



# World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

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# Belize

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## Principles and general objectives of education

Education is a basic human right. The broad objective of education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills and attitude required for their personal development to reach their potential and for their full, active and free participation in society and the country's development, and the advancement of common values. The national goals of education for students in Belize are: a) knowledge of Belize and a commitment to and involvement in its nationhood and development; b) appreciation of and respect for different people and cultures and a commitment to justice and equity for all; c) spirituality, social skills and personal qualities; d) intellectual skills and qualities; e) knowledge and practice of healthy lifestyles; f) understanding of the economics of Belize and of the world, the appreciation of work, the capacity to participate in economic activities, skills in design and the ability to use a range of technologies; g) knowledge of the universe and an understanding of our solar system with special attention to the earth; h) understanding of systems and sub systems in the physical world, including the natural environment and the need to preserve it; i) understanding of number, quantity and space and the application of relevant concepts; l) appreciation of, and participation in, artistic ventures, particularly within the Belizean culture; m) ability to communicate proficiently in English; n) ability to communicate effectively in Spanish.

Decisions concerning the delivery of education are guided by principles recognizing: the rights of the individual to education regardless of gender, religion, language or ethnicity; the uniqueness of the individual and the need for the complete development of each person; and the need to protect the individual by ensuring that the content and process of education are morally acceptable.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

According to the **Education Act** 1990 (amended in the year 2000), the eight-year primary education programme is compulsory and all children between the ages of 5 and 14 years are required to attend the school.

Article 25 states that: "The education system shall ensure equitable access for both genders to education at all levels, shall be sensitive to the particular needs of the female gender, and shall cater to the special needs of challenged pupils. Schools shall be free of gender, racial and other biases, and shall be managed in such a way that all students shall, as far as may be applicable, co-exist as peacefully and harmoniously as possible."

## Administration and management of the education system

The **Ministry of Education** (previously the Ministry of Education and Labour) is the main education authority in the country. The Ministry establishes and sets national



education goals and policies; provides support systems for the effective delivery of appropriate and equitable educational services at all levels of the education system; and monitors the quality and effectiveness of education at the pre-school, primary, secondary and post-secondary levels. It ensures the development of relevant curricula, its implementation, and the provision of supportive environment that facilitates the teaching/learning process, in a system that is managed by qualified staff. The Ministry works in consultation and co-operation with the churches, communities, voluntary and private organizations, and other bodies recognized as education partners for the sufficient, efficient, and equally accessible provision of education in Belize.

Within the Ministry of Education, **School Services** is responsible for functions relating to the administration and resource provision of schools, and ensures that operational decisions relating to these are taken at the regional level. The purpose of the School Services is to support the Chief Education Officer in his/her duties through: managing school supervision and inspection; devising criteria for the equitable delegation of school resources; providing for the sale of textbooks and allocation of grants/bursaries; monitoring school children transportation service to ensure safety and equity; monitoring the work of the School Attendance Officer and Rural School Officers.

The **Quality Assurance and Development Service** ensures relevant quality education through the development and monitoring of the implementation of national standards for the performance of students, teachers and schools, and is comprised of the following Units/Services: **Curriculum Development Unit**; Assessment and Evaluation Unit; Teacher Development and Licensing Service; Administration and Finance Unit; and Production Unit.

The **Special Education Unit (SEU)** is committed to providing appropriate educational support to children and youth with special educational needs. The nature of the need may be physical, sensory, intellectual, behavioural, emotional or multiple. Services provided under SEU include screening, diagnostic assessments, teacher-training, parent and school support and specific therapies for students with special needs. Two major principles govern the provision of education for children with special education needs: the principle of inclusion and the principle of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The principle of inclusion is based on the affirmation of the same right of equal education for every person to learn within his or her own community. The LRE recognizes the wide range of diversity among students as well as unique forms of need. This principle recognizes that where it is not in the best interest of the child to be included in the class he or she may need a different setting for the teaching learning process, for example special schools and classes, resource classrooms and home schooling. The approach to special education has changed from exclusion, to mainstreaming, to inclusion. District Centres provide support to parents whose children have special education needs.

The **Pre-school Unit** is responsible for: providing training for pre-school teachers and early childhood workers; doing licensing inspection and visits to pre-schools; providing support to managing bodies of pre-school programs; advocating with government and aid agencies for financial support and recognition; developing and implementing early childhood curricula for pre-school education; and conducting



a school readiness summer programme in areas where there is no pre-school education programme available.

The **Employment Training and Educational Services (ETES)** of the Ministry of Education is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that youth and adults are provided with quality occupational employment training and education services that will empower them to become gainfully employed and thus actively contribute towards the development of the nation. The vision of ETES is to enhance a national TVET system that will provide equal access, empowerment opportunities and a better quality of life for all. Centres for Employment Training (CET) offer courses such as small engine repair, food preparation, catering, cake decorating, arts and crafts, cushion making, woodwork, computer training and literacy, in keeping with the stated goal of training for today's job market. The centres are accessible to all, but the major target group is the disadvantaged young people who did not get an opportunity to get into secondary school but would like to have a skill in order to be able to get a job. They also cater to adult education for people who are already working but may need to improve on their skills or learn an additional one. The courses vary in length ranging from three months to ten months in duration.

The **National Resource Centre for Inclusive Education (NaRCIE)**, established in June 2007, remains the department of the Ministry of Education which is responsible for ensuring that the special learning needs of students are properly addressed within the existing education system. This task demands that the NaRCIE collaborates with other entities to consolidate the principle of inclusive education in the education system. The NaRCIE seeks to institute programmes which will strengthen the ability to address the needs of the growing number of students with varying learning needs in pre-school, primary and secondary schools. The NaRCIE continues to provide technical and professional support to two special schools and six centers as well as to several regular schools.

According to the (draft) Education and Training Bill of 2009, the **National Council for Education** shall advise the Minister on all matters relating to education the Minister requests, and in particular shall: a) make recommendations on the availability of, and access to, the different levels of education including continuing education and special education; b) monitor and report on factors which limit participation in education, including socioeconomic and cultural factors; c) act as a forum for discussion on the goals of education and the relationships between schooling and the needs of the individual and education and the development of Belize as a nation; d) inform and advise on the quality of schooling at the different levels including issues of curriculum, textbooks and teacher performance; e) inform and advise on the effectiveness of management in the education system and schools; and f) make recommendations on the responsibilities and contribution of parents and the community to education.

On the basis of the Education and Training Bill of 2009, the **National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET Council)** shall: a) provide advice in the design of the curricula pertinent to technical and vocational education and training at all levels of the education system; b) provide advice in the establishment of standards for the completion of all technical and vocational education and training programs and apprenticeships in designated trades and



occupations identified by the Minister as eligible for award of the Belize National Vocational Qualification; c) provide advice in the development, conduct or arrangements for examinations, tests or other standards of performance for persons seeking technical and vocational education and training and certification at Belize National Vocational Qualification levels; d) assist in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of technical and vocational training at the post primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels of the education system; and e) provide advice and assistance in developing policies and procedures for granting recognition and accreditation in Belize of technical and vocational education and training qualifications granted in member countries of the Caribbean Community and other countries.

According to the (draft) Education and Training Bill of 2009, the **Belize Teaching Services Commission** shall enforce: a) standards set by the Ministry for entry into teaching to assure the quality and status of the Belize teaching force and the quality of the delivery of education; and b) all regulations governing the conditions of service of teachers with respect to employment, appointment, transfer, discipline and termination of teachers in government and government-aided pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary and TVET institutions. The Commission shall have the power to: a) verify and enforce compliance with standards, set by the Ministry, and regulations prescribed in this Act and Rules made thereunder for employment of teachers; b) maintain a database of teachers; c) maintain a Register of Appointed Teachers; d) appoint teachers to the teaching service; e) approve transfer of teachers; f) approve such leave as long leave, study leave and maternity leave, extended sick leave and any other leave extending beyond ten days; g) approve secondment and posting as itinerant resource officer; h) discipline teachers in the teaching service for government and government-aided pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, TVET and tertiary institutions. The **Belize Board of Teacher Education** shall provide quality assurance of teacher education and training in Belize and shall make recommendations on teacher training and allied matters to the appropriate authorities.

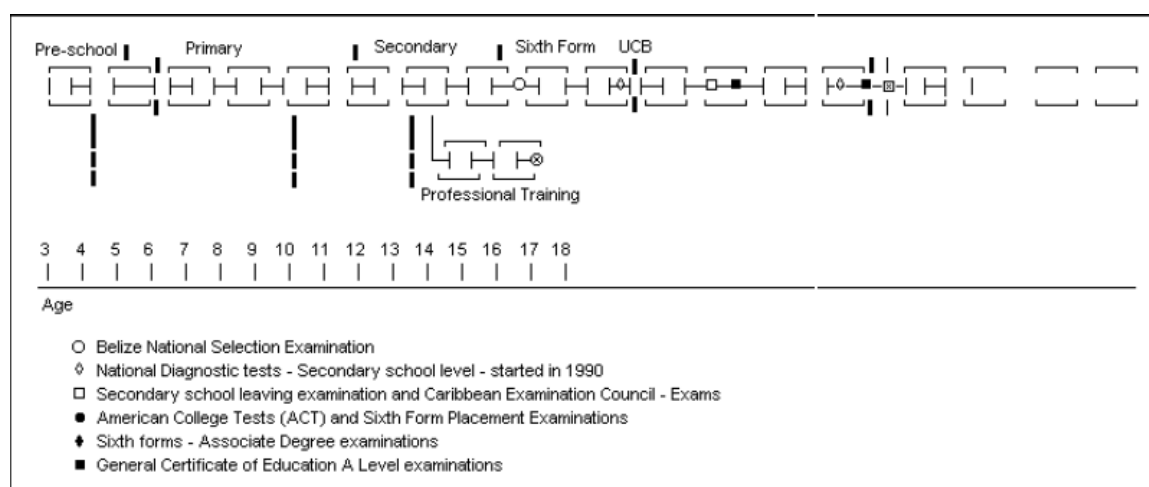
**District Education Councils** are established to assist the Ministry in planning, managing and monitoring the delivery of educational services in each of the six districts of Belize. Managers, managing authorities or boards are responsible for the proper and efficient organization of individual schools or institutions and for the adequate provision of such support systems required to deliver appropriate education to students enrolled in schools (with assistance and in partnership with the government under the conditions for grant-in-aid as specified in the Education Act).

In the recent years, the **Literacy Council** of Belize has emerged as an arm of the Ministry of Education with the responsibility in conjunction with the Adult and Continuing Education section of the Ministry to conduct literacy programmes. Some secondary schools also undertake their own evening schools for those who wish to upgrade their education. Various non-governmental organizations also offer training programmes relating to their particular missions and objectives.

There are only a few private schools in Belize. The country has an established church/state system of education and thus church schools and schools run by various voluntary organizations receive public funding and are declared public schools.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Belize: structure of the education system



### Pre-school education

Pre-school education caters to children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. It is community-supported and is not compulsory, but is becoming more widespread as its benefits are recognized by parents.

### Primary education

Primary education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 14 years. The eight-year programme is divided into infant grades (I-II) and junior grades (III-VIII or Standards I-VI). The completion of primary education is marked by a nationally administered examination to determine access to secondary school. Most primary schools are church-related, but receive public funding under the church/state system of management. Primary schools follow the official curriculum that prepares students for the Belize National Selection Examination.

### Secondary education

Secondary education includes four-year schools offering general education (in most cases including an element of vocational-technical education) and vocational or trade schools offering short-term courses in basic trades (Centres for Employment Training). At the end of the four-year programme students sit the Caribbean Examinations Council Certificate (CXC), GCE Ordinary-Level Examinations, and after two additional years they may take the GCE Advanced-Level Examinations.

### Higher education (tertiary education)

Higher education in Belize refers to all post-secondary education which occurs within the formal education structure and culminates in the award of certificates, diplomas and degrees. Post-secondary institutions include sixth-form establishments (junior colleges), offering two years of post-secondary schooling leading to the award of an



associate degree; institutions for professional training (agriculture, nursing, teaching); and the University of Belize. The University offers programmes leading to the award of certificates, diplomas, associate degrees and bachelor's degrees.

The length of the school year for pre-primary, primary and secondary education is approximately 175 working days with a minimum of four, five and five and a half hours of classes per day, respectively. The school year usually begins in September, with breaks at Christmas and Easter, and extends to the end of June. Summer holidays last nine or ten weeks. Primary schools usually divide the year into three terms, the end of each corresponding to the Christmas, Easter and summer vacation periods. Secondary schools divide the year into three terms or two semesters. Post-secondary institutions usually divide the year into two semesters, with the University College of Belize maintaining a summer programme equivalent to a third semester.

## The educational process

The Ministry of Education Action Plan 2005–2010 identified a number of key action areas in order to reshape the education system to allow for delivery of innovative ways to meet Belize's education needs for the twenty-first century. As regards curriculum and assessment, the objectives are to ensure that curricula are relevant and effectively taught at all levels, implement national assessment and use assessment data to inform educational planning, establish strong links with community and parents as well as volunteer opportunities.

The curriculum of primary schools is centrally established by the Ministry of Education, while the curriculum at the secondary level depends on the external examination councils.

### Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education emphasizes socialization and the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pre-school education is not yet fully developed. Pre-school centres are generally small, with many teachers being untrained, i.e. having not completed a formal teacher training programme.

According to the Ministry of Education Action Plan 2005–2010, “the period of early childhood is that period of a child's life that spans from age zero to 8 years. The education system has traditionally given far from sufficient attention to this most important phase in children's development. There is urgent need to increase access to opportunities and quality of education at this critical stage in children's development. Meaningful connections are initiated with the first stage of early childhood from birth to three years, the preschool years, and the later stage of early childhood, which includes the transition from preschool to primary school. Emphasis is also placed on initiating and maintaining strong links with other sectors addressing early childhood issues.”

Envisaged activities within the Plan include: a) support attachment of preschools to primary schools in all districts; b) construct/support construction of pre-



schools where none exist; c) establish Summer Preschool Experience Program where none exist; d) establish and resource a specialized unit—Early Childhood Education and Development Centre (ECEDC); e) train and certify preschool teachers; f) complete the curriculum development and implement it in all pre-schools; g) ongoing monitoring of preschools countrywide by district supervisory teams.

In 2007, there were approximately 5,000 children enrolled in pre-primary education.

## Primary education

The ultimate goal in primary education is to have all students successfully succeed, and perceive themselves as successful learners, and demonstrate a desire to obtain further education. The primary school curriculum is grouped around four areas of study: language (English and Spanish); mathematics, science, work and technology (aspect of technology relating to production); social studies and personal development (aspect of personal development relating to social/cultural, spiritual, economics); the expressive arts, physical education, health (including the physical aspect of personal development). Religious education and/or Bible studies commonly feature in denominational schools. Life skills are also a common element.

Students are formally assessed and evaluated at the end of every term/semester and at the end of each school year to determine promotion. At the end of primary education, students take the Belize National Selection Examination (BNSE) composed of tests in English usage and composition, mathematics, science and social studies. Based on test performance, the student is issued a percentile rank that forms the basis for entry into secondary schools on a competition for available space basis. The student is also issued a certificate presenting a letter grade (A to D) for each of the four subjects listed using a norm-referenced method of grading.

Figures for educational wastage vary, but the generally accepted national dropout rate average between entry and completion of primary school is 25%. Educational wastage increases during the latter half of schooling and the repetition rate is high (9.7% over the eight grades). In 2003, the primary school completion rate was 40.4%. In 2006/2007, the transition rate from primary to secondary school was 88% (87% males and 90% females).

Teachers have very little autonomy. The centrally-developed national curriculum with associated guidelines specifies what is to be taught at what levels. The new curriculum gives more freedom to principals and teachers to determine the actual content and classroom strategies and teaching sequence, as it seeks to identify learning outcomes rather than specific content and sequence.

In 2007, there were some 52,000 pupils enrolled in primary education.

## Secondary education

The curriculum for the first two years of secondary education generally consists of English, Spanish, science, mathematics, social studies, religion and literature. During the last two years, students are streamed and the subjects studied will depend on the





stream. There are usually three streams, i.e. business, secretarial and academic studies. The latter consists of studies in the sciences, mathematics and the arts. Schools usually allow a mixture of all three with emphasis in one.

At the secondary level, the curriculum is dictated by the syllabi of the various external end-of-school examinations, such as the General Certificate of Education (GCE) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). A significant number of teachers were involved in determining the syllabi of the various CXC subjects.

English is the language of instruction at all levels. In some cases where there is a homogeneous class, as in the case of isolated Mayan villages, the mother tongue is partially used as the language of instruction in the early years. The proposed language policy for education seeks oral and written competence in English and Spanish and literacy in one of the mother tongues. This is not yet fully implemented, however.

Students are formally assessed and evaluated at the end of every term/semester and at the end of each year of schooling to determine promotion. At the secondary level, students are issued a diploma by the institution attesting to the successful completion of the prescribed course of study based on its own internal assessment and standards. Most students also take examinations set by the Caribbean Examinations Council, which often form the basis for employment and further studies. There is no connection between award of the diploma by the institution and performance on the external examination. There is no national standard and assessment of performance at the secondary level similar to the BNSE at the primary level. Sixth-form establishments and other post-secondary institutions operate similarly to secondary schools in issuing diplomas certifying successful completion of the prescribed course of study.

Educational wastage between entry and completion of secondary education is similar or slightly higher than that at the primary education level. The dropout occurs early, usually after the first or second year. The repetition rate averages 6% over the four years of secondary education.

There is now at least one sixth-form or Junior College in each of the six administrative districts. They either operate within the administration of a secondary school or provide tertiary level education as an institution with its own administrative structure.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

The Assessment and Evaluation Unit of the Ministry of Education contributes to the assessment of learning achievement nationwide through: a) providing the education system with high quality assessment instruments at critical stages of the primary and secondary level; b) conducting analyses of achievement data in order to provide information on student performance in relation to outcomes determined by national curricula; c) providing the education system with evaluative information from national examinations of student learning to enable review of curriculum, pedagogy and to inform the policy making process; d) directing activities related to the administration of national and international examinations; e) participating in the development of policies governing the provision of educational services as required



by the Ministry of Education; f) liaising with national, regional and international entities in matters related to curriculum and assessment; g) establishing clear guidelines for classroom assessment; and h) collaborating with other Service Units in the provision of educational services to the education system.

## Teaching staff

The recent paradigm shift in the role of the teacher is one that views the teacher as facilitator/guide to learning, a view that sees the student as participating and generating understanding rather than the teacher being the sole source of knowledge. Teaching as a profession is a vision of the teacher as one who: a) has a sound academic background and, therefore, demonstrates knowledge of the content area to be taught; b) has an appreciation for children's social, emotional and cognitive development. This appreciation will recognize each student as a unique individual with her/his own talents and dispositions and will endeavour to prepare instructions to meet the uniqueness; c) is willing to make decisions on changes, particularly those for the benefit of students and the larger society; d) has concern for both the planned and hidden curriculum. Such a teacher will utilize resources wisely in planning quality curriculum and instructional materials, will model positive behaviours as well as inculcate sound, societal values and attitudes. He/she will select goals and set standards that are challenging but achievable; e) has a repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management skills; these are essential to enabling the teacher to deal effectively with the various learning styles and behaviour patterns of students; f) has an awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and the needs of each particular class; this allows for much forward planning such as guest speakers, field trips, etc., to ensure that students get maximum benefit from each and every teaching/learning experience; g) reflects on and analyses practices as a means of improving teaching, holding oneself accountable for the progress of the students they teach. In summary, the role of the teacher is to design coherent instruction to promote good teaching. This can be described as a coordinated approach that considers the various elements outlined above into an effective programme to meet the needs of the individual students and that of the wider curriculum; and h) believes that each student is capable of achieving. Teacher expectations of students have proven to have tremendous effect on students' achievement in the classroom. It is important therefore that teachers make positive inferences about students' potential for achievement.

The vision of the teacher as a professional is one in which a multiplicity of roles must be played. One of these essential roles is that of creating a warm and caring atmosphere, particularly as many students come from broken and dysfunctional homes. The teacher should create an environment where there is excitement for learning, is a safe place for risk-taking, and promotes high expectations for achievement. In brief, the school and classroom environment should be one in which the teacher as facilitator is indisputably in charge but students can still regard them as a special sort of friend, a protector, a challenger, someone who will permit no harm.

In 2004/2005, the total number of pre-primary teachers was 256. The large majority of teachers in pre-schools (99% of whom are female) have not attended and completed a formal institutional programme of teacher training (only 7% of pre-primary teachers were trained in 2004).



In primary schools, there is still an insufficiency of trained teachers (those certified after completing a formal programme of teacher training). In 2004/2005, there were 2,664 teachers in primary education, 51.4% of whom were trained, and 72% of whom were female. Secondary schools also suffer from an insufficiency of appropriately trained teachers. The teacher needs of the secondary schools are influenced by the continuing increase of the primary school enrolment which impacts on the output of the primary schools and consequently on the demand for secondary school places. These needs are also influenced by a widespread insufficiency of teachers qualified to instruct at the secondary level, as well as the shortage of specialist teachers in the various disciplines of secondary school curriculum. In 2004/2005, there were 1,131 secondary school teachers, of whom 64% were female and 37.6% trained.

In 2004/2005, there were 143 post-secondary teachers, 225 tertiary level teachers, and 47 vocational teachers.

The Teacher Development and Licensing Services of the Ministry of Education establishes standards for initial and teacher education and continuing professional development for teacher at all levels, as well as developing criteria for licensing of teachers and establishing standards for teaching at all levels and monitors teacher and teacher education against standards established.

There are variations in recruitment, which are not linked to any clear-cut national criteria. At the primary level, recruitment of teachers has been traditionally linked to the pupil-teacher system. Under this system, a primary school-leaver (14 years of age) may be recruited as a candidate to the first Teacher Examination, which is usually sat two years following admission to the schools' teaching staff. Subsequently, such a teacher studies and sits the Second Class Certificate Examination and finally the First Class Examination. At this point, the teacher is officially recognized as a fully certified but not as a trained teacher. Someone may also be recruited after completing three years of secondary education. In that case, the person must sit the two final certificate examinations, or, as a high school graduate, is exempted from certain academic subjects but has to qualify for the award of the First Class Teacher Certificate. Finally, a person may be hired as a trained teacher who has completed a teacher training college certificate or diploma course; or as a university graduate; or even as someone holding a post-graduate degree or diploma. Within the church/state system of educational administration, the religious faith of the recruit may also influence the decision to hire.

There are two basic (minimum) requirements for admission into the Belize Teacher College, offering training programmes for primary school teachers. The first is three CXC passes at the general proficiency level, one of which must be English; or successful completion of the First Class Teacher Certificate, a local examination that caters to those persons who may not have completed high school or who completed high school but did not obtain the minimum score required in the CXC examinations. The second requirement is successful completion of an entrance examination in English and mathematics.

Once appointed, opportunities for promotion occur with the opening of new schools or with vacancies arising from the departures or transfers of principal

teachers. At the secondary and tertiary levels, opportunities emerge with the expansion of the curriculum that necessitates new speciality or department heads. In this connection, in-service training providing for the professional development of teachers is highly important. Much of this is provided at the primary school level, by the Belize Teacher College, since its full-time teacher training programme includes student teachers who are already certified teachers on study leave. The Education Development Centre provides short-term in-service training of a few days duration in the areas of curriculum development and testing and measurement. Additionally, the National Teachers Union offers a three-week in-service programme of training for primary school teachers annually. Specialized workshops and on-site training are also offered by the National Drug Council, the Belize Zoo, the Tropical Education Centre and a few other NGOs, in the interest of promoting their own programmes through the schools.

In its true sense, pre-service training for primary school teachers began in 1988 with the admission of high school graduates into the Belize Teacher College. Prior to that time, such a programme did not exist given the fact that only teachers who were in the profession were able to pursue training (between 1954 and 1988, the college offered a programme for teachers already in the profession which provided initial training rather than pre-service training for teachers). The pre-service programme has limited intake because candidates find it more profitable to first secure a teaching job before seeking admission to the college. This afforded them the privilege of having a secure job until they have completed training, and receiving full salary while in training. This paradox is due to the fact that admission to the teaching profession requires only a high school diploma and in some cases only a primary education certificate. Also, the country's historical developments in education relied in the past on the pupil-teacher system of training for teachers. This situation is fast changing. The Ministry of Education has established a policy that requires training before entry into the profession and has put increased emphasis on the upgrading of teachers currently in the profession through the efforts of the Primary Education Development Project. Entry of high school graduates into the teaching profession without teacher training qualifications is now controlled to meet current demands, so the core of untrained teachers in the profession is now being reduced.

The training programme for primary teachers entitled Three-Year Certificate Programme with School Experience is accredited with the Joint Board of Teacher Education at UWI, Mona. This programme started as a pilot programme in 1990 and was formally introduced under the Primary Education Development Project in 1992.

This Programme can be pursued through two modes: a) one-year full-time studies at the college (Level I), followed by one to two years of experience in the field, returning to the college for one additional year of full-time studies (Level II); b) two and a half years in the extra-mural programme (Level I), utilizing distance-learning materials, followed by one year of full-time studies at the college (Level II).

A Certificate in Teaching Level I is granted by the Ministry of Education at the end of the first level. The Joint Board of Teacher Education grants certification for the entire programme at the end of Level II. Teachers receive a salary increase after successfully completing Level I, and another after successfully completing Level II. This programme prepares a teacher to teach in primary schools.



An opportunity for further training is the bachelor's degree programme in primary education, which is offered by the University of Belize.

In order to improve the quality of instructional inputs in primary schools and increase the achievement levels of pupils, the Primary Education Development Project has invested heavily in improving the teacher education programme for primary school. Prior to the introduction of the project, the programme was criticized as being too theoretical. Therefore, conscious efforts have been made to focus on the development of pedagogical skills while addressing content upgrading. New courses were introduced to meet the new demands and challenges facing teachers and schools.

The new model of training assumes that teachers admitted into the programme will have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, but given the current employment practices, this is not always possible. If the programme is to succeed, efforts will have to be made to admit only those who meet established entry standards. The new approach also attempts to train teachers using the methodologies they are expected to use in their classrooms and to place greater emphasis on developing process skills.

In-service training of teachers occurs in two forms: a) pre-college academic upgrading of teachers to meet the entry qualifications of the training college; and b) post-initial training for teachers.

The pre-college upgrading programme seeks to provide an opportunity for teachers to upgrade their content knowledge and to acquire the minimum entry requirement for admission into the college through attendance of in-service classes on Saturdays. The target group is the untrained portion (40-45%) of the primary teaching force. The programme is organized and delivered weekly in the district towns under the supervision of teacher college faculty stationed in the respective districts. The newly constructed district centres serve as the meeting point for these and other teachers in the various programmes being offered in the districts. Teachers pursuing this programme sit any of the three qualifying examinations depending on their academic background. Teachers sitting the First Class Examinations (highest level) are usually high school graduates who may not have passed any CXC's. Those sitting the First Teacher Examinations (lowest level) are usually primary school-leavers who may have completed two years of high school studies and dropped out. Teachers are required to study six examinations at each of the three levels (i.e. English, literature, history, geography, mathematics and science). Teachers pursuing the First Class Certificate are required to follow a course in child psychology and teaching methods, and are assessed in teaching practice, in addition to the six subjects. Teachers must complete all courses in a level before progressing to the next higher level. Completing all the courses at each of the three levels can take several years. Although time limits were set at three years per level for completing the courses, these were not strictly enforced until recently.

Examinations are set annually by the Belize Teacher College following course outlines developed jointly by the tutors in the programme. The college has developed a course in multi-grade methodologies for in-service teachers. This is an area of dire need in the country. Many teachers complain that they do not know how to cope with teaching several classes with children of varying abilities. The college is also offering



a programme for principals in educational leadership and administration, in anticipation of a more decentralized form of school management with the principal assuming an enhanced leadership role and greater school autonomy in determining teaching strategies and learning experiences in a curriculum with greater social relevance.

Over the last few years teacher training in Belize has witnessed a paradigm shift with greater emphasis being placed on attracting pre-service teachers who are perceived as being more flexible and open to innovation rather than trapped in the traditional ways of doing things. The teacher training curriculum is being reviewed to reflect those elements needed to develop a strong sensitive teacher able to manage a diverse group of learners using differentiated instruction in a child-friendly atmosphere, a teacher who will be able to effectively manage the new demands that will emerge with achievement of universal access to secondary education. Alongside the emphasis on teacher training must come the realization that support systems must be put in place to assist teachers in managing some of the new challenges they are now faced with. Teachers must now learn to cope with children with HIV and AIDS, diverse learning needs, physical and psychological handicaps, highly negative social circumstances and a host of other challenges. Only with strong support from the community, parents, the Ministry of Education and all stakeholders will teachers be able to remain efficient and effective in the modern classroom where inclusion is the overarching philosophy (Ministry of Education, 2007).

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## **Web resources**

Ministry of Education: <http://www.moes.gov.bz/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]

University of Belize: <http://www.ub.edu.bz/> [In English. Last checked: April 2010.]

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

## Annexes

### Belize Teacher College programmes

#### 2+1 Certificate Programme: Last intake 1991

Course	Hours	Credits
<b>Required courses</b>		
Educational methods (incl. visual aids)	90	4
Educational psychology	60	4
Educational sociology	60	4
Educational philosophy	60	4
Mathematics	180	12
English language	150	10
Language arts	120	8
Science	90	6
Social studies	90	6
Art education	90	6
Physical education	90	6
REAP	90	6
Divinity	60	4
<b>Electives 1 (one from:)</b>		
English literature	90	6
Special education	90	6
Early childhood education	90	6
Spanish	90	6
<b>Electives 2 (one from:)</b>		
Music education	90	6
Computer studies	90	6
Home economics	90	6
Industrial arts	90	6
Internship	one school year in the field (20 credits)	
Research paper	done during the internship year (8 credits)	





## New programme introduced in 1992

Three-year certificate programme with school experience

Admission Requirements: three CXC G1 or G2 including English or a First Class Certificate plus a pass in an Entrance Examination

### Level I

Courses	Hours	Credits
<b>Compulsory courses</b>		
Teaching methods	60	4
Child development	45	3
Testing & measurement	45	3
Classroom organ. & Mngt.	60	4
Instructional aids	30	2
English language	105	7
Language arts	90	6
Mathematics	90	6
Belizean studies	45	3
Social studies	45	3
Divinity	30	2
<b>Electives (two from:)</b>		
Art education	45	3
Physical education	45	3
Music education	45	3



## Level II

Courses	Hours	Credits
<b>Compulsory courses</b>		
Education & society	45	3
Guidance & counselling	30	2
Principles of education	30	2
Research methods	45	3
English language	75	5
B'zean & Carib. Lit.	90	6
Mathematics	90	6
<b>Electives 1 (one from:)</b>		
Art education	45	3
Physical education	45	3
Music education	45	3
<b>Electives 2 (one set from:)</b>		
Early childhood education	120	8
Special education	120	8
Educ. Leadership & Admin	120	8
<b>Electives 3 (one from:)</b>		
Spanish	90	6
REAP	90	6
Guidance & counselling	90	6
Computer studies		90

**Internship:** one semester (fifteen weeks with supervision after completion of course work requirements)

**Student Teaching:** six weeks (done before the second semester of course work)