

RESPONSE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA TO OHCHR QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION, UNHRC Resolution 10/23

January 31, 2012

1. Chapter 39 of The Laws of Guyana still provides the legal basis for education in Guyana. This Act, and in particular its Regulations, specify the academic standards to be achieved in all the subject areas at all levels of education. These standards are revised periodically. Some of the major documents in which these policies are articulated are:

- School Records and Documents (a compilation) which give guidelines on: Standard Operational procedures; Annual work plans, School Improvement Plans; Code of Conduct for Teachers; Child Development Index Cards; Manual on the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools, among other things.
- Academic Standards for each grade.
- Non-Academic Standards for various levels of education.

2. There are different standards and norms for each level of education.

a) School Infrastructure

Nursery: Minimum classroom size 337 square feet, Maximum 562 square feet (15 square feet per student).

Sanitary facilities: A minimum of four toilets for every 50 students.

Primary: Minimum classroom size 180 square feet, Maximum 600 square feet (14 square feet per student).

Sanitary facilities: A minimum of four toilets for every 100 students.

Secondary: Minimum classroom size 420 square feet, Maximum 945 square feet (14 square feet per student).

Sanitary facilities: A minimum of four toilets for each 150 students.

The general rule for all levels is two toilets for every 10 teachers. The building codes for public buildings in terms of height of rooms, number of windows, are adhered to. In general also designs try to capture natural light and the flow of air. Access to potable water is of particular importance and there are rules for the number of taps per students for the various levels (1 for 10 students at nursery level, 1 for 20 students at the primary level and 1 per 40 students at the secondary level). There are several other areas that are dealt with in the document on non-academic standards e.g. classroom accessories, emergency facilities and canteen facilities.

b) Class size and Pupil teacher ratio

The maximum number of students in a nursery class is set at 20 and the maximum teacher pupil ratio is set at 20 students:1 teacher

At the primary level there are two standards.

Grade 1 and 2 (25 students per teacher) and Grades 3 to 6 (35 students per teacher).

At the secondary level the maximum is 45 students per teacher and for practical classes it is 25 per teacher.

At a national level the aggregate indicator shows that the proportion of teachers to students is within the standards, but there are some areas of overcrowding (with higher ratios) and there are remote areas with very small populations with lower ratios. The issue in terms of quality education is effected more by the proportion of trained teachers and this can be a challenge especially in remote areas.

c) Teacher Qualifications

As noted in section b there is a challenge in terms of the proportion of trained teachers in the system although there has been improvement in the current plan period. The Ministry has recently raised the minimum qualifications for entry into the teaching profession. These qualifications are the same as those for entry into the University. In terms of professional qualifications the Ministry is aiming that at least 70 percent of its teachers should be trained.

d) Working Conditions for teachers and their professional development

Some of the standards for the physical conditions, under which teachers work, are outlined above. On average, teachers work approximately 28 hours per week. They are not officially on leave during school vacations, but they benefit from time off during these periods. In addition teachers on the permanent staff benefit from a special one month paid leave outside of the normal vacation periods after every three years of service. Teacher training is free of cost to the trainees (indeed they receive a small allowance while being trained). In addition the Ministry has recently developed a policy on continuous professional development (CPD) which requires teachers to upgrade their qualification on a periodic basis. These courses are provided free to teachers and they receive credits from these courses that enhance their promotional opportunities.

e) School curricula content and pedagogical material

Curricula are continually upgraded in keeping with learning outputs/attainment targets through the Curriculum Development Unit of the National Centre for Resource Development (NCERD).

These revisions are made in collaboration with practicing teachers and senior educators in the system.

Some textbooks are provided free of cost to students at the various levels. The policy at the primary and the secondary levels is to provide at least one textbook per student in the four core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies).

Of note, the government provides for a universal school uniform voucher system for children enrolled from nursery to secondary in the public education system. There is also a school feeding programme available to children in the lower primary levels in areas which are poor.

f) Teaching learning processes

The Ministry's policy is to make learning interactive and child-centered. This is a work in progress as teachers are continually being trained in these approaches. Facilities are now being upgraded to facilitate the use of innovative technologies including the use of computers as teaching learning tools. All secondary schools will have computer laboratories by the end of this year and the Ministry is working to have 50% of primary schools with laboratories in another two years. There are also dedicated efforts to provide science and technical facilities in all secondary schools.

g) School Management, including student and parent participation

- The school is considered the basic unit of management in the system. The size and complexity of the management structure depends on the size and level of the school. A large school would have a Principal supported by a management team which would include a Deputy Principal, Senior Master and Mistresses and Heads of various departments. A smaller school would not have a Deputy and would have a smaller number of Heads of Departments. The Ministry of Education is promoting community involvement in school management. This is evidenced by:
 - parent teacher associations (There is a national parent teacher coordinator)
 - management of schools by Boards of Governors (approximately 30% of secondary schools have Boards)
 - a mentoring programme

Student involvement is being promoted through student councils at the secondary level and through the introduction of student governments in the child-friendly school programme.

h) Methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes

At the early childhood levels there are no formal assessments but the Child Development Index Card gives the entry and exit profiles of the children who attend pre schools. There is a policy of continuous assessment at the primary level with national assessments at Grades 2, 4 and 6 with a focus on literacy and numeracy at the earlier grades. In addition to annual

assessments at the secondary level, there is a national assessment at Grade 9 and the end of cycle Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate which is administered by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). A select group of students who move on to grades 12 and 13 sit the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination administered by the same examination body.

3. The chief source of data on educational institutions is obtained from the annual questionnaire which is administered by the Statistical section of the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Education. In addition to enrolment data, indicators on the quality of teachers, availability of texts and equipment, the state of the physical facilities, repetition, drop-out and student attainment can be obtained from these questionnaires.

The Ministry also has a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Development (MERD) Unit which is charged with assessing the state of education at both the school and district level. Training programmes are conducted to address weaknesses which are identified. There is also an Inspectorate which audits schools and provides an independent assessment to Government on the state of schools including the quality of education.

4. Over the years there have been several initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education. The most significant of these are:

- Interactive Radio Instruction in Mathematics in the first three grades of primary school.
- Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP) – an alternative path at the secondary level which offers modularized competency based technical programmes at the secondary level.
- Technical Vocational Centres which offer very practical skill-based programmes.
- Establishment of a hospitality school.
- Significant expansion in distance education programmes including offering teacher education programmes via distance modalities and the establishment of an education television learning channel.
- Establishment of the Guyana Learning Channel in April 2011, the first in the Caribbean such television channel, commenced offering child-friendly learning materials and primary and secondary subjects as well as other educational programmes for early school leavers.

Please note that more information is available on the Ministry of Education website www.education.gov.gy

