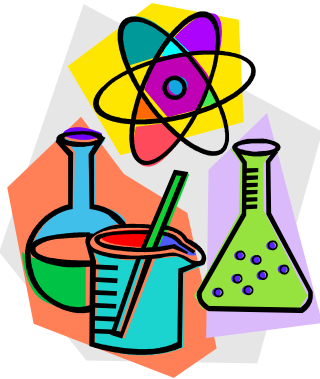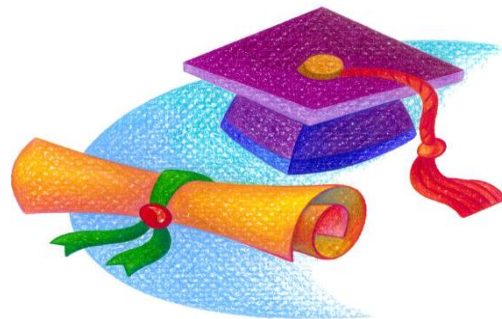**NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON EDUCATION (NACE)**

REPORT

EDUCATING IN THE NEW CENTURY - TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION

IN BARBADOS

May 2010

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FOREWORD

Education is the main vehicle on which the people of Barbados have relied to improve their economic and social development. The importance of human resources has always been recognized throughout our history, particularly in the post-independence period when efforts have been made to promote their **'development',** through the rapid expansion of comprehensive institutional arrangements and the provision of access for all through free education 'from cradle to the grave'.

Education has the potential to achieve greater social equity and to bring us closer together as a country. ***Unless each member of society has an equal opportunity to participate in lifelong learning, Barbados's capacity to mature and prosper will be hampered.*** A country of informed and engaged global citizens is more strategically placed to confront the critical issues of our time, such as global poverty, environmental change and conflict.

More than **20%** of Barbados' national budget is spent on education but the return from this expenditure is becoming less and less satisfactory. The education system is producing too many people lacking the skills for the job market or for effective and efficient living. Unemployment is often the result, and this not only indicates wasted resources but is also a wider human problem. The loss to the country extends beyond the economic, becoming wasted human potential. Youth is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people have energy and a willingness to learn and to serve. With work, their potential can be directed towards a common benefit; without work, it is dissipated or even channeled into anti-social behaviour.

The **Government of Barbados** is committed to the view that <u>all</u> citizens, regardless of gender, class, culture and more, have the ability to learn and therefore should be provided with the opportunity to develop their potential to the fullest. The Government also recognizes that the most important resource in a small state such as Barbados, with limited land and mineral resources, is its people. This bears ample testimony to the fact that the real prerequisite for this country's further development and economic growth lies in the skills, enterprise and industriousness of Barbadians. Security and development within a small state will not be possible therefore unless particular attention is paid to human development. In the words of a Commonwealth Secretariat report, ***"The experience of countries' human resource development does not conflict with the pursuit of economic development: rather it is the key. It provides a sound foundation for an uncertain future"*** (Commonwealth Secretariat: 1997).

These philosophical moorings, buttressed by the socio-economic realities of our time, have placed a heightened responsibility on the state to ensure that an efficient and equitable system of **first-class education** is established and maintained in Barbados in the twenty-first century. Indeed, this is the true implication of a commitment to sustainable human resource development. The commitment we make to create an informed society will also, in large part, determine our capacity to be an actor on the world stage. It is within this context that one of the central aims of the Government will be to make Barbados' education system more relevant to the country's development needs.

It is against this background too, that the highest priority was paid to the appointment by the Minister of Education, Human Resources and Development of a 14-member National Advisory Commission on Education (**NACE**), a national consultative body to formulate a plan consistent with a vision for the creation of a premiere education system. The Commission's mandate was to set about the tasks of:

- *addressing the relevance of our present education system;*

- *ensuring adequate and affordable educational opportunities for every Barbadian;*

- *making school a rewarding experience for every child;*

- *ensuring that every school child benefit fully from the education system; and*

- *helping every child to realize his/her potential through education.*

It was envisaged that the newly appointed Commission would prepare and present to the Honorable Minister an action plan on the education system to set in place the transformative processes that would eventually enable the people of Barbados to acquire the skills necessary to compete in a dynamic and uncertain global economy.

The Commission from its preliminary internal consultations snapped hot several different issues in order to examine what was happening to Barbadian children and youth from kindergarten through to post-secondary education. This broad but intensive remit informed the Commission's work and provided the contextual framework within which it addressed, *inter alia,* the *following major issues:*

- *co-education*

- *the school-leaving age*

- *the promotion of non-academic subjects*

- *the duplication of subject offerings at schools*

- *inter-school transfers, between primary and secondary and between secondary and secondary*

- *the academically challenged in the education system*

- *school attendance and dropping out*

- *teacher recruitment, deployment, training and rewards*

- *transportation of school children*

- *discipline in schools*

- *the interaction between parents and the school.*

Although our formal education is of enviable quality when compared to similar developing countries, Barbadians could benefit from a wider range of learning opportunities to sustain and promote socio-economic well-being achieved through greater social equity in this technological age. There are still too many young men and women in Barbados at risk of not fulfilling their potential thus creating the conditions for a cumulative learning deficit and diminished quality of life in the years to come. They lack confidence because they have skills that may be either redundant, or for whose use no avenues exist. They are therefore often immobile in society and they are the last to benefit from general economic revival and the free workings of the labour market. The economic and labour-market performance of Barbados is generally strong but, with the challenges of the future, a coordinated effort is needed to recognize and seize as many learning opportunities as possible for our children and the generations to come. This task of educating the people of the nation remains urgent and unfinished, moreso because Barbados' small size can create problems –

i. *connection rather than merit may govern recruitment to positions of authority and leadership;*

ii. *deference to hierarchy can discourage criticism and stifle initiative;*

iii. *excessive centralization acts against devolution of authority and responsibility;*

iv. *and the small scale of organizations, public and private, limit career development.*

Much of this we gleaned from written submissions and heard from various respondents in the several town hall meetings and focus group discussions on education.

Our recommendations on educational development present the major thrust of our field investigations. During our work we benefitted from the varied experiences of people who provided insights into the modus operandi of a complex institutional framework fossilized/embedded in a deeply conservative, socio-cultural environment. The members of the commission realized from the extensive work that a review of the macro-educational arrangements required much more time than was anticipated for the completion and presentation of this **Report.** It was necessary to be rigorous and methodical in the analysis of the various submissions and divergent perspectives so as to allow all ideas to contend. It must be noted that no singular recommendation from the comprehensive documentation presented, and submissions heard by the Commission, will achieve any of the macro goals earlier articulated; rather, these recommendations are a synthesis of ideas and views presented which we hope will achieve success in the implementation endeavour. While **NACE** recognizes that any investment in education and training is costly in the short term, we would stress that it will, if properly designed, pay for itself in higher economic growth and development in the long term.

As Chair of the Commission, I was grateful for the generous support and encouragement we received from the Barbadian public. I extend sincere appreciation to the **Minister of Education, Honourable Ronald Jones. JP** for the patience, support, confidence and trust he reposed in me to Chair this august body of knowledgeable members to fulfil this most important mandate. Each member of the Commission brought his/her passion, commitment, time, experience and exposure to the lengthy but complex debates that often engaged us during the deliberation processes. When

assembled as a team it was an enriching, provocative and insightful *tete á tete* of competent professionals in a collegial and mutually respectful atmosphere.

It would also be remiss of me if I do not express my sincere gratitude to the *rapporteurs* of this report, Ms. Diane Cummins and Mr. Andy Taitt, for their dedicated professionalism with their meticulous and penetrating eyes for detail. They too became part of the family of **NACE** and provided incisive commentary when our brains were exhausted from poring over the extensive documentation submitted to us for consideration during the numerous and lengthy meetings. And, by no means least, our hard working Secretary to the Commission, Mr. Cyril Burke, must be applauded for his unreserved and boundless energy in responding to our every administrative and technical need, as well as his unfailing assistance in rallying the respective stakeholders to our call to provide the information needed for us to have a catholic view of this worthwhile exercise in nation building.

The development of education must be a national priority in the wider context of national development. It is the earnest hope of the Commission that our recommendations will not only be accepted but will also help to focus national attention on the many issues discussed in order to bring about a renewed process that will ensure a quality and transformative education for all Barbadians in the twenty-first century.

Please accept, Honourable Minister, the expression of our highest consideration.

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Letnie Rock, Ph.D.

CHAIRMAN

METHODOLOGY

The diverse policies and issues that can create and enhance an education system require an assessment that seeks to explore these factors. Our society can achieve much in decision-making through sharing of quantitative or qualitative information. Such an assessment defies any singular methodological arrangement. In this regard the investigation into the operations of the education system of Barbados employed multiple methods of data collection. This form of research is usually described as a convergent methodology or triangulation where cross-validation is achieved when different kinds and sources of data converge and are found congruent, or when explanation is developed to account for divergence. To achieve the aims and objectives as outlined in Section 1.1, the Commission sought to conduct research activities by:

- *exploring the relevant issues from the consultation process;*

- *identifying and confirming the full array of specific issues and areas requiring attention;*

- *identifying gaps in the conceptions or assumptions inherent in the proposed policies on the ground;*

- *making recommendations for an educational strategy by proposing priority areas for development.*

In accordance with the terms of reference of the aforementioned, the Commission:

- *held town hall and community meetings;*

- *invited comments, papers and memoranda and sought other submissions from stakeholders to assist in its development of a comprehensive report on education in Barbados;*

- *conducted and coordinated extensive focus groups with diverse stakeholders across the country;*

- *considered presentations by experts in the field of education where the specific policy issues for action were presented and discussed;*

- *worked in plenary and sub-groups in order to identify key issues.*

Secondary Data

The Commission in its early stages and during the process analysed local and international reports and specialized publications for best practice in order to gather primary and secondary data to validate issues and to identify possible action options. This material was also invaluable not only from a historical perspective but from a contemporary perspective to determine those recurrent themes and issues that are considered critical for discussion.

The Focus Groups/Town Hall Meetings

The respondents selected for the focus groups were primarily drawn from representatives and major stakeholders in the educational establishment. Meetings were held with respondents directly involved in the decision-making process, both academic and administrative, practitioners, teachers, students from the three levels of the education system and with private and public schools in order to hear their experiences in the education system. It was, however, the voices of the primary and secondary school students that guided **NACE** directly to the non-academic aspects of the education system that had been overlooked. Whereas **NACE** members focused on curriculum planning and different levels of the system, the primary level students reminded us of the ancillary services that are integrally related to the efficient functioning of the system and impact significantly on their well-being. As such **NACE** was able to hear from the children, with a sense of precocious intelligence, their views on issues such as the school meals department, school security, corporal punishment and the idiosyncratic behaviours of teachers as they related to corporal punishment; the Common Entrance Examination and parenting.

Likewise, a series of fourteen strategically placed town hall meetings—from St. Lucy Secondary School in the North to Princess Margaret Secondary School in the South, from Grantley Adams Secondary School in the East to Ellerslie Secondary School in the West—were conducted to hear the views of the people of Barbados and their vision for the education system. As an investigative tool, the focus group and town hall meetings provided direct insights into the complex dynamics of strategic decision making processes and allowed a cross-section of respondents to offer their points-of-view without predetermining those points-of-view through prior selection by questionnaire categories.

By granting to a range of highly knowledgeable respondents the space in which to define, in their own words and through their own perceptions, the challenges and strengths of the educational establishment, the recommendations can provide the basis for a more complete understanding of what should be done in the future to promote education in Barbados. The recommendations for policy have therefore been made by the people of Barbados, and the process was an expression of democratic participation in the development of a shared national vision for educational policy in Barbados. The qualitative information that was gathered from respondents was analysed and presented in report form.

Limitations

The Terms of Reference required that the entire education system be addressed. However, **NACE** concentrated its efforts on early childhood education, a full scale examination of the primary and secondary school sectors and, to a lesser degree, the tertiary and the independent school sectors. In light of the increasing role the latter sectors can play in national development we recommend that separate reviews be undertaken for these levels, *viz* tertiary and private. **NACE** hopes that this Report will be a useful contribution to a better understanding of the issues involved in educating the people of Barbados and the action to be taken.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A society that, fails in the development of education for its people to the highest level by adopting unsustainable policies and practices is not only wasting its resources on inefficient solutions but jeopardizing the prosperity and quality of life of its next generation of citizens. Rapid technological change, global competitive pressures and new patterns of work are demanding a more sophisticated set of transferable skills as part of the creation of viable 'human capital', a critical element in the economic and social development of all societies. In essence, it refers to the 'quality' of human beings: an educated person is likely to yield higher social returns than a less educated person.

Education and training are therefore the ingredients of human-capital formation. Education can impart life-skills such as numeracy and literacy, build technological capacity and capabilities, impart specific knowledge and develop the qualitative skills increasingly demanded by today's workplace, such as problem solving, adaptability to one's environs, creativity, confidence, thoughtfulness, understanding, kindness, effective communication, decision-making, teamwork, leadership, entrepreneurship and enterprise, personal effectiveness and empowerment. The development of these skills requires embracing a view of learning that goes beyond the provision of formal education and encompasses all modes of delivery to affect the necessary changes. In the face of these challenges the Government of Barbados and all Barbadians must make a coordinated effort to recognize and seize as many educational opportunities for our children and generations to come if Barbados is to sustain its comfortable level of social well-being and economic prosperity.

The National Advisory Commission on Education **(NACE)** sought to fulfill the following objectives:

- *address the relevance of the present education system of Barbados;*
- *ensure adequate and affordable educational opportunities for every Barbadian;*
- *make school a rewarding experience for every child;*
- *ensure that every school child benefits fully from the education system;*
- *help every child to realize his/her potential through education.*

From these objectives the following issues were addressed:

- *identification of the advantages and disadvantages and likely problems associated with co-education*
- *the school leaving age;*
- *inter-school transfers;*
- *the treatment of academically-challenged students;*
- *teacher recruitment, deployment, training and rewards;*
- *ill-discipline in schools;*

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- *the interaction between parents and the school;*

- *the public's interaction with schools;*

- *the use of school property for community and other activities;*

- *school security;*
- *sub-cultures.*

This report encapsulates the attitudes and perceptions revealed through the consultative and deliberative processes of Barbadians. The findings of this report constitute a set of recommendations for reforming the education system to achieve the above-stated objectives and are therefore tethered to the process of sustainable national development. The issues that form the body of this report are not finite and, from the depth of the discussions, each could be the subject of a definitive enquiry and report. However, **NACE** believes that the recommendations proposed offer the means to create new opportunities for our society without diluting commitment to the task. The recommendations are summarized under the following headings:

Achieving our Goals: Governance and Management of the Education System

NACE is acutely aware that central to the transformation of the education system will be the creation and/or [re-]fortification of the institutional arrangements. It is being proposed that the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (**MEHRD**), in [re-]examining itself as an institution, become more innovative in the delivery of educational services to the people of Barbados, consistent with our central goal of an education for the twenty-first century. **NACE** recommends:

- *[re-]visiting the question of centralization or devolution of some sections, policies and processes currently being centrally administered by the **MEHRD** back to their respective institutional arrangements;*

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- *a policy and process audit to be conducted across all sectors of the education system to assess the effectiveness of their design and implementation, the relevance and consistency of their implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of plans, programmes and services that support critical needs and emerging priorities in the education system;*

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- *that the diffuse policy authority of management in the **MEHRD** become more focused and professionally controlled from within the establishment to ensure that foundational educational goals are given the priority they deserve;*
- *a monitoring and evaluation of tasks by personnel in the education system to provide an appropriate degree of professional control in relation to responsibility and accountability;*

- *the **MEHRD** in [re-]examining itself must become more innovative in the delivery of education services to the people of Barbados. In this regard, there is a need for the constant [re-]training and/or upgrading of the skills and knowledge of junior and senior employees to enhance the professional delivery of services at all levels of the system, aiming for the goal of service excellence.*

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Policy and Legal Framework

NACE also recognizes that some changes to the system cannot be made without the requisite legislative changes. **NACE** is therefore recommending that the **MEHRD**:

- *review with greatest urgency the precise legislative and regulatory framework that will be required to facilitate the implementation of the respective recommendations that emerge as a result of this review exercise;*

- *create a policy reform environment and human resource capability to sustain these developments and win support for them in all quarters of our national community.*

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The importance of early childhood learning and care cannot be overstated. Both are vital for fostering positive attitudes toward learning and for preparing children to become engaged members of society. **NACE** recommends:

- *the establishment of an oversight institution for **Early Childhood Education** and care which would work assiduously to bring the full age cohort into the system of care and education at this level. It would be charged with the responsibility for developing policy incentives to encourage the partnership between the state and the private sector, non-governmental organizations, parents, caregivers and educators.*

- *Monitoring the proliferation of day-care centres and pre-school programmes to ensure that they conform to integrity of standards and that the proprietors and their assistants are trained in areas of **ECE** and care.*

Quality Education for Children with Special Needs

In our consultations the Commission received submissions from members of the disabled community which addressed the theme of children with special needs. Students with special needs were considered as not only those with disabilities; but also those exceptionally gifted children who found difficulty in the existing school system. In order to promote greater accessibility to education by children with special needs **NACE** recommends that:

- *the system make adequate provision for children with special needs through the development of a comprehensive policy on special education by which schools, teachers and parents could be guided;*

- *continuing education and training be provided for children and young people with special needs, and the retraining and education of people who have suffered a disability, in order to encourage self-sustainability;*

- *the institution of a **National Development Scholarship** for people with disabilities in the areas such as vocational rehabilitation, career guidance, physiotherapy and occupational therapy to enable their access to post graduate education.*

- *teachers who, through testing and appropriate services, become aware of gifted students with special needs seek to develop their special capacities.*

Primary Schools

The primary school system will continue to be a central focus of Government's expenditure. **NACE** is of the view that the most pressing issue is the chronic underachievement of the system with worrying numbers of students performing for various reasons well below their class levels. **NACE** recommends that:

- *the continuation and expansion of the national development and remediation programme be supported with the objective of improving students' abilities and competencies up to their age appropriate class/form level in the shortest possible time;*

- *a special emphasis to be placed on extending the textbook loan scheme to primary school students. This recommendation will support those students who are financially at risk.*

Transfer from Primary to Secondary School

There was significant discussion around the transfer of students from the primary to secondary level, with people expressing both support for, and criticism of the present method of transferral from the primary to the secondary level. In spite of the fervent debate articulating the pros and cons of retaining the current transfer system *via* the **Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE),** there was general consensus that any examination process that was developed and implemented should be cognizant of, and seek to address negative psycho-social concerns. In this regard, **NACE** recommends that the following be considered:

- *children be given the opportunity to explore non-traditional areas of study;*

- *there be a re-examination of the mistaken concept that children do not fail the **BSSEE;***

- *children not be separated according to their marks in the BSSEE; rather allocation should be based on mixed abilities so that there can be children with the highest levels of skills and abilities in all schools;*

- *there be an end to the social comparison of children and an end to the distinction between bright and "duncy", recognizing that each child has unique potential.*

Zoning: Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (BSSEE)

The issue of zoning was contentious with firm views that it should be properly conceptualized and maintained. Concerns were raised over dispelling notions of elitism that created negative social stigmas; allocation of students to schools closer to their homes to enable them to build stronger communities, participate more readily in extra-curricular activities, and have better relationships with teachers and parents and to ease traffic congestion; and greater opportunity for all schools to have a more evenly distributed socio-economic and academic composition.

- **NACE** supports full zoning and a reformation of the **BSSEE** (also referred to as the Common Entrance Examination or the 11+) but takes into consideration, however, that to effectively facilitate zoning there must be a concerted effort by Government to ensure that all schools are continuously supported with adequate resources and to embrace curricula that foster the development of every skill and aptitude of each child throughout its educational career.

- **NACE** recommends that students be continuously assessed and transferred to the secondary school in their respective zone after taking the revised format of the BSSEE. Students should not be allowed to attend schools outside their zone of residence. In this way, there is a fairer distribution of all social classes within secondary schools.

Supporting Services: Health and Nutrition

Inadequate nutrition contributes to heightened levels of learning impairment, while the vending of junk food and the peddling of illegal drugs on, or near school premises, present challenges in the school system. Students' learning is compromised if their health and nutritional needs are not met. **NACE** recommends:

- *the dietary plan be revised drawing on the expertise of Home Economics teachers to reflect the dietary requirements of students with special needs;*

- *the dietary plan be distributed at the start of each school term to alert parents to what will be available;*

- *the nutrition and health imperatives involve the local agriculture sector, for the sourcing of commodities to reduce costs;*

- *a [re-]evaluation of the management systems in place for the School Meals Department with a view to ensuring the efficiency and effective delivery of this essential service.*

Governance of Primary and Secondary Schools

As with the management of the **MEHRD, NACE** believes that there is a critical need for the revision of the management of the central institution responsible for children's education: the school. In this regard **NACE** firmly supports the recent ministerial initiative for the introduction of strategic plans for improving the governance and administrative capacity in secondary schools. **NACE** also recommends that this initiative be extended to all primary schools.

In addition **NACE** recommends that:

- *large primary schools with over **500 students** benefit from the proposed new management structure of secondary schools;*

- *all primary schools have a **deputy principal**;*

- ***Boards of Management** be appointed to all primary schools;*

- *secondary schools be kept to a maximum of 800 students and be managed by one principal and two deputy principals;*

- *the **post of principal** be held within the education system and not on appointment to specific schools;*

- *principals be **appointed on contractual basis** and the contract be renewed if positive performance targets are met;*

- *students be given a voice in the management of schools at the secondary level through the implementation of **Student Councils**;*

- *chairpersons of **Boards of Management** and all board members be trained in the protocols of school management;*

- *the duties of Boards of Management include holding the principal accountable to the objectives and performance targets of the school's **Strategic Plan***

- *all principals receive **continuous training** in school management, administration, conflict resolution, industrial relations, financial management and leadership.*

Discipline and Support Systems

Anti-social and violent behaviour is a social phenomenon that is inimical to our national development and has permeated all sectors of society including the school. All students are entitled to receive undisturbed and efficient instruction in school and must not be held ransom by errant and delinquent students. **NACE** recommends that:

- *a programme be developed to identify and meet the needs of those students exhibiting difficult behaviour with a view to employing the necessary **intervention strategies** to ensure that students cooperate;*

- *schools be supported from as early as nursery through to the secondary level with all the relevant **supporting psycho-social personnel** such as social workers, guidance counsellors and psychologists to work with children and parents;*

- ***An alternative residential educational institution*** *should be established with the mandate to employ all the necessary corrective measures to rehabilitate students exhibiting difficult behaviour while providing the opportunity for them to continue their studies, with it being compulsory that parents be actively involved in this process;*

- *the strengthening and proper resourcing of an enhanced **Juvenile Liaison Scheme** working in collaboration with the students services section of the **MEHRD**;*

- ***corporal punishment be retained*** *on the statute books but with a view to reforming The Education Act to lead to its eventual abolition once the correct ethos and the appropriate resources, such as psycho-social professionals, are employed in schools to support the efforts of teachers;*

- *the **MEHRD** would continue to **monitor the regulations** for the misuse of corporal punishment in schools, and respond to complaints using appropriate sanctions against teachers and school managers who violate the regulations;*

- *a **comprehensive code of behaviour** with the accompanying sanctions be developed, with the understanding that students be informed what is expected of them in order to eradicate the random responses and resultant confusion within an institution where similar infractions attract different sanctions; and as all stake holders would have to adopt this code, everyone should be aware of what is expected of students and the ensuing sanction to be employed for any given violation;*

- *a **study** be carried out to ascertain any correlation between an inflated pupil/teacher ratio and negative student behaviour, with the findings of this research to shape future policy;*

- *a **staff development programme** be undertaken to enable teachers to identify and manage difficult students and conflict in the classroom;*

- *media (through the Government Information Service) and other community programmes be implemented to **familiarize parents with best practices in parenting techniques;***

- *a **peer coaching programme** (possibly though the use of students councils) be developed and utilized to influence student behaviour in a positive way;*

- *students in schools be exposed to an **on-going programme of conflict resolution**;*

- *a **closer link between all stakeholders** be forged to give consistency to efforts at instilling good discipline in students.*

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SCHOOL INSPECTION and QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development should establish a **National Education Inspectorate and Evaluation Department** in keeping with the relevant Section of the Education Act and Regulations. The mandate of the **NEIED should be** to make an assessment of the standards attained by the students in our primary and secondary schools at key points in their education and to report on how well they perform or improve, as they progress through their school and learning life.

The NEIED should be charged with the responsibility to make recommendations to support improvement in the quality of the provision and outcomes for all learners.

The NEIED will therefore contribute to raising the levels of student attainment by assessing and reporting on:

- *The quality of teaching*

- *The quality of students' response*

- *The extent to which students have access to the curriculum*

- *The quality of leadership and management of the learning environment in the school or learning institution*

- *The quality of relationships engendered by the leadership team with stakeholders in the education process.*

The NEIED should identify, in its initial inspections, improvements that a school or other education provider will need to make to standards and quality. In subsequent reports, it will also make an analysis of the implementation of inspection findings and their impact.

The NEIED should inspect <u>all</u> state funded schools at the primary and secondary levels. The inspection of Independent school and other private providers of education services should form part of those institutions' registration and accreditation procedures.

The inspection of early childhood education institutions will remain with an Early Childhood Commission until a fully integrated inspection and improvement system is instituted.

The NEIED should also carry out thematic and subject inspections, evaluate national and local initiatives and carry out evaluation of the policies of the Ministry of Education in terms of their impact on student attainment.

The cycle of inspecting schools and other service providers should be determined by the Minister of Education.

The NEIED should also gather, analyse and interpret the data generated from all of its inspections, evaluation and survey work and thus be in an informed position to provide policy advice to the Minister of Education and report directly to Parliament on the standards achieved and the quality of education provided in Barbados.

It will, systematically, issue reports, guidance, advice and assistance to principals, school boards, school management teams, teachers and other education professionals about effective practice, based on the accumulation of evidence from the school inspections.

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Infrastructural Development and Capital Works

NACE commends the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development for his recent initiative in spearheading the capital works programme of fencing all primary and secondary schools to ensure that most security threats at schools are substantially mitigated. **NACE** firmly believes that the poor quality of physical plant is a major contributing factor to indiscipline in schools, which in turn suspends the learning environment. **NACE** recommends:

- **the rehabilitation and upgrading of schools**, *incorporating the needs of staff and students, accessibility for the physically challenged and support for co-curricular activities into their [re-]design;*

- *that* **schools be provided with adequate resources for the proper preventive** *and corrective maintenance of the school plant, with a view to diminishing the extra-curricular commercial activities, which often currently exist on the school compound and which take away from the fundamental goal of learning;*

- *the* **introduction of caution fees** *at all secondary schools—collected as a one-off cost at the beginning of a student's first form year and returned at the completion of his/her school career if the student has not been deemed as liable for any act of damage to school property. Any interest gained from the investment of those funds to be used for cost recovery from abuse of school property and to assist deserving students through a benevolent fund.*

- *the introduction of* **strategic security assessments** *for all schools with a view to the implementation of adequate security systems at all schools.*

Transportation: Primary and Secondary Schools

NACE applauds the recent initiative of the Government of Barbados to provide free transportation to all school children. This is critical in helping to improve enrolment in schools and, more importantly, alleviating another financial burden on vulnerable sections of our society. Notwithstanding, there are some challenges that, if noted and corrected, could be instrumental in improving the quality of service. **NACE** recommends:

- *a review and* **monitoring of the operational services** *by the Transport Board, to determine how best the public school bus service could be improved to meet the needs of children and their families;*

- *in order to mitigate the* **indiscipline on the Transport Board buses**, *the Royal Barbados Police Force and/or an empowered traffic warden conduct frequent spot checks by boarding and riding in buses along the routes to ensure orderly behaviour from all patrons;*

- *the sustained and* **strict reinforcement of the regulations** *governing the conduct of personnel from Public Service Vehicles (PSVs), particularly as it relates to the carriage of school children.*

Co-Education in Secondary Schools

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Throughout the consultation, much debate centred around co-education in secondary schools. There were two extremes - those who argued for continued co-education, and those who argued for a return to single-sex schools. In all the discussion there was no conclusive evidence to support the claims for either extreme. **NACE** supports co-education, but will welcome studies to suggest the merits and the demerits of this initiative.

Sixth Form Schools and Expanded Access

NACE is of the view that a student's educational journey through to sixth form should be as natural as his/her journey from first form to fifth form. **NACE** is also of the view that the acquisition of a sixth form must not be seen as an entitlement or a privilege in the education system but as a right, subject to qualification requirements, as currently exists elsewhere in the Caribbean. **NACE** recommends that:

- *sixth form status be granted to all schools as a normal academic trajectory;*

- *rather than all schools offering similar curricula, individual schools focus their efforts on their strengths and build on these for their sixth form offerings;*

- *eligible students be allowed to enrol in any sixth form school that best matches their academic, technical and vocational career development.*

Transitioning through the System from Secondary to Tertiary: Colleges and Universities

University of the West Indies

The tertiary sector continues to expand rapidly in response to demands for second chance primary and secondary education. The economic and social benefits of pursuing tertiary education have been widely documented.

NACE therefore recommends:-

- *that measures that work be instituted to ensure that the quality, relevance and international acceptance of the tertiary programmes of the respective institutions are maintained and promoted;*

- *that the efficiency and the costs of delivering academic programmes be made more rigorous and transparent in accounting to government;*

- *a revision of the matriculation requirements to reflect a student with more advanced level/Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (**CAPE**) exposure and restrict the matriculation of students directly from fifth form schools because the mix of abilities in some university classrooms slows the lecturing process, and students need to regard university as a serious step to academic excellence and career development and not as an extension of high school;*

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- *that before the introduction of new initiatives they be carefully conceptualized and discussed;*

- *that the university be more responsive to students' needs, particularly in relation to the expansion of relevant degree programmes, and through the provision of a greater diversity of degree programmes to respond more rapidly to market signals/demands;*

- *that **UWI** reconsider graduating students with low Grade Point Averages since students who achieve this level of performance have demonstrated little, if any, academic achievement ;*

- *that **UWI** restrict the time for completion of degree programmes to three years, full-time and to four to five years, part-time, with students who continually repeat courses or flippantly switch programmes having to incur some of the costs that are currently heavily subsidized by government financing, rather than stay within the system imposing a constant financial strain on the system;*

- *the tertiary institutions revisit their standards, the viability of their academic programmes, the efficiency of their delivery, and the costs of their operations, placing special emphasis on achieving competencies in teaching and research, through processes that facilitate staff and student mobility;*

- *more support be provided for distance and on-line education and that satellite operations be established in rural areas, with information technology playing a major role in improving quality and expanding the range of vocational and tertiary education and training.*

Barbados Community College (BCC): The Establishment of the University College of Barbados (UCB)

For some time now there has been discussion surrounding the proposed establishment of the University College of Barbados which would see the amalgamation of the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and Erdiston Teachers Training College. **NACE** recommends:

- *the retention of the **BCC** since funding the UCB would divert already challenged financial resources from the **UWI**, already an extreme cost to Government, and would further place pressure on the education system by diverting much needed funds from primary and secondary institutions and from the implementation of developmental programmes;*

- *that the **BCC** continue to expand its professional and vocational course offerings by alignment with chartered professional bodies; to develop associate and undergraduate degree programmes that broaden the scope of educational opportunities; and offer training in areas not previously given recognition;*

- *that the Barbados Community College should rebrand itself in the context of providing a more effective and efficient delivery of educational services*

- *That the **BCC** develop full undergraduate degree programmes in those relevant applied areas.*

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- *a revision of articulation agreements between the **UWI** and the Barbados Community College regarding some programmes and courses to ensure that the quality and integrity are assured and that students transferring into university possess the necessary competencies to effectively engage the programmes in advanced Levels II and III;*

- *a revision and auditing of existing programmes by external independent agencies in collaboration with the relevant local and regional institutions to ensure that the quality and integrity of content and delivery of the programmes meet with regional and international standards;*

- *the **BCC** must move towards external second marking of scripts to ensure validity and legitimacy of examination processes, aligning the associate degree with other similar qualifications, such as **CAPE**, that are offered by regional bodies.*

Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP)

NACE believes that the **SJPP** increasingly has become removed from its original mandate of providing an alternative secondary/post-secondary curriculum for students. It has contributed to the frustration of school leavers wanting to pursue non-traditional technical and vocational options since only a few people who do not achieve highly in secondary school qualify for places in this institution. **NACE** recommends that:

- *the **SJPP** should become a full fledged Technical Institute, which supports a varied educational and certification programme and research.*

- *the **SJPP** revisit its original mission statement regarding its core constituents with a view to expanding its subject options to include, for example, horticulture, boat building, new agricultural and farming methods, and new areas in information technology, while emphasizing literacy, numeracy and oracy skills, and other enriching subjects to continue to make its purpose more relevant to all;*

- *the **SJPP** work with other international polytechnic institutes in designing programmes and facilitating student exchanges to develop advanced skill development in areas of technological innovation;*

- *the **SJPP** could offer a portfolio of new courses as part of a [re-]focussed adult education programme to provide expanded access to students without adequate certification to meet formal matriculation requirements who wish to continue their education. As such the **SJPP** should devise matriculation mechanisms to facilitate the entrance of these candidates to its programmes;*

- *the expansion of the **SJPP** to include another campus, or alternatively the utilization of the technical-vocational facilities at secondary schools to deliver an expanded programme.*

Erdiston Teachers' Training College

Oral and written submissions were made during the course of our consultations that lamented the poor performance of students at both the primary and secondary schools. The level of performance was attributed to inappropriate curricula and teaching methods; a critical shortage of trained teachers; a critical shortage of trained teachers "comfortable" in the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate the implementation of new aspects of the national curriculum; and lack of other instructional materials. **NACE** recommends that:

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College be rebranded to facilitate more effective teaching and learning and research on pedagogy;*

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College work closely with the proposed* **National Teachers Council** *to conceptualize and develop appropriate curricula and teaching methods that draw their content and purpose from linkages made between the world of study and work; as well as encouraging the promotion of critical and analytical abilities through partnerships with the* **UWI** *or any such tertiary level institution;*

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College facilitate the development of a retraining (professional upgrade) programme for all secondary and Primary school teachers every 3-5 years to equip them with new teaching methodologies, and the ability to build research and analytical capacity to diagnose and prescribe solutions to the challenges they face;*

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College should develop specific Institutes to encourage professional development among teachers and school leaders.*

- *Erdiston facilitate the development of training and retraining programmes on School Management, Industrial Relations, financial and facilities management and conflict resolution for senior management;*

- *attention be paid to a continued sensitivity to the significance, importance and limitations of educational and other new technologies to be reflected in teacher training programmes and teaching and learning strategies.*

Restructuring Funding/Scholarship Programmes for Tertiary Education

The Barbados Scholarship has been considered the summit of academic achievement in the awards of the education system. However with so many of our young people making an effort to excel in non-traditional areas of endeavour, such as athletics, **NACE** feels that too many of our young citizens are unable to realize their scholastic expectations because of the lack of opportunities available to them. **NACE** recommends:

- *the establishment of a* **National Scholarship Committee***, with proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to examine the revision of scholarship programmes and the feasibility of establishing new scholarships in non-traditional areas to students who demonstrate natural talents and abilities in for example the visual and performing arts, sports, even aviation, but who are also able to incorporate their academic pursuits in these endeavours;*

- *a **Strategic National Human Resources Needs Analysis Study** be conducted to determine the shortages in and conflicting demands on human resource capacity in Barbados to determine the categories or areas of need, and to compile a register of highly skilled nationals, areas of expertise and legitimacy of degrees.*

Online and Distance Education Programmes

Increasingly a number of external and online universities have been providing a range of educational services to the Caribbean without the requisite accreditation mechanisms in place to protect vulnerable clients.

- ***NACE** recommends that the Barbados Accreditation Council work closely with the **MEHRD** and external Accreditation Councils when necessary to conduct an audit of distance education programmes as well as online university programmes to monitor and evaluate the content, quality and integrity of standards of these programmes before allowing access to funding or legitimating the qualification.*
-

The Role of Stakeholders

The education of people is at the heart of human development. It involves fostering the enlargement of human capacities. This is a complex task and one that cannot be done by one institution—the **MEHRD**—alone. **NACE** therefore recommends:

- *a greater participatory approach through civic engagement of a variety of society's institutions, based on the view that sections of Barbadian society have lost the message of the value of education to national development in spite of Government's commitment to extensive outlays in investment;*
- *that a clear and continuing socially responsible message should exist for our main capital expenditure—that education 'is we business' and that we ignore its worth within our society at our own peril—be communicated to all Barbadians through a public relations campaign similar to the one that exists for tourism, our main foreign exchange earner;*
- *greater outreach to all businesses to contribute to the educational effort through benefactions, gifts and the award of scholarships to schools, in return for which Government could grant tax incentives to facilitate businesses in such contributions;*
- *a more active involvement of churches and religious groups in the imparting of moral and ethical values in our schools, with their role as educational partners accommodated through their participation in designing, planning and implementing agreed social agenda.*

The Role of the Media as a Stakeholder

NACE recognizes that the media are a principal stakeholder in the education system. The media have a powerful influence on our youth as a principal agent of socialization in our society and therefore have an obligation and duty to our society that goes beyond earning advertising revenue. **NACE** recommends:

- *a media policy, to serve as an antidote to negative cultural penetration, that will focus on values and attitudes, character education, patriotism and service through the production, storage, dissemination and exchange of*

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information, based on the media's capacity to infuse within our society the notion of the importance of education by nurturing and supporting it through the quality of their professionalism;

- *that the media be conscious of avoiding symbols, images, and ideas that inculcate negative social biases in young people, based on the awareness by* **NACE** *that the media can play a decisive role in giving voice to the sentiments expressed by sections of our society of its role in shaping the minds of our youth in a positive way;*

- *that a progressive media policy be deliberately pursued to focus on the maximization of gains from English as an international language, particularly as Barbados continues to establish its place as an international business hub, by expanding or creating a language policy on communication that searches for the best skills to serve national development.*

Education for Competitiveness

As the Caribbean grapples in the first decades of the century with the uncertainty of a major global economic downturn, and is likely to continue facing severe difficulties long after the global economy turns around, the need to ensure that countries like Barbados will continue to have the right skills and knowledge for a sustainable economy—now and in the future—is important. Internationally mobile, skilled workers invest in communities that are socially progressive. **NACE** recommends that:

- *in order to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise for our youth, while also creating employment for young people, there is a need to pursue strategies that will create a supportive business environment with viable incentives for young people;*

- *an emphasis in curricula be placed on a wider infusion of practical and creative skills in the interest of self-employment and entrepreneurship;*

- *we further explore the options of providing more institutionalized credit and business-support services to young artisans and others establishing craft and agricultural enterprises to help them harness their creative endeavours to undertake productive activities;*

- *business associations like the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, civic clubs, and trade unions, in collaboration with government training institutions, encourage their respective constituents to use their collective skills and financial resources to support the development of an entrepreneurial culture and a skilled work force;*

- *firms of all types, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, must play a more active role in the development of a skilled workforce through encouraging constant training, formal and informal, and the upgrading of skills of all employees.*

Re-Engaging the Marginalized/Lower-Skilled Worker

Increasingly there has been an undercurrent of anomie among our youth, most commonly called boys, and girls, "on the block", which manifests itself in incessant loitering. Often a criminal element emerges, some may argue, as a result of frustration from lack of opportunity.

- ***NACE*** *is calling for studies to be conducted on how best to engage these young men and women in a way that determines what educational initiatives can be designed to assist them in realizing their hopes and aspirations.*

- *Likewise, there must be an added focus within our education system on motivating the lower-skilled population about the economic and social benefits to be attained from developing first-class skill sets to perform professionally and exceptionally in their chosen tasks.*

Policy on Teen Parents

At present, teen mothers attend public schools at the "discretion of the principal". Some teen mothers are permitted to continue in school but others are not, depending on the philosophy of the school and the perception of the individual student.

The immediate goal must be to provide services and support to the teen mothers in school. The long-term goal should be to break the cycle of poverty, violence and abuse common to teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers and their children remain a very vulnerable population and this policy should support these vulnerable teens and children with a "total development" approach that results in successful adults and healthy children. These teen mothers can also play a role in mentoring other young women to make good decisions about their lives and future.

This policy should be based on collaboration between the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sport, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, the Ministry of Health working with schools, health clinics, local physicians, hospital staff, families and the community.

Teens can be referred by school guidance counselors in the Secondary Schools. The families, health clinic nurses, physicians, hospital staff, the girls themselves and concerned individuals in the community are other sources of referral. The girls may be referred when pregnant and/or after the birth of the child. Girls who are in public school and are "at risk" of pregnancy may also be referred.

A basket of support services must be put in to service to ensure the viability of the programme.

- **Day Care**—*assistance with locating day care and connecting low- income families with Social Assistance.*

- **Counseling**—*contact with the girl and/or family to help deal with the immediate crisis of pregnancy and begin setting goals for school and the future.*

- **Legal Issues**—*assistance as needed with maintenance and other legal issues.*

- **Advocacy**—*assistance as needed with other government programs and returning to school.*

- **Workshops**—*sessions offered on self-development, career development, parenting and entrepreneurship during school breaks.*

- **Skills Training**—*currently available during school breaks in computer training, sewing, cooking and baking and hairdressing/cosmetology.*

- **Job Attachment**—*girls with specific vocational interests are placed in jobs over the school break(s).*

- **Stipends**—*available for transportation and day care during workshops and other activities.*

- **Teen Mother Support Group**—*gives teen mothers the opportunities to share experiences and support one another.*

- **Scholarships and Educational Opportunities**—*The Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development staff can help identify scholarship and educational opportunities for girls wishing to continue on to college and/or other vocational training.*

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education

ICTs are broadening and redefining the learning landscape in unprecedented ways. Countries that foster the potential of **ICTs** as educational tools are making an investment in their citizens' prosperity and well-being. Though there are many benefits to be derived from the use of **ICTs**, the Commission wishes to temper this exuberance because of the increasing deleterious legal and ethical issues that such technologies portend for the undermining of the educational and social value in the wider society. **NACE** recommends:

- *a [re-]evaluation of this strategic educational initiative to determine its performance objectives, focusing on establishing mechanisms for effective policy and program co-ordination;*

- *the provision of e-learning opportunities, making them more accessible to individuals with disabilities, and with institutions, the private sector and governments ensuring the appropriate adaptation of technology and associated resources to meet the differing requirements of people with disabilities;*
- *the use of **ICTs** to link with best practice schools through forging teaching partnerships and the sharing of facilities and resources to teach difficult concepts via distance, or using the appropriate software to do the same;*

- *the re-statement and reinforcement of the **MEHRD** no cell phone policy in schools;*

- *telephone companies, internet service providers, and the print and electronic media demonstrate some sense of social responsibility and civic duty by implementing a protocol regarding the legal and ethical concerns and the consequences for users of irresponsible technological usage, and showing the correct use of these technologies in public spaces.*

Human Resource Development: Teacher Professional Development

The teaching profession has been assailed recently by a society that for the most part does not see teaching as a profession, nor as worthy of being considered a profession. As Barbados evolves into a knowledge economy, teachers will be responsible for the creation of every viable professional knowledge worker in the realization of such a national development goal; yet, they who are essential moulders of this society are not considered professionals worthy of a regulatory body to reflect their diverse needs and interests, their own professional standards, codes of ethics and specific training programmes.

NACE recommends:

- *the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission which will govern the teaching profession and will include a significant representation from past profession.*

- *the Teaching Service Commission be the focal point of a unified structure that would be responsible for recruitment, selection and review of personnel at the higher levels of the entire education system;*

- *The Teachers' Commission be relatively autonomous within the public service, and given its subventions and responsibilities for its own budgetary arrangements and the power to enter into contracts for the delivery and development of its programmes and projects;*

- *the Teachers' Commission be responsible for: the type of leadership teachers require at their schools; determining the changes to their terms and conditions of service, in particular, achievement of the goal of a fully trained teaching service; policies for promotion and performance appraisal and remuneration; the structure of vacation leave; the ongoing professional development of teachers; promoting the establishment of a licensing regime for the assessment of*

'qualifications' of eligible personnel to ensure adequate development and maximum utilization of the skills and abilities of a teacher corps;

- *the Teacher Service Commission be given responsibility for the introduction of a Master Teacher Corps, particularly for those teachers who have distinguished themselves in their subject expertise but who would rather not seek the office of Principal. As an incentive for distinction and continuation in the service, this cadre of personnel would command equal pay and perks in the system but would be a peripatetic resource, training teachers in classroom and conducting workshops to share best practices and experiences.*

Private Schools

Private schools play an important part in any education system in providing education and specialized services to those in need. **NACE** recommends that private schools:

- *be given access to the training and professional preparation courses and programmes at subsidized rates;*
- *liaise with an oversight body to be established to ensure that they adhere to foundational requirements in the provision of an adequate curriculum to ensure numeracy, literacy and the use of **ICTs** in education;*

- *have parallel arrangements with the Teachers' Commission to ensure that their personnel are entitled to similar benefits.*

Ethics and Citizenship for Civil Society

An understanding of Barbados's history and politics by people young and old is important on many levels. It helps us grasp our rights and responsibilities as members of a democracy. It also informs an awareness and social consciousness of Barbados's distinct place and role in the global community. For the individual, it develops civic literacy with the knowledge required to participate effectively in a democracy. **NACE** recommends:

- *that throughout all levels of the education system students must be exposed to and experience the reinforcement of social and civic values, be taught to demonstrate conflict resolution skills, be led to awareness of their cultural and national identities, and encouraged to respect other citizens and the environment;*

- *that curriculum goals set out to embrace a programme of values education focussing inter alia on multi-cultural sensitivities, aesthetic development, religious understanding, etc. as a foundational element in the educational process;*

- *the infusion of a philosophy for addressing the psychological and social challenges faced by students in our education system to assist in ensuring that their personal and social needs are served and that the humane, preventive discipline that should challenge learning societies is put in place;*

- *that there be a re-orientation of programmes in educational and training institutions to include: conflict resolution, emphasis on problem solving, negotiation skills, change from within programmes, decision-making techniques, self-concept development, guidance and counseling, and an orientation towards learning to earn.*

The Financing of Sustainable Education

Quality education is not cheap and the initiatives outlined in this report will come at a cost. There is a role for all stakeholders, particularly parents and private bodies such as firms, to play their part in this educational effort. **NACE** recommends that:

- *a sub-committee be established to focus on examining and managing the costs in the planning, programming and implementation of these recommendations to achieve the national objectives of equity and efficiency;*

- *Government allow alumni who donate to their alma mater through gifts of cash, shares, or property to claim income tax relief on the full value of the donation.*

Conclusion

This report makes a contribution to the public in a contemporary assessment of the more tangible effects and recommendations for an improved education system in the twenty-first century. From the beginning we acknowledge that nothing will be achieved without the urgent and foremost support of parents and other stakeholders. The implementation process will entail some adjustment and new ways of thinking, but the potential benefits are well worth the effort and commitment required to secure Barbados's future prosperity.

1. EDUCATION FOR A NEW SOCIETY

1.1 Introduction: Defining the Context

Education lies at the very core of human potential. It fosters our ability to think, create and solve problems. It encompasses a complementary mix of formal and informal learning that develops skills and abilities essential to success in the knowledge economy. It enables us to envision and embrace the kinds of lives we want for ourselves and our children.

Beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout the adult years, learning is fundamental to our experience of being human and shapes virtually every aspect of our lives. It inculcates the best social values, promotes human understanding and appreciation of the dignity in all labour. Learning occurs in all sites of human endeavour—in the home, at the workplace and in the community. It is imperative therefore that a successful education system busy itself with integrating the learning needs of individuals across the lifespan, creating opportunities in all areas of life—at school, in the workplace, in the community and at home.

Fundamentally, schools will play such a pivotal role in the lives of children and youth that their experiences in formal education can spell the difference between lifelong failure and success.

Barbados has one of the most highly educated populations in the world. This could not have been achieved without a cadre of well trained, dedicated and committed professionals within the education system working to achieve this goal.

Indeed, Barbados can boast of having met the two **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs**) of access to universal primary school enrolment for all girls and boys and their ability to complete this first stage of the learning process. This achievement further suggests the successful reaching by Barbados of **MDG3**—full gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels of the education system *in primary, secondary and tertiary education*. Further to these goals, during the review of Barbados's education system, other positive achievements were evident and are worthy of note. These include:

- *Universal access to early childhood education from three to four years in a complementary system of public and primary institutions;*

- *Universal access to secondary education for all boys and girls;*

- *A highly subsidized and accessible book rental scheme at the secondary level;*

- *A highly subsidized lunch program at all primary schools;*

- *A standardized national primary and secondary curriculum;*

- *A teaching corps in which over 95% of the teachers are college trained;*
- *The provision of a dedicated free transportation system for all school children on the national public transport service;*

- *Greater security for all secondary and primary schools by the installation of boundary fences and security guards and systems to ensure the safety of every child in school;*

- *Government's contribution to education representing over 20% of the national budget;*

- *A highly subsidized tertiary education system where most of the economic and tuition costs are paid for most Barbadian nationals at every **UWI** campus and supplemental costs such as university amenities fees are subsidized.*

In spite of these achievements, there are signs of trouble and we ignore them at our own peril. Some children are significantly more disadvantaged than others and these inequities must be addressed if Barbados is to sustain its comfortable level of social well-being and economic prosperity. Moreover, the rapid technological changes, global competitive pressures and new patterns of work are demanding a more sophisticated set of transferable skills, such as problem-solving, communications, decision-making, teamwork, leadership, entrepreneurship and adaptability. The development of these skills requires embracing a view of learning that goes beyond the hallowed walls of our educational structures. In this regard, the continuing achievement of our potential requires that Barbadians understand the challenges and rewards of developing an educational policy for a new

society, and commit themselves to this process. We therefore need a long-term perspective on education that reflects the needs and aspirations of Barbadians now, and for the future. Success will largely depend on the extent to which society actively engages and makes demands on the skills and knowledge of its citizens, promotes the use of individuals' competencies and encourages them to think, act and be engaged throughout their lives. We need to formulate a road map of the future we envision for our children and for generations to come. We need a clear vision that will keep our sights on what matters most—the development of our people.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Report

There is widespread agreement in government that 'human capital' is a critical element in the economic and social development of Barbados. In essence, it refers to the 'quality' of human beings: an educated person is likely to yield higher social returns than a less educated person. Education and training are therefore the ingredients of human capital formation. Social capital refers to the stock of norms and values that bind a society together rather than dividing it to cause crime, family break down and civil strife. Failure to understand individuals as social beings is therefore likely to threaten the sustainable development of our society. Aware of the threats that portend for our society, the Government of Barbados attaches the highest priority to the reform of the education system and intends to utilize all available expertise and resources to effect the necessary changes. To this end, the Government convened a National Consultation on Education with a view to formulating a plan towards:

- *addressing the relevance of our present education system;*

- *ensuring adequate and affordable educational opportunities for every Barbadian;*

- *making school a rewarding experience for every child;*
- *ensuring that every school child benefits fully from the education system; and*

- *helping every child to realize his/her potential through education.*

In pursuit of these objectives of the Government of Barbados, the Minister of Education, Human Resources and Development, the Honourable Ronald Jones, appointed a 14-member national consultative body, the National Advisory Commission on Education **(NACE),** to formulate a plan consistent with a vision for the creation of a premiere education system to set about the tasks of:

- *examining the relevance of our present education system to the human resource development needs of the country;*

- *engaging stakeholders in discussions with a view to making recommendations with respect to the improvement in the education system;*

- *examining the provision of adequate and affordable educational opportunities for every Barbadian citizen;*
- *focusing on enhancing the quality of education;*

- *improving student performance and certification;*

- *reducing disparities among gifted, average, special needs and at-risk students across the system;*

- *making recommendations on strategies to make school a rewarding experience for every child and to ensure that every school child benefit from the education system;*

- *making recommendations that would facilitate the fostering of appropriate attitudes and the development of programmes that would ensure that every child realize his/her potential through education and training.*

This comprehensive but intensive remit informed the Commission and provided the contextual framework in which the major issues affecting the achievement of a globally competitive but relevant education system were addressed in a holistic manner. That context is:

- *Structure of the Education System*
  - Primary
  - Secondary
  - Tertiary
  - Transitional and articulation mechanisms and procedures between primary and secondary and between secondary and tertiary
  - Co-education
  - Support services in schools
  - Health and nutrition
  - School-leaving age
  - School attendance
  - Transport systems
  - Security systems
  - Management of children with special needs
  - State of infrastructural development
  - Stakeholder participation
  - Financing mechanisms

- *The Curriculum: Teaching and Learning for Nation-Building*
    - Role of **ICTs**
    - Promotion of technical and vocational subjects
    - Duplication of efforts (subject offerings) at schools
    - Student assessment
    - Curriculum implementation, development and advocacy
    - Standards

- *Teacher Professional Development*
    - Recruitment, deployment, training and rewards
    - Human resource development
    - Performance appraisal
    - Management and organization of teaching
    - Establishment of a professionalized Teaching Commission
    - Governance and management

- *Social Issues and their Impact on Discipline in Schools*
    - Ethics and citizenship
    - Interaction between parents and the school
    - Violence and anti-social behaviour

- *Policy and Legal Framework*
    - Policy audit
    - The Education Act
    - Conflict resolution
    - Industrial relations

As this report emphasizes, Barbados can no longer afford to view the purpose of education and learning primarily as the preparation of young people for the labour market. Nor can we compartmentalize the various facets of the education system in each stage of life without recognizing the critical intersections that connect the ages and stages of the implementation process. Instead, we need to examine education in the broader social, political and economic contexts through an assessment of who are the various actors; what is their stake in the system; what are the relationships that exist between these various stakeholders; and the mechanisms that are in place for the voicing of concerns and views about education. These were analysed with a view to identifying the gaps in the conceptions or assumptions inherent in the proposed policies on the ground to provide the basis for a more complete understanding of what is to be done to create a sustainable educational policy.

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1.3 The Structure of the Report

The Commission's mandate forms the starting point for this report. **Section One** contextualises the importance of the report. It begins from the premise that there is much to be lauded in our current education system, but there is need for expressed anxiety, if not grave concern, at encroaching negative social forces, often liberal but not responsibly mediated norms, peddled by diverse forms of information and communication technologies which portend negatively for the sustainability of our society.

In accordance with our terms of reference, we set about to determine the critical issues for consideration and examination in the education system acting collectively and in harmony to underpin a more equitable and sustainable system of national development. Here, in this section we also outline the Commission's choice of methods for the work conducted, which was principally through public consultation in town hall meetings and focus groups, plenary meetings and seminars, as well as desk research.

In Section Two we put forth the views, the analysis and the recommendations of the people of Barbados that emerged from these consultations.

In Section Three we present the Commission's own recommendations drawing on our own expert knowledge. These emerged from the assessment and the analysis of the policies and recommendations made from both the town hall meetings and the focus group discussions. Our analysis focused on discussing the mismatches/syntheses of ideas that emerged from the varied consultations, our own experiences and exposure to varied education systems, expert reports and other desk research of best practices conducted elsewhere to provide a macro perspective of the way forward, and which forms the core of our proposals. We believe that these recommendations are a formidable agenda, the implementation of which will require further discussions both in specialized fora and intersectorally[1].

Finally we have been conscious of the need to place our work in the context of other work recently and currently being undertaken by other bodies.[2] The report also seeks to be comprehensive in its treatment of issues, although necessarily it cannot be exhaustive of all the issues the education system faces because of the limited time and data to examine such issues. We hope that we have projected an education system that is second to none, while being mindful of protecting and inculcating what is best in our national cultural heritage and at the same time guarding against the dangers confronting and undermining, internally and externally, the ethical and moral fabric of our society.

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[1] For the list of members of the Commission see Appendix I.

[2] See for example, the **UNICEF Report on Corporal Punishment (2009).**

2. REPORT OF NATIONAL CONSULTATION

2.1 Introduction

This section covers the results of the National Consultation and captures the views, the analysis and the recommendations that emerged from the town hall meetings, the written submissions and the focus group discussions[3].

2.2 Co-Education

The presenters in the National Consultation put forward arguments both for and against co-education. However, it was not one of the areas receiving strong focus during the Town Hall Meetings. Co-education was seen as an issue with different dimensions and complexity, and an emotional issue that had biological and social aspects.

One argument in favour of co-education was simply that since men and women have to live together, they should be educated together. The focus group participants noted that it brought to the schools the benefits of the socialization between the sexes that started from the primary unit of the family. While some concern with co-education might have more to do with inappropriate interaction and the problems it created, segregation in the schools seemed unnatural. They expressed the view that co-education should therefore not be regarded as a major issue because adults needed to work with each other in the workplace and this socialization should be practiced right through the education system. All the elements found in the wider society could be expected to surface in the schools and provision had to be made to counter the problems that could arise. Yet, with many children coming from homes supported inadequately by a single parent, usually a mother, the education system was still geared for delivery to 'normal' well behaved children who were seen as coming from stable two-parent homes.

The issue of the existing government single sex schools was raised by all. It was suggested that the most favoured schools were co-educational whereas the only single-sex school for boys, which according to the argument that single-sex education was more effective for male students, had not lived up to this expectation. Some schools had experimentally been allowed to remain as single sex schools but those experiments might have been skewed because no 'high flyer' schools had been included that allowed comparison of the performances of different types of schools. Some schools had also experimented with single sex classes within a co-educational school. There were however no data coming out of either kind of experiment to show that one kind of school or another was producing a better quality student. And, asked about the need for two equivalent schools among top end schools to serve as controls, the Minister dismissed the idea.

In the absence of research data, the choice lay between maintaining the current system with improvements in the delivery of education through stimulating greater interest among students and enhancing teacher skills, possibly relying on greater use of technology and multimedia applications,

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[3] For the Summary Reports of the town hall meetings and written submissions and the focus group discussions, please refer to Appendixes VI and VII respectively.

or overhauling the system radically. The overhaul should see education in general being made more stimulating to student learning, in itself requiring a reorganization of education in its entirety rather than a focus on co-education only. Those in favour of co-education also argued that students' performance should not be affected by whether they attended a mixed or co-educational school, and that they should instead be encouraged to apply themselves to their schoolwork. Some speakers dismissed the popular argument that boys were put at a disadvantage because they were distracted by girls, arguing that girls were also distracted by boys.

Those against co-education tended to focus on its effect on boys and the imperative for them to have the opportunity to excel in school. They opined that co-education discriminated against boys and was bad for them because it interfered with their studies. Further, research conducted on this issue had concluded that sex separation was best. One suggestion was that there should be separation in junior school, up to 4th or 5th Form, since boys learned at a different rate to girls, were interested in different things and were distracted by the sight of girls. In addition, girls had a mental advantage over boys since they started to mature around age nine whereas boys started to develop around age 11. It was also suggested that boys might feel embarrassed around girls and did not like to 'lose face' in front of them. Girls in secondary schools, it was argued, sometimes distracted boys by putting them down and making advances to those who might not yet be 'girl conscious'. A study was cited which stated that boys appeared more at ease and participated more freely in single-sex schools.

The focus group participants also examined the issue of boys' performance and recommended that, if it was true that male students tended to be distracted from their studies by the presence of girls, the resolution lay in the management of co-education and appropriate sex education. In most cases, boys eventually settled themselves and concentrated on their academic work.

Teachers comprised another important factor for those who were against co-education. They argued that the fact that most teachers were female could have a negative impact on boys and that there was a dearth of male role models for boys. Some female teachers, it was said, dressed 'sexily' which could have an effect on young impressionable boys. Teachers also tended to treat boys like second class citizens. One participant asserted that it was men's right to rule and that if they were not allowed to rule by law, they would rule by the gun. The study cited above also found that boys were more at ease and volunteered more in single sex classes with male teachers.

One written submission cited a study in Jamaica on gender differences in participation, opportunities to learn and achievement in education. This study highlighted, among other things, the teacher/student interaction that favoured girls; gender coding and stereotypical notions of male and female behaviour; the anti-academic culture among males; the curriculum and teaching methods' alienation of boys and the girl friendly nature of schools.

The essential concern expressed by the focus group participants did not appear to be the presence of boys and girls in the same environment but rather the numbers in the classroom and the need for greater discipline in class. The possibility existed though that the problem might lie in the structure of co-education and other external variables. Programmes offered in the schools tended to be too concentrated in a small number of areas and needed to be structured in a way that stimulated the interests of boys and girls equally. It was often said that boys tended to be overshadowed by the girls and that some teachers treated boys in ways that made them feel inferior to the girls. Boys had been labelled as disruptive and there had been something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was also true,

however, that while we lamented that men were not getting university qualifications, which were sometimes of little value in their search for work, ten times as many men as women graduated from the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, with qualifications that enabled them to earn money.

Another view expressed was that co-education was not seen as posing a problem either in primary or tertiary education nor was there any significant proof that it had failed in secondary education. It was important to avoid magnifying the existing problems and to look for and work with the strengths and weaknesses in the system and to keep looking for ways to make improvements.

It was important that co-education not be seen as equivalent to equal education. Girls and boys lived different experiences and had their identities shaped while developing physically. A co-educational system which treated them as the same would encounter problems. Special attention should be paid to the teaching of soft skills with more training in gender sensitization, perhaps through guidance counselling and values education, leading to boys and girls learning to better understand how they related to each other. Unfortunately, the teaching of social skills, social presence and self management was seen as making the boys into girls, leaving the boys in a dilemma. Young men, nevertheless, needed to be trained in how to be gentlemen and how to deal with conflict resolution and anger management issues.

There was another opinion that schools were generally more disrupted by the indiscipline of girls than by boys because girls tried to assert themselves as women in an environment with a majority of women in the teaching population. More men should be drafted into the teaching service in order to maintain a balance between the sexes and closer attention had to be paid to teaching girls how to be ladies and good citizens as they bore the responsibility for transferring cultural norms to the next generation.

Another question to be examined was whether there were issues of gender inherent in the curriculum, which would require that the system change; or whether the gendered application of the syllabus was at fault - the effect, for example of having more female than male teachers. At the same time, there were adequate models for masculinity in the secondary schools where many of the principals were male and the staff members were not overwhelmingly female.

In compiling this report, it was often quite striking how the views of the children who participated in the focus group discussions contrasted with those of the adults. The children's comments often revealed how clearly they were observing their elders who often seemed oblivious to the children's gaze. Yet one was often left wondering if the children's comments were their own surprisingly mature views or if they were merely intoning what they had heard from teachers and parents. The writers of this report recommend that as many people as possible, certainly all members of the Commission, read the children's own words.

The pupils sometimes seemed unable to grasp what seemed like simple concepts. For example, the primary pupils did not seem to have a clear idea of co-education, with their responses often touching only on the peripherals of the issue. It may however be that, having ever known only co-educational schools, they could not understand why they were being asked such an obvious question.

In their responses, the primary school pupils also spoke of co-education as a distraction but one that could be overcome because men and women obviously worked together, and starting the experience from young with co-education was a positive influence. They recognized that the distraction happened to both boys and girls, although some felt that boys were probably distracted more and

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needed to focus more. "*You get attracted to them and can't concentrate on your education,*" one boy said. Another felt there was too much talking about which other children they liked as a boyfriend or girlfriend and not enough focus on school work.

One girl liked that boys and girls were together, with pupils exposed to both genders and their points of view, and with boys and girls getting to learn about the same things, all the while learning to cooperate and work in groups. Another girl preferred schools with both sexes, even if there were to be divided into single-sex classes. The influence of the other sex was not always seen as negative. Boys who did not like to study might be inspired to do so by seeing the girls around them studying and could even get help from the girls. Some boys felt better and safer with girls in the classroom as they were friendlier.

In terms of disruptiveness, both boys and girls said boys are more 'hard-ears' than girls and all-boys classes would result in more stress on the teachers. While one girl felt that boys were 'real messy' and kept the classroom dirty, at least one girl thought that girls were noisier, 'always fretting, always picking at things and there is always a quarrel'. One boy said that boys did their work at school, leaving their fighting mostly for breaks or on the buses.

In discussion with the Minister, he revealed that despite a few single-sex schools in the public sector which he felt should remain and which could offer research opportunities, co-education would remain a part of the education dynamic in Barbados. He was not persuaded that boys were not performing because of the presence of girls and thought rather that there were other reasons, including the demands placed on boys, both by themselves and by those around them, to perform. He felt girls faced similarly high, or even higher, demands but that there was an assertiveness and strength in women that led them to take charge. Boys, he believed, were no longer receiving that kind of guidance from the many positive men in our society, although he did think there were some initial signs of a change.

Recommendations

- *Carry out a comparison between Ellerslie School and St. Leonard's Boys' School and Springer Memorial Girls' Schools to determine if co-education is failing.*

- *Conduct an evaluation of the co-educational system.*

- *Have single sex classes in co-educational schools but retain some co-educational classes.*

- *Maintain co-education but ensure more effective and efficient school leadership.*

- *Reintroduce single sex schools.*

- *Develop guidelines on creating a gender-fair environment in schools.*
- *Ensure that topics on the curriculum are more attuned to boys' interests.*

- *Redesign the school environment to make it more oriented to encouraging boys' interest in learning.*

- *Provide more positive role models in schools to help motivate boys and, by extension, encourage leadership and nation-building.*

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- *Find ways to address the question of boys' academic identity.*

- *The Government should stop borrowing money for school buildings from the World Bank, which requires that schools be co-educational.*

2.3 Curriculum and Nation Building

Purpose of Education

Participants in the meetings exhibited a clear need to examine the purpose of education and the implications for the way in which Barbados would educate both young people and those adults who want to continue their education. Not surprisingly, for almost every opinion, proposal or recommendation put forward there was likely to be a diametric view expressed either at the same or a subsequent meeting.

It was generally agreed that the purpose of education was to make the country's children the best possible citizens and to maximize the potential of each. It was accepted that every country would have its specific focus in its educational system arising out of its culture and history, and the nature and purpose of education would be determined within this context. Part of the outcome expected from these meetings was that Barbados would be able to define its own specific focus more clearly. There was a fundamental acceptance that education was essential to success in life; it was said at least once that life in its fullest sense involved education, and indeed was a process of education. Therefore, in looking at the purposes that education should serve, the nation should envision the school as a micro-society in which the curriculum attempted to address the total emotional experiences of students, expand their visions and prepare them for a life lived more fully.

It was accepted that education should not be limited to schools or to an academic curriculum focused on passing exams. There must be unfettered access to education that employed the appropriate institutions to focus on the creativity of the individual, with a curriculum and related teacher training that paid attention to the left brain/right brain dichotomy and that allowed for the well-rounded development of students of all ages at the time when they were most ready to benefit from it. In a situation of unequal access to resources, the education system must cater to the different capacities of learners.

The first consideration in educational policy should be what is best for the child – an obvious goal but one which at least one speaker felt was sometimes complicated unnecessarily. One member of the public, in a written submission, suggested it should be the aim of every learning institution to assist students in identifying their personal strengths and weaknesses, encouraging them to focus on those strengths while learning to overcome their identified weaknesses in learning ability.

The quality of education provided in Barbados was several times described as unsatisfactory and, given that education in Barbados received comparatively greater funding than health and other sectors and that there was almost universal access to education, the desired results were still not being achieved. Several voices in the town hall meetings argued that the social climate in Barbados was not conducive to innovation in education, citing EduTech and the White Paper as examples of proposed changes that have so far amounted to little. In the current system, where schools were

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labelled by the children they received, schools that received only underachievers would continue to be labelled as underachieving.

It was recommended in focus group meeting that the 'inaccurate and dangerous notions' that only some children could achieve academically and that there was a natural academic/vocational dichotomy had to be abandoned. The Ministry of Education should be reconceptualized with a purpose, framework, capacity, personnel, systems and processes specifically geared towards effecting student success. Schools should hold themselves accountable for student success, instead of blaming the student or the home for failure. Principals, as head of the school as an organization, had to be overall accountable for the success or failure rate of the school, and of the role of the teachers in any outcome.

Education planners, policy makers and teachers should set precise, measurable learning goals for students relevant to whole outcomes in their expected performance. It was essential that students understood they were responsible for their own learning. Externally created interest could not be self-sustaining and true learning required the learner's participation. Teachers therefore had to create an atmosphere where the important activities were performed by students.

Participants acknowledged that the perceived crisis in education, where children left the primary and even secondary levels still illiterate, was one that Barbados did not face alone. Some felt that compared with other educational systems, the Barbados system had served the country relatively well over the years. It was nonetheless showing signs of weakness with too many policy decisions being made without due consideration and with the implementation left to technocrats without proper study and preparation. To continue to claim proudly that there were schools that were hundreds of years old was to ignore that these schools had been founded in the era of colonialism and slavery. Significantly, the Public Library, an integral part of the education system, remained closed for several years; the economic divisions existing in the education system were deepened by exorbitantly priced lessons that poorer parents could not afford; and, unlike in other countries, schools are barely used for adult and continuing education classes in the evening.

Change was necessary and successful reform of schools and the education system would call for thinking 'outside the box' and careful examination of non-traditional areas and policies that were being successfully implemented elsewhere and could be adopted in Barbados to revolutionize the country.

Part of the problem, it was asserted, was related to the quality of teacher training and an education system which was geared towards the 3 'R's, calling and writing words, and manipulating numbers. Creative thinking and problem solving were absent from the early stages in the schools. A new curriculum should make real provision for creative thinking and creative problem-solving in the early stages. Teaching involved reading comprehension and children would be encouraged to raise questions, a process that would result in better comprehension.

The type of society we wished to achieve in the future, it was argued in a written submission, would determine the contemporary form that primary education would take. That decision would influence the type of schools and curricula we developed at the secondary level. Secondary schooling should then foster the determination of more students to seek education at a tertiary level. Such a requirement could best be met by **'whole systems planning'** as education could not be planned for in a vacuum.

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Barbados therefore needed to revisit the mission and vision of education, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the present system to arrive at quality education for all. Since the introduction of free education and the creation of the **Barbados Community College** and the **Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic**, there had been few additional changes in education. Our survival in a changed world was described as **'a miracle'.** At the same time, it would be unprofessional to see only weaknesses and no strengths. Scientific research on the system was needed to provide guidance.

In response to this submission, others argued that Barbadian society did not encourage creativity; rather, it criticized people who tried to do things differently and gave greatest credit to those who followed the status quo. A cultural change would be needed to overcome this defect.

Self Worth

A major area of concern for many at the meetings was the concept of self worth and the influence of the schools and the kind of education they offered on student self perception. A system that valued only 25% of its people, it was argued, could only be destructive and had to be removed. Conversely, change that had positive impact on the way in which students thought of themselves would also have a positive impact on Barbados as a nation.

The suggestion was made in a written submission that it would be difficult to sustain the effects of training the population to deliver excellence at all times in all sectors, particularly the service sector, when there was a system in place that negated the development of a positive self-concept and undermined the development of positive self-esteem. Rather, a system of education that placed no damaging labels on children in their formative years and allowed for the removal of stigma within vocational areas of human endeavour would provide a people with the confidence to be more entrepreneurial and creative and to excel in areas other than the traditional.

One area of change could be effected at an early point in the system through a full psychological evaluation of each child in primary school since children who were properly assessed could be given better guidance. It was seen as important that all children in schools be perceived as successful in some area or other. It was important also that children be saved from boredom by being shown the link between their academic and their regular day-to-day activities and being encouraged to be analytical.

Participants agued as well that the influence of parents was a significant contributing factor in low self-esteem in some children, especially the children of those parents who were described, by one participant, as victims of the system and, as a result, prone to stress the divisions among pupils and the need to excel. Responsibility for creating a sense of value in young children could not be left solely to Government acting through the education system. Parents needed to accept their share of responsibility and to invest heavily in their children and work together with teachers to do so.

Yet, if parents could not or did not know how to help their children, or had tried but failed, the educational authorities had to take responsibility and try to solve the problem. Several speakers cited examples where they felt the school or the Ministry had hindered their own efforts as parents to promote their children's interests and where they had suc**CEE**ded in spite, rather than with the help, of either. An example given was the extremely limited nature of the secondary school music

programme, which forced parents to pay separately if they wanted to develop a child's musical ability beyond simply playing the recorder.

Problem Areas

Critiques of the educational product centred on the policy and administration of education, and on the delivery system – both the school plant and the teaching methods. While there were voices in support of education as it was currently conducted, many more were convinced that education in Barbados needed to be upgraded, either gently or drastically. That any student could complete schooling still either completely illiterate or barely functionally literate, that some students were moving from primary to secondary school, and even to university, carrying serious unsolved problems with them was irrefutable evidence for this claim. One speaker suggested that the Criterion-Referenced[4] test in Infants B and Class 2, if structured correctly, would serve to identify most or all deficiencies that a child might have.

Based on the belief that education should go beyond academic training and focus instead on the development of the nation's children, participants argued that areas of curriculum were being taught in a void and children formed no association between the subjects they studied and between those subjects and real life. One fundamental recommendation was that literacy be redefined. The speaker gave no specifics but the implication was that the redefinition would place more emphasis on critical reading and interpretation. Additionally, it was recommended in one of the focus groups that greater emphasis be put on reading and on reorienting the teaching of writing, with a major focus on production.

The foundation of education at the primary level was weak and left room for inefficiencies. There was too high a dependence in the system on testing, even though it had been shown to be an ineffective method of evaluation. There had to be something wrong, the argument went, with expecting all children to complete the CXC syllabus over the same period of time regardless of their performance in the common entrance exam. The difficulties the children encountered were not being identified and the children were not offered assistance in a timely manner; only the 'A stream' students received genuine attention whilst others, often from deprived backgrounds and therefore more in need of support, went without the needed support. It was recommended that the concept of age education be replaced by that of stage education.

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[4] **Criterion-Referenced Test**
The Criterion - Referenced test is designed to determine the extent to which a student can effectively perform a prescribed set of tasks. The Criterion -Referenced test interpretation permits us to describe a student's test performance without referring to the performance of other students. Criterion - Referenced tests are administered in English Language and Mathematics to students in Infants B and Class 2 of the primary schools. The English test has two basic components, grammar and comprehension. At the Infants B level, the grammar component targets eight (8) sub-skills, and the comprehension component targets five (5) sub-skills. At the class 2 level the grammar component targets ten (10) sub-skills. The tests were previously written in September, but it is now proposed that they be written in May of every year. [http://www.mes.gov.bb/pageselect.cfm?page=45]

An opposing argument was that education in Barbados catered only to the average student, not to the 'high flyers', meaning the very brightest. It is a frightening thought that the two arguments could be reconciled if the A stream pupils were indeed only average.

It was further argued that more attention should be paid to 'the fate' of those who were not academically able and who slipped through the cracks in the system to reappear 'on the blocks' and in the newspaper court reports. An improved education system would aim to identify the potential of those young men, and increasingly women, and provide them the opportunity to maximize that potential while still providing a firm grounding in basic academic subjects.

On a broader, non-specific level schools were critiqued for a lack of relevance in social cohesion. While as a society we condemned prejudice, we were willing to support an academic prejudice under which a child's academic level was determined at age 11, after testing in only two subjects, and the child was then forced to live forever with that determination. The existing conditions of education had to be challenged through a wider focus that demanded that schools help provide better grounding in the life skills of parenting, relationships, and dealing with failure and disappointment, and that required a broader definition of teacher training.

Curriculum

Members of the public raised several interesting points on the issue of what would comprise an appropriate curriculum. At the policy level, a participant asked which of the two systems - Curriculum 2000, which proposed offering six levels of teaching up to 5th form, CXC and beyond; or the new **Barbados National Diploma of Secondary Education (BNDSE),** in which students would be tested at the end of the 4th year - would take precedence when conflict inevitably ensued. The speaker called for the BNDSE to be put in place promptly to allow each student to leave school with some indicator of success.

Technical and vocational education was also a major area of concern in curriculum and a remarkable number of speakers felt more should be done about technical/vocational education. There was support for a proposal from 2006 to implement a multi-pronged approach in six schools - two older and four newer secondary schools. A participant submitted in writing that it would also be an advantage to have a folk school to accommodate people interested in activities such as cooking, heritage crafts and the use of indigenous materials for costume design.

Well grounded technical and vocational training, it was argued, would help Barbados reduce dependency on imported skilled labour. Similarly there was a need for more emphasis on practical work orientation programmes, all adequately supplied with teaching aids and the kinds of materials that would encourage manipulation and hand/brain coordination. In the meantime, unfortunately, technical and vocational rooms were not being used for the purposes designed and there was a shortage of trained teachers, timetabling hours and specialized equipment in areas of vocational studies.

Other recommendations called for the establishment of a second polytechnic in the North, and for technical students to be given more access to science subjects since the two areas complemented each other. In this connection it should be noted that the Ministry had set out guidelines on including technical and vocational and science subjects in curricula and indicated that schools were

to have autonomy to make minor changes and were not expected to follow a single, fixed programme.

A former principal suggested in a written submission that the name 'skills training' be dropped as it suggested something that was inferior and thus stigmatized that part of the curriculum. A change of name to 'design centres' would hint at an atmosphere that was more creative and would be more attractive. 'Slow learner' was another abhorrent term that should be discarded. There were also suggestions for broader-based changes. Ongoing curriculum review in all subjects, with Heads of Departments and teachers undertaking leadership of the reform process, would empower the profession. The curriculum was at the core of human resource development and should be changing and dynamic. A broader curriculum would allow students more opportunity to excel in the areas they were good at.

Greater emphasis on moving education beyond the walls of the school building was also recommended. Field-trips and exchanges of artefacts between the Barbados Museum and museums abroad were among suggestions for offering students wider horizons.

Several voices in the focus group meetings called for greater use of technology in education. One argued that the debate was not on whether to introduce technology but on enhancing the sector in which the technology was used. It had to be introduced consistently and kept up to date and the Ministry had to ensure that teachers using the technology were properly qualified and that all students had access. Fast modern hardware, including multi-media equipment, using the most recent software should be made easily and readily available to teachers and students.

There was also room, the argument continued, for the use of technology in monitoring performance and in building database to track statistical information, including attendance and record keeping for both teachers and children, for further analysis and critical decision making. An alternate opinion warned that children needed interaction with humans and the overuse of technology in the schools could rob children of opportunity to develop interpersonal skills in the very the place where such skills should be learned.

Secondary and primary students, when asked in their own focus groups what they would like to see added to their curricula, suggested a thoughtful list that included 'more interesting subjects', such as astronomy, chemistry in primary schools, craft, dance and drama, education about growing up and changes occurring to their bodies, engineering, French in primary schools, gardening, home-keeping, history, information technology, parenting skills, and woodwork. There were requests for more singing and more needlework, suggesting that some students liked the practical things in their curriculum; and a call for agriculture beyond simple gardening, possibly to the level of **CXC.**

Students also wanted more practical career-oriented programmes like weaving, art information technology, small appliance technology, cosmetology and hairstyling, and where possible to have these coupled with job attachments in hotels, landscaping businesses, and service providers. They also wanted computers and science labs. Some primary pupils wanted to be exposed to more of the secondary school curriculum to be better prepared for the eventual change over.

Several primary pupils displayed impressive depth of thought. One far-sighted boy asked that boys be taught home economics "because when they get big and get a girlfriend, she wouldn't have to cook all the time." The logic behind this kind of thinking was reinforced by a girl's observation that,

Adults think that children['s] … minds are too young to know more information about certain things but that is not fair because our minds are big enough to hold possibly anything. We would like to know more but adults don't understand that.

Syllabus

Many of the critiques and recommendations raised in the meetings for improvement of the syllabus were summarized in an eloquent, well thought out delivery at one of the meetings. The speaker argued that the system of education founded in the colonial era might have served well for producing raw materials but was no longer adequate for preparing our students for survival and success in the era of changes forced upon us by the World Trade Organization and similar re-definitions of world order.

A new curriculum would place more emphasis on enjoying the learning process and less on testing and results. It would incorporate the teaching of entrepreneurial skills using areas such as sports where we often excel. The training in sports would be taken far more seriously and used to teach cooperation skills. Other subjects needed to be similarly expanded and more fully exploited – teaching religious knowledge should go beyond teaching only Christian doctrine and help students appreciate the values of other faiths; the history of the region that is currently taught should be fully re-evaluated; a revamped course in civics to include everyday issues that are often neglected - the environment, gender, ageing; a new attitude to other languages in a region where more people speak either Spanish or French than speak English.

There were also calls for more space in the syllabus in every school for agricultural education, including hands-on experience in school gardens, especially important in light of the current global food crisis. One participant recommended the teaching of English as a foreign language should be considered to avoid repercussions from children being unable to acquire the necessary language skills and articulacy.

Extracurricular Activities

There was considerable concern over the content and organization of extra-curricular activities. In general speakers were in favour of extra-curricular activities with suggestions that they be made mandatory. There was support for students enrolling in service organizations where they would learn to give back to the community, and would grow in self confidence and presence, even after relatively short periods of involvement. One speaker expressed her anxiety, though, that predators might use extracurricular activities to gain access to young boys and girls.

Providing activities, equipment and facilities for students on the school premises would also have the advantage of encouraging them to spend more time on the compound and away from unwholesome influences. The main concern expressed over extra-curricular activities centred on their organization. Students who were catching two buses back to their homes in the afternoon or were already experiencing other difficulty with transportation would be placed at further

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disadvantage, asked either to be on the road during late hours or to forego activities from which they could benefit.

Sports were popular with pupils, as they noted in their focus groups, but were sometimes not taken seriously enough by the schools. A school might concentrate on winning athletic sports sometimes to the detriment of both athletes and other pupils, with pupils often at the mercy of the decisions of the individual teacher who might either refuse to give make-up classes for those who lost tuition in training for sports or could take an entire class back over the part of the syllabus missed by athletes.

Recommendations

There were many suggestions put forward for improvements to the system of education in Barbados. The majority centred on the curriculum offered to students and the ways in which they were shepherded through the years of schooling. Much concern was expressed over moving students almost automatically from class to class at the end of the year and several alternatives were proposed. At the same time, several speakers recognized that there had been many good ideas put forward in the past for reforms – some of which had never been implemented. The more substantial recommendations are listed below:

- *Design a curriculum that accepts the inherent inclinations of students and responds to their ability to assimilate and grow. Individual students have different talents to offer the society and could not all be grouped together and expected to produce identical results and it is important for the educational system to expand into all those areas where children could realize their potential and develop through access to information that is current and relevant, support from an education that teaches them to interpret information, and access to opportunity to initiate practice and benefit from that education.*

- *Gear the curriculum to specialized skills and thus offer students varying opportunity to nurture their talents. Each would respond differently to specific influences and have access to the mental and physical stimulation that was their right. The success of this recommendation would require recognizing each child's appropriate skill and offering the child opportunity to develop. The low likelihood that such skills could be revealed by age 11 had major implication for early childhood education and for the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary education.*

- *Allow pupils to move from primary to secondary on a zonal basis for a given number of years, then to transfer to another school with individual-appropriate curriculum – arts, sciences, professions - to receive their fourth- and fifth-form level education and, where relevant, continue on to the sixth-form or transfer to the **SJPP** or **BCC**. Students who inclined to options that were not available should be offered the alternative of continuing whatever available education they find acceptable while working. Such a system would end the scramble for **CEE** results by assuring each student an equal opportunity and would raise the efficiency of the education system by providing alternatives for and helping to maximize the potential of people who are not now accommodated by the system.*

- *Offer nine years of general education with the same basic teaching provided for all up to age 13, followed by four years of specialized teaching where students would be allowed to move into the areas where they felt best suited and would likely achieve best results. Specialized training could also be provided in specialized centres.*

- Create a new teaching environment with five levels:
    - *Nursery – up to age 2½*
    - *Pre-primary – up to age 6*
    - *Primary – up to age 10*
    - *Mid-secondary – up to age 13*
    - *Senior secondary – ages 13-18*

- *Implement zoning in stages 1 to 3 with children working at their own speed, with teachers who would cater to individual needs. In this structure, responsibility for early education would be transferred to the Ministry of Education from the* **Child Care Board***; teaching and learning would be individualized, accompanied by psychological assessment that would be common place in all schools. Senior schools would be built according to demographic need.*

- *Include trade schools to accommodate the potential skilled artisans, simultaneously removing the stigma attached to education that was considered to be non-academic.*

- *Consider all education as elitist, in the sense of aiming for only the best, with centres of excellence with a wide and applied curriculum in areas such as Sports, including sports management, sports broadcasting, applied physical sciences; Arts, including visual arts and performing arts, producing, conservation sciences; Personal Services such as grooming and cosmetic services, services that fit into the tourism sector; Agriculture; and Trades. An additional aim would be to provide a less fragmented system at reduced costs. Here it was noted that the country currently had no economists of education to calculate either current costs of education, including costs incurred by those who pay to take exams privately, or the value of potential savings.*

- *Include the teaching of values such as innovation and entrepreneurship, tolerance, and individualism and teamwork; the development of articulation and professionalism; and learning to compete and yet not be consumed by competition.*

- *Place increased emphasis on life skills in school curricula in determining the child's ability and successful performance.*

- *Implement the Health and Family Life Education programme as a mandatory element in all schools across Barbados.*

- *Articulate a clear and common policy on education to guide the administration of all schools in Barbados.*

2.4 Discipline in Schools

Many of the contributors suggested that indiscipline in schools had affected the delivery of education, citing a number of contributing factors including school size and layout, the absence of male teachers, lack of parental support, neglect of religion, the societal dimension, teachers' influence and teacher to student ratio. Corporal punishment was the area that received the most attention and it was also the most contentious.

There was general agreement in the focus group discussions that there was a problem of discipline in the schools and it was often stated that some of the causes were to be found in the family and the community. Similarly it was often said that the early symptoms of the problems that became apparent in the secondary schools might have been noticed as early as in the primary school but, in the absence of resources to detect or to treat the problems, they remained unaddressed. The primary schools therefore needed to have the resources that would enable detection and possibly targeted intervention at an early stage. Follow-up of this kind would require that educational and school authorities be able to transfer files on children as they moved from primary to secondary.

It was suggested that some facility, like a hostel, was needed for those pupils who were currently being put back into the same home environment, sometimes with parents who were clearly drug users, after a period at the Edna Nicholls Centre. The Minister said that he had already been thinking of such an institution for such students, with a period of stay exceeding a year if necessary, to bring about that transformation, and to do so in a way that would counter any idea of stigma connected to attending the institution.

Asked for their ideas on discipline, the reaction of pupils ranged across remarkable maturity, self-preservation and what seemed like mirroring of the precepts of their parents and teachers. Discipline was interpreted as self-control, knowing what behaviour was appropriate or, in their own words, 'knowing what to do when', and being mannerly.

School Environment

It was suggested that the student population of secondary schools was too large, making it difficult to control the students and ensure good discipline and a minimum of violent behaviour. Schools should have no more than 500 students. Another problem was the 1:40 ratio of teacher to students in some schools. The actions and behaviours of teachers were also factors which some participants felt could have an impact on students for life. Standards, they argued, needed to be set from the top to the bottom. The emphasis should be on sound education, a sound mind, sound behaviour and a sound disposition.

The participants felt that the lack of individual classrooms in many primary schools presented problems. They suggested that teachers often spanked children unnecessarily to keep them quiet in such situations. However, they acknowledged that it was unrealistic to expect teachers to deliver or interact with children in an environment of shared classrooms.

The absence of male teachers was posited as another factor promoting indiscipline. Boys responded better to males than females in authority. The presence of men in secondary schools was critical to instilling proper discipline and controlling students' behaviour, it was suggested. Some teachers themselves were indisciplined which also contributed to indiscipline in students.

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Corporal punishment

The issue of corporal punishment generated a great deal of vociferous discussion at most of the meetings, both in opposition and support. One participant was especially opposed to corporal punishment and presented a comprehensive set of arguments against its practice, namely:

- *It is anachronistic to continue to support flogging, which is a form of violence and a breach of the human rights code. Despite this, it continued to be the default form of discipline, often inflicted by teachers impulsively and as a means of venting their frustration.*

- *The continued existence of flogging in schools represented a failure of the legal system to extend protection against violence not only to adults but to children who needed it most. It was an example of unequal protection under the law and constituted the modern application of otherwise discarded ideas of the right of masters to hit servants or husbands to hit wives.*

- *Parents often felt intimidated by the power of the school system and were reluctant to confront it by asserting their right to request that their children not be flogged, even when it conflicted with and negated their methods of parenting. Flogging undermined the authority of such parents, created resentment in the child against the school and could be a platform for conflict between teachers and parents.*

- *Collective corporal punishment sent the wrong message to the children who were well-behaved.*

- *Paediatricians could attest to the vulnerability of young people's body tissue to harm and damage from physical punishment.*

The speaker also hoped that the education system could develop non-violent forms of discipline and re-educate away from the idea that hitting children was a right and duty. Other speakers who disagreed with corporal punishment stressed that beating in school perpetrated a cycle of violence and that children could be disciplined without force. Methods similar to those in the USA could be used, where it was not even acceptable to speak to children in angry tones. However, for this to be successful, teachers would need to have a different mindset. It was also asserted that real discipline derived from self-discipline, not through corporal punishment. Evidence of this was the fact that there were schools that did not allow corporal punishment yet exhibited good academic performance and no record of criminal behaviour.

Turning to the **Education Act**, some participants felt that it left too much to the teachers' discretion in relation to corporal punishment. Counter to this was the argument that education officials had taken away the power of the teacher to administer corporal punishment when necessary. Another argument in support of corporal punishment was the absence of sensible alternatives. The alternative, it was suggested, was wilful disobedience or children who disrupted classes. On the other hand, corporal punishment, judiciously and appropriately applied in the 1st and 2nd forms, would produce respectful and disciplined students.

The schoolchildren similarly recognized the need for external discipline and that it was the duty of teachers to exercise control in the schools and, where necessary, to administer punishment. Children

had a sense that some major offences, such as throwing stones with the intent to hurt or injure, gross disrespect to teachers or to the mothers of other children, stealing of substantial items or amounts, deserved corporal punishment.

Indeed, in one of the focus groups a surprising 60% of the pupils thought corporal punishment should be used in school. Among the justifications children used were ideas such as 'if you don't hear you would feel' or 'if you can't hear this way or that way, that is the only way he would hear'. Another pupil felt that while children might misinterpret flogging as a sign that the teacher didn't like them, corporal punishment could in fact be a way of showing appreciation of the pupil.

Despite the statistic, though, the children deeply resented unfair punishments and humiliation and being used as an outlet for what they saw as the personal frustrations of the teachers. Some of their comments are revealing:

- *Teachers come to school with a bag of problems and take it out on the children.*

- *The teachers are too strict, always picking on you instead of talking to you and making you understand.*

One boy objected to corporal punishment on what might at first seem a weak argument but which, on careful consideration, addresses the root of the issue. "It hurts," he said.

The children also displayed depth of thought about corporal punishment. Starting from a simple "…sometimes I feel children need a beating…", they went on to show they clearly understood that frequent beating was not going to be a successful method because "… it only hurts for a little while and then I forget and do the same thing, … there are different ways to punish a child." Flogging children, they felt, could lead to anger and a desire to retaliate.

Generally children saw corporal punishment as a grave response and not appropriate for a wide range of minor infringements. The willingness of teachers to flog for even the smallest of offences was therefore particularly disturbing. Small offences such as 'dropping your pencil', 'breaking [someone's] pencil', 'throwing stones in trees or on the roof', 'giving wrong answers' could be punished by being made to replace the loss, by a loss of privileges or by having to do community service like being made to clean blackboards, straighten furniture or tidy the classroom.

Frequently, the children raised the topic of teachers sitting with them to explain right from wrong and to guide by encouragement. "Teachers should also discuss problems with children," they said, and "…talk with children to try to see what the real problem is." Consequently their comments showed great appreciation of teachers who they felt cared about and wanted to protect them.

Pupils expected the school to take care of them and were disappointed when it appeared otherwise. "The Principal should also tell the teachers to be disciplined," they said. They felt teachers ought to set the example they expected the children to follow. One child said, "They have to keep us under control but they don't need to shout at us," and another followed this with, "Some teachers in the schools should go to anger management". Another child's deep frustration emerged from this comment,

Teachers shouldn't beat children over things like dropping your pencil because they make those mistakes too. They wouldn't like it if they drop a piece of chalk and all of a sudden a child rushes up to them with piece of stick and start hitting them. So why are they doing it to us?

In the face of what they considered improper teacher behaviour, the children looked to higher authority for protection. While some felt that no teacher should have the right to hit them, others would require the school to seek the written permission of the parent to flog. Others wanted the authority to use corporal punishment restricted to the principal and senior teachers, implying they saw these as demonstrating greater maturity and fairness.

Even while accepting the validity of punishment for major offences, the children were capable of analysis that seemed beyond their years. One boy rejected the administering of corporal punishment for fighting because "… corporal punishment itself can be taken as a form of fighting. Serious fights should be punished with suspension or expulsion, or even bringing in the police." Other children simply refused to accept corporal punishment as valid. One girl argued, "It is against the law to hit an animal or an adult. Why not to hit a child?"

Asked what things they felt they should be punished for they listed violence, fighting and bringing to school weapons. They felt cell phones should be banned from school if they were being misused but had not noticed a problem with cell phones and had not witnessed wide use of phones for pornography. They recognized that cell phones did not create the problem and therefore banning them would not constitute a solution. All technology could be used for good or bad and cell phones were useful in cases of emergency.

Asked about their response to what they considered unfair punishment, the children generally felt angry and powerless. A typical answer was a blunt, "I feel really angry." Another girl's response was more complex. "I just feel like getting back at them, doing things to hurt them…" Her follow-up comment should cause reflection on the view that children bring their lack of discipline from the home. "But my mother was telling me manners maketh man …," she continued, but ultimately did not have the strength of character, "…but sometimes I does can't take it and I must say back something."

Parental support/Discipline in Home

Lack of parental support for actions taken by the school and lack of proper training in the home were identified as two contributing factors to indiscipline. The participants felt that stronger positive parental influence would solve many of the problems surrounding indiscipline and that there was a need for parental training. They opined that the school was increasingly becoming a hostile environment with growing aggression among students towards teachers. One problem was a lack of support from parents who, rather than lodging a complaint with the Ministry, could be aggressive and abusive towards teachers on the school compound. They showed little respect for the Principal or Deputy Principal thus sending negative messages to children. The children in the focus group discussions felt that much of the indiscipline in schools came out of the home environment, including what was seen on television, and from what was observed in the community around them.

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Other influences

Asked what they thought contributed to indiscipline, the children attributed the problems to their environment – the community and peer pressure. They also felt some of the causes of indiscipline lay in the schools. Collective punishment was singled out as it could cause those who were well behaved to think they might as well behave badly. Some of the responsibility also fell to teachers and the way they conducted themselves in and out of the classroom, and in their class management.

The pupils felt that introduction of free travel for school children on Transport Board buses had led to more children using the school bus but no marked improvement in punctuality, with some students using the bus merely as a way of saving money. Some still limed about town waiting on the minibuses, with the 'right' music. Pupils also felt that behaviour had improved but that some children still behaved as they always had.

While the free bus rides had had a positive impact, some students lived in areas which the Transport Board did not service and were obliged to catch mini-buses and ZRs. It was noted at the same time that not all buses played the same kind of music or had the same influence on students. Some students also pointed out the need to remember that it was adults who were driving the vans and playing the music and thus were creating the undesired influences for which students were often bl

Violence in Schools

The focus group participants stated that the violence in schools was generally accepted as a microcosm of violence in the wider society. Children had begun to believe that the alternative of violence and the life associated with it was the right way and it had become the duty of the schools to be the agency to show an alternative. Training in conflict management had to be intensified in the schools and in the entire society.

Teachers were being forced to spend too much time trying to calm students and dissipate conflict arising out of substance abuse, the negative subculture and violence. More counsellors were needed in both primary and secondary schools and more research on violence and on violent children was needed to identify the background that led to violence. It was suggested that the earliest intervention for violence and indiscipline might have to take place at the reception stage.

Policy makers had contributed to the social fallout in schools by allowing too much latitude and reducing the authority of teachers in the classroom. Responsibility was to be encouraged, recognizing that rights were rights only as far as the law allowed. At the same time, as a signatory party, Barbados was obliged to abide by several international conventions.

At the same time, there were existing mechanisms to control violence and indiscipline in schools and those responsible had to have the courage and the will to use such measures as peer mediation, guidance counselling, psychiatric counselling and testing, and 'the hot stove effect' of discipline. More creative ways of disciplining were needed but corporal punishment should be retained.

To ensure the security of children and teachers metal detectors might have to be considered in intercepting the weapons which children might bring to school. Security guards would become very necessary at all schools and protected zone would have to be created with the perimeter fenced to reduce the flow of pedestrian traffic onto the school compound.

The level of violence in schools had repercussions for other than the children. In keeping with the trade union rights of teachers, the onus lay with the owner of premises and the employer to ensure that facilities were safe for all. Teachers who were threatened or who found the working environment not conducive to daily functioning could seek court protection. Similarly, dissatisfied parents would have a legitimate grievance against the state, as the law that made school compulsory could be seen to be forcing parents to send their children into a danger zone.

Students showed awareness that violence or the potential for violence was everywhere. None seemed to feel completely safe in the schools or on the way to and from school and generally used caution in getting from place to place and in their daily activities. Asked how safe they felt, their replies ranged from 'partially safe' to 'no place is really safe' to 'I know how to defend myself'. They were aware of specific threats inside the school. Bullying was present in all schools, whether in the form of direct violence, taking of money or constant verbal abuse, and the bigger boys were specifically seen as a threat. "People want to bully the people that can't defend themselves and try to take away their money." This could have harmful long-term effects if students felt they had to carry a weapon for self-protection, as well as if those who retaliated were seen as heroes.

Pupils also understood that some children brought weapons to school because they felt there was no one to protect them and that they could rely only on themselves. Several pupils had seen weapons, either implements designed to be weapons or makeshift items that pupils turned into weapons. One pupil referred to the practice of hiding weapons on the school premises in case they were needed.

Others sources of fear included those children who were too easily influenced by the music they heard in the vans, and which then led to fighting. Free bus rides were not a solution in those areas serviced only by **ZR** vans or minibuses. Children also worried about violence from surrounding areas spilling onto the school grounds and they feared violent parents who came to the schools to attack teachers. School premises were felt to be more unsafe in the evenings when fewer teachers would be around.

An issue arose out of the discussion with the children that deserves specific mention. Children felt more secure in schools with higher numbers of male teachers as they felt that female teachers should not be called upon to part fights. In their experience, female teachers justifiably preferred to keep far from fights and to call for outside support.

Students were clearly aware of the quality of neighbourhoods they lived in or travelled through to reach their schools. "There is always violence on the streets," one said. Two other primary school pupils named specific districts and commented, "_____ is a place with a lot of gangs". Even in schools in rural settings that were more likely to be isolated from gangs and violence, students still feared that even a small disagreement could turn into a gang matter. Students felt safer in schools that were well fenced and had security guards who were conscientious and met people coming onto the school premises. If necessary, security guards would have to call in the police. A single guard was not considered adequate because even the most attentive would occasionally have to leave the gate or guard hut on some matter of security. Those guards who only sat and did nothing or constantly talked on the phone inspired no confidence in the children. Similarly with fencing, the children were contemptuous of fences that were too low and easily jumped or climbed; or that people in the surrounding districts frequently cut in order to use the school grounds as a short cut or to dump rubbish. Children also wanted to see more police security around the schools and even to have surveillance cameras installed.

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Apart from security measures, some schools were using training programmes focussing on attitudes and behaviour, on preparing for work and on conflict and anger management. Success was limited where students chose not to attend the programmes because of peer pressure.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to improve discipline in primary and secondary schools in Barbados.

- *Introduce programmes that could result in a reduction in the supply of and demand for weapons and drugs in schools, encompassing security measures such as enclosed school compounds, security cameras and metal detectors at entrances; background checks on all school staff; a dedicated school-bus system; and universal drug awareness education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, for both students and teachers. These programmes should extend so far as to incorporate changes in the legal system, for instance removing the right to legal aid for drug-related offenders.*

- *Introduce reformatory institutions, properly staffed and with remedial and residential facilities, to address the issue of children with problems too severe for the mainstream schools to handle. To fully exploit these institutions there would need to be sufficient and involved guidance counsellors in every school, including primary schools, and compulsory personality testing for children.*

- *Establish a home or a residential camp with counsellors on board to adequately deal with the issues which threaten troubled children. In this current system, children go to the Edna Nicholls Centre for counselling after they have been suspended from school. In most cases, these children need to be removed from their home environment in order for this programme to be more effective.*

- *Introduce an alternative programme for students with behavioural and emotional problems, namely an Alternative Day School and an Alternative Classroom Programme/Behaviour Improvement Classroom. These would focus on offering education to those who would otherwise be unable to access it or who might otherwise be alienated from schooling.*

- *Commission a study with input from a trained criminologist on the nature and management of flogging, looking particularly at the impact of the acceptance of flogging on behaviours, relationships, the magnitude and nature of flogging and identifying children most at risk.*

- *Conduct research on violence and violent children to identify the background that leads to violence.*

- *Review and circulate the draft Students' Code of Discipline to primary and secondary schools for comments. All principals as well as the Ministry of Education should be part of this 'contract' when finalized.*

- *Revise the instructions on corporal punishment which exclude collective corporal punishment as an option.*

- *Put in place regulations that speak to the manner in which flogging should be done. Barbados as a community has to decide that if it will not end flogging in school, it has to control it.*

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- *Provide teacher training prior to inducting them into the classroom so that they have the skills to identify problems in the children who misbehave.*

- *Re-educate teachers and parents about using positive child-rearing practices and non-violent forms of discipline in homes, schools and institutions.*

- *Intervene earlier for violence and indiscipline, possibly from as early as reception stage and train teachers to deal with the related issues such as anger management, violent behaviour, conflict resolution.*

- *Examine and improve the teacher/pupil ratio – there is a correlation between size and discipline.*

- *Provide guidance counsellors in primary schools and increase the number in secondary schools.*

- *Hand back power to teachers by giving them back authority in the classroom*

- *Improve the relationship between the home, school and church, with the church playing a greater role. The Barbados Christian Council is willing to offer assistance with regards to the reintegration of religion into the school curriculum since there are some core values which children must be taught.*

- *Provide community centres so children could play safely after school; this would also help to build stronger relationships and a better community.*

- *Let children go to schools as close as possible to their homes – this would keep them off the vans and help to reduce bad behaviour.*

- *Re-emphasize discipline in the educational system since Barbados, as a society, lacks discipline.*

- *Explore alternatives to suspending or expelling 16-year-olds who are not yet able to make a valid contribution to themselves or their societies.*

- *Ensure that dialogue and due process are observed when students are suspended from school.*

- *Institute more creative ways of disciplining but retain corporal punishment.*

- *Abolish corporal punishment in schools.*

2.5 Quality Education for Students with Special Needs

The issue of quality education for children with special needs was given a great deal of attention throughout the national consultation by a number of stakeholders The primary focus was on children with learning challenges but the issue of gifted children was also raised.

The last National Census (2000) estimated that there were nearly 14,000 people with disabilities. The stakeholders felt that it was necessary to know how disability was defined in the census and they

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suggested that the information should be disaggregated by categories such as type of disability, age, and gender as well as level of education and employment. Accurate census information was important since this could be used to assist the disabled and inform policy, including on education.

The participants in the focus groups noted that children with disabilities faced many challenges today more so than when they were children. They suggested, however, that attitudes towards people with disabilities were changing and becoming more positive but that they needed more opportunities to advance educationally and professionally. They gave support for the integration of children with special needs into "normal" schools.

Role of teachers and other professionals

The role of teachers in identifying children with special needs was a particular concern. The presenters at the Town Hall Meetings felt that teachers were in a position for early identification of children who needed special care and attention in terms of their behaviour and social development. Early diagnosis and interventions could address some problems, especially since it was important to make right diagnoses between ages 3-8. To ensure early identification, all schools should have at least one teacher trained to identify children with specific challenges. Teacher training was crucial not only in recognizing problems but in working with children with special needs. Special Needs training should become compulsory at Erdiston Teachers' Training College.

The focus group participants argued that there were not enough teachers trained in special education or sensitive to the issues. It was noted however that often those teachers who had been trained were not deployed to the schools for children with special needs, few of whom got the opportunity to take **CXC** or **CAPE** exams. Teachers in regular education had resisted being placed in the special needs programme and the Ministry, in discussion with the Barbados Union of Teachers, had agreed not to deploy them in special needs. Special needs teachers believed that they were not taken seriously in the mainstream of education.

Erdiston College also needed to address the attitudes of teachers and instructors if they were to deliver quality education to children with special needs. Another problem stemmed from teachers being under pressure to teach the overloaded syllabus, which could result in their ignoring the children with learning disabilities. The schoolchildren recognised that slow learners needed exceptionally patient teachers as they learned 'at a different speed'. In at least one school slow children were taken out of mixed ability classes and put in classes where teachers worked specially with them.

Sign language was another suggested area for teacher training. This would result in more pupils being accommodated in mainstream schools. Alternatively, there should at least be volunteer interpreters to work alongside teachers.

Another issue was the labelling of children. Some presenters felt that too many labels were placed on children and this could sometimes have negative connotations. For example, **'dyslexic'** could be applied as a negative label on children who were not performing or who were behaving badly. Rather than being helped, the children could regress.

The focus group participants suggested that there were several challenges to be met involving a re-evaluation of special needs education. The same level of performance was being asked of all children

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but some were unable to cope, leading to disciplinary problems. A method therefore had to be found for identifying special needs students, some of whom were still being placed in mainstream classes, and for providing them with programmes that were diverse and not solely focused on reading, writing and arithmetic.

Learning Environment

At the town hall meetings, the presenters identified the learning environment, related to student: teacher ratio, as problematic. Although the numbers of children with special learning needs were increasing in primary schools, there had been little progress made in teaching them. In private institutions there were small numbers (4-5 children per teacher) and teachers could be creative in getting children to learn. Having 10 special needs children to one teacher was difficult since special education children often needed one-on-one attention. The government needed to look at the ratio of teachers to pupils in its schools and help to promote the private schools which often had healthier ratios.

The teaching methods and numbers of children in primary school classes were also a concern to the presenters since while children learned in different ways, there was little or no scope for individual learning. Children with special needs, who should be allowed to learn at their own pace, were subjected to the same test as the others at the end of Class 4. They then went on to secondary school where the inappropriate teaching recurred in an environment not conducive to learning, including large classes, other non-functioning children and a curriculum that must be strictly followed. Teachers were under pressure to teach some 15 topics when they knew that the children could handle one only.

It was also noted that at primary school, children with special needs and learning disabilities were often crammed into a single room and this represented the beginning of problems for them. They easily became distracted, resulting in disruptive behaviour. The system was in effect setting them on a path of destruction and collision with the law. It was therefore recommended that classrooms for Reception and Nursery should be smaller, with no more than 10 students in classes for those with learning disabilities.

The participants also had concerns about the curriculum. They asserted that the curriculum needed to be geared towards assisting children with special needs to develop academically and vocationally. Without this, many were left feeling that they were inadequate. The gap between special needs and mainstream education was described as a travesty. The quality of education offered to the hearing impaired, for example, was far below par. A culture had been created where the hearing impaired could communicate among themselves but not with others. It was suggested that sign language should be added to the curriculum in all primary schools to enable more communication with people with hearing impairment. However, there was a caution that sign language was inadequate in helping the hearing impaired to understand whole passages of text since it could not accommodate all teaching requirements and the students often found it difficult to communicate in whole sentences.

Some facilities offering special education did not meet the highest standards. However, parents often had little choice but to accept what they could afford. A total reassessment and restructuring was therefore necessary to meet the constitutional rights of children.

Transfer from primary to secondary

Transfer from primary to secondary school was a special area of concern in relation to children with special needs. Town hall meeting presenters noted that although there were several primary schools with special education units, children had to leave at ages 13-14. Some went on to **The Ann Hill School** which could only house fewer than half of the children from the special units. If they gained admission to the **Children's Development Centre (CDC)**, they could stay there for only two years. In either case, since the Education Act made education compulsory to age 16, parents had either to home school their children or send them to private schools. With special education costing from $400 to $1,200 a month, some parents have to give up working to stay at home to look after their children. Parents could secure a bursary from Government for a child with special needs if they obtained a psychological assessment, at their own expense, but the bursary was completely inadequate for private schools. The government and the private sector, it was felt, needed to contribute more to the area of education for special needs.

The bursaries for students with special needs who attended the **Barbados Community College** and **UWI** should be increased to cover items such as software and technical aids. A disability fund could be established for this purpose. The Challenor School was still the only school for children with severe challenges and another secondary school was therefore needed for intellectually challenged children.

The 11+ examination, it was argued, forced teachers to teach for that examination and to cover the syllabus and they often overlooked and neglected special needs children and stragglers. As a result, teachers often did not like to teach children with special needs. The solution was to de-emphasize the 11+ and allow teachers to reduce the pace at which they felt they needed to teach and to give quality education. One speaker said her daughter was diagnosed as dyslexic but she preferred not to think of her as a candidate for special needs education. She complimented the Ministry on allowing hearing impaired children to take the **11+ exam,** which required specially trained people to relay instructions to the candidates, but she felt the Ministry should also allow dyslexic pupils who required a reader to have one accompany them to take the exam.

The focus groups noted that some children with disabilities came out of the school system not having done the **CEE or CXC** although they had the ability whereas there were some who would never be able to take these examinations no matter how much work was done with them. Presenters expressed concern about those that performed well at the **CEE** but whose progress was not recognized. The Ministry set no mandate for recognizing children and it was therefore possible to highlight only the prize-winners although special education children were often more creative than children in academic streams.

One presenter asserted that children with learning challenges and disabilities who were discarded in Barbados' educational system could achieve with the right approaches. The presenter shared her experiences with her son who was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia and was of above average intelligence. Research suggested that 2-10% of the population, largely males, had dyspraxia. If it was not recognized, it could lead to secondary problems and the child might suffer very low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. Children with dyspraxia did not perform well under stress so that the current methods of examination were inappropriate for them. One suggested solution that clinical psychologists advocated was that at least part of the **11+ examination** should be done orally.

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After secondary school, there was little to stimulate special needs children or encourage them to progress further. Initially students did not require **CXC** certificates to enter the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. To demand certificates now would merely impede the academically weak students, who were most likely to benefit from learning a skill and remove their motivation and encourage delinquency.

A written submission expressed concern that these children requiring additional attention were transferred from primary to secondary level to continue to be largely ignored by the teaching population, driven purely by a lack of adequate training. This rejection often fostered depression, feelings of rejection by society and eventual anger in some instances. Sometimes this anger produced negative elements in the society, as these individuals became contributors towards deviant behaviour.

Role of Parents

The role of parents was seen as a critical factor in relation to special needs children and many presenters felt that the system should also cater to parents. Identification by the parents was critical since many of them did not know how or were unable to support their children with special needs and were often even unaware of where to access any available resources and information. The focus group with the disabled community stressed the importance of parents taking an interest in their children. Some parents did not understand how the child with a disability functioned in the school setting and teachers in a school with special needs children should therefore work with the parents, informing them about what they were doing, so the parents could continue working with the child at home. Consistency was paramount so the teachers and the parents must work together to reinforce training and discipline. Over time both teacher and parents would see the child becoming more successful.

One parent with a physically disabled son noted a number of challenges faced by parents such as transportation, wheelchair accessibility in schools, teacher aides to assist the physically and mentally disabled child and support for parents. He suggested that Government should repair the old Transport Board buses and give them to schools to help with the transportation problem. The five buses that the disabled community reportedly rejected should also be given to schools that cater to physically challenged children.

Categories

The Special Needs categorization must be more closely defined to accommodate the needs of specific children, with special needs assessed in categories beyond merely being mentally or physically challenged. A child with brain damage could not be treated in the same way as a dyslexic child. More careful categorization could also be applied to students who were inclined more towards areas such as carpentry, masonry, mechanics, hairdressing, etc. To this end, teachers should try to identify the strengths of students and to channel them in the direction in which they were inclined, thus reducing the number of students who leave school uncertified.

Discipline in schools

The focus group participants noted that the negative behaviour among young people was extending to those with disabilities. There were, for example, complaints about bad behaviour in the bus stands in particular by boys from the Ann Hill School. Other reports were that the children from both the Ann Hill and Irving Wilson schools sometimes beat the younger students in the bus stand. One person shared that a friend's son had been doing well but regressed after attending Ann Hill, becoming extremely violent, even towards his mother who had had to arrange private transportation because of his violent behaviour on the school bus. In some cases, other students might not know that a child had a learning disability or emotional problem and might not recognize that the inappropriate behaviour was due to the disability.

It was noted that some special needs children were born into dysfunctional households and faced verbal, sexual and physical abuse. They often ended up venting their feelings and frustrations through deviant behaviour.

Testing and identification

The focus group participants indicated that Government had a diagnostic/assessment programme for people with disabilities enabling early diagnosis. However, there should be ongoing assessment, even for adults, as the costs of private assessment were very high. They stressed the importance of assessing children before the transition from primary to secondary school. In contrast, the presenters at the town hall meetings stated that was no routine early testing of children for conditions like dyslexia, attention deficit disorder **(ADD)** or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (**ADHD),** even though the tests were not cost-prohibitive. Bi-polar disorder often went undiagnosed. They argued that there were enough special needs children for there to be a special focus and more strategies to address the issue. All schools should have at least one teacher who could identify children with specific challenges, as well as a clinical psychologist.

Support services

The participants in the focus group discussions as well as the presenters at town hall meetings felt that the support services in both private and public schools were inadequate for children with special needs, many of whom would not be able to reach their full potential. A range of support services was needed including both human and technical resources. Some of the human resources identified were guidance counsellors, teacher's aides/assistants, social workers, clinical psychologists and special needs teachers. Children whose parents could not afford to send them to private facilities were excluded from schooling on the basis of a disability. A situation was described of discrimination against children diagnosed with profound mental and physical challenges and low functioning autism who presented a special challenge to the educational system. For example, children who could not go to the bathroom on their own or those who were incontinent were typically viewed as 'not the responsibility of the Ministry of Education'. Students with disabilities did not receive adequate support in order to access general education.

Provision should be made for those with learning disabilities so that adequate extra lessons and assistance from special education teachers could be facilitated. In addition, **there should be more than one Special Needs Officer in the Ministry of Education.**

The technical resources included computers with Braille for the blind and visually impaired, telephone typewriters and computers with software for the hearing impaired. Strong support was needed particularly for those children who were going into secondary school and moving to the tertiary level to help them go through the various transitional stages.

The young people seemed impressed that their respective schools went out of the way to provide for the students with special needs. For example, two deaf girls had a trained person to accompany them and to translate in class; a sign language group was set up so students could learn to communicate with them; the Ministry established a compulsory programme in sign language for teachers (not all of whom took part) and a wheelchair user had her own bathroom and a special chair and buildings were made accessible to her. In addition, at least one school established peer tutoring and the students felt that this helped those with special needs feel included and helped to reduce disruption in the classroom. One school established a *Tek Back Programme*, teaching masonry and carpentry for the less academic and providing job attachments.

The **MEHRD** was complimented for its support of the two impaired students who attended the Garrison Secondary School. A teacher from the Irvin Wilson School was placed at the school to sign for them and was there every day with them to communicate between students and teachers so they could get their work done and participate and have access education. This could be used as a model to be replicated.

Representatives from the private schools indicated that although catering to students with special needs was a drain on the school's resources, they continued to do it out of compassion. They needed some financial assistance from the Government particularly at the primary level to ensure that special needs students were better served.

Curriculum and nation building

The focus group participants stated that apart from the Learning Centre, the Ann Hill School and the Challenor School, there was nowhere for young people with disabilities to further their education. There was no accessible training or continuous stimulation, resulting in most of them staying at home. In addition, while in the school system, they were not encouraged or motivated. Some who were given the opportunity to get further training and sit **CXCs** and pursue vocational programmes after leaving school excelled in these areas. This suggested that the curriculum and the method of teaching in the school system needed examining.

The focus group stressed that persons/children with disabilities must be given opportunities to excel in their area of specialty. Some were being neglected and pushed aside and became frustrated as well as suffered from low self-esteem. As a result, they might not take advantage of available opportunities. More support was needed to develop their skills and abilities and the Ministry's role should be to identify their strengths and weaknesses. When the strengths were emphasized the person excelled since 'nothing breeds success like success'.

Retraining and education for self-sustainability was needed for people who acquired a disability. However, the training must be appropriate to the needs and abilities of the person.

There were people who had done well at the school for the deaf or hearing impaired, had gone on to university and returned to assist the school. People who would make such a commitment to return and make a contribution were needed. A National Development Scholarship for people with disabilities was one way to provide training in areas like vocational rehabilitation, career guidance, physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Gifted children

The presenters felt strongly that special needs should also include gifted children who needed the opportunity to work at a higher level but were held back by placement in the same class as others. As a result, they were not being encouraged to realize their full potential. They argued that especially brilliant and creative children – indigo children – required a different approach within the schools to accommodate their mental and physical aptitudes. Schools should recognize this difference and not relegate the children to categories such as **ADHD** or 'having behavioural difficulties' when they no longer found class stimulating.

It was suggested that there should be a small number of 6th Form schools scattered around the country for gifted children to attend from age 14. This would help to avoid the present educational caste system. A presenter indicated that research had been done that suggested that combining different levels of ability in a school was detrimental to the more advanced children. The progress of gifted children was retarded and they often lost or had diminished ambition to perform or exceed, and their performance fell below their maximum potential.

General

The Minister of Education admitted that the government was not doing enough for children with special needs and that the society itself had neglected them. To rectify this, he felt that the overall budget should be increased and additional resources made available. The public system should use some of the same systems used in the private sector to cater to people who could not afford to pay $2,000 per month, which some private institutions were charging. Although the costs per special needs student were very high – for example, with 2.5 million dollars one could cater to 40 students with special needs as opposed to 200 without these needs – they were part of the total Barbadian landscape and must be included either in the existing or specialized institutions.

Another point raised was the inadequacy of the extra 15 minutes on the hour given at CXC to students with dyslexia. Further, students were not always given the extra time.

Recommendations

- *Make provision in the educational system for children with special needs to be seen or dealt with.*

- *Institute a special focus on special needs children and more strategies to address the issue.*

- *Develop a facility to cater to children with special needs on a one-on-one basis.*

- *Develop a facility to accommodate disabled children who have never attended school because they were not bathroom trained, providing education that caters to their needs so that they can develop to their full potential.*

- *Address education for children with special needs in a holistic and not fragmented manner.*

- *Develop a clearly articulated policy and agenda for the education of children and young adults with disabilities by which schools, teachers and parents can be guided. These should be publicized nationwide.*

- *Cater for students with special needs in the school bus system and have someone to assist the driver should a child experience a seizure or other chronic medical crisis on board the buses.*

- *Repair the old Transport Board buses and give them to schools to help with the transportation problem. The five buses that the disabled community reportedly rejected should also be given to schools that cater to physically challenged children.*

- *Assign people to assist teachers with handling children with autism.*

- *Provide human resources at the special schools/units to assist students with their toileting needs and basic requirements, for example a teacher's aide/assistant.*

- *Put measures in place that allow the development of a relationship between the parent and school and parent and teacher to help the child.*

- *Organize a meeting between policymakers and parents of hearing-impaired and children with other disabilities to establish ways of meeting their right to be educated.*

- *Spread children with challenges across the educational system.*

- *Offer more care and attention to students who are integrated into the mainstream system at schools such as All Saints.*

- *Examine from different perspectives the issue of inclusive education as addressed in the White Paper, including a concern for meeting the needs of children requiring special education.*

- *Conduct a review of the curriculum and the method of teaching in the school system.*

- *Add sign language to the curriculum in all primary schools to enable more communication with people with hearing impairment.*

- *Encourage students to appreciate differences in others and educate them about how to relate to those in their school with special needs.*

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- *Evaluate or assess all children through their initial interaction with teachers and schools, drawing on the resources of agencies such as the* **Child Care Board** *and* **PAREDOS** *for assistance.*

- *Institute a method for identifying special needs students, some of whom were still being placed in mainstream classes, and for providing them with programmes that were diverse and not solely focused on reading, writing and arithmetic.*

- *Ensure early identification of difficulties so that the child who is assessed early can be sent to the Children's Development Centre for early intervention, especially where teachers in the school system do not screen for disabilities.*

- *Train teachers to work with children with disabilities, including students who are dyslexic. It was noted that trained teachers are now deployed throughout the system rather than working with children with special needs.*
- *Institute three levels or tiers of teacher training:*
    - *Certificate in Special Education Provisos: Theory and Practices. Target group – teachers working in the field of Special Needs Education; entry levels stipulated;*
    - *Basic General Interest Course: Introduction to Special Needs. Target group – general public; parents or teachers interested in an introductory component in the field of Special Needs;*
    - *In-Service Teacher Training: Include a component in the training of all teachers at Erdiston Teachers' Training College. Increase the present very small component to include things such as differentiation etc.*

- *Provide specialists to train and educate children with behavioural problems and learning disabilities who might experience more challenges than the blind, hearing impaired and wheelchair users. Training and educational opportunities usually depend on the severity of the disability.*

- *Have special teachers and learning specialists in each school or easily available to each school. All schools should have at least one teacher who could identify children with specific challenges, as well as a clinical psychologist.*

- *Have teachers identify the strengths of students and channel them in the direction in which they were inclined. This would reduce the number of students who leave school uncertified.*

- *Institute a* **National Development Scholarship** *for people with disabilities.*

- *Increase the bursaries for students with special needs who attend the Barbados Community College and* **UWI** *to cover items such as software and technical aids. A Disability Fund could be established for this purpose. Create educational opportunities that would sharpen the academic and social skills of the disabled.*

- *Place surveillance in bus stands where students with disabilities gather.*

- *Give individual attention to students, including examining the teacher/pupil ratio for students with disabilities. Classrooms for **Reception** and **Nursery** should be smaller, with no more than 10 students in classes for those with learning disabilities.*

- *Strengthen the **Student Support Services Department** at the Ministry of Education including assigning a speech and language therapist/pathologist to provide intervention programmes for the large number of students experiencing speech and language difficulties.*

- *Hold regular sessions for students and parents with a counsellor or psychologist - individual or small group therapy - to help them to deal with some of the emotional issues they confront.*

- *Put a system in place for assistance to students with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs.*

- *Have the Ministry of Education establish a fund for the purchase of equipment for the disabled or institute a loan system for students so that they can borrow a computer to do their homework.*
- *Organize meetings and workshops to assist parents in dealing with children with disabilities.*

- *Institute education and assessment methods using audio and oral examinations as opposed to visual and written examinations for people who are visually impaired and may not be able to read or write with any depth of understanding to answer questions appropriately.*

- *Provide students with disabilities with adequate extra time to complete their examinations.*

- *Have Government implement a system to assist children whose parents cannot afford to send them to private schools and who are unable to get into the government schools.*

- *Provide financial assistance to private schools particularly at the primary level to ensure that special needs students were better served.*

- *Empower the families of children with special needs by providing for their education at no cost to them, including education/training at the skills training level.*

- *Give bursaries to disabled students just as with other students.*

- *Employ the Garrison School's model for working with special needs students in other schools.*

- *Have the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development showcase young people with disabilities and give some promotion to the abilities of children with disabilities.*

- *Reclassify special schools within the education system.*

- *Make the following changes to the Education Act with regards to Special Education:*
    Section 9 (e) Re: Stages of Public Education

    "Special education"

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- means education designed to meet the needs of children who are mentally and physically challenged, deaf or hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired and for those who are experiencing communication difficulties or emotional or psychological disorders.
- includes education designed to meet the needs of students who are gifted or have exceptional ability.

"Inclusive schools"

- means schools in which everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by, his or her peers and the members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met.

Section 42 (1) Re: Attendance of Pupils at Schools

Remove Section 42 (1) (a) since it insinuates that special education is not within the normal realm of the general education provisions. The amended legislation should remove all barriers that would allow the philosophy of inclusion from developing. It should also include procedures and practices throughout the education system which is likely to facilitate inclusion.

Regulations – PART IX re: Children Requiring Special Education

The terminology is inappropriate and archaic and the following are recommended:

Terminology presently used	**Suggested terminology**
Partially sighted	Visually impaired
Partially deaf	Hearing impaired
Educationally sub-normal	Cognitive defects

The list should also include: has communication difficulties; has emotional/psychological disorders and is academically gifted.

The word "*suffering*" should be removed and replaced by the following possible alternatives: people with a disability; having a disability; experiencing a disability.

- Have a small number of 6th Form schools scattered around the country for gifted children to attend from age 14. This would help to avoid the present educational caste system.

2.6 Student Transfer from Primary to Secondary

The transfer from primary to secondary school was an area of concern for many parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the town hall meetings and focus group discussions as well as those making written submissions.

Common Entrance Examination

A national survey conducted in February 2007 had concluded that Barbadians liked the **Common Entrance Examination (CEE)** because they had benefited from it, or they were from the old

school, or did not like change. However, the vast majority of people were not aware of the technical issues relating to the examination. Although there were comments both in favour of and opposed to the **CEE** during the National Consultation, the marked majority opposed it, with one person in the focus group discussions going so far as to describe it as a 'disgusting exam'. The concerns of those opposed centred on the significance of sitting the examination and the resulting choice of school. They cited several experts in education, including Dr. Leonard Shorey and Dr Anthony Layne, who had called for the abolition, or at least a change, of the **CEE.** At the same time, several people opined that the **CEE** was the best method of transfer and there were no viable alternatives.

Some people described the **CEE** as perpetuating elitism. One written submission noted that it was originally designed as a selection process when places in schools were limited. Now that places were available for all children, this method of selection might no longer be necessary. All children who took the **CEE** for allocation to secondary schools were labelled by it, either as successes - or as failures, which undermined the children's self esteem. Schools were also labelled by the children they received. The problem therefore was not whether children were going to good or bad schools but that Barbados was failing to produce children who could succeed no matter what school they attended.

The connection between academic performance and socio-economic circumstances was explored. The current system of allocating children to schools ensured a perpetual situation where the 'brand name' schools would always get the best choices while the other schools picked up the remainder. It 'leads either to an inmate or a graduate in every home'. Those with the lowest scores were herded into one school, putting all the social problems in one place and perpetuating the underclass. The **CEE** had fostered a system of classifying students according to the school they attended, rather than on their subsequent achievements. The exam also had an impact on teachers in those primary schools that repeatedly secured only a few passes.

One argument was that the Common Entrance filled a need within Barbadians for the drama and ceremony of seeing the winners paraded, congratulated and awarded, while conveniently forgetting the others who had not passed. They were also not recognized when, despite entering with zero marks, they left with **5 CXC** certificates. Everyone should be regarded as a survivor of the current education system, all having been damaged in different ways by that system. Examples were cited of parents who demanded that their children be better than others rather than be the best they could be. The society had to recognize that many children would not be able to achieve success in the exam and that no academic system could be expected to produce all brilliant children. As a country we condemned prejudice in the wider society, while supporting an academic prejudice where we determined a child's academic level as early as possible and forced her or him to live by it forever.

Another contention was that the **CEE** created a situation where children were learning by rote in primary school, then, often after long hours of lessons, they were moved on to a secondary school where they could not repeat the performance that got them there. The system would not have taught them to understand or analyze, and their creativity would have been discouraged. Some of these students might go on to graduate from university with First Class Honours but they still could not function in society. Because teachers did not all teach in the same way and schools did not all have the same resources, the school system tended to teach for exams and not for life. One result was that many people who had gone through the system were functionally illiterate. A wider focus was needed to challenge existing conditions, for example, through a gender lens.

Another issue raised was the concentration at **CEE** on two subjects, virtually ignoring sport, foreign languages, music, arts and other areas. Similarly, the Criterion-Referenced test was taken at ages 7 and 9 with testing in the same two subjects. Parents therefore needed to be careful not to misuse these results and should try to find each child's intelligences, wherever they existed.

Presenters as well as focus group participants felt that the Common Entrance Exam put too much pressure on the child for one day, a lot of this pressure coming from parents. It was suggested that the Ministry needed to help parents change their thinking about the exam to learn to embrace children at their individual levels and to focus on finding niche situations where children could contribute to society. There was also too much pressure on the teachers to cover the syllabus by Class 3, to be revised entirely in Class 4. The exam put unreasonable pressure on children, even those who could be described as 'high flyers'. This raised the question whether there this was adequate time for children to absorb the syllabus and find time for creativity. It also interfered with their love of learning. Teachers also put pressure on the children, many of whom were unable to maintain their level of performance at secondary school. Children were also pressured by the media hype about the examination.

Some of the young people expressed strong emotions about the examination with just over half in one focus group saying that they felt pressured during that period, including from parents. Most of them had taken after school lessons. One student experienced fear because an oral test was not included; another one just "wanted it over and done with".

The difficulty was raised in the written submissions of sustaining the effects of training a country's population to deliver excellence at all times in all sectors, particularly in the service sector, when there was a system that negated the development of a positive self-concept and undermined the development of a positive self-esteem.

Students who are not sufficiently 'bright' might fail the Common Entrance Exam and end up in a school geared towards maintaining 'discipline'. A problem then arose because there were too few teachers to deal with basic problems like dyslexia and dyslexic students could go through the system without being detected or helped. The Common Entrance was not an accurate measure for children with learning difficulties such as **ADHD**. Many of them were intelligent but did poorly with written tasks and the examination system deemed them failures. Participants queried what provisions were being made for those children deemed 'underachieving' and who had been lumped together in particular schools. They entered the first form where they struggled with the syllabus, and continued to struggle throughout their school lives. No one knew why they were performing at a lower level, yet the expectation was that they could take the same exam as those with a higher performance. One of the reasons why children did not pass the common entrance examination in the first place was their inability to read, which contributed to poor performance in the examination.

One speaker raised the issue of a possible **'Common Entrance Conspiracy'** and suggested that control of the educational system was entrenched in the hands of a given clique that still held the colonial belief that as long as enough students gained entrance to the 'good' schools, this would be enough to 'see the country through'. If all schools were of a high standard and more children could qualify and go on to university, Government would be unable to provide satisfactory employment for all so that an increase in the number of graduates would create a serious situation. In the past, it was implied, education had been purposely made difficult to prevent such a situation from occurring. It was possible that some people who had attended the "best" schools wanted to

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guarantee the available places for their own children at the expense and exclusion of children from other sectors of society, even when some of those children had surpassed the privileged elite. To counter this, there must be encouragement of those officials in the educational system who had the foresight to call for inclusion of entrepreneurial skills in the syllabus and to encourage young people to create, rather than look for, employment.

Several speakers supported the **CEE** and felt that, within the current context of Barbados' society, it was the only fair method of transfer. They argued that no-one had been able to come up with a better alternative that had been shown to work and where students from all social and economic levels had an equal opportunity for allocation to the more prestigious schools. The **CEE** was a fair system wherein children succeeded on their own merit, in comparison to the situation which it replaced where students had had to pay for their education, thereby favouring the wealthy. In addition, it set standards that the child had to attain by the time s/he left primary school. Parents and children benefited from the interaction while preparing for the examination. One should strengthen the weak rather than weaken the strong and one solution would be for those who got below a certain mark to spend the first year of secondary school repeating the 11+ curriculum.

Others felt that the **CEE** should be improved but not discontinued since many people would be at a disadvantage if it were tampered with. It motivated children and gave them a goal. However, allocation could be based on a system similar to **CSEC** - school-based assessment combined with an examination. One speaker suggested that all exams were traumatic so this was no reason to abolish the **CEE.** The problem stemmed from inadequate preparation for the examination. Another presenter stated that the 11+ helped some children to escape the cycle of schools that their family attended, as had been his experience.

The support for the examination from the focus group discussions was based on the argument that one had to be tested to decide which secondary school would be the best fit and the 11+ was a good method of determining this. Without it, transfer would be a challenge. Furthermore, there had to be a system to ensure the progress of the brightest students while recognizing those who had good technical and vocational skills. In recent years, the **CEE** had become a little more child friendly with regard to the visual aspect.

Some primary students in the focus group supported the examination since it was a good guide to the school that best suited each child. In addition, since all children did not learn at the same pace, it was good for them to attend schools with children at the same level. An alternative view was that it was unnecessary to worry about which school one attended since students at all schools sat the same **CXC**. Practice exams and support from parents and teachers helped children to feel settled, confident and excited about the future and maturing. Some were simply excited about progressing to the next level of education. The **CEE** was also described as 'just another exam'.

Another issue raised was the need for the standardization of the examination and the failure in this regard to draw on the resources of primary school teachers, who were best placed because of their daily interaction with primary school students. Without their input, the children were being set up for failure. It was also suggested that maintaining the Common Entrance Examination was a political rather than an educational decision. As long as some schools were considered more desirable than others, the exam would continue to appear to be the fairest way to determine entry into those schools.

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Zoning

Presenters at town hall meetings strongly supported zoning as an alternative method of transfer and some people gave details about how a full-fledged zoning system could work. The concept also received some support from the focus group discussions since having to travel long distances to school reduced children's participation in extracurricular activities. One speaker linked zoning to the concept of schools of excellence. He stated that there were schools whose names were synonymous with excellence in particular areas, for example: St. James Secondary School for languages; Princess Margaret Secondary School for woodwork and Combermere and Coleridge and Parry Schools for music. The concept of Areas of Excellence on p88 of the **White Paper on Education Reform** was laudable but the planners had misunderstood the concept, which called for full zoning. There were two primary mechanisms for zoning – by catchment area or by feeder schools, either of which would eliminate the demand by parents for their children to get to elite schools. In the present system, the choices parents made in selecting schools perpetuated snobbery. Zoning and parental choice were not compatible once the concept of good and bad schools was discarded. With full zoning Barbados would be divided based on the number of schools, and districts would be allocated to zones and related schools.

The same speaker identified the following benefits of full zoning:

- *a positive self-image for all as Barbados moved away from the institutional snobbery that the present system encouraged;*

- *teachers' ability to hone their skills and to learn to function in a mixed ability environment, with portfolio building, group work and diagnostic teaching some of the evaluative tools that would be available to teachers;*

- *peer-to-peer teaching would flourish – it was an established fact that children learned more readily from their peers and the bright children would help those who were not as bright;*

- *reduction of transportation problems since the distance to travel to school would be shorter – this would help to eliminate indiscipline and violence;*

- *children would be able to get the best education in the area in which they were interested;*

- *social engineering would be the greatest benefit: presently, children's friends were from across the island with no allegiance to district, an environment in which violence could grow;*

- *a more stable social environment in secondary schools;*

- *more stable communities since zoning would help to build communities.*

According to this presenter, there should be full zoning up to 3rd Form in secondary school and transfer to the schools of excellence would take place from 4th Form. At this point (at the start of the **CXC** programme), students would make their career choices and would be free to move out of their zones to go to the school that offered the best curricula in their chosen subject area. He argued

that 4th Form was the best environment in which to excel and therefore the transfer should take place then. The children would also have developed street wisdom by this time.

A child might reveal his/her talent at 14, but not at 11. If the curriculum were geared to specialized skills, then that child could go where its talent would be nurtured. The problem was to recognize the child's skill and give that skill the opportunity to develop.

A similar proposal was that after 3rd Form, children could either transfer to 4th Form as outlined above or continue on to **SJPP or BCC.** Those who did not get the option to do either of these could have the alternative of continuing their education while working. Additional benefits identified were an end to the scramble for **CEE** results by giving each student an equal opportunity; reformation of the educational system; the provision of alternatives for students whom the present system did not accommodate; and helping young people to maximize their potential.

Other presenters agreed with the arguments raised and noted that the problems faced by the zoning system could not all be blamed on the perceived lower performance of the newer secondary schools. Looking at elitism, they suggested that some of these same schools were seats of class prejudice and the manner in which students were placed in the previous system perpetuated that prejudice and intensified all the negative aspects of the students who were lumped together in the least prestigious of the newer schools. A fully zoned school system would also result in a more thorough integration of students across social and economic strata. It would also afford more children the physical benefits of walking to school and end the situation which forced some children to wake up at very early hours to attend schools far away from their homes, when there were often adequate or better schools within walking distance.

Additional benefits identified were that children would put more effort in their school work since those who gained a place at the older, more prestigious secondary schools would not feel that they had 'made it' and no longer needed to put in the effort they had made to enter the schools in the first place. Conversely, students who attended the newer schools would understand the need for hard work and discipline.

Educating, facilitating and legislating must be the goals in instituting any new system of transfer from primary to secondary. For zoning to work, the first step should therefore be to educate parents to facilitate their acceptance of its introduction through legislation.

One of the arguments against zoning was that it did not take into account that parents who worked would want their children to attend a school close to their work places in cases where no one was at home to be responsible for the children when they got home from school. This also presented a problem because of traffic routes and where there was no dedicated school bus or where the home was not on a dedicated route. Some people also asserted that although zoning purported to offer children a choice of going to schools near to their home, some students would still have to take more than one bus to get to a school in their zone. In addition, under the present system, the existence of open-choice schools only applied sensibly if the school chosen was not in the student's zone.

Contrary to the earlier positions, one presenter felt that zoning restricted socialization and prevented children from meeting and mixing with others from other parts of the island. In addition, teachers often preferred classes with children coming from many areas across the island and who brought different experiences to share in the classroom.

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Other arguments against zoning were that it would not bring about the changes or educational equality that some people expected. Primary schools were zoned and those in poor or negatively regarded areas gained the reputation of their location and their students were considered inferior. Similarly, just as certain schools had gained negative reputations, so had certain geographical areas. Zoning would simply result in an exchange of the basis for disparity. Parents would always see the schools that produced the students with the best grades as the best schools, regardless of zone. The society would never consider zoning to be a success while this situation existed.

The children in the student focus group discussions did not fully understand the concept of zoning, especially that it had the potential to level out schools, although some did suggest that without the Common Entrance, all the schools would be the same. They generally thought that with zoning they might lose the chance to go to a 'good' school or that children could attend a 'good' school but might not be able to live up to its standard. They however felt that there should be more schools like Combermere, Queen's College or Harrison College throughout the island so that children who worked hard could more easily attend one of those schools.

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment was also mooted as an alternative or complementary system to the **CEE**. Some felt that rather than abolish the **CEE**, there should be continuous assessment, testing children in all subjects and with the exam serving as the final in a series of evaluations. Children would then not be pumped up beyond their true level of ability in the final stages of primary school to go to a secondary school where they might be unable to cope. This would also put an end to the practice of parents using personal influence and connections to get a child into a school considered an elite school. Continuous assessment would give an idea of the child's on-going progress. The testing used in continuous assessment would be standardized and therefore reliable, but there should be a follow-up programme with interventions, based on the results, for any child who was not succeeding.

Some presenters and focus group participants did not support continuous assessment and called for careful consideration before initiating any change. They argued that it had seemed like a good idea when it was introduced at primary level but there had been a problem with introducing at the secondary level. Many secondary teachers did not support continuous assessment in the primary schools because they felt that it would lead to classes with pupils with a range of abilities and this would force them to adapt their teaching methods. Other drawbacks were that there was no way to verify who was doing the assignments that students took home; it ignored the fact that children would eventually have to take some form of exam and it could lead to corruption, with some people trying to influence teachers or the Ministry. In addition, its objectivity was hard to guarantee and, as a result, the **CEE** might be the fairest system. On the other hand, students who could not read or retain information were promoted under this system and expected to follow a curriculum set for those with a high IQ. Programmes were needed that would cater specifically to building capacity among weaker children towards development that was in the best interest of the students and the society.

Recommendations

- *Implement a system in which the entire class 4 cohort in each school would go to the secondary school closest to their homes, with Harrison College and Queen's College becoming 6th form colleges solely, offering both arts and sciences and seen as centres of excellence. This change would have a positive impact on the transport system, the level and quality of entrepreneurship and the country's global competitiveness. Sending children to the closest secondary school would also provide the opportunity for them to remain in their communities, building longer and stronger bonds.*

- *Have children sit the Common Entrance for the four presently existing 6th form schools. If they failed to get into these, they should go to the school of the parents' choice which was nearest to their residence or parent's work place.*

- *Implement a system whereby a student after taking the **CEE** would attend the secondary school closest to their primary school regardless of the mark obtained. After third form, the **CEE** mark would go towards 70% of the final mark used to determine which school the child would attend to complete senior school. Term and end of year exams in 1st to 3rd forms would make up the remaining 30% of the marks. All secondary schools regardless of grading or ranking would have a remedial class so as to prevent all the difficult/challenging children ending up doing their 4th and 5th forms at the same school. A parent and child could decide to stay with a particular secondary school even though the combination of **CEE**, term and end of year marks would allow that child to transfer out to a higher graded school. A child who had performed below par would have to move on to the appropriate graded school with the exception of those children that would remain in the remedial class at the same school. All schools would be able to be seen as centres of excellence as they would all have the opportunity produce children that would attend any of the five older secondary schools. There would be a clear and real connection between a secondary school, the primary schools and the district.*

- *Allocate schools on the basis of zones to create an equal balance of children from each area, with no school being seen as better than another.*

- *Institute zoning but allow a choice of the 2 or 3 nearest schools since not every child would want to go to the school closest to their home.*

- *Zone schools to make them more accessible to the parents and pupils so that parents would be able to have a better relationship with teachers.*

- *Implement geographical zoning with purposive zoning of select groups to ensure balance.*

- *Examine the educational systems in other countries, e.g. France, Sweden or Germany, each of which had slight differences influenced by culture. Some were more dependent on continuous assessment while others combined continuous assessment with a strong focus on exams.*

- *Zone schools so children would have shorter distances to travel to and from school.*

- *Introduce zoning with an improved bus system that could move children around and not have them on the street after dark*

- *Implement a fully state funded school bus service.*

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- *Use continuous assessment to make the **Common Entrance Exam** work properly, with four standardized tests during the primary school years. This system would prevent children getting the impression they would never have to take exams.*

- *Change to continuous assessment but ensure that it was as objective as possible and with continuous monitoring of performance.*
- *Institute continuous and diagnostic assessment and other forms of assessment to determine placement for children going into secondary schools.*

- *Have the **Common Entrance Exam** look at the total spread of characterizations of the student and offer her or him the best education to maximize their potential, thereby ending this rigidly classified system.*

- *Develop a system of transfer that does not involve testing.*

- *Implement remedial and accelerated secondary school programmes to allow children to move ahead or to be held back, with progress determined by ability and not by age.*

- *Fast track students as early as age 5 in the school system, allowing them to take the common entrance exam as early as age 8. Children should be able to sit the **CEE** when they are ready since people developed at different stages.*

- *Have all secondary schoolchildren wear the same uniform, perhaps with differences allowed for 6th formers.*

- *Address the **CEE** in the context of education reform to maximize improvement.*

- *Give children the opportunity to explore non-academic and non-traditional areas.*

- *Re-examine the mistaken concept that children do not fail the 11+.*

- *Base allocation to secondary school on mixed abilities so that there are excellent children in all schools.*

- *End the social comparison of children and end distinction between bright and 'duncy', recognizing that each child has potential.*

- *Conduct a demographic study of the location and number of primary and secondary schools that could adequately serve each parish or educational boundary. All primary and secondary schools would need to be provided with adequate resources to meet the needs of each student.*

- *Change the emphases and marking of Common Entrance English so that student production of orthodox English was a major focus.*

- *Since timing is a problem, give a longer period in the **CEE** for everybody. Let those who finished ahead of time, had checked through their work and wanted to be excused leave the examination room rather than remain and distract the others.*

- *Put standard things in place in the **CEE** to deal with children who have various attention problems, either a longer period or a breather that allowed them to stop and then start again.*

- *Maintain the length of time given for the **CEE** since additional time would make it longer than **CXCs.***

- *Reduce the number of questions on the **CEE**, for example the number of comprehensions in the English paper, the number of questions in the Maths paper.*

- *Hold the English and the Maths exams on two separate days.*

- *Determine whether the issue was the quality of the exam or its difficulty and relevance to our environment and find a way of assessing children and putting in place a syllabus that catered to a Caribbean and Barbadian environment.*

- *Ensure that the Common Entrance Exam was acutely sensitive to and in line with expectations at the secondary level.*

- *Position the Common Entrance Exam as more than a sorting and labelling mechanism.*

- *Restructure the idea of the 11+, broadening the scope beyond academics to include students' practical skills to give every student an equal chance.*

- *Retain the **CEE** as a way to screen children academically in conjunction with screening in terms of their skills set.*

- *Reintroduce the feeder school system that gave teachers better understanding and control of children and led to more interrelation between teacher and family.*

- *Ensure teachers and senior pupils from secondary schools visit primary schools to give pupils there an idea of what to expect. The graduating class should also spend a day at a secondary school.*

- *Revise the structure so that there was a middle school where students would be allowed time to settle before secondary school since children developed at different rates and levels. This would give each student a better opportunity to be successful in school.*

- *Keep the media away from schools on common entrance day to prevent any negative effect on the child who was not bright.*

- *Discontinue specialist secondary education for the disabled.*

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2.7 Teacher Training and Development

Working Conditions

The quality of the teachers delivering education to students was seen as a crucial component in the success of the entire system and there was unanimous support for more and better training for teachers. There was also a high level of concern over the quality and suitability of teachers as individuals, leading to widespread support for the idea of a professional structure that would allow teachers to move to the place in the system where they best fit and, once there, to be suitably remunerated.

From comments made in the meetings, many by practising or retired teachers, and in the focus groups, the teaching service emerged as an unattractive profession that offered little hope of advancement or recognition to the thousands of people who staffed the schools. Once they stayed in teaching, most teachers could hope only to rise to the level of head of department and a much smaller number to the level of deputy principal or principal. The meagre number training opportunities available did little to provide a sense of achievement and development.

At the same time, without denying any of the critique put forward, some of the problems highlighted in these discussions were put in different perspective by the comment of a teacher in one of the meetings. Citing a recent experience of being told by a student, "I hope you keep on teaching," she expressed the opinion that all was not lost. At another meeting a parent suggested that teachers were like gods to the children - she had been unable to help her son with his arithmetic homework because she had been trying to explain using the 'borrow and pay back' method and his teacher had been using 'regrouping' and for him the teacher's way was the only way.

The working conditions of teachers and the salaries they were paid were seen as unattractive and demotivating. Over the series of meetings and discussions teachers were said to be under-paid and overworked, their non-teaching periods regularly sacrificed when other teachers were absent, and as a result they suffered from low morale and badly needed support. The resources they needed were often lacking but they were asked to be innovative and therefore often had to use their own money to provide classroom requirements. Support from the Ministry, parents and the community with regard to their physical security was sometimes lacking. Another argument raised was that teaching was the only profession with a qualification bar that prevented any further increase in reward to the workers, regardless of whatever further qualification they earned.

The low salaries and the lack of status deterred many men from the profession. A speaker at one meeting cited statistics to claim there were 4,074 female teachers in primary and secondary schools but a mere 830 male teachers. The suggestion was that men who felt obliged to be the leading financial provider in the family did not see teaching as a viable option. Ironically, despite the higher number of female teachers in the system, it was claimed only 18% of principals were women.

Barbadians have for a long time lamented the absence of men in the teaching profession, considering it an unhealthy development where many boys are being raised almost exclusively by women in the homes and the schools. Not surprisingly, this fear was frequently raised in the meetings where several voices argued that, although female teachers are otherwise doing an excellent job, they could not know how to deal with boys and they were intrinsically unable teach a boy to be a man. Male role models were therefore needed in the schools.

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For those men and women who entered and remained in the profession, one of the few options for earning higher salaries was seen to lie in accepting greater administrative duties with appointments to head of department, deputy principal and, best of all, principal. One road to promotion was length of service whereby the teacher with most years in a particular subject was most often, though not always, chosen to head the department. Several speakers, both in town hall meetings and focus groups, said that this led to unfortunate results when the person with longest service was not the most competent manager, and sometimes not even a good manager. On occasion, long-serving members of staff might be appointed shortly before their retirement in order to improve their pension position. Alternatively, where the best qualified and/or the most skilful teacher was promoted, it often resulted in a shift of the teacher's primary focus from classroom to administrative duties and the students' loss of exposure to an exceptional teacher.

Providing real opportunity and financial and emotional rewards for teachers were seen as the ways to end several of these ills. The most common suggestion was for an increase in teacher salaries. This course was supported by teachers, for what seem obvious reasons, and by parents who recognized the extremely important role teachers played in the lives of their children and were therefore in favour of anything that promoted job satisfaction among teachers and that helped to empower them.

There was a sense too that increased levels of violence and physical danger in the schools entitled teachers to some form of hazard pay. Improved job-related benefits, either along with or in lieu of salary increases, could also help to make teaching a more attractive professional option. Among the suggestions made were to allow teachers to hold a second job; allow for the easy movement of teachers into wider arenas of public service; or to provide preferential access to housing.

A participant in a focus group discussion summed up the debate well in commenting that there had to be new areas of learning taught in the schools, in new syllabuses, and using new methods if all students and pupils were to succeed.

Opportunities for Training

Improved professional training for teachers at all levels emerged as another major factor in improving and maintaining the quality of education. Many teachers enter the profession with only a basic two-week long initiation. Many come straight from university with no teacher training and no grasp of the processes by which children learn. Very few secondary teachers have had experience of teaching in primary schools – as had been the case when the newer secondary schools were first opened and many teachers were transferred from primary schools.

Starting from the top, it was recognized that principals were largely responsible for shaping the ethos of the school and their ability to accomplish this depended on a mix of leadership skills, including empathy and understanding. The first concern was that principals should be trained in the leadership and management of schools and, as this was already often the case, a further issue lay in was the quality of the performance of principals. Productivity and the overall quality of schools were directly affected by the quality of the principal. It was recommended that this performance be constantly assessed and that principals be rotated between schools so they could continue to learn through encountering continually changing situations, as well as contribute their specialty skills to

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more than one school. Where principals are unequal to the problems encountered, the Ministry of Education might have to consider bringing in consultants to assist with finding alternative direction.

It was also suggested in a focus group discussion that secondary principals needed to be properly trained to become confident and competent managers of school finances. The financial management structure in secondary schools needed to be changed with principals having knowledge and awareness of the financial issues, though not replacing the Secretary/Treasurer.

The deputy principal was also seen as an important element in a school and therefore also needed to be trained in management. It was suggested in one meeting that there could be more than one deputy principal in a school, each allocated fewer specific areas of responsibility which could then receive more attention. As present, once the principal is absent, a deputy principal must fill both positions. There was an alternative suggestion that as schools grew smaller, having two deputy principals in schools would be an inefficient solution compared to having one deputy principal with better management skills.

The heads of departments constituted another level of the profession where training and development were necessary to produce professional team leaders able to support their teams rather than serve merely as administrators. Teachers who wanted to become administrators would have to be trained to manage teachers, ancillary staff and students. There was also merit in the idea of a 'master' teacher recognized for the quality of his or her service and who was raised to a higher pay scale rather than promoted out of the classroom to principal or deputy principal. A teacher noted at one meeting that some teachers genuinely preferred the classroom and many loved teaching and would prefer to continue in the profession in the classroom. There was also value in mature teachers with many years in the profession pooling their expertise to design materials to help younger professionals and to prepare new teachers for the profession.

The public expressed several opinions regarding the training of teachers in general. Teacher training was recognized as one of the challenges facing the educational system. Teaching is the only profession that affects every other profession and teachers should not allow others to second guess their profession but should set the standard for the way it is seen and make efforts to develop the profession into the best that it can be.

No teacher, it was felt, should remain in the system for long periods having gone through only the initial two weeks of training to which all teachers are exposed on entering the system. Administration should support teachers in securing training through providing opportunities such as access to degree programmes, conferences and workshops. If necessary teachers would be expected to give up some of their free time, for example, in the 13 weeks of the long vacation, to ensure they received additional training. The participant making this suggestion added it sometimes seemed unthinkable to suggest any reduction of teachers' free time.

At the same time, a participant argued that many young people, herself included, aspired to be teachers but could not gain access to the programme at Erdiston. She suggested in her written submission that Erdiston be expanded to accommodate more students, possibly through an online programme.

Once teachers had positioned themselves to do their jobs better by furthering their studies, it was counter-productive to ask them to continue to teach as before and for the same reward. Teachers who pursued training should be encouraged to apply for available posts. A speaker related the

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experience of being told in an interview that she was too young and would not be considered for appointment to Senior Teacher ahead of others who had been teaching for as long as she had been alive. In this regard, the current method of deciding appointments to the post of senior teacher, based on length of service, was seen as disadvantageous to younger teachers. Here it should be noted that a member of the **NACE** present at that meeting pointed out that length of service was not the only criterion for appointment to the post of senior teacher.

One speaker cautioned that while it was commendable for teachers to take time and spend money to obtain qualifications, teachers did not need a master's degree to teach in the primary schools. Teachers with that level of qualification should be prepared either to move on to teach in a secondary school or at university, or to continue in primary schools without promotion or increase in pay. There was a danger then that the best qualified teachers could leave the primary schools and only the mediocre would remain.

A participant in one meeting suggested that the current structure of teacher training was antiquated and that there needed to be closer links between the School of Education, Erdiston College and the schools so that each could be of benefit to the other.

The Honourable Ronald Jones, Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, expressed his opinions on several of the matters raised here in a focus group discussion.

Asked how the Ministry would go about furthering teacher training, the Minster recommended a licensing regime, to include every trained teacher, that would require continual professional upgrading over a suggested three to five year cycle. The system would be self-regulated with some provision for sanctions and penalties. Teachers would then be in a position to claim the status not only of a trained or graduate teacher but also of licensed teacher, demonstrating their professionalism though regular updating of professional skills.

Teachers who were unable to satisfy the training requirement would lose their licence, though not their public service jobs, and could be denied promotion. A self-regulating teachers' body would address and correct the situations of teachers being appointed without training and showing no subsequent interest in being trained.

Teachers' professional development, the Minister felt, had to be continuous and varied and the Ministry had to provide ways to upgrade skills. The teacher evaluation process identified the skills that were lacking and Erdiston Teachers' Training College had a mandate to provide development training, which would also include retraining exercises.

Teacher appraisal, the Minister suggested, would also assist teachers in improving their craft, skill and delivery. However, there was an underlying fear that teacher appraisal implied sanctions and it would be important to adjust the appraisal system until the required results were achieved. The system would have to be all-encompassing and emphasis should be on the perception of continuous development and improvement for all. Professional development had to be holistic so that it fostered collaborative and coordinated approaches to teaching.

Apart from professional qualification in the profile of each teacher, the Minister believed consideration also had to be given to the involvement of individuals in 4-H Clubs, youth groups, or in community activities like football or cricket.

Teacher professional upgrading after reaching the qualification bar, the Minister suggested, would be about self-improvement as there would be no additional salary. The Minister cautioned that teachers should be careful not to price themselves out of the market or, worse, create the impression they were being greedy and demanding, and noted that there were other approaches teachers could use that would position them as trained, highly qualified professionals and earn them a corresponding status. The issues of efficiency, effectiveness and quality were demarcated by the attitude of teachers, some of whom worked beyond the call of duty. Apart from simple money, people who continually upgraded their skills, published or filled other roles that held them up as exemplars within the system could be rewarded and recognition for their scholarship or their mentorship with incentives such as appointment as master teacher.

Those participating in the focus group with the Minister felt that some teachers were unable to further their training and development because of their heavy daily workload and the lack of any allowance for sabbatical or other leave. If training and retraining were made necessary elements in promotion, appropriate conditions would have to be put in place to address the quality and types of programmes offered and the problems experienced by teachers already in the available training programmes.

It was agreed that there had been some breakdown over a number of years in the level of teacher discipline and the time had come for a statement on overall standards of teacher professionalism. There were instances reported of senior female teachers choosing to mentor younger teachers, a development that could be significant given that some children in their focus groups had spoken about the poor examples set by teachers in terms of behaviour, dress and general deportment. The Minister added that he had begun to take note of young men coming into the school system who were both well qualified and exemplary in their deportment, and who met the criteria and were well profiled, suggesting that a renewal might be occurring.

Human Resource Development

Education, it was said in a focus group meeting, was sometimes seen primarily as a means towards developing human resources with no real appreciation that human resource development had its own dynamics, one of which was the strategic needs of the country. The Minister suggested that human resource development began with the foundational aspects of education - nursery, primary, secondary - followed by other activities in partnership with capitalism in which the development needs of Barbados were identified. The specific required human resource needs were then targeted.

Human resource development had been pursued in Barbados through the Government Training Division, the **TVET** Council, the Ministry of Education, the Manpower Unit and the Vocational Training Board, among others. The next development would be an overarching entity pulling these bodies into a single functional unit aimed at meeting the development needs of the country.

A related position emerging from another focus group was that the secondary school curriculum choices reflected a grounding in the work environment of the 1970s and 1980s and students were consequently not familiarized with the careers in demand. Teachers therefore spoke to students about becoming doctors, lawyers and accountants but did not address specialties like forensic accounting, actuarial science, paediatric medicine, sports medicine, neurology, quantity surveying, international interpreters, international business, tourism management, spa management, eco-

tourism, environmental studies, and alternative energy studies - a few careers that were all relevant to the future development of Barbados.

For students to attend career show cases only at fifth form level was far too late for these events to meaningfully shape their career path and decision-making. The showcases though would require forward thinking to avoid the disappointment associated with so many of them. Business entities could help students by coming into schools to highlight the jobs available in their sectors, finding ways to promote them so children found them attractive and offering training and scholarships. There should also be a school leaving programme to prepare students for the world of work.

Recommendations

- *Raise teacher motivation by making working conditions more attractive through:*
  increasing salaries, providing teachers with the resources they need to meet classroom requirements, increasing physical security arrangements in schools, allowing teachers to hold a second job, allow for the easy movement of teachers into wider arenas of public service, and providing teachers with preferential access to social benefits such as housing, loans, etc

- *Allow salary adjustments for teachers according to qualifications earned, removing the limit placed on teacher salaries regardless of additional qualifications.*

- *Increase attractiveness of the profession in ways that will encourage more males to become teachers where they could provide male role models for boys in the schools.*

- *Create a framework within which teachers could earn higher salaries according to the quality their performance in the classroom without necessarily being promoted into administrative posts.*

- *Ensure that all principals are trained in the leadership and management of schools and that their performance is constantly assessed.*

- *Modernize the structure of teacher training at Erdiston and increase its relevance through closer links with the School of Education and the schools, to the mutual benefit of all.*

- *Rotate principals regularly between schools so they continue from continually changing situations, and share their specialty skills with other schools.*

- *Create a framework in which principals may call in consultants to work with problems they find difficult to solve.*

- *Post more than one deputy principal in each school; or improve the management skills of the deputy principal, improving their ability to handle multiple issues and reducing the cost of management implied in duplicating the deputy principal.*

- *Train heads of departments to become professional team leaders and not merely administrators.*

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- *Train teachers wanting to enter administration to be managers of teachers, ancillary staff and students.*

- *Provide more resources for teacher training and other human resource development to create a pool of competent personnel to administer the support services needed in learning institutions.*

- *Institute the post of 'master' teacher recognized and remunerated for quality of teaching ability.*

- *Create opportunity for experienced teachers to pool their expertise to design aids for young professionals.*

- *Ensure that all teachers are trained and encourage them to improve their qualifications.*

- *Improve the capacity of training facilities to accommodate all who wished to be trained.*

- *Reward teachers who earn additional qualifications and allow them the space to employ the new methods and techniques they would have acquired. It would be recognized that some teachers could become over-qualified for the responsibilities they held.*

- *Encourage teachers with appropriate qualifications to apply for available posts and balance the values of qualifications and experience in allocating posts.*

2.8 Support Services in Schools

The general consensus from all of the stakeholders was that there was a deficiency in the support services offered in the school system. For example, a secondary school with over 1,000 students had only one guidance counsellor. The main support services identified were in the areas of guidance counselling, social workers, health services, attendants/assistants and support for children with special needs. (This is discussed in Section 2.5 above).

Guidance counselling and counselling in general comprised the major area of concern. The participants suggested that guidance counsellors should be available at every level in the system since children's problems could begin before they reached the secondary stage. The time that teachers had to spend disciplining secondary students whose problems had not been addressed at the primary level was evidence of this need. Thus, the violence seen in the secondary schools should not be assumed to have started there. Further, the school must be seen as a microcosm of society and increased violence in the society would be replicated in the schools.

Other areas where counselling might be needed were with late developers at the primary level, with the 11+ examination, and in the secondary school system with self-esteem and the issue of underachievement, which could result in indiscipline and violence.

It was suggested that not having guidance counsellors in all secondary schools was resulting in many children falling through the cracks. Counselling was needed to help students deal with problems in the home. Periods of bereavement also called for trained counsellors. In recent years a few students had died tragically throwing their schools into large-scale mourning and the teaching staff had been called upon to fill the role of guidance counsellor, a post for which they had not trained.

The issue of ratio of guidance counsellors to students needed to be addressed. One suggestion was that, in the absence of enough guidance counsellors for allocation of one to each school, the sharing of counsellors across schools could be explored. An alternative suggestion was that support services need not be located in schools, but off site where they could be easily accessed. There were both primary and secondary schools located in the same general geographical location and hence there could be one general guidance counselling practice serving a number of schools. The students suggested that there should be at least five guidance counsellors, one for each year level. They also felt that it was not fair that Guidance as a timetabled subject was not included in the 5th year at the stage when they needed it 'more than ever'. There were instances when children turned to teachers, some of whom were described as being very enthusiastic and encouraging, for help with their problems.

Another suggestion was for all schools to have a Guidance Department with a guidance counsellor as a resource person and with social workers, nurses, doctors and other professionals brought in as necessary. There was also a call for social workers, two or three per school and trained in psychosocial assessment, to be placed in all schools to assist with the many socio-emotional problems that children faced. An occupational therapist should be part of the initial assessment of all primary school entrants.

Turning to the transition to work or higher education, some participants felt that there were too few sessions on career guidance and that students were not given detailed information about Barbados' manpower needs, possible professions and their requirements. Guidance counsellors helped with this transition by responding to gaps in the children's knowledge by training them to present themselves for interviews, writing CVs and letters of application. However, more was needed in this area.

Some participants raised the issue of confidentiality, which caused some students to express a lack of confidence in their guidance counsellors. Serious breaches ought to be dealt with.

Presenters felt that the school sick bays were inadequate to meet the health needs of students. They suggested that each school should have professional health services on site staffed by a nurse (who could also teach health education) and an occupational health therapist. First-aid supplies should also be stocked.

The system of having nursery classes in primary schools was raised and it was argued that this had not been properly thought through. The concerns were for the lack of attendants/assistants and inadequate facilities. A three and a half year-old child demanded special attention but there were no attendants to assist teachers with these children. For example, there was no one for the parents to hand them to on mornings. They often had to manage on their own throughout the day. There should be paid assistants/attendants – having a parent volunteer or the payment of a stipend was inadequate. Facilities were also problematic with the toilet bowls sometimes being too high for these small children.

Another problem identified in the focus groups was the long waiting list for referrals to the Ministry of Education and other units. As a result, parents often had to go the private route.

The present bus system took away too many of the Transport Board buses because schools all start at the same time, which also caused congestion. In the 50s and 60s, schools in Bridgetown started at 8:30 and 9:00 and those in the country started at 9:30 and 9:45. The Ministry should purchase and

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operate its own school bus system, which would provide employment to people for a couple hours per day and would ensure that all Transport Board buses would be available to the public.

Security in schools was also a concern. In a written submission, one person noted that a security survey on educational institutions conducted over six years ago highlighted the need for security personnel, fencing, adequate lighting and emergency stairways.

Recommendations

Following are some additional recommendations made in connection with support services in schools:

- *Have a team of reading specialists at the Ministry of Education to assist schools. The Ministry should also appoint reading specialists in every school according to size.*

- *Inform teachers about how to use the Peace Programme and how to integrate it into their programmes.*

- *Encourage schools to support strong and effective parent teacher associations to augment the entire school programme.*

- *Introduce water tanks to avoid closure during water outages.*

- *Give schools the authority to bring in consultants for assessments of the problems faced.*
- *Ensure that there was a well-planned, efficient and practical emergency plan in schools, especially in the aftermath of the recent earth tremor. In addition, people should not be able to walk off the road into schools. All schools should submit a safety report each term and emergency lockdowns and fire drills needed to be put in place.*

- *Improve school security, e.g., enclosed properties and supervised entrances, and secure environments even on the outside of the schools because children must be protected from negative societal influence as well as physical harm.*
- *Re-evaluate and re-market the guidance counselling programme; or put in place an additional programme that more closely mirrored the actual work environment. Key components of a guidance counselling programme would include having speakers from a cross section of careers discuss work ethics, knowledge base, challenges faced when working etc.; inviting human resource professionals to the schools to discuss expectations in the workplace from an employer perspective, carry out mock interviews etc.; an understanding about the intricacies of business management; developing a programme where students manage their own businesses and report on their success, including partnership with other students where team effort, motivation, and financial management become key skills.*

- *In addition to guidance counsellors, provide other support personnel such as social workers, therapists, psychologists and speech and language therapists.*

- *Determine and clearly articulate the roles of social workers and guidance counsellors to prevent duplication of tasks.*

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- *Establish a zonal mechanism in which psychosocial professionals are given special responsibility for schools within in their immediate zone.*

- *Provide support services in all schools from nursery through to tertiary level to cater for at risk children.*

- *Create a national approach to guidance counselling with standard practices and a standard referral form.*

- *Require social workers to have background training in both preventive and remedial nursing to work with at risk children.*

- *Make support services available to private schools.*

2.9 Early Childhood Education

It was a commonly stated view, based on the recognized rights of the child, that every child was entitled to an education. Education authorities however were challenged to cater to the individual child, allowing each to develop his or her abilities at an individual pace.

Nursery education, or early childhood education, it was argued, was critical in the child's learning to be separated from its parents; and was therefore, one participant argued, the foundation of the education system. Additionally, the educational system should accept the responsibility to protect and prepare those children who were not receiving adequate preparation in the home. This would call for a broader spread of early childhood education.

The teachers involved would have been trained in early childhood education and would be expected to use that training in the classroom and to be assessed in their use of the training. The early childhood education programme should also include at least one professional who was qualified to identify and address the early challenges that some children experience.

Apart from the above general recommendations, several individuals raised specific concerns about the current implementation of early childhood education. It was mentioned that in 2005, a decision was taken that three-year-olds should be moved from day care centres to nursery schools, but no properly designed programme was put in place for the nursery schools. Such a programme would need to be broad-based and with a fluid structure and carried out by trained teachers.

A related question asked if achievement targets had ever been set within the pre-school education provided by Government and, additionally, if all pre-school teachers were required to have qualifications. A Commission member responded that all pre-schools are registered with the Ministry of Education and the Child Care Board and that all teachers have access to the same training.

Another specific issue raised was the space for especially gifted children. A different approach would be required within the schools to accommodate mental and physical aptitudes that were not well served by the present systems. Recognizing and accepting these differences could help to avert the tendency to label children who no longer find class stimulating as having behavioural difficulties or

suffering from ADHD and to prescribe medication. Medication, the speaker added, was not a long term solution to ADHD and inappropriate therapy could cause harm.

Recommendations

The following recommendations towards raising the quality of education were put forward:

- *End shortcomings in the present system such as failing three-year-old children, having small children sit all day at a table, and offering insufficient playtime and a limited variety of media to stimulate children.*

- *Regulate the existing Montessori programmes and improved certification of staff more closely.*

2.10 Parenting

Parenting was a frequent topic of discussion among participants who recognized a very close association between upbringing and education and therefore saw that parents would play significant roles in education. Participants saw the ideal role for parents as building close relationships, first with their children and subsequently between those children and their teachers since parents and teachers were working towards the same goal – the education of the children. Along with this perception went a strong underlying belief that schools and the education system in general would work best if there were close cooperation between parents and educators, with parents being involved meaningfully in both the upbringing of their children and the direction and management of the schools.

Participants argued first of all for open, respectful and understanding relations between parents and children. It was felt that children needed to be nurtured and to be offered unconditional love rather than harsh discipline or reward based on academic achievement. Some of the negative behaviour students displayed in class was seen as resulting from the lack of basic emotional support at home.

Some speakers felt that Barbados had experienced tremendous social change that unfortunately had seen many people become parents before they were ready for the responsibility and who needed to be educated in parenting. The schools had not adapted to this change. Another product of drastic social change had been the impact of working hours on the availability of parents for their children. Parents often had to be away from home for as many as twelve hours a day, often leaving home before and returning after their children did. Children were left on their own with too little supervision, leading to problems at school when their homework might not have been done or might not have been checked by the parent and they were therefore unprepared for school. In many cases, parents could not be contacted for discussion. With no one else available to help with child care, it was often left to the schools to teach children the things the society needed them to know and which they formerly learnt from their parents. Under such circumstances, teachers who played the additional role of parent when the real parents default were especially commended.

Participants wanted to see greater involvement by some parents in their children's education and improved communication between teachers and parents. Parents were criticized for a number of unhelpful behaviours. Some were quick to appear at the schools when there was a grievance while being reluctant to attend **PTA** meetings. Some failed their children when they were too quick to blame schools for their children's failings without playing their own part in motivating children, in

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reminding them of their responsibility to apply themselves to their studies, and in combating absenteeism. Some parents were said to become anxious as their child's schooling was about to end and they were unsure what the child's future could be. Participants even suggested that the cause of the illiteracy often encountered in the schools should be placed not on teachers but at the feet of parents who did not go the extra mile with their children's reading. It was pointed out, however, that because many children were now learning materials in the schools that were unfamiliar to parents, parents sometimes felt helpless and in turn needed support from teachers.

Extracurricular activities were often put forward as an area where parents could easily have greater input, particularly as teachers were already fully occupied with preparing classes and doing research. Yet it was often as difficult to get parent support for extra-curricular activities as it was with any other activity requiring parent participation, such as parent-teacher or class level meetings. As well, teachers were too often expected to provide child-care, either outright or indirectly in the guise of extra-curricular activities, for those students whose parents could not collect them until several hours after school ended, seldom with any regard for the teacher's own needs or time-constraints.

The participants also said many positive things about parents and recognized that circumstances often prevented them being involved as fully as they would sometimes have liked, or that they were put in positions which made it difficult for them to contribute as they often would have liked. That a parent should go onto school premises and attack a teacher or principal was soundly condemned but at least one speaker queried the provisions put in place for handling cases of abuse of children by teachers or workers. Many such complaints, it was said, had been raised over the years only to fall on deaf ears. A parent bemoaned the lack of parental involvement in school decisions, and questioned why parents had no input into the rules that were set. This paralleled another suggestion that parents needed to take greater ownership of education and not see the system as belonging only to teachers and administration or residing only within the framework of the school.

There seemed to be general agreement that parents did not want only to be told that their children had problems; they expected to be offered solutions and to see the schools produce results. Participants recognized that, even with well educated and well trained teachers, schools would still face many problems that staff alone would not be able to solve. But they felt solutions could be found by utilizing the skills of teachers and parents together. Parents were often called to the schools to confer over repeat offenders but there was no wider program of counselling and training for parents to learn to reinforce the efforts of teachers in the schools. One speaker gave an example of a program organized through the St. Leonard's Parents Teachers Association **(PTA)** where all parents of a given class would meet and discuss problems common to that class since if one child in the class were creating problems, all students in the class would be affected.

Nonetheless, participants insisted that, while parents must be responsible for their children, teachers had a responsibility to follow up on their students - from issues as simple as ensuring that parents received the notices sent home, to more serious matters like major absenteeism and violence or theft. As long as parents were compelled by law to send their children to school, the school system was obliged to meet the needs of the children regardless of how parents might be failing. In addition, every criticism of parents for failing to cooperate with the schools was also a criticism of the education – through which all the parents had now passed – for failing to teach those who became parents the need to cooperate with the schools.

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Parents, it was felt, needed guidelines on how to interact with teachers. Schools, like any other organizations, had administrative procedures for parents to meet with principals and teachers but parents needed to be made aware of these procedures and be encouraged to cooperate with them.

Parents could also become more closely involved with their children's schools, both in and outside the classroom. Parents could run school canteens; attend skills-building and training courses offered in the school buildings; have their children who were in wood- and metal-work classes earn fees for repairing furniture and small items; assist school agricultural projects with their own technical expertise and marketing skills to make the projects economically viable.

In like thinking, there was a recommendation for exploring formal contracts between parents and the school to recover the cost of replacing equipment damaged by students; and even to pay compensation for injuries by their child to other students or to staff.

Indeed, many participants were concerned about discipline in schools, believing that the battle of discipline with students was being loss. Parents, it was felt, contributed when they criticized teachers for being too harsh and resisted punishments. Discipline ought to start not at school but at home with teachers working with parents to maintain discipline in schools, starting with such seemingly small matters as deportment and ensuring their children were appropriately attired.

The issue of parenting attracted little attention in the focus group discussions, apart from occasional reference to the influence of parents on the classroom discipline of their children and the danger children felt from parents' violent behaviour on the school premises. There was general acceptance that parents could contribute to the solution of many of the problems in the schools by spending more time with their children. Young people turned to other sources of guidance and support, some of them undesirable, if parents did not or could not spend time with them. Even children from homes with caring parents could succumb to peer pressure. There was also a suggestion that parents be punished by law for what could be described as neglect when they failed to ensure that their children received adequate education. Parenting skills had to become an integral part of the education system.

Parent teachers associations constituted one of the major points in the focus group discussion where interaction with parents was expected to occur. A practical suggestion for an additional role for parents included assistance in career development by engaging students in areas in which they had experience, a process that could be focused through the PTA and that would serve to bring parents into the schools.

Otherwise, the issue was approached mainly in the focus group discussions with primary and secondary students and the outcomes were generally dismal. A single child expressed the opinion that **PTAs** were useful for parents to know what was going on in the school and what their children were doing. Several others admitted freely that they did not give the notices to their parents, sometimes for fear of the parents and teachers getting together to share information. In some cases the school either did not print notices or gave them only to junior classes, relying on the seniors to remember to tell their parents. Many seniors, it seemed, did not.

Of a group of six students in a focus group, only one parent consistently went to meetings. Both primary and secondary students strongly defended their parents' attitudes. "Teachers," one said, "think parents who do not come to PTA don't care but they don't know what trouble the parents have to go through just to get to a PTA meeting." Another child defended her mother's priorities,

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saying, "My mother works every minute of the day and whatever little time she has she gives her spare time to me and my sister and different family members."

In general the attitude of students, in a clear echo of what their parents said, was that the schools criticized their parents as uncaring or negligent for not attending PTA meetings without taking into account the other concerns that parents had or the alternative uses to which they put the time that they did not spend in PTA meetings. Coming from the mouths of the students, the parents clearly felt that too much time was spent in PTA meetings to achieve too little, and that what little was achieved was largely the agenda of the schools and the teachers. According to one secondary student, "Parents get frustrated when they give their opinions but teachers are more concerned about what they think needs to be done." A primary pupil reinforced this, saying "…all they want is money, money, money."

Few students had direct experience of a PTA meeting but one senior student was severely disillusioned with his experience. A member of the school band, he was asked to speak on the impact of music on young people and expected he would see a large turnout. "If they were 20 people, they were many. Out of a school of a 1000 plus … which was pretty sad.' Another student reflected just how out of touch students were with PTA meetings, characterizing them as "when the principal gets to talk to the parents about whatever he talks to them about."

One of the few positive references to PTA meetings was made of the Foundation School where efforts were made to schedule meetings around the work hours of parents.

Recommendations

- *Create opportunities for greater involvement by parents in their children's education and for improved communication between teachers and parents. Find ways to encourage parents to attend PTA meetings, to support the schools in motivating children, and combating absenteeism and generally in going the extra mile in support of their children.*

- *Support parents in dealing with those parts of the syllabus thought in the schools that were unfamiliar to parents and which they sometimes felt helpless to deal with.*

- *Create opportunities for parents to become more involved in extra-curricular activities, lending assistance to teachers who were already fully occupied with class work and research.*

- *Put provisions to deal equitably with cases of abuse of children by teachers or workers, making sure that such cases were dealt with promptly.*

- *Create increased ownership of education by parents with greater involvement in school policy and decision making, while removing the locus of education from the sole framework of the school.*

- *Provide parents with solutions to the problems their children faced, where possible utilizing the skills of teachers and parents together.*

- *Provide parents with a wide program of counselling and training where they would learn to reinforce the efforts*

of teachers in the schools.

- *Provide parents with guidelines on interacting with the schools and teachers.*

- *Provide parents with opportunities to become more closely involved with their children's schools, in and outside the classroom, using their technical and professional skills to help schools run more efficiently, reduce costs and even earn income.*

- *Explore the establishment of formal contracts between parents and the school to recover the costs of replacement and compensation in cases involving their children*

- *Promote parent involvement in maintaining discipline in schools through initial discipline at home and continuing to work with teachers in schools in large and small areas.*

2.11 Management in Schools

Several opinions expressed in focus group meeting create the impression that administration in schools was failing to maximise the quality of administrators who, despite their best intentions, often had insufficient knowledge of some of the more current approaches. Collaboration and the development of the school's goals then suffered because principals might not make allowance for teachers to plan for operating in professional learning communities.

Principals were largely responsible for shaping the ethos of the school but their ability to accomplish this depended on a mix of leadership skills, including empathy and understanding. In some cases where a staff had gained a reputation for recalcitrance, a complete turnaround could be achieved through the introduction of a new principal. On the other hand, there were cases where despite the best efforts of a principal an entire staff body simply refused to cooperate. The Minister agreed that the mere re-allocation of principals might not change the makeup of the school if the same teachers remained entrenched within the school but capacity of the Ministry to reassign teachers because of the exigencies of any situation would have to be written into their terms of employment.

At the secondary level, the Heads of Departments and the Senior Teachers would have to play bigger roles, taking complete charge of their departments. There were proposals to recommend to the Civil Service that senior teachers teach only one lesson a day, leaving them free to deal with their whole-year group. This change would take a lot of responsibility off both the Deputy and the Head.

In the primary schools, one senior teacher being responsible for as many as 200 children was unworkable. More senior teachers were needed and some of the larger primary schools with over 500 students, which were tending to be unwieldy in management, would also need a deputy principal. This matter was already under consideration. Primary school principals should also be allocating a significant proportion of their time to instructional leadership, which was critical to teacher growth and development.

There was a query whether the principals of primary schools were leaving the profession at an earlier age than principals of secondary schools because of higher levels of stress, a situation that would have repercussions in the loss of quality staff. The Minster believed the two kinds of

principals were assuming the posts around the same stage of their careers and spent an equal number of years in the post. He believed also that the notion of two principals in a single school, one responsible for pedagogy and the other for pastoral care, was based principally on the size of schools but schools were continually growing smaller.

It was felt that not enough attention was being paid to primary education where the average annual expenditure allocated to programmes ranged between $13.00 and $19.00 per child, a significant disparity against what was spent in secondary schools.

It was noted too that many of the problems to be grappled with across the system started within the home and at the classroom level rather than in the principal's office. It was necessary to look at ways of partnering with communities and parents and assisting teachers in honing their skills in classroom management to reduce some of the burden on other layers of management.

Recommendations

- Provide each primary school with an administrative person such as a Clerk/Typist or Secretary.
- Relieve at least one senior teacher in each school of teaching duties.
- Assign senior teachers on the basis of 1 – 150 children.
- Appoint a deputy principal in schools with more than 500 students.

2.12 Children's Attitudes to School

Based on the opinions they voiced in focus group discussions, a pleasing number of students liked school as a place where they could learn new things which gave them a sense of developing their abilities and preparing for the future. Many also found school a place where they could escape the confines of home and interact with others of their own age.

Students liked those teachers, particularly the younger ones, who 'come out of the staff room and have conversations with us', who talked with them in class, and who showed interest in their welfare. They liked getting to interact with the teachers and pupils, especially at times like Christmas with its parties and gift exchanges; some liked reading classes which they found generally quiet and a time to enjoy books. Some children wanted more sports, not only for the enjoyment but because they saw sporting activity as a chance to learn a kind of discipline that could be useful in their lives.

Not surprisingly, children did not like to be punished or to be treated with a lack of respect by teachers. They resented being treated anonymously; they objected to the ways in which some teachers conducted themselves; and they objected to 'bad-minded people' including 'instigators', the 'so-called gangsters', and 'bad-minded teachers' who were antagonistic to children.

Asked about the improvements they wanted to see, students wanted to see less talk and chalk and instead more opportunity for research projects with wider use of information technology, starting even from the early years of school. They wanted more teaching outside the classroom – field trips, job attachments, and wider use of language laboratories. Students asked for more encouragement

and greater opportunity to work together, with the more able helping those with difficulties. They wanted more interaction with students from other schools, a development they felt could help break down the division between schools. They also wanted more training in how to present themselves in public fora, a skill they felt would help them to build confidence.

Students wanted teachers to be monitored in class on occasion and their performance evaluated. They saw teachers who were not enthusiastic about their subjects as a problem. They wanted teachers to be more interactive with students, allowing them to air their views more and, of course, listening to those ideas, to the extent of allowing them to make mistakes in their pursuit of knowledge.

Teachers, it was felt, should not favour the brighter students but give the less able students more opportunity to speak in class and answer questions. They should favour girls less and give boys equal treatment.

Among the other hoped for improvements were:

- *more peer support education programmes on drugs, sex and other non-academic issues;*
- *easier access to Barbadian schools for students from other Caribbean islands;*
- *clean, functioning, well-lit bathrooms;*
- *repairs to school buildings;*
- *additional extracurricular activities;*
- *teachers who are polite and fair and set example with their own behaviour;*
- *that residents of surrounding areas should respect the school compound and not litter;*
- *better, safer facilities, including playing fields, and with security guards who were 'able-bodied';*
- *better supervision at breaks;*
- *more sports to help children build confidence;*
- *libraries with appropriate books.*

2.13 Miscellaneous Issues

There were some other areas of concern that were raised by presenters at the town hall meetings, in the written submissions and during the focus group discussions. These focused on issues such as parental and community involvement in the schools, children's participation in extra-curricular activities, mentoring, school size, student to teacher ratio and flexible school hours.

Some recommendations were put forward on these issues:

Parental and community involvement

- *Organize parental and community partnerships for schools, providing the assistance that would be needed to develop these programmes. The educational system could not* succeed *without the community's support and the community could not succeed without making maximum use of the opportunities provided by the educational system. Implement "Each One Matters" by having each school and educational institution tailor its needs to community partnership plans, activities and the interests of students, parents, teachers and the immediate community.*

- *Establish Action Teams for Partnership where the stakeholders within communities would come together to form a school liaison committee. This could comprise the Principal, several teachers, a PTA representative and community stakeholders working together to uplift the school and the community. The keys for this partnership to be successful were: parenting, communicating, volunteering, and collaborating with the community with resource people coming into schools.*

- *Introduce an interactive homework partnership process involving the parents and the teachers since homework not done presented a major problem. This would result in parents getting to know what was happening in the classroom and children valuing education.*

- *Have community-based adult educational programmes to accommodate the large number of parents in their 30s and 40s who did not have the opportunity to complete their secondary education or who do not have certificates. They need help so that they can in turn help their children. The programmes can be held at the underutilized community centres.*

- *Implement a mentorship programme. Studies in other countries have shown mentorship programmes to be highly beneficial to the people being guided. The old scholar associations that exist in some schools could be prime starting points for caring, supportive interaction with troubled children.*
- *Establish more adult literacy centres in communities.*

- *Establish more community outreach programs to foster and encourage stronger relations and deeper interaction between the schools and the community.*

- *Establish more partnerships with corporate Barbados and other entities at the regional and international levels.*
- *Improve the relationship between the home, school and church, with the church playing a greater role. The* **BXC** *was willing to offer assistance with the reintegration of religion into the school curriculum since there were some core values which children must be taught.*

Extracurricular activities

- *Make it mandatory for children to join extracurricular activities such as the Key Club Guides or any other school based organisation. It is good for children to be involved in a service organization and to give back to their communities.*

Flexible school hours

- *Introduce a system of flexible hours for schools that would prevent students having to compete with the adult workforce for transportation and have the added benefit of keeping them off the public service vehicles.* **[Access to free transportation on public buses put in place since the meetings were held might make this point less relevant – Eds.]** *Preventing schoolchildren using public service vehicles because they constituted a negative influence would be unfeasible until there could be a fully dedicated school bus service.*

Job attachments

- *Shift emphasis away from business subjects to the sciences and provide job attachments in the sciences.*

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- *Make job attachments available to those doing well academically and in areas that were relevant to their chosen careers rather than do so haphazardly.*

Curriculum

- *Place increased emphasis on life skills in school curricula in determining the child's ability and successful performance.*

- *Create more flexible curricula in schools to allow children to develop at a pace suited to their abilities.*

- *Implement the Health and Family Life Education programme as a mandatory element in all schools across Barbados.*

- *Articulate a clear and common policy on education to guide the administration of all schools in Barbados.*

School leaving age

- *Raise the school leaving age to 18.*

Structure of education

- *Establish a permanent advisory commission on education.*

- *Examine the structure and content of the educational system to determine its purpose within the available resources.*

- *Establish improved channels of communication and effective collaboration and dissemination of information between the Ministry, the social agencies and stakeholders to encourage systemic reform without overlap.*

Transfers

- *Improve the transition process between levels of education to help children better adjust to new school settings.*
- *Let teachers take advantage of the non-studying time pupils have once they have completed the **CEE** to begin preparing them for some of the non-academic elements of their secondary education – what is expected of them in the new environment; the new subjects they would be exposed to; dealing with peer-pressure.*
- *Based on the assertion that no child fails, dedicate to those children with the lowest scores in the **CEE** the additional time and special attention needed to improve their scores.*

National research study

- Commission a national research team or centre to address social problems affecting the educational system in Barbados.

Community relations

- *Establish more Adult Literacy centres in communities.*

- *Establish more community outreach programs to foster and encourage stronger relations and deeper interaction between the schools and the community.*
- *Commission a national research team or centre to address social problems impacting on the educational system in Barbados.*
- *Establish more partnerships with corporate Barbados and other entities at the regional and international levels.*

Counselling services

- *Determine and clearly articulate the roles of social workers and guidance counsellors to prevent duplication of tasks.*
- *Establish a zonal mechanism in which psycho-social professionals are given special responsibility for schools within in their immediate zone.*
- *Establish improved channels of communication and effective collaboration and dissemination of information between the Ministry, the social agencies and stakeholders to encourage systemic reform to avoid overlap.*
- *Provide support services in all schools from nursery through to tertiary level to cater for at risk children.*
- *Create a national approach to guidance counselling with standard practices and a standard referral form.*
- *Require social workers to have background training in both preventive and remedial nursing to work with at risk children.*

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Introduction

The recommendations submitted in this section reflect those of the fourteen-member **National Advisory Commission on Education (NACE).** Through conducting several plenary and discussion groups **NACE** reflected on and brought to bear their own perspectives on the various aspects of the education system. Some of the salient questions to which **NACE** responded was the current state of the education system in Barbados, what were the underlying philosophical positions we felt should be the guiding focus for education and how we would get there. In addition, the Commission focused on and discussed the recommendations and proposals drawn from the experiences and current realities, as presented at the town hall and focus group meetings, distilling the essential ideas to complement our own philosophical and ideological moorings to reach a consensus of what constitutes a shared vision by - and for - all of Barbados for an education system for a new society in the twenty-first century.

Given their strong interests and views on the topical issues involved, the Commission worked tirelessly to ensure that their views were objective so as neither to safeguard the vested interests of any of their representative institutions or their deeply held personal interests, nor to marginalize those of the key stakeholders in the Barbadian education system. As such, the Commission's recommendations are inspired by the views, the shared experiences and hopes of many Barbadians to ensure that while we project an education system that is second to none, the Commission was also protecting and inculcating what was best in our national cultural heritage, while guarding against the dangers, internal and external, confronting and undermining the ethical and moral fabric of our society. With the challenges of the future, Barbados needs a coordinated effort to map the future **NACE** envisions for our children and generations to come.

3.2 Achieving our Goals: Governance and Management of the Education System

At the heart of our consultations has been an urgent enquiry into the structures necessary for the achievement of the goals outlined in this report. In this regard, **NACE** is acutely aware that central to the transformation of the education system in the manner described throughout this report, will be the creation and/or [re-]fortification of the institutional arrangements consistent with our central goal of an education for the twenty-first century. As much as possible, these 'new' institutions should build on the existing institutions in the education system. We do not subscribe to radical restructuring of the education system because lacklustre and unsustained attempts at radical transformation of any system can mean the difference between success and failure at any given stage in the process over the long term. As such, **NACE** faced a highly demanding challenge of using imagination and creativity in focusing on the policies to make the system more effective and efficient in responding to the ideals, hopes and ambitions of the people of Barbados.

A vocal constituency exists that is supportive of the need for an education system at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary to reflect high levels of accountability and quality. **NACE** therefore is recommending a new model for governance where students are at the centre of the system and

every institution that impacts on students is focused on and held accountable for enabling their adequate functioning.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) is at the heart of the development of the critical human resource development thrust. Therefore, it has responsibility for ensuring that effective and efficient management systems for the human resources within the educational service itself are established and sustained. This will require, among other things, a [re-]examination of its internal mechanisms, policies, and programmes to become more flexible and dynamic in its response to the challenging issues and situations in the education system. There is a strong belief by professionals and stakeholders that the **MEHRD** has become too rigidly centralized and is unable to ensure that the foundational educational goals are being given the priority they deserve. Even if such views were only a crisis of perception, it was often stated that the relevant sections in the **MEHRD** took too long to respond in making decisions. In other cases, respondents complained that they felt as if sections of the **MEHRD** were unaware of what the roles and responsibilities of other sections ought to be in response to emerging situations throughout the system and this contributed *inter alia* to:

- *overlapping mandates,*

- *unnecessary delays in processing information;*

- *uncertainty about the distribution of responsibility for action;*

- *power centres being created in the **MEHRD** at the exclusion of some sections; and*

- *the setting of conflicting personal agendas.*

These situations have led to the undermining of authority and legitimacy within and among sections of the **MEHRD.** This existing organizational climate in turn has impacted on the delivery of clear guidelines to the constituent institutions at all levels of the education system which generally leads to frustration, disengagement, anger, and attitudes of 'take action and inform the **MEHRD** later' and/or general apathy. For example, it was gleaned from discussions that conflicting personal agenda-setting affected particularly the secondary school level where the amount of funds allocated to particular schools in some annual budgets resulted from the politics of favouritism by some senior education officers. Similarly, in other instances, educational services provided by the **MEHRD**, for example, psychological evaluation and testing, were woefully financially under-resourced and compounded by insufficient human resource capacity, which refracted back on to the system and led to bottlenecks in the delivery of these services.

NACE recommends:

- *revisiting the question of decentralization or devolution of some sections, policies and processes currently being centrally administered by the **MEHRD** back to their respective institutional arrangements;*

- *a policy and process audit to be conducted across the elements of the entire education system to assess the effectiveness of their design and implementation, the relevance and consistency of their implementation, and the*

monitoring and evaluation of plans, programmes and services that support critical needs and emerging priorities in the education system;

- *that the diffuse policy authority of management in the **MEHRD** be made more focused and professionally controlled from within the establishment to ensure that foundational educational goals are given the priority they deserve;*

- *a monitoring and evaluation of tasks by personnel in the education system to provide an appropriate degree of professional control in relation to responsibility and accountability;*

- *a new information system for the efficient and effective delivery of information within the system to all clients (internal and external), and across the system thereby facilitating an evenness of commitment, performance and productivity of the highest quality at every point;*

- *that there be adequate funding as well as enhanced human resource capability to facilitate the delivery of the diverse student services the **MEHRD** is called upon and expected to supply to its clients;*

- *the **MEHRD**, in [re-]examining itself, become more innovative in the delivery of educational services to the people of Barbados, with constant [re-]training and/or upgrading of the skills and knowledge of junior and senior employees to enhance the professional delivery of services at all levels of the system in line with the national goal of service excellence.*

3.2.1 Policy and Legal Framework

The Commission also recognizes that some changes to the system cannot be made without the requisite legislative changes and is therefore recommending that the **MEHRD**:

- *review with greatest urgency the precise legislative and regulatory framework, such as the Education Act, Public Service Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, that will be required to facilitate the implementation of the respective recommendations that emerge as a result of this review exercise;*

- *create a policy reform environment and human resource capability to sustain these developments and win support for them in all quarters of our national community.*

3.3 The Educational Cycle

To build a dynamic forward-thinking country, we need to foster favourable conditions for building a learning society. These include nurturing a strong foundation for learning; providing for smooth transitions between the ages and stages in the schools; and providing ongoing opportunities for individuals to learn throughout their life course. The critical learning intersections that connect the ages and stages are as unpredictable and nonlinear as are the lives of individuals. These transitions can take place throughout all phases of life, but particularly among young people on the threshold of adulthood.

3.3.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The processes of learning and skills acquisition begin in early childhood when human abilities and motivation are shaped by families and learning environments within the community. Not surprisingly, investments in early—particularly for the first five years of—childhood learning, which has critical implications for well-being and later success in school, at work and in the community, produce the highest social and economic returns. It is a time when young learners develop attitudes about the value and purpose of learning, setting the stage for lifelong learning in all aspects of their lives. Higher quality child care, regardless of type, has been associated with children scoring higher on language and achievement tests, having better social skills, and displaying fewer behavioural problems.

The lack of school readiness could set in motion a lifelong chain reaction, in which the children who are at greater risk of meeting social and academic difficulties are also more likely to drop out of high school, to have more difficulty finding employment, to earn less and to be in worse health. These foregoing factors serve to increase the proportion of students who are eventually labelled as 'educationally at risk'. They generate early learning deficits that are cumulative and compound the personal and social 'difficulties' that pupils experience in their subsequent years of schooling. This trajectory represents an enormous loss of human potential. Yet all too often, the importance of child care as a vital precursor to formal learning is undervalued or unrecognized.

Although family and parental characteristics play key roles in shaping children's abilities and their attitudes toward learning, all learning environments experienced in the early years—whether in the home or in the community—can profoundly affect learning abilities over the longer term. The quality of child care can influence children's physical/motor, social/emotional and language/cognitive development, all of which set the stage for learning in the school years.

NACE recommends the establishment of an oversight institution for:

- *Early Childhood Care and Education that should work assiduously to bring the full age cohort into the system of care and education at this level; and be charged with the responsibility for developing policy incentives to encourage the partnership between the state and the private sector, non-governmental organizations, parents, caregivers and educators;*

- *closely monitoring the proliferation of day-care centres and pre-school programmes to ensure that they conform to integrity of standards by ensuring that their proprietors and their assistants are trained in areas of **Early Childhood Care and Education**.*

3.3.2 Quality education for children with special needs

In our consultations the Commission received submissions from members of the disabled community which addressed the theme of children with special needs. The submissions reflected a genuine, sincere but dignified complaint against their marginalization by society by virtue of their disabilities. Members often felt a sense of indifference and insensitivity from the public and also felt forgotten and neglected in the policy planning process. They felt a fundamental reason for this attitude by officials was the lack of financial, human and physical resources. As a result, some of their challenges, if addressed, generally reflect policies which may readily cater to apparent physical

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disabilities while non-apparent disabilities such as fits/seizures, **HIV/AIDS**, childhood diabetes, phobias were often ignored and/or misunderstood. In those instances where public attitudes towards people with disabilities are changing and are more positive the change is all too slow and, as such, children with disabilities continue to face many challenges in the school system. It is in this regard that the Commission focused on such topics as curriculum planning, discipline, student transfer from primary to secondary, teacher training, support services, parenting, early detection, and intervention. The call was made for greater opportunities for people with disabilities to advance educationally and professionally and much support was given for the integration of children with special needs into 'normal schools' where possible. Students with special needs were considered not only to be those with disabilities but also the exceptionally gifted child who found difficulty in the existing school system. The Commission is mindful that it takes resources to cater to special needs, but we will also wish to make emphatically clear that they are members of society and their needs as part of the human resource development programme of Barbados must be catered to as a right and not as a charity. In order to promote greater accessibility to education by children with special needs **NACE** recommends:

- *that the system make adequate provision for children with special needs through the development of a comprehensive policy on special education by which schools, teachers and parents can be guided;*

- *the provision of continuing education and training for children and young people with special needs, and retraining and education for people who have suffered a disability, in order to encourage self-sustainability.*

- *the institution of a National Development Scholarship for people with disabilities in the areas such as vocational rehabilitation, career guidance, physiotherapy and occupational therapy to enable their access to post graduate education;*

- *the provision of physical access in all schools, including sick bays, to accommodate students with special needs as well as those who use walkers and wheelchairs;*

- *improved and increased access to education by children with special needs provide the opportunity for them to benefit from a quality education;*

- *that special buses be designated for students with special needs, with an assistant on board who could assist a child who might experience a seizure or other medical crisis while on board;*

- *surveillance in bus stands where the students gather to avert instances of bullying and other lawless act targeted at special needs students;*

- *the curricula and programmes of schools make provision for the very special, and individual needs of students and therefore that there be greater attention given to the curriculum and the teacher/pupil ratio in providing education for students;*

- *that teaching assistants/aides be provided at the special schools/units to assist students with their toileting and other basic needs;*

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- *strengthening of the office of Student Support Services, **MEHRD** to include the employment of a speech and language therapist/pathologist to provide intervention programmes for the large number of students in the education system who are experiencing speech and language difficulties;*

- *that more teachers be trained in the field of special education and provided with incentives to work directly with the children in the classroom setting, addressing both the dearth of suitably trained teachers to work with children with special needs, including students who are dyslexic and autistic, and the situation where teachers trained in teaching children with special needs are now deployed throughout the system mainly at the administrative level of the profession rather than working directly with children;*

- *that training and education be provided for children with behavioural problems and learning disabilities who might be experiencing emotional difficulties and therefore facing greater challenges to their educational progress in the school system than children with physical, visual or hearing impairments;*

- *that the **MEHRD** increase the level of mainstreaming of children with special needs and provide them with adequate care and resources while in the system, and through the special needs curriculum teach children without disabilities to respect differences in others including their disabled peers - mainstreaming/inclusion/integration has been practiced internationally as a more effective way to work with people who are differently able and it fosters the acceptance of children with disabilities by their non-disabled peers;*

- *the routine screening of children on entry to school be continued to ensure through assessment the early identification of students with special needs from the time they enter preschool and definitely before they transfer from primary to secondary school, so that the child who needs help can be referred to the Children's Development Centre for early intervention, and an individual educational plan implemented;*

- *suitable and adequate education for children with visual problems, the teaching and assessment methods to use audio and oral examinations as opposed to visual and written examinations so students who are visually impaired and who may not be able to read might have the opportunity to be asked and to answer questions pertaining to their course of study; as well it is recommended that, at all educational institutions, students with special needs be provided with extra time to complete their examinations;*

- *that the **MEHRD** employ the Garrison School's model for working with special needs students in other schools;*

- *that the **MEHRD** showcase young people with disabilities thereby highlighting the achievements of students with special needs.*

Our primary schools are also blessed with a number of gifted students who are unable to realize their skills until late in the education system. **NACE** recommends:

- *that teachers who, through testing and appropriate services, are aware of these gifted students with special needs seek to develop their special capacities. In response to the preceding issues, **NACE** suggests other policy initiatives.*

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3.3.3 Primary Schools

The primary school system will continue to be a central focus of Government's expenditure. Many of our proposed recommendations regarding governance, discipline, **ICTs** in education, infrastructural development, and school size are equally as applicable to early childhood education as they are to the primary and secondary school sectors. Our primary schools cater to some students with severe learning difficulties who are also experiencing social and economic challenges as identified elsewhere in this report and for whom we have suggested recommendations. **NACE** is of the view that the most pressing issue is the chronic underachievement of the system with increasingly worrying numbers of students performing well below their class levels. **NACE** will continue to support the continuation and expansion of the **national development and remediation programme** with the objective of improving students' abilities and competencies up to their age appropriate class/form level in the shortest possible time. The failure of the system to properly equip learners with the requisite skills and competencies for each stage of their schooling has produced an inefficient and wasteful system in which many of the students, if not properly corrected, are liable to carry their frustrations on to the next level leading to their inevitable removal from the system. In this way a cycle of recidivism continues.

- *NACE recommends that a key component of this remediation programme focus on new and innovative ways by which material can be introduced and understood by the students - for example, how could music be used to teach some areas of mathematics; or art and dance used to teach the aesthetics of strength, beauty and expression; and the transferring of such skills to an appreciation for literature and the development within our students of their creative imagination: the derivative of which could be the genesis of new skills to support the cultural industries. Such reflection on creative but novel teaching methodologies to develop students' intellectual capacity could provide infinite scope for further variation and we hope would develop a Barbadian student impassioned by the love of and the willingness to learn and who would therefore want to be a lifelong learner continuously developing knowledge and wisdom. It is within this context that although we advocate continued remediation, it must not be restricted to Mathematics and English, but to all other disciplines with a view toward achieving levels of excellence in all areas of endeavour.*

- *NACE also recommends that support personnel such as psycho-social professionals be deployed throughout the primary school system to work with children, parents and the school in the education of the children.*

- *NACE wishes to place special emphasis on extending the textbook loan scheme to primary school students. This recommendation will support those students who are 'educationally at risk'.*

3.3.4 Transfer from Primary to Secondary School

There was significant discussion regarding the transfer of students from the primary to secondary level, with people expressing both support for, and criticism of, the present method of transferral. In spite of the fervent debate articulating the pros and cons of retaining the current transfer system *via* the **Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE)**, there was general consensus that any examination process that is developed and implemented should be cognizant of and seek to address any negative psycho-social concerns. In this regard, our recommendations are to consider the following:

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- *children should be given the opportunity to explore non-traditional areas;*

- *a re-examination of the mistaken concept that children do not fail the 11+;*

- *children should not be separated according to their marks in the **CEE**; rather allocation should be based on mixed abilities so that there would be children with excellent grades in all schools;*

- *an end to the social comparison of children and an end to the distinction between bright and 'duncy', recognizing that each child has potential.*

In addition to the remedying of the psychosocial issues, other critical areas of consideration discussed across the society centred around the following areas: zoning, restructuring/curriculum reform; continuous assessment; and administration.

3.3.5 Zoning

The issue of zoning was contentious with firm views that it should be properly conceptualised, maintained and extended. Concerns raised were over dispelling notions of elitism that created negative social stigmas; a call for the allocation of students to schools closer to their homes to end traffic congestion, to enable them to build stronger communities, participate more readily in extra-curricular activities, and have better relationships with teachers and parents; and to provide a greater opportunity for all schools to have a more evenly distributed socio-economic and academic environment. **NACE** takes into consideration however, that to effectively facilitate zoning there must be a concerted effort by Government to ensure that all schools are continuously supported with adequate resources and embrace a curriculum that fosters the development of every skill and aptitude of each child throughout its educational career.

From the plethora of data and commentary presented across the spectrum of society, **NACE** recognizes that one of the fundamental reasons for the retention of the BSSEE is based on social class and a desire, almost an innate need, for sections of the society to distance and separate themselves from others through access to certain educational institutions. There could be no other reason for its retention since successive governments have put forward the view that all schools are equally allocated resources and are adequately staffed by trained graduate teachers from the **UWI** and elsewhere. Within this context, therefore, all schools ought to be equal and the automatic transferral to secondary schools should not be fraught with difficulty if the preceding logic is sound.

NACE also recognises that underlying many of the proposals and recommendations expressed around restructuring/curriculum reform, continuous assessment, and administration was the individualistic self-interest of fearful stakeholders over how best they could negotiate a reshaping of the examination process to their children's needs. As such, many of the recommendations reflected the desire to insert piecemeal qualifiers to redress individual fears rather than a focus on a comprehensive examination and analysis of the structural, socio-political, and resource constraints and capacities within which the transfer from primary to secondary level education must operate.

Mindful of these issues, **NACE** recommends that the transfer from primary to secondary levels should be conducted within the suggested framework:

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- Schools should be allocated into three zones:

ZONE 1

The Alexandra Secondary
Alleyne Secondary
Coleridge and Parry Secondary
Ellerslie Secondary
Grantley Adams Memorial
St. Lucy Secondary

ZONE 2

Harrison College
Lester Vaughan
Queens College
Springer Memorial
St. Leonards
The Garrison Secondary School
The St. Michael School

ZONE 3

Combermere
Deighton Griffith Secondary
Foundation Secondary School
Parkinson Secondary
Princess Margaret Secondary
The Lodge School

It is recommended that students be continuously assessed and transferred to the school in their respective zone after taking the revised format of the **CEE**. Students should not be allowed to attend schools outside their zone of residence. In this way, there would be a fairer distribution of students in all secondary schools. **NACE** is also cognizant that in instances where students must wait for their parents or guardians to collect them from school, a well structured after school programme should be implemented. **NACE** is also mindful of the fact that the proposed redistribution of secondary schools in these respective zones will provide a fairer opportunity for all teachers to cater to the diversity of students at all secondary schools rather than the uneven distribution that currently exists where some teachers felt overwhelmed by a steady stream of one type of student that taxed their intellectual and physical reserves each day.

- The **CEE** should be revised to reflect the following changes:

All subjects currently being taught at the primary level to be continuously assessed and examined through standardized formats established by the Ministry of Education, with equal emphasis/weightings for all subjects as currently followed in the internal annual exams offered by primary schools.

These exams could be done over the period of a week or two as presently practiced at all primary schools. Students will, by their seventh year in primary school, have become accustomed to taking exams and will not have the added pressure that currently arises from taking one definitive exam that seemingly determines a child's social future. This new format will also allow students to capitalize on their varied strengths. The exams could be internally invigilated at primary schools where students would be in their familiar surroundings.

For those stakeholders overly concerned about their ward's ability and the chances of their being left behind by the traditional format of the **CEE** because of 'remedial' challenges, **NACE** takes the view that the notion of remedial education could be addressed through the continuous training and development of teachers. This would correct any deficiencies in a student's educational career through the diagnostic testing of students. This is with a view to tailoring special curricula to cater to the particular needs of a diverse student population, some of whom may not wish to pursue the traditional curriculum with a concentration on the Arts and Sciences. In addition, the proposed reconfiguration and allocation of adequately resourced schools in their selected zones should ensure that each child has a chance at attending a centre of excellence.

3.3.6 A New Beginning

NACE proposes that two secondary schools could be taken out of the mainstream secondary system, renamed, reconfigured and created as special centres of endeavour for students who display aptitude in different areas. These two schools readily lend themselves to campus configurations to host a number of expanded specialist areas of education. They must not be considered as remedial or differently abled institutions to perpetuate negative social stigmas. The renamed schools should be considered as equivalent to an Agricultural and Mechanical Engineering institute/college where a diversified portfolio of complementary skills could be offered; and a Conservatory for the Fine Arts and related subjects. This would facilitate the offering of specific and relevant **CVQs, NVQs, CSEC,** other specialist exams or international baccalaureate, suited to the particular needs of the students who do not wish to follow the traditional curriculum.

Entrance to these colleges/institutes would not necessarily always be at 11 years old but permitted through different matriculation requirements once the student's aptitude and affinity for a respective area has been assessed. Matriculation could therefore take the form *inter alia* of:

- *auditions;*
- *portfolio assessments;*
- *the allocation process of the revised* **CEE** *format;*
- *on completion of the first three foundational years (first through third) at a secondary school and the student's aptitude for a particular skill is more discernable.*

3.3.7 Governance of Primary and Secondary Schools

As with the management of the **MEHRD**, **NACE** believes that there is a critical need for the revision of the management of the central institution responsible for children's education: the

school. Increasingly, with the failed responsibility of parents to assume leadership roles in ensuring the child's success, more emphasis is being placed on schools to fulfil this role. Parents and guardians and indeed the wider society are calling on the management of schools at all levels to be more accountable and steadfast in creating a learning environment that is conducive to academic success. School leaders and managers must therefore be more responsible for how institutions are managed for students' achievements. However, in some instances both primary and secondary schools continue to have large numbers of students, which makes governance a challenging task for both staff and parents.

In this regard **NACE** firmly supports the recent Ministerial initiative for the introduction of strategic plans for improving the governance and administrative capacity in secondary schools. **NACE** also recommends that:

- *this initiative be extended to all primary schools;*

- *large primary schools with over 500 students reflect a management structure similar to that of secondary schools;*

- *Boards of Management be appointed to all primary schools;*
- *secondary schools be kept to a maximum of 800 students and be managed by one principal and two deputy principals;*

- *the post of principal be held within the education system and not on appointment to specific schools;*

- *students be given a voice in the management of schools through the implementation of Student Councils at the Secondary level;*

- *Chairpersons of Boards of Management and all board members be trained and certified in the protocols of school management;*

- *the School Boards should hold the principal accountable to the objectives and performance targets of the school's strategic plan;*
- *all principals receive continuous training in school management* and leadership.

3.3.8 Discipline and support systems

Parents and educators are sharply divided on the administering of corporal punishment in schools. One of the most common reasons for its abolition relates to the extreme or excessive physical abuse reported by the media and popular accounts of these allegations, even though corporal punishment is used less and less in the majority of schools and largely as a last resort. Likewise, there are those who favour retention of the practice noting that the media and some development agencies recently have highlighted only the most salacious and lurid details of the disciplinary regime while silencing alternative memories or accounts, failing to examine prevailing policy and practice in homes and schools to see what is regarded as acceptable and legitimate, and failing to see the deeper and wider implications to society particularly when institutions are increasingly encountering large numbers of delinquent students.

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NACE recognizes the critical voices for and against corporal punishment and is mindful that students must not be subjected by teachers or school management to harsh and severe punitive measures. However, at the same time all students must be allowed to receive undisturbed and efficient instruction in school and must not be held to ransom by errant and delinquent students. As such corporal punishment, if properly administered, can be useful as an effective institutional, not classroom, method of control. **NACE** is also aware that the majority of teachers have a lively regard for the improvement and general welfare of their pupils, often going beyond the call of duty in the extent to which they treat pupils with kindness combined with firmness and fairness. As such, **NACE** supports the call for the creation of adequate programmes in schools to ameliorate the existing behavioral and psycho-social challenges, which, if they remain unchecked, will lead to ungovernable institutions. **NACE** recommends:

- *a programme be developed to identify and meet the needs of those students exhibiting difficult behaviour with a view to employing the necessary intervention strategies to ensure that they cooperate and with the relevant support personnel available to students in all schools from as early as the pre-school and infant departments in primary schools and throughout secondary school;*

- *an alternative residential educational institution should be established with the mandate to employ all the necessary corrective measures to rehabilitate students exhibiting difficult behaviour while providing the opportunity for them to continue their studies, and with it being compulsory that parents be actively involved in this process;*

- *the strengthening and proper resourcing of an enhanced juvenile liaison scheme which would work in collaboration with the student services section of the **MEHRD**;*

- *corporal punishment be retained on the statute books but with a view to reforming The Education Act to lead to its eventual abolition once the correct ethos and appropriate resources, such as psycho-social professionals, were employed in schools to support the efforts of teachers.*
- *the **MEHRD** should continue to monitor the regulations for the misuse of corporal punishment in schools, and respond to complaints with appropriate sanctions against teachers and school managers who violate the regulations.*

- *a comprehensive code of behaviour with the accompanying sanctions be developed, with the understanding that students be informed what is expected of them in order to eradicate the random responses and resultant confusion within an institution where similar infractions attract different sanctions; and as all stake holders would have to adopt this code, everyone should be aware of what is expected of students and the ensuing sanction to be employed for any given violation.*

- *a study be carried out to ascertain if there were any correlation between an inflated teacher/pupil ratio and negative student behaviour, with the findings of this research used to shape future policy;*

- *a staff development programme be undertaken to enable teachers to identify and manage difficult students and conflict in the classroom;*

- *media (through the Government Information Service) and other community programmes be implemented to familiarize parents with best practices in parenting techniques;*

- *a peer coaching programme (possibly though the use of students councils) be developed and utilized to influence student behaviour in a positive way;*

- *students in schools be exposed to an ongoing programme of conflict resolution;*

- *a closer link between all stakeholders be forged to give consistency to efforts at instilling good discipline in students;*

- *all members of staff be trained to effectively employ appropriate technology in the delivery of lessons, thus enabling teachers to cater to the individual needs of the students, render lessons more student-centred and eliminate the frustration that is a real source of indiscipline in the classroom.*

3.3.9 Supporting Services: Health and Nutrition

Inadequate nutrition contributes to heightened levels of learning impairment, while the vending of junk food and the peddling of illegal drugs on or near school premises present some challenges in the school system. Students' learning is compromised if their health and nutritional needs are not met. Primary school students complained of the often poor quality and tardiness of the school meals service, which could interrupt an entire day of learning. In addition, there were complaints that the current school meals arrangements did not take into consideration students with special dietary requirements and who therefore went hungry.

NACE recommends:

- *that the dietary plan be revised drawing on the expertise of home economics teachers to reflect the dietary requirements of students with special needs and dietary practices;*

- *that the dietary plan be distributed at the commencement of each school term to alert parents about what would be available;*

- *that the nutrition and health imperatives be met through working more closely with the local agricultural sector, for the sourcing of commodities to reduce costs;*

- *a [re-]evaluation of the management systems in place for the School Meals Service with a view to ensuring the efficiency and the effective delivery of this essential service.*

3.3.10 Infrastructural Development and Capital Works

NACE commends the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development for his recent initiative in spearheading the capital works programme of fencing all primary and secondary schools to ensure that most security threats at schools are substantially mitigated. **NACE** firmly believes that the quality of the physical plant is a major contributing factor to indiscipline in schools, which in turn suspends the learning environment. For example, there are currently several primary and secondary schools where many pupils are crowded into narrowly defined spaces. Overcrowding impacts on the ability of staff to introduce new teaching methodologies that require increased instructional space; and on their ability to introduce different teaching options to mixed ability groupings. Overcrowding also leads to inadequate staffrooms and administrative office space, sick bays and facilities for the physically challenged. Moreover, such challenging physical environments produce a teacher corps in which morale is affected negatively.

NACE noted in onsite visits to schools that, in several instances, counseling rooms were often inappropriately located, or unavailable, while facilities and space for play areas and co-curricular activities were not provided. Some urban schools lacked a clean, green environment and were congested. It is imperative therefore to create the right type of physical environment that would invite children's interest and an inclination to learn.

NACE recommends:

- *the rehabilitation and upgrading of schools and the incorporation of the needs of staff and students into their [re-]design, as well as including accessibility for the physically challenged and support for co-curricular activities;*

- *the design of new schools as integral components of communities that could be used to encourage and develop life-long learning programmes and cultural activities;*

- *the involvement of the private sector and community in school maintenance;*

- *that schools be provided with adequate resources for the proper preventive and corrective maintenance of the school plant, with a view to diminishing the extra-curricular commercial activities which often currently take place on the school compound and detract from the fundamental goal of learning.*

Related to the above, **NACE** also recommends:

- *the introduction of caution fees at all secondary schools—collected as a one-off cost at the beginning of a student's first form year and returned at the completion of his/her school career—to be used for cost recovery from abuse of school property and to assist deserving students through a benevolent fund supported by interest accrued from the deposit of such funds;*

- *the maintenance (and condition) of schools be incorporated in each principal's performance criteria;*

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- *the introduction of strategic security assessments for all schools with a view to the implementation of adequate security systems at all schools - the Coleridge and Parry Security Assessment Model could be used as best practice;*

- *the fostering of landscaping programmes at each school.*

3.3.11 Co-Education in Secondary Schools

Throughout the consultation, much debate centred around co-education in secondary schools. There were two extremes: those who argued for a return to all male and all female schools; and those who argued for no changes to be made. In all the discussion, there was no conclusive evidence to support the claims for either extreme.

NACE is of the view that the central issue is not co-education but rather the preparedness of the educational environment within which both boys and girls are educated.

NACE believes that with the correct supporting infrastructures—*inter alia,* funding, curricula, discipline, parental support and adequate school size, as mentioned elsewhere in this report—both genders could be socialized to their roles in society. There would be no need for the separation of sexes in a school environment that is holistic, that weaves together the intellectual, spiritual, physical and social growth and development of the individual from the earliest ages, and that encourages the achievement of excellence, and the exercise of social responsibility at the level of the family, the workplace, the community and the nation.

NACE supports co-education, but would welcome studies to suggest the merits and the demerits of this initiative.

3.3.12 Sixth Form Schools and Expanded Access

Currently there are four sixth form schools with a new initiative for the introduction of another two schools. The expansion of sixth form schools will be instrumental in offering academic support to the tertiary sector by ensuring students receive solid pre-foundational support in areas of literacy, and numeracy and are allowed to develop and apply their knowledge and skills, to be better prepared for the world of university. The expansion of sixth forms could also see the shift of foundation courses being currently taught at **UWI** to these institutions, allowing the university to concentrate on core areas in respective academic disciplines, which they now cannot fulfil because of overburdened degree programme options. **NACE** is of the view that a student's educational journey through to sixth form should be as natural as his journey from first form to fifth form.

NACE also believes that the acquisition of a sixth form must not be seen as an entitlement or a privilege perpetuating notions of elitism, an attitude which is a fundamental source of underlying social tensions in the education system and wider society, but as a right, subject to qualification requirements, as currently exists elsewhere in the Caribbean. It is within this context that **NACE** recommends:

- *that sixth form status be granted to all secondary schools as a normal academic trajectory through a child's educational career;*

- *that rather than all schools offering a similar curriculum, they focus efforts on their strengths and build on these for their sixth form offerings, such that a school that has established a forte in music or business would continue to enhance its students' strengths through the provision of these subjects at the sixth form—a recommendation that is in keeping with the notion that all schools must be centres of excellence.*

3.4 Transportation: Primary and Secondary Schools

NACE applauds the recent initiative of Government to provide free transportation to all school children. This is critical in helping to improve enrolment in schools and, more importantly, in alleviating another financial burden on vulnerable sections of our society. Notwithstanding, there are some challenges that, if noted and corrected, could be instrumental in improving the quality of service. For example, principals, particularly from rural schools, complained of the tardiness of the service in reaching their schools, in some cases one hour after school had started.

The second general concern relates to the rapid urbanization of Barbados, which has led to severe traffic congestion during peak travel hours between 7am to 9am. Students using this public service during these peak hours are stranded by the snail's pace of traffic, further prolonging the excessive time on the road and leading to late arrivals at their schools. This therefore is not entirely the fault of the transport service. Although **NACE** is sympathetic, these concerns obviously raise another issue, full zoning in which students will attend schools that are closest to their homes, which is dealt with elsewhere in this report and which must be thoughtfully but seriously considered.

Notwithstanding the above, it is fair to say that there are some challenges with the service regarding timing, routing, crowding in buses, limited units to service the schools and particularly the indiscipline by school children and **NACE** recommends:

- *a review and monitoring of the operational services by the Transport Board to seek solutions as to how best the public school bus service can be improved to meet the needs of children, their families and the schools;*

- *in order to mitigate the indiscipline on the Transport Board buses, that the Royal Barbados Police Force and an empowered traffic warden conduct frequent spot checks by boarding and riding in buses along the routes to ensure orderly behaviour from all patrons;*

- *the sustained and strict reinforcement of the regulations governing the conduct of personnel from Public Service Vehicles (PSVs), particularly as it relates to the carriage of school children.*

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3.5 Transitioning through the System from Secondary to Tertiary: Colleges and Universities

3.5.1 University of the West Indies

The tertiary sector continues to expand rapidly in response to demands for second chance primary and secondary education. The economic and social benefits of pursuing tertiary education have been widely documented. Individual benefits of tertiary education include better wages and job satisfaction with fewer periods of unemployment; improved health and quality of life; a skilled workforce linked to higher productivity, innovation, economic growth; as well as stronger communities with higher civic engagement and social cohesion. However, adults often experience a number of daunting transitions as they leave secondary school and make their way toward post-secondary education (PSE) and the labour market. For young people, these are particular reasons for concern.

Unemployment impairs the transition being made from childhood to adulthood; from dependence to independence. While some may enter the labour market immediately, others go directly into a tertiary programme, still others pursue several options that include combinations of work, study, and skills development. Factors such as family background, previous learning success and availability of resources (informational, monetary) can influence the timing and quality of a person's decisions to pursue further education. The consequences of young adults being undervalued and offered no future and opportunity to exercise choices can be serious for society and for the individual, both in the short and in the longer term.

While primary and secondary schooling are important, tertiary education is needed to provide the capacity for analysis, problem solving, and management at both general and specific levels. Increased access to tertiary education leads to empowerment. Tertiary institutions also generate the cadres of professionals who perform important tasks in policy development, project management and implementation, production and maintenance. **NACE** firmly supports the initiative of expanded tertiary education by the **UWI** to provide fair and equal access to a university education to all those who have the potential to succeed or benefit from it. In our discussions and consultations regarding this sector, there were several issues that emerged regarding the governance of tertiary institutions in the education system. **NACE** believes that these institutions should take note since they are perceptions, informed or misinformed, which are influencing the reality of several Barbadians.

NACE therefore recommends:

- *that measures be instituted to ensure that the quality, relevance and international acceptance of the tertiary programmes of the respective institutions are maintained and promoted;*

- *that the efficiency and the costs of delivering academic programmes be more accountable to Government;*

- *a revision of the matriculation requirements to reflect a student with more advanced level/**CAPE** exposure and restriction of the matriculation of students directly from fifth form schools because the mix of abilities in some university classrooms slows the lecturing process, and students need to regard university as a serious step to academic excellence and career development and not as an extension of high school; that the introduction of new initiatives to promote male participation in the university be carefully conceptualized and discussed lest gender inequalities be promoted;*

- *that the university be more responsive to students' needs, particularly in relation to the expansion of relevant degree programmes, and respond more rapidly to market signals/demands through the provision of a greater diversity of degree programmes;*

- *that **UWI** reconsider graduating students with low Grade Point Averages since students who achieve this level of performance have demonstrated little if any academic achievement;*

- *that **UWI** restricst completion of degree programmes to thee years for full time students and four to five years for part time students, with students who constantly repeat courses or flippantly switch programmes having to incur some of the costs that are currently heavily subsidized by government financing, rather than stay within the system imposing a constant financial strain on the system;*

- *university faculty make a special effort to integrate their ideas through cross-disciplinary approaches in lectures and pay more attention to ensuring that students are properly taught and to instilling in students the ability to think critically and creatively;*

- *the tertiary institutions revisit their standards, the viability of their academic programmes, the efficiency of their delivery and the costs of their operations, placing special emphasis on achieving competencies in teaching and research through processes that facilitate staff and student mobility;*

- *more support be provided for distance and on-line education and that satellite operations be established in rural areas, with information technology playing a major role in improving quality and expanding the range of vocational and tertiary education and training;*

- *the tertiary institutions continue to actively work with employers and employer-organizations to customize skills assessment tools and curricula to meet the needs of particular industries.*

3.5.2 Barbados Community College: The Establishment of the University College of Barbados (UCB)

The Barbados Community College continues to offer a comprehensive range of flexible vocational and academic programmes to make access to higher education a realistic option for as many people as possible. For some time now there has been discussion surrounding the proposed establishment of the University College of Barbados (UCB) which will see the amalgamation of the Barbados Community College, Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and Erdiston Teachers Training College.

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There was some dissent within the commission on this educational initiative. One view was that if the UCB comes into existence, it must not offer similar programmes to those already offered by the **UWI** since this would be a duplication of effort. Concerns were also expressed regarding the start-up costs of the **UCB** and the sustainability of such an enterprise.

Another strongly held view is that the **UWI** should be considered the premiere tertiary institution in Barbados. **UWI** should perform an audit of its programmes and where necessary, strongly supported by the reality of financial resources, expand its course and programme offerings in new and diverse areas to reflect the character and the dynamics of the labour market.

NACE's recommendation was more in favour of the latter option because it was felt that to fund the **UCB** would be to divert already challenged financial resources away from the **UWI** to the **UCB**. It was emphatically stated that funding a rapidly expanding **UWI** was already an extreme cost to Government and to have a **UCB** would place pressure on the education system by diverting much needed funds away from primary and secondary institutions as well as the implementation of developmental programmes. **NACE** recommends:

- *that the **BCC** continue to expand its professional and vocational course offerings by alignment with chartered professional bodies, and to continue to develop associate degree programmes that broaden the scope of educational opportunities, as well as offer training in areas not previously given recognition;*

- *a revision of articulation agreements between the **UWI** and **Barbados Community College** regarding some programmes and courses to ensure the quality and integrity, and that students who transfer into university possess the necessary competencies to pursue tertiary level work;*

- *a revision and auditing of existing programmes by external agencies, in collaboration with the relevant local institutions, to ensure that the quality and integrity of the programmes are consistent with regional and international standards;*

- *the **BCC** move towards external second marking of scripts to ensure validity and legitimacy of examination processes, aligning the Associate Degree with other similar qualifications, such as **CAPE**, that are offered by regional bodies.*

3.5.3 Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic

The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (**SJPP**) was originally designed to collaborate with employers and industry experts to ensure programme content was highly relevant. **NACE** believes that the **SJPP** increasingly has become removed from its original intake and mandate of providing an alternative secondary/post-secondary curriculum for students and has contributed to the frustration of school leavers wanting to pursue non-traditional technical and vocational options since only a few people who do not achieve highly in secondary school qualify for places in this institution. **NACE** recommends:

- *that the **SJPP** revisit its original mission statement regarding its core constituents with a view to expanding its subject options to include, perhaps horticulture, boat building, new agricultural and farming methods, and information technology, while emphasizing literacy, numeracy, oracy skills, and other enriching subjects to continue to make its purpose more relevant to all;*

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- *that the **SJPP** offer a portfolio of new courses and devise matriculation mechanisms as part of a [re-]focussed Adult Education Programme to provide expanded access to students desirous of continuing education but without adequate certification to meet formal matriculation requirements;*

- *that **SJPP** work with other international polytechnic institutes in designing and offering student and instructor exchanges to build and foster a culture of design and technological innovation;*

- *the expansion of the **SJPP** to include another campus, or alternatively, make use of the technical and vocational facilities of secondary schools to deliver new and expanded programmes.*

3.5.4. Erdiston Teachers' Training College

In the course of our consultations, oral and written submissions were made which lamented the poor performance of students at both the primary and secondary schools due to the inappropriateness of curricula and teaching methods; the critical shortage of trained teachers, as well as a critical shortage of trained teachers comfortable in the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate the implementation of new aspects of the national curriculum; and the lack of other instructional materials. **NACE** recommends that:

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College in collaboration with the proposed Teacher's Commission be the guardians of standards and integrity within the teaching professions because they are the trained experts in their area of endeavour;*

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College expand its capacity to allow all untrained teachers to be trained immediately and, working with the newly formed Teacher's Commission, focus attention on the personal as well as on the professional development of teachers to ensure no untrained teacher is appointed within the profession;*

- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College work closely with the proposed Teacher's Commission to conceptualize and develop appropriate curricula and teaching methods which draw their content and purpose from linkages made between the worlds of study and work; as well as encourage the promotion of critical and analytical abilities through partnerships with the **UWI**;*

- *Erdiston facilitate the development of a retraining programme for all secondary school teachers every 3-5 years to equip them with new teaching methodologies, and the ability to build research and analytical capacity to diagnose and prescribe solutions to the challenges they face;*
- *Erdiston College facilitate the development of training and retraining programmes on School Management, Industrial Relations and Conflict Resolution for senior management;*

- *Attention be given to a continued sensitivity to the significance, importance and limitations of educational and other new technologies to be reflected in teacher training programmes and teaching and learning strategies;*

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- *Erdiston Teachers' Training College be satisfactorily resourced to satisfy the emerging needs of the Barbadian classroom given the rapid development and dynamic changes occurring across the educational lands***CAPE** *that call for resources.*

3.5.5 Restructuring Funding/Scholarship Programmes for Tertiary Education

The Barbados scholarship has been considered the summit of academic educational awards. However with so many of our young people making an effort to excel in non-traditional areas of endeavour, such as athletics, **NACE** feels that too many of our young citizens are unable to realize their scholastic expectations because of the lack of opportunities available to them. Additionally, a revision of this award programme serves the purpose of efficiently and effectively utilizing funds, spreading them proportionately over all areas of academic pursuits.

In this regard, **NACE** recommends the Barbados scholarship should be tenable only at one of the three campuses of the University of the West Indies or a tertiary institution in the Caribbean where students must pursue an undergraduate course of study that is applicable to the national development needs. These scholarships should be awarded based on the developmental needs of the society and not on the pursuit of personal interests. **NACE** recommends:

- *that recipients of this award must focus their attention on the national needs and pursue programmes of study that will promote the national good;*

- *the scholarships be fulfilled at the* **UWI**, *except for programmes of study applicable to national development needs but unavailable at one of the three campuses of the* **UWI**, *and the monies thus saved be put towards the* **National Development Scholarships** *to assist in broadening the scope and expanding access to postgraduate funding opportunities in new specialist areas of national development;*

- *the establishment of a* **National Scholarship Advisory Committee** *with proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to examine the revision of these scholarship programmes, and the feasibility of establishing new scholarships in non-traditional areas to recipients who demonstrate natural talents and abilities in the visual and performing arts, sports, even aviation, but who are also able to incorporate their academic pursuits in these endeavours;*

- *that a* **Strategic National Human Resource Needs Analysis Study** *be conducted to determine the shortages in and conflicting demands on human resource capacity in Barbados; and to compile a register of highly skilled nationals, areas of expertise and legitimacy of degrees, making the* **MEHRD** *better able to determine the areas of need for the granting of scholarships and awards to ensure that funds are being well spent in targeted areas, and helping recipients determine their choices more accurately and avoid frustration on return with higher skills in a narrowly defined labour market;*

- *that like the Barbados Scholarship, the National Development Scholarship must also be revised to reflect the needs of Barbadian society and must be in tandem with its national development goals;*

- *the* **Students Revolving Loan Fund** *make provision for the funding of online and distance education programmes, subject to rigorous checks and balances regarding the quality and integrity of such programmes, recognizing that many of our citizens are pursuing online and distance programmes.*

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3.5.6 Online and Distance Education Programmes

Increasingly a number of external and online universities have been providing a range of educational services to the Caribbean without the requisite accreditation mechanisms in place to protect vulnerable clients. These universities are often unaccredited by their official national accreditation institutions and are instead accredited by 'accreditation mills' - nefarious organizations established to offer such services for profit. A number of external universities, and these are not just the exception, have been penalized by their national accreditation institutions for offering programmes way below the standards and quality offered in their national markets to unsuspecting and unknowing external markets.

- *NACE recommends that the Barbados Accreditation Council work closely with the MEHRD and with regional and external Accreditation Councils to conduct an audit of distance education programmes as well as online university programmes to monitor and evaluate the content, quality and integrity of standards of these programmes before determining access to funding or legitimating the qualification.*

3.6 The Role of Stakeholders

The education of people is at the heart of human development. It involves fostering the enlargement of human capacities. This is a complex task and one that cannot be done by one institution alone - the **MEHRD**. **NACE** is of the view that large sections of Barbadian society have lost the message of the value of education to national development in spite of Government's commitment to extensive outlays of investment. Indeed, there is a growing lack of appreciation for, an undervaluation of and, in some cases, blatant indifference to what the educational sector has done for this country.

Parental involvement is inadequate with only a minority of parents being fully involved in their children's education or the life of the school. Some homes do not provide the required stimulating environment, a necessary prerequisite for learning. Along with weakened school/community linkages, the aforementioned have resulted in a pattern of the relative absence of parenting from participatory school management practices. There is a need for an association such as re-convened **National Council of Parents Teachers Associations** for much greater involvement of parents in the delivery of services and supporting decision-making for students and the school as necessary. An association like this can also aid in the establishment of Parent Teacher Associations where non-existent and, with support, provide training in parenting skills for parents as needed.

NACE therefore recommends:

- *that a clear and continuing socially responsible message—that education 'is we business' and that we ignore its worth within our society at our own peril— should exist for our main capital expenditure and be communicated to all Barbadians through a public relations campaign similar to the one that exists for tourism, our main foreign exchange earner;*

- *a [re-]convening/[re]habilitation of the National Parents Teachers Association as parental involvement is inadequate with only a minority of parents being fully involved in their children's education or the life of*

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the school; in addition, some homes do not provide the required stimulating environment, a necessary prerequisite for learning;

- *all schools encourage the formation of alumni associations to encourage alumni to give back to the school informally and/or formally in co-curricular activities and financial support for improvements in the physical environment;*

- *a greater outreach to all businesses to contribute to the educational effort through benefactions to schools in the form of awarding of scholarships and gifts to schools, in return for which Government could grant tax incentives;*

- *greater involvement of churches and religious groups to have a greater sense of presence in our schools in the imparting of moral and ethical values and, as well, accommodating their role as educational partners through their participation in designing, planning and implementing agreed social agenda;*

- *the involvement of civic groups to establish youth chapters in all schools to instill not only civic and ethical values, but also to impart their invaluable entrepreneurial, business and other professional/vocational standards and training programmes that are relevant to and complement the school's curriculum.*

3.6.1 The Role of the Media as a Stakeholder

NACE recognizes that the media are a principal stakeholder in the education system. Recent liberalization of the electronic media industry (both state and privately owned sectors) has resulted in a burgeoning of radio and subscription television (cable) channels. The industry is extremely competitive, with players vying for market position with, in some cases, less than desirable content. This has not always resulted in positive influences, particularly on our youth. Anti-social and violent behaviour is becoming a social phenomenon which is inimical to our national development and which has permeated all sectors of society. Barbados has built an enviable reputation in the world as a disciplined and orderly society, qualities which are integral and essential for any civilized society and which are worthy of being preserved as unique to our Barbadian heritage. The media have a powerful influence on our youth as a principal agent of socialization and therefore have an obligation and duty to our society that goes beyond earning advertising revenue. **NACE** does not ignore the fact that the media are business entities and their survival in a competitive market place is crucial, but **NACE** also calls for a greater social responsibility to our youth. **NACE** recommends:

- *a media policy, to serve as an antidote to negative cultural penetration, that will focus on values and attitudes, character education, patriotism and service through the production, storage, dissemination and exchange of information, based on the media's capacity to infuse within our society the notion of the importance of education by nurturing and supporting it through the quality of their professionalism;*

- *that the media be conscious of avoiding symbols, images, and ideas that inculcate negative social biases in young people, based on the awareness by **NACE** that the media can play a decisive role in giving voice to the sentiments expressed by sections of our society of its role in shaping the minds of our youth in a positive way;*

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- *a progressive media policy be deliberately pursued to focus on the maximization of gains from English as an international language, particularly as Barbados continues to establish its place as an international business hub, by expanding or creating a language policy on communication that searches for the best skills to serve national development.*

3.6.2 Education for Competitiveness

As the Caribbean grapples with the uncertainty of a major global economic downturn, the need to ensure that countries like Barbados will continue to have the right skills and knowledge for a sustainable economy—now and in the future—is important. The skills and knowledge that Barbadians bring to their communities play an important role in determining our international economic success and our overall quality of life.

With jobs becoming vulnerable or disappearing, Barbadians will be forced to rethink their future. They are asking themselves, "What can I do now?", particularly as the spectre of unemployment among young people has been the subject of increasing debate and analysis. Youth unemployment is a crucial segment of a larger problem—that of general unemployment. The alleviation of this requires a variety of policies relating to education and [re-]training and whose effects are direct and indirect. With the challenges of the future, we need a coordinated effort to recognize and seize as many learning opportunities as possible.

There has been a recent call by Government to encourage and strengthen national development by the reliance on entrepreneurs—large and small—to be the main driving force behind development and job creation. **NACE** is of the view that such a participatory approach by these entities could develop a network of information exchange to share best practices on the way forward for commercial success. To default on this social responsibility would see the continuation of the mismatch between the supply of and demand for skilled labour, which will not redound to a vibrant business culture in Barbados. **NACE** supports this cause in light of the concerns expressed by several young people who attended our focus group meetings and town hall meetings. However, **NACE** also recognizes that whereas some initiatives are in place to facilitate the development of small businesses, the financial and other pre-qualification requirements presently in place are usually outside the means of most unemployed youth. . **SMEs** are usually the first victims of a myopic approach to learning and training. When employers under invest or refuse to invest in the creation and development of social capital, it is refracted back on to the economy in the delivery of poor quality service by the firms and an unsophisticated consumer market unable to appreciate innovative products. This current state of malaise has been compounded by the unwillingness of some firms to invest in young people or often by their under-investment in training since they are of the view that the benefits are likely to be shared with other firms at their expense. **NACE** recommends:

- *that to promote entrepreneurship and enterprise for our youth, while also creating employment for young people, there is the need to pursue strategies that will relax overly strenuous financial requirements and create a supporting business environment with viable incentives for young people.;*

- *an emphasis be placed in curricula on a wider infusion of practical and creative skills in the interest of self-employment and entrepreneurship;*

- *further exploration of the options for providing more institutionalized credit and business-support services to*

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young artisans and others establishing craft and agriculture enterprises to help young people harness their creative endeavours to undertake productive activities;

- *that business associations, such as the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, civic clubs and trade unions, in collaboration with government training institutions, encourage their respective constituents to use their collective skills and financial resources to support the development of an entrepreneurial culture and a skilled work force;*

- *that firms of all types, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, play a more active role in the development of a skilled workforce through encouraging constant training, formal and informal, and the upgrading of skills of all employees, to be officially be encouraged through the provision of incentives to increase workplace learning, through shared financing arrangements and collaboration with learning institutions;*

- *that firms recognize experience and credentials of employees to prevent low morale in the general workplace leading to low productivity;*

- *that firms offer realistic work experiences through attachments, where feasible, to allow students to gainfully develop and invest their skills.*

3.6.3 Re-Engaging the Marginalized/Lower Skilled Worker

Increasingly there has been an undercurrent of anomie among our youth, commonly called boys, and girls, 'on the block', that manifests itself through incessant loitering around street corners. Often there is an underlying criminal element that emerges, some may argue, as a result of frustration from lack of opportunity. Nonetheless, several are disengaged from mainstream society, yet they constitute a valuable resource that must be [re-]considered in our educational policies.

- ***NACE*** *is calling for studies to be conducted to engage them in such a way as to determine what educational initiatives can be designed to assist them in realizing their hopes and aspirations;*

- *Likewise, there must be an added focus within our education system on motivating the lower-skilled population to the economic and social benefits to be attained from developing first-class skill sets to perform professionally and exceptionally in their chosen tasks. As Barbados becomes a premiere destination for international business, there will be a need for all employees to possess literacy, numeracy and IT competencies as well as an element of sophistication and expertise in softer skills to enable them to deliver the more innovative and complex products and services required of a premiere destination.*

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Policy on Teen Parents

At present, teen mothers attend public schools at the "discretion of the principal". Some teen mothers are permitted to continue in school but others are not, depending on the philosophy of the school and the perception of the individual student.

The immediate goal must be to provide services and support to the teen mothers in school. The long-term goal should be to break the cycle of poverty, violence and abuse common to teen mothers and their children. Teen mothers and their children remain a very vulnerable population and this policy should support these vulnerable teens and children with a "total development" approach that results in successful adults and healthy children. These teen mothers can also play a role in mentoring other young women to make good decisions about their lives and future.

This policy should be based on collaboration between the Ministry of Youth, Family and Sport, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, the Ministry of Health working with schools, health clinics, local physicians, hospital staff, families and the community.

Teens can be referred by school guidance counsellors in the Secondary Schools. The families, health clinic nurses, physicians, hospital staff, the girls themselves and concerned individuals in the community are other sources of referral. The girls may be referred when pregnant and/or after the birth of the child. Girls who are in public school and are "at risk" of pregnancy may also be referred.

A basket of support services must be put in to service to ensure the viability of the programme.

- **Day Care**—*assistance with locating day care and connecting low- income families with Social Assistance.*

- **Counselling**—*contact with the girl and/or family to help deal with the immediate crisis of pregnancy and begin setting goals for school and the future.*

- **Legal Issues**—*assistance as needed with maintenance and other legal issues.*

- **Advocacy**—*assistance as needed with other government programs and returning to school.*

- **Workshops**—*sessions offered on self-development, career development, parenting and entrepreneurship during school breaks.*

- **Skills Training**—*currently available during school breaks in computer training, sewing, cooking and baking and hairdressing/cosmetology.*

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- ***Job Attachment***—*girls with specific vocational interests are placed in jobs over the school break(s).*

- ***Stipends***—*available for transportation and day care during workshops and other activities.*

- ***Teen Mother Support Group***—*gives teen mothers the opportunities to share experiences and support one another.*

- ***Scholarships and Educational Opportunities***—*The Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development staff can help identify scholarship and educational opportunities for girls wishing to continue on to college and/or other vocational training.*

3.7 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education

ICTs are broadening and redefining the learning landscape in unprecedented ways. Countries that foster the potential of **ICTs** as educational tools are making an investment in their citizens' prosperity and well-being. For those poorer countries without the highly educated workforces and knowledge assets that multinational corporations demand, integration within the global economy is very difficult. Societies that fail to take advantage of their potential may well be left behind through a failure to adjust to rapid technological change, to changing international competitiveness and changing regional patterns of employment, and the lack of effective policies to counter skill and locational 'mismatch'. Improvements in technology mean that a given capital stock becomes more productive and hence capable of 'supporting' a larger level of human well-being.

Barbados appears well positioned to reap the benefits of **ICTs** in education. Our telecommunications infrastructure, generally regarded as one of the best in the Caribbean, provides a firm foundation for online learning initiatives. Additionally, our population has widespread access to the internet, which has created a platform for sharing information and educational resources. Computers, multimedia programmes, texting, chat rooms and other manifestations of the digital age are now common throughout children's developmental years—as almost any parent or educator will attest. We need to evaluate how we can best harness the ICT interests of this group—the leaders, parents, and workers of tomorrow.

To date, the educational enhancement programme familiarly known as **EDUTECH 2000** programme, has been designed to be a comprehensive and coherent approach to align **ICTs** in education's vast potential with a clearly articulated and informed understanding of what they could or should accomplish. However, from discussions regarding this programme, the consequences of its implementation have been duplicated efforts, fragmented goals and objectives, sporadic and short-term processes and a lack of co-ordination and communication among stakeholders. By advancing new learning technologies, **NACE** believes that Barbados can maximize its human capital and help foster a dynamic learning society prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

Though there are many benefits to be derived from the use of **ICTs** in education, the Commission wishes to temper this exuberant, if not naïve, perspective of the myriad opportunities created by the technologies. Of concern to the Commission are the increasing deleterious legal and ethical issues

that such technologies portend for the undermining of the educational value in the wider society. Increasingly, the technologies are being uncontrollably used for malicious and nefarious purposes by students in the classroom and in the public life of the school. Incessant complaints from education personnel range from, but are not limited to, the lack of protocol of when, where and how to use **ICTs** (particularly the mobile phone) in public spaces, increasing indentify theft, unauthorized filming and recording of individuals, illicit peddling of pornographic images, filming of undesirable practices for *YouTube*, and hacking into administration databases. These scenarios also extend into the adult public sphere. Essentially, the Commission is concerned by license without responsibility and by the fact that institutions of learning feel compromised by imposing disciplinary measures to curb such behaviour because of conflicting messages from public officials and fallacious arguments from technophiles, which promote listlessness in the general society with an attitude that such behaviour cannot be controlled. As a result, there is endemic frustration and angst in the educational establishment regarding the use of **ICTs**. **NACE** therefore recommends:

- *a [re-]evaluation of this strategic educational initiative to determine its performance objectives, focusing on establishing mechanisms for effective policy and programme co-ordination;*

- *E-learning opportunities be made more accessible for individuals with disabilities, with institutions, the private sector and governments ensuring the appropriate adaptation of technology and associated resources suited to meeting the particular specialist needs of the recipients;*

- *the use of **ICTs** linking into best practice schools through forging teaching partnerships and the sharing of facilities and resources to teach difficult concepts via distance, or using the appropriate software to do the same;*

- *the reinforcement and re-statement of the **MEHRD** no cell phone policy in schools;*

- *telephone companies, internet service providers and the media, both print and electronic, accept some sense of social responsibility and civic duty by conducting, as part of their advertising campaigns, a protocol informing users of the legal and ethical consequences of irresponsible technological behaviour and usage by showing the correct way of using these technologies in public spaces.*

3.8 Human Resource Development: Teacher Professional Development

The teaching profession has been assailed recently by a society that for the most part does not see teaching as a profession, neither do they see it as worthy of consideration as a profession. Indeed it has become a default profession with the adage 'those who can, do; those who can't, teach". The structure of the profession, with its limited career paths, inadequate opportunities for training in technical and vocational areas and for pedagogical training, the disciplinary challenges it faces from social problems such as drugs, truancy and gang violence, and the limited opportunities for training and retraining to deal with changing social issues, has impacted on the morale of teachers. As Barbados evolves into a knowledge economy, teachers are responsible for the creation of every viable professional knowledge worker to facilitate the realization of such a national development goal, yet, they who are the central creators of this society, are not considered professionals worthy of a regulatory body to reflect their diverse needs and interests, their own professional standards, codes of ethics and specific training programmes. **NACE** recommends:

- *the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission, which will include a significant representation of teachers, govern the teaching profession and be the focal point of a unified structure that would be responsible for recruitment, selection and review of personnel at the higher levels of the entire education system;*

- *the Teachers' Commission should be relatively autonomous within the public service and given its subventions and responsibilities for its own budgetary arrangements and the power to enter into contracts for the delivery and development of its programmes and projects;*

- *the Teachers' Commission be responsible for the type of leadership teachers require at their schools; determine the changes to their terms and conditions of service, in particular, achievement of the goal of a fully trained teaching service; determine policies for promotion and performance appraisal and remuneration; decide on how vacation leave is structured; on the ongoing professional development of teachers, and look towards the establishment of a licensing regime for the assessment of qualification of eligible personnel to ensure adequate development and maximum utilization of the skills and abilities of a teacher corps.*

- ***Recommended Roles of the Teaching Service Commission***

- *The Teaching Service Commission should be responsible for:*

- *developing and promoting a systematic, professional and improved quality of work life for all teachers in the system;*

- *planning, setting goals and objectives, managing staff development activities and engaging in job design and re-design, and providing the infrastructural support for monitoring and evaluation of policy reforms;*

- *determining the terms and conditions for recruitment and selection for specific posts, the unification and systematization of the categories of teachers in the system, induction policies and procedures, and systems of performance appraisal, staffing, incentives for retention and continuity of service along with the requisite commitment and performance of personnel in the education system;*

- *in collaboration with the respective trade unions, determining the bargaining strategies that are required so as to reduce the disruptions in service and the amount of valuable time lost;*

- *determining the compensation schemes based on a clear delineation of the types of academic attainments, professional competencies and relevant experience that are valued in the teaching service, with clear indications of the monetary and non-monetary rewards they will attract;*

- *management of personnel records that would form part of the Commission's Human Resources Department;*

- *governing professional control in relation to responsibility and accountability and allowing for the establishment and enforcement of a code of ethics which could enhance the status of employees within the education system;*

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- *working in collaboration with Erdiston Teachers' College to develop teacher competencies through: pre-service orientation/induction; in-service programmes of training; secondment, selection and incentives schemes which could change the nature, and dynamics of teacher participation, commitment and productivity;*

- *working closely with Erdiston Teachers' Training College to conceptualize and develop appropriate curricula and teaching methods that draw their content and purpose from linkages made between the world of study and work; as well as encouraging the promotion of critical and analytical abilities through partnerships with the* **UWI**, *developing a research capacity that would reinforce teacher satisfaction as teachers gain more knowledge and understanding about their own efficacy and are encouraged by such research to use their skills and abilities to the fullest;*

- *introducing, particularly for those teachers who have distinguished themselves in their subject expertise but who would rather not seek the office of Principal, a Master Teacher Corps that, as an incentive for distinction and continuation in the service, would command equal pay and perks in the system but would become a peripatetic resource for training teachers in classroom and conducting workshops to share best practices and experiences;*

- *taking into consideration when drafting its professional codes of conduct, educational strategic objectives, as well as regulatory procedures and similar concomitant plans for the proposed national and regional teaching councils for achieving greater integration consistent with the decision taken at the Council of Human and Social Development* **(COHSOD)** *to enhance functional cooperation within the profession.*

3.8.1 Private Schools

Private Schools play an important part in any education system in providing education and specialized services to those in need. **NACE** recommends that:

- *private schools be given access to the training and professional preparation courses and programmes outlined above at subsidized rates and that an oversight body be established to ensure that these schools adhere to foundational requirements in the provision of an adequate curriculum to ensure that students are grounded in numeracy, literacy and the use of* **ICTs** *in education;*

- *private schools have parallel arrangements with the Teachers' Commission to ensure that their personnel are entitled to similar oversight and benefits.*

3.9 Ethics and Citizenship

In another section of this report, mention has been made of the declining appreciation for the value of education in some sections of our society. Indeed, universal education was expanded in Barbados from the confines of a narrow elite in order to foster an informed citizenry with a distinct identity. An understanding of Barbados's history and politics is important on many levels to people, young and old. It helps us grasp our rights and responsibilities as members of a democracy. It also informs an awareness and social consciousness of Barbados's distinct place and role in the global community. For the individual, it develops civic literacy with the knowledge required to participate effectively in a democracy. Society also benefits from an informed and engaged citizenry. Civic

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literacy helps young people develop an awareness of, and interest in, issues facing Barbados and it enables participation, and voluntarism, both essential to social engagement. A successful education system is holistic, weaving together the intellectual, spiritual, physical and social growth and development of the individual. From the earliest ages, children should be exposed to ethical and civic values which place a premium on hard work, the achievement of excellence, and the exercise of social responsibility at the level of the family, the workplace, the community and the nation.

The decline in civic knowledge among young Barbadians is a concern that manifests itself in the increase in the number of students completing secondary school without a sensitivity of their social, economic and political environment. Likewise, the absence or de-emphasizing of ethical values, devalues the quality of our social fabric. One can with some measure of experiential knowledge link the anti-social behaviours in schools to this de-emphasizing of ethical values, which in some cases engenders disrespect among students for their peers and teachers; revenge for acts done against them or their friends; alienation from the normative patterns which are supposed to guide their behaviours and on the basis of which they are judged; provocation amongst themselves; mismanagement of emotions; theft of personal items; bullying (a dominant feature of the school culture at both primary and secondary school levels) - all of which contribute to the absence of a caring community and wider society.

The concerns about sections of our youth population which have been identified for discussion here are not reflective of all young people, but rather in terms of the seriousness of their implications for the under-realization of their potential. When students are involved with drugs and crime, it is the scarce resources which must be diverted for their treatment and the loss of their creative potential which make this minority a national concern for the education system. **NACE** recommends:

- *that throughout all levels of the education system students must be exposed to and experience the reinforcement of social and civic values, demonstration of conflict resolution skills, awareness of their cultural and national identities and respect for other citizens and the environment;*

- *the curriculum goals set out to embrace a programme of values education focussing inter alia on multi-cultural sensitivities, aesthetic development, religious understanding, etc. as a foundational element in the educational process;*

- *the infusion of a philosophy for addressing the psychological and social challenges faced by students in our education system to assist in ensuring that their personal and social needs are served and that the humane, preventive discipline that should challenge learning societies is put in place;*

- *there should be a re-orientation of programmes in educational and training institutions to include: conflict resolution with emphasis on problem solving and negotiating skills, change from within programmes, decision-making techniques, self-concept development, guidance and counseling, and an orientation towards learning to earn.*

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3:10 The Financing of Sustainable Education

Quality education is not cheap and the initiatives outlined in this report will come with a cost attached. There is a role for all stakeholders, particularly parents and private bodies such as businesses, to play in this educational effort.

- ***NACE*** *recommends that a sub-committee be established to focus on examining and managing the costs in the planning, programming and implementation of these recommendations to achieve the national objectives of equity and efficiency;*

- ***NACE*** *also recommends that Government allow alumni who donate to their alma mater through gifts of cash, shares, or property to claim income tax relief on the full value of the donation. The importance of gifts and benefactions to one's alma mater cannot be overstated and continued support at a significant level will be needed. Such donations ably assist the maintenance and development of buildings, and support the many extra-curricular activities that contribute to the richness of the institution's life and future well being.*

3.11   A Look to the Future

Simply maintaining the *status-quo* may not suffice if we are to sustain a competitive edge. This report is our principal means of communicating our findings. It addresses some of the principal issues of national educational development which were discussed and raised during our consultative processes. **NACE** will assist in helping to clarify these proposals and explaining the recommendations, but **NACE** is also aware that its own proposals will unquestionably require refinement. The recommendations are not exhaustive, neither are the issues for discussion finite. To this point though, through the consultative process this is the path along which Barbadian society wishes to proceed for its educational enhancement, a path between a *status quo* scenario and an idealistic odyssey.

NACE is mindful that there will be voices lamenting that we have not gone far enough. Some argued for the abolition of the **CEE**, others argued for the teaching of dialect in schools, the building of several new schools to meet the predilection of every school child. What may seem obvious to us may not seem so to all, but there is always room for legitimate disagreement. **NACE** was also mindful that our education system is embedded in a system with bureaucratic delays arising from resistance to change, on the basis of a lack of enthusiasm for new approaches. This is not a purposeful indictment on all the hardworking personnel throughout the system, but we are aware that as plans progress to implement the recommendations, vested political, bureaucratic, business and other interests will present themselves to stymie the process. But this is the nature of our democracy, and proof of its functioning with its various checks and balances that these gatekeepers perform within the system from time to time. Though some claims were vigorously and articulately debated, **NACE** was mindful as stated in the beginning of this report that any attempt at the radical changes proposed by some advocates for the transformation of the education system must be carefully considered lest we make the best the enemy of the good. And, **NACE** is well aware that unsustained radical efforts, though from their outset well-intentioned, often bring us back to the point where we commenced, but the worst for wear and tear. Such forays are adventures that

Barbados can ill-afford and we must guard against it; but if we support change, we must be prepared to argue for it.

In this report, **NACE** has treated the education system as one tightly articulated unit, divided into levels and stages for convenience, but necessitating an evenness of commitment, performance and productivity of the highest quality at every point. The Government of Barbados remains committed to the democratization of education, but not at the risk of compromising high quality standards. The implementation of these recommendations must be facilitated by a concerted and collaborative approach involving the **MEHRD** and all levels of government, teachers, the private and non-profit sectors, labour, the media and individuals to address Barbados's educational challenges.

Importantly though, **NACE** cannot underscore enough that nothing will be achieved without the urgent and foremost support of parents and their role in the education of Barbados. Regardless of the type of child care, parents and home form the centre of children's lives and are strong predictors of educational success. The combination of strong, supportive family relationships, a high level of parental involvement and high-quality child care can compensate for risks associated with low income, lack of family resources and low parental education. In addition, a cohesive, supportive, well-resourced neighbourhood can also act as a protective factor. As in the earliest years, the family and the home environment play an important role in successful learning.

At a time of fierce global competition, rapid technological change, an increasingly diverse population and an aging society, a robust education system is the key to Barbados's future prosperity and success. There is no question that education must be foremost on the national development agenda. The reasons are inescapable. A quality education system not only lies at the very core of our national development but is also the *sine qua non* of our human potential for excellence. Let us therefore embody this spirit as we continue to look forward and work towards the future in preparing our citizens, young and old, for the realization of this goal so critical to our future.

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Appendix I

Dates and Locations of Town Hall Meetings

Date	Location
19th April 2008	Deighton Griffith Secondary
22nd April 2008	Ellerslie Secondary School
24th April 2008	Alexandra Secondary School
6th May 2008	Garrison Secondary School
8th May 2008	Barbados Community College
17th May 2008	Queen's College
20th May 2008	St. David's Church Parish Hall
24th May 2008	Alleyne School
3rd June 2008	Gall Hill Community Centre
5th June 2008	St. James Secondary School
7th June 2008	St. Lucy Secondary School
17th June 2008	Lester Vaughn Secondary School
19th June 2008	St. Michael Secondary School
21st June 2008	Princess Margaret Secondary School

Appendix II

Composition of Focus Groups

- Barbados Christian Council
- Class IVs, Primary Schools
- Council of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB)
- Fifth Formers, Secondary Schools
- Government Industrial School
- Human Resource Management Association of Barbados (HRMAB)
- Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, The. Hon. Mr. Ronald Jones
- Ministry Officials, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
- Association of Public Primary School Principals
- Barbados Association of Principals of Public Secondary Schools
- Psycho-Social Professionals
- Special Education Personnel
- Teachers of Private Secondary Schools
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council (TVET)
- Students of the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus

Appendix III

<u>NACE Committee Town Hall Meeting Attendees</u>

Adams, K.
Adamson, Freddie
Agard, Adrian
Agard, Grace
Alleyne, Asha
Alleyne, Huldah
Alleyne, Orson
Allman, Shawn
Annel, Dr. Desmond
Applewhaite, Carl
Aquein, Mayor
Archer, Anderson
Arthur, Ermie
Ashby, Colbert
Ashby-King, Sonia
Austin, Ian
Austin, Rockiel

Beckles, Bentley
Belle, Maurice
Bend, K.
Benn, Corlyn
Benn, Elvis
Best, Rosemarie
Bishop, Akilah
Bishop, Lawrence
Blackman, Cedric
Blackman, John
Blades, Marcia
Bowen, Reynold
Bowen, Yolande
Boyce, Hedda P.
Boyce, Michael
Branch, Peter
Brathwaite, Errol
Brathwaite, Joycelyn

Briggs, E.
Brome, David
Broome, Jeff
Broomes, Harlow
Brooms, Lisa
Brown, Cindy
Browne, Jessica
Browne, John
Browne, Trevor
Burgess, Desmond
Burke, Hazel
Burke, Hugh
Burke, Jackie
Burke, Lynette
Burke, Noel D.
Butcher-Lashley, Jean

Callender, M.
Callender, Pauline
Carter, Gale
Carter, Shawn
Cave, Gloria
Chadderton, Winston
Chandler, Alexina
Cheltenham, Jean
Chinnery, Susan
Clarke, A.
Clarke, Anne
Clarke, Graham
Clarke, Ryan G.
Clarke-Marville, Janis
Clement, Hubert-
Collymore, Andrea
Connell, Margo
Corbin, Paula
Corbin, Wayne

Cox, Martin
Cox, Nicholas
Crawford, Patrice
Cuffie, Joan
Cumberbatch, Colin
Cummins, C.
Cummins, Clarence
Cummins-Williams,
  Marguerite

Daniel, Ishmael
Davis, Jerome
Depeiza, Verna
Dolcy, Lamar
Dolcy, Seth
Downie, Gloria
Drakes, Glyne
Drakes, Grantley

Edwards, A.
Estwick, M.
Evans, Thesby

Farrell, Nigel
Fletcher, A.
Forde, Patrick
Forde, Tricia
Franklyn, Grace

Gibbs, Dr. Harold
Gibbs, Sandra
Gibson, Annette
Gill, Angela Y.
Gittens, Joy
Goodridge, Dwayne
Goodridge, Jenifer

Goodridge, Margurate
Goodridge, Sonya
Grazette, Selma
Green, Horace
Griffith, A.
Griffith, Juliette
Griffith, Keith
Griffith, P.
Griffith, Trudy N.
Griffith-Watson,
　Wendy

Hall, Lydia
Harrison, Richard
Haynes, Atheline
Haynes, Beverley
Haynes, Grantley
Haynes, Melanie
Heallis, Neville
Henry, Ivan
Henry, Sylvia
Hinds, C.
Hinds, H.
Hoad, Ruth
Holder, Adrian
Holder, Claudette
Holder, Maureen
Holder, Petrona
Howell, Monica
Hoyte Rouse, Lucine
Hunte-Cox, Dr. D
Husbands, Austin
Husbands, Liz
Hutchinson, Victor

Ifill, Alison
Inniss, G. Felicia
Inniss, Hughson
Isaacs, Avis

Jackman, D.
Jackman, Martin
Jemmott, Lorraine
Jemmott, Ralph
Johnson, Victor
Jones, Hosina
Jones, Maureen
Jones, Omari
Jones, Orlando
Jones, Shomari
Jones, William
Jordan, Lemuel
Jordan, T.
Jordan, Troy
Joseph, Albert
Joseph, Mertin
Joseph, Raymond

Kellman, Sandie
King, Laurie
King, Mr. & Mrs.
　Winston
King, Philip
Kirton, Aurea
Kirton, James
Knight, Doreen

Lashley, Romero
LaTouche, C.
LaTouche, Nikita
Layne, Sarah P.
Legall, Georgiann
Lewis, Queenselle
Lothhamer, Sherlyn
Lovell, P. J.
Lowe, Berkley
Lowe, Odessa
Lucas, Peter
Lynch, Mc Donald

Maloney, Ancel
Marith, Justin
Mark, Leonora
Marville, Mr. & Mrs.
　Orlando
Mascoll, Audora
Mascoll, Brenda
Mascoll, John
Massiah, Winston
Mayers, Maria
McClean, Hetty
McClean, O.
Millington, Rodney
Montrose, S. L. A.
Morris, Toni
Murphy, Paul
Murray, Caluiton
Murray, S. Ezra
Murray, Sandra
Murrell, Janelle

Newton, N.
Nicholls, S.
Niles, Roberta
Nunez, Richard

Ottley, Charmaine
Ottley, S.

Padmore, Curtis
Padmore, Patricia
Perkins, Shelton
Peters, Jennifer
Phillips, Vin
Pile, Roseann
Pilgrim, Curtis
Powlett, Eurica
Prescod, Gerrad
Proverbs, Carlisle
Proverbs, Stephney

Redman, Mary
Reece, Frank
Reid, Asha
Reid, Heather
Richards, Tracy
Roach, Gladwyn
Roach, P. R. Victor
Robinson, Nailah
Robinson, T.
Rock, Andrew
Rogers, Anne
Rollock, Theophilus
Rose, Marcia
Rose, Mark
Ross, Shelly
Rudder, Michael
Rudder, Roderick

Sayers, S.
Scantlebury, Anderson
Scantlebury, Irwin
Sealy, Anthony
Sealy, Donna
Sealy, Jacqueline
Sealy, Reuben
Sehntwali Len
Senhouse, Courtenay
Shepherd, K.
Shepherd, Pedro
Simpson, Katrin
Skeete, Margaret
Small-Thompson, Sandra
Smith, Hersey
Smith, Noel
Sobers, Christopher
Sobers, Sheila
Spencer, Sean
Springer, Norma
Squires, S. T.
St. Hill, P.

St. Juste, Kishmar
Stuart, Jerome
Stuart, Karen
Stuart, Kimberley

Taylor, Liz-Ann
Thangaraj, Patricia
Thomas, Donna
Thorne, Carole
Thorne, Julie
Trotman, Emil
Tull, Emmata
Tull, Patrick
Turton, Sylvia

Vaughan, Jeanette

Walker, Olwin
Walters, Arnie
Walters, Sherwyn
Walters, Wayne
Ward, Suzanne
Waterman, Astrid
Watson, Emmerson
Weekes, Debbie-Ann
Weekes, G. W.
Weekes, O.
Weekes, Troy R.
Whitehall, Percival
Wickham, Eudalie
Wickham, Grace
Wickham, Peter
Wiggins-Rock, Alphea
Wilkinson, Sophia
Williams, A.
Williams, Collis
Williams, Sable
Woodroffe, Randolph
Woods, Vernell

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Appendix IV

Participants in Focus Group Discussions

<u>**Principals of Primary Schools**</u>

Name	School
Cloda R. Alleyne	St. Joseph Primary
Lionel Stoute	Milton Lynch Primary
Marielon Gamble	Bay Primary
Marcia Best	Eagle Hall Primary
Ovid Gibbs	Mount Tabor Primary
Jennifer Lavine Hinds	Gordon Walters Primary
Cliston Burke	Society Primary
Lorraine Burke	Bayleys Primary
Wilmont Straughan	Irving Wilson School
Michael Watson	Roland Edwards Primary
Ivan Clarke	Hilda Skeene Primary
Eudora Mascoll	Cuthbert Moore Primary
Eleanor Brathwaite	St. Matthew's Primary
Marcia Rose	Hindsbury Primary
William Grazette	Ignatius Byer Primary

Secondary School Students

Name	School
Christina Smith	Alleyne School
Hewley Watson	Alleyne School
Tyrel Headley	Alma Parris Memorial
Stephenson Maynard	Alma Parris Memorial
Leon Brome	Coleridge and Parry Secondary
Leslie Bascombe	Coleridge and Parry Secondary
Kemar White	Garrison Secondary
Chantel Alleyne	Garrison Secondary
Hannah Taitt	Queen's College
Dario Boyce	Queen's College
Julita Fergusson	Seventh Day Adventist Primary
Jalisa Brewster	Seventh Day Adventist Primary
Lara Burnette	St. Lucy Secondary
Omar Husbands	St. Lucy Secondary
Johanne Edelmann	St. Winifred's School
Jade Garcia	St. Winifred's School
Shannon Hamilton	St. Winifred's School

Private School Teachers

Name	School	Position
Angela Bushell-Skeete	Bridgetown Seventh-Day Adventist Primary	Teacher
Barbara St. John	St. Winifred School	Deputy Principal
Marcia Jenkins	The Rock Christian School	Administrator/Principal
Nicole Wills	Wills Primary	Principal

CTUSAB Committee Members

Name	Organization	Position
Clarence Hinds	BFSA Fire Service	Chairman
Ulric Sealy	BWU	Dept. General Secretary
Dennis Depeiza	CTUSAB	General Secretary
Anne-Marie Burke	CTUSAB	General Treasurer