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Principles and general objectives of education

According to the Education Act of 2005, the specific goals of education are: the establishment and strengthening of a varied and comprehensive educational system that is based on societal needs; and the provision of access to quality education for all the nationals of St. Kitts and Nevis in institutions that foster the spiritual, cultural, moral, intellectual, physical, social and economic development of the individual and of the community.

The specific objectives of the education system are to: a) encourage and promote the development of basic knowledge and skills in all persons, including: the skills of literacy, listening, speaking, reading, writing, numeracy, mathematics, analysis, problem solving, information processing, computing; critical and creative thinking skills for today's world; an understanding of the role of science and technology in society together with scientific and technological skills; appreciation and understanding of creative arts; physical development and personal health and fitness; and the creative use of time; b) develop self-worth through positive educational development; c) promote the importance of the family and community; d) provide opportunities to reach maximum potential; e) promote the recognition, understanding and respect for the Constitution, laws and national symbols of the state; f) develop an understanding of the principle of gender equality and other forms of equality as defined in the Constitution; g) promote understanding of the history, language, culture, rights and values of Saint Kitts and Nevis and their role in contemporary society; h) increase awareness and appreciation of the natural environment; i) promote a national and Caribbean identity through regional cooperation and integration; j) develop an understanding of the historical and contemporary role of labour and business in society; and k) prepare for participation in the affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis and the global society.

The goals and objectives of the education system must be considered in terms of the emerging implications of the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). Additionally, the education system must ensure that there is hope for young people and must provide the means for young people to exercise a national mandate to assist with the issue of crime and violence. So, young people should be assisted in channelling all their energies into productive activities that lead to positive outcomes. (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The Education Act No. 18 of 1975 and subsequent amendments has been for a long period of time the main legal provision for all matters relating to education. The **Education Act 2005** provides the new legal framework for developments and policies in education. The **Education (Amendment) Act No. 17** of 2007 addresses certain important issues, including provisions for guidance counsellors in schools. This



Amendment gives greater prominence to the role of guidance counsellors in the schools and provides a legal framework around which guidance counsellors can work.

By the beginning of 2010 some Education Regulations were to be completed and in force, including the Education (Education Institutions) Regulations, the Education (Teacher) Regulations, and the Education (Home-Based) Regulations.

The Accreditation Board was established in 2000 in accordance with the provisions of the St. Christopher and Nevis **Accreditation of Institutions Act No. 21** of 1999. The Act was amended in 2001 by the St. Christopher and Nevis **Accreditation of Institutions (Amendment Act) No. 9** of 2001.

Legislation passed in the National Assembly in 1998 made provisions for teenage mothers to return to school to continue their education. In accordance with Section 14 of the Education Act of 2005, subject to available resources, all persons are entitled to receive an educational programme appropriate to their needs in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Education is compulsory for the age group 5-16 years.

Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education** (formerly the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs, Labour, Social Security, and Information Technology) has full and complete responsibility for education. The administration of education is centralized with the Ministry giving policy direction, while the **Department of Education** implements the policies. The **Chief Education Officer** in St. Kitts and the **Principal Education Officer** in Nevis are responsible to the Ministers of Education (in Saint Kitts and in Nevis) for the execution of education policies.

Curriculum development is a major 'thread' throughout the White Paper on Education Development and Policy 2009-2019 *Raising the standard, maximizing resources, aligning with best practices, promoting success for all* (Ministry of Education, 2009). The proposed strategies and agendas for action under every major section of the document highlight curriculum development activities to be coordinated by the **Curriculum Development Unit** (CDU), under the Department of Education. The professional staff of the CDU currently makes provision for a Director, coordinators of mathematics, language arts, social studies, science, learning support, measurement and evaluation, and the **Teacher Resource Centre**.

The **Special Education Unit** caters to the needs of children with a variety of challenges. There is one in St Kitts and one in Nevis. The Unit began operating in 1982 and catered solely to the needs of children who were mentally challenged. Today the number of teachers and students, and the variety of challenges, has increased. The **Early Childhood Education Unit** is responsible for the management and delivery of early childhood services in St. Kitts and Nevis. It is managed by a national coordinator, an education officer, early childhood resource teachers on both islands and relevant support staff.



The **Examinations Section** of the Department of Education administers many exams on behalf of a number of overseas exam boards and awarding bodies, including: the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examinations; the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE); the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Examinations (CCSLC); and the Cambridge International Examinations General Certificate of Education (GCE) O- and A-levels.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes are offered at the **Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC)** and through the **National Skills Training Programme**. To facilitate the implementation of competency-based education and training (CBET) in schools and colleges and generally to guide the development of TVET, the Ministry has established a **TVET Council**. The Terms of Reference for the TVET Council are outlined in the Education Act (2005), Sections 123-134.

The **Accreditation Board**, established in 2000, operates as a semi-autonomous entity under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and is responsible to the Minister of Education for evaluating applications for accreditation and monitoring the performance of tertiary-level institutions, in accordance with the provisions of the Accreditation Act (and Amendment).

School principals are responsible for day-to-day management of their school and for the quality of education delivered. They must therefore be accountable for the school's performance. Under a World Bank Programme, the new approach is toward a de-concentration and decentralisation of power. **School boards** are to be in charge of the management of schools. Schools will have greater autonomy and they will be required to prepare development plans.

According to Section 78 of the Education Act (2005) a **Council on Early Childhood Education** will be established to provide a coordinating mechanism for advising the Minister of Education on the implementation of the early childhood policy. Pre-service and in-service teacher education and the recruitment of teachers are to be reviewed, and the system will move to institutionalize pre-service teacher training. A **Teacher Education Advisory Committee** will be established and commissioned to advise the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College on teacher education and training needs and to make recommendations for teacher professional development courses or programmes.

Structure and organization of the education system

Pre-school education

Early childhood education caters to children from birth to 5 years of age and it is not compulsory. Nursery centres cater to children up to 3 years of age, while preschool centres cater to children aged 3-5 years. Day-care centres have a nursery and a preschool component, and therefore they cater to children in the age group 0-5 years. preschool education, which is mainly offered by private institutions.



Primary education

Primary education is compulsory and caters to children aged 5-12. Primary education is divided into: infant department (kindergarten and grades 1 and 2); lower primary (grades 3 and 4); and upper primary (grades 5 and 6). Progression through grades is automatic and on an age basis. Pupils' performance in the grade 6 Test of Standards is also used to assist schools in the placement of students in Form 1 in secondary schools.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts five years and it is compulsory. It is divided into lower secondary (Forms 1-3) and upper secondary (Forms 4 and 5). Students who complete Form 5 sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) at either general, technical or basic proficiency level. There are some 31 subjects that are offered by CXC for the CSEC. Schools in St. Kitts and Nevis offer about 24-28 of these subjects. The regional indicator for success at CSEC is four subjects, including English, at CSEC general or technical proficiency. However, normally at least five subject passes are needed to proceed to the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC) in St. Kitts and sixth form in Nevis. Lower achievers at the secondary level who wish to pursue technical and vocational education can enrol at the Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC) for a two-year programme, which serves as matriculation requirements for the technical education at the CFBC.

Higher education

Post-secondary and tertiary level education is offered by the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC). Since September 2000, students of the CFBC in St. Kitts and sixth form in Nevis can pursue the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exam (CAPE), a post-secondary programme designed to replace the traditional English-based General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced-level programme; programmes leading to the award of a certificate take one year to complete, while diplomas are awarded after successful completion of a two-year programme.

The CFBC also offers courses leading to certificates, diplomas and associate degrees (two-year programmes) in the various divisions of the College: arts and general studies, teacher education, health sciences, technical and vocational education, and management studies, which includes the Hospitality Training Centre. The CFBC also has arrangements with institutions such as the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), where credits obtained at the CFBC are transferred into Bachelor's degree programmes. A Master's degree programme offered by the UVI is taught at the CFBC using video conferencing technology. There are also 'off-shore' owned universities with campuses established in St. Kitts and Nevis; the majority of these institutions are medical schools.

The school year extends from early September to early July and consists of thirty-nine weeks. It is divided into three terms as follows: September–December (fourteen weeks), January–April (thirteen weeks) and April–July (twelve weeks). The typical school day for primary and secondary schools is from 8:30 to 12:00, and from



13:00 to 15:30. At the pre-primary the school day runs from 8:30 to 15:15 with children arriving at around 8:00 and leaving between 15:15 and 16:00. The CFB College operates on a semester system, with two semesters running from August to December and January to June.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

The Early Childhood Development Unit of the Ministry of Education is responsible for coordinating and supervising preschool education, which is mainly offered by private institutions. As mentioned, nursery centres cater to children from three months to 3 years of age, while preschool centres cater to children aged 3-5 years. Day-care centres have a nursery and a preschool component, and therefore they cater to children in the age group 0-5 years. Centres can be home-based, a rented or privately owned building or a government institution. Centres are usually headed by a supervisor, and other staff members include teaching staff, teachers' aide, nursery assistants, cooks, etc. Parents and guardians of children enrolled in government centres are charged a weekly nominal fee.

The main objectives of pre-primary education are to provide high quality care and education for children in their early years of life and to prepare them for primary school and life in general. These objectives are achieved by fostering the child's emotional, moral, physical and social growth and by kindling curiosity through sensory and intellectual stimulation.

The curriculum of early childhood programmes in St. Kitts and Nevis is still based on the the High/Scope Curriculum Process for infants, toddlers and preschool children. The High/Scope curriculum process emphasizes active learning. The curriculum is based on the belief that children learn best through active learning, hands-on experiences with people, objects, events, and ideas. Trusting relationships and continuity of care are emphasized as the anchors for development and learning. Infants and toddlers are encouraged to discover the world around them by exploring and playing. Caregivers are always close by to support children as they play and learn. The High/Scope preschool curriculum is an open-framework model derived from Piagetian theory. Through designated key experiences for children, teaching and parenting strategies, and child observation materials, the curriculum provides a decision-making framework. The research on the High/Scope curriculum suggests that preschoolers who are exposed to the experiences are likely to develop their: ability to use a variety of skills in the arts and physical movement; knowledge of objects as a base of educational concept; ability to speak, dramatize, and graphically represent their experiences and communicate these experiences to other children and adults; ability to work with others, make decisions about what to do and how to do it, and plan their use of time and energy; and ability to apply their newly acquired reasoning capacity in a wide range of naturally occurring situations and with a variety of materials.

As regards preschool education, the assessment of children is based on close observation at work and play. Evaluation is done by assessing the child's competence



in the following areas: cognitive skills, social and emotional development, creativity, language development, attitude to reading and writing skills.

In March 2009 a new Early Childhood Development Policy was reviewed and approved. The new policy was developed following a national consultation held in St. Kitts and Nevis, and was created to respond to the need to improve the quality of and level of access to early childhood education in the federation. As a critical component of the early childhood education policy, targets have been set to provide early education services to all working parents in all communities in St. Kitts. This will help break the cycle of poverty in poor families and poor communities. Under the new early childhood policy, support will be given to private providers of early childhood education so that they can expand their services and improve the quality of such services. Government has set a timeline of 2009-2011 for the implementation of the new early childhood education policy.

The World Bank reports that only 53% of the children between the ages of birth to 5 participate in formal early childhood programmes, 38% of the birth-to-2 age group and 76% of the 3-to-5 age group. A 2007 Quality Survey revealed that there were a number of areas of programming in need of improvement, despite the existence of commendable levels of service provision in a number of the centres. (World Bank, 2009).

In 2003, the gross enrolment ratio was 101% and the net enrolment ratio was 83%. According to national sources, in 2007/08 the total enrolment at the pre-primary level was 2,547 children.

Primary education

As mentioned, primary education is compulsory and caters to children aged 5-12. Primary education is divided into: infant department (kindergarten and grades 1 and 2); lower primary (grades 3 and 4); and upper primary (grades 5 and 6).

The main objectives of primary education are to: develop basic skills in literacy, oral expression, numeracy, problem solving and teamwork to facilitate efficient learning at the secondary level; and develop requisite knowledge, values and attitudes to promote success at the secondary level and beyond. It is expected at the end of the primary phase of education that pupils would have acquired skills in literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving for the next phase of their education. It is also expected that pupils would have acquired skills in literacy, oral expression, teamwork, numeracy and problem solving for the next phase of their education. The level of content gained should also equip them with the requisite knowledge, values and attitudes for secondary education.

The core subjects taught at the primary level are compulsory. At the beginning of 2000s these were mathematics, language arts, social studies and science. Other subjects included music, environmental education and physical education. The table below shows the typical weekly timetable at the end of the 1990s.



Primary education: weekly timetable (core subjects)

Core subject	Number of weekly teaching periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	6	6
Language arts	6	6	6	6	6	6
Social studies	4	4	4	4	4	4
Science	4	4	4	4	4	4

Note: Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

In some schools, there are more sessions for mathematics and English to help the pupils to sharpen their skills. There is some specialization at the primary level for mathematics and English. In the past, one teacher taught all the subjects in his or her class regardless of competence. The specialization in English and mathematics sets out to ensure that the best mathematics and English teachers teach the subjects to the pupils.

The educational approach at the primary level is developmental and is based on the belief that concepts and all forms of information should be presented to children in ways that integrate new and existing pedagogies. Based on this developmental framework, ideally, a quality primary school curriculum is expected to allow children to acquire skills at their own pace, but at the same time it is necessary to use any amount of varied resources that are needed to enable the child to meet the specific targets to be achieved.

Reading is generally the subject of highest priority in the primary school curriculum. Emphasis is on the development of phonics, vocabulary, fluent reading, writing, listening skills, and a whole host of other skills. Reading is the basis for all subjects across the board. The teaching of reading will therefore continue to receive a high level of attention. Teacher training will intensify in early identification of weak readers, remediation and reading recovery techniques. Implementation of reading intervention strategies will intensify to ensure that all children transferring from the grades 5 and 6 to the higher grades and the secondary level are functioning at the appropriate reading level.

The Ministry of Education will continue to experiment with the introduction of a second language at the primary level. French and Spanish are being piloted in selected schools. Following evaluation on completion of the pilot phases, one of these languages, most likely Spanish, will be selected for introduction in all primary schools. The primary school curriculum will expand experiences for pupils in physical education, music and art, character education, volunteerism, technology, as well as exposure to trade skills. Physical education will give pupils a good basis for health and wellness that they will carry with them throughout life. Pupils' creative side will be developed through singing, music and art. Character education will emphasize principles of honesty, responsibility, courage, respect for others, anger management, and conflict resolution, thus teaching them to be responsible citizens. Basic parenting and family concepts will be introduced and presented to the young children in exciting



ways, including stories, films, pictures, discussions, and debates. Children will be led to develop 'parenting and family manuals' to share with their parents.

Through a system of automatic promotion pupils move irrespective of ability from primary to secondary school upon attaining the age of 12. Repeating a grade is allowed at the discretion of the school and in consultation with the parents. A formal assessment strategy, known as the Test of Standards is administered to all pupils of grades 3 through 6 each year, and is written simultaneously at all primary schools in the Federation, both public and private. The results of the test for grade 6 pupils are used almost exclusively as the yardstick by which to measure pupils' ability to perform at the secondary level and accordingly, to place pupils in the first Form of the secondary school. In grades 3-6, pupils are tested by the national assessment measure known as Test of Standards. All pupils who write the Test of Standards at the end of grade 6 generally access secondary education.

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2007 the total enrolment at the primary level was about 6,200 pupils, representing a gross enrolment rate of 94% and a net enrolment rate of 87%. There were some 370 primary school teachers in 2007. According to national sources, in 2007/08 the total enrolment at the primary level was 6,325 children.

According to the Education Act (2005) special needs education services should be delivered in the least restrictive and most enabling environment to the extent resources permit. The services should be viewed on a continuum – the most severely challenged to the gifted. Services may be provided in classrooms with students who have no learning difficulties. This might mean playing at break time with children in regular education. For others it might mean working on some academic subjects in the regular classroom and others may have no contact at all with children in regular education during the school day.

The Ministry of Education believes that all children are valuable and can contribute in a positive and meaningful way to the development of the nation. The special education curriculum is designed for students with profound, severe and complex needs, aged 5-16 and working below level 1 of the primary and secondary education curriculum. It is designed to support the primary and secondary education curriculum by emphasizing emergent skills across subject areas and providing where possible a sequential teaching outline. The purpose of this curriculum is to provide targets for students' attainment and to develop the ability to track student progress towards primary education level 1. The curriculum is designed to focus on four core areas: functional reading skills, functional mathematics skills, life skills and vocational skills. The goal is to prepare students for independent and meaningful living in their communities.

The Education Act (2005) recommends the development of individual education plans (IEP) for students with Special Needs. The IEP should be developed by an IEP team which should include the parents, the teacher, the principal and other support staff who deal with the child.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts five years and it is compulsory. It is divided into lower secondary (Forms 1-3) and upper secondary (Forms 4 and 5). The general objectives of secondary education are to: develop skills to facilitate lifelong learning; prepare students for the world of work; develop skills of conflict resolution and negotiation; and facilitate the development of parenting skills.

In the 1990s, up to Form 2 students were taught compulsory subjects such as English, mathematics, history, geography, science, French and Spanish. In Form 3 there were options to choose from the following sets of subjects: technical drawing/French/physics; Spanish/computer science/chemistry; geography/principles of business; accounting/agricultural science/literature; typing; building technology; biology; electricity. The table below shows the typical weekly timetable for Forms 1-5 at the end of the 1990s.

Secondary education: teaching subjects and weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly teaching periods in each form				
	I	II	III	IV	V
English	5	5	5	5	5
History	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5
French	4	4	4	4	4
Spanish	–	4	4	4	4
Science	4	4	4	4	4
Geography	4	4	4	4	4
Principles of business	–	–	4	4	4
Biology	–	–	4	4	4
Chemistry	–	–	4	4	4
Physics	–	–	4	4	4
Electricity	–	–	4	4	4
Technical drawing	–	–	4	4	4
Agricultural science	4	4	4	4	4
Accounting	–	–	4	4	4
Building technology	–	–	4	4	4
Computer science	–	–	4	4	4
Literature	3	3	4	4	4

Note: Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes.

The World Bank reports that in recent years the Ministry of Education developed a common curriculum for Form 1-3 in most subjects and issued accompanying guidelines. As a result, the number of core subjects was reduced from



14 to 10. The core subjects are: communication studies; creative and performing arts; information technology; integrated technology; integrated science; mathematics; modern languages; social studies; personal development; and physical education. The curricula were developed with a strong participation of teachers, parents and business community who were all part of the curriculum advisory committee. They were also written by teachers themselves. Materials were also procured to support implementation of this curriculum. These newly developed curricula accommodate other curriculum reform initiatives such as Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC), and are harmonized with Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) requirements. This ensures that there is only one common curriculum used for each subject across the federation. (World Bank, 2009).

Students who complete Form 5 sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) at either general, technical or basic proficiency level. There are some 31 subjects that are offered by CXC for the CSEC. Schools in St. Kitts and Nevis offer about 24-28 of these subjects. The regional indicator for success at CSEC is four subjects, including English, at CSEC general or technical proficiency. However, normally at least five subject passes are needed to proceed to the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC) in St. Kitts and sixth form in Nevis. Lower achievers at the secondary level who wish to pursue technical and vocational education can enrol at the Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC) for a two-year programme, which serves as matriculation requirements for the technical education at the CFBC.

Since September 2000, students of the CFBC in St. Kitts and sixth form in Nevis can pursue the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exam (CAPE), a post-secondary programme designed to replace the traditional English-based General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced-level programme; programmes leading to the award of a certificate take one year to complete, while diplomas are awarded after successful completion of a two-year programme.

A new programme that is being piloted in secondary schools is the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary level Competence (CCSLC), a regional initiative that is being implemented in collaboration with CXC. The CCSLC requires continued and sustained teacher training and curriculum development, ensuring proper evaluation and maintenance of student portfolios to reflect a competency-based approach to instruction and evaluation. A candidate will be eligible for the CCSLC if he/she successfully completes a minimum of five subjects, over a three-year period. The three-year period for some students may begin in Form 3 and end at the end of Form 5. For those students who take the CCSLC for the first time in Form 4 the three-year period will be completed, if necessary, in a post-secondary institution or through an adult education programme. The five subjects may be chosen from the following options: mathematics and English are compulsory; any three other subjects from a group, or combination of groups, e.g. integrated science, modern languages (French/Spanish), and social studies.

The general behavioural and attitudinal outcomes of the CCSLC students should acquire are: a positive image of self, family, community, region and world; respect for others irrespective of age, class, creed, gender, ethnicity, physical disabilities or nationality; an abhorrence of violence in all its forms and commitment

to settle disputes through arbitration and conciliation; the capacity to understand that individual freedom is consonant with the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's own actions; and commitment to ethical and moral societies that recognize equality of opportunity, freedom of expression and association, and the right to fair judicial process.

The final score on any CXC-examined CCSLC subject is to be a composite score based on a school/teacher-assessed mark and a CXC mark from the final examination. The student is classified as being either developing competence (fail), competent, or master in each CXC-moderated subject. The CCSLC is a joint certificate awarded and signed by representatives of both CXC and the Ministry of Education.

Candidates who successfully complete the CCSLC would have achieved: a foundation for further education and training; expanded opportunities for entry-level employment; and opportunity to articulate with other CSEC and TVET programmes. Achievement of the CCSLC will attest that the candidate has acquired competencies such as: oral and written communication; mathematical literacy; problem solving; critical thinking; informed decision making; management of emotions; working in groups; dealing with diversity and change; handling conflict; development of positive self-concept; social and citizenship.

The Guidance Counsellors Network, in collaboration with the Curriculum Development Unit, will develop a curriculum for Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) for offer as part of the CCSLC. The curriculum will be developed in accordance with guidelines provided by CXC and must be approved by CXC if it is to be included as a CCSLC offering. The HFLE curriculum will include a Parenting Education Module for students. Career education will be introduced from Forms 1 and 2 in secondary schools either as separate inputs on the timetable (guest speakers etc.) or integrated in the after-school programme.

Curriculum development initiatives led by the Curriculum Development Unit will continue to review and upgrade curriculum guidelines for core subjects and electives at the lower secondary level to ensure that the curriculum is clearly articulated with other curriculum reform initiatives. Thus, the emergence of the CCSLC will require continued review and re-structuring of the curriculum of selected subject areas in Forms 1–3, as well as in-service training of teachers to deliver the CCSLC. It is expected that by 2011, as curricula in Forms 1-3 are reviewed and properly sequenced to incorporate the competencies required by the CCSLC, the CCSLC mathematics and English will emerge as a Form 3 “Test of Standards”.

The more established post-secondary education opportunities focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and enable school leavers to develop skills and competencies for the world of work in various occupational areas. Such programmes are offered at the Advanced Vocational Education Centre (AVEC) and through the National Skills Training Programme, as well as, selected courses at the CFBC Division of technical and vocational education and management studies.

In recent years there has been renewed interest on TVET with the introduction of occupational skill areas in schools leading to the award of the Caribbean



Vocational Qualification (CVQ). The Ministry of Education established partnership arrangements with HEART Trust/National Training Agency in Jamaica for the training and certification of teachers, instructors and facilitators in these programmes. A Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) is in fact a generic National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), agreed upon by members of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which St. Kitts and Nevis is a member, and which satisfies regional and international standards. Nearly 100 skill areas have been developed to date and approved for consideration as CVQs. A CVQ can be adapted and/or modified where necessary at national level to reflect any specific national needs or requirements. Each CVQ requires competency-based education and training (CBET).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2007 there were some 4,500 students enrolled in secondary education programmes, representing a gross enrolment rate of 105% and a net enrolment rate of 84%. According to national sources, in 2007/08 the total enrolment at the secondary level was 4,403 students.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

Mathematics was in the fourth position in the 1999 Test of Standards. Only 42.1% of grade 4 pupils had marks above 50%—the mark accepted as mastering basic learning competencies. ‘Social studies’ was in the third position (46.9%), science was in the second position (60.9%) and English language was in the first position (66.2%). (Ministry of Education, 1999).

A formal assessment strategy, known as the Test of Standards is administered to pupils of grades 3 through 6 each year, and is written simultaneously at all government and private primary schools. The Test of Standards is used primarily to determine the level of attainment of students at the respective grade levels and to identify areas where curriculum intervention is required.

The Test of Standards is administered in four core subject areas at the primary level: English, mathematics, social studies and science. The Test of Standards is not used as a yardstick to compare schools. It is used by the Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Development Unit to probe the strengths and weaknesses of students in schools in the respective subject areas and identify areas where curriculum and teacher development interventions may be needed.

Performance on the grade 6 Test of Standards will continue to be used to assist schools in the placement of students in Form 1 in secondary schools based on criterion-referenced measures and interpretation. However, performance on the Test of Standards is expected to be just one of the criteria used during the discussion between teachers in secondary schools and heads of feeder primary schools in determining the placement of students. One other criterion, for example, is the performance of the student during the final school year at primary level in grade 6, as evidenced by the class teacher’s class records and the pupil’s position in class. The emphasis will continue to be on placing the student in the best possible group so that he or she can perform at his or her maximum.



Based on the results of the 2007 and 2008 CSEC examinations, about 75-80% of the national secondary school age cohort from Form 1 is being given the opportunity to take CSEC. In 2007 and 2008, the national pass rates were 75.56% and 77.16%, which compared favourably with previous years. Hence, it is clear that more students can be given the opportunity to take subjects for which they show aptitude at CSEC without lowering the national pass rate.

Teaching staff

The minimum qualifications required to teach are four CXC General Proficiency subjects or GCE O-level, one of which must be English.

The typical teacher education programme includes: education (psychology and classroom management); mathematics (content and teaching methods); English; science (content and teaching methods); reading; music/art (optional). Secondary school teachers must specialize in two subject areas, excepting education.

Pre-service and in-service teacher education and the recruitment of teachers are to be reviewed, and the system will move to institutionalize pre-service teacher training. A Teacher Education Advisory Committee will be established and commissioned to advise the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College on teacher education and training needs and to make recommendations for teacher professional development courses or programmes.

A policy framework for recruitment and selection into the teaching service will form part of a wider comprehensive rationalized Teacher Education System. The competencies of the persons entering the teaching service and those entering the programmes of initial teacher preparation influence the quality of the outcomes of both these areas of activity. Similarly, the competencies of the persons who deliver teacher education programmes affect the quality of the outcomes of these programmes. Individuals recruited for pre-service teacher training should possess a minimum of five (5) CSEC subject passes including mathematics and English, or the equivalent. Prospective candidates should attend no less than three weeks orientation before they begin working with students.

In keeping with standards, and pursuing the goal of recruiting individuals who have demonstrated high levels of academic and professional competence, teacher recruitment should be done from a pool of candidates who have already successfully completed an initial teacher training programme from an accredited institution. By September 2012, it is expected that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching service will be a certificate, diploma, associate degree in teacher education. By 2014, all practicing teachers should have at least a certificate in teacher education.

The World Bank reports that before the implementation of the Teacher Appraisal System (TAS), the assessment of teachers had been conducted through a generic civil service assessment in St. Kitts. The TAS was developed to: ensure that an appropriate and effective system is available for the evaluation of teacher, and provide a continuous assessment of teachers. It was designed to provide constructive feedback for teachers' professional development. The teacher appraisal was



introduced in the federation in 2005 and is being used in the government primary and secondary schools. Over 90% of the teachers were appraised in 2008. Overall, the appraisal is appreciated by both teachers and school principals as being teacher friendly. In addition, the use of a common appraisal tool eases movement of teachers across the federation. (World Bank, 2009).

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For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>