

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION**

National Report of **MAURITIUS**

by

The Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources

2008

## **1. The Education System in Mauritius facing the challenges of the twenty-first century: an overview**

### **Introduction**

Mauritius has become highly vulnerable to changes now taking place in the world trade regime. Over the past decade, the groundwork has been laid for the country to realign its economic orientations from a preference-dependent to a globally-competitive economy. There is a shift towards more knowledge- and skill-intensive activities and higher-value-added financial and business services.

Equally, there is a need for the country to realign its human resources, which are the country's major resource and constitute the social infrastructure for the success of the new economic agenda. This reinforces the importance of education as a vehicle to shape the country's growth prospects. Mauritius thus aims at building a Knowledge Society and becoming a Regional Knowledge Hub. With the changes taking place on various fronts of the International scene, our higher education system is being required to be responsive and of high quality.

In Mauritius education is free at all levels, right from Primary through to university level at one of the two public universities, namely, the University of Mauritius. The education structure consists of the following 4 cycles:

- (a) Early childhood development and education (0-5): This is organized in two separate systems covering two distinct phases:
  - (i) the infant/ toddler period (0-3) known as the Early Childhood Development and placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare
  - (ii) Pre-Primary schooling: the 3-5 year olds attending pre-schools which operate within the ambit of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources.
- (b) Primary schooling, of 6 years duration minimum (one repeat allowed), leading to an end of cycle examination called the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE)
- (c) Secondary Education for a minimum of five years leading to the Cambridge School Certificate (SC) or the General Certificate of Education – Ordinary level. A minimum of two more years is thereafter required for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC) or the General Certificate of Education- Advanced level.
- (d) Post-Secondary/Tertiary Education

Success at the CPE examinations is a *sine qua non* condition for securing access to Secondary schooling in the mainstream.

Those who have failed the CPE twice or who have reached the age of 12 (the maximum age at which a child may stay in primary) but have failed in the examination, are admitted to the Pre-Vocational stream of the secondary schools. In this stream, a specific, skills-based curriculum ensures the continuation of educational provision for these children and furthers their learning opportunities during a period of 3 years.

After this, the students of this stream are able to integrate a vocational institution to follow the 1-year National Trade Certificate Foundation Course which, on successful completion, allows them entry in the vocational sector towards the various levels of apprenticeship and trade certificates.

### **1.1. Major reforms and innovations introduced in the education system**

#### **(a) Organisation, structure and management in the education system**

Prior to 2006, all state secondary schools were offering classes up to Form V only (the first 5 years), except for some 16 remaining ones which were Form VI colleges. Thus, after successfully completing the first cycle, the students were required to seek admission to Form VI colleges. A major change has been brought in 2006 with the abolishing of Form VI colleges and all state secondary schools offering classes up to Form VI (A- level). Structure of system of Education is at Annex 1.

At the level of management of education, the process of decentralisation has been furthered through greater empowerment of the Zone Directorates responsible for the management of education in their geographical areas—four in number.

#### **(b) The aims and purposes of education**

##### **Overall goals**

Pre-primary: To ensure that ALL children aged 3 to 5 years in Mauritius should have the opportunity to develop their individual intellectual, socio-emotional and psycho-motor skills to the best of their capacity in order to build confidence and self-esteem in learning that will not only prepare them for the next level (primary school) but, more importantly, lay the foundations for learning that will support them throughout their lifetime.

Primary: The overall goal for this sub-sector is to sustain equitable access to quality education, ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communications Technology and essential Life Skills as a basis for lifelong learning.

Secondary: To ensure that all students are given opportunity to successfully complete higher secondary education and embark on higher and further education and training for employability with the required maturity and confidence.

Tertiary: The main objective for the tertiary education sector is to make Mauritius a Knowledge Hub to serve the Region and a Centre for Higher Learning and Excellence.

TVET: An efficient and effective TVET system responsive to the present and future needs by providing a skilled and flexible workforce for sustainable development.

### **(c) Curriculum policies, educational content and teaching and learning strategies**

The curriculum is an important element that has been given due consideration within the reforms of the system. It provides the tools to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system.

The Government Programme 2005 – 2010 spells out the need to reform the curriculum at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels in the light of developments worldwide, and according to national needs of the Mauritian students. Because one of the major pillars of the reforms being brought about is that of “Relevance”, there is a dire need to overcome the mismatch that has been prevailing between what is taught and the life skills needed for future citizenry. In other words, the curriculum has to be more relevant to ensure that students are able to relate their learning experiences with their immediate environment and prepare them for economic employability.

The overhauling of the curriculum became necessary considering the rate of failure at the end of the primary cycle (33.8 percent in 2007) and the low transition rate to mainstream secondary ( 70.9 percent in 2007).

A renewal of the curriculum has accordingly been embarked upon at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.

- **Curriculum Review in the Pre-primary Sector**

The Curriculum for Pre-primary education is being reviewed in an effort to standardize the teaching and learning at these schools and to adopt the best practices which will be most suited to the overall development of the child. The program will also have a special regard for early and late developers.

At the same time an assessment tool is being developed to ensure readiness of the children for primary education.

The development of moral values and civics in the child is also considered as a must if he/she is to develop an all round personality and the right attitude for him to be a global citizen. A ***“Hand Book for the Promotion of Moral Development”*** through play during early years has been launched and teachers are being provided with the necessary training for them to promote this initiative at school.

- **Curriculum Review in the primary Sector**

In November 2005, a National Debate on the Curriculum was organized and took on board the several views of the different partners and stakeholders of education. This resulted in the document ***‘Towards a quality curriculum – a strategy for reforms’***.

The new Curriculum Framework for primary aims at empowering every child to realize their full potential and to optimize their innate aptitudes while at the same time develops their affective capacities. Stress is laid on the development of the whole individual as opposed to the purely cognitive development of the child.

The primary curriculum lays the foundation for continuous and lifelong learning through making every child become an independent learner. The child develops such skills as critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and life skills. The curriculum includes a whole range of knowledge of national significance such as the promotion of values, democracy, human rights, appreciation of diversities in a composite culture, environment education and sustainable development, Health and HIV/AIDS, poverty alleviation, climate change, etc.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the curriculum adopts an inclusive, integrated and holistic approach. It brings a significant shift from a subject-centered to a child-centred, from a compartmentalized to an integrated approach to teaching and learning. The different domains of

learning are integrated in a cross-curricular dimension. Components of science or environment are contained in languages just like values are in Mathematics and Science.

Not only is the integrated approach in line with modern trend in pedagogy, but also it paves the way for a comprehensive curriculum which is constructively de-loaded to make learning a meaningful and joyful experience for children and retain them at school.

The new competence-based curriculum also aims at preparing the ground for the phasing out of the CPE and its gradual replacement by a child-centred and holistic system of assessment. In this connection, three facets are fundamental

- Baseline Profiling

The Baseline Profiling is an instrument which is administered at the beginning of the first year of primary schooling. It gives an indication as to the learner's acquisition of skills and competencies at the end of the pre-school cycle. The aim is to address any learning deficit through a clearly defined remedial plan in the course of the first term of level I so that all children start on the same footing and **no one is left behind**.

- Diagnostic Assessment

This Scheme is in place at Grade 3. It is a tool to map the weaknesses and strengths of pupils after 2 years of primary schooling. Using this instrument, teachers come to know at once which competencies and skills and learners are having difficulty to grasp and by addressing these learning gaps teaching and learning is made more effective and purposive.

- Continuous Assessment followed by appropriate measures of remediation

If the assessment tools aim at identifying learning difficulties of pupils, the Remedial Education Strategy provides the intervention measures for improvement in attainment level. The strategy looks at a wider range of considerations besides the cognitive; it targets the physical, social, psychological and mental development of the learner.

The Continuous Assessment Scheme with its merits of regularity, feedback and performance-based tasks will make students become better learners, develop self-confidence and perform autonomously.

The Evaluation and Assessment systems assist the teachers and parents understand the weaknesses and strengths of children better so that proper and relevant intervention measures may be meted out. A number of advantages are thus derived, namely

- It relieves learners of the burden of the end of year examination and the stress which precedes it
- The child learns at his or her own pace and is provided with the opportunity to improve as he or she moves from one stage to another
- It is assessment for learning and not only of learning
- It is a shift from an examination-driven to a curriculum-driven system of education providing equal opportunity to every child to unlock his or her potential

The de-loading of the curriculum has created more space for children to develop and express themselves at different levels-physical, social, cultural aesthetic and cognitive. There is a more conducive and enabling environment created to make room for participation in a variety of activities like the arts, health and physical education and other life skills where children excel and gain in self-esteem. A de-loaded curriculum has provided teachers with more time to use interactive, hand-on, innovative teaching strategies and also to attend to individual learning needs of every student.

- **Curriculum Review in the secondary Sector**

While the National Curriculum Framework for primary is completed and is being implemented, the National Curriculum Framework for Secondary is in draft form and is expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

The National Curriculum Framework will lay emphasis on the lower Secondary Curriculum (Forms I – III) which has to smoothly take the primary school leaver through an incremental process of development with regard to knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and promote a qualitative entitlement to the Upper Secondary level. There will also be an indication of the way forward for Upper Secondary level, in each of the different domains of learning so as to cover the full range of the compulsory school age.

Pending the finalization of the National Curriculum Framework, a number of innovative measures have been put in place as a result of the policy document issued in September 2006.

- In order to develop a broader curricular base, General Science has been introduced at Secondary level and made compulsory to those students not opting for pure Science (Chemistry, Physics, Biology) at the Upper Secondary level. Conversely, those taking pure Science will have to take either one literature or one social science.
- So as to provide students with a more creational base, the Ministry is also making available subjects such as Travel and Tourism, Environmental Management and Marine Science. These subjects would help to build the creational base for employability.

**(d) The legal framework of education**

- Prior to 2005, education was compulsory only up to the end of the primary cycle. However, following relevant changes in legislation, as from January 2005, **education has become free and compulsory for all up to the age of 16**, with the introduction of 11-year schooling.
- The recent promulgation of the **Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Act (2008)** has seen the setting up of a regulatory agency, the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority (ECCEA), with the necessary powers to give a new boost to the pre-primary sector. The ECCEA has taken over from the Preschool Trust Fund, which had been up to now the major executing agent for the Ministry of Education & Human Resources for this sub-sector.

The main objectives are to

- Ensure provision of quality pre-primary education to children aged 4 to 5 years,
- Enhance children’s readiness to primary schooling
- Implement a standardized curriculum, with an inbuilt flexibility in delivering the curriculum to cater for identified specific needs
- Ensure that all preprimary educators are fully trained and qualified
- The increasing number of recruiting agents and individuals canvassing students for studies abroad and the possible mushrooming of bogus institutions and qualifications have necessitated the proclamation of the **Licensing of Recruiting Agents for Overseas Educational and Training Institutions Act** on 1 December 2006.
- Over the past few years the country has witnessed a Post Secondary Education sector increasingly driven by a growing number of private providers (local and overseas), each with its own specificities. To democratize access to tertiary education and facilitate the



emergence of Mauritius into a knowledge industry of international standard, the **regulatory framework has been consolidated** to oversee the quality of post-secondary education in the country. The Tertiary Education Commission has thus been empowered to register and accredit private universities and other institutions offering post-secondary education and accredit their programmes.

- To enhance the articulation and pathways to TVET sector and academic education that would enable lifelong learning, the Mauritius Qualifications Authority which acts as a facilitator by providing the levels at which qualifications for such Technical and vocational training programmes are pitched, has been given additional powers for assuming the responsibility for the **recognition of prior learning (RPL)**.
- Amendments have been brought to the **Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) legislation** such that the Rabindranath Tagore Institute (RTI), which has a cultural vocation, can operate under the aegis of the MGI. The RTI presently operates on its own campus in the north of the island and is slowly emerging as a centre of excellence in Asian culture in this part of the country.
- The Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) has been established with the objectives of developing, implementing and maintaining a National Qualifications Framework for an effective certification system, ensuring compliance with provisions for registration and accreditation, as per MQA Act 2001 and ascertaining that standards and registered qualifications are internationally comparable.

In 2005, the **Education Act** was amended to provide for a separation of regulatory powers under different stakeholders at the Ministry. Thus the MQA became, through the amendments of the legislation, the regulator of the TVET sector in Mauritius, with the regularity aspects of higher education then falling under the aegis of the Tertiary Education Commission.

The regulation of the primary and secondary sector in Mauritius resides in the Ministry, with a special committee (the National Equivalence Committee) looking into the specifics of recognition and equivalence of qualifications at these levels.

## **(e) Objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms**

### **(i) The Quality Issue**

Prior to 2005, enormous effort had been made regarding the access issue through construction of more schools, particularly in the secondary sector. The next challenge was that of enhancing the quality dimension as well as bringing more equity in the system. Thus, the Government stated its vision for education in Mauritius in its Programme for 2005-2010 as follows:

*"[The] Government is committed to carrying out fundamental reforms in education towards a World Class Quality Education for All to enable young Mauritians to be employable in the new sectors of the economy, to have more fulfilling jobs and also to be competitive at the international level."*<sup>1</sup>

This global vision has led the way to a broad based, interdependent reform programme through a comprehensive, inclusive and holistic approach that cuts across all levels and sub sectors.

In this respect, a wide set of initiatives has been taken towards enhancing the quality of education imparted in schools. These include, *inter alia*

- The enhancement of the learning environment of children to make it attractive and conducive to learning
- The enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning, with emphasis on the use of modern technologies. Computer labs adequately equipped have been set up in all primary and nearly all secondary schools. A computer corner is also being set up in all pre primary schools to encourage early literacy in ICT. This project helps to familiarize the child with the computer through play and it is in line with the avowed policy of Government to make Mauritius a cyber island.
- Provision to preschools of play and learning materials, a children's library equipped with new book shelves and children's books
- Setting up of book clubs in schools towards promoting a reading culture among students to enhance their linguistic aptitudes
- Affiliation of all primary and secondary schools to the iNET project encourages schools to work together, to share best practice and provide mutual support and challenges to students and the teaching service

- Excellence Awards for Education, aiming at promoting best practices and improved processes, in pre-primary, primary and secondary institutions are to become a yearly feature. ISO 9001 Certification has also been awarded to some schools, units and one Zone Directorate.
- Stepping up of efforts to improve access to continuous professional development and training for teachers
- The strengthening of school management and leadership through provision of training and appropriate tools
- Improving the linkage between the school and the world of work through placement of Lower VI students during school holidays
- Partnership and involvement of community through empowerment of Parent- Teachers' Associations and establishment of linkages by schools and the community

## **(ii) The Equity Issue**

Regarding the equity dimension, steps are being taken for all schools to be provided with the same facilities and all students to benefit from equal opportunities. This aim is to maintain a degree of parity of esteem between both, state-owned and private grant-aided centres of learning, with a view to increasing equity within the system.

Along the same lines, all teachers, irrespective of where they teach, are recruited upon the same prerequisite qualifications and they also enjoy the same terms of employment. Training is provided to teachers in all sectors to ensure that quality teaching and learning take place in a universal way in all schools.

The measures relating to the support provided to families of modest income as mentioned above, also go in the direction towards increasing equity within the system. It is also to be noted that good schools have been set up equally in rural and in urban regions to eliminate disparities between such areas.

On the other hand, action has been underway to ensure the inclusion/integration of learners with mild impairments into the mainstream while specialised schools and institutions run by Non-state actors (NGOs) cater for those with heavy disabilities.

### **(iii) The Gender Issue**

Government's commitment towards gender equality is expressed in the National Gender Policy Framework, 2008 which strives to fulfill a vision of

*“a society in which all girls and boys, women and men live together in dignity, safety, mutual respect, harmony and social justice, there is an enabling environment in which they are able to achieve their full potential, in full enjoyment of their human rights, are equal partners in taking decisions to shape economic, social and cultural development, in determining the values that guide and sustain such development and equally enjoy its benefits”.*

In the Education Sector, the Ministry of Education is guided by commitments made to achieve goal 5 of the Dakar Framework which emphasizes that the attainment of Education for All (EFA) by 2015 would require world's commitment in “eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.”

As far as access is concerned, there are no gender gaps in enrolment at pre-primary, primary, secondary and post secondary levels. The government policy of free primary education for all, coupled with the high social demand for education has resulted in almost universal enrolment at primary level long before primary education was made compulsory.

Free access to secondary education in 1977 caused enrolment at secondary level to increase considerably, with the most striking progress being the remarkable increase in girls' enrolment thereby narrowing the gender gap at that level to reach near parity. Free secondary level education has brought more benefits to girls, as they are no longer discriminated against on economic grounds to access education. Given their large numbers among secondary graduates, it is obvious that many girls have continued their studies beyond secondary levels, closing the gap in gender enrolment at the post secondary level.

There have been on-going efforts to address gender disparity, for example removing gender stereotypes in the school curriculum and in school textbooks. Notwithstanding the above advances, new areas of gender disparity have emerged which require immediate attention. The performance of boys is found to be lagging behind that of girls at all levels. The performance of girls at the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) far exceeds that of boys (72.7 percent against 60.1 percent in

2007). Boys at Grade 6 level were found to have lower reading skills than girls as evidenced by the SACMEQ study (2003). These have resulted in a larger proportion of boys among repeaters and in the prevocational classes. The problematic that has to be addressed is whether these figures indeed show a gender disparity or is it a system disparity caused by an educational process dictated by competition during the early formative primary school years where girls are known to have a higher cognitive development.

	<b>Pre-primary</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Tertiary</b>
<b>Male</b>	18 362	60 641	62 054	7 680
<b>Female</b>	18 105	58 669	64 225	10 544

**Enrolment in education by gender (2007)**

	<b>CPE examinations</b>	<b>School Certificate Examinations</b>	<b>Higher School Certificate Examinations</b>
<b>Male</b>	60.1%	71.7%	72.9%
<b>Female</b>	72.7%	81.2%	81.8%

**Pass rate by gender (2007)**

As for the Tertiary Sector, it is noted that girls tend to lose to boys when it comes to the enrolment in higher levels of study as illustrated in the following table:

<b>Level of Study</b>	<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Diploma</b>	<b>Degree/Diploma</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Higher Degree</b>
<b>Male</b>	809	2255	93	3196	1034
<b>Female</b>	1938	1263	132	3865	775

**Enrolment by level of study in the Tertiary sector (2006-2007)**

#### **(iv) Forthcoming reforms**

Work has been initiated on a number of other issues that are central to the reform package:

- Recuperating children of age 3-5 who are currently out of the pre-primary settings (some 15 % of the age group)
- Introduction and institutionalization of remedial education at the primary level
- Coming to grasp with private tuition which is rampant
- Introduction of 3 two-year cycles at the primary level instead of the current 2 three-year cycles of lower and upper primary.
- Re-invigorating the use of ICT across the curriculum such that new ways of teaching/learning are fully ingrained in the system and introduction of media support through the Knowledge Channel
- Formulation of the new curriculum framework for secondary education
- Vocationalisation of the secondary curriculum
- Introduction of continuous assessment
- Harmonizing the TVET sector
- Creation of linkages between Higher Education and the TVET sector
- Building a creative and comprehensive human resource base through human resource development and lifelong learning

### **1.2. Main policies, achievements and lessons learned**

#### **(a) Access to education**

While education is free and compulsory up to age sixteen, it is also true that there is some drop-out in the system especially at the secondary level. Exclusion as such does not exist (this being constitutionally guaranteed); but there is no mechanism per se to enforce compulsory schooling.

Inter-ministerial collaboration is being reinforced and the support of NGOs being enlisted to capture those cases of drop-outs and to eventually provide them with functional literacy through Adult literacy courses.

Mauritius has also achieved the goals of universal primary education in terms of access and gender parity in enrolment. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) has stabilized over the last decade to reach

102 percent in 2007 and Net Enrolment Rate (NER) has gradually improved to reach 97 percent with a gender parity index of 1.0. The survival rate to the last grade of primary schooling is about 98 percent. These indicators show that the education system is operating effectively at the primary level in the achievement of the EFA goal in terms of provision of access to free and compulsory primary education to all children.

In 2008 there were 301 schools which ensured the provision of primary education to some 118,700 pupils. The sub-sector is enriched by the participation of different stakeholders, namely the Roman Catholic Education Authority, the Hindu Education Authority and private non-aided organizations and about 26 percent were enrolled in private school settings. In 2007 the pupil classroom ratio was estimated at 32:1 and the pupil teacher ratio at about 28:1

### **Secondary**

With free and compulsory education up to age sixteen and with the massive construction of state secondary schools, as well as the upgrading of a large number of private providers, access to that level is not a problem.

### **Post Secondary and Tertiary Education**

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>GTER</b>	24%	28%	34.1%	37.3%

**Gross Tertiary Enrolment Ratio**

As per new Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Strategic Plan 2007-2011 and the White Paper on Tertiary Education projections, the GTER is expected to increase to 40% in 2010 and to 45% in year 2015. However, the country is aiming at reaching by 2015 a GTER equivalent to 80% of that of middle-income countries.

### Overcoming constraints to access

The Ministry of Education allocates about one-third of its budget to the primary sector and this is translated in an equitable allocation of human and material resources among schools in the education zones.

Though education is free from Primary on to Tertiary, the indirect costs for education are affordable with some difficulty for some families living in precarious situations, thus impacting on the attendance and performance of these children at school. The following accompanying measures have therefore been taken with a view to alleviate the financial burden of families of school going children:

- Free transport by bus to and from school for all students from Primary to Tertiary
- Free textbooks to all children attending Government and Grant-Aided Primary School and to needy students in Secondary Schools
- Free meal for school children attending a ZEP (Zone d'Education Prioritaire) school
- Full subsidy on fees for School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations for 9000 students from families with modest income and part subsidy for others
- The Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups has since July 2005 provided loans to 132 needy students following courses at the University of Mauritius.

### (b) Early childhood intervention

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a major feature of the Educational Reform programme undertaken by the Government.

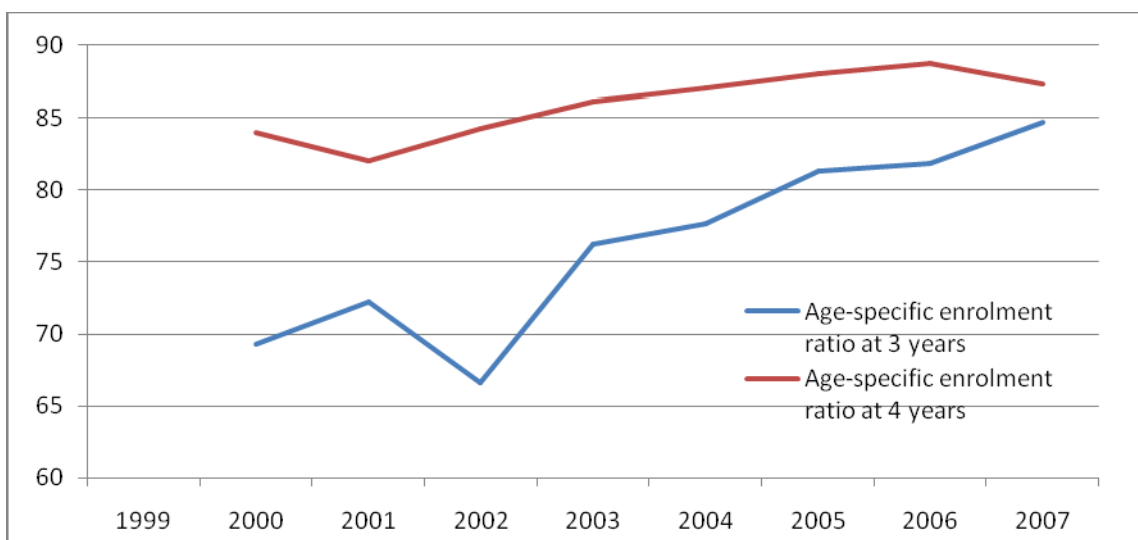
2004	2005	2006	2007
96%	94%	96%	94%

**Pre-Primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Number of students enrolled per 100 population aged 4-5 years





As for the age-specific enrolment rates at age 3 and at age 4, both have been rising, albeit unevenly, since 2002, reaching in 2007, 84.7% for age 3 and 87.3% for age 4.

Government continues to ensure equitable access of children to pre-school education through the following provisions:

- A monthly per capita grant of Rs 200/ payable to children of 4+ who are attending a private pre-school.
- Construction of pre-schools attached to Government primary schools is determined by the demand and supply mechanism with special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged children in regions of greatest social need.
- All private pre-school settings enjoy the freedom to operate their respective pre-schools in line with Pre-School Regulations. Adequate supervision is provided with application of norms and standards to improve service delivery
- Furthermore, the Mauritius Institute of Education provides appropriate training to Pre-school teachers through the Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education. This proficiency-based training programme is a very flexible proposal for practitioners who are currently working in the ECD/Pre-School sector. A one-year supplementary training programme leading to a Teachers' Certificate (Pre-Primary) is also available.

<b>NUMBER OF SCHOOLS</b>	<b>1076</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>179</b>

<b>Private</b>	<b>897</b>
<b>Aided</b>	<b>886</b>
<b>Unaided</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>ENROLMENT</b>	<b>36 467</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>18 362</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>18 105</b>
<b>TEACHING STAFF</b>	<b>2513</b>
<b>NON TEACHING STAFF</b>	<b>893</b>

**Status of Pre-Primary Sector (2007)**

In its bid to ensure access to education to all children of pre-school going age, the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF now replaced by the ECCEA) in collaboration with all stakeholders and partners has been working towards identifying these children and integrating them in the main stream of pre-primary education.

The recent promulgation of the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority Act has allowed the setting up of a regulatory agency with the necessary powers to give a new boost to the sector and raise it to new international standards.

The following initiatives have also been taken in the Pre-School sector:

- **Bridging the gap from home to school**

Considering that

1. the child's development from birth through the early primary school years is a continuous process,
  2. the parents are the first educators and the family the first social setting where the child acquires the basic skills and competencies and where the foundation of his further development is laid,
- it follows that an interface and linkage between home and the pre-primary school had to be established. The initiative therefore looks at holding the child's hands to cross the bridge from home to school so as to enable the child to integrate in the pre-school environment and reach the developmental growth in terms of psychological, emotional, psychosocial, intellectual /cognitive, physical, moral development in order to optimize the child's overall development.

Along these lines, the Parental Empowerment Program has been designed with a view to increasing responsibility of the parents towards their children and stimulating their interest in their learning

process and development. It also assists in enhancing the teacher-parent relationship and communication process.

The Early Years Pre-School Enrichment Program aims at providing high quality pre-school education, to some 1500 children, particularly to those at risks. Apart from the pedagogical program, it comprises an aspect relating to nutrition, basic health and psycho social well being of the children. The above initiatives also help to ensure an early detection of problems and initiation of a remedial program through the utilization of the children's profile.

### **Bridging the Gap from preschool to primary school**

This project aims at facilitating the transition of children from pre-primary to Standard I in Primary. The overall objective is to ensure that the children make a good start at the beginning of their primary schooling by securing them emotionally and having them successfully integrate in their environment. This should help in reducing the failure rate at the end of the primary cycle.

The specific objectives are

- To identify the physical, social and behavioural difficulties of children at an early stage and come up with appropriate interventions
- To provide teachers, Head Masters and parents with information on the child
- To train all Standard I teachers on interactive strategy
- To review the physical set-up of the Standard I classroom to bring it in line with that of the pre-primary unit

### **(c) Efforts to improve learning achievement**

The major challenge of primary education remains the quality of the output of primary schooling. The CPE pass rate has stagnated at around 65 percent over the last decade, with the performance of girls far exceeding that of boys (74.3 percent against 62.0 percent in 2006). The transition rate to secondary level has evolved from 50 percent in 1993 to 71 percent in 2007.

The Primary sub-sector has an automatic promotion system till Standard V. Grade repetition becomes very significant at Standard VI, at about 25 percent, as a large proportion of those pupils who fail the CPE repeat a year, with the aim of improving their performance at the CPE examination the following year. Although ranking of pupils at the CPE examination was abolished in 2002, The CPE still serves the

dual purpose of certification and selection for admission in secondary schools. The primary school environment thus remains competitive, resulting in more than 85 percent of parents having recourse to private tuition for their children.

- The choice of the language of instruction used in school is considered to be of utmost importance and needs to be given attention especially in socio-economically disadvantaged areas where both family and community exposure to the English language (the 'official' language of instruction and assessment in schools) is limited. The curriculum highlights this issue and the fact that teachers need to be made aware of the principles underpinning language acquisition so that they can make judicious use of the language of the environment to facilitate learning.
- As indicated earlier, since 2007, a baseline profiling is carried out at the beginning of Standard I to assess the state of readiness of Standard I entrants. In 2008 a diagnostic assessment was carried out at the beginning of Standard III to identify gaps in the pupils' learning at this level for remediation. These measures are efforts to bring about an equitable distribution in learning outcomes.
- The Zone d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP) has been created to address educational failure which is more pronounced in schools found in the less developed regions. The ZEP Strategy is based on the premise that positive reinforcement is required to create favourable learning conditions for children from disadvantaged regions. It provides for the active participation of all stakeholders, namely parents, the community, business organizations, non-governmental organizations, in the process of bringing about improvements in the achievement levels of the schools.

One of the most interesting outcomes of the philosophy upon which the education methodology for ZEP schools is based is the social outcomes it has achieved. ZEP schools have managed to produce some good practices such as holistic educational approaches, school-community partnership, active parent involvement in the educational process, fund-raising models for school improvement projects etc. that needs to be replicated in all other schools.

#### **(d) Teacher training**

The majority of teachers at the primary education level are government employees. All teachers of government and grant-aided schools follow a two-year full-time pre-service training programme dispensed by the Mauritius Institute of Education. Since 2002 the entry requirement to join the

teaching profession has been upgraded from O-Level to A-Level qualifications. A Pedagogical Inspectorate monitors and supports teaching and learning to improve the teacher effectiveness.

Recruitment of teachers for the government primary and secondary schools is carried out by the Public Service Commission as the case is for state employees. Private institutions, grant aided ones included, recruit their teachers on their own. In the state sector, there is a mobility of teachers as well as Heads of schools as part of a procedural transfer exercise—though this is anything but an annual feature. Hence in the primary sub -sector, teachers complete a 6-year cycle before being eligible for a transfer (for Heads of Primary schools, it is a 4-year term).

Working conditions are determined by existing regulations and are generally governed by labour laws.

The new curriculum that is being prepared in both the Primary and Secondary Sectors will certainly take necessary action to give Science and Technology Education an important place. This change in philosophy needs to be accompanied by revisiting the Professional Development of our teachers because teachers are a key to the improvement of the educational quality of any educational system. Teachers being a major partner of Educational Reforms, their professional development and re-training are seen as fundamental. In addition, pre and in-service training has been reformed with greater emphasis being placed not only on the development of Professional Skills and Values but also at promoting more autonomy, innovation, reflection and career-long development. In the latter context, the training path for teachers has been so rationalized as to encourage them to undertake voluntary career-long professional development.

### **1.3. Poverty and social exclusion**

Education for All forms part of a broader strategy towards poverty alleviation and elimination of exclusion. The goal is to develop a more inclusive system where

- All children find a place at school
- Quality education is accessible to all
- The system is free of any sort of inequity
- Every child is given the opportunity to fulfil his potential

Despite all facilities and support, including free access to education spanning pre-primary to university, 15 % of children of pre-primary age (about 5000) do not attend school. Absolute poverty is the main

reason. Most of the families involved live in the pockets of poverty in both urban and rural areas. For these 5000 children, not going to school is, today, a result of poverty, and, tomorrow, it will be the cause of their poverty. For these 5,000 children, not going to school is, today, a result of poverty, and, tomorrow, it will be the cause of their poverty.

Rs 395 million have thus been provided for 2008/09 for a special item of expenditure known as Eradication of Absolute Poverty (EAP) Programme. Among other things, this amount is to ensure that all poor children of pre primary school-going age attend school, and that these children are provided with a decent lunch. Understanding that this is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires not only financial resources, more seats in classrooms and more teachers, but also an entire range of social support, Government looks to joining into a five track partnership, bringing together the entire range of social partners, including, socio-cultural organizations, NGOs, the corporate sector, development partners and the various levels of government.

The following actions which are being envisaged will target every child who should be but is not attending pre-primary school because of poverty and will be applied in rural as well as in urban areas:

1. Identifying space in existing schools, both private and public to register these children;
2. Providing free transportation facilities to and from school, with maximum security and safety for the children;
3. Providing free food pack for the day;
4. Giving free school materials for the year;
5. Providing free clothing;
6. providing counseling to parents with the help of NGOs;
7. Providing "*accompagnement scolaire*" to ensure that the children are in school; and
8. Providing free medical check-ups, eye glasses, and hearing aids to those in need.

Having said this, it will be borne in mind that the Constitution guarantees there is no exclusion from schooling on the basis of race, creed or ethnicity. Cultural marginalization is therefore seen as a form of discrimination that is legally not acceptable.

## **2. Inclusive Education: The way of the future**

### *2.1. Approaches, scope and content*

#### **a) Conceptualisation and vision of inclusive education**

The country's constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens and excludes all types of discrimination. This would be further consolidated with the Equality of Opportunity Bill that the Government is intending to pass in Parliament. Government's vision is to create a society where there are opportunities for all, a more inclusive society, a society where there is equality of treatment before the law and by all agencies, whether public or private.

The principles of equity, justice and social inclusion are deep-rooted within both the Social and the Education agenda, the Mauritian Government recognising the right of every child to education and seeking to promote the democratisation of a society where no child is to be left behind. Thus, every child is to have a rightful place for personal growth and overall development and find his/her place to evolve at his/her pace in a lifelong learning process. The government also acknowledges that children with special educational needs should be included as far as possible within the general education environment.

#### **b) The challenges for ensuring educational and social inclusion**

Though education is free and compulsory up to the age of sixteen, still there are children who either are not enrolled or drop out at an early age. Being given that seats are available in schools to cater for all children within the age group, it is evident that this situation relates to poverty of the families or to self-exclusion.

The main problem is the identification of those who are being left out of the system and, in this connection, much effort is being made by the Ministry of Social Security and the NGOs which are active on the field. It has thus been averred that a certain number of children have not even been registered at birth, thus rendering the identification of non-enrolled children more difficult.

The Ministry of Education has on its part recruited a number of Social Workers who work in close collaboration with Educational Psychologists to provide support to schools and students at risk. The Social Workers are responsible for establishing the link between the home and the school, visiting the

home and parents of children who are often absent from school. They are thus in a position to help track down the cases of children dropping out before the age of 16.

The difficulty however lies in the enforcement of the law in respect of compulsory education as fining or imprisonment will only add to the hardships already endured by these children and their families.

Inclusive education also challenges the traditional school model so that it caters equally for children with special educational needs like those having

- physical, sensorial, intellectual and other disabilities
- specific learning needs (specialised learning needs for gifted children or children who have major learning difficulties)
- learning difficulties arising from social problems (vulnerable groups)

Parity has been a guiding principle because of the previous situation whereby the children were not being given equal opportunities for quality education as all their peers. Now, it is acknowledged that children with special educational needs will be offered all additional services and facilities they require in order to give them the best opportunities for their personal and social development. It is also clear that there will be greater flexibility of the age of admission at primary level and flexibility also in the time taken to finish lower primary or upper primary.

Another important challenge relates to getting people to go and work in these schools characterized by a high rate of social exclusion. Despite the extra allowances paid to staff working in the ZEP schools, still there is the reluctance of the staff for such postings and those who have served for some time are unwilling to stay longer and ask for transfer.

Getting companies, as part of their corporate responsibility, to provide support to these schools is another difficulty that has to be addressed.

### **c) Legal or regulatory frameworks that refer to inclusive education**

The Regulatory Framework

#### **Key actions**

- Ensure quality through proper mandatory norms to safeguard the holistic development of the child
- Facilitate registration of existing Specialised Schools
- Upgrade existing services



- Formulate recommendations for entitlement to grants.
- Develop human resource and building capacity
- improving information, communication and documentation
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Mauritius subscribes to the UN declaration of the Rights of the Child and a specific Ministry ensures these are safeguarded. The Ombudsperson's Office for Children acts as a watchdog to ascertain their rights to inclusion are guaranteed.

## *2.2. Public Policies*

### **a) Current dimensions of the phenomenon of exclusion from and within education**

Mauritius is fortunate as being a country of relatively small land area (1850 km<sup>2</sup>). The existing infrastructure gives fairly easy access to all places throughout the island and, at the same time, there is an adequate number of primary and secondary schools that have been built in both rural and urban regions. Again, due to the size of the country and the existing public transport facilities, one may easily travel from one place to another, thus making that the educational institutions are quite easily accessible from any place.

Another point that may be viewed as strength is the fact that the population, which is only of some 1.2 million, stands together as one nation, though having different ethnic origins. At the same time, there is no language barrier, all the people using the same mother tongue and understanding English and French, these two languages being taught right from the first years at school.

Thus, among the barriers to inclusion, neither the remoteness of areas and people nor the language and ethnicity stands significantly as causes of exclusion in the Mauritian society. In fact, the main challenge for Mauritius is poverty of a certain number of families (about 7000), most of them from disadvantaged areas. A correlation between the geographical area and the academic performance of the schools located in these areas has been established in a clear manner and it is not surprising that most of the ZEP schools are found within the deprived areas.

In order to address exclusion issues, the main indicators used are the enrolment, retention and attrition ratios. The Ministry also keeps the ZEP schools under close monitoring, making use of data relating to academic performance and absenteeism.

## **b) Inclusive education issues relevant for educational policies of the country**

Access to basic education is not at all a problem in Mauritius if viewed in terms of the number of institutions and that of seats made available. However, considering the Gross Enrolment Ratios or performing a cohort analysis and looking at transition rates, the picture is somewhat different, such an exercise revealing certain elements of exclusion:

- Although education is both free and compulsory up to the age of 16, still 15 % of children of pre-primary age (about 5000) do not attend school.
- Although provision is made for the secondary schooling of all children, the enrolment rate only reaches 75%.
- 30% of primary school children do not get through the end of primary cycle examinations.
- Only around 72 % of a cohort completes the CPE examinations successfully at their first or second attempt.
- Of this cohort, only 55% successfully complete their School Certificate ('O' level) and only 35 % access the Higher School Certificate ('A' level).
- Only about 28% of every cohort is successful at HSC making them ready for University.

The country cannot afford such inefficiencies of the education system given that its human resources are its major resource. In order to develop a strong knowledge-based economy and to provide the required products and services, the country needs all of its human capital — the knowledge and skill of the population — as they have a major role to play in the productivity of the nation.

While the education system of Mauritius has much to be proud of, with many young people achieving excellence both here and abroad, too many leave education without having fulfilled their potential, or having acquired the basic skills needed to function effectively in society. The reforms to the education system aim at seeking the highest educational standards for all the children and young people with a view to improving the quality and relevance of the education experience the young people receive and to ensure that the institutions serve the best interests of all sections of society.

It is also pertinent to remain alert on the gender issue so as to address the fundamental issue of equity. The Ministry shall develop a sector gender policy consistent with the principles and operational strategies of the National Gender Policy Framework. The policy shall ensure equal opportunities are given to both sexes to achieve gender equality in learning achievement. It shall also ensure the gender-

sensitivity of curricula and teaching and learning materials. Gender-sensitive indicators shall be developed to monitor gender gaps in education.

**c) Ways in which the current educational reforms address inclusive education**

- Efforts are ongoing through capacity building programmes to ensure that mixed ability classes are the norm and no child is discriminated against by virtue of his/her pace of learning.
- Sound teacher training ensures that more and more teachers are ICT literate and accordingly help gradually overcome the digital divide by encouraging computational skills in their learners

**The ZEP project**

This project addresses basic needs and contributes to the realization of basic rights of children living in poverty and failing to complete successfully their primary education by age 11+.

- It is an integral part of the on-going Educational Reform towards the realization of the Dakar Goals (2000) and the Millennium Goals one and two by 2015 with particular emphasis on quality basic education.
- The Project contributes to the promotion of inclusion in several ways:
  - (i) It researches an inclusive approach focusing on the "whole child" through on-going in-service training at all levels.
  - (ii) It draws on a Partnership with parents, community, club services, Private Sector and other partners in development ensuring that all stakeholders operate with an inclusive framework as set out in the original strategic document (2003).
  - (iii) Learning Support Services (LLS) - Nutrition, Health, Remedial Education and Fun and Leisure – are developed and fully integrated within the teaching and learning process and are part of the "flexible" Curriculum Framework that has been developed by the MIE earlier this year.
  - (iv) Remedial education provided within classes or in special units attached to schools with "pédagogie différenciée" is to be seen as a matter of priority to ensure full integration. Low achievement is the common denominator of all ZEP schools and additional assistance lead to positive reinforcement towards learning achievement thus contributing to breaking the poverty alleviation program.

## Special Education Needs

The vision regarding the education of children with special needs rests on the following policy guidelines

- Access to education and recognition of our children with special educational needs having the same right and enjoying equality of education opportunities as their counterparts.
- Relevance and Quality through the setting-up of structured systems aimed at meeting each child's needs.
- Achievement in terms of teaching and learning as well as provision of support services within the classroom and the school through the collaboration of all school personnel and the multi-disciplinary team: educational, social, psychological, therapeutic and medical.

## Budget Provision

Budget Year	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Budget for SEN	Rs. 4 M	Rs. 17 M	Rs. 17 M	Rs. 18 M
No of pupils		1229	1374	1411
No. of schools/day care centres		40	44	45

The four-fold increase in budget 2005-2006 aimed at achieving parity in treatment for the pupils in special needs schools as compared to those in mainstream schools.

## Access

Access to education and recognition of our children with special educational needs having the same right and enjoying equality of education opportunities as their counterparts implies access to school for children with special needs either in mainstream, in integrated classrooms or units or special education needs schools.

Since 2002 the Ministry of Education's involvement in SEN schools run by NGOs so far has been in the form of a partial per-capita grant. However since 2005, to alleviate the school fees, grant which are presently at par with the per-capita spending on a normal child in main stream schools.

Other actions taken which show the commitment towards inclusive education are as follows:

- Posting of primary school teachers in some specialised schools

- Provision of textbooks to children with disabilities
- Integration of children in the mainstream through the retrofitting of school buildings
- Facilitation of the participation of the children with disabilities in national examinations (extended time or adapted presentation of exam papers)
- Provision of additional services to the Special Education Needs institutions, either schools or day care centres, in terms of structures that are being set up to facilitate the educational services offered to the children in a holistic approach.
- Provision of adapted and flexible curricula for each category of special need.
- Provision of a supplementary feeding programme for the children

### **Tertiary education**

Tertiary education is a powerful mechanism for social mobility. It is thus of paramount importance that anyone qualified and aspiring for tertiary education, irrespective of his or her socio-economic origin and background can get access to it.

As an innovative and forward-looking institution, the University of Mauritius, one of the two public universities, has taken a series of measures to address the issue of inclusive education. Thus it has been noted that financial constraints may be a stumbling block for needy but meritorious students and the latter are able to obtain support through the

- Needy Student Fund
- SSR Foundation Fund interest-free Loan Scheme
- Trust Fund for Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups

The University has also attended to re-designing its infrastructure to make it friendly to students with physical disabilities. Ramps have been set up around the campus to facilitate the movement of students in wheel chairs and, for those with severe eye impairment, Braille and other such devices are available. The University's Regulations also provide for special consideration for students with physical handicap, in so far as examinations are concerned.

Despite efforts in the past, only 26% of children entering primary schools make it up to tertiary education. As a result, the GER at tertiary level, though on the rise, is only 36%. This is low by international standards and is out of phase with our ambition to be a globally competitive nation. Some

children work hard to make it through secondary education only to be barred from tertiary education because of insufficient seats or lack of funds. Even if the education is free, many are unable to avail of the opportunities offered.

Increasing and widening access to quality tertiary education has been a major preoccupation. The contribution that high-level human resources can make in the progression of our country to the rank of developed nations cannot be underestimated. Indeed, empirical evidence internationally points to a strong correlation between access to tertiary education and GDP per capita.

A comprehensive and effective action plan is therefore being implemented to increase the FGTER, thus ensuring that no one is turned away through lack of funds. The aim is to enable all students who are qualified and willing to pursue further studies to secure access to tertiary education. These include

➤ **Introduction of Foundation Programmes**

It is proposed to introduce Foundation/Bridging programmes for those who do not have 2 A-Levels. There is a huge mass of people who have not passed their HSC but who have one or two 'A' level subjects which do not qualify them to enter University courses. The practice in many countries is to run Foundation programmes or a pre-University course which will qualify these people to join the University courses.

➤ Expansion of TVET programmes at the level of Higher National Diploma

➤ Use of additional spaces in public and private institutions

Possibilities for tertiary institutions to open on a 7-day week basis as well as to make full utilization of their facilities during vacation time are being explored through

(i) Running courses on a double shift system in Tertiary institutions.

(ii) Use of existing facilities in the private Training Institutions (currently some 350)

(iii) Expansion of access through distance education

➤ In order to contain costs and increase enrolment in an economical way, innovation measures will be implemented such as extended programmes, greater use of technology including IT in teaching and

learning, the introduction of more modules and programmes through flexible and mixed mode including DE (Distance Education) as well as e-learning.

The Ministry is also working on several strategies to expand access to Tertiary Education through distance education. The MCA is already offering some twenty programmes through the distance education mode. These programmes are organised with support of external institutions such as IGNOU in India and the University of Mauritius.

➤ **To further expand flexible and distance learning in Mauritius, the Ministry is actively working on the setting up of an Open University.**

The objective of the Open University project would remove barriers for access to post secondary and tertiary education in Mauritius and the Indian Ocean Region, through the emergence of a flexible, accessible and cost effective educational system that will tap on the existing resources at technical, vocational and university education levels. The resulting impact should significantly enhance the quality and provision of post secondary education both locally and for this sub region of the Indian Ocean Rim.

➤ **Flexible learning:** Flexible mode of teaching and learning will be a key instrument in our arsenal to increase access to tertiary education. Today, more than 1 in 4 tertiary students (26% or some 9000 out of a total 34,332) are studying on the open learning mode

➤ With the National Qualifications Framework well in place, new learning strategies such as the Recognition of Prior and Experiential Learning will also be playing an important role in broadening the access base to those who previously could not get in.

➤ In order to provide for multiple exit strategies and provide for greater flexibility or students wishing to move in and out of the system at their own pace, multiple entry and exit points will be encouraged in all programmes as well as providing more options regarding the limit in the number of years to complete diploma or degree programmes.

➤ **Setting up of Campuses of overseas institutions**

The setting up of Tertiary education institutions, both local and overseas, is being encouraged. In this regard the proper regulatory and incentive framework has been put in place.

➤ **Introduction of a Loan Scheme**

The 2008/09 Budget has come up with a major measure to remove the biggest obstacle in the way of students from poor background to pursuing tertiary education which is finance. Ensuring that students get easy access to Government guaranteed loans and to refund back when they start working has been seen as a step in the right direction.

Hence a sum of 1billion rupees has thus been provided in the last budget for a **Human Resource Development, Knowledge and Arts Fund** to finance *inter alia*

- Physical infrastructure for Tertiary Education such as buildings, equipment and various facilities
- Projects to equip individuals with access to information, knowledge, technology, training and skills
- Student loan schemes and scholarships
- To meet the higher demand, the two universities are working towards increasing their intake so that all students who qualify for university studies can be admitted.
- To make Tertiary Education more affordable, sandwich courses that combine theory and practice, class room lectures and work experience are being developed. It is expected that creating a crucial bridge between university and industry will give to the students the best start possible into the world of work.
- As for needy students enrolled in distance learning courses, the costs of laptops and internet access for the duration of their studies are to be met through scholarships

### *2.3. Systems, links and transitions*

As mentioned earlier, the main barrier to inclusive education is poverty and the socio-economic situation of the families concerned. The government seeks to build an inclusive Mauritius by integrating the families who are at the margins of development and by further broadening the circle of opportunities. The budget thus makes provision for support to the economically weak families, namely, those whose income is below Rs 7500 per month.

The welfare state is also maintained particularly for that category of families with social aid being provided in given circumstances; for example, the payment of examination fees of their children.

Given also that this is a complex and multifaceted issue, it requires not only financial resources, but an entire range of social support. In fact, to face down that problem, Government is joining into a five track



partnership, bringing together the entire range of social partners, including, socio-cultural organizations, NGOs, the corporate sector, development partners and the various levels of government. In the last case, the Ministries of Health, Education, Family Welfare and Social Security represent the most important facilitators of inclusive education

### **Approaches and measures to make the education system more flexible**

Some students cannot make it to university studies because they do not have the academic aptitude. Nevertheless, they should be allowed to choose an alternative education path so that they stand the same chance as all other students to fully develop their talents and become as employable as those who go on to higher academic studies. As part of the ongoing reform programme, a pathway will therefore be introduced at the end of Form IV to help students opt either for tertiary vocational or academic education.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources, in collaboration with other Government departments and NGO's is working to develop a **Second Chance Programme** by January 2009 for all young people under 21 who are not in full time education or employment. It aims at providing basic numeracy and language skills to those who have dropped out of school and orient these young people to a vocational programme that includes a strong emphasis on life training skills and provides psychological and social back up.

**Recognition of prior learning** is also a most pressing issue around vocational education and training and it is coming constantly in the forefront of the Government agenda as a means to combat the skills shortage problem in the country. The concept is to translate prior learning and experience into a qualification, thereby allowing more people to acquire a duly recognized qualification. It is recognized as being critical to the development of an open, accessible, inclusive and integrated education and training system and is the foundation stone for lifelong learning policies.

Proficiency courses in Information and Communication Technology (IC<sup>3</sup>) are also being offered to the general public by making use of the existing infrastructure and equipment in state secondary schools. This project is in line with Government's aim of making Information Technology a pillar of the new economy and transforming Mauritius into a cyber island.

Mention has also to be made of ongoing adult literacy programmes as well as Education for Women and Women's Empowerment Programmes.

## *2.4. Learners and teachers*

### **(a) New approaches to teaching and learning**

The new curriculum adopts a more inclusive and integrated approach giving opportunity to every child to learn according to his or her needs and capabilities. Accordingly, a variety of teaching styles are adopted by teachers in line with participatory and inclusive pedagogy. Group work, project work, field visits are carried out to increase interests of pupils and seek greater involvement. In some cases, like the Bringing the Gap initiative, the classroom set up has been changed to reflect the educational needs.

In order to make learning more relevant and interesting, a number of concerns like Environment, Human Rights, HIV/AIDS, Values, Sustainable Development, Climate Change, Poverty alleviation and Gender have been integrated into the different learning areas. Children are not only at the receiving end, but are required to bring in their own knowledge of the world and their immediate environment.

The use of ICT as a tool has expanded the learning experiences of the child. The new curriculum makes provision for multi-media support to enhance learning and make it more interactive. Each school has been equipped with some 15 computers and an ICT teacher has been trained to transact with not only the ICT curriculum but also to assist in the teaching of other areas.

In the ZEP schools, teachers have been trained more intensively in the inclusive and participatory pedagogy to assist pupils with learning difficulties. More pedagogical support from NGO's and other organizations is provided to the teachers so that pupils of disadvantaged groups can develop more self-confidence and self-esteem to value education.

The setting up of class libraries is another measure to boost literacy skills in all schools. The Ministry along with other organization like the British Council has donated books to primary schools in order to foster a culture of reading and boost achievement level. Besides having a replenishment of the stock of books in the school library, each class manages a class library. Pupils are encouraged to bring their own books. The teacher supervises the reading habit of pupils in his or her class.

Assessment and Evaluation constitute main elements in the learning and teaching process. The new curriculum lays emphasis on assessment **for** learning. A number of assessment tools have been devised to identify the learning gaps of pupils and propose remedial measures. At Standard I, the Baseline Profiling is used to screen pupils and to determine whether they have acquired the competencies and

skills required to follow primary schooling. At Standard III level, a Diagnostic Assessment tool is used to identify pupil's difficulties and gaps.

The Remedial Education Strategy aims at developing intervention measures at individual level so that the slow learners obtain the additional support to make the grades. This national strategy is being applied at Standard III and IV on a pilot basis.

### **(b) Responding to the diversity of learners**

The new National Curriculum Framework lays emphasis on relevance and equal educational opportunity for all. With fast rate of development in the world, the curriculum has to follow suit; children should be able to connect their daily experiences with what is being learnt at school.

In order to enhance learning opportunities and reduce disparities, the National Curriculum Framework adopts an integrated, inclusive approach to teaching and learning. The pedagogy is more participatory.

Though English is the medium of instruction, the use of the language of the environment as a facilitator and support language is encouraged throughout the primary level. This becomes more important for children coming from deprived areas where the home environment compounds the linguistic difficulties they face in the classroom.

Textbooks are developed in line with modern pedagogical principles of the integrated and inclusive approach. This provides opportunities to pupils of different aptitudes and interests to learn and make the grades. The use of the textbooks is further supported by Teacher's Guides which give the required curricular orientations and assist teachers to deal with different level of learners.

The new emphasis given to assessment for learning as opposed to assessment of learning provides further boost to teaching and learning and caters to the needs of a variety of learners. The new approach aims at assessing the curriculum in terms of achievement rather than in terms of failure. It gives highest priority to the domains of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The curriculum is prepared on the Essential Learning Competencies (ELC) and the Desirable Learning Competencies (DLC) for those who can go beyond the essential.

### **(c) Learning reading in the early primary**

The number of hours of instruction in the primary school sector is 975 hours per year on average, amounting to an average of 27 hours of teaching time per week. The timetable in primary schools makes provision for reading periods for every class. In terms of curricular time, about 100 hrs per year are dedicated to learning reading, such an activity being carried out across the six years of primary schooling.

### **(d) Training of teachers**

Continual reforms in education over the years have created new challenges for school staff development. The need to upgrade teacher qualifications and embark on high level professional programmes like B.Ed and Masters in Education including the mandatory pre-entry programme for secondary graduates is being strongly felt.

Training and empowerment of all school personnel thus remains a priority of the Ministry. As such, the new policy of the Ministry is to increase access to teacher training facilities, through a diversification of modes for training, to cater for the entire teaching force as well as higher management, ancillary and supervisory staff. Emphasis will be placed on transferability, sustainability of training and recognition of good practices so that training has a multiplier effect. The need to develop real community of practice within school is also emphasized. Furthermore, as education is in a continuous state of flux, there is a need to develop a lifelong learning culture through a policy of continuous development for all professionals in education.

The publication of the PRB Report 2008 makes a number of recommendations on the review of entry qualifications and modes of selection for all cadres in education thus necessitating the development of a comprehensive HR strategy for training as well as optimal use of all resources at all levels in the sector.

Some of these relate to:

- (i) Upgrading of skills and competencies of teachers through insistence on an all diploma teaching workforce for the primary sector and the necessity for all new entries to the secondary sector to possess an Educator's License as well as the compulsion for all Secondary School teachers in service to possess a PGCE for eligibility to promotional positions;

- (ii) Targeting Special Education Needs through the creation of the posts of “Trainee Educator, Special Education Needs” and “Special Education Needs Teachers” working closely with the class teacher;
- (iii) Leadership and educational management with emphasis for potential incumbents to possess a Diploma in Educational Management, a PGCE or a Master in Educational Leadership & Management or again, a Certificate in school management for school superintendents-secondary

**(e) Towards a more effective organisation of formal and non-formal learning environments**

In the formal setting, it should be ensured that the physical school environment is conducive to learning in order to create the necessary motivation among students with various abilities. The teaching strategies should be adapted to the different levels and abilities of our mixed ability classrooms. Teachers should ensure that differentiated pedagogy is employed in their teaching in order to include all the learners.

In the context the competency based curriculum, multiple skills development is favoured in lieu of content knowledge and recall. Co and extra-curricular activities should be properly planned and organised for the overall development of the child.

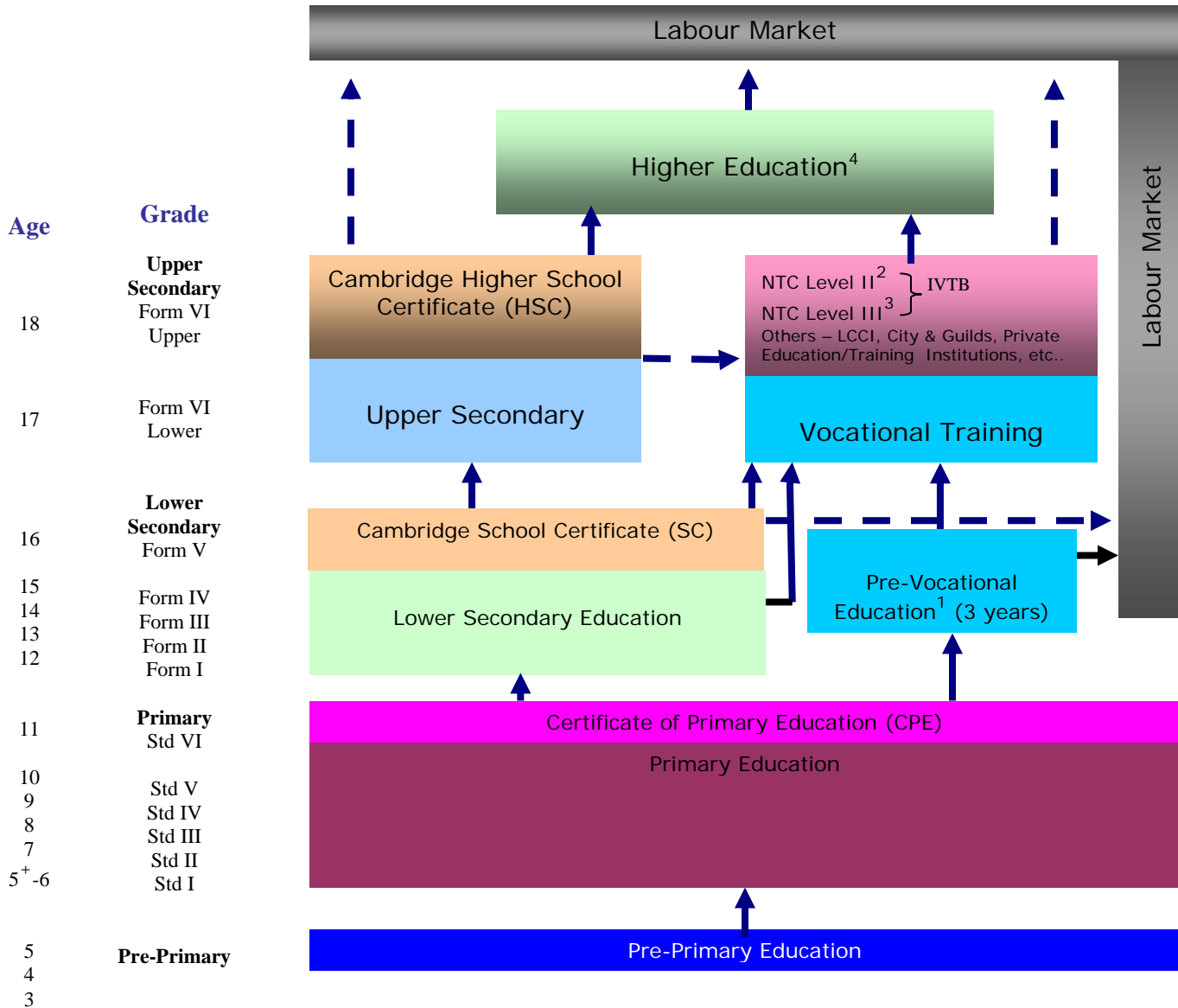
The Remedial Education Strategy currently being applied at Standard III and IV on a pilot basis as mentioned earlier, now needs to be implemented across the primary as well as in the secondary sector.

Various structures exist within the different Ministries to provide adult literacy programmes in non-formal settings. A national core skills programme has been designed for the lower grade labour force for them to keep pace with changes in their work environment. The Empowerment Programme spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance is also an important tool to fight absolute poverty. This forms part of the informal environment created to provide the necessary condition and act as a catalyst for those who have been left out of the formal system to be empowered with skills in order to become employable.

The **Second Chance Programme** which was referred to earlier is another effective means towards inclusion of youths who have dropped out of the system.

## Current Structure of the Mauritian Education System

### Pathways of the Education and Training System in Mauritius



**Key:**

1: Pre-Vocational education was provided for those pupils who have failed the CPE after a second attempt and hence were not eligible for admission in secondary schools. In 2001 pre-vocational classes were integrated in secondary schools alongside the mainstream classes. The pre-vocational curriculum provided for basic literacy, numeracy, science, technical and ICT skills over three years. Upon completion of the pre-vocational programme, students follow a bridging course- the NTC foundation course, which allows for progression in the TVET sector. Entry requirements for the TVET sector vary from completion of Form III to Form V.

NTC - National Trade Certificate, IVTB - Industrial & Vocational Training Board

2: Requirements for NTC Level II vary between SC and HSC or NTC III

3: Requirements for NTC Level III vary between Form III and SC or NTC III Foundation Course (Min. Age: 15)

4: Refers to Post A -Level / HSC