

**Sub-regional Seminar on Curriculum Development for “Learning to
Live Together”**

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Country Report – St. Kitts and Nevis

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Introduction

The formal operations of the **Curriculum Development Unit** (CDU) began in September 1997 with a staff of eight – a Director, five subject coordinators with responsibility for Language Arts, Primary Science, Secondary Science, Mathematics and Social Studies, a coordinator for Language Enrichment, and a secretary. One coordinator for Learning Support joined the staff in 1998, and a coordinator for Measurement and Evaluation in 1999. Two Education Officers, one in Nevis and one in St. Kitts, work closely with the Unit and are the liaison for the Education Department.

Mission

The Curriculum Development Unit of St. Kitts and Nevis will develop, monitor and evaluate school curriculum based on national goals; within this framework, the needs of students, teachers, and parents will be given priority.

Goal

The Curriculum Development Unit will facilitate the full actualization of each student’s potential through the creative use of carefully crafted curriculum.

Working in tandem with the CDU are two **Teacher Resource Centers (TRC)**, one in St. Kitts and the other in Nevis. Each Center is headed by a Coordinator who is supported by a Library Assistant.

The Teacher Resource Center will provide support for improving teaching and learning in the form of resource materials, workshops, and other relevant services to teachers in the school system.

The Teacher Resource Center will also serve as a location for sharing ideas, making teaching aids, and promoting exemplary practices in the implementation of curriculum. Further, the TRC will encourage teacher creativity by interfacing with stakeholders.

Main organizations and mechanisms involved in the process of curriculum development and reform

The Curriculum Development Unit is central to the process of curriculum development and reform. It operates in partnership with various stakeholders in education at various levels – students, teachers, parents, education officers, teacher educators, parents, private sector and the wider community. For each subject area being developed, Advisory and Curriculum Guide Committees have been established. The two Teacher Resource Centers, one centrally located on each island, are pivotal to the curriculum process.

The Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is “to ensure that all aspects of the school curriculum including policy, project development, implementation and evaluation are appropriate for the effective development of students in St. Kitts and Nevis.” The composition of these committees is outlined below:

Subject Coordinator	Chairperson
Director of Curriculum Unit	Ex Officio
Education Officer	
Principal, Secondary School	

Principal, Primary School
Representative, Private Sector
Parent
Lecturer, Division of Teacher Education
Representative, Interest Group

All Advisory Committees are given terms of reference which state the purpose, composition and the responsibilities of the committee.

The Curriculum Writing Committee

The Curriculum Writing Committees are comprised of classroom teachers under the guidance of the subject coordinator. Their major role is “to design and develop materials for the subject area” based on the following general principles:

- The materials should be student-centered
- Opportunities should be provided for student involvement in planning and directing their learning experiences
- Cognizance should be taken of stages of child growth and development, and their relationship to how children learn
- Materials should be flexible enough in order to cater to individual teaching and learning styles

All Writing Committees are given these guidelines in addition to guidelines specific to objectives, content, activities, resources and evaluation/assessment.

Philosophy or principles of education informing curriculum development.

Policy

Policies for the National Curriculum Development Unit are based on the thesis that the Ministry of Education has the responsibility to ensure quality education for all people of St. Kitts and Nevis. Education and training, primarily in the schools and institutions of the Nation, are the essential instruments for achieving national goals and a high quality of life. The dynamic and accelerated change in the local, regional, and global society requires constant re-examination and assessment of needs in the educational system. Curriculum policies for any school system are developed by considering an essential triad of student, teacher and subject.

The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) is intended to:

1. become the main agency for generating, initiating, implementing, and supervising change in the courses of studies at all levels from pre-primary to secondary;
2. organize knowledge to ensure the acquisition of competencies to function meaningfully in the Federation, the Region, and the World;
3. develop curriculum guides for all school subjects at all levels – early childhood, primary, and secondary based on a prioritized list according to the needs of the Federation. To ensure that the Nation remains competitive in the global economy particular attention should be given to the large scale introduction of computer studies in all schools at appropriate levels;
4. ensure that subject matter is organized appropriately according to chronological and mental age and that suitable curricular suggestions be made to accommodate remedial needs;
5. develop national curricula to ensure transition from one grade to another in all subjects;

6. advise on suitable achievement standards for students at all levels and will recommend procedures for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating attainment of such standards and continuous necessary remedial measures;
7. supervise the implementation of the curriculum;
8. provide support services to teachers and principals for the proficient use of the curriculum guides;
9. maintain a high level of professional expertise in the subject areas, curriculum theory, and curriculum development;
10. develop partnerships with Ministry of Education, Teacher Education Division, business and any other sector in society that will enhance the goal of this unit and education in the schools of the Nation;
11. establish, as far as possible, articulation with OECS curriculum units and CDUs in the wider region.

Curriculum Framework

The CDU proposes a learner-oriented approach to curriculum design, including emphasis on content and objectives, as well as four fundamental elements – context, goals, methods and evaluation. These elements are combined with other essential features – situational analysis, rationale, scope and sequence, and instructional resources – to form a comprehensive curriculum design plan.

Subject Policies

A policy is developed for each subject in order to set guidelines to direct the major goals of instruction for the particular subject. The policy addresses the rationale for the

teaching of the subject, definition(s), scope, conceptualization, principles, mission statement, goals and objectives of the programme, assessment and evaluation.

Principal new content areas and teaching-learning methodologies introduced in recent reforms

New content areas

Technology added to the Primary Science curriculum, the main aims being

- to explore the relationship between science and technology
- to understand science as probing answers to questions about the natural world while technology addresses problems of human adaptation to the environment

Moral and Religious Education has been reintroduced into the formal curriculum. However, at present an interim programme has been introduced into schools while the curriculum is being developed.

Emphasis has been placed in the revised Language Arts curriculum on *Listening and Speaking* as the needs assessment revealed that these were not intentionally developed in most classrooms.

Social Education has been added as a specific unit in the Social Studies curriculum. Although some aspects were imbedded in other units in the former curriculum, they were not given adequate treatment by all teachers.

Methodologies emphasized

Primary Science and Technology: The process approach is advocated, since knowledge in science is achieved through the use of steps in the scientific process, and technology involves a process which applies knowledge and skills in solving practical problems. The process categories used are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1 : CATEGORIES FOR THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROCESSES

Process Categories	
The Scientific Process	The Technological Process
• Problem finding • Collecting information and hypothesizing • Experimenting • Decision making • Recording and communicating • Applying findings • Organizing	• Needs and problems • Research • Design • Making • Use, control, evaluation and refinement • Communication • General (organization)

Language Arts - Comprehension strategies (KWL Plus, DRTA) and the Reading-Writing connection : Although not new, these methodologies have been addressed system-wide to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These areas were identified for attention from an analysis of student performance on the Test of Standards in reading comprehension and creative writing. Workshops were conducted: literature and teachers' responses emanating from these workshops were collated and disseminated to schools.

In addition, the curriculum guide has been so organized to address specifically each of the areas of the language arts – listening, speaking, reading, writing.

Greater integration of these four aspects in teaching has been emphasized and areas for such integration were worked out, with and by teachers during the implementation workshops.

The methodology forms the basis of the reform in *Mathematics* with emphasis on a more activity-driven, hands-on approach to the teaching of the subject. It also stresses the importance of connections to real-world, everyday experiences. *The ‘big ideas’ of the reform are communication, connections, estimating and mental mathematics, problem solving, reasoning, technology and visualization.* The guide is organized using the strands number, shape and space, patterns and relations, statistics and probability .

In order to support the implementation of curricula, workshops have been organized by the TRC and subject coordinators for the construction of teaching aids. These take place on Saturday mornings and during the school vacation period.

Description of curricular areas which focus on the three themes of the seminar

Aspects of the themes are addressed mainly in the Social Studies curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 6, and the interim programme for Moral and Religious Education. An outline is given in Tables 2 - 5.

Citizenship education: learning at school and in society

TABLE 2 : CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (Grades K – 6 Social Studies)

General Aims	Topics	Objectives	Values
To develop a sense of	Our Federation	• Demonstrate respect	Right to a

belonging and pride for one's country To provide an understanding of the geographical, cultural, economic, social and political influences which have shaped our federation	How our government works	for national symbols • Explain why we have a government • Describe our system of government • Describe the composition of parliament • Explain the electoral system • Examine how our history is reflected in our national symbols	nationality National pride Patriotism Respect for authority Importance of leaders Importance of democracy Participation Responsibility Making choices Accountability
To foster characteristics that would produce socially healthy citizens to support the common good	Social education: • protecting consumers • our civic responsibilities	(Incomplete)	Right to consumer protection Right to civil liberties Responsibility Tolerance Participation Right to equal protection under the law

Social exclusion and violence: education for social cohesion

TABLE 3 : EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL COHESION (Grades K – 6)

General Aims	Topics	Objectives	Values
To provide a sense of belonging to family To learn values, ideas and customs provided by the family	My Home and Family	• Explain what is a home • Recall basic chores done daily • List social activities in which the family engages • Appreciate a clean environment • Tell the importance of eating healthy foods • Identify safety rules at home and school	Importance of shelter Love of cleanliness and order Cooperation Sharing Showing love Appreciation of others Love Politeness Making healthy choices The right to health Respect for life
To familiarize children with the importance of school and each person's role in the school community	My School	• Identify people who work at school • Demonstrate activities done at school • Demonstrate care and respect for school property	Respect for authority Love of and for school Cooperation Right to an education Responsibility Pride in one's school
To provide an understanding of how we meet our basic	Our basic Needs	• Identify food, clothing and shelter as basic human needs	Right to provide basic needs Interdependence

needs and wants		Realize that nature provides us with our basic needs	
To foster characteristics that would produce socially healthy citizens to support the common good	Social Education: - good manners - keeping the body clean	(Incomplete)	Politeness Respect for self, others and property Kindness Honesty Right to special care and protection Positive healthy lifestyle

Shared values, cultural diversity and education: what to learn and how?

TABLE 4 : SHARED VALUES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY (Grades K – 6)

General Aims	Topics	Objectives	Values
To provide an understanding of the geographic, cultural, economic, social and political influences which have shaped the Caribbean	The Caribbean Celebrations	(Incomplete) To capture the spirit of understanding and cooperation in celebrations	Tolerance Respect and appreciation for cultural diversity Appreciation of our Caribbean neighbours Cooperation
To provide an understanding of the physical, cultural, social, economic and political interrelationships throughout the world	The world Communities all over the World	(Incomplete)	Appreciation of different people in the world Tolerance Cooperation Respect and appreciation for

			cultural diversity
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TABLE 5 : MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (Grades K – 11)

Goals	Themes
- Promote Christian and moral values – social responsibility, honesty, human dignity, social justice, a love of life, courtesy, compassion – that would lead to a more humane society and a better quality of life for all - Create a society in which home, school, church and community work in harmony - Create a heightened awareness of right and wrong - Develop individuals capable of choosing right over wrong - Develop citizens who have a sense of individuality and are capable of self-evaluation - Impress upon individuals the importance of the sanctity of life - Develop individuals confident of their own sexuality and respectful of the sexuality of others	- Who am I?: what makes me special? what/who influences my behaviour ? what habits have I acquired? what would I change about myself? - Reverence for God: the Creation who gave the commandments? why do we go to church? - Human life is sacred: the Creation how are we different from machines? what happens when someone is murdered? (victim, families of the victim, perpetrator, families of the perpetrator} other forms of violence against others showing tolerance for others resolving conflicts - Family relationships: purpose and function of the family family types
Bring about a society in which there is tolerance for other persons' beliefs and	role of family members working together/interdependence

opinions • Encourage acceptance of each person as a unique individual • Foster mutual respect among all persons • Instil respect for authority • Develop an appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship • Develop an appreciation of others and their contribution to society • Value the contribution and worth of the elderly in society • Encourage the practice of the social graces • Encourage appropriate standards of dress, deportment and speech • Set priorities in terms of values, so that materialism does not become the only or main focus of one's existence Develop respect for the natural environment, and an appreciation of its beauty	staying together (conflict resolution) • Respect and obedience: - self respect - golden rule - consequences of disobedience • Friends and neighbours: - Interdependence - who is my neighbour? - how do I choose and keep friends? - positive peer pressure • Right and wrong: - things that make us feel comfortable about ourselves / uncomfortable about others - making choices/consequences - right thinking • Fairness and justice: - Obeying rules (games) - obeying rules (laws and regulations) - golden rule – treating others with respect • Truth and honesty: - being truthful (words, thoughts actions) - being honest (words, thoughts, actions) - how we work at being truthful and honest • Love for God and others: - how do we show love for God? - How do we show love for others?
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Main problems faced by curriculum specialists during curriculum development/reform

Design

The organization of content posed problems in some areas, e.g. mathematics – where topics could be included under several strands. It was not always a simple decision as to where to include the topic.

Staffing constraints mitigated against the inclusion of more schools in the piloting of the curricula, as it would have been impossible to give the necessary supervision and guidance. This therefore makes it even more critical for close monitoring and continuous evaluation of the curricula after implementation.

In some instances teachers did not complete the in-depth documentation of the piloting activities, which was intended to guide the review process re appropriate-ness of curriculum for grade intended.

Implementation

A major concern is the amount of time allocated to the various subjects. Efforts have been made to standardize this across schools.

The revised curricula places greater demands on teachers re preparation time – research, etc. and some are not always willing to give up time outside of the school day for such activities.

Change does not come about easily and some teachers are slow to adopt the new ideas particularly in areas that they find more challenging.

Follow-up process

The major problem here is the constraints imposed by limited staff for the necessary supervision and support to teachers and to observe first hand how teachers and students respond to the material.

Strengths and successful aspects of the process of curriculum change

- The involvement of the various stakeholders in the process, particularly that of classroom teachers in the writing of the curriculum, was one of the greatest strengths of the process. The commitment and perseverance of these teachers to accomplish the task is commendable.
- There was also positive input from members of the Advisory committees. The input from persons not directly involved in education was invaluable in terms of curriculum relevance.
- The valuable contributions of some teachers with regard to the piloting of the curriculum – their identification of areas/aspects omitted, suitability of activities, continuity of content across grades, sharing of experiences in the teaching/learning situation regarding innovations and modifications made to suggested activities and resources, and sharing of ideas for teaching aids.
- Cooperation of Ministry, Principals, classroom teachers and students in the process – needs assessment, release of teachers for workshops, piloting of the material.
- Improvement in student response to Mathematics noted during the piloting

- Boost in teacher and student confidence in mathematics brought about by the shift in methodology - math experimentation/ games etc. Math Fairs were held by two schools during last term.
- Increased demand of schools for staff development sessions to address various methodologies in the different subject areas.
- The possibilities of using assessment [using students' performance on the Test of Standards] to inform and address the needs of the curriculum. Through central marking of the tests, teachers are trained to marking objectively using a marking key, and how to use the information obtained from test results. Feedback from the analysis of these tests provide insights into strengths and weaknesses, which inform the curriculum process, as well as school based staff development needs.