

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Trinidad y Tobago Country Report

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

C.E.T.T	-	Caribbean Centre of Excellence For Teacher Training
E.C.C.E.	-	Early Childhood Care and Education
G.O.R.T.T.	-	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
M.S.T.T.E	-	Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education
M.O.E.	-	Ministry of Education
N.A.A.T.T.	-	National accreditation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
S.E.A.	-	Secondary Entrance Assessment
S.S.S.D.	-	Student Support Services Division
T.H.A.	-	Tobago House of Assembly
U.N.E.S.C.O.	-	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
U.T.T.	-	University of Trinidad and Tobago

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.0 Background

The twin-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) is located in the Southern Caribbean. It consists of two main islands; Trinidad is the larger island and covers an area of 1,979 square miles. Census data for 2000 showed that Trinidad and Tobago has a population of approximately 1.26 million (CSO, 2000). The country has recorded a marginal population growth rate over the past five (5) years. Mid-year figures for 2006 indicate that the population will grow by an estimated 0.27% to 1,297,944 persons from 1,294,494 in 2005. The population comprises persons of East Indian descent (40.9%), African descent (40.1%), people of Mixed (18%), Chinese, European and Middle Eastern descent (1%), (CSO,2000).

English is the principal language spoken; however, Spanish, Hindi, English Creole and French patois are also spoken. Approximately 60% of the population is Christian, with Roman Catholics accounting for 29.4% and Anglicans 10.9%. The major non-Christians bodies are the Hindus (23.8%) and the Muslims (5.8%) (T&T, 2001).

Trinidad and Tobago is the birthplace of calypso, music and the steel pan, which is the national instrument. Carnival is celebrated prior to Lent. The diverse cultural and religious background allows for many festivities and ceremonies throughout the year. Other indigenous art forms include soca (a derivate of calypso), Parang (Venezuela-influenced Christmas music) and chutney.

Trinidad and Tobago is primarily an industrialized country whose economy is based on petroleum and petro-chemicals. The country is a democratic republic. For the past thirteen years, the economy has been experiencing prosperity. The average increase in real GDP since 2001 is 8.7%. The GDP per capita also rose from US\$6,970 in 2001 to US\$13,978 in 2006. The main driver for the economic expansion is increased activity in the energy sector which is forecasted to grow by 20.6% and to account for 41.2% of total GDP (Review of the Economy, 2006).

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has committed the country to the achievement of the goal of developed nation status by 2020. In light of the national objectives identified as priorities for the attainment of that goal, education is viewed as the key to human resource development and to the social and economic transformation on which the country has embarked.

In response to the ideals identified, the government's education policy has been to create a modernized education system that provides the education and training as well as inculcates the skills and values relevant to the developmental needs of the country. In this regard the government has accorded high priority to the improvement of quality in early childhood, primary and secondary education. These initiatives in education are expected to create an education system whose contents and methods reflect the country's social and cultural realities and provide young people with skills for living, working and for citizenship.

1.1 Organisation & Structure of The Education System of Trinidad and Tobago:

The education system in Trinidad and Tobago includes both public (government and government-assisted) and private schools. The country's education system falls mainly under

the purview of two Ministries – the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (MSTTE); and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA). By Act No. 40 of 1996 responsibility for the administration of education including curriculum, was designated to the THA. Therefore, the Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministry of Education share a collaborative relationship in order to ensure standardized practices in the education system.

The education system is comprised of five levels, namely, pre-primary, primary, secondary, post-secondary (Advanced Proficiency and Technical/Vocational) and tertiary levels. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the administrative authority for the pre-primary to post-secondary levels and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (MSTTE) has responsibility for tertiary level education.

The tertiary level is intended to allow students to pursue different kinds of education and training programmes through a variety of institutions including:

- Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality Institute
- College of Sciences, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTATT) *is to be replaced by a anew entity called the Community College of Trinidad and Tobago. The COSTATT act of 2000 will be repealed and in its place an Act will be passed to establish the Community College*
- Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology;
- University of The West Indies;
- University of Trinidad and Tobago;
- Private Institutions;

In 2004, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) was established to expand the opportunities for university education in the areas of science and technology training. During 2006, UTT has expanded its capacity by incorporating into its academic programmes:

- The John Donaldson Technical Institute;
- The San Fernando Technical Institute;
- The Valsayn Teachers' College;
- The Corinth Teachers' College;
- The National Institute Of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST);
- The Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry (ECIAF).

The MSTTE also has responsibility for quality assurance in the country through the National Accreditation Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (NAATT) which falls under its purview. It is responsible for a range of technical/vocational programmes at post secondary level. It should be noted that at this level of training, there is considerable support from public and private sector organizations, including the business sector.

CHAPTER 2: The Early Beginnings – the movement from Special Education to Inclusive Education :

The education of students with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago began in the 1940s. Religious bodies, voluntary organizations and community groups organized and directed the education of these students. Students with disabilities attended “Institutional Schools” that were partly financed by subventions from the Government, but mainly through contributions from corporate citizens and other members of the society.

In 1980, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago agreed to formally incorporate the “Institutional Schools” into the education system. These schools were re-designated, “special schools”. The re-designated schools were:

- The School for the Blind, Santa Cruz
- The Schools for the Deaf at Cascade and Marabella
- The Princess Elizabeth School for Physically Handicapped Children, Woodbrook
- The School for the mentally handicapped at St. Ann’s Hospital and
- The Training Center at the Lady Hochoy Home, Cocorite and its branches at Gasparillo and Penal.

The Ministry of Education had now assumed full responsibility for the management and operation of these schools in conjunction with their respective Boards of Management.

The Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, by Minute 3901, dated October 03, 1980 determined that the Special Education Unit was to be established in the Ministry of Education. This decision was to come into effect on January 01, 1981.

The Special Education Unit was given responsibility for:

- Coordinating special education throughout Trinidad and Tobago
- Supervising and developing curricula for special schools and regular schools where students with special educational needs were enrolled and
- Collaborating with other Government Ministries in the prevention of disorders and disease.

In 1982, the Advisory Committee on Special Education was appointed. The Advisory Committee comprised representatives of the non-governmental organizations involved in the education of students with special educational needs and Ministries of government that were involved in the provision of funds for the administration of these schools.

In 1984, the Report of a National Survey of Handicapped Children and Youth in Trinidad and Tobago was made public. This Survey was the result of a Project in Special Education and Rehabilitation of the handicapped that was undertaken by the joint efforts of the organization of American States and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Survey identified the estimated prevalence of children with special needs aged 3 – 16 years as being 16.1% of the population.

Following the Survey, the Special Education Unit identified these areas as being of major concern

- the integration of students with handicapping conditions into regular schools
- provision for training of teachers in the area of special education through the facility of Full Pay Study Leave Awards
- the provision of internships for teachers qualified in the area of special education
- Curriculum Development Seminars for teachers of the hearing impaired
- Workshops in Diagnostic and prescriptive Teaching for teachers in regular Schools, through the CIDA Programme
- the establishment of a Special Education Library
- a programme for Dyslexic Students
- the establishment of a facility for the Hearing Impaired in Tobago
- the integration of students with special educational needs at both primary and secondary schools

While success was not achieved in all of these undertakings, the public was made more aware of the needs of students with special educational needs and there was a marked increase in the demand for education and training in the area of special education.

Contemporary View of Special Education:

By 1991, the view on special education had changed significantly. Contemporary thinking no longer allowed the labeling of children by their disability. The new focus was on:

- what the child needs to learn and
- the teaching methods and arrangements required to enable the child to access the curriculum

A special educational need was now regarded as relative, based on the interaction between the child and the environment.

A child is considered to have special educational needs when that child has:

- a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age or
- a disability that prevents or hinders the child from making use of the educational facilities of the kind normally available in school for children of the same age.

Children with special educational needs are, therefore, those who have characteristics that affect their ability to learn to the extent that specially adapted conditions are necessary if they are to be appropriately and effectively educated.

The Education Policy Paper **1993–2003** exposed a philosophy that underscored the following beliefs:

- that every child has an inherent right to an education which will enhance the development of maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social and religious background.
- that every child has the ability to learn and that we must build on this positive assumption 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 opportunities to develop differing and socially useful talents.

This paper identified amongst its priorities:

- Accessibility to educational opportunities for all
- Delivery of quality education to citizens at all levels of the education system.

In seeking to give effect to the above, the Ministry commenced a pilot Diagnostic Programme in 1999 and established the Student Support Services Division in 2004. This Division combined Guidance and Counselling, Special Education and School social Work to provide on going support to all students in the education system. The Student Support Services Division has planned a phased development of providing support with one of its main priorities being “Inclusive Education”.

Ministry of Education’s Perspective on Inclusion:

The Ministry of Education subscribes to UNESCO’s definition of inclusion which is seen as a **PROCESS** of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education (Booth 1996). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO 1994).

It further subscribes to the view that inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broad spectrum of learning needs in formal and non formal educational settings. Rather than being a marginal theme on how some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education, inclusive education is an approach that looks into how to transfer education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners.

The Ministry of Education’s approach to inclusive education is first and foremost about **school reform** (see Reform Agenda – Appendix I) so that all learners can participate in the process of education in a seamless manner from Early Childhood Care and Education to tertiary education. As such, the initiatives of inclusion are situated within the Ministry of Education’s reform and its Seamless Education approach. It is designed to facilitate all learners who may be marginalized or excluded eg. drop-outs, underachievers, students with learning or other disabilities, students who are gifted and talented, students affected or infected with HIV, students with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is about improving the quality of education with a philosophy built on the belief that all people are equal and should be respected and valued as an issue of basic human rights.

CHAPTER 3: Situational Analysis with Recommendations

Situational Analysis of Trinidad and Tobago re Inclusion

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embarked on several strategic objectives for the reformation and modernization of the education system (Strategic Plan 2000 – 2006). The Government of Trinidad and Tobago expects to maximise human resource development in terms of both quality and quantity through universal coverage at ECCE, primary and secondary level. The goal of the various education initiatives is to strengthen the nation's productivity and competitiveness by ensuring that young citizens from all backgrounds are prepared to participate in and contribute to the development of a modern skill-based economy. The Ministry's progress to Inclusion has been developed as a response to some criticism of the education system as noted in the various reports of the many committees and task forces on education over the past twenty years. These criticisms include:

- Existence of few programs for special needs students in regular schools;
- Lack of training for teachers to deal with special needs;
- Absence of pre-service training for teachers;
- Weak system for in-service training;
- Poor integration of technology into teaching strategies;
- A centralized management system;
- Weak communications network among the various levels of central, district and school activities;
- Weak articulation among the various levels of the education system;

In light of the above, the Ministry of Education had drawn up plans for inclusive education which will focus on:

- Physically upgrading public schools to adapt to the new inclusive policy;
- Teacher training;
- Creating diverse schemes and incentives to increase the supply of qualified specialists;
- Management and administration training;
- Provision of didactic materials and equipment, including those required for the introduction of ICT;
- Development of a multi-pronged communication strategy for sensitization;
- Strengthening mechanism for inter-ministerial coordination;
- Parent education and empowerment;
- Streamlining curriculum and adaptation of testing instruments;
- Support for early diagnosis of children with special needs;

These objectives are in keeping with international trends on the progress of inclusive education. The following therefore is a review of where Trinidad and Tobago is and recommendations to become more fully inclusive based on the Miske-Witt Mid-Term Report (2007) on the status of Inclusive Education in Trinidad and Tobago.**

**** Miske –Witt and Associates** have been contracted by the Ministry of Education to undertake a comprehensive study of Special Education in Trinidad and Tobago and make recommendations for Inclusion.

1. Physically Upgrading Schools to adapt to the new inclusive policy

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The national survey data of the Miske Witt study revealed that in the sampling of eighteen (18) schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago the majority of the classrooms and the environment are not barrier free. Only three had adequate space to accommodate a wheel chair. Bathrooms were frequently totally inaccessible and there was limited efficiency and multi-purpose use of space. The general conclusion is that the majority of schools in Trinidad and Tobago are not barrier free.	All the schools to be built are being designed to acceptable international standards to accommodate students with various disabilities.	All schools are to be upgraded and retrofitted on a phased basis to be complete by 2015 in keeping with ADA regulations. It is estimated to cost in the vicinity of TT\$790 million (Source: Planning Division, Ministry of Education).

2. Teacher Training

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The percentages revealed by the Miske Witt national survey data indicated that ninety percent (90%) of respondents to survey indicated they had no qualifications in special needs education. Forty five percent (45%) said they only understand “somewhat” what is necessary to teach in an inclusive classroom. Seven percent (7%) had “a lot” of experience with curriculum differentiation; forty percent (40%) had “some knowledge”.	A four year or equivalent B.A. in Education is currently being developed by UTT with emphasis on on special Education. Pre-service training is included for all regular teachers in differentiated curriculum, meeting the needs of diverse learners, as well as exposure to specific areas of special needs for which teachers may want to train, such as for deaf children. Other tertiary institutions have also begun degree programmes in special education.	The Miske Witt study has recommended the following plan for teacher development to 2015. Year 1 – Plan pre-service training programme at local colleges and universities, norm diagnostic instrument, find “pockets of excellence” that exist in T & T schools. Year 2 – Launch pre-service programme at local colleges and universities, plan in-service training programme, track use and results of diagnostic instrument. Year 3 – Launch in-service teacher training programme, adjust diagnostic instrument as needed.

		Year 4 – Evaluate and adjust pre-service training programme. Year 5 – Evaluate and adjust in-service training programme. Year 6 – Phase out consultants’ role in pre and in-service training, re-norm diagnostic instrument. Year 7 – Sustain training efforts and continuous assessment efforts through MOE oversight.
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3. Create diverse schemes and incentives to increase the supply of qualified specialists

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
Of four hundred and eighty (480) primary schools and one hundred and forty (140) secondary schools only about forty percent (40%) with Special Education Teachers, Guidance Officers and School Social workers. The numbers of speech therapists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, child psychiatrists are inadequate to meet the needs of students with special needs and mainly exist in the private sector.	Cabinet has approved additional staffing for schools on a phased basis of Guidance Officers, School Social Workers and Special Education Teachers. Since 2005 sixty five (65) Guidance Officers, thirty (30) Special Education Teachers, thirty (30) School Social Workers, and two (2) School Psychologists have been employed. Scholarships have been offered in Speech Therapy and plans to ‘outsource’ private services for students are before the Executive of the Ministry of Education.	Outsourcing of Private Services. Additional scholarships in specialized areas. Special contractual arrangements to attract Trinidad and Tobago nationals abroad as well as Caribbean professionals. Continued additional employment of Guidance Officers, School Social Workers and Special Education Teachers to staff seventy five percent (75%) of schools by 2015.

4. Management and Administration Training

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
A Centralized Ministry of Education with weak management systems at the District and school levels.	Ministry of Education formed a Decentralized Unit to manage and implement the decentralization process. Workshops and training have commenced with staff to establish the process at schools and District level.	Study has recommended: Training for effective leadership at the school level. Scheduling to provide time for collaboration and problem-solving. Support for classroom teachers. Instructional leadership in the form of mentoring.

5. Provision of didactic materials and equipment

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The Miske Witt school analysis survey revealed: Regular teaching resources were limited. Specialized learning and teaching materials to accommodate the visually or hearing impaired were even more limited. Student access to computers and internet was nearly non-existent Some schools have access to other technologies such as televisions, C.D. players, overhead projectors, LCD projectors, radio and videotapes.	Computerization of all primary schools has begun and completed in about ten percent (10%) of all schools. Computerization of all secondary schools has begun and is about forty percent (40%) completed. Instructional materials are made available to all special schools and needs assessment is being conducted for provision to regular schools for students with special education needs.	The study recommended: Provision of adequate resources for special needs students and for the teachers. Teacher training for computerization and use of technology. In addition all schools will be fully outfitted with appropriate technologies for all learners by 2015 and continuing.

6. Development of a multi-pronged communication strategy for sensitization

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The Miske Witt school analysis survey revealed: Liaison and coordination are informal and sporadic at the ground level. Available resources are under utilized. The volunteer sector provides a huge hidden resource/revenue factor and fills many gaps in government programmes and services. Islands of excellence exist and could be taken to a larger scale with coordinated training and support.	Workshops, seminars have been conducted amongst the staff of special schools and selected regular schools with special needs students.	The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should: Build on pockets of excellence (recognized exemplary practice in Trinidad and Tobago) to scale up efforts for a broader audience. Establish liaison with institutions of higher education and agencies conducting parent/teacher /support personnel training to develop and implement sensitization and outreach programmes. Identify needs and priorities and target these to institute a phased approach to sensitization and outreach. Utilize multi-pronged strategies involving media, community networks, and other communication and venues to reach the general public. Involve individuals with disabilities and their organizations in all phases of planning and implementation.

7. Streamlining Curriculum and adaptation of testing materials:

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The Miske Witt school analysis survey revealed that: “Other than allowing students with difficulties more time to their work, little was being done in the non-SEA classrooms to accommodate the range of learning needs of students”. “In very few classrooms were teachers observed making notes or keeping records on student performances which would guide their efforts to develop	Ministry of Education implemented a Continuous Assessment Programme at the primary level. These initiatives currently include: - Conducting of remedial programmes to address learning deficiencies through the created Literacy Remediation/ Alternative Education Unit. - Establishment of Caribbean Centre of Excellence in	Strengthening of Ministry of Education's initiatives Enhanced teacher training.

accommodation in subsequent learning activities". "Teachers spoke of one on one assistance they provide during recess or during the lunch-break." "Teachers used positive reinforcement to motivate their students and they provided a warm and inviting environment in their classrooms". "In many cases teachers draw from the students' experiences outside of school to reinforce learning and teaching".	Teacher Training (CETT) to address reading among pupils from Infant level to Standard II.	
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8. Support for early diagnosis of children with special needs:

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Recommendations towards Inclusive Education
The Miske Witt national survey of data on disability awareness of teachers revealed: "Twenty six percent (26%) had at least one student with a visual impairment in their class". "Thirty seven percent (37%) of teachers had at least one student with a diagnosed learning disability, while sixty nine percent (69%) believed they had at least one student with an undiagnosed learning disability in their classes". Thirty five percent (35%) of teachers had a student with a diagnosed cognitive impairment in their classes and an additional sixty two percent (62%) felt they had a student with undiagnosed cognitive impairments".	Ministry of Education established the Student Support Services Division to provide ongoing support to all learners in 2005. Eighty eight (88) out of four hundred and eighty (480) primary schools now have support teams and systems providing support for students with learning and behavioural difficulties (Guidance Officers, School Social Workers, Special Education Teachers) Sixty (60) out of one hundred and forty (140) secondary schools have full-time Guidance Officers. Twenty one (21) visually impaired students are mainstreamed in regular primary and secondary schools. Twenty six (26) hearing impaired students are mainstreamed in regular schools. Special Education, Resource	Continued expansion of Student Support Services Division to provide effective support services. Provision of appropriate resources for the visually and hearing impaired. Upgrading of the technology to assist with learning. (See other recommendations)

	Aides and Interpreters for the hearing impaired in regular schools are being introduced for students with severe special needs. Four (4) itinerant teachers provide services to the visually impaired students in regular schools.	
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9. Strengthening mechanisms for inter-ministerial co-ordination:

Current Status	Current Initiatives	Continued Recommendation and Progress
Various Ministries e.g. Social Development and Health conduct programmes and activities related to students with special needs. The study revealed: "The Trinidad and Tobago policies are exemplary in addressing international trends".	Ministry of Social Development has produced a National Policy which specifically addresses the universal right to an inclusive education. Ministry of Education has a policy on Student Support Services. Ministry of Education has a Green Paper (2005) on Quality Standards for Education in Trinidad and Tobago defining an approach to education that is holistic and stresses affirmative programming for disadvantaged children and youth".	Continued review of Legislation to outlaw discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Conclusion:

The Ministry of Education is about reform of the education system. Inclusive Education is part of the Ministry of Education's thrust of promoting a Seamless Education system for Early Childhood Care and Education to tertiary education. Inclusive must be seen as a pre-condition of bringing about quality education for all. This report has shown that Inclusion is a work in progress, that it involves all the components of the Education system from "construction to urricula". It is not just about students with disabilities but quality education for all recognizing that every child can learn.

Appendix I

Reform of the Education System:

In addressing the issue of quality education under this dimension, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has reformed the system through:

- Adoption of a Plan and Programme for a Restructured and Decentralised Ministry of Education with support from the Ministry of Education's Restructuring and Decentralisation Action Unit;
- Establishment of an International Cooperative Initiatives Unit (ICIU), that has facilitated this country securing support of the Organisation of American States (OAS) for several projects including HIV/AIDS awareness. This country now leads the region in the education sector's response to this dreaded disease HIV/AIDS;
- Establishment of the Teacher Professional Development Unit charged with responsibility for addressing teacher education reform, including teacher education programmes, recruitment and selection of teachers, induction programmes, teacher certification and continuing professional development;
- Establishment of a Legal Unit in 2004, which is now undertaking a review of the Education Act (1966) with a view to developing a revised Education Act in keeping with educational provision in the 21st century;
- Implementation of a number of key policies and policy guidelines for the continuous modernization and renewal of the system to ensure access by all. These include policies on:
 - o School Nutrition
 - o Education Materials
 - o School Transportation
 - o Inclusive Education
 - o Governance and Management of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
 - o School Infrastructure
 - o Assessment and Examinations
 - o Land Management
 - o Sixth Form Expansion
 - o Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) for the Ministry of Education
 - o Distance Education
 - o Deshifting and conversion of targeted secondary schools
- Introduction of a Policy and Policy Guidelines for a National Curriculum to support a Seamless Education System which is managed by a National Curriculum Council;
- Development of a framework for a seamless education system from early childhood to adult education with an emphasis on lifelong learning and inclusive education;

- Development of a structure for the establishment of an Assessment and Examination Authority;
- Expansion from role of guidance and counselling services of the Ministry of Education the provision of comprehensive School Support Services (SSS) such as diagnostic testing, special education, parent education, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS awareness, including support to private Special Schools;
- Adoption of the USAID programme “Centre of Excellence in Teacher training” to improve levels of reading through in-service teacher development and classroom intervention;
- Facilitation of the de-shifting of junior secondary schools as well as the conversion of all secondary schools to either 5 or 7 year schools. Some 21, 455 students will benefit from this programme;

Formulation of a Draft Corporate Plan 2006-2010 to serve as a guide to the Ministry of Education’s strategic directions in achieving a quality education system.