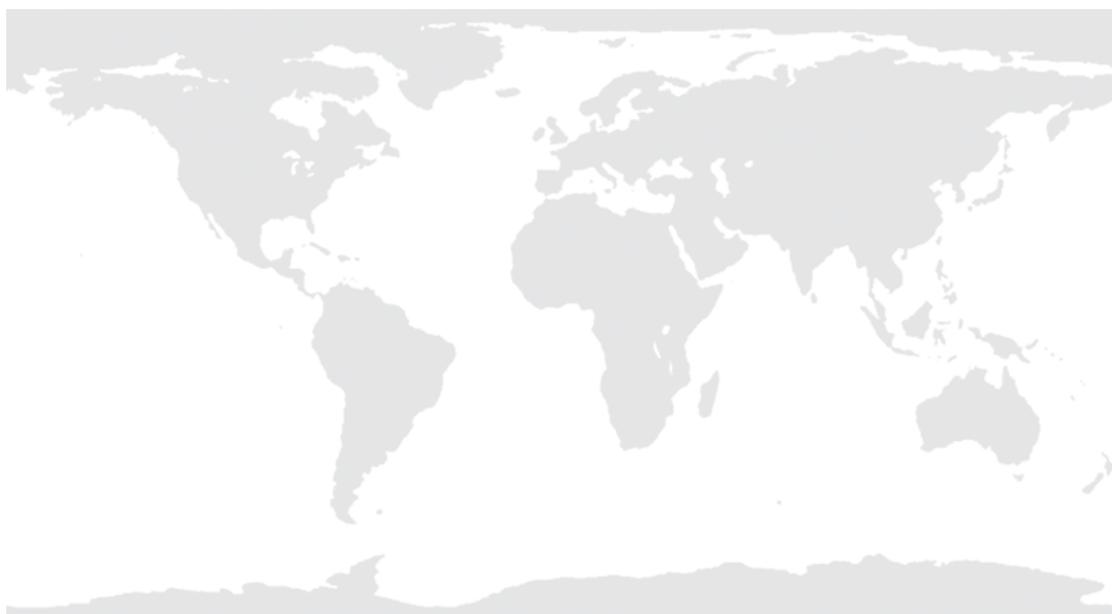




World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11



Barbados

Updated version, April 2010.

Principles and general objectives of education

The philosophy that underpins the education system of Barbados is rooted in the fundamental principle that human resource development is the key to social, economic, and political growth. Consequently, education must seek to enable all children and young people to be knowledgeable and creative; to possess positive attitudes and relevant skills; to be exemplars of good citizenship; to believe in the quality of humanity; to be self-confident in planning their future; to be thinkers, innovators, and problem-solvers; to inculcate the best social values and an appreciation of the dignity in all labour; and to be committed to the preservation and enhancement of the environment (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 1995).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

In January 1983, the new **Education Act 1981-25** and **Regulations 1982** were enacted, bringing fundamental changes to the organization and management of the educational system, including compulsory primary and secondary education up to the age of 16.

Since then a number of amendments were made in 1991 to deal with issues ranging from the duties of Boards of Management to the duration of suspensions and the authority of Boards to expel students.

Education is compulsory from 5 to 16 years of age (primary and secondary education). Overall, equitable access to primary and secondary education for boys and girls is facilitated by the prevalence of co-education in the system. This policy has been widely instituted since the late 1970s and early 1980s. As a result, school places are equitably accessible to both boys and girls. There are presently only three single-sex public primary schools, one all-boys school and two all-girls schools, while at the secondary level there are two single-sex public schools. According to the Education Act, education is free in public educational institutions, although fees and other charges may be payable as the Minister may prescribe.

Administration and management of the education system

Administration of the Barbados education system is controlled at the central level by the **Ministry of Education, Human Resource and Development** (formerly the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports). The Division of Education is headed by a Permanent Secretary and at the technical level by the Chief Education Officer. These officers are assisted by a Deputy Permanent Secretary, two Deputy Chief Education Officers and a cadre of staff at Ministry Headquarters.



The major function of the Ministry of Education is to co-ordinate all educational activities, and to make workable policy initiatives of the political directorate. More specifically, the Ministry of Education executes policy, set up *ad hoc* committees to assist with the functioning of the Ministry, deal with curriculum development, supervise and administer all examinations, and supervise the day-to-day operations of the primary schools. The *ad hoc* committees examine various functions affecting the teaching service. A committee may be internal or with the stakeholders; for example, if the committee is concerned with curriculum teachers are involved.

The **Curriculum Section** is responsible for the management of the national curriculum. This entails the supervision of every facet of the teaching and learning process in a variety of subject areas at seven classes in the primary, and six levels in the secondary schools. Officers in the department visit classrooms where they assist teachers with the development of instructional and lesson plans, observe classroom practices, demonstrate relevant methodology, hold on site workshops and advise on curriculum materials. They also ensure that there is adherence to the national syllabuses and that the attainment targets and methods of assessment which are a major consideration in the design of any teaching unit. Ultimately, critical to the monitoring of programmes in schools, is the evaluation and revision of curricula in the interest of ensuring relevant content and pedagogically sound practices in educational institutions at all times. The functions of the Curriculum Section are to: promote best Professional practices at all times; supervise and monitor student performances and curriculum management in schools; facilitate curriculum evaluation, review and reform; formulate training programmes and interventions where necessary; help to ensure that the necessary resources are available for effective, efficient curriculum delivery; provide critical support to teachers in the delivery of the curriculum; liaise with external partners; and identify strengths and weakness in content taught, methodology, assessment and pedagogy as they relate to students needs.

The **Special Needs Education Services** of the Ministry of Education ensure that provision is made for students experiencing any of the following challenges: autism, visual impairment, speech and language impairment, learning difficulties, mental challenges and giftedness. The Special Needs Education Services focus on the identification of students for placement through multidisciplinary evaluation. Provision is made for students to be assisted with devices such as hearing aids. Special needs education is address in three ways: in the regular classroom, in the special classroom in the regular school, and in the special unit or special education school. Children who are mainstreamed in the regular classroom are given the necessary support through an Individual Education Plan, which assts the teachers to meet the needs of the student. Special education services are provided in equipped classrooms (special units) in eight public primary schools. There are two special schools in Barbados, one for children who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired, while the other caters to children with global developmental delays and other disabilities. Placements in one of the special schools or special education units are facilitated through the Student Services Section of the Ministry of Education. A referral can be made to this section from Principals, parents, doctors, psychologist, or from the Children's Development Centre.



Regarding the supervision of examinations, the Ministry is responsible for the following examinations: the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE); the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), with School-Based Assessment; the Cambridge General Certificate Examinations Advanced-Level (GCE A-Level); and the National Criterion Referenced Assessment (NCRA) for Years VII-IX students. The Ministry of Education does not administer professional examinations, such as the Association of Chartered Accountants.

At the level of the schools, there are school boards and committees. The **Boards** have a management function at the secondary school level, while the **Committees** assist the Ministry of Education with the operations of the primary schools by overseeing the school plants, reporting on the state of the school plants, and making recommendations for the repair of school plants. The Board controls finances, select and appoint ancillary staff, and make recommendations for appointment to the teaching staff. The Board has support staff—clerical assistant, secretary treasurer, executive officer, and typist.

The Committees, which assist with the day-to-day operations of the primary schools, have no finances. They are concerned primarily with reporting on the state of the school plants. In addition, they can make recommendations to the Ministry of Education regarding the curriculum. The Committees have no support staff.

In addition to the *ad hoc* committees, boards, and primary school committees, there is the **National Development Council** that examines curriculum matters and makes recommendations to the Ministry of Education.

In 1980, the Government set up a National Training Board (now called the **Barbados Vocational Training Board**), with a mandate to ensure an adequate supply of trained work force in occupations in all branches of economic activity in the country. Another agency that has been established to ensure an adequate supply of technical and vocational training for industry is the **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council** established under an Act in 1993. This agency has the following functions: to advise the Minister on policy relating to TVET; to prepare plans for TVET in accordance with national policies and economic needs; to ensure that agreed plans for TVET are implemented; to coordinate TVET at the tertiary level; to establish standards for TVET; to establish training priorities, tests, qualifications and accreditation; to determine the facilities and resources required to ensure satisfactory standards of TVET and the welfare of students, trainees and staff of training institutions; to advise the Minister on the allocation of resources for TVET; and to make grants and loans for the support and provision of TVET.

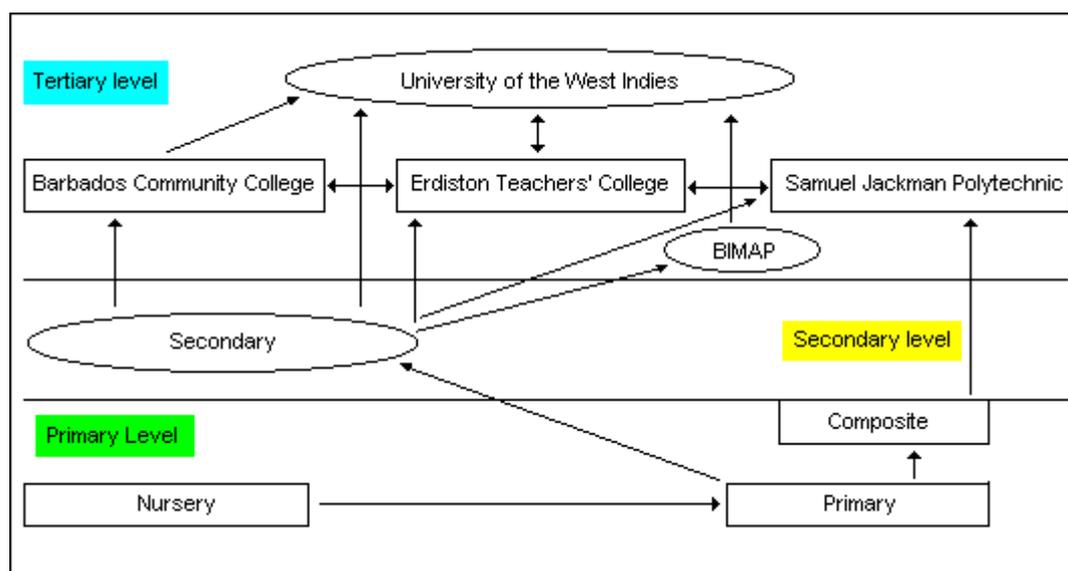
In June, 2004, the **Barbados Accreditation Council** was established by an Act of Parliament (i.e. Barbados Accreditation Council Act 2004-11) with two broad functions: a) the registration and re-registration of institutions offering post-secondary or tertiary education and training, and the accreditation and re-accreditation of programmes of studies and institutions in Barbados and related functions, such as recognition and equivalency of foreign-based qualifications to local awards, articulation and conferral of institutional titles; b) the granting of the Certificate of Recognition of CARICOM Skills Qualification to applicants who satisfy the requirements for recognition as skilled CARICOM nationals; and examining and

verifying of Certificates of Recognition of CARICOM Skills Qualification granted to community nationals by Member States. The Council is the sole government agency with responsibility for assuring the quality and integrity of post-secondary or tertiary education and training in Barbados. The major purposes for accreditation are to provide objective assessment of the quality of the educational institution or programme of study offered and to stimulate continuous improvement. The Council views the accreditation process as one which should ensure quality enhancement and institutional improvement.

Departments and agencies under the **Ministry of Youth, Family and Sports** include: the Barbados Youth Service; the Child Care Board; the National HIV/AIDS Commission; the National Sports Council; and Youth Affairs. The mandate of the **Child Care Board** is to promote children's right, while continuing to lobby for changes in legislation that would promote the optimum development of all children.

Structure and organization of the education system

Barbados: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-school education is provided for children between the ages of 3-5 in nursery schools and/or in nursery classes in some primary schools; they pursue an Early Childhood Education programme (ECE).

Primary education

Primary education caters to children in the age group 5-11. This level of education is compulsory, and lasts five to six years. Children between 5 and 7 years of age pursue an ECE programme; those in the age group 8-11 follow the national primary school curriculum.



Secondary education

Secondary education is for pupils aged 11-16 years. This level of education is also compulsory, and it lasts five to six years. Students pursue a wide and varied programme culminating with the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations.

Higher education (tertiary education)

On graduating from secondary education, students gain places at the four schools that offer advanced-level programmes or at Barbados Community College (BCC). At the BCC students have the possibility of pursuing the following programmes and activities: Bachelor Degrees in Fine Arts and Graphic Design; Associate Degrees in Arts, Sciences, Applied Arts and Applied Sciences—these include areas such as Mass Communication, Social Work, General Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology, Pharmacy, etc.—Occupational Education courses and activities; training provided by the Hospitality Institute; and B.Ed Tech.Voc. The Erdiston College is an institution responsible for providing professional training to teachers and administrators in the area of education. It offers training at the level of Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.) and the Certificate of Educational Management and Administration (Cert. Ed.). The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic is responsible for developing trade skills and occupational competencies up to the level of skilled artisans. As a regional tertiary level institution, the University of West Indies (UWI, Jamaica) is in the forefront of the higher education thrust of the government of Barbados. The government provides and annual subvention for the University and pays tuition fees for Barbadian citizens pursuing undergraduate studies at all three campuses of the UWI. The government sponsors the tuition fees of MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) students at the Mona Campus of the UWI and at the St. Augustine Campus of the UWI on an annual basis.

At all levels the school year consists of 39 weeks, divided into three terms: September to December, January to April and April to July.

The educational process

In the context of globalisation and continued changes in information and communication technologies, education will be promoted as a lifelong process, which seeks to produce outcomes that are culturally based, technologically driven, diverse and dynamic. It will also seek to inculcate in citizen an understanding of, and appreciation for the rule of law. It is through education that individuals will become well-rounded Barbadian citizens who are conscious of their responsibilities to self, family, society and country, and equipped with the tools necessary to build an all-embracing, cohesive society. Towards this end, various strategies employed by the Ministry include: promote learning as a collaborative experience; be responsive to, and influenced by, the needs of all beneficiaries: recognize the existence of multiple intelligences and abilities, and ensure that these are addressed in the classroom; accommodate and address the different learning styles of the students; allow each student to develop at his/her own pace; promote the creativity of students and the youth, and the building of self-esteem and confidence; reinforce the cultural and



spiritual values and those behaviours necessary for a productive and wholesome life; adopt a research-driven and consultative approach to the development of programmes; use sports as a vehicle to develop a healthy, disciplined and united society; and promote the holistic development of young people through the creation of an enabling environment that facilitates the self-actualization of the youth.

The curriculum, under the educational reform, is based on constructivism and the child-centred approach. The focus is the student's interaction with the curriculum rather than the curriculum dictating the pace of learning. In addition, the revised curriculum promotes the utilization of indigenous content and materials, as well as authentic, relevant experiences.

Another innovation in the curriculum reform is the introduction of an outcomes-based education approach. This strategy will focus on the development of attainment targets that will outline specific student outcomes for each module to be covered in the different subject areas. They will be used as guides for the development of national standards, and copies will be provided for parents. One major benefit of this system is that parents will be better able to monitor their children's progress, which should lead to heightened participation of parents in the education of their children.

In addition, the revised curriculum includes technology and social and emotional learning. Technology will be integrated across subject disciplines, and technological skills and competencies will also be taught in primary schools and continued during the first three years of secondary schooling where necessary. Social and emotional learning skills such as self-management, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution will also be integrated across the curriculum where they will be monitored and evaluated systematically.

In 2007 the Ministry implemented a National Policy on Reading. The policy provides a framework for the implementation of curriculum initiatives in a way that extends literacy opportunities for all students and contributes to national development. Among other goals this policy aims to: increase the consistency with which high quality reading instruction is delivered across the school system; provide supplemental, individualized interventions for students who have reading challenges; emphasize the role of language variation and culture in the acquisition of literacy.

Pre-primary education

Pre-school education is provided in nursery units within public primary schools, in six government nursery schools as well as several private nursery schools registered with the Ministry of Education. There is also one infant school.

The goal of pre-primary education is to provide for the total development of the child's personality by complementing and extending the pattern of informal education that is being provided in the domestic environment. At this level, the children between 3 and 5 years of age are at school for 15 hours a week. The teacher-guided activities range from twenty to thirty minutes and deal with such areas as language arts, mathematics, religious education, environmental studies, physical education, music and drama. In addition to teacher-guided activities, children are



taught by way of centre-of-interest activities—reading, art and craft, dramatic play, house keeping, creative corner, writing, science corner, music, and block building. Children are evaluated using the portfolio assessment (collection of dated pieces of work), anecdotal notes, and checklist of developmental milestones and behaviours.

In 2005, all children aged 5 years were enrolled. However, only 70% of 3-year-olds had access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes, either through government or private institutions. For the age group 0–2, 15 public and 64 private day-care centres had been registered with the Child Care Board. These centres, though designated ‘day care’, offer the complete ECE programme supported by the Ministry of Education.

Through the expansion of ECE it is hoped that the children will: develop the ability to speak/communicate effectively; acquire an innate curiosity and desire to learn; engage in playful activity; develop the ability to imitate and interact with each other, as well as with adults; gain the ability to use concrete and multi-sensory materials and tools; acquire knowledge and skills in multiple areas; develop the capacity to learn at different rates; acquire the ability to use real life experiences in their learning; acquire the ability to distinguish right from wrong; foster a sense of security and self-confidence. A critical component of ECE is the Parent Volunteer Support Programme. The programme is designed to secure the assistance of parents/guardians of a pupil of the school on a voluntary basis in order to facilitate an appropriate nursery programme in the public schools, nursery schools catering 4/5-year-olds, special schools and schools where special education programmes are provided. The general goal of the programme is ‘to enable principals, teachers and parents to work in partnership in order to use all available resources, which would empower each child to develop his or her early potential to become a lifelong learner’. Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture.

In 2007 there were approximately 6,100 children enrolled in pre-primary education, representing a gross enrolment ratio of 91% (71% in 2000/2001), and a net enrolment ratio of 82%.

Primary education

The fundamental goal of primary education is to build a foundation in reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. At this level, the pupils between 6 and 11 years of age are at school for thirty-five hours a week, five days a week. Each day is divided into seven sessions of thirty-five to forty minutes.

During the week pupils receive instruction in the following curricular areas: language arts (reading, 175 minutes; comprehension, 70-80 minutes; grammar, 70-80 minutes; writing, 35-70 minutes; poetry, 35-70 minutes); mathematics, 175 minutes; general science, health and family life education, social science, agriculture, arts and craft, music, physical education, and religious and moral education, 70-80 minutes for each subject area. Students also learn conversational Spanish.

Pupils are evaluated using two term tests and one annual/promotional examination. In addition, at the end of the primary level students take the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE) for transfer to the secondary level.



Since 1995, pupils have been taking the National Criterion Reference Assessment to identify areas of weakness and remedial needs.

Decisions about curriculum content are guided by the prevailing curriculum reform philosophy as outlined in the *White Paper on Education Reform* (1995), the *EduTech 2000 Master Plan* (1997) and the *Curriculum Reform 2000* documents. This philosophy places the student at the centre of the teaching/learning process and emphasizes the integration of various technologies across the curriculum. Decisions about the implementation of the curriculum at the school level are made by each school principal who, as chief instructional leader provides specific guidelines about the manner in which the curriculum is to be implemented. However, the leadership style, the ethos of the school, staff morale, and socio-economic status of the students and their parents are factors that impact on the actual delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, there are some variations from one school to another. In several schools, teachers collaborate as they plan in teams for the implementation of the curriculum. The insights gained from the interaction and exchange of ideas in such planning sessions help to enhance the quality of lesson delivery. This collaboration also builds collegiality among practitioners who would normally deliver instruction in isolation.

The curriculum reform effort, which dates back to 1996, represents a landmark in the development of education in Barbados. In terms of promoting equity and diversity, the curriculum reform effort will improve the provisions made for individual students within the system, since the reform is based on the facts that children: learn at different rates; have different learning styles; respond to a variety of stimuli; and learn best what is meaningful to them.

The objectives of the curriculum reform are to: (i) prepare students who are creative, numerate, literate, well trained and readily re-trainable at any point in their development; (ii) ensure that all students understand the necessity of being able to live and work harmoniously with other persons in their environment; (iii) increase the efficacy of the teaching/learning process by encouraging teachers to shift to the child-centred and more collaborative forms of learning in their classrooms; and (iv) prepare students for life in a technologically-advanced society by ensuring that all students who leave school in the twenty-first century have a good knowledge of, adequate skill in, and favourable attitudes towards the use of information technology.

At the primary level, the new curriculum is organized around learning areas: language arts; mathematics; science; social studies; physical education; music; moral and religious education ; visual arts; health and family life education; conversational Spanish. For students to see the inter-relatedness of all knowledge, these learning areas are to be integrated. Thus, social and emotional learning, information and communications technologies, and the cultural arts are embedded in the learning areas. The subject areas included in the revised curricula represent the wide range of skills and knowledge areas that will be necessary in the new global environment. Therefore, the new curricula include areas such as aesthetics studies, health and family life education and technology, and reinforces the traditional core subjects—i.e. communication, literacy and language development, numeracy and mathematics, social studies and natural sciences. Given the present information-intensive environment, the technology component of the curriculum reform is vital. It includes the introduction of basic technology mastery in both primary and secondary schools in



the first group of schools in the reform Programme. In addition, information and communication technologies will be systematically integrated into the teaching and learning process.

The socialization of students also plays a major role, thus specific social and emotional learning skills are considered under the various learning areas of the revised curricula. It is hoped that through this effort students will develop the necessary social and emotional skills to enhance their own development and integrate well into society. The content of the revised curricula also addresses the imperative to preserve and affirm the local culture and to bolster national identity. Heritage conversation is therefore one of the topics included and teachers are encouraged to emphasize authentic, local experiences in their teaching.

In 2007, there were some 23,000 pupils enrolled in primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 97%. The transition rate from primary to secondary education is 98%.

Secondary education

The principal goal of secondary education is to ensure that all students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will lay the basic foundation for future jobs and careers, as well as to ensure high levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy, by building on the primary foundation—reading, writing, and problem-solving skills—raising them even higher, and deepening levels of understanding across a variety of subject areas.

At this level, the students (age group 11–16) are at school for 35 hours a week, five days a week. Each day is divided into seven sessions of 35 to 40 minutes. The curriculum includes eleven or thirteen subject areas: English language and literature; foreign language (Spanish and/or French); history; geography; general science (Forms I–III); biology, chemistry, and physics (Forms IV and V); mathematics; music; home economics; industrial arts; art; and arts and craft.

The weekly time allocated to the various subject areas is as follows: English (language and literature), 245 minutes; mathematics, 210 minutes; science (general and individual subjects), 140 minutes; history, 105 minutes; geography, 70 minutes; foreign language, 140 minutes; music, 70 minutes; industrial arts/home economics, 105 minutes; and arts and craft, 70 minutes.

Students are evaluated using two term tests and one annual/promotional examination. In addition, at the end of the secondary level students take the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination. If students gain four or more passes at Grade II or better, they may gain places at the four schools that offer advanced-level programmes, or at Barbados Community College.

Concerning the secondary school curriculum, the focus is the student's interaction with the curriculum rather than the curriculum dictating the pace of learning. Though it includes attainment targets for each subject discipline, the curriculum is flexible, allowing students to pursue compulsory core subjects, foundation courses and electives. Credits are given for enrichment activities, which



complement the compulsory core. The following learning areas comprise the compulsory core subjects: (i) communication (language and literatures in English), compulsory to Level V; (ii) numeracy and mathematics, compulsory to Level IV; (iii) natural sciences, including integrated science, compulsory to Level IV; (iv) social studies, including African heritage studies and citizenry, compulsory to Level IV; (v) modern languages, either conversational Spanish or French, compulsory to Level IV; (vi) physical education, compulsory to Level V; and (vii) moral and religious education, compulsory to Level III.

The secondary school programme has been broken down into six levels. Level I is intended to bridge the transition from primary to secondary school while students who have demonstrated competence at the primary level will access Level II. At Level III, students are expected to consolidate what they have learnt at Level II. Level IV ends the junior stage of secondary school and provides the opportunity for students to write the exit competency tests in three of the core areas. Level VI marks the end of the secondary programme and facilitates those students who will be writing the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) General Proficiency Examination. It prepares students for access to post-secondary examinations such as the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE).

To complement the core subjects from Levels I to III, students are expected to study at least one of the following subjects under the foundation studies: social studies; visual arts; performing arts; information and communications technology; design technology; woodwork; metal work; technical drawing; and home economics.

In addition, students at Levels IV to VI have an opportunity to choose electives from the following options: history; geography; biology; physics; chemistry; agricultural science; integrated science; foreign languages; visual arts; performing arts; technical and vocational education; electronics; mechanical drawing; home management; entrepreneurial and business studies; physical education/sports; comparative religions; and tourism.

Students can also select one activity from a list of enrichment activities designed to develop their special skills and abilities. These include: athletics, sports and games, including board games; clubs—academic, social, religious and service; voluntary organizations; semi-disciplined organizations (brownies, scouts, girl guides, cadets, rangers). As at the primary level, social and emotional learning is integrated across the curriculum.

In 2007, total enrolment in secondary education was approximately 21,000 students.

In addition to the academic technical and vocational education qualifications, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are qualifications that reflect the skills, knowledge and understanding an individual possesses in relation to a specific area of work. The NVQ will signify that the person to whom it is awarded has met the established national standards for an occupational or work role. The award is granted to persons who demonstrate the competences embodied in the standards for an occupational area. NVQs are classified into five levels of competence, which correspond to the hierarchy of responsibility in the workplace:



- *Level 1 Entry Level Foundation Skills:* Recognizes competence in a range of varied work activities performed in a variety of contexts. Most work activities are simple and routine. Collaboration with others through work groups or teams may often be a requirement. Substantial supervision is required especially during the early months evolving into more autonomy with time (closer correlation with academic qualifications: basic certificate).
- *Level 2 Skilled Occupations:* Recognizes competence in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a variety of contexts, some of which are complex and non-routine. Some responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others through work groups or teams and guidance of others may be required (closer correlation with academic qualifications: O-Level).
- *Level 3 Technician and Supervisory Occupations:* Recognizes competence in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources are often a requirement. The individual is capable of self-directed application, exhibits problem solving, planning, designing, and supervisory capabilities (closer correlation with academic qualifications: associate degree/A-Level).
- *Level 4 Technical Specialist and Middle Management Occupations:* Recognizes competence involving the application of a range of fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of resources, as well as personal accountabilities for analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution, and evaluation (closer correlation with academic qualifications: undergraduate degree).
- *Level 5 Chartered, Professional and Senior Management Occupations:* Recognizes the ability to exercise personal professional responsibility for the design, development, or improvement of a product, process, system, or service. Recognizes technical and managerial competencies at the highest level and includes those who have occupied positions of the highest responsibility and made outstanding contribution to the promotion and practice of their occupation (closer correlation with academic qualifications: postgraduate degree/professional qualification).

NVQs are based on standards of competence, which specify the needed skills, knowledge and understanding. The evidence collected is assessed against the standards of competence on which the NVQ is based. A standard is composed of: an element which describes the tasks people have to do to be able to perform in the area of work the unit covers; performance criteria which describe the level of competence that has to be achieved; range statements which detail the circumstances and applications in which the task covered by the element has to be performed; the underpinning knowledge which is the essential knowledge needed to demonstrate competence that cannot be shown by performance alone. Standards are grouped into units (description of the expected outcome within a specific occupational function). These units are used to form NVQs. For each unit, candidates have to produce



evidence requirements. These are assessed against the standards and are used to award the NVQ.

NVQs are different from traditional qualifications. They are based not on what people know and can reproduce in an examination, but on what people can do and demonstrate at work. In traditional qualifications, only part of the curriculum is learned and assessed. In an NVQ, everything that is specified in the qualification must be achieved and assessed.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE) is administered to children who are 11 years old but less than 12 years old at 1 September in the year of examination, as a means of allocation to secondary school.

The National Criterion-Referenced Assessment (NCRA) for Years VII–IX students is designed to determine the extent to which a student can effectively perform a prescribed set of tasks, based on a student's performance without comparison to that of others. Criterion-Referenced tests are administered in English Language and Mathematics to all students in Infants B and Class 2 of the primary schools. The English test has two basic components: grammar and comprehension. The classes were previously written in September, but it was recently proposed that they be written in May of every year.

Other national assessments administered by the Ministry of Education are the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), with School-Based Assessment, and the Cambridge General Certificate Examinations Advanced-Level (GCE A-Level). The Barbados Secondary School Leaving Certificate is usually taken in the third term of the school year.

Continuous assessment is an ongoing incremental system of measuring the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students have gained from pursuing the primary school curriculum, over a period of time rather than relying on a one shot examination. It has been proposed that the continuous assessment scores be used in conjunction with the score gained in the BSSEE to allocate students to secondary schools.

The recent curriculum reform initiative includes a fundamental change in the assessment mechanisms used in primary and secondary schools. The revised curricula represent a shift from traditional, product-based assessment modes (pencil and paper tests) to more authentic assessment models based on a combination of process and product methods, including orals, interviews, peer and self-assessment, performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolios, project-based work, written achievement tests and norm reference tests. These assessment methods should foster the development of valuable higher order learning skills, and should give all students a better opportunity to excel in school.

The changes in assessment will be reflected in the method of transfer from the primary to the secondary school level, and in the certification offered in secondary schools. The traditional Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination will no

longer be the sole means of assessment for school placement. Instead, school-based assessment from Classes 1 to 4 (7–8 to 10–11 age groups), now constitute 40% of the overall transfer marks. This should enhance the fairness of the transfer, as students will receive credit for achievements made throughout their primary school careers and will improve the prospects for students who do not excel in paper-based assessments.

Teaching staff

The qualifications to teach, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, are myriad and varied. The minimum qualifications to teach, at the level of untrained teachers, are four subjects including English language at General Proficiency I or II; or three subjects at General Proficiency I and II including English language and two subjects at Basic Proficiency I and/or General Proficiency III or a combination of both Basic Proficiency I and General Proficiency III.

The level up from untrained teacher is qualified teacher. The qualification for this category of teacher, in addition to the entry-level qualifications, is a diploma or certificate of training recognized by the Ministry of Education, for example, the Erdiston Teacher Training Certificate. The other grade or type of teacher is the graduate teacher. The requirement for this category of teacher is a degree from a university or any qualification approved by the Ministry as being equivalent to a degree.

The minimum qualifications required of a professor to lecture at the Barbados Community College and the Erdiston Teacher College is a first degree or an equivalent qualification and teacher training certification. At the University, the preferred qualification is a Doctor of Philosophy in the relevant discipline; however, at times individuals are allowed to lecture at the assistant level with a master's degree.

The initial in-service programmes for teachers are as follows:

- Primary school teachers are required to take education theory, English language, mathematics, science, social studies, teaching practice, individual study, and an optional subject, chosen from the following: art, geography, history, music, modern languages, physical education and religious education.
- Secondary school teachers are required to take foundations of education, use of English, two specialist subjects (chosen from the secondary curriculum), teaching practice, individual study, one optional subject, and social issues. In addition, each student must also successfully complete the following courses during the first year or the first five terms: audiovisual aids, educational research and measurement, health education, and information technology in education.

Furthermore, students enrolled in the business education programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: accounting, office procedures, shorthand and transcription, and typewriting. The students must also complete a business attachment. Students enrolled in the home economics programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: clothing construction, home



management, and food studies. Students enrolled in the industrial arts programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: metalwork, technical drawing and woodwork. In addition, these students must also complete courses in engineering science, basic electricity and electronics, and mathematics.

Subject to the Act and the regulations, a teacher in a public school shall: a) provide the pupils under his/her care with appropriate instruction and learning experiences during the school day; b) make adequate preparation for each day's classes as assigned on school's timetables making use of the officially approved textbooks; c) maintain proper order and discipline among the pupils under his/her care; d) be on duty for the school day and take part in playground supervision and other school related activities; e) assist in promoting the welfare and well-being of the pupils and fostering their social and moral development; f) keep a record of the daily attendance of students.

A Senior Teacher, in addition to his/her duties as a teacher, is responsible for assisting the principal in administration and discipline in the school, giving professional guidance to teachers, and liaising between the principal and staff. An Informal Subject Coordinator (Subject Leader) in a primary school, in addition to his/her normal teaching duties, is responsible for drawing up syllabi and ongoing curriculum development in his/her specific subject; and advising principals and teachers on matters relating to the subject, including leading professional development sessions and mentoring inexperienced teachers.

Subject to the Act and the regulations, a principal in a public school shall: a) prepare in consultation with the teachers, a scheme of work, based on the official curriculum, suited to the needs of the pupils; b) prepare the timetable for the school and organise the school accordingly; c) examine the pupils in the subjects of instruction in accordance with existing regulations; d) maintain control of the building, premises, apparatus, equipment and furniture of the school; e) supervise all teaching and non-teaching staff of the school; f) ensure that discipline is maintained throughout the school at all times.

A new appraisal system for teachers was designed to replace the existing Annual Reports used throughout the public service. The new system should provide timely, accurate information about schools and teaching learning strategies, which should result in the improvement and dissemination of best practices. The Ministry of Education is presently in the final stages of the pilot for teacher evaluation.

At the secondary level, teachers have a maximum of 30 teaching or contact periods per week, each period lasting 35 or 40 minutes. In the primary schools, teachers generally work for 35 periods per week, each period lasting 30 or 40 minutes. There are some primary schools where the teachers may be given one or two additional non-teaching or contact periods per week.

In view of the current reform thrust of the Ministry of Education, the Erdiston College has been given the mandate to train/retrain all school personnel.

In 2007, there were 320 preschool teachers, some 1,600 primary school teachers, and some 1,400 secondary school teachers (the latter figure refers to 2006).



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Web resources

- Barbados Accreditation Council: <http://www.bac.gov.bb/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]
- Barbados Vocational Training Board: <http://www.bvtb.gov.bb/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]
- Ministry of Education, Human Resource and Development: <http://www.mes.gov.bb/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council, Barbados: <http://www.tvetcouncil.com.bb/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]
- For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*