grants of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) per student are provided through an innovative visa card. For September, 2004 thirty thousand (30,000) students entering fourth and lower sixth form classes are targeted to receive the grant.

POST SECONDARY – CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION (CAPE)

In September 2003, the Ministry of Education adopted the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) programme as a unified system of certification designed to encompass current arrangements in sixth forms and to articulate with programmes at community colleges and communities across the region. The new examination brings academic, technical and vocational courses of study within a single system of certification. “It is designed on the assumption that a coherent programme of study must not only address a specific knowledge base, but must also include the development of related skills and attitudes if it is to prepare individuals adequately for life in regional and international communities, for work and for higher education”. (See: *Country Paper Fourteenth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers “Education in a Global Era: Challenges to Equity, Opportunities for Diversity”, July 2003, Ministry of Education, page 34*). This move

away from the traditional system of accreditation reflects the Ministry's vision to be a pacesetter in education as it seeks to provide quality education for our young people, in non-traditional areas so they can adapt to the changing needs of the labour market both locally, regionally and in the wider global economy.

TERTIARY LEVEL

At the tertiary level of education, the Ministry of Education has the responsibility for the provision of adequate and appropriate training for its primary school teachers at the two (2) Teachers' Training College. At present the Valsayn Teachers' College has a current enrolment (July 2004) of 205 students, 36 males and 169 females. At Corinth Teachers College the current enrolment figure (July 2004) is 362 students of which 85 are males and 277 females. One of the major challenges of the system, is the inability to attract a large number of males to the teaching profession. The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine through its Faculty of Education provides in service professional training for secondary school teachers. This institution also offers the Bachelor of Education programme.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

With its sustained emphasis on quality education, the Ministry of

Education recently set up a Teacher Development Project Unit, with the responsibility for upgrading the standard of teacher education at all levels of the system. The major task of the Unit is to develop recommendations for establishing a single entity to co-ordinate activities related to teacher education and development which would take into account teacher training, recruitment and quality assurance. The Unit will also develop a rationalization plan for teachers' colleges.

With respect to teacher education, the following programmes are conducted on an ongoing basis, and a status of the programmes up to the latter part of the year 2003 is as follows:

- 1) Executive Diploma in School Management and Effective Leadership Programme – 40 participants (Cohort 3) commenced training in August 2003 and is ongoing;
- 2) The Certification Programme in School Management and Effective Leadership – 80 participants (Cohorts 1 and 2) are currently in receipt of training;
- 3) Masters in Education for Principals – 30 participants in Cohort I are currently undergoing training;
- 4) Diploma in Technology Education – training for Second Cohorts – commenced in April 2003 and is ongoing;
- 5) Bachelor of Education – The final cohort of school principals, Vice Principals and Senior Teachers graduated from the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, in October 2003. At that time a total of 474 persons had been exposed to the programme.

CARIBBEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING (CETT)

Another recent initiative of the Ministry of Education is the establishment of the Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETI). This centre was set up to provide innovative leadership in inspiring, empowering and equipping teachers in the first three (3) grades of primary schools, to improve the teaching of reading and thereby assist students in mastering the fundamentals of reading.

CETT will also train teachers in the latest and best evidence based strategies of teaching and reading and will engage them in the best practices. In so doing, the promotion of continued professional development of teachers will be ensured.

EDUCATION AND GENDER ISSUES:

The Education Policy Paper (1993 –2003) espouses as one of the inherent principles upon which the education system is based “that every child has an inherent right to an education... regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social, or religious background”. (See: *Education Policy Paper (1993 – 2003), Ministry of Education, Page*

xvii.)

Historically, access to education has always been male dominated and enjoyed by the wealthy, but by the turn of the 21st century one witnessed the establishment of an education system that allowed access by all, regardless of gender, ethnicity or social status. In fact, the education system in this country has been the channel through which the working class has been able to achieve social mobility, an achievement that is now enjoyed by the children and grandchildren of our forefathers. Today women in this country hold high positions. In fact the present Minister of Education is female and in large part a product of this nation's education system, which seeks to facilitate social cohesion and is based on social equity.

While at present there exists no gender- based policy for education as such, it is significant to note that enshrined in the national constitution of Trinidad and Tobago is equality of opportunities, regardless of gender. This basic human right as a citizen is used to inform the education policy of the Ministry of Education.

Furthermore, in terms of providing quality education at all levels, the reformation process has sought to ensure that all students have access to the educational opportunities within the sector. In this regard the school curricula are gender sensitive, so that boys and girls can obtain the best education possible. Moreover, it is an

unwritten rule in the education sector that work is performed in the following manner:

- 1) equal opportunities for males and females;
- 2) gender discrimination is eliminated from the school curriculum, textbooks and both genders have access to all subjects;
- 3) gender sensitive curriculum strategies are developed and continue to be implemented at all levels of the education system;
- 4) schools cater to the needs of both genders in extra curricula activities such as sporting activities;
- 5) available resources are distributed equally between the sexes.

EDUCATION AND COMPETENCIES FOR LIFE

Introduction of Technology Education

General education is expected to equip the individual with the necessary skills to meet the demands of the society in which he/she lives and works. Technical and Vocational Education contributes to such experiences by exposing the individual to technologies and related sciences as well as practical skills and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

In the year 2001 the General Council of UNESCO adopted the resolution that all children (pre-school to 16 years old) should be afforded a general education of which technical and vocational education should be an integral part. The benefits to be achieved from technical vocational education are as follows:

- 1) Preparation of the student for effective participation in the world of work;
- 2) Facilitation of responsible citizenship;
- 3) Development of the groundwork for the achievement of environmentally sound sustainable development; and
- 4) Facilitation of poverty alleviation.

Recognizing the benefits to be gained by technical/vocational education in preparing young people for the world of work and life itself, the Ministry of Education has introduced technology education as a core subject in the transformed secondary school curriculum, which is being developed under the SEMP.

The technology education subject encompasses the basic principles, content, skills and attitudes afforded by the study of several technical areas including Information Technology, Agricultural Science, Home Economics, Industrial Arts and Business Studies. The curriculum is expected to facilitate horizontal and vertical articulation within the school system and society as a whole, thus allowing for flexibility. Exposure to technology education from Forms 1 to 3 will prepare students to choose from as many as fourteen (14)

technology related subjects being offered by the regional Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination as well as curricula for Forms 4 and 5 to be assessed as part of the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) of Trinidad and Tobago. It is planned that students who choose the latter programme will be certified and accredited as having achieved certain labour competencies that make them attractive employees.

SPECIALISED CRAFT SUBJECTS

Rationalization of the programmes of specialised craft is ongoing: At the core of this proposal is the removal of craft subjects from the secondary to the postsecondary level. These changes are expected to empower young people, allowing them to develop their individual talents, interests and skills and preparing them for the world of work.

To this end, the new curriculum at secondary school focuses on the provision of basic academic skills, as well as on the physical and aesthetic development of students. The core subjects are English, Mathematics, Spanish, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, Technology Education and Visual and Performing Arts. These changes have been made to respond to the challenge of providing young people with flexible/appropriate learning opportunities and life skills development to enable them to face the new challenges of the 21st century. Additionally, it is anticipated that students would achieve the essential learning outcomes of aesthetic expression, citizenship,

communication, personal development, problem-solving and technology competence. Also, by engaging in these core subjects, students would also achieve foundation skills such as numeracy, literacy and research skills as well as core work skills such as teamwork, learning to learn skills, safety competencies and basic manipulation skills.

HEALTH AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION (HFLE)

All efforts to renew and revise the education curriculum at the secondary school level must be viewed within the context of the holistic development of the individual into a well rounded, balanced citizen of this country who is capable of being productive and achieving his/her fullest potential.

The Ministry of Education has therefore introduced a Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme within the education system.

The most striking feature of HFLE is that it is designed to promote psychosocial competence, which is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. HFLE promotes psycho-social competence in children and youth by teaching them life skills, which are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour. In this way the HFLE is a continuous process aimed at

“ensuring that individuals through funded learning experiences, acquire attitudes, knowledge, skills and values which would empower them to develop healthy lifestyles and make choices and decisions that would impact positively on themselves, their homes and their communities. (See: *Report for National Plan of Action for Children, November 2003.*)

It is proposed that teachers at all levels of the education system will be trained to deliver the HFLE programme in the short to medium term period. In addition, the Ministry of Education has recently completed two (2) Modules on Aids and Sexual Reproduction Health for teaching at the secondary level.

VALUES EDUCATION

A decision was taken by the Ministry of Education to infuse Values Education across the subject areas with the following objectives:

- 1) To help individuals think about and reflect upon different values and the practical implications of expressing their values;
- 2) To deepen understanding, motivation, and responsibility in making positive personal and social choices;
- 3) To inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral and spiritual values and be aware of practical

methods for developing and deepening them; and

- 4) To encourage teachers and other care-givers to look at education as providing students with a philosophy of living, thereby facilitating their overall growth, development and choices, so that they may integrate themselves into the community with respect, confidence and purpose.

Today, moral and values education is treated as a separate subject with the appointment of a Moral and Values Education Officer.

Clearly the curriculum plays a key role in providing the basis upon which learning is to take place and to the extent that the curriculum is relevant to the changing needs of our young people, will the education system produce talented, well adjusted individuals who are capable of not only mastering the academic subjects but who can interact positively in society, and are confident and capable of reaching their fullest potential.

If the education system is to be one of the main channels, if not the main avenue for social advancement, then, it must continue to adapt to the changing needs and be flexible so that students can have an overall balanced experience. At present, the curriculum is infused with subjects which when transmitted to students may provide the basis for progress and can take our country to true developed country status by the year 2020.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION:

The Education Policy Paper 1993–2003 espouses a philosophy that underscores the belief that “every child has the ability to learn and that children vary in natural ability, and that schools therefore should provide, for all students programmes which are adapted to varying abilities, and which provide opportunity to develop differing and socially useful talents”. (See: *Education Policy Paper (1993-2003)*, Ministry of Education, Page xvii.)

This philosophy is emphasised in the Strategic Plan 2002–2006, as a strategic objective of achieving accessibility to educational opportunities for all. In pursuit of this objective, the Ministry of Education has conducted a broad analysis of its student population and has developed systems for social inclusion.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Ministry of Education recognises that as it seeks to develop the child holistically, it must provide the right environment for such learning to take place and must address the issues related to barriers in learning. Through use of a multi-disciplinary team approach a system of student support services delivers guidance and counselling, diagnostic/prescriptive services, social work and special

education services in schools. At present there are approximately fifty (50) Guidance Officers working in about fifteen (15) primary schools and forty (40) secondary schools.

This support system has its greatest exposure at the primary school level where formal schooling begins at age five. It is at this critical point in the formative years of the child that holistic analysis is needed to identify strengths, weaknesses, aptitudes and provide the necessary interactions for remediation work or to reinforce positive growth and behaviour patterns.

“AT RISK” YOUTH

At the secondary level, continuous identification and remediation work with added focus on personal/social and career development is conducted. It is at this stage that many young people experience psychological problems in their own personal development and require support throughout this stage of development. Focussing on ensuring that all students stay in school and do not fall out of the system or are expelled because of dysfunctional behaviour, Guidance Officers work with “at risk” students to support them. Guidance Officers also work with the parents of these students in an attempt to deal with the situation as a family in crisis.

Over the period 2003/2004, Guidance Officers provided counselling for 2,033 “at risk” students in academic, personal/social

and career concerns. Additionally a total of 885 parents were also exposed to training in parenting skills to enable them to treat with their children's problems. This is one area in which the system is challenged, since dysfunctional behaviour among young people could have far reaching ill effects, not only on the individual, but in eroding the very fibre of our society, thus militating against the achievement of the anticipated growth to developed country status by 2020.

Therefore in recognition of this challenge, the Ministry of Education saw the need to strengthen its support to students in dealing with real psycho-social issues ranging from challenges in managing relationships among their peers, human sexuality, HIV/AIDS and STDs; to helping students deal with migration and family separation as well as financial issues to cover for basic needs of food and clothing. In this regard the Ministry of Education sought and obtained Government's approval in January 2004 for restructuring and strengthening the Guidance Unit into a fully operational Student Support Services. At present steps are being taken to hire 120 new officers to hold technical positions within the newly created Student Support Services. It is anticipated that by September 2004, 80% of the selected persons would be appointed to work with students, in both primary and secondary schools.

Designed specifically to assist students in enabling them to maximise their learning potential, it is anticipated that secondary school students and their parents would continue to benefit from

specialised programmes through the Student Support Services in areas such as peer mediation, career guidance and adolescent development issues. Furthermore, through attendance at seminars and workshops, it is expected that parents will benefit from the newly organized school based support system. The curriculum in health and family life education will support these major efforts to assist students.

To reiterate, the emphasis is on holistic development and in dealing with the dysfunctional behaviour of some students so that the intention is not to suspend or expel students, but to treat with their challenges through crisis intervention, and so facilitate his/her continuation throughout the education system. In this way the education system promotes social inclusion and works in a healthy positive way towards reuniting families, helping young people deal with their crises, and thereby performing the role of guardian and trustee, which is associated with the noble profession of teaching.

At present a number of initiatives are being conducted through 'Project Peace', which is managed by the Ministry's School Intervention Strategies Unit (SIS). For the period 2003/2004 the project has been able to reach secondary students and their parents in the following ways:

- (i) 2,400 students were exposed to training in peer mediation/ counselling / conflict resolution;
- (ii) 1,000 students were involved in research into school

violence and delinquency;

(iii) the entire student population was exposed to seminars and workshops to train them in respect pillar – nurturing a strong sense of self-respect, personal responsibility and respect for others through the “Together We Light The Way” project;

(iv) selected students with behavioural problems were involved in the “out of school suspension” programme which included remedial work at three (3) centres with Guidance Officers and Social Workers, aimed at achieving positive behavioural changes;

(v) 300 students in thirty-three (33) secondary schools were involved in special classes and training sessions within schools to assist them in managing behavioural tendencies that are barriers to learning;

(vi) secondary school students in ten (10) schools were exposed to a training course to encourage responsible and safe driving habits among the youth.

Another initiative which targets school indiscipline, is a joint venture between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Security, which commenced in the year 2003 at seventeen (17) selected (‘at risk’) schools. The programme involves various aspects to address the problem of indiscipline in schools, including a mentoring programme, in which 5,305 students from fifteen (15) of the selected schools were exposed to activities related to promoting positive behaviour patterns.

At present the project is seeking to employ thirty-four (34) School Safety officers who would be involved in crisis intervention on site at the school plants and would also be responsible for monitoring the general conduct and behaviour of students on the compounds. At first it is intended that many of these officers should be selected from the cadre of Police Officers. It is anticipated that these Officers would represent an authority figure in schools to discourage unlawful behaviour, yet at the same time, possessing a certain level of maturity and experience that would enable them to effectively implement crisis intervention strategies and assist students in general, to deal with their developmental problems which form barriers to their learning and progress in school.

Additionally, another aspect of the work of this Task Force on School Discipline was the drafting of a policy document on drug addiction in schools, in collaboration with local government agencies, such as NADAPP (National Alcohol and Drug Prevention Programme). A planned programme for training in drug prevention in schools is expected to be launched by September, 2004.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The concept of inclusion as it relates to children/students with special educational needs, in essence, suggests a commitment to educating them in the school and classroom. It involves bringing the

support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services. It requires that the child benefit from being in the class, rather than having to keep up with other children.

In Trinidad and Tobago, apart from the students with early recognisable abilities, there are three (3) groups of exceptional students:

- 1) those with sensory disabilities (=50% of the school population has undetected problems with vision that contribute significantly to their inability to maximise their learning potential);
- 2) those intellectually below normal (=25%);
- 3) students with learning disabilities (10%);
- 4) the gifted and talents (=2%). Virtually no attempt is being made to identify this group of students and to provide the accelerated programmes they require in either the academic or aesthetic area.

The education system has never provided a full and comprehensive approach to special education. At present, there are twelve (12) public special schools – 2 government and 10 government-assisted. There are twenty-one (21) private special schools that offer special education programmes for students with special educational needs.

The Ministry of Education recognises that the current special

schools cannot meet the challenges of treating with the larger number of students with special needs. In fact, there is a constant decline in enrolment at some of these schools, since children with various disabilities often times attend the regular school. There is however, a wide disparity between some of the academic programmes implemented in special schools and that which is intended in the national curriculum.

As a means of addressing this disparity in the system, the following measures have been taken to provide support and inclusion of all vulnerable groups within the education system:

- 1) provision of ramps at all new primary and secondary schools to facilitate access of students in wheelchairs;
- 2) provision of additional diagnostic and intervention support through school psychologists at the educational district level as well as ensuring prescriptive services at some educational districts;
- 3) increase in the number of concessions granted to students with physical and learning disabilities who are registered for national, regional and international examinations;
- 4) co-ordination with the Ministry of Health to have all students screened for visual and learning disabilities. This would include testing and provision of spectacles and hearing aids where necessary. This programme is scheduled to start in September, 2004 with the screening of Infant students entering school for the first time.

- 5) continuation of the issue of book grants for students in secondary schools;
- 6) continuation of providing school meals for students at all levels on a daily basis; and
- 7) provision of Special Education Teachers, Guidance Officers and School Social Workers in primary schools to work with learning and behaviourally challenged students.

The government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Education recognizes that more work has to be done in this area to facilitate the inclusion of students with special needs into the education system and in treating with students with psychological problems. To this end, the Student Support Services intends to implement the following proposals:

- 1) The provision of counselling and specialised intervention strategies for students with emotional, behavioural and learning concerns at the primary and secondary levels; (See: *Draft National Policy on Student Support Services, MOE, February 2004, Page 21.*) and
- 2) “Specialised services for gifted students, for students with moderate and severe special educational needs as well as students with educational needs attending regular schools” (See: *Ibid.*, Pages 21-22).

OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH

In terms of the formal education system, steps are being taken to facilitate social inclusion i.e. sustaining a system whereby all have access to the education system, regardless of gender, ethnicity and even intellectual capacity.

However, for the “out of school youth”, who may have dropped out of high school, or who may have been unsuccessful at examinations, and who may be seeking re-entry into the system, social inclusion may be a challenge and therefore, the Ministry of Education has to find innovative ways of educating these individuals. At present the Ministry of Education through the media, airs a number of programmes to assist in the continued education of these persons, who, if left unattended, would become part of the vulnerable and disadvantaged group in our society, or the casualties of social development.

At present a project of forty (40) 5-minute programmes is aired on prime time radio and newspaper articles are written to focus on social issues, such as parenting whereby potential parents and already parents are provided with useful information on parenting skills. The aim is to capture or re-capture this vulnerable group so that through intervention they may be able to live productive lives. Also featured through public information programmes is useful information on health issues such as HI V/Aids.

This programme is facilitated through collaboration with the Ministries of Social Services, Health, Sport and Youth Affairs, Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs and relevant nongovernmental organisations.

The adult education sector the Ministry of Education currently caters for 9,600 students at forty-six (46) Lifelong Learning Centres located throughout the country. These centres provide both academic and technical vocational skills training. Additionally, through distance learning, adult students can obtain opportunities for training while still being able to maintain full time employment; and through the efforts of the newly introduced GATE programme of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education access will be provided to tertiary level education for students who have the ability but may lack funds to pay for further education or training.

Furthermore, through the Ministry of Social Development, young people with an entrepreneurial spirit, have the opportunity to access funds and training to start their own businesses through the micro enterprise project. This facility especially caters to young adults who are less fortunate or/and drug addicts as well as probationers who need support to assist them on the road to self empowerment.

An EDF (European Development Fund) project was recently completed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education to determine the situation of tertiary (post secondary)

education in this country. The project found that the tertiary education system was not seamless and concerns over consistency and standardization were revealed in the education provided at this level. While the study was more of a needs assessment, it has formed the basis for European investment into this country's tertiary sector by the European Commission, which will assist in providing the necessary opportunities for our young students and adults wishing to pursue their studies at the tertiary level.

Generally speaking, for 'at risk' youth and children at risk, it may be difficult for them to benefit fully from the formal education system, and some may find themselves outside or at the peripheries of social life, exposed to the negative elements, without the basic coping skills required for healthy living. Achieving their re-entry into the education system requires effort and can be achieved through collaboration with other line Ministries such as Social Development; Youth and Sport Affairs; National Security; and Science, Technology and Tertiary Education for accessing relevant programmes within these Ministries. This type of collaboration is invaluable since it is a means of identifying the vulnerable group, i.e. those who fall within the cracks of the system, and steps can be taken to introduce programmes and projects to ensure their re-integration into positive socio-economic activities, which will certainly enhance their quality of life and empower these young adults to reach their fullest potential in whatever course of studies or profession they may choose.

QUALITY EDUCATION AND THE KEY ROLE OF TEACHERS

It is well recognized that teachers along with other school administrators lie “at the heart of the nation’s secondary education reform drive” (for) they are the professionals charged with the responsibility of translating into effective classroom practice the conviction that every child can learn”.

Bearing this in mind, the professional development of teachers must occupy a central position and is in fact one of the key components of SEMP, which seeks to train school personnel so that they can facilitate the change process among their students.

Two (2) aspects of SEMP are relevant to the professional development of teachers, and can be linked directly to the reform process, namely:

- 1) improvement component which deals with curriculum reform, teaching and learning strategies, assessment testing and evaluation and professional development;
- 2) the institutional strengthening component which deals with reorganising the Ministry of Education and retraining staff.

In terms of teachers, the professional development component

is a sub-component of the quality improvement component, which has as its objective to bring the attitudes and skills of the nation's teachers and other education professionals in line with SEMP's ideals for a modern, efficient, progressive education system.

Through its professional development sub-component, SEMP has been providing training for teachers, principals, vice-principals, heads of departments and other school administrators, since these are the people charged with the responsibility of reforming and expanding approaches to learning/teaching curriculum development and assessment procedures.

Certainly, the recent salary increases and the continued negotiations for increasing teachers' salaries by the present government is a reflection of the recognition of the key role of teachers. Additionally, steps to delink the teaching service from the rest of the public service and the subsequent strengthening of the professional base of the education system are also evidence of the determination to elevate the teaching profession to its rightful place and to adequately compensate educators. All of these changes are to take place within the context of a modern, advanced and progressive education sector.

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

Training for teachers is a key area also implemented at the

school level in the form of school based management programmes. The school is regarded as the major site of teacher development, which is core to SEMP's professional development activities. Since teachers continuously build on their knowledge base through ongoing action research, which calls for constant rethinking and re-evaluation of their values and practices, some activities such as workshops that are broad-based and collaborative, encourage teachers to collaborate and learn from each other. In this way, helping staff members develop the capacity to teach others in school based professional activities is another aspect of making schools more effective.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Some of the current training programmes being undertaken under the professional development sub-component of SEMP are:

- (i) The Executive Diploma and Certificate Programme in School Management and Effective Leadership at UWI's Institute of Business, is designed for school administrators and senior teachers;
- (ii) A Masters Programme in Education at UWI, St. Augustine, offered for Vice-Principals, Deans and Heads of Departments;
- (iii) Technology Education for Teachers whereby 128 teachers will be offered a course leading to a diploma in Technology Education. The programme reflects the SEMP curriculum as it

applies to technology education;

- (iv) Multi-media Specialists – 128 Multi-media Teachers who co-ordinate and teach in the teaching centres are being offered a one-year Diploma Programme in the use of multi-media for enhancing curriculum delivery and student learning;
- (v) Special Education Teachers – A 60-hour short term course offered to 200 Special Education Teachers who are providing leadership in special education activities and programmes in secondary schools. This programme is designed to ensure equity of opportunity for differently-abled students. The course reflects the instructional, curriculum and assessment aspects of the special education curriculum that are geared towards a degree or diploma accreditation;
- (vi) A post-graduate diploma in Visual and Performing Arts is being offered to 128 Aesthetics Teachers in disciplines such as Art, Music, Drama and Dance. This is to encourage the integration of Mathematics/Science/Technology and Arts during the implementation of SEMP curriculum reform efforts;
- (vii) Specialised Craft Teachers – A 60-hour course for 375 specialised Craft Teachers whose subjects are being phased out of the secondary curriculum, is aimed at retraining and reskilling the teachers to operate in a technology based environment for the delivery of technology education and technology programmes;
- (viii) School Librarians – A 60-hour course to introduce school Librarians to their school-based duties;
- (ix) Beginning Teachers, Mentors – All Beginning Teachers with first

degrees (5% per school, per year) are required to participate in a 60-hour programme for an introduction to relevant concepts and practices;

- (x) Training for teachers whose challenge is to integrate their subject knowledge with the new curriculum, encourage student creativity and other subject knowledge with the new curriculum, encourage student progress, through workshops and credit activity and school based projects. These projects are designed to build communities of learning around improved teaching, classroom research projects and other teacher and school related activities that build in the professional development activities and help teachers take ownership of projects.

INCENTIVES

Incentives are an aspect of the SEMP professional development initiative. Policies are now being considered to link remuneration with teacher performance and initiate support for school-based management and school boards. The tenets of providing quality education dictate that teachers should be well trained and highly committed to the development of their students. They must also recognise that to keep abreast with the changes in their field they need to constantly update and refresh their skills and must display professional behaviour to uphold the dignity of the profession.

Indeed, quality teachers equal quality education, and quality education means quality students and quality citizens of this country who can work towards the progress and development of our country and who strive for social inclusion always, and the sustaining of a society in which there is respect for life, where moral values are revered and where the democratic process is upheld, and a culture of peaceful co-existence permeates every shred of society.

As the key holders of transformation in society, teachers must be creative mentors. They must also have the confidence that their positive actions can instil positive behaviour patterns in their young students, and recognising that they have this important moral role to play as well, teachers must conduct themselves professionally and even aspire to becoming role models to our children.

As a society of professional thinkers, we must be ever mindful of the critical role of teachers and so always ensure that they are provided with the opportunities to upgrade their skills. Through SEMP, the Ministry of Education is achieving this goal and will continue to do so, so that it can boast of having a cadre of professionally trained teachers within the education sector.

CONCLUSION

This national report 2004 highlights the development and transformation of the education sector as the gateway to achieving developed country status by 2020. Also critical is the achievement of the EFA goals and the commitment to the millennium goals. Indeed, the fact that this country has been a signatory to those alliances indicates the level of commitment to the development and investment in the education sector which has influenced the central Government to allocate the highest budgetary amounts to the education sector for the fiscal year 2003/2004. This is evidence that the political will exists to reform and modernize the education system into a pacesetter, and allow it to lead in the transformation process of not only the education system, but also in charting the course for this country's human resource development and global competitiveness.

Mindful of the changing global environment with its new demands not only in traditional areas but in the area of technology and the establishment of a knowledge based workforce, quality education must focus on meeting these needs and on sustainability, so that our citizens can fully achieve their potential and enjoy an enhanced quality of life.

Therefore, providing quality education means focussing not only on the traditional, academic areas but also on non traditional technical/vocational areas which are now being infused with

technology education as a response to the changing global needs for human resource development.

In order to ensure social inclusion, the education system seeks to provide the proper environment for learning in the classroom through the provision of the necessary equipment and facilities for all students. This includes providing the necessary support services to ensure student learning and achievement.

The need for fully trained, professional teachers and administrators will continue to engage the attention of the central administration of the Ministry of Education and sustained efforts at providing opportunities for professional growth and development of teachers, administrators and even support staff will be provided. However, the Principal as leader must also be empowered to undertake his/her role as a provider of school based training on an ongoing basis.

The challenges of the education system in providing “quality education for all young people are many. However, through its strategic thrust and through continuous review and realignment of its policies and programmes the Ministry of Education will sustain its commitment to deliver “quality education to the nation’s children and youth”.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education – Strategic Plan 2002–2006 – November, 2002.
2. Draft National Policy on Student Support Services System – February, 2004.
3. Ministry of Education, Secondary Education Modernization Co-ordinating Unit (SEMPCU) – Providing Quality Secondary Education for all in Secondary Education – Feb. 2002.
4. Ministry of Education, Secondary Education Modernization Co-ordinating Unit (SEMPCU) – Creating the Capacity for Excellence, Professional Development Sub-Component – Secondary Education Modernization Programme Co-ordinating Unit – June, 2002.
5. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago – Report for National Plan of Action on Education, Educational Planning Division, Ministry of Education – November, 2003.
6. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education – National Consultation on Restructuring and Decentralization of the Ministry of Education – June, 2003.
7. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education – Country Paper Fourteenth Conferences of Commonwealth Education

Ministers “Education in a Global Era: Challenges to Equity, Opportunities for Diversity” – July, 2003.

8. Ministry of Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) — National Task Force on Education (White Paper).

9. Draft Estimates of Expenditure 2003-2004.

10. Interim Report – Consultants – EDF Project.

11. Development Programme Cumulative Statement of Expenditure as at 31st July, 2004 – Ministry of Education.

