Annex to ED-96/MINEDLAC VII:

Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean

SIXTH MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE MAJOR PROJECT IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Kingston, Jamaica, 13-17 May 1996

EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:
VALUING DIVERSITY AND INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONALIZED AND GROUP LEARNING

AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

UNESCO
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AN OVERVIEW OF THE CARIBBEAN

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The term Caribbean, for the purposes of the Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean, refers to that archipelago of islands containing principally English, Dutch and Papiamentu-speaking people, and extending through the Caribbean Sea from the Commonwealth of the Bahamas in the North, to Trinidad and Tobago in the South. It includes also the English and Dutch-speaking mainland countries of Belize in Central America and Guyana and Suriname in South America. The sub-region also encompasses the Dutch and Papiamentu-speaking countries of Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao and the Leeward islands of the Netherlands Antilles.

2. These countries share common historical experiences and their populations reflect the cultural mix and vibrancy of hybrid societies. But not all of the countries which share this feature and which are located in the Caribbean basin, can be included in this definition of the sub-region. Cuba and the Dominican Republic are grouped with Latin America, while Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States. Martinique and Guadaloupe are Departments of France.

3. With the exception of Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Anguilla, the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands, most of these territories gained independence over the twenty-five year period, beginning in 1960. The post-independence period saw the state marshaling resources to respond to the demand for the expansion of education as a means of effecting social development. Education systems were expanded to accommodate larger numbers of the populace. Increased educational infrastructure was provided principally from heavy external borrowing. This was predicated on the positive economic circumstances that existed in most territories, especially during the decade of the sixties. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, a combination of factors led to severe economic problems. The consequence was the adoption of structural adjustment policies, which from the point of view of most countries,
brought more harm than good. The social sector was the major casualty. The implementation of structural adjustment policies contributed to the undermining of several of the new initiatives that had been implemented for the development of education. These difficult circumstances led to the re-examination of the objectives of development and of the purposes and relevance of education to the development process, and of the roles that different partners must play in this process.

4. But despite the severe economic pressures caused by structural adjustment policies and the contraction of the resources available for the social sector, basic education continued to grow in the Caribbean and, prior to the start of the Major Project, there were important achievements in education. The Major Project, however, provided greater stimulus and significant gains were made with respect to access to Primary Education now approaching 100% in the sub-region. Problems in other areas, however, continued to exist. The most severe of these was the alarming increase in the number of school graduates who were functionally illiterate. The situation was most severe in those countries which had adopted the automatic system of promotion. There was also considerable deterioration in the physical school plant, as fewer resources were available for the supply and maintenance of buildings, equipment and class materials. Declining resources in education, accompanied by dramatically rising prices were just a part of the resource difficulties faced by Caribbean educational systems. These circumstances, together with declining conditions for learning and teaching, contributed to the exodus of many of the finest minds from the classroom.

5. The inauguration of the Major Project with its overall goal of eliminating illiteracy, improving the quality of education and the management of the system both at the Ministry of Education and the school level, provided a special focus and renewed the stimulus for change, in spite of the difficult economic circumstances. This thrust was further encouraged by the World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, adopted at the March 1990 World Conference on Education For All, held in Jomtien, Thailand. Caribbean governments played an important role in this conference and contributed significantly to the development of the Declaration and Framework.
II. THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN

6. At the 11th Meeting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Standing Committee of Ministers Responsible for Education (SCM E), held in Bridgetown, Barbados 25-26 April 1996, Ministers of Education, supported the view that there was need to redefine the term ‘development’ from a concept in which the economy was the central focus, to one which regarded as paramount the quality of human life and the sustainable development of people and of the environment in which they lived. The Ministers also took note of the need to set a new framework for the development of educational policy to ensure education for all and the more effective development of human resources.

7. The Standing Committee of Ministers recommended that efforts be made in the Caribbean to ensure that the best possible education and training be provided for children, out-of-school youths and adults at all levels of the system, in order to equip them with the capacity to survive in and contribute to the development of Caribbean societies, now at the dawn of a new millennium.

8. The Standing Committee agreed to urge governments to allocate greater resources to education and to utilize, in a more efficient manner, those resources that were already allocated to the sector. The Ministers also took note of the significance of culture in development, and urged that efforts be made at the regional as well as the national level, to promote the role of culture in the development process, and to sensitize the people of the Caribbean to the relationship between democracy, culture and development.

9. The consensus was that the preferred strategy for educational development in the Caribbean was through sub-regional and regional collaboration and cooperation. Recognition was given to the increasing efforts in collaboration, being made between individual countries of the sub-region.

10. Collaboration operates at different levels. There is the sharing of ideas, expertise and “best practices” within the region by professional groupings of teachers and administrators. Examples of these are the Caribbean Association of Principals of
Secondary Schools and the Caribbean Association of Chief Education Officers and the review fora organized by donor agencies, involving a cross-section of senior educational officials. The work of the Standing Committee of Ministers Responsible for Education is a good example of functional cooperation. Although these initiatives are commendable, there is still room for greater south-south collaboration and technical cooperation among countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially on matters related to educational innovation.

III. THE PROCESS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

11. In responding to the challenges of the 1990s, The CARICOM Secretariat developed in 1993 a Regional Education Policy: “The Future of Education in the Caribbean”, which was approved by the Standing Committee of Ministers of Education. Two years later, an Action Plan was developed to guide the implementation of the recommendations made by the CARICOM Advisory Task Force on Education. The Task Force, a group of outstanding educators from the region, defined the role which education should play in the sub-region as contributing to the establishment of social solidarity through the development of a sense of a common cultural identity and increased social understanding. The Task Force developed its work on the thesis that “Education is and will continue to be a critical factor in the national and regional efforts to sustain and enhance productivity and economic growth.” It also pointed to the broader role which education must play in the effort to establish social solidarity within the Region, through the development of a strong sense of common cultural identity. The Advisory Task Force identified the following issues and concerns as they relate to the different levels of the education system in the Caribbean.

IV. THE CARIBBEAN POLICY ENVIRONMENT - CONSTRAINTS TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

12. Despite the existence of the Regional Education Policy and the sub-regional Reform Strategy, and other efforts at regional cooperation, the development of an appropriate policy framework and an implementation strategy at the national level to support the effective delivery of quality education is one of the challenges facing the region. The slow
rate of policy implementation is a characteristic feature that needs much attention. Some of the factors which contribute to this situation are:

i. The need to have a larger number of Education personnel trained in project formulation and development, monitoring, evaluation and financing;

ii. the lack of communication and of networking within individual countries and among some countries of the region;

iii. the widening of economic and social despair resulting from increasing debt burdens;

iv. the need for greater empirical research for the guidance of policy makers both nationally and regionally;

v. weaknesses in the decision-making process (often decisions are made at the regional level without sufficient appreciation of the legal and financial implications of their implementation);

vi. the lack of public awareness and consequently support for decisions made.

13. The following recommendations have been made:

i. Increase the use of modern technology to facilitate communication within and among member states and develop interactive medium for constant discussion.

ii. There needs to be more sharing of experiences and resources in the region especially as these relate to achieving the objectives of the Major Project in the Field of Education.

iii. Joint approaches should be made to the donor/lender community for regional projects so as to avoid duplication and waste.

v. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

14. In the Caribbean, Early Childhood Care and Education is largely provided by the church, private interests and community groups. The main issues and concerns at this level, relate to the learning environment, access, the level of training of the teachers, the curriculum and transition from nursery to primary. The specific goals recommended for
this level are:

i. To make Early Childhood Care and Education available to all children between the ages of 3-5 by the year 2000.

ii. To improve the quality of Education offered at this level.

15. The most urgent actions identified as necessary to achieve the goals for Early Childhood Care and Education are to:

i. Develop regional programmes for the training of teachers of ECCE to university degree level, by the use of innovative methodologies and delivery systems such as distance education and vacation programming. The pilot degree summer programme initiated at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, was unfortunately discontinued after the first batch of teachers graduated, because of the lack of resources. This very effective programme should be re-activated;

ii. develop a core curriculum for pre-school children;

iii. improve the status of the pre-school teacher by offering better terms and conditions of service;

iv. mount awareness programmes designed to give parents, guardians and other caregivers an understanding of Early Childhood Care and Education and sensitivity towards the importance of paying attention to proper health, nutrition, emotional support and physical, mental and spiritual stimulation, for the effective learning of young children;

v. establish mechanisms for monitoring pre-schools to ensure that they meet and maintain satisfactory standards.

VI. PRIMARY EDUCATION

16. The main issues and concerns at the primary level center around the need to improve the quality of education. This has implications for identifying the appropriate approaches to curriculum development and delivery, teacher-training, assessment and examinations and adequacy of resources.
17. The majority of teachers at this level follow the traditional approaches to the teaching of subjects in a curriculum that is already overcrowded, and in some situations, not at all relevant. There is need for greater activity-oriented experiences, similar to the process-based approach to the teaching of primary science and technology, pilot-tested within the framework of a UNESCO project, by a number of Caribbean countries. In terms of assessment practices, a number of countries have either abolished the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) or are planning to do so in the near future, as a means of selecting students for secondary education. What is being developed in a number of countries are school-based assessment practices, administered at specific points of the pupil’s primary career. These ‘tests’ are not designed to determine terminal levels of achievement only, but are more useful as diagnostic instruments to help teachers determine what remedial programmes or what curriculum changes ought to be introduced to respond to the needs of the pupil.

18. Although the Caribbean, as a whole, has achieved nearly 100% in terms of access and coverage at the primary level, the problems to be tackled are:

(a) the number of drop-outs, especially at the grade six level;
(b) irregular attendance;
(c) shortage of supplies and inadequate furniture;
(d) lack of textbooks and other teaching aids;
(e) over-crowded classrooms.

Areas of serious concern are:

(f) the quality of the teachers;
(g) the relevance of the curriculum; and
(h) the low levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy. A phenomenon which requires urgent attention is the declining performance of boys when compared with girls. Boys record a higher drop-out and a poorer attendance rate, especially at grade 6.
19. The urgent actions required to meet the goals of Primary Education, as suggested by the Advisory Task Force on Education are to:

i. Develop new continuous assessment practices, supported by a system of improved record-keeping and student profiles.

ii. Develop achievement norms according to grade level and subjects.

III. Upgrade the academic and professional performance and include information processing skills in programmes designed for the pre-service and in-service training of primary teachers.

iv. Improve the training of primary school principals so that they acquire increased competence in instructional supervision and curriculum management.

VII. SECONDARY EDUCATION

20. Coverage at the secondary level in most countries is 50% or less, unlike that of the primary level, which is close to 100%. Added to this is the problem that of the 50% gaining entry, with the exception of Barbados, only about 2 to 5 per cent secure four or more subjects at the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) secondary school leaving examinations.

The issues and concerns at this level include:

(a) the lack of continuity in curricula from one grade level to the next and from one type of post-primary school to another;

(b) the absence of textbooks and other teaching/learning materials;

(c) access and equity;

(d) the relevance of the curriculum to the demands of higher education and to the world of work;

(e) shortages of trained and experienced teachers.

21. The secondary curriculum needs to accommodate technology studies, environmental education, career guidance, courses in entrepreneurship. The Advisory
Task Force recommended the introduction of media studies as necessary in assisting the uncritical absorption of material transmitted from other cultures by electronic and other means.

22. In addition to what was recommended by the Task Force, an important programme strongly recommended for inclusion is a course in “Life Skills” or “Citizenship”, which should cover Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Peace.

23. The areas identified for urgent action are:

i. The introduction of a curriculum to produce graduates who are scientifically, technologically and artistically literate.

ii. The implementation of a regional strategy for the training of secondary teachers.

iii. The introduction of alternative modes of delivering secondary education, including distance education, computer assisted instruction and open learning systems.

iv. The initiation of activities to enable national governments to undertake industry-led curriculum development in Technical and Vocational Education.

VII. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Coverage at the tertiary level is very low and the probability of entering university is stated to be between 2 to 3 per cent. This compares very unfavorably with enrolment ratios of other middle income developing countries, where the average is estimated to be about 16 percent. Major deficiencies exist in science and technology education. This problem has very serious implications for development, since it is largely the tertiary system that provides the skilled, supervisory and management personnel, the teachers, health workers and other professionals needed to stimulate and maintain social, political and economic development.

24. Other problems facing tertiary and higher education in the Caribbean are:

i. The lack of adequate financing, which has forced governments that once offered
‘free-education’ at all levels of the system, to introduce cost-sharing and cost-recovery schemes at the secondary and tertiary levels. The view has been expressed that the renewed interest of the international community in Basic Education for All, following the Jomtien World Conference, has caused governments to reorder their priorities in Education and have consequently shifted financial resources from higher to lower levels of Education;

ii. the inability to attract and retain suitably qualified staff and students, especially in Mathematics and Science and Technology and Foreign Language disciplines.

Caribbean Universities

25. There are several institutions across the Caribbean which offer university level certification. These include the University of the West Indies (UWI), with campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, the University of Technology (UTech), the former College of Arts Science and Technology situated in Jamaica, The Universities of Guyana and of Suriname, on the South American mainland and the University of the Netherlands Antilles in Curacao. Additionally, there are off-campus sites of the University of the West Indies in the Eastern Caribbean and elsewhere, the Cultural Training Centre of Jamaica which offers certification in the fields of Dance, Drama, Music and the Fine Arts, the network of State and Community Colleges, with their Associate Degree programmes.

26. Surveys done of anticipated private sector needs in the region for University-type graduates suggested demand levels of 4,800 to 7,200 per annum up to 1996. In 1991, the output of the institutions of the region was somewhat above a half of this.

27. Actions being taken include:

i. The increase of the present enrolment ratio from 5% to 10% of the sub-region’s populace by the year 2000 through the Ten Year Development Plan of the University of the West Indies.

ii. The re-introduction of fees to recover some of the cost of providing education at
this level and fund reform.

iii. The promotion of regional cooperation to ensure that the critical minimum size in teaching and research is realised through free movement of staff and students and cooperation among campuses and between institutions.

iv. The strengthening of outreach programmes through distance education and through a network of links with other institutions.

v. The enhancement of the capacity of the Institute of Social and Economic Research in the sphere of research, particularly through greater collaboration with donor agencies.

vi. The concentration on sub-regional collaboration and development in the sphere of Science and Technology. On-going collaborative efforts are executed through such agencies as the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Caribbean Food and Technology Institute (CFNI), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) and the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA).

vii. The establishment of an International Centre of Excellence to facilitate the application of science and technology to perceived environmental requirements at the University with funding from UNESCO is of note. The existence of Mona Informatix which is involved in using computer aided design in the drafting of plans for the production of aircraft parts and which is presently engaged in filling an order for Boeing Aircraft Corporation, is another accomplishment. These are only some of the more recent innovations in the sphere of Science and Technology as it relates to the world of work.

28, The actions recommended for implementation at the tertiary level are:

i. The establishment of databases on Labour Market Information Systems now being developed in Member States and the more direct articulation of the curriculum to the world of work.

ii. The utilization of innovative learning strategies for the delivery of tertiary and university level instruction.

iii. The establishment of gender equity in training, recruitment and decision-making at
the tertiary level.

iv. The establishment of appropriate systems to monitor and evaluate on-going tertiary level courses and programmes and the establishment of a mechanism for determining equivalency and accreditation of certificates, diplomas and degrees that would be applicable across the region. In this respect, the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI) is to be recognized as the body responsible for the co-ordination of Caribbean tertiary institutions.

v. The expansion of the Consortium Graduate School of Social Sciences as a post-graduate centre of excellence for training and research in economic and social development.

vi. The development of programmes for the professional training of teachers at the tertiary and university level.

VIII. OTHER PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

29. Gender Issues and the Crisis in Male Education: There is a growing crisis in the education of boys and men in the Caribbean today. In some countries, there are now more illiterate men than women and females are out-performing males at every level of the education system. The male: female enrollment rate at the Early Childhood level is evenly distributed between boys and girls. Enrollment at the primary level reflects roughly the same ratio. At grade 6, however, there is a shift in favour of the girls due to the higher drop-out and repetition rates among the boys. Also girls record higher attendance than boys. At the Secondary level in one country, the male: female distribution is three girls to every one boy.

30. The pattern of female dominance continues at the tertiary level. At the University of the West Indies, 62.5 % of the students enrolled in 1993/94 were women. Women outnumber men in every faculty, with the exception of Engineering. The trend of female dominance continues even in the non-formal adult training and literacy programmes, where a considerably higher number of women than men are registered.

31. But despite the advances made by women in education and in attaining economic
independence, when compared to men, they still have less access to opportunities and rewards and to the corridors and board rooms of political and economic power. Caribbean countries have begun to address this issue and the Prime Minister of Jamaica, in his contribution to the 1996/1997 Budget Debate, announced on April 30, 1996, the establishment of a Commission on Gender and Social Equity to promote and monitor the implementation of practical measures to effect equity, and the enforcement of laws in relation to gender equity and to oversee the implementation of the various conventions on the status of women, to which Jamaica is a signatory. The Commission would also monitor policy measures to achieve justice, equity and mutual respect between men and women.

IX. LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN - MEETING BASIC LEARNING NEEDS

32. Illiteracy is perceived as one of the principal hindrances to productivity in the region. Some of the main contributory factors to the incidence of illiteracy in the region include:

i. Limited access to learning as a result of intervening variables such as culture, politics, gender, location, inadequate facilities, and so on;

ii. Lack of resources (financial and human) for sustainable development and for the implementation of literacy programmes;

iii. The negative impact of structural adjustment on overall economic development of the countries;

iv. Reduced expenditure in national budgets on education.

33. Within the region, with the exception of four countries, scientifically administered surveys to determine prevailing levels of literacy are not the norm. In Jamaica, where a survey had been conducted in 1994, the literacy rate was 75.4% while in Trinidad and Tobago which had also conducted a survey, it is 87.4%. For all territories, literacy levels appear to be fairly high. There are, however, pockets of the population, especially in lower-income areas, where the illiteracy rate is high. Recent indicators of literacy indicate
that females are performing at a higher level than their male counterparts.

34. Recommended actions are:

i. Integrate Literacy programmes in National Development Plans.

ii. With assistance from the media and private sector interests, engage in public awareness programmes concerning the critical importance of literacy for the achievement of national developmental goals.

iii. Develop standardised training programmes for the conduct of Adult Education and Training regionally and nationally, including workplace literacy.

iv. Adopt a regional approach to the measurement of literacy levels so that actions may be regional in focus to facilitate sharing resources and minimizing waste.

35. Literacy, therefore, remains a priority in the Caribbean. Although encouraging advancements have been made - one country succeeded in reducing the illiteracy rate from more than 50% of the adult population in the early 1970s to approximately 18% in 1994 - the problem of functional illiteracy is still a cause for concern. The Caribbean needs a comprehensive survey to determine the current rate of illiteracy in the sub-region and hence the real size of the problem.

36. The Caribbean Regional Council on Adult Education (CARCAE), an affiliate of the International Council on Adult Education (ICAE), has been mandated by the Caribbean Community Secretariat to co-ordinate Adult Education activities within the sub-region. CARCAE is placing special focus on infusing family values into all aspects of Adult Education and into the promotion of Health and Family-Life Education.

X. THE ORGANIZATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES (OECS)

37. Arising from the initiative taken by Ministers of Education in the Eastern Caribbean, a collaborative study was undertaken to reform the process of Education within the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). This study was undertaken by regional experts, through a process of wide consultations across the
islands involving the partners in education. These included political parties, educational planners, professional educators, parents and members of community organizations including the Church. The process resulted in a document, the OECS Reform Strategy which included sixty-five strategies for reform in the educational processes of the sub-region in a manner that would result in a greater sharing of resources.

38. The Reform Strategy was accepted by Ministers of Education and Heads of Government of the sub-region. As a result, a Reform Unit was established in 1992 in the OECS Secretariat in St. Lucia, in order to implement the reform process. Various areas were identified for priority action, they include:

i. Harmonization of Education legislation.
ii. Teacher Education.
iii. Curriculum development and harmonization.
iv. Special educational provisions for children with special needs.
v. Adult and Continuing Education.
vi. More efficient management of the education system, including the development of a comprehensive Management Information System.

39. In developing these priorities there were real concerns that the reform process should unfold within the following framework:

i. that it should have a positive impact on the performance of the boys and girls who are the immediate beneficiaries;
ii. that it should strengthen local capabilities;
iii. that the participatory methodology should be followed and developed in all undertakings;
iv. that the process should be sustainable given the economic imperatives.

40. There have been a number of activities related to implementation of the reforms, these include:
i. Development of a draft Education Act.
ii. A comprehensive needs assessment for the improvement of teacher education.
iii. Development of a Management Information System.
v. Demonstration and development of guidelines for school performance reviews.
vi. Developing a network structure to implement the various aspects of the reform process.

41. The main emphases within the strategy were:

i. Improving the quality of education.
ii. Enhancing the learning environment through the use of varied mechanisms including information technology.

III. Reforming the process of formal education to make it more responsive to the need for a more informed and thinking populace to chart the course for the sub-region’s development into the twenty-first century.

iv. Improving the status of teachers.
v. Enhancing the role and involvement of parents and of the community in schools.

XII. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE MEDIA - RELEVANCE TO THE LEARNING NEEDS OF THE CARIBBEAN

42. Based upon the situational analysis and upon the thesis that technology has created more effective learning environments, the following recommendations are offered:

i. Engage in research to determine prevailing attitudes of teachers to the use and application of information technologies and the media in Caribbean schools;
ii. Pursue initiatives with a view to the establishment of Media Centres in Teachers’ Colleges and Community Colleges throughout the region;

III. Ministries of Education throughout the region should accept specific responsibility for sensitizing educators about educational media policies. They should develop the
human and institutional resources related to educational media and the newer
information technologies;
iv. Initiate compulsory pre-service as well as in-service computer training in teacher
education institutions across the region.

43. Concern has been expressed about the cost of using information technology viz.
computers in Caribbean classrooms, given the economic constraints currently being
experienced in the region. There is some apprehension at the likelihood of the widescale
adoption of information technology resulting in enhanced learning given the present
learning context. Questions also exist about the likely impact of the use of computers on
the mental and consequent social functioning of children. This issue is considered to be
of particular importance in light of the increasing use of computers in classrooms,
especially in Jamaica.

XIII. THE STATUS OF TEACHERS IN THE CARIBBEAN

44. At the recently held UNESCO review of the status of teachers ‘in the Caribbean, the
general sentiment was that despite advances made in improving the training and
remuneration of teachers, the professional status of teachers was being severely
undermined as a result of a combination of factors. These included:

i. The fact that children are not being readied from home to receive the instruction of
school nor to accept, in many instances, its norms and values. Indeed respect for
the authority of the teacher is now virtually obsolete.

ii. The existence of classes with too many children thus rendering the teacher’s
pedagogic role virtually ineffectual.

iii. The fact that the teacher is not autonomous in the school and consequently has
less influence in the community.

iv. The need for persons who are selected to teach to manifest and embody the values
which they espouse.
XIV. RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR TEACHERS

i. Maintain high standards for the selection and recruitment of candidates for training as teachers.

ii. Parents to be assisted in assuming their equal responsibility in the education of their children. Thus giving to the teacher a child who has been properly readied for learning in an institutional setting and who respects and values the teacher.

III. Teachers must accept full responsibility for what occurs in the classroom/school setting. Their role as educators to parents and to the wider community not only to children must be acknowledged.

iv. A comprehensive social security program me for teachers including unemployment benefits, housing, full medical care, injury benefits and so on, must be developed and implemented by each member state as a matter of urgency.

v. Provide teachers with the tools to do a good job viz., small classes in a pleasing environment, adequate teaching materials, positive reinforcement, reasonable task allocation, fair remuneration.

vi. Provide a comprehensive incentive package to reward teacher creativity and innovation.

xv. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

45. If quality education is to be realised in the Caribbean region, parents, as major partners, must share equal responsibility with teachers in educating their children. H is the parent’s responsibility to ensure that the school receives a child who has been prepared from home in the values, attitudes and norms of behaviour expected in civilized society.

a. The “Mummy Programme”

The “Mummy programmes”, a programme which laid the foundation for the expression of democratic and humanistic values among students and teachers in a private
secondary school in Jamaica, is a good example of partnership. In this enterprise, a mother was involved, on a daily basis, in helping children to believe in themselves and in their potential for goodness. This programme could be adopted in similar circumstances where significant proportions of children need additional attention which teachers and often many parents are not able to provide. The programme essentially assists in the building of esteem and with strengthening a foundation of love within the framework of the regular schedule of the school. Children who participated in the programme were more receptive to learning and exhibited a more responsible approach to life.

b. Education For All and Skills Training - The Blackstonedge Experience

The prevailing conditions which prompted the establishment of a skills training centre in Blackstonedge, a deep rural community in Jamaica, included low levels of literacy and the lack of employable skills. This led to the establishment of a training centre in 1991 with funding provided by UNESCO. Women were targeted in the early years for training in marketable skills, but the programme soon embraced men also.

The skills acquired were used by beneficiaries for self-employment as well as to obtain employment in ongoing enterprises. There were continuing education and external examinations preparation classes for those who were academically inclined.

The Blackstonedge Project is a practical demonstration and a good example of the partnership between home, school, community, Ministry of Education, and Funding Agency. The project arose from the school, yet was totally attuned to the needs of home and community. In this way all benefitted, parents, teachers and the wider community, as students were able to transfer their learning skills to their children and to others. For example, as literacy levels of parents involved in the programme improved, increased learning levels were registered by their children in the Primary school.
REPORTS WERE SUBMITTED BY THE COUNTRIES LISTED BELOW:

THE ENGLISH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA
THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA
ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES
ST. LUCIA
GRENADA
BARBADOS
BELIZE
THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
JAMAICA
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

THE DUTCH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN
ARUBA
THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
SURINAME
THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

The government of Antigua & Barbuda has been implementing measures to increase the access of its populace to education as well as to reform the system in order to achieve the goal of quality education for its citizens. The following specific achievements have been identified:

i. Increasing public participation in the provision of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes. A National Plan has been developed and standards set for the delivery of such programmes.

ii. Restructuring the Ministry of Education to enable it to more effectively respond to the needs of the people.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

The Government of Dominica, having endorsed the goals of Education For All has been realising progress in effecting improvement in Basic Education. Achievements to date include:

i. A change in the nature of school supervision. District Education Officers serve as resource personnel to Principals and provide them with support in their instructional efforts.

ii. Review of curricular offerings at the primary level and training and upgrading of teachers. New subjects like Health and Family Life Education have been added to the curriculum.

iii. The concept of effective schools has been adopted and a process of school performance reviews has been commenced.

iv. A more dynamic cadre of School Principals has been selected with particular
emphasis on leadership potential rather than seniority. A number of Principals have been given assistance to allow them to pursue the UWIDITE Certificate in Management and Supervision course, and a major programme for the training of Principals is being planned under the aegis of the OECS Education Reform Strategy.

v. Access to secondary education will be increased under the Basic Education Reform Project which is being conducted in collaboration with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD-the World Bank). Access to secondary education is being expanded and strategies to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness are being implemented.

vi. Diversification of the secondary school curriculum is in progress. Information Technology is being introduced, as are a range of technical subjects.

vii. All tertiary level institutions are being brought under one umbrella for greater efficiency. Curriculum review is being conducted to promote greater relevance to the world of work and broader partnerships are being fostered.

Slow progress has been experienced in the restructuring of the Ministry of Education and in developing a system-wide acceptance of the need to set high standards. A tendency to curriculum overload has also resulted in less emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Since 1990, through the OECS Reform Strategies, St. Vincent and the Grenadines have been involved in a series of reform initiatives aimed at:

i. improving the quality of the education system;

ii. improving the performance of the boys and girls in the system;

iii. making education accessible to all school-age children both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.
These initiatives include, among others, the following:

i. Improvement in the management structure and processes.
ii. Improving the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of the rapidly changing world.
iii. Curriculum support and the development of programmes on parenting to make the area of Early Childhood Education effective.
iv. Networking within the OECS reform strategy in order to achieve the goals.
v. Government engages a wide range of partnerships and the participatory approach in the management, development, provision and financing of education.

The following, however, exist as concerns in the system:

i. The rate of functional illiteracy among the adult population that tends to negate the efforts in the school system.
ii. The low priority rating given to adult and continuing education and the failure to integrate this component as an integral part of Lifelong Education.
iii. The general conceptualisation of the phenomenon of secondary Education with a definitive stigma to anything that is non-academic in its orientation. As a consequence of this, there is a perennial problem as regards the transfer mechanism from primary to secondary schooling with inherent curricula and other attendant problems.
iv. The poor performance of boys as compared with girls in the school system.

ST LUCIA

Some of the gains which have been registered in St. Lucia towards achieving quality educational offerings are mentioned below:

i. Recent data on educational attainment by students indicate that 42.1% completed primary school, 16% secondary school, and 8.6% tertiary education by both sexes. However, the data show that 43% males completed primary school while only 41.3%
of females did in 1994. At the secondary level, 13.4% males completed while 18.1% of females did in 1994. At the tertiary level, 9.7% females completed while 7.6% males completed.

ii. The participation rates in the education sector at various age cohorts show that at the pre-school level, age 0-4 yrs. 91% participated. At the primary level, ages 5-15, the data indicated a rate of 87% in 1994 while for the secondary level age group 11-16, the rate was 57% and at the post-secondary level, it was 9% of the age cohort.

iii. A firm belief that the quality of the early years lays the foundation for adult life is primarily the essence and reason for the existence of Pre-School Services.

This service seeks to develop human and material resources as they relate to the developmental needs of 3-5 year old children and the professional qualities of the adults who work with them. The Ministry continues to give active support to special education in order to ensure that everyone can participate in the development process.

Increasingly, the handicapped are being integrated into the education system; This process is appropriate as the Ministry continues to provide opportunities for all categories of citizens.

The mission of Primary Education is to provide each child with the foundation for further learning as well as for acquiring the skills, values and attitudes that would make him/her a useful and productive citizen.

The secondary level of the education system will concentrate on and will ensure the provision of better opportunities for the general improvement of all secondary schools. To this end, efforts will be made in the areas of communication and co-ordination, broad based participation, administration and supervision, guidance and counselling, professional development and accountability.

Some of the key issues which are being addressed are:
(a) Guidance and Counseling facilities - the need to broaden the outlook of students through Guidance and Counseling;

(b) The need to improve the administrative structures in order to provide professional development of staff and ensure students’ progress;

(c) The necessity for community-based education to encourage greater participation by those outside the school;

(d) The co-ordination of activities of the school;

(e) The need to encourage greater accountability.

The principal concern at the tertiary level relates to the low level of enrolment. However, increased demand at that level has been fuelled by Government’s reclassification plan which hinges promotion on prescribed levels of qualification and which consequently imposes on public servants a need to upgrade their qualifications.

The Adult Education Unit has designed programmes to address not only basic literacy and numeracy skills but also work oriented skills also. Continuing education classes are provided for primary school leavers.

Encouragement continues to be given to the teaching of technical vocational education in schools. Support has also been given to pre-vocational programmes in primary schools, additional facilities have been constructed under the World Bank/CDB/OPEC Project and the overseas training of technical vocational education teachers.

GRENADA

The many achievements of the Grenada Government in its effort to improve its educational offerings include:

i. The formulation of an Education Policy Document along with a Five Year Plan as well as the formal introduction of yearly work plans in all of the Divisions of the Ministry of Education.
The introduction of a Performance Appraisal System from 1st April, 1996. Education is seen as a business which must function efficiently and effectively. All public workers including teachers and Education Officers will be appraised annually. The man-power needs and training needs are also critically assessed with appropriate follow-up actions.

There has been a revitalization of the Education Advisory Council.

The repair of the roofs of six schools.

A “Basic Education Reform Program me” is now being implemented. This involves school construction and refurbishing as well as the provision of more modern equipment.

Enhancing partnerships in education to provide increased resources.

BARBADOS

Barbados has been experiencing several successes as it strives to improve the quality of its education despite difficulties in financing the provision of education. Among these successful experiences are:

i. The production of a White Paper on Education Reform. The process involved consultation with social partners and more effective collaboration between the Ministry of Education and teachers.

ii. Proposal to implement, as a matter of priority, a fair and effective Teacher Appraisal System.

iii. Identification of alternate mechanisms for financing educational development and minimizing waste.

BELIZE

The Ministry of Education and the Government of Belize have been exploring a number of mechanisms in their efforts to provide more and better education for all of their citizens by the year 2000. Interventions in the education system in Belize have been largely project driven causing expressed concern for their likely sustainability at the end of the
project cycle. The progress made to date in improving the system include:

i. Successful measures to improve participation rates and attendance of children in Primary Schools, as well as improving the transition from primary to secondary.

ii. Improvements in conditions of service of teachers including remuneration and training opportunities.

iii. The Establishment of the Literacy Council of Belize to improve the delivery of Adult Literacy programmes to persons 18 years and over who require them.

iv. A process of decentralisation of educational services, resulting in the establishment of District Education Management Teams which has contributed to more efficient administration and management of schools.

v. Textbooks and other learning materials have been provided for primary schools.


vii. Improvements in Early Childhood Care and Education which include increased training programmes for teachers and improved supervision of the delivery of programmes.

viii. Support the establishment of school/community boards for increased participation in school management.

ix. Revised Rules and Regulations governing the management of education.

x. Examination reform which includes such evacuative mechanisms as diagnostic and summative tests.

xi. School Facilities Improvement Programme has resulted in provision of additional classrooms to ease overcrowding and improve access. In addition repairs have been effected in order to improve the learning environment.

For Belize, the principal constraint to the realisation of the goals of quality and equity resides in the difficulties associated with a lack of economic resources.
THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana has sought through the implementation of various reforms to improve the access and participation of its populace in basic education despite severe economic constraints. It has registered a number of achievements, foremost among these are:

i. Improvement in the transition from nursery to primary schools. This has been effected through the development of a plan of action and the implementation of a participatory process involving Teachers at the Nursery, Preparatory and Primary levels as well as Parents. This process received funding support from UNICEF as well as from the Government of Guyana.

ii. The classroom environment and the physical conditions of several schools have been improved.

iii. Review of curricula has led to the revision of texts by Guyanese teachers who wrote, edited and prepared the manuals in eight subject areas, viz. English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Spanish, Agricultural Science, Industrial Arts and Economics at the Secondary level.

iv. The revised texts are now being employed in all of the sixty-two General Secondary Schools in Guyana.

v. The Primary Education Improvement Project has funded the preparation, printing and distribution of texts in Primary Schools. Texts for Levels 1 and 11 in the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and social Studies have been distributed to all 425 Primary Schools and are being used.

vi. Increased remuneration for teachers in the system as well as emphasis on reforming the Secondary School programme are just two of the ways in which Guyana is addressing quality issues in education.

vii. To enhance equality of access to schooling and address the condition of children in especially difficult circumstances, Guyana is seeking to upgrade its Schools’ Welfare Service.
THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas has been engaging in a process of comprehensive educational review and reform in order to better meet the requirements of a better and more equitable system. This has resulted in a number of achievements over the past five years, they include:

i. The decentralisation of the education system to make it more responsive to the needs of stakeholders and to cater to the needs of citizens in the entire archipelago.

ii. Extensive curricular review in the primary sector has led to the introduction of a Pilot project involving the use of more relevant learning materials in 1994 at Grade 7 and 8 in several Schools in New Providence and Grand Bahamas where more than two thirds of the populace reside.

iii. Review of assessment mechanisms in the islands has led to parents’ recommending the reintroduction of the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC) which had been previously abolished. This, in order to implement evaluation measures which will better respond to perceived community needs.

iv. The expansion of provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education by increased governmental participation in the sector. It had previously been dominated by Non-Governmental Organisations. The College of the Bahamas is also playing an increasing role in ECCE by developing pre-certificate programmes to assist the operators of child-care facilities.

v. Increased partnership by the Church in the delivery of literacy programmes as well as the introduction of a National Literacy Programme by the Government has caused some improvement in literacy levels.

vi. Development and implementation of policy and necessary resources to ensure the delivery of technical and vocational programmes at the secondary and post secondary levels, in order to prepare students to fully participate in the expanding economic opportunities of the Bahamas.
In Jamaica, policy formulators, the Government and educational planners have all endorsed the goals of providing quality education for the nation. Several reforms have been undertaken to improve educational offerings generally and in particular to make them more equitable. For Jamaica also, many interventions in the education system are project driven. Access to education at the Primary level is universal, prior to Jomtien, and the principal issue which arises refers to levels of participation in the system and the quality of offerings across differing school types, viz. issues of equity.

Achievements in the attainment of the goals of improving the educational provision include:

i. The Ministry of Education in association with the Planning Institute of Jamaica produced a Five Year Plan 1990-1995 which gave expression to the goals and instruments for effecting the objective of Education For All. The process of preparing this plan was participatory involving all of the principal actors in the educational process. The plan outlines strategies for achieving: equal educational opportunities for all; improved adult literacy; enhanced community involvement in education; improved school management, administration and supervision to name just a few areas.

ii. The entire Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture has been reorganised to effect more efficient programme delivery and supervision. The Ministry’s capabilities in policy analyses have been strengthened through an improved management information system and the introduction of policy analysis and programme monitoring evaluation units, programme budgeting and annual Corporate Plans have been introduced, some support services are being decentralised to six regional offices and a Professional Development Unit has been established to develop and implement in-service teacher education programmes.

iii. The rationalisation of technical/vocational programmes with the establishment of the National Training Agency (NTA) as an adjunct to the Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) program me. The HEART/NTA monitors, coordinates and
funds Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in Jamaica. A national Council on TVET was established in 1994 to develop modularized curricula, accredit programmes and institutions and certify graduates from these programmes in the HEART Academies, Vocational Training Centres, Secondary Schools and in Community Centres. Most of the training programmes in communities are specifically directed towards the alleviation of poverty.

iv. The promulgation of the National Council on Education Act 1993 and the establishment of the Council in December of that year was to increase community participation in policy formulation in the education sector. Some twenty-four persons representing a range of sector interests involved in education including the Church, the political parties, the Media, the Private Sector, Teachers’ Organisations, Parents, Students and Community interests are responsible for advising the Minister of Education on education policy. The Council also trains educational administrators and Board Chairmen. It is responsible for the management of the Education Trust Fund, to be established from the proceeds of an Education Tax which all employed members of the populace pay.

v. The implementation of the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) programme (1993) in order to effect greater standardisation and equity in what has been an exceedingly fragmented secondary education system. Through the ROSE programme the secondary curriculum has been overhauled to make it more responsive to the needs of all for quality education. Teachers have been trained in the delivery of a new Junior High curriculum for Grades 7-9 which is to be introduced in all secondary schools and departments which has as the focus materials which have as the focus a core of subjects deemed essential for functioning in the world of work and for learning to live. Secondary Schools are being upgraded to the level of Comprehensive and Technical High Schools, and All Age Schools (Grades 1-9) are being converted to Primary and Junior High Schools, in order to effect the programme. It is anticipated that by the year 2000 there will be a unified, well articulated system of secondary education in Jamaica delivering quality offerings to all secondary age children. Readers have been developed for those experiencing difficulty reading at the lower secondary level in four subject areas. ROSE also has a policy analysis component which is improving local
vi. At the Primary level there has been continued improvement in community involvement in education through such mechanisms as the School Community Outreach Programme for Education (SCOPE) which provides structures and training to effect greater participation, and the Adopt-A-School Programme. Additionally, all aspects of the primary education programme are being evaluated as a result of which the curriculum will be revised. New materials have been developed in Mathematics and teachers have also been trained to facilitate consistency in programme delivery. A Primary Book scheme has been effected with private sector assistance to aid in the availability of learning materials particularly to those who are economically deprived. Assessment mechanisms are being evaluated and instruments tested with a view to introducing throughout the Primary system a National Assessment Plan (NAP) which will facilitate ongoing assessment and contribute to the abolition of the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), the selection examination for entry to public secondary institutions. Several schools have been refurbished.

vii. Competency shelters which target the estimated 30%-40% students who operate two or more grade levels below the expected level in reading and numerical calculations, have been established.

Viii. To alleviate the impact of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation programmes on the populace, a programme of Food Stamps has been implemented for the most economically challenged. A school feeding programme supported by the World Food Programme exists to support school attendance and provide nutritional subsidy to students in pre-Primary, Primary, All-Age and Secondary Schools. Funds generated from students’ contributions are used for development activities which include uniforms of needy students, repairs to sanitary facilities, water supply and provision of food storage facilities. A School Bus system has also been introduced to provide children with more comfortable and safe travelling conditions at a reduced cost.

ix. Improvements have been registered in the numbers of children involved in Early
Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes and there is a proposal to rationalise the system for more efficient programme delivery. The early childhood education and day care programmes have been evaluated.

To obtain increased resources for secondary and tertiary education, Cost-Sharing schemes have been introduced which give parents greater responsibility in funding educational programmes. Financial assistance is available for needy students. There are also special programmes which access private sector funds such as the Adopt-A-School programme. Another important private sector initiative is the Peace and Love in Schools programme designed to promote conflict resolution.

A reclassification exercise has just been completed which offers teachers enhanced career paths within the profession. A teacher appraisal system is being introduced to determine training needs.

The University Council of Jamaica has been providing accreditation for tertiary programmes not only locally but also regionally. There has also been the upgrading of the former College of Arts Science and Technology (CAST) to the status of a degree granting institution the University of Technology (UTech). Considerable expansion in student intake and in programme offerings has also occurred in the University of the West Indies.

A major challenge in increasing access and improving educational quality is to develop an integrative and flexible distance education programme. Exploiting to the full the potential of the University of the West Indies Distance Education Facilities, developing modular self-instructional programmes, and mass producing learner friendly programmes involving simple electronic and computer technology could provide the breakthrough. A major project could in fact be designed and developed along this line.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

The twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken a process of educational reform which is largely project driven. A National Task Force on Education was established and a White Paper introduced in Parliament (1993) which makes specific proposals for reform in the areas of Resource Management in Education and in the
Delivery System. These involve the restructuring of the system of education and reforming the curriculum at all levels in order to attain the goal of quality education for all of its citizens, by the year 2000. The identified achievements to date include:

i. The definition of the Essential Levels of Learning (ELLS) which identify observable and/or measurable knowledge, skills and values that all pupils are expected to have developed or achieved at the end of primary school. They constitute unambiguous criteria for determining the presence or absence of quality in Primary education in Trinidad and Tobago.

ii. The Ministry of Education has developed a strategy for the introduction of the National Certificate of Secondary Education which will cater for the entire secondary school enrolment. The certificate will measure progress not only in the areas of knowledge, understanding and reasoning, it will also give recognition to work done in the social, cultural and aesthetic fields.

iii. Considerable expansion has occurred in Early Childhood Care and Education which now caters to more economically challenged children.

iv. A new curriculum policy, to integrate more closely the teaching of Language Arts and Reading, is being implemented.

v. Achievements in skills training include the revision of the curriculum in Youth Development and Training Centres (YDAC) in 1992 to offer the same craft programmes to those who may not have benefitted from secondary education or who may be from economically challenged backgrounds as that offered in the senior comprehensive schools. Also, there has been the implementation of the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP) which targets the general populace for skills training in an effort to meet the skill needs of the industrial sector by the year 2000. The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) has been further rationalised and represents the first level of a comprehensive programme for technical/vocational education and training in Trinidad and Tobago.

vi. In response to a deteriorating socio-economic situation, the Ministry of Education has introduced a number of programmes these include: Social Safety Net programmes to bring a measure of relief to families most severely affected by harsh economic circumstances; a restructured school nutrition programme and a School
Transportation Project to allow students to use the system at reduced cost and the supply of Textbooks in the areas of Mathematics, Language and Science to Secondary School students. Trinidad and Tobago believes that it is not only necessary to give a man a fish but to teach him how to fish in order to reduce the incidence of persistent poverty.

vii. Greater emphasis on continuous assessment than on the single Common Entrance as an evaluative mechanism to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary education.

viii. The fourth (GORTT/IBRD) Basic Education Project aimed at improving the quality of basic education is the main vehicle for implementing the recommendations of the White Paper in Education.

THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

The British Virgin Islands consist of an archipelago which is 58 square miles in area with a population of 18,000 persons. Size is seen as creating limitations in education delivery. These include a lack of resources, financial and human, as well as limited facilities material and equipment. Despite these however the following achievements are noted:

i. Increase in public recurrent expenditure in education between 1993 and 1995. Approximately 18% of the Government’s budget is allocated to education.

ii. Primary school shave been expanded and renovated and eight resource centres have been added. At the Secondary level, construction is well underway on the New Senior School. Two buildings have already been completed and equipped and are now functional.

iii. The training of teachers continues to be an area of focus for the Government. Increased numbers of teachers are being trained locally as well as through the UWIDITE system which enables Secondary School teachers with degrees to become proficient in professional training.

iv. Extensive curricula revision and review is underway. Music, Computer Studies, Language Arts and Social Studies are just some of the areas which have received
attention. Remedial education is a priority at all levels.

v. Adult Education continues to receive encouragement and at the Tertiary level there has been considerable expansion of programme offerings.

vi. At the Secondary level students from the BVI continue to perform at the highest level in the CXC.

vii. Since 1990 there has been less emphasis on access to education and curricula and quality issues now predominate.

Viii. In the area of Early Childhood Education regulations for standardisation have been passed and an Early Childhood Education Board has been established.
THE DUTCH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

ARUBA

The Aruba Government has embarked on extensive innovation of the education system informed by three major concerns - the expansion of offerings; the elimination of inequality of opportunity and the improvement of the relevance and quality of education. The strategies adopted include:

i. The reform of the primary curriculum to accommodate fundamental change in the teaching of Dutch to Papiamentu speaking Arubans from the traditional emphasis on grammar to an emphasis on communicative competence.

ii. A new mathematics curriculum based on the principles of “realistic” mathematics, was introduced to increase interest and achievement in mathematics particularly among female students with greater emphasis on problem-solving skills. This will facilitate the transition from mechanistic to realistic mathematics.

iii. There is the local development of programmes and materials to support the curricular reform.

iv. Dutch teaching methods, Dutch financing and a Dutch specialist provide the underpinnings of the primary curricular reform programme.

v. The Aruba Quality Foundation: “Aruba Vision 2005” anticipates win-win partnerships between the public and private sector to “have an educational system that stimulates our people, old and young, to learn and think creatively and that prepares them for a changing world.”

vi. A plan has been developed for the integration and modernization of lower level technical and vocational education. To create economies of scale the ten existing schools will be reduced to two comprehensive vocational schools. This reform is being spearheaded in the EPB/EPI Project Management Unit of the Department of Education.
THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

Several reforms of the educational system have been undertaken. These include:

i. The enactment of compulsory education laws to ensure that students attend and remain in school until the end of the statutory period.
ii. The use of computers to assist principals in their administrative tasks.
iii. The review and revision of texts and other teaching and learning materials to make them more relevant to local needs. Particular attention has been paid to subjects such as Dutch, Mathematics and Social Studies. Bridging the gap between the mother tongue Papiamento and Dutch in the early instruction of children is seen as a major step in ultimately improving learning achievement at the end of primary schooling.
iv. The establishment of a Foundation for School Materials, in Curacao, responsible for the development of curricular materials for all of the islands.

SURINAME

Suriname has concentrated on improving the quality of its educational provisions despite facing enormous resource difficulty. It has had compulsory primary education since 1876 and has recorded several reforms and achievements in the recent period. These include:

i. Approximately eighty-two percent of four and five year olds are enrolled in Early Childhood Care and Education institutions.
ii. Special institutions have been established to meet the needs of children who are developmentally challenged.
iii. Reform of the primary curriculum to more effectively reflect Suriname's social reality accompanied by the revision of textbooks. Review of the transition from primary to secondary education to increase participation in secondary education.
iv. The establishment of a Learning Resource Centre for curriculum development, and guidance.
v. The creation of community guidance teams, serving the needs of several schools in particular areas of the country.

vi. The training for teachers to qualify at the Advanced Teacher Training College is being intensified and teacher training is also being expanded through the establishment of a new faculty at the University of Suriname.

vii. Efforts are being made to ensure quality secondary educational offerings throughout the country despite the fact that low population concentration renders it difficult in some areas.

UNESCO Kingston
May 1996