

# Barbados

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## Principles and general objectives of education

The philosophy that underpins the education system of Barbados is rooted in the fundamental principle that human resource development is the key to social, economic, and political growth. Consequently, education must seek to enable all children and young people to be knowledgeable and creative; to possess positive attitudes and relevant skills; to be exemplars of good citizenship; to believe in the quality of humanity; to be self-confident in planning their future; to be thinkers, innovators, and problem-solvers; to inculcate the best social values and an appreciation of the dignity in all labour; and to be committed to the preservation and enhancement of the environment (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 1995).

## Current educational priorities and concerns

The Barbados education system evolved out of the efforts of the orthodox religious groups—Anglican, Methodist, Moravian and others. These efforts pre-dated emancipation and continued until the middle of the 1900s, when the government undertook full responsibility for the education of its citizens. During the immediate, post-emancipation period the emphasis of the Barbados education system was to provide the children of the emancipated slaves with the fundamental elements of education, the “three Rs”—reading, writing, and arithmetic.

During the first quarter of this century, the system was severely criticized, and few changes had been made to improve the system despite the harsh criticism. Listed among the criticisms were issues such as: the lack of a “definite policy”; elementary education being removed from the needs of children, thus rendering them unemployable; first-grade schools being “severely academic and having little contact with reality;” and second-grade schools, by imitating the first-grade schools, providing neither culture nor technical skills (White Paper on Education Reform, 1995).

Given the above criticisms, the Marriott-Mayhew Commission was appointed in 1932 to make a comprehensive review of the educational services of Barbados. The Commission reported a year later, among its recommendations was one advocating a “reorganization of the schools and a review of the curriculum to bring education into closer touch with the needs of the students and the times.” An important outcome of the Commission was the introduction of the modern secondary school in which technical and vocational subjects were included in the curriculum.

Having achieved universal access to basic education, the challenges for Barbados—due in part to the changes in the economy, the job-market place, and transformation of the global educational product—remain the improvement in the quality of the educational product, and the reduction of the lag in the reform of the



education system to keep pace with the economic and technological changes. The government, in an effort to meet the challenges and issues resulting from the economic and technological changes, is committed to the implementation of a reform policy that will put education and training on the cutting-edge of national development. Therefore, the Education Sector Enhancement Programme (or EduTech 2000) was initiated in January 1999, to be implemented over a seven-year period. The government's reform policy will address such critical areas as teacher empowerment, legislation, curriculum, special education, early childhood education, primary, secondary and tertiary education, as well as national certification.

The main objectives of this reform are as follows:

- preparing citizens for the responsibility of nation-building;
- revaluing the role of education in the sphere of national development;
- reinforcing the concept that learning is a continuous, lifelong process;
- developing a workforce that is equipped to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and that is readily re-trainable;
- ensuring equity in the delivery of education and equality of opportunity in the access to education;
- enabling students to develop enquiring and creative minds;
- helping our population develop positive attitudes, values, and beliefs to enhance the individual, as well as his or her position in the family, community, and nation;
- revaluing the role of teachers;
- sensitizing teachers to the importance of catering to the individual needs of the students;
- fostering a greater partnership between the school, the home, and the community; and
- strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture to plan, manage, and evaluate the education system more effectively (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 1995).

EduTech 2000 has four major components: physical rehabilitation of schools; technological infrastructure; curriculum reform; and human resource development (teacher training and institutional strengthening). Many of the elements of the Programme aim at promoting equity and diversity in the education system and in the society as a whole. Moreover, through these initiatives the Ministry aims to prepare the nation for successful adaptation to globalization, while strengthening the cohesiveness of the society.



Current objectives of Ministry of Education are:

- To continue to provide a sound basic education at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels which would equip students with the ability to recognize and realize their potential for development;
- To ensure equity in the delivery of education, taking the special need of students into account;
- To continue the enhancement of the teaching and learning process, through the integration of information and communication technologies under the Education Sector Enhancement Programme;
- To provide intensive HIV/AIDS education in schools and training institutions to sensitise youth and communities to HIV/AIDS and to foster preventative measures;
- To establish the University college of Barbados to fully meet existing and future training needs, broaden the scope of educational opportunities, and offer training in areas not previously given recognition;
- To provide, through the Student Revolving Loan Fund expanded access to funding for young persons who cannot otherwise afford a tertiary education;
- To increase access to early childhood education from 80% to 100%;
- To increase access to tertiary level education from the current 28% to 35%
- To develop a workforce that is equipped to adapt to a rapidly-changing environment and that is readily re-trainable;
- To foster a greater partnership between the school, the home and the community;

The School Meals Programme has been in place since the mid-1930s, and has the mission to provide lunches which are of high nutritional value and low cost to school children in an environment that is congenial to good work ethics and meets the highest health standards. The short-term objectives are to improve standards of nutrition and thereby promote regularity of attendance at school. Long-term objectives are to improve the standards of nutrition throughout the island and as a result to improve the rate of economic development. In addition, the service is designed to provide learning experiences in nutrition, education and social behaviour.



## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

In January 1983, the new **Education Act 1981-25** and **Regulations 1982** were enacted, bringing fundamental changes to the organization and management of the educational system, including compulsory primary and secondary education up to the age of 16.

Since then a number of amendments were made in 1991 to deal with issues ranging from the duties of Boards of Management to the duration of suspensions and the authority of Boards to expel students. However, there is need for further amendments to the Act and Regulations in order to make them supportive of some of the key strategies of the White Paper. Some areas for which modifications are necessary include:

- the adoption of a new teacher appraisal system;
- the establishment of a Teachers Service Commission and a Curriculum Development Council;
- the provision of national diagnostic assessment at the primary level;
- the introduction of flexible transfer from primary to secondary education;
- the introduction to partial zoning at the secondary level;
- the granting of teachers, where appropriate, the authority to search students' property.

Some of the above have already been introduced either partially or fully, while others are yet to be introduced. There will also be new legislation establishing a Council responsible for certification and articulation of programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Education is compulsory from 5 to 16 years of age (primary and secondary education). Overall, equitable access to primary and secondary education for males and females is facilitated by the prevalence of co-education in the system. This policy has been widely instituted since the late 1970s and early 1980s. As a result, school places are equitably accessible to both males and females. There are presently only three single-sex public primary schools, one all-boys school and two all-girls schools, while at the secondary level there are two single-sex public schools.

## Administration and management of the education system

Administration of the Barbados education system is controlled at the central level by the **Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports**—MES (formerly the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture). The Ministry is headed politically by the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports. The Division of Education is headed by a Permanent Secretary and at the technical level by the Chief Education Officer.



These officers are assisted by a Deputy Permanent Secretary, two Deputy Chief Education Officers and a cadre of staff at Ministry Headquarters.

The major function of the Ministry of Education is to co-ordinate all educational activities, and to make workable policy initiatives of the political directorate. More specifically, the Ministry of Education executes policy, set up *ad hoc* committees to assist with the functioning of the Ministry, deal with curriculum development, supervise and administer all examinations, and supervise the day-to-day operations of the primary schools. The *ad hoc* committees examine various functions affecting the teaching service. A committee may be internal or with the stakeholders; for example, if the committee is concerned with curriculum teachers are involved.

Regarding the supervision of examinations, the Ministry is responsible for the following examinations: the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE); the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), with School-Based Assessment; the Cambridge General Certificate Examinations Advanced-Level (GCE A-Level); and the National Criterion Referenced Assessment (NCRA) for Years VII-IX students. The Ministry of Education does not administer professional examinations, such as the Association of Chartered Accountants.

At the level of the schools, there are school boards and committees. The **Boards** have a management function at the secondary school level, while the **Committees** assist the Ministry of Education with the operations of the primary schools by overseeing the school plants, reporting on the state of the school plants, and making recommendations for the repair of school plants. The Board controls finances, select and appoint ancillary staff, and make recommendations for appointment to the teaching staff. The Board has support staff—clerical assistant, secretary treasurer, executive officer, and typist.

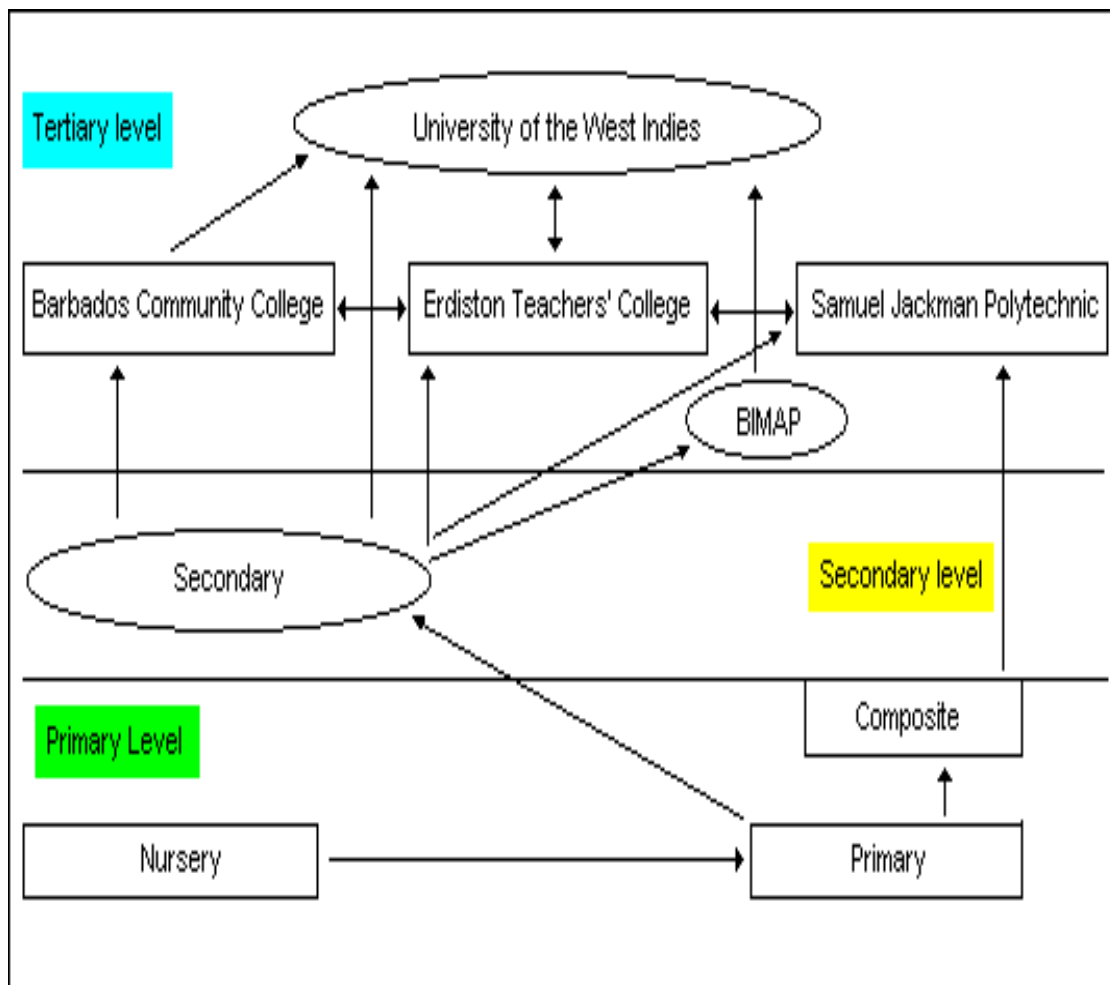
The Committees, which assist with the day-to-day operations of the primary schools, have no finances. They are concerned primarily with reporting on the state of the school plants. In addition, they can make recommendations to the Ministry of Education regarding the curriculum. The Committees have no support staff.

In addition to the *ad hoc* committees, boards, and primary school committees, there is the **National Development Council** that examines curriculum matters and makes recommendations to the Ministry of Education.

In 1980, the Government set up a National Training Board (now called the **Barbados Vocational Training Board**), with a mandate to ensure an adequate supply of trained work force in occupations in all branches of economic activity in the country. Another agency that has been established to ensure an adequate supply of technical and vocational training for industry is the **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council**. This agency was established under an Act in 1993 and is the governmental agency charged with the responsibility for advising on national policy on TVET matters, developing national plans for TVET and for co-ordinating and facilitating the implementation of those plans.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Barbados: structure of the education system



### Pre-school education

Pre-school education is provided for 3-4-year-olds in nursery units within primary schools and four nursery schools. At present, this level is not compulsory, and lasts two years.

### Primary education

Primary education caters to children in the age group 5-11. This level of education is compulsory, and lasts five to six years. Pupils between 5 and 7 years of age pursue an early childhood education (ECE) programme; those in the age group 8-11 follow the regular primary school curriculum.

### Secondary education

Secondary education is for pupils aged 11-16 years. This level of education is also compulsory, and it lasts five to six years. Students pursue a wide and varied programme culminating with the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC)



examinations. On graduating from this level, students gain places at the four schools that offer advanced-level programmes or at Barbados Community College (BCC).

At all levels the school year consists of thirty-nine weeks, divided into three terms: September to December, January to April and April to July.

## The financing of education

Over more than three decades, Barbados has pursued a policy of free education from primary school to university. Indication of this commitment can be gauged by the proportion of the national budget that is allocated to education.

Between 1990/1991 and 1994/1995, education's share of the public expenditure averaged 18.2%, beginning at 22% in 1990/1991 and falling to 18% by 1994/1995. The true measure of this commitment can best be seen by considering education's share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which, between 1990/1991 and 1993/1994, was an average of 6.8%. This level of social investment compares favourably with most developed countries.

Private financing in the public school system is reduced to a minimum, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. Private financing at the primary level includes the provision of clothing, exercise books, textbooks, pens and pencils, bus fare, and fees for school meals. At the secondary level, the major items of private financing are bus fare, lunch money, uniforms, and petty fees (games, exercise books, note books, and textbook rental).

At the post-secondary level, students, while not having to pay economic cost, are required to pay certain fees. These fees may include registration, student identification and material fees at Samuel Jackman Polytechnic; registration, institution and materials fees as well as medical insurance at Barbados Community College; registration, caution money, guild fees, non-residential fees, and books at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Cave Hill Campus; and registration, caution money, and student body fees at Erdiston Teacher College. For students who wish to study outside of Barbados, funding is available through scholarships, awards, bursaries and loans, as described in the Higher Education section.

There are two major dimensions of public expenditure, current and capital. Current expenditure accounts for the greater portion of expenditure—from almost 78% in 1990/91 to 97% of the total education budget in 1993/1994. The distribution to the various levels of education is shown in the table below. The largest portion (32.2%) went to the secondary level, while the primary level and the tertiary level received, on average, 28.5% and 22.2%, respectively.

## The educational process

In the context of globalisation and continued changes in information and communication technologies, education will be promoted as a lifelong process, which seeks to produce outcomes that are culturally based, technologically driven, diverse and dynamic. It will also seek to inculcate in citizen an understanding of, and



appreciation for the rule of law. It is through education that individuals will become well-rounded Barbadian citizens who are conscious of their responsibilities to self, family, society and country, and equipped with the tools necessary to build an all-embracing, cohesive society. Towards this end, various strategies employed by the Ministry will:

- promote learning as a collaborative experience;
- be responsive to, and influenced by, the needs of all beneficiaries,
- recognize the existence of multiple intelligences and abilities, and ensure that these are addressed in the classroom;
- accommodate and address the different learning styles of the students;
- allow each student to develop at his/her own pace;
- promote the creativity of students and the youth, and the building of self-esteem and confidence;
- reinforce the cultural and spiritual values and those behaviours necessary for a productive and wholesome life;
- adopt a research-driven and consultative approach to the development of programmes;
- use sports as a vehicle to develop a healthy, disciplined and united society; and
- promote the holistic development of young people through the creation of an enabling environment that facilitates the self-actualization of the youth.

The curriculum, under the educational reform, is based on constructivism and the child-centred approach. The focus is the student's interaction with the curriculum rather than the curriculum dictating the pace of learning. In addition, the revised curriculum promotes the utilization of indigenous content and materials, as well as authentic, relevant experiences.

Another innovation in the curriculum reform is the introduction of an outcomes-based education approach. This strategy will focus on the development of attainment targets that will outline specific student outcomes for each module to be covered in the different subject areas. They will be used as guides for the development of national standards, and copies will be provided for parents. One major benefit of this system is that parents will be better able to monitor their children's progress, which should lead to heightened participation of parents in the education of their children.





In addition, the revised curriculum includes technology and Social and Emotional Learning. Technology will be integrated across subject disciplines, and technological skills and competencies will also be taught in primary schools and continued during the first three years of secondary schooling where necessary. Social and Emotional Learning Skills such as self-management, problem-solving, decision-making and conflict resolution will also be integrated across the curriculum where they will be monitored and evaluated systematically.

## Pre-primary education

Pre-school education is provided in nursery units within public primary schools and in four traditional nursery schools. There is also one infant school.

The goal of pre-primary education is to provide for the total development of the child's personality by complementing and extending the pattern of informal education that is being provided in the domestic environment. At this level, the children between 3 and 5 years of age are at school for fifteen hours a week. The teacher-guided activities range from twenty to thirty minutes and deal with such areas as language arts, mathematics, religious education, environmental studies, physical education, music and drama. In addition to teacher-guided activities, children are taught by way of centre-of-interest activities—reading, art and craft, dramatic play, house keeping, creative corner, writing, science corner, music, and block building. Pupils are evaluated using the portfolio assessment (collection of dated pieces of work), anecdotal notes, and checklist of developmental milestones and behaviours.

For the age group 0–2, 15 public and 64 private day-care centres had been registered in 1998 with the Child Care Board.

The average class size is 12 pupils, and the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:12. In 2002/2003, there were 4,732 children enrolled in 78 government pre-primary schools; 529 within the 18 private institutions. In 2004, there were 5,901 children enrolled in pre-primary education, representing a gross enrolment ratio of 89% (71% in 2000/2001), and a net enrolment ratio as 81%. The percentage of children entering primary school education with previous preschool experience was 100%.

## Primary education

The fundamental goal of primary education is to build a foundation in reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. At this level, the pupils between 6 and 11 years of age are at school for thirty-five hours a week, five days a week. Each day is divided into seven sessions of thirty-five to forty minutes.

During the week pupils receive instruction in the following curricular areas: language arts (reading, 175 minutes; comprehension, 70-80 minutes; grammar, 70-80 minutes; writing, 35-70 minutes; poetry, 35-70 minutes); mathematics, 175 minutes; general science, health and family life education, social science, agriculture, arts and craft, music, physical education, and religious and moral education, 70-80 minutes for each subject area. Students also learn conversational Spanish.



The average class size is 30 pupils, and the teacher-pupil ratio is 1:30. Pupils are evaluated using two term tests and one annual/promotional examination. In addition, at the end of the primary level students take the Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE) for transfer to the secondary level. Since 1995, pupils have been taking the National Criterion Reference Assessment to identify areas of weakness and remedial needs.

Decisions about curriculum content are guided by the prevailing curriculum reform philosophy as outlined in the *White Paper on Education Reform* (1995), the *EduTech 2000 Master Plan* (1997) and the *Curriculum Reform 2000* documents. This philosophy places the student at the centre of the teaching/learning process and emphasizes the integration of various technologies across the curriculum. Decisions about the implementation of the curriculum at the school level are made by each school principal who, as chief instructional leader provides specific guidelines about the manner in which the curriculum is to be implemented. However, the leadership style, the ethos of the school, staff morale, and socio-economic status of the students and their parents are factors that impact on the actual delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, there are some variations from one school to another. In several schools, teachers collaborate as they plan in teams for the implementation of the curriculum. The insights gained from the interaction and exchange of ideas in such planning sessions help to enhance the quality of lesson delivery. This collaboration also builds collegiality among practitioners who would normally deliver instruction in isolation.

The curriculum reform effort, which dates back to 1996, represents a landmark in the development of education in Barbados. In terms of promoting equity and diversity, the curriculum reform effort will improve the provisions made for individual students within the system, since the reform is based on the facts that children: learn at different rates; have different learning styles; respond to a variety of stimuli; and learn best what is meaningful to them.

The objectives of the curriculum reform are to: (i) prepare students who are creative, numerate, literate, well trained and readily re-trainable at any point in their development; (ii) ensure that all students understand the necessity of being able to live and work harmoniously with other persons in their environment; (iii) increase the efficacy of the teaching/learning process by encouraging teachers to shift to the child-centred and more collaborative forms of learning in their classrooms; and (iv) prepare students for life in a technologically-advanced society by ensuring that all students who leave school in the twenty-first century have a good knowledge of, adequate skill in, and favourable attitudes towards the use of information technology.

At the primary level, the new curriculum is organized around seven learning areas. For students to see the inter-relatedness of all knowledge, these learning areas are to be integrated. Thus, social and emotional learning, information and communications technologies, and the cultural arts are embedded in the seven learning areas. The subject areas included in the revised curricula represent the wide range of skills and knowledge areas that will be necessary in the new global environment. Therefore, the new curricula include areas—such as aesthetics studies, health and family life education and technology—and reinforces the traditional core subjects—i.e. communication, literacy and language development, numeracy and mathematics, social studies and natural sciences. Given the present information-



intensive environment, the technology component of the curriculum reform is vital. It includes the introduction of basic technology mastery in both primary and secondary schools in the first group of schools in the reform Programme. In addition, information and communication technologies will be systematically integrated into the teaching and learning process.

The socialization of students also plays a major role, thus specific social and emotional learning skills are considered under the various learning areas of the revised curricula. It is hoped that through this effort students will develop the necessary social and emotional skills to enhance their own development and integrate well into society. The content of the revised curricula also addresses the imperative to preserve and affirm the local culture and to bolster national identity. Heritage conversation is therefore one of the topics included and teachers are encouraged to emphasize authentic, local experiences in their teaching.

In 2004, there were 22,327 students enrolled in primary education, with a net enrolment rate of 97%. The transition rate from primary to secondary education is 98%.

## Secondary education

The principal goal of secondary education is to ensure that all students acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will lay the basic foundation for future jobs and careers, as well as to ensure high levels of literacy, numeracy, and oracy, by building on the primary foundation—reading, writing, and problem-solving skills—raising them even higher, and deepening levels of understanding across a variety of subject areas.

At this level, the students (age group 11–16) are at school for thirty-five hours a week, five days a week. Each day is divided into seven sessions of 35 to 40 minutes. The curriculum includes eleven or thirteen subject areas: English language and literature; foreign language (Spanish and/or French); history; geography; general science (Forms I–III); biology, chemistry, and physics (Forms IV and V); mathematics; music; home economics; industrial arts; art; and arts and craft.

The average class size is 30 students, and the teacher-student ratio is 1:18. The weekly time allocated to the various subject areas is as follows: English (language and literature), 245 minutes; mathematics, 210 minutes; science (general and individual subjects), 140 minutes; history, 105 minutes; geography, 70 minutes; foreign language, 140 minutes; music, 70 minutes; industrial arts/home economics, 105 minutes; and arts and craft, 70 minutes.

Students are evaluated using two term tests and one annual/promotional examination. In addition, at the end of the secondary level students take the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination. If students gain four or more passes at Grade II or better, they may gain places at the four schools that offer advanced-level programmes, or at Barbados Community College.

Plans are in effect for reforming the secondary school curriculum as well. The focus will be the student's interaction with the curriculum rather than the curriculum



dictating the pace of learning. Though it will include attainment targets for each subject discipline, the curriculum will be flexible, allowing students to pursue compulsory core subjects, foundation courses and electives. Credits will be given for enrichment activities, which complement the compulsory core. The following learning areas comprise the compulsory core subjects: (i) communication (language and literatures in English), compulsory to Level V; (ii) numeracy and mathematics, compulsory to Level IV; (iii) natural sciences, including integrated science, compulsory to Level IV; (iv) social studies, including African heritage studies and citizenry, compulsory to Level IV; (v) modern languages, either conversational Spanish or French, compulsory to Level IV; (vi) physical education, compulsory to Level V; and (vii) moral and religious education, compulsory to Level III.

The secondary school programme will be broken down into six levels. Level I is intended to bridge the transition from primary to secondary school while students who have demonstrated competence at the primary level will access Level II. At Level III, students are expected to consolidate what they have learnt at Level II. Level IV ends the junior stage of secondary school and provides the opportunity for students to write the exit competency tests of the Barbados National Diploma of Secondary Education (BNDSE) in three of the core areas. Students will be required to write the BNDSE at Level V in mathematics and language arts and two electives. It is at this level that the final assessment for the Enrichment Programme will take place. Level VI marks the end of the secondary programme and facilitates those students who will be writing the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) General Proficiency Examination. It prepares students for access to post-secondary examinations such as the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). The Cabinet of Barbados has agreed to establish the BNDSE at the secondary level. All students will be required to take it. Students will have independent indicators of their achievement, and will gain credit for their multiple skills and activities, including involvement in specified extra-curricular activities.

To complement the core subjects from Levels I to III, students will be expected to study at least one of the following subjects under the foundation studies: social studies; visual arts; performing arts; information and communications technology; design technology; woodwork; metal work; technical drawing; and home economics.

In addition, students at Levels IV to VI will have an opportunity to choose electives from the following options: history; geography; biology; physics; chemistry; agricultural science; integrated science; foreign languages; visual arts; performing arts; technical and vocational education; electronics; mechanical drawing; home management; entrepreneurial and business studies; physical education/sports; comparative religions; and tourism.

Students will also be able to select one activity from a list of enrichment activities designed to develop their special skills and abilities. These include: athletics, sports and games, including board games; clubs—academic, social, religious and service; voluntary organizations; semi-disciplined organizations (brownies, scouts, girl guides, cadets, rangers). As at the primary level, social and emotional learning will be integrated across the curriculum.



In 2004, total enrolment in secondary education was approximately 22,000 students.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

The Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE) is administered to children who are eleven years old but less than twelve years old at September 1<sup>st</sup> in the year of examination, as a means of allocation to secondary school.

The National Criterion-Referenced Assessment (NCRA) for Years VII–IX students is designed to determine the extent to which a student can effectively perform a prescribed set of tasks, based on a student's performance without comparison to that of others. Criterion-Referenced tests are administered in English Language and Mathematics to all students in Infants B and Class 2 of the primary schools. The English test has two basic components: grammar and comprehension. The classes were previously written in September, but it was recently proposed that they be written in May of every year.

Other national assessments administered by the Ministry of Education are the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), with School-Based Assessment, and the Cambridge General Certificate Examinations Advanced-Level (GCE A-Level).

Continuous Assessment is an ongoing incremental system of measuring the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students have gained from pursuing the primary school curriculum, over a period of time rather than relying on a one shot examination. It has been proposed that the continuous assessment scores be used in conjunction with the score gained in the BSSEE to allocate students to secondary schools.

The recent curriculum reform initiative includes a fundamental change in the assessment mechanisms used in primary and secondary schools. The revised curricula represent a shift from traditional, product-based assessment modes (pencil and paper tests) to more authentic assessment models based on a combination of process and product methods, including orals, interviews, peer and self-assessment, performance assessment, exhibitions, portfolios, project-based work, written achievement tests and norm reference tests. These assessment methods should foster the development of valuable higher order learning skills, and should give all students a better opportunity to excel in school.

The changes in assessment will be reflected in the method of transfer from the primary to the secondary school level, and in the certification offered in secondary schools. The traditional Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination will no longer be the sole means of assessment for school placement. Instead, school-based assessment from Classes 1 to 4 (7–8 to 10–11 age groups), now constitute 40% of the overall transfer marks. This should enhance the fairness of the transfer, as students will receive credit for achievements made throughout their primary school careers and will improve the prospects for students who do not excel in paper-based assessments.



In addition, the Barbados National Diploma of Secondary Education (BNDSE) will be implemented, which will be compulsory for all persons accessing secondary education.

## Higher education

Higher education in Barbados is provided through four institutions: the Barbados Community College, Erdiston Teachers Training College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, and the University of the West Indies.

The Barbados Community College (BCC), established in 1968 by an Act of Parliament—the Barbados Community College Act, 1968-23—seeks to make available a comprehensive range of curriculum offering to foster the educational, personal and social growth of all its students, and to enhance their ability to contribute to the development needs of the country. Students have the possibility of pursuing the following programmes and activities: Bachelor Degrees in Fine Arts and Graphic Design; Associate Degrees in Arts, Sciences, Applied Arts and Applied Sciences—these include areas such as Mass Communication, Social Work, General Nursing, Medical Laboratory Technology, Pharmacy, etc.—Occupational Education courses and activities; training provided by the Hospitality Institute; and B.Ed Tech.Voc.

The BCC is administered by a Board of Management consisting of nine persons under a Chairman, appointed by the Minister of Education, to serve for a period of three years. The administrative staff of the college consist of: the principal, who is appointed by the Board of Management and is responsible to it for the internal organization and administration of the college; the deputy principal; the registrar (who is clerk to the Board of Management and Personnel Manager); the bursar; and ten senior tutors who are the Academic Heads of the Divisions of the College. The College has a Planning and Advisory that concerns itself with all aspects of college life and makes recommendations directed towards improving the overall operations of the college. There are also Advisory Committees at the divisional level. These committees provide assistance in programme planning by examining and evaluating current programmes and recommending the introduction of alternative or additional programmes that have direct relevance to the development trends in the community. The college had an enrolment of 2,531 students in 1995/1996. In 1997, there were 123 member of the full-time faculty: 11 senior tutors; 26 tutors I; 54 tutors II; 15 instructors I; and 17 instructors II.

The University of the West Indies (UWI) started in Jamaica in October 1948 as the University College of the West Indies, with a special relationship with the University of London, and was granted university status in 1962. The Cave Hill Campus of the UWI, which began in 1963, had an enrolment of 2,800 students in 1996/1997. Successful students are awarded undergraduate and graduate degrees in a myriad of disciplines within five faculties—Humanities, Law, Science and Technology, Clinical Medicine and Research, and Social Sciences. The campus is governed by the Board for Undergraduate Studies, the Board of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Board for Non-Campus countries and Distance Education, as well as a principal who has responsibility for the internal organization and administration for the campus. The Campus had approximately 170 members of the full-time faculty in 1997.



As a regional tertiary level institution, the UWI is in the forefront of the higher education thrust of the government of Barbados. The government provides an annual subvention for the University and pays tuition fees for Barbadian citizens pursuing undergraduate studies at all three campuses of the UWI. The government sponsors the tuition fees of MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) students to a maximum intake of fifteen students at the Mona Campus of the UWI and ten students at the St. Augustine Campus of the UWI on an annual basis.

The Erdiston College is an institution responsible for providing professional training to teachers and administrators in the area of education. The College is offering training at the level of Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.) and the Certificate of Educational Management and Administration (Cert. Ed.).

The Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic (SJPP) is responsible for developing trade skills and occupational competencies up to the level of skilled artisans. In addition, the objectives of the SJPP are: to meet the requirements of the labour market for skilled operators, craftsmen and technicians; to prepare students for direct entry into employment; and to train students to be useful, effective and good citizens. It provides skills training in the traditional areas such as carpentry, joinery, masonry, plumbing, electrical wiring, welding, auto repairs, as well as typing and shorthand. The SJPP is expanding its programme offerings to include such areas as tourism craft, shoemaking, upholstery, fishing, animal husbandry, furniture restoration, and maintenance of office equipment. In 1997, the SJPP had an enrolment of approximately 2,500 students.

The Ministry has supported the establishment of the Centre for International Services at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, in order to provide necessary professional training in the important services sector. In addition, an Industry Services Unit has been established at the Barbados Community College to work closely with businesses and industries to identify needs and to facilitate the provision of customized training, research and technical services to those businesses and industries on a fee-for-service basis.

Finally, the Ministry is working to establish the Barbados National Accreditation Agency. This is in response to the proliferation of providers of post-secondary/tertiary education, and more importantly, to the challenges posed by liberalization in the movement of labour, especially as a result of the decision to establish the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. The proposed Agency will provide the regularized accreditation, equivalency and articulation systems needed to assure the quality of education and to facilitate the acceptance of a variety of qualifications from regional and international service providers. Greater cost efficiency in the labour market will also be an anticipated benefit of the establishment of this Agency.

Various scholarships, awards of excellence and bursaries are available to students who wish to pursue tertiary education. The award of Barbados Scholarships, Exhibitions, and Awards of Excellence, are based on the performance of students in the annual Advanced level G.C.E., C.A.P.E., and Associate Degree Examinations. The requirements for these awards were set out in the Education (Amendment) Regulations (2002). National development scholarships, introduced in 1987, are



offered to candidates to study overseas pursuing courses considered critical for national development. Commonwealth Scholarships are offered to Barbados on an annual basis by the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. The scholarships are fully funded by the awarding countries and include payment of tuition fees, living allowances, accommodation, books and airfare. Candidates selected for nomination by the National Scholarship Committee are considered based on their academic achievements, relevance of area of study, and community involvement/awareness. Bursaries are also available on the basis of financial need.

In addition, the Student Revolving Loan Fund Act (1976-20), which replaced the Higher Education Loan Fund, grants loans to eligible Barbadians to assist in financing areas of study that are perceived to be of national priority. The project was financed jointly by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Government of Barbados but recently it has become self-financing. Areas currently identified for loans are:

- Adult vocational education—All full-time courses offered at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic;
- Post-secondary/technical education—Developmental courses of the Barbados Community College and other post-secondary/technical institutions, locally, regionally and extra regionally, e.g. health sciences, computer studies, commerce, etc.
- Graduate and undergraduate studies—Business, professional and technological programmes, for example: accounting, medicine, computer technology.

Loans are available to Barbadians at least 18 years of age who are within the gross family income limit stipulated in the Regulations. The maximum loan available is BDS\$50,000. However, loan ceilings of lesser amounts are applied to particular institutions and specific programme academic levels, and are determined by the expenses expected in pursuing the particular course of study/training such as: registration, tuition and other school fees, books, living expenses, and approved transportation to and from foreign countries at the most economic costs. Tuition fees shall normally be paid directly to the institution concerned; the balance of the loan shall be paid to the student to meet other expenses. The loan is covered by group life insurance and the accumulated premiums are to be repaid by the student during the repayment period of the loan, which ranges from five to twelve years given the size of the loan.

## **Special education**

The Special Needs Education Services of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports ensures that provision is made for students experiencing any of the following challenges: autism, visual impairment, speech and language impairment, learning difficulties, mental challenges and giftedness. The Special Needs Education Services focuses on the identification of students for placement through





multidisciplinary evaluation. Provision is made for students to be assisted with devices such as hearing aids. Special needs education is address in three ways:

- In the regular classroom;
- In the special classroom in the regular school;
- In the special unit or special education school.

Children who are mainstreamed in the regular classroom are given the necessary support through an Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.), which assts the teachers to meet the needs of the student. At present, special education services are provided in specially equipped classrooms (special units) in 8 public primary schools. There are two special schools in Barbados: children who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired attend the Irvine Wilson School; while the Ann Hill School caters to children with global developmental delays and other disabilities. Placements in one of the special schools or special education units are facilitated through the Student Services Section of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports. A referral can be made to this section from Principals, parents, doctors, psychologist, or from the Children's Development Centre.

## **Private education**

In addition to the public controlled schools, there are also several privately owned establishments. There are about thirty-five nursery/primary schools and nine approved secondary schools.

At the tertiary level, there are the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity, the Barbados Workers Union College and other such institutions providing technical and vocational education.

## **Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure**

Within the education system there are presently: 71 public primary schools; 1 infant school; 4 public nursery schools; 30 private primary schools; 23 public secondary schools; 2 public special schools; 2 private special schools; 1 public senior school; 7 government-assisted private secondary schools; 3 tertiary-level institutions; 1 teachers training institution; and 1 Central Administrative Agency—the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Sport.

Under the Education Sector Enhancement Programme, a refurbishment of all public primary and secondary schools, as well as certain private schools began in December 1998 under the project *Edutech*. Special schools also benefit from this component of the Programme. For example, the Irving Wilson School for visually and hearing impaired students has been refurbished and equipped with a variety of assisting devices.

All public schools, along with some private schools, will be equipped with computer hardware, software and technical infrastructure. At the primary level, all



classrooms for Grades I–IV will be equipped with five computers, and there will be one computer laboratory for schools with less than 500 students, and two laboratories for schools with more than 500 students. At the secondary level, each classroom for Forms I–III will be equipped with six computers. Each secondary school will have eight specialist subject rooms outfitted with ten to thirty computers and other information and communications technology, as well as a computer laboratory equipped with thirty computers. In addition, all classrooms in public primary and secondary schools will be outfitted with a media centre for use by teachers. At the end of January 2004, thirty-two of one hundred and ten schools or 29% of the overall number to be worked on have been refurbished including full installation of technology cabling. The types of technology in the Programme include PCs, printers, digital cameras, scanners, plotters, science probes, electronic whiteboards, multimedia projectors and TVs. In addition, standard application software, Education Management Information System (EMIS) software and academic software will be provided under the Programme.

Measures such as these should address the issue of inequities in distribution of public educational resources across the system, as all schools will have adequate, well-maintained facilities and will be equipped with the same technology. Moreover, the technological component of the Programme will allow for the widespread integration of technology into the teaching/learning process.

One important innovation is the *NETSchools* pilot project, involving four primary schools and two secondary schools in the first two phases of the Programme. Under this project, all the students at the schools involved will have StudyPro laptop computers. The specific technical characteristics of these computers allow for information and communication links, including the Internet, which will enhance the teaching/learning process. Teachers, students and parents will have received training in the use of the StudyPro computers as part of the project. One of the aims of the *NETSchools* project is to address issues of economic and social justice, by ensuring that students and families in the lower socio-economic brackets will not be disadvantaged by inadequate access to technology. The project will therefore be closely monitored, in terms of both its education impact and its socio-cultural impact on the students' households.

There is a drive to create and utilize indigenous materials as teaching and learning aids for the new curricula. The Shell Antilles and Guyana Software Review Centre is conceptualized as a cradle for the development of indigenous software. Teachers, assisted by relevant professionals, will be able to create and review educational software. Some teachers have already been trained in the creation of teaching aids such as puppets under the Government of Barbados/Inter-American Development Bank Primary Schools Project, and are expected to contribute significantly to the materials production effort. It is envisaged that the Audio Visual Aids Department of the Ministry will play an important role in this effort, by providing support for teachers in materials development and by producing a variety of materials including readers, journals and texts.

The AVAD (Audio Visual Aids) Studio was established to provide education in Barbados with the capacity to deliver the very best in audio and visual aids namely radio lessons and pre-recorded video productions. Over the years, AVAD has



produced many projects, with the objectives of enabling educators to: express their understanding of the importance of media in a collaborative learning environment; demonstrate their understanding of the processes involved in executing class-based projects; realize their potential as authors and producers in the design of indigenous software; more effectively plan and set up displays resulting from children's research; and recognize and respond to the needs of the physically challenged.

The Primary Education Domestic Programme (Primary Schools Maintenance) aims to sustain the teaching/learning environment and educational performance at the Primary level by repairing and upgrading the physical plant of the island's primary schools on an on-going basis.

## **Adult and non-formal education**

The literacy rate of the adult population stands at about 97%. Nearly 100% of the adult population, falling between the ages of 16 and 65 years have been educated to at least the primary level. More than 80% of the labour force has been exposed to some form of secondary education. A growing number of private sector and public sector educational institutions continue to offer a variety of adult education/training programmes as a means of human resource development. These programmes target adults who did not complete the secondary education requirements on entry to the labour market and those who are engaging on training or retraining exercises.

The programmes offered by these institutions include the academic secondary level education, offering courses that lead to the acquisition of certificates at the CXC level and other equivalent qualifications offered by approved overseas examination bodies. Other courses offered are technical in nature. These are designed to offer general training in specific technical fields or tailored training modules requested by employers of specialist enterprises.

The National Training Board (now called the Barbados Vocational Training Board), was established in 1980 with a mandate to ensure an adequate supply of trained work force in occupations in all branches of economic activity in the country. The Board has been engaged in a number of vocational training programmes, since its inception. These programmes include: skills training courses in various areas, which take between six to nine months to complete; and an apprenticeship system. The skills training programmes are conducted within a classroom type environment while the apprenticeship system is more of an on-the-job training programme. In the apprenticeship programme, employers are directly involved in the delivery of training and training takes place in the employer's workshop. Under this scheme, the employer ensures that training is relevant to current needs and the apprentice gains the necessary work experience.

Another agency that has been established to ensure an adequate supply of technical and vocational training for industry is the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council. This agency was established under an Act in 1993 and is the governmental agency charged with the responsibility for advising on national policy on TVET matters, developing national plans for TVET and for co-ordinating and facilitating the implementation of those plans. The main function of the

Council is to ensure the efficient, effective and productive allocation of resources for TVET through its collaboration with private sector organisations and the management of an Employment and Training Fund. The resources of this fund are earmarked for the promotion and support of training which focus on the upgrading of skills in the labour force, in accordance with national priority, economic and social needs.

## Teaching staff

The qualifications to teach, particularly at the primary and secondary levels, are myriad and varied. The minimum qualifications to teach, at the level of untrained teachers, are four subjects including English language at General Proficiency I or II; or three subjects at General Proficiency I and II including English language and two subjects at Basic Proficiency I and/or General Proficiency III or a combination of both Basic Proficiency I and General Proficiency III.

The level up from untrained teacher is qualified teacher. The qualification for this category of teacher, in addition to the entry-level qualifications, is a diploma or certificate of training recognized by the Ministry of Education, for example, the Erdiston Teacher Training Certificate. The other grade or type of teacher is the graduate teacher. The requirement for this category of teacher is a degree from a university or any qualification approved by the Ministry as being equivalent to a degree.

The minimum qualifications required of a professor to lecture at the Barbados Community College and the Erdiston Teacher College is a first degree or an equivalent qualification and teacher training certification. At the University, the preferred qualification is a Doctor of Philosophy in the relevant discipline; however, at times individuals are allowed to lecture at the assistant level with a master's degree.

The initial in-service programmes for teachers are as follows:

Primary school teachers are required to take education theory, English language, mathematics, science, social studies, teaching practice, individual study, and an optional subject, chosen for the following: art, geography, history, music, modern languages, physical education and religious education.

Secondary school teachers are required to take foundations of education, use of English, two specialist subjects (chosen from the secondary curriculum), teaching practice, individual study, one optional subject, and social issues. In addition, each student must also successfully complete the following courses during the first year or the first five terms: audiovisual aids, educational research and measurement, health education, and information technology in education.

Furthermore, students enrolled in the business education programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: accounting, office procedures, shorthand and transcription, and typewriting. The students must also complete a business attachment. Students enrolled in the home economics programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: clothing construction, home management, and food studies. Students enrolled in the industrial



arts programme must select their specialist and optional subjects from the following: metalwork, technical drawing and woodwork. In addition, these students must also complete courses in engineering science, basic electricity and electronics, and mathematics.

Subject to the Act and the regulations, a teacher in a public school shall:

- provide the pupils under his/her care with appropriate instruction and learning experiences during the school day;
- make adequate preparation for each day's classes as assigned on school's timetables making use of the officially approved textbooks;
- maintain proper order and discipline among the pupils under his/her care;
- be on duty for the school day and take part in playground supervision and other school related activities;
- assist in promoting the welfare and well-being of the pupils and fostering their social and moral development;
- keep a record of the daily attendance of students;

A Senior Teacher, in addition to his/her duties as a teacher, is responsible for assisting the principal in administration and discipline in the school, giving professional guidance to teachers, and liaising between the principal and staff. An Informal Subject Coordinator (Subject Leader) in a primary school, in addition to his/her normal teaching duties, is responsible for drawing up syllabi and ongoing curriculum development in his/her specific subject; and advising principals and teachers on matters relating to the subject, including leading professional development sessions and mentoring inexperienced teachers.

Subject to the Act and the regulations, a principal in a public school shall:

- prepare in consultation with the teachers, a scheme of work, based on the official curriculum, suited to the needs of the pupils;
- prepare the timetable for the school and organise the school accordingly;
- examine the pupils in the subjects of instruction and in the manner prescribed in regulation 44(1) and (2);
- maintain control of the building, premises, apparatus, equipment and furniture of the school;
- supervise all teaching and non-teaching staff of the school;
- ensure that discipline is maintained throughout the school at all times.

A new appraisal system for teachers was designed to replace the existing Annual Reports used throughout the public service. The new system should provide timely, accurate information about schools and teaching learning strategies, which should result in the improvement and dissemination of best practices. The Ministry of Education is presently in the final stages of the pilot for teacher evaluation.

In 1997, there were a total of 2,771 teaching posts in the public service; of these 1,591 were graduate teachers (658 at the primary level and 933 at the secondary level). The remaining 1,180 non-graduate teachers were at the primary and special grade levels. Approximately 80% (or 2,229) of the 2,771 teachers were trained, and 542 (20%) were untrained. Of the untrained teacher in the system, 259 (almost 48%) were to be found at the secondary level and 283 (about 52%) at the primary level. Initial in-service training at the Erdiston Teacher College started again in 1997 with about 71 students, that is, approximately 13% of the untrained teachers in the system.

### Number and types of teacher by school

School	Graduate		Special Grade		Teacher		Total
	Trained	Untrained	Trained	Untrained	Trained	Untrained	
Senior	4	1	n.a.	n.a.	5	3	13
Special	3	1	n.a.	n.a.	12	6	22
Primary	631	27	4	n.a.	655	156	1,473
Secondary	703	230	22	16	190	102	1,263
	1,341	259	26	16	862	267	2,771

Source: Ministry of Education, 1997.

In 2004, there were 377 pre-school teachers, 1,372 primary school teachers, and 1,262 secondary school teachers.

At the secondary level, teachers have a maximum of thirty teaching or contact periods per week, each period lasting thirty-five or forty minutes. In the primary schools, teachers generally work for thirty-five periods per week, each period lasting thirty or forty minutes. There are some primary schools where the teachers may be given one or two additional non-teaching or contact periods per week.

## Educational research and information

Within the Ministry of Education, there is one unit dedicated to educational research, namely the Planning, Research and Development Unit. It has responsibility for the provision of information to inform educational policy and to determine and recommend appropriate strategies to solve problems in the education system through Research, the use of Statistics and Educational and Economic Planning. Within the unit, there are officers attached to the various technical departments also engaged in specific research projects and areas related to their discipline. The functions of the unit include short, medium, and long-term planning, collection of education data and



statistics, preparation of project briefs and proposals for funding, feasibility studies, along with project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and the preparation of Cabinet papers and policy briefs.

The Curriculum Section, Testing and Measurement Unit, Student Services Section, and Schools Supervision and Management conduct other educational research.

The estimated number of Ministry of Education's professionals engaged in research is about twenty-seven. These professionals are engaged in various levels of educational research across the system. At present, the Ministry of Education is the beneficiary of a number of projects funded by several international organizations.

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## Web resources

Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports: <http://www.mes.gov.bb/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

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