

1.0 Background

1.1 Socio Economic Performance

The Caribbean Sub region extends from the islands of The Bahamas and Cuba in the North and runs east and then South to Trinidad and Tobago along the chain of islands which enclose the Caribbean Sea. It also includes The Netherlands Antilles in the south of the Caribbean Sea the mainland territories coast of Belize, Guyana and Suriname are also included in the Caribbean sub region because of their historical and cultural attachments of the islands of the Caribbean. On the attainment of political independence, the English speaking countries have maintained a Westminster style of parliamentary government.

With relatively small populations ranging from under five thousand (5000) to 2.6 m, these countries are referred to as Small States. Data from the last three censuses show that the rate of population has been slowing down. Infant mortality rates have declined and the crude death rates have been generally low, resulting in increased youth and elderly dependency ratios which have placed an increased burden on the working population

Although classified as middle income countries, many states have substantial numbers of poor people in their population. Country Poverty Assessments conducted in 13 countries over the past 10 years indicate that the proportion of population living below the poverty line ranges from 14.5 to almost 40%. The proportion of persons living in extreme poverty or indigence ranges from 1% to 26% of the population while six exhibit extreme poverty levels of more than 10%. Issues associated with low economic growth population changes, social economic and natural vulnerability and the impact of the HIV/AIDS poses enormous challenges for poverty education.

Despite economic growth rates during the last four decades which have enabled the Region to achieve middle income status, the structure of regional production systems and the nature of its product marketing arrangements together with natural hazard exposure have resulted in regional economies displaying high degrees of vulnerability and income volatility. More recently the global push toward trade liberalisation has substantially reduced earning from commodities markets under preferential levels. While regional economies have continued to grow, the rate of economic expansion has been generally slower over the past decade

The CDB 2004 annual review of the countries economic performance recorded that in spite of natural disasters that caused substantial damage in the region and resulted in weakened economic performance it was still above that of 2003. This was so principally because they were able to take advantage of strengthening global demand. Regional performance was underpinned by improvements in tourism, oil in the case of Trinidad and Tobago and to a lesser extent broad based growth in construction and financial services, agriculture and manufacturing.

1.2 Structure and Management of the Education System A Brief Description

The structure of the education systems across the Caribbean sub region is more or less the same. Compulsory education is between the ages 5/6 to 14/17 years. This covers primary to basic/secondary education. In most countries government and private schools co exist at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.

Pre primary education which is available to children between 3/4 and 4/5 years provide a sound foundation for formal education at the primary level by developing the abilities attitudes and qualities which are prerequisites for learning among children of this age group. As a readiness programme it is geared towards the physical, mental, social and emotional development of the child

This level of education is implemented mostly by private entities and NGOs while governments have taken on the responsibility of developmental activities, registration and regulation of centres, training of proprietors and the provision of a standard curriculum.

Within recent years governments having recognized the crucial importance of Early Childhood Education experiences are consistently increasing access and coverage to this programme by building and equipping new schools and providing places in primary schools.

Primary Education caters for children between 5/6 and 12/13 years, where the focus is on the development of numeracy and literacy skills. Most countries have achieved universal primary education as shown in Table 1. At the end of this cycle, students proceed either automatically, or by a terminal examination (Secondary School Entrance Education/National Assessment Examination) to secondary schools, or they spend another three years in the Tops of Primary Education when at the end of three years, they may enter Secondary schools based on the performance of a Third Form examination

Secondary education is provided from the age of 11/13 for a period of five years at the end of which students write a regional examination (The Caribbean Secondary School Examination) and/or as in the case of The Bahamas and Barbados and Belize national examinations that will qualify them for entry into the world of work and /or tertiary education.

For those students wishing to proceed to higher education a two- year programme is provided in selected schools that run a seven- year programme at the end of which they sit either the London General certificate Examination Advanced level or the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Education (CAPE).

Post secondary education and tertiary education provided in several colleges and universities are usually fee paying institutions. They serve a relatively small proportion of students. Participation rates available for countries in 2001 ranged from Male 0.7; Female 2.7 to Male 20.4; Female 52.0

1.2.1 Organisation and Management of the Education System

Education is managed within the country's legal Framework underpinned by the Education Act where the Ministry of Education has the responsibility for the performance of the education system. On the whole administration is centralized in terms of policy formation curriculum development evaluation of school performance and financing. Increasingly there is some form of devolution of authority at the operational level (district and school level) where education officers have the responsibility of education performance at the district level.

2.0 General Performance of the Education System & Strategies Aimed at Preventing School Failure

2.1 Access and Coverage

Caribbean Governments on the achievement of political independence having recognized the crucial importance of education as a potent instrument for national development have through a convergence of a variety of strategies sought to improve access to educational opportunities provided. The result was an exponential growth in primary education and to a lesser extent secondary and tertiary, where at the primary level there is more or less universal primary education as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Net Enrolment Ratios at Pre primary, Primary and Secondary Levels - 2001

Countries	Net Enrolment Ratios					
	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bahamas	30.3	29.8	85.2	87.6	58.3	62.6
Barbados	88.3	90.0	99.6	100.0	68.1	66.5
Belize	28.0	27.2	96.1	96.4	68.9	74.5
Jamaica	84.7	89.0	100.9	100.1	NA	NA
St Kitts & Nevis	na	na	na	Na	46.9	56.9
St Lucia	63.9	66.9	110.6	112.0	52.4	74.8
Suriname	97.3	95.4	Na	Na	74.1	78.4
Trinidad & Tobago	62.5	63.4	105.6	104.5	68.0	75.6

Source www.efareport.Unesco.com

Jamaica reported that:

- Nearly universal primary enrolment has been achieved;
- More than 80% of children were enrolled in lower secondary grades (7- 9);
- Approximately 83% of teachers were college trained;
- Government took over the operating costs of the traditionally elite schools to facilitate entry of children from the working class;

Whereas there was quantitative improvement in accessing education opportunities, an examination of the data in Table 2, suggests that qualitatively many countries did not reach their desired goal of the delivery of quality education.

An perusal of the Gross Enrolment ratios at the primary and secondary levels indicates the number of overage children still at these levels.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratios: Primary and Secondary Levels 2001

Countries	Primary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Bahamas	-	-	90.2	92.8
Barbados	108.3	108.2	103.4	100
Belize	119.4	115.8	68.0	73.5
Jamaica	100.9	100.1	82.2	85.0
St Kitts & Nevis	-	-	-	-
St Lucia	110.6	112.0	74.7	97.1
Suriname	126.7	124.8	61.8	86.0
Trinidad & Tobago	105.6	104.5	76.5	83.9

Source www.efareport.Unesco.com

Repetition rates at the primary level were relatively high particularly at the Grade 1 level, the child's entry to formal education. The relatively high wastage rates portrayed by both the repetition and dropout rates reflected the state of efficiency of the education system and its effectiveness in bringing about the changes envisaged.

Table 3:Wastage in the Education System at the Primary Level 2000

Countries	Repetition Rate				Drop Out Rate	
	All Grades		Grade 1		All Grades	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Belize	11.5	8.1	15.6	12.4	21.4	19.5
Jamaica	6.7	4.6	5.8	3.3	16.1	9.3
St Kitts & Nevis	1.5	2.1	1.2	2.6	24.3	29.8
St Lucia	3.0	2.0			1.8	Na
Suriname	Na	Na	Na	na	Na	Na
Trinidad & Tobago	7.4	5.2	12.1	9.1	Na	Na

Source www.efareport.Unesco.com

2.2 General Strategies for Enhancing Education Performance

As a result of rapid changes at the national, regional and global levels, and the application of new technologies particularly in the area of communication and information, economies have become closely interwoven in supply and demand of both products and services causing an increasing demand for highly skilled workers who can adapt to and function in high performance job.

Implicit in this demand is the capability of nationals to develop cognitive, analytical and interpersonal skills required to work in a modern organization and be flexible as the economy progresses from one level of development to another.

Of note here is the focus of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government July 1997 –Building a Creative and Productive Workforce – where it was reiterated that a higher level of economic well being in the Caribbean region will only be achieved with a workforce that is efficient and adequately skilled. Consequently the focus was on universal secondary education, curriculum development and review, and technology and communication.

It is within this context that governments with assistance from multilateral, bilateral and grant aid agencies have embarked on many initiatives through government and non government agencies, to enhance the delivery of education. Through a series of consultations and collaborative efforts, education strategic development plans aimed at improving school performance were developed,

For example Belize reported:

To fine tune the government's plans for education reform a comprehensive national consultation was conducted that cumulated to an education summit in May 2004. The recommendations derived from the consultation have now been evolved into a strategic five year plan.

On the other hand, St Kitts and Nevis stated that education officials and principals came together in a retreat to brainstorm strategies to address the problem of aspects of school failure where many at- risk children were leaving secondary schools poorly equipped for the world of work.

2.2 General Strategies

Presented in this section is a list of general strategies generated by the eight countries. These are categorized as follows:

- Increasing expenditure on Education;
- Managing for efficiency and effectiveness;
- Monitoring student performance;
- Curriculum reform and renewal;
- Improving the physical learning environment;
- Providing support services;
- Enhancing the teaching-learning environment;
- Heightening training and development;
- Strengthening relationships with parents and the Community at Large.

2.2.1 Increasing Expenditure on Education

Table 4 presents available data on countries' expenditure on education for the years 1998 and 2001. The data indicate that increasing amount has been spent on education but only St Lucia and Belize reached the target of 20 % as proposed by the 1995 World Summit on Social Development.

Table 4: Expenditure on Education: 1998, 2001

Countries	Education Expenditure as a % of National Expenditure			Education Expenditure as a % of GDP			Education Expenditure as a % of GNP		
	1998	2001	2003	1998	2001	2003	1998	2001	2003
Bahamas	-	-	-						
Barbados	15.4	16.7	-	-	-	-	5.3	6.7	
Belize	17.1	20.9	*14.1	*5.6 (99)	*5.8	*5.6	6.2	6.8	
Jamaica		12.3	-	-	-	-	6.6	6.8	
St Kitts & Nevis	13.8	19.0		3.59	3.89	3.52	6.0	8.5	
St Lucia	20.7	20.7					8.3	7.7	-
Suriname	-	-	-						
Trinidad and Tobago		13.4					3.4	4.3	

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 1994; * Central Bank of Belize; Estimates of Revenue and expenditure, Belize 199/00 to 2003/4

It should however be noted that the majority of current expenditure is on salaries, leaving limited funds for developmental and capital works.

For example Jamaica stated:

Over 90% of total expenditure represents recurrent expenditures, primarily salaries and wages and thus very limited capital funds are available to address the deteriorating infrastructural needs much less the demands for expanded services ...as central to children as wellbeing.

2.2.2 Managing for Efficiency and Effectiveness

Concomitant with the rapid transformation of the role of education as a critical factor in the national effort to promote productivity and economic growth, countries have undergone some form of democratization of education where the Central Ministry is responsible for formulation of policies, evaluation of educational results identification of innovations. On the other hand education officers have been responsible for implementing the policies and overlooking performance for those schools that are within his/her districts/zones. By localizing the management of education districts it is expected that there will be greater efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

For example, St Lucia reorganized its Ministry of Education Human Resource Development Youth and Sport from a top down authoritative fashion to a service centre which encourages consultation negotiation and problem solving. District Education offices are operating as coordinating and monitoring centres of the Ministry. In this way deficiencies and failures are spotted early, and appropriate remedial action taken.

A similar management style is recommended for Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago where it reported that in place will be a new management model that is more strategically decentralized with major operational functions devolved into Regional Educational Authorities with the ministry retaining primarily policy and planning functions. Box 1 gives the Trinidad and Tobago experience.

Box 1: Trinidad and Tobago Experience

Much attention continues to be paid to the role of the education sector as a change agent. To achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in its operations. Plans are now being developed and implemented to restructure the administrative arm and technical units of the Ministry.

With restructuring and decentralization high on the agenda, the Ministry proposes to proceed with a number of strategies aimed at achieving better organizational performance, better management of schools and a higher level of effectiveness throughout the system (National Consultation on Restructuring and Decentralization of the Ministry of Education Trinidad & Tobago June 2003

Trinidad and Tobago has also introduced modern management structures at the school level following a school based management model which is aimed at tightening accountability. Besides the systematic inspection and evaluation of schools, there is an assessment criteria for principals to be accountable for effective school performance.

In tandem with the decentralization system is the development/establishment of management information system both at the central district and school level. The availability of ready and accurate data on performance on tests, attendance, equipment, and teaching processes can inform on main factors which influence academic performance and facilitate remedial action.

This strategy is in various stages of development/ implementation in the respective countries and can be reflected in the state of the current education statistics availability.

2.2.3 Monitoring Student Performance

In the past, evaluating student performance tended to be writing termly and terminal examinations, ie leaning more toward summative evaluation. Instituted within recent years is continuous student assessment, the results of which should be a diagnostic tool for remedial action. Consequently students' strength and weaknesses are diagnosed and the relevant remedial action taken.

In St Kitts & Nevis, an annual central administered test - Test of Standards - in the core subject areas Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies is administered to Grades 3 -6 children. It is not a standardized test but a mechanism to identify strengths and weaknesses of the education system in order to take necessary remedial action. The country's experience is reported in Box 2

Box 2: St Kitts and Nevis Experience

St Kitts and Nevis reports that from an analysis of the annual Tests of Standards, a report of the findings is made available to schools, and follow up action taken with regards to weaknesses noted. These activities include workshops and staff development sessions at school zone and national levels.

Consequently there has been heightened awareness of the critical link between assessment, teacher preparation and student learning carried. Out of the outcome of the annual assessments was recognition of the need for systematic review and development of curriculum.

The Bahamas as a way of addressing perceived short comings in student performance, introduced a National Standardised Assessment (GLAT) at Grades 3, 6 and 8. The results of these assessments are used to pinpoint nationally, individually, by school and by island how the students were performing.

The introduction of the basic Skills Assessment Battery is administered to measure pupils' readiness to begin the curriculum in the first grade of the primary schools of Barbados & Jamaica.

In Jamaica, routine child assessments reflect the state of school performance. The results of the Grade 1 Readiness Inventory 2003 administered to all children within the first term of Grade 1 assessing mastery of basic school readiness skills and capacities indicate that economically disadvantaged children did not have the basic competencies which the Jamaican primary system required.

A similar pattern of performance was observed at the Grade 3 and Grade 4 Literacy tests; the latter being used to provide summer remediation classes, retest and retention for those students who do not demonstrate mastery of basic literacy.

2.2.4 Curriculum Reform Revision and Renewal

The recognition of the need for systematic review and development of the curricula has been stated by all eight countries which are in various stages of implementation. In tandem with this strategy is the strengthening of the Curriculum Division and the establishment of Resource Centres.

Along with curriculum reform and renewal are:

- The creation and utilization of indigenous materials in teaching learning aids and training in the use of same (Barbados);
- Integration of technology in teaching learning process(Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Belize.);
- Utilisation of the thematic approach to teaching (Barbados and St Kitts and Nevis) child centred approach to teaching (All eight countries);
- The establishment of national bodies to guide policy, monitor and establish standards for curriculum development and renewal systems;
- Intensification of literacy and numeracy programmes.

2.2.4.1 Transition from pre-school to Primary

To address the problem of the relatively high repetition rate at the port of entry to primary education, some countries have:

- introduced a transition programme through which Kintergarten teachers from primary schools participate in the orientation workshop to help them to create child centred and attractive classrooms for the children in the first grade ; and
- ensured that qualified and trained teachers are allocated to the lower grades of the primary division.



2.2.4.2 Gender Equity

In terms of gender equity both boys and girls have equal access, to education opportunities, but there is growing disparity in the participation rates between boys and girls as shown in Tables 1- 4. In response to this situation The CARICOM Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional Coordinating Unit of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies UWI developed a module for Teacher Education which is a first step in making teachers aware of ways in which gender bias and stereotypes are reproduced through a variety of processes in the school. The module has been published and circulated to Governments and training institutions in the sub region but no mention has been made by respective countries of its impact.

2.2.5 Improving the Physical Learning Environment

Countries continue to improve the physical learning environment through the building of new schools and rehabilitation of schools to address congestion, oversized classes; and providing recreational and sporting facilities and upgrading utilities (All countries).

Gradually the open plan primary schools are giving way to classroom settings.

At the secondary level, concerted efforts are being made to improve school infrastructure upgrade libraries and science laboratories (All countries).

2.2.6 Provision of Support Services

Mentioned earlier is the fate of socially and physically challenged children. Strategies highlighted by countries to correct the balance include:

- Screening of all children on entry to primary schools for hearing sight and speech disorders and nutrition levels which affect learning;
- Providing learning support and remedial services to address specific needs For the mentally, socially and physically challenged children;
- Providing free text books;
- Introducing textbook rental schemes; and
- Expanding school feeding programmes.

2.2.7 Enhancing Linkages with Parents and the Community at Large

Countries have intensified their efforts at improving the school/ home/learning environment in order to encourage parents to participate more in their children's learning. Strategies include:

- Establishing school boards;
- Establishing and maintaining vibrant Parents/ Teachers Association (All eight countries);
- Creating a national mentoring programme (St Kitts and Nevis);
- Attaching secondary students to business enterprises etc. to effect a smooth transition to the world of work; and
- Encouraging business enterprises to adopt a school.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

Although an analysis of successes and failures of the various strategies developed were not presented in countries' reports, anecdotal evidence and performance at external examinations indicate that there is still a gap between expected outcomes and actual outcomes in terms of the status of school performance vis a vis the delivery of quality education.

Successful completion of secondary education is of major importance for employment in a modern economy for the development of a solid basis for a comprehensive and diversified tertiary education and for the competitive position of the world market. Countries in their reports indicate that in spite of the various education reforms implemented to prevent school failure, students performance at external examinations were not up to the desired standards and the drop out rate continues to be relatively high (Bahamas, Jamaica, Suriname, St Kitts & Nevis).

For example Bahamas in reporting on 12th graders performance at the 2004 BGCSE examination results examination reported that:

Out of a total of 22 095 subject entries 60% received D grades or less. Schools were being accused of graduating functionally illiterates ... [who] were unable to find meaningful gainful employment thus they became deviant and posed a social risk to society. ... what was also revealing was that between Grades 3 6 8 & 12, there was a sharp decline in the number of students enrolled in these grades and fewer were entering for the terminal examinations

A similar picture was painted by Belize as reflected in Table 5 where the completion ratios at the primary and secondary levels were low with more females than male completing each programme.

Table 5: Primary and Secondary Completion Rates Belize 2003-2004

Level	Completion Ratios %		
	Male/Female	Male	Female
Primary	40.4	34.1	43.4
Secondary	51.3	48.4	56.2

Source: Belize Country Report June 2005

To reverse the pattern of school failure depicted earlier, the Caribbean Sub Region is now carefully examining the Early Childhood stage of development since research evidence has shown that the earliest years are critical not only to the individual children's developmental chances (early brain research the most compelling) but to society as a whole (to which the cost

benefit research on quality early years intervention has repeatedly attested. Research also demonstrates that children's successor failure at the early childhood centre can often predict the course of later educational success as well as the individual's later adjustment to society. ECCE is therefore seen as major driving mechanism for continuous and sustainable human development (United Nations Millennium Development Goals 2000; Education For All 2000; Dakar 2000).

Investing in early Childhood is now being recognized by the Caribbean Sub region as a most social and economic investment in the country's future productivity.

3.0 Strategies Identified for Preventing School Failure Early Childhood Education

Early childhood is defined as the period of a child's life from birth to eight years, a period that is consistent with developmental psychologists where the child is at the operational/concrete phase of development that requires them to explore the world around them manipulatively using a concrete modality at acquiring pre conceptual skills in a safe and stimulating environment. This periods allows the child to move smoothly from pre-primary level to primary level - Grades 1 through 4.

As stated in the previous chapter studies have shown that that from birth until three years of age, human brain cells require stimuli in order to function properly. When this does not occur these cells are lost thus limiting the maximization of the potential of the individual. Empirical evidence has also proven that early childhood education and care can provide the important benefits to children that receive it. These findings have contributed to the greater awareness of the importance of the early years on human development and the importance of education during these years as a preventive and compensatory factor to overcome learning difficulties and educational and social inequalities.

Within the Caribbean sub region early childhood programmes comprise in the main two components.

- Component 1 is composed of day care centres which serve infants and children from 6 months to three years. Such centres are usually under the administration of ministries other than that of Education
- Component 2 includes pre school 3- 4/5 years and Grades 1 through 4 at the primary level.

A perusal of the historical perspectives of Early Childhood Education programmes indicate that they are mostly run as private entities with governments being responsible for running a small proportion of schools. The outcome was that a poor quality of service was offered in some institutions and those from the lower socio economic suffered, widening the imbalance between the 'Haves' and the 'Haves Not'.

Persistent advocacy and social mobilization, in particular by UNICEF and the EFA Framework for Action, propelled Caribbean governments to become more involved in ECED. Recognising too, the crucial importance of ECED to the success of any initiative in human resource development the Caribbean Plan of Action for ECED was adopted by the Heads of Government in July 1997 as part of the Regional Human Resource Development Strategy.

Hence, within recent years governments have become increasingly visible in their involvement in ECED. Besides being directly responsible for the developmental aspects of early childhood education they are now intimately involved in more and more direct control of pre-school centres and organizing stimulating experiences for those who do not have easy access to such facilities.

One very important benchmark acclaimed is the regulation of all centres though the criteria mode and the integrated approach to curriculum development and training in the use of same so enable all children to be exposed to quality early childhood education experiences.

Bearing in mind also that ECCE centres are predominantly private entities where most of the proprietors might have had limited or no access to pedagogical training, countries are implementing a variety of training programmes to help proprietors and teachers not only to acquire the necessary skills and also to create attractive classroom environments, but also to give them opportunities for advanced training.

Strategies developed by the eight countries to enhance student performance fall under the following broad policy areas;

- Improving Access and Coverage.
- Management for Efficiency & Effectiveness
- Policy: Improving the Learning Environment Training and Development
- Curriculum Development/ Instructional Programme /Transition to the Primary Level
- Establishing Linkages with Parents and the Community at Large

At the time of writing up this report, an analysis of successes and failures were not included in the country reports, while for some countries strategies are about to be implemented.

Hence presented in Tables 6.0 – to 6.4 are the strategies developed and the expected outcomes.

Table 6.0: Policy Area - Improving Access to Early Childhood Education

Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Bahamas	Establishing pre-school centres at all Government maintained primary schools; Encouraging civic groupings to establish day-care and pre-school centres Providing subventions to particular independent institutions to facilitate the attendance of underprivileged children	Access to pre school education increased Attendance of underprivileged children increased
Barbados	Providing 455 places in 22 existing government primary schools and a converted building Establishing 3 new nursery schools to accommodate 550 places Assisting private nursery schools in the expansion of their	Universal pre primary education achieved over a three year period 2005-2008. The programme is yet to be implemented

	operations	
Belize	Attaching preschool centres to primary schools Conducting two sessions in centres daily with different groups of children Expanding the present Beginner Summer Preschool Experience programme	Access of underprivileged children increased Access to pre school education increased All children entering primary school are exposed to some stimulation & preparation
Jamaica	Conducting early screening and detection of developmental and behavioural disorders especially in 0-3 years –children. Establishing referral systems on identification of at-risk children for more effective response and treatment.	Risk factors that impact negatively on children's development detected early. More children are better prepared to participate in opportunities offered.

Table 6.0: Contd. Policy Area - Improving Access to Early Childhood Education

Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
St Kitts & Nevis	Reaching Children Where They Are (RCWTA) by providing parents and care givers with the necessary skills to stimulate those children who do not have access early childhood facilities	Early stimulation are provided to children in their home environment
St Lucia	Identifying communities which are underserved and those that have significant populations of children at risk ; Designing programmes for children at risk and providing subventions for the implementation of such programmes.	Access to preschool education increased Coverage enhanced
Suriname	Integrate preprimary education into primary education Abolish dispensation regulation: the moment that children become 4 years they are admitted	Access to preschool education increased
Trinidad & Tobago	Upgrading and expanding educational facilities through the construction of new ECCE centres Providing student support services by expanding the breakfast and lunch programmes Developing a national comprehensive early intervention programme for ECCE and Establishing a National Health and Family Life Education Committee	The number of ECCE places available increased Socio-economic accessibility increased Parents sensitized to best practices in Health and Family Life

Table 6.1: Policy Area -Management for Efficiency and Effectiveness

Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Bahamas	Devising processes and structures to establish minimum standards and monitor same	The operations standards and regulations governed by legislation monitored by the Early Childhood Unit Early Childhood Centres licensed according to an approved grading system
Barbados	Managing of the ECCE by the MOE	
Belize	Re-Organizing the Preschool Unit as a Specialist Unit of the Ministry of Education Providing adequate financial and other resources for the efficient and effective operations of the unit Expand primary school management to include the attached preschool centre	Delivery of services for Early Childhood Education efficiently managed Reorganisation and effective execution of the unit's responsibilities realized
Jamaica	Establishing The Early Childhood Commission with responsibility for a comprehensive and integrated delivery of early childhood programme and services. Establishing regulations standards for early childhood institutions through the passing of the Early Childhood Act	Complementarities between line ministries and agencies established; Use of limited resources maximized; Regulatory powers of the Commission prescribed, and standards to which Early Childhood Institutions will be required to conform set.
St Kitts & Nevis	Issuing licence to centres only when there is satisfaction with level of service offered	Minimum standards for Early Childhood Centres established
St Lucia	Integrating the administration of the early childhood sector through a merger between the ECE services Unit of the MOE and the Day care Services of the Min of Social Transformation Culture and Local Government Including ECD as part of the Educational District responsibility Making Establishing the Council for ECE as provided by the Education Act Approving promulgating and disseminating Minimum standards for the provision of ECE Services and establishing monitoring mechanisms	A more integrated approach to early childhood programme established Minimum standards for Early Childhood Centres established
Suriname	Making the Ministry of Education responsible for the overall management of Preschool education	
Trinidad & Tobago	Strengthening the MOE administrative system	Standards for regulating early childhood services established are adhered to and monitored

Table 6.2: PolicyArea - Improving the Learning Environment Training and Development

Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Bahamas	Instituting an approved training programmes for all proprietors and operators for early childhood facilities Courses are offered by the College of the Bahamas, the Teacher Education Division and the Bahamas Baptist Community College.	Operators' academic efficiency and their understanding of child growth and development enhanced; Minimum standards of care ensured.
Barbados	Conducting pedagogical training in ECECD for all new teachers involved in the expansion of the programme	Teachers in the programme demonstrate the ability to deliver quality early childhood education
Belize	Providing training opportunities and specialized qualifications for the Unit's staff members Developing and implementing an ECE training programme for operators/practitioners Establishing links with the teacher training institution for professional training of ECE teachers Providing adequate financial and other resources to enable re organization of the Unit	All persons trained in ECECD will be exposed to the same curriculum and move on a continuum from birth through eight years old. More professionally trained ECE teachers in place A cadre of young person with basic training in ECED
Jamaica	Developing training materials for upgrading workers capability; Developing a reformed and integrated curriculum for improving the quality of learning and caring environments ;	Level 1 training curriculum drafted A smoother transition across all levels of ECCE achieved
St Kitts & Nevis	Providing training opportunities for ECCE teachers overseas and nationally through workshops and seminars; Expanding the Toy Lending Library to meet the needs of the increase in the RCWTA programme	Delivery of the RCTWA programme enhanced; More qualified practicing teachers.
St Lucia	Strengthening the national EC Association Designate EC as eligible for tertiary scholarships Introducing an option in SALCC teacher training programme Making training tax deductible for EC businesses/individuals Recognising outstanding practitioners at the national level	More qualified practitioners in place The number of professional trained ECECD teachers increased
Suriname	Organizing in-service training and upgrading for preprimary school teachers	
Trinidad & Tobago	Intensifying the training of teachers from the ECCE Sector and the primary level through the UWI SERVOL Montessori and the Hindu Academy, MOE workshops Expanding access to tertiary education with specialization in ECCE; Monitor and support in-service teachers and graduates Improving the quality of early literacy programmes at the ECCE and primary level and improving articulation of practice among teachers in the system; Providing equipment for new ECCE and upgraded centres , and resource materials for teachers and children	Pre- service training and certification available at the three provisions of In-service Training programmes for all In service EC service providers; Quality of service ensured; Learning environment, and child-initiated activities improved.

Table 6.3: Policy Area - Curriculum Development/ Instructional Programme /Transition to the Primary Level

Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Bahamas	Implementing an early childhood education curriculum that would guide the activities of all child care centres	All preschool children exposed to a standardized curriculum
Belize	Creating a model teacher/training ECE centre	More qualified teachers in Place
Jamaica	Introducing the new 3-5 curriculum first in schools where some basic requirements are in place and thus more readiness to embrace the new direction.	A more integrated approach to learning achieved.
St Kitts & Nevis	Implementing a thematic approach curriculum where the High/Scope key experiences form a major component of the curriculum and training of preschool teachers in the use of same. Initiating a transition programme through which Kindergarten teachers from primary schools participate in orientation workshops	All preschool children exposed to the same curriculum; Smoother transition between levels achieved.
St Lucia	Curriculum review and revision Improve the learning environment	Learning environment improved
Suriname	Assessing and adjusting existing curricula and integration of curriculum preprimary education and basic Education and training teachers in the use of the curriculum	An integrated curriculum developed Smoother transition between levels achieved.
Trinidad & Tobago	Revising and updating the curriculum guide for use at ECCE Centres; Improving articulation of practice among teachers within the system; Developing monitoring mechanisms; Establishing an Inspectorate team	A national ECCE curriculum guide is in use at ECCE Centres An integrated approach to curriculum in sinc with developmentally appropriate/best practices achieved; Quality of service/standard assured

Table 6.4: Policy Area - Establishing Linkages with Parents and the Community at Large

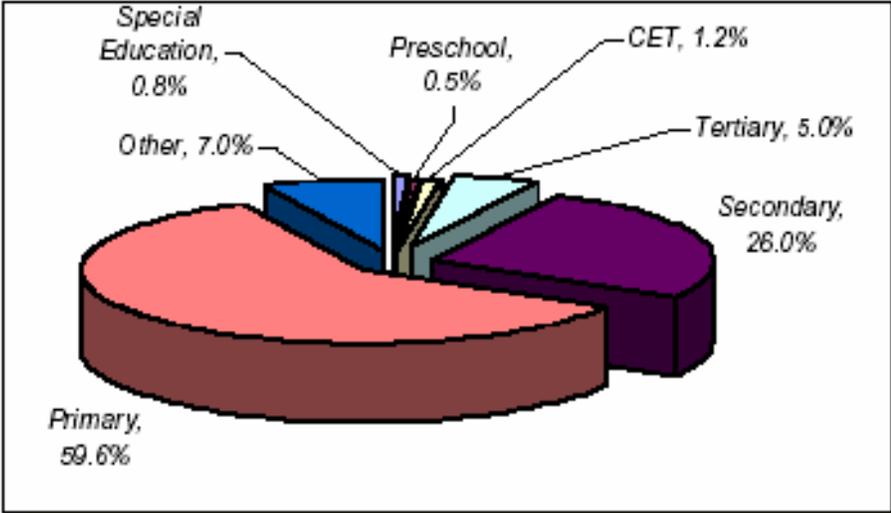
Countries	Strategies	Expected Outcomes
Bahamas	Establishing a support system to include health education and social welfare specialists to provide guidance for early childhood Care Centres	Mechanism in place for giving guidance to early childhood care centres
Barbados	Securing the assistance of parents/guardians of a pupil of the school on a voluntary basis to facilitate an appropriate nursery programme in the public schools nursery schools and special education programmes/schools	The parent Volunteer Support programme established Principals teacher and parents work in partnership to help chosen develop early potential
Belize	Conducting public awareness programmes on the importance of ECE education Involving community members in the operation and delivery of EECE programmes Encouraging private business to financially support the ECCE programme facilities	Public awareness in the importance of early childhood education increased More parent and community involvement in early childhood education achieved
Jamaica	Conducting out reach programme The 'Roving Caregivers' aimed at reaching parents beyond the reach of centres and training them in stimulation techniques and promote discussions of appropriate; Conducting public education activities about the mandate and functions of the Early Childhood Commission and the importance of investing more private and public funds Conducting stakeholders workshops at all levels of the sector to provide opportunities for dialogue about hurdles and how they can be overcome Organising and participating in training activities with education officers principals on specific requirements such as reporting child abuse using universal precautions implications of the new curriculum etc.	Coverage improved; Increase in the number of children entering primary education with some stimulating experience Parent involvement in their children's education activities increased; A collaborative approach to early child hood education achieved.
St Kitts & Nevis	Conducting a home visitation programme to train parents and care givers in stimulation and manipulative skills	Children who are not at school are exposed to some form of stimulation skills before entering primary schools Parents become more involved in their children's learning activities.
St Lucia	Encouraging the formation and active involvement of PTA' in ECCE programmes; Conducting on-going parent education activities; Mass education activities eg Billboards Mass Media; Establishing partnerships with key stake holders. Establishing modalities for inter ministerial collaboration Strengthening the National Early Childhood Association;	Parents and the community become more involved in the delivery of early childhood education programmes Partnerships with key stakeholders established
Trinidad & Tobago	Increasing parent and community participation on school/community boards In collaboration with stakeholders providing student support services	Parents and the community become more involved in the delivery of early childhood education programmes Partnerships with key stakeholders established; A national comprehensive early intervention programme developed

4.0 Challenges and The Way Forward

The major challenge facing Caribbean Governments in its determination to improve access to quantitatively and qualitatively early childhood education and so improve equity in opportunity is their capability of attracting the necessary funding for the execution of the strategies identified. This is also in the light of the sub region’s vulnerability to national disasters and international fiscal policies. It is therefore pertinent that linkages continue to be strengthened among all agencies involved in Early Childhood Education and a more aggressive approach taken towards attracting funding from external and other sources.

The Belizean situation depicted in Figure 1 is an indication of the quantum of good funding need in the light of the present allocation of funds. At the moment just 0.5% is allocated to Pre school Education

Figure 1.0: Allocation of Funds by Sub Sector



Source: Belize Country Report June 2005

The integrated approach to early childhood education necessitates collaboration among ministries involved in the various components of the early childhood components. Already this process has begun but detailed planning has to be developed to eliminate ‘turfism’ and facilitate transition. For example Jamaica has reported that:

The Early Childhood Commission has been by the new legislation been given responsibility for regulating the sector of early childhood services. But the bulk of the personnel who will be required to train and assess staff ... do not at present report to the ECC. ... The questions of how best to rationalize the human resources required, under what jurisdiction and with what roles are crucial to the ultimate success of the legislated reforms.

Taking into consideration too, the whole concept of governments' increasing take over of early childhood education facilities, regulation and maintaining of the quality of centres will continue to be a challenge, thus affecting sustainability. There has to be a divesting of expenditure from merely on payment of salaries to increase expenditure on developmental activities as outlined in the sub regional report. The St Kitts & Nevis experience is a good example where between 1998 & 2000, there was a 86% increase in expenditure on ECCE, as against 6% growth of the total education Budget. The money was committed to such developmental activities as instructional materials to support its Active Learning Curriculum; improving the learning environment; upgrading teachers, and heightening parent involvement (Brown J, Early Childhood Investment in St Kitts and Nevis A Model for the Caribbean? www.uwichill.edubb/bnccda/Sk&v Conference Papers.

Mentioned earlier in 2.2.3 is the gradual introduction of education management information systems at the central district and school level. The establishment/strengthening of such units needs to be hastened in order to monitor education performance. In this way progress if any will be detected through performance indicators. Within this context is the importance of conducting a baseline study.

In concluding Trinidad and Tobago has succinctly pinpointed the areas around which challenges remain in the areas of quality and access to ECCE. These are:

- Quality-the improvement of ECCE programmes, implementation and monitoring of standards, staff training and the provision of adequate instructional and didactic materials;
- Expansion and equity: the examination of sustainable high quality services and provision of services in far flung areas e.g Belize, The Bahamas and Suriname;
- Institutional strengthening –the identification of legal administrative, organizational and planning needs of the Ministry of Education to support governments' long term strategy for the reform and modernisation of the education system.

Documents and Papers Studied

Country reports from:

- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Jamaica
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago

World Summit for Social Development Copenhagen 1995 <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd>

Brown J. Early childhood Investment in St Kitts and Nevis A Model for the Caribbean?

www.uwichilli.edubb/bnccda/Sk&n Conference Papers

Caribbean Development Bank Annual Review, 2004

Caribbean Development Bank Annual Economic Review 2004

Curriculum 2000 Barbados Rationale and Guidelines for Curriculum reforms in Barbados

Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture June 2000

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, the Carolina Abecedarian Study and the Chicago Child Parents Study www.nhsa.org/download/research/Schweinhart

EFA Monitoring Report 2005 www.efareport.unesco.com