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MEMORANDUM BY THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION
ON
EDUCATION POLICY

January 4th, 1968

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION POLICY

The government on its assumption of office inherited an educational system not only rooted in the past, but so inchoate and confused as to render it almost stultifying to all but the brightest brains and certainly frustrating to the majority of our teachers.

During 1964, a number of racially segregated schools had been established. In many of these the conditions were (to say the least) not conducive to learning, particularly in the infamous "bottom house schools," where siting, quality of staff and suitability of personnel selected, virtually negated the aims of proper education. (In one instance the headmaster was the only qualified teacher on a staff of 27!)

Moreover, out of a teaching strength of 4,348 there were 1500 interim teachers, many possessing neither the academic qualifications nor the slightest disposition to teaching. Teachers had been recruited to permanent appointments who had not qualified in English even at the accommodating standard of the College of Preceptors Examination. The age and qualifications for entrance to the Training College were unrealistically reduced, so that students were admitted at 16 years with only the College of Preceptors Certificate.

A general reorganisation of education had been attempted in 1963. The aims of this reorganisation were laudable, but the results were detrimental to the educational system. As the Germanacos Report noted: "The lack of facilities and resources made effective reorganisation virtually impossible. It could hardly be expected that untrained teachers of limited academic background working in appalling conditions could turn easily to the teaching of French or Physics." Students were obtaining a secondary education in name only. And in the fruitless attempt at providing secondary education, the primary grades were denuded of their meagre supply of trained teachers.

The eight years of compulsory attendance introduced in 1876, cover the full primary course plus two years of secondary education in the all-age schools. Children are at present permitted to enter school from 5 years, but only in those schools where accommodation is available. Pupils in the upper forms of 'all-age' schools were (until recently) allowed to stay on almost indefinitely provided the headmaster of the school was satisfied that they had a reasonable chance of success at the appropriate leaving examination. The result was that in many instances, the senior pupils in all-age schools were retained for as many as two years or more beyond the permitted age of 16. This has had a most undesirable, and in some instances, harmful effect on discipline and behaviour within the schools since five-year-olds were often grouped together under the open class-room system with adolescents of 18 years.

In the secondary schools, standards of education varied sharply and the new junior secondary schools, set up in haste and without adequate planning, were poorly staffed, badly housed and ill-equipped.

As regards curriculum, secondary education throughout the country, is only of the traditional grammar school type, whereas it has been established that in most

countries the number of children capable of absorbing such education stands at around 30%. In effect the majority of Guyanese children are being provided with a totally unsuited and inappropriate education.

A UNESCO Mission headed by Mr. C.L. Germanacos visited Guyana in 1963 and submitted recommendations for reorganisation of the educational system, but the majority were not put into effect. In 1964, another UNESCO Consultant H. Larby, reviewed the Germanacos Report and made complementary recommendations. Since then the Ministry of Education has had the benefit of advice from other UNESCO advisers and also of personnel of the team of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development which visited Guyana in 1966.

In the field of scientific and technical education, advisers from England and Canada have also provided valuable material for reorganisation. Particular mention must be made of Dr. G.E. Watts, who was at that time Principal of Brighton Technical College; Mr. J.W. Gailer, Assistant Adviser on Technical Education of the Ministry of Overseas Development, United Kingdom; Mr. B.H. Henson, Deputy Director (Overseas) of the City and Guilds of London Institute; and Mr. W. Partin of Canada. In Higher Education we are grateful to Sir Christopher Cox, Chief Education Adviser to the then Department of Technical Co-operation; Sir Charles Morris, Vice-Chairman of the Inter-University Council; Mr. Frank Dunnell and Mr. I.C.M. Maxwell.

This White Paper seeks to project Government's policies and aims for education in Guyana and to implement such recommendations of the various missions and advisers as correspond to Government's policy.

The aim of Government's educational policy is to produce, in the shortest time possible, Guyanese with adequate skills to meet our needs and, at the same time, to broaden the scope and to change the content of the curriculum to provide for the total development of each child.

If Guyanese are to develop a national pride and a national outlook, our educational system must provide real equality of opportunity in all fields of endeavour in the country, and so remove all barriers to progress of the individual citizen, irrespective of ethnic origin, social background, religious convictions or political persuasion.

In keeping with this policy of equal educational opportunity for all, our schools will be developed as communities of Guyanese children with common ideals and working towards a common national goal.

The content of our education will be primarily directed towards the Guyanese and Caribbean environment but not to the exclusion of the world's store of meaningful and relevant knowledge. In all our schools emphasis will be placed equally on the traditional academic subjects as on the practical, technical and scientific subjects.

An integrated modern and progressive educational system has been carefully planned - a system relevant to the ability, aptitudes and experiences of the individual child and adult, as well as to our national needs. But education planning cannot be entered into on a once-for-all basis. It must be a continuous process keeping pace with progress in other countries and setting the scene for social and economic change

within the country. The Planning Unit in the Ministry of Education is therefore being transformed from its previous amorphous character into a vital and purposeful sector maintaining liaison with the Central Planning Unit in the Ministry of Economic Development.

REFORM AND REORGANISATION

Before the introduction of reform and reorganisation, it was necessary to restore order in the existing system. Government's efforts were in the first instance, mainly directed towards the urgent need for providing places for our rapidly increasing school population. In addition, a positive attempt has been made towards reintegration of our schools.

Educational Legislation

With the gradual return to order in the educational system, it has become clear that most of the educational legislation needs to be brought up to date to reflect both the changes in practice and the new thinking on education. It is therefore proposed to carry out a comprehensive revision of all outdated legislation in order to provide a proper legal framework for orderly administration.

Government views with considerable apprehension the conditions under which some private schools operate. Some of these schools are merely business ventures set up by unqualified and unscrupulous persons seeking to capitalize on the demand for education at all costs.

It is proposed to legislate that every person wishing to establish a school should first satisfy the Ministry of Education as to his qualifications, and to the physical facilities of the building in which the school is to be held. It will be illegal to maintain a school without the written authorisation of the Ministry.

Primary Schools

An adequate primary education is the only foundation for a successful secondary education. The Government's plan for reorganisation of the educational system of Guyana must therefore begin with reform at the primary level. Government has already implemented the UNESCO team's recommendation that instruction in what are known as all-age schools should extend only as far as the College of Preceptors level, except in such schools situated in isolated areas as have an adequately qualified staff capable of teaching to the standard of the G.C.E. 'O' Level examination.

It has been decided that the term 'All-Age' school is to be abandoned. What are now known as 'All-Age' schools will revert to the name primary school, but will continue to teach secondary subjects on a new basis.

Admission into the primary school is to be made uniform at five years 9 months, and, although the statutory school leaving age is fourteen years, children may be permitted to remain in primary school until age 16.

With a view to co-ordinating the work of the primary and secondary schools, it is also proposed, as soon as circumstances permit, to begin in the junior department

of the primary schools some of the subjects now restricted to secondary schools.

Secondary Schools

So far, because of the massive inherited backlog of school places, the Government's school building programme has been fully extended in meeting the insistent needs of both the primary and secondary levels. The time has come for the greater emphasis to be placed on secondary school accommodation and the greater attention to be paid to our secondary needs.

Secondary schools will be classified as junior secondary, established on an area basis to serve the needs of the school population within a given radius, and senior secondary schools, that is schools with sixth forms, teaching to Advanced Level or equivalent standards. It is proposed also that a senior secondary school in each county will be designated a county secondary school to which qualified students from the junior secondary schools will be admitted on a competitive basis, for sixth form work.

It must be explained also that at present some of the junior secondary schools operate as decanting centres for the secondary departments of neighbouring schools, while others - the majority - accept students only through qualification at the Common Entrance, Preliminary Certificate or College of Preceptors Examinations.

To provide for late developers, students are given three opportunities to obtain entrance into Government Secondary Schools: entrance is obtainable through achieving high marks in the Secondary Schools Common Entrance Examination (between ages 10 and 12), the Preliminary Certificate Examination (between 12 and 14) or the College of Preceptors Examination (between 12 and 16).

The number of secondary places available has been considerably increased and will continue to be increased, as rapidly as financial resources and the availability of suitably qualified teachers permit, so that adequate and free secondary education will eventually be brought within reach of every child qualified to receive it.

A single integrated system of secondary education will be built up in co-operation with privately managed schools as the latter meet the standards prescribed. Financial aid to privately managed schools will depend on efficiency, adequate staff and equipment, and acceptance of the general policy regarding admissions, curriculum and examinations.

AMERINDIAN EDUCATION

The policy of successive Governments towards the Amerindian citizens of Guyana has gradually moved from the obsolete and now inapplicable theories of the past century to the modern concept of Government's duty to provide Amerindians with the full facilities available to other citizens. Government intends to make every effort, mainly through education, to bring about an integration of the Amerindian into Guyanese society and to do this without the tragic loss of essential cultural values.

A joint committee comprising officials from the Ministries of Local Government and Education has therefore been appointed to consider the entire field of

Amerindian education.

Amerindian scholarships for entrance to secondary schools in Georgetown and other parts of the country according to the choice of parents are awarded annually. The results have so far not been encouraging, partly because of the difficulty in finding proper accommodation in Georgetown, and partly because of the educational strain placed on the scholars in an attempt to keep pace within the system of the senior secondary schools while living in an unfamiliar environment.

It is therefore proposed to increase the number of places available in the secondary schools within the Amerindian areas and to make scholarships awarded to Amerindian children tenable in their own locale.

Plans under consideration for providing vocational education programmes for Amerindian areas include the setting up of a central technical institute with hostel accommodation and the operation of mobile units with the necessary teaching personnel and equipment.

Priority is given in the Development Plan to the building of teachers' houses in the interior so as to attract qualified teachers to serve in Amerindian and other hinterland areas. A start is being made at Monkey Mountain and Kamarang.

The provision of teachers' houses, itself a long-term programme, will not alone attract to the interior and remote areas the specially qualified and dedicated teachers required. It may be necessary to offer inducements, or to make periods of rural service compulsory (with inducements).

THE EDUCATION OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Government will in collaboration with the Guyana Red Cross Society, maintain a school in Georgetown for handicapped children. In order to meet the needs of children from the rural areas, residential facilities will be provided as soon as is financially feasible.

Provision has been made in the Development Plan for further development in this field and Government will seek external aid.

KINDERGARTEN SCHOOLS

It is not possible for Government to implement at the present time a policy of country-wide establishment of kindergarten schools. The present school building programme aimed at relieving overcrowding in the existing schools, as well as finding some 6,000 additional places each year for young Guyanese of school age, is as much as the country's finances can carry.

Local Authorities and other community organisations will therefore be encouraged to establish kindergarten schools for children between the ages of three and six years.

All kindergarten schools, will be subject to inspection by officers of the Ministry of Education, and will be required to conform to such standards, including

those relating to accommodation, as are prescribed by legislation.

CURRICULUM REFORM

Curriculum reform is imperative if we are to achieve our national goals.

A new curriculum has been prepared and was introduced into the schools in September, 1967. The new curriculum requires restructuring of the primary school administration to provide greater mobility among the teaching staff and to encourage specialisation in particular subjects. The curriculum stresses the need for a new approach in the methods of teaching. Mechanical and repetitive processes must give way to pupil-participation and to learning by reason rather than by rote.

The new curriculum seeks to break the bondage by which education in our schools was kept tied to the British system of bygone years in content as well as in form. In this decolonisation process, care has been taken, however, to avoid rash and reactionary innovation, to retain that which is relevant to the Guyanese child, and to remove that which is not. In addition to the introduction of a second language (Spanish) early in the primary schools, the new curriculum places increased emphasis on home economics, handicraft, science and technical training, and provides for regular instruction in physical education and social studies.

It is intended to give special attention to agriculture, and animal husbandry, particularly in schools in the rural areas. School gardens will be encouraged where the school surroundings are suitable, and they will be used for practical science teaching. The re-introduction of school gardens even at this limited level will however be proceeded with cautiously because of the dismal record of failures in the past. Government proposes to establish Farm Institutes or Centres which will serve the needs of students and adults.

To meet the present needs of the country for technically trained personnel, the secondary school curriculum with the traditional emphasis on the academic arts subjects, even for children who have little or no interest in them, will be replaced by a new curriculum in which adequate provision will be made for teaching the practical, technical and science subjects, to school certificate or an equivalent level.

The system of secondary education most favoured for the full development of the potential of the Guyanese child is of the comprehensive and multilateral type.

Government proposes to begin immediately on the gradual transition from the traditional grammar school to the multilateral type of secondary school. In addition, the educational expansion programme will embody the establishment of new secondary schools to meet the needs of the environment.

A phased programme to increase the facilities for vocational and technical education includes:

- i) the introduction of technical drawing and the preliminary craft courses in secondary schools;
- ii) the early extension of the Technical Institute in Georgetown to allow for the introduction of more craft courses;

- iii) the provision at the new Anna Regina Secondary School of the facilities for technical and craft education which will be made available to the community through evening classes;
- iv) the conversion of existing secondary schools (one each) on the East Coast and West Coast of Demerara into Technical Schools;
- v) the building of a Technical Institute in New Amsterdam;
- vi) the provision at the University of Guyana of advanced technician training to the level of the Higher National and Ordinary National Certificates;
- vii) the transfer of training at the technician level from the Government Technical Institute to the University of Guyana.

The new curriculum will provide instruction in all subject areas to the level required for university entrance in Guyana or elsewhere (in fields not provided for at the University of Guyana).

EXAMINATIONS

Steps are being taken to review and revise the Common Entrance Examination for secondary school entry. From the inception of this examination the tests used have been set in Britain and based on the performance of the English child, blessed as he is, with more widespread educational media than the Guyanese. This method of testing, coupled with the rampant practice of fee collection by teachers as a prerequisite for common entrance preparation, has placed the child of the lower income group in a position of great disadvantage.

Further, the Common Entrance Examination is one of the contributing factors to the breakdown in the educational system. Teachers instructing children between the ages of 7 and 11, tend to concentrate on the Common Entrance drill to the exclusion of all else on the curriculum. The result is that successful Common Entrance pupils enter secondary school minus elementary training in such essential subjects as English composition, history, geography and general science. The unsuccessful student remaining in primary school is then required to scramble through these subjects in two years for the next examination.

All these are factors which prompt an early revision of the Common Entrance Examination, and which will be taken into account when the revision gets underway.

The Preliminary Certificate Examination, which provides a second point of entry into the free government secondary school system, is also to be revised to fall in line with the new curriculum.

The College of Preceptors Examination, an indefensible and retrogressive test, has been retained solely because at present it offers the late developer the

last opportunity for free secondary education. A local examination will replace the College of Preceptors.

Consideration is being given to the early abolition of the annual Teachers' Examinations and the Teachers' Certificate Examinations.

In order to have a secondary school leaving examination related to the needs of Guyana and the independent Caribbean territories, discussions have been held with the Governments of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados on the setting up of a Caribbean Examinations Council which will assume responsibility for holding examinations at the levels now taken by secondary school pupils in the area. This arrangement will have the effect of gradually replacing the London G.C.E. Examinations by a Caribbean equivalent.

It is intended that the Ministry of Education should exercise supervision over all public examinations held in Guyana to ensure efficiency as well as to establish public confidence and uniform standards in the conduct of such examinations.

TEACHER TRAINING

The Government has raised the age of admission to the Government Training College from 16 to 18 and has restored four passes at G.C.E. 'O' Level (including English Language or a pass in a paper in English Language set by the College) as the qualifying standard. In addition, so that the benefits of early teacher training are not bypassed, persons under 24 years are now debarred from the In-Service training course for teachers, and are required to seek admission to the Training College for the Pre-Service Course.

The Government attaches the highest importance to its programme of teacher-training and to the urgent need to increase substantially the annual output of trained teachers.

A new residential Teachers' Training College will be built adjoining the University of Guyana campus at Turkeyen and will provide facilities for an annual output of 400 graduates.

In addition the Government has embarked on a system of training women of mature age and suitable temperament as infant teachers for our primary schools.

Experience has shown that in the main the teacher graduating from the Training College or from In-Service classes, with qualifications equivalent to the G.C.E. Advanced Level, is reluctant to accept posting in the infant division. Yet it is in this division that the child's attitude to education is formed, and that the lasting foundations of learning are laid. It is necessary also that, for the child, the transition from home to school should not be an abrupt and emotionally disturbing process.

In selecting the new infant teachers, therefore, greater emphasis is placed on temperament than on high educational achievement. In the training of these persons, care is being taken to ensure that they attain the competence and status of specialists in their field.

The In-Service Training Programme is to be varied to upgrade the educational content of untrained teachers between the ages of 25 and 45 years, by a series of crash programmes. It is hoped that these coupled with the stringent application of the rule that all teachers under 24 years of age should take pre-service training, will quickly render in-service training unnecessary for the purpose of qualification. In addition steps will be taken, in consultation with the Guyana Teachers' Association, to make it obligatory for all serving teachers to take part in refresher courses at regular and stated periods.

The Department of Education recently established at the University of Guyana is already gearing itself to make the fullest possible contribution to the professional training of teachers. The University will undertake teacher training at both the diploma and graduate level thereby obviating the necessity for overseas training.

As soon as facilities for teacher training become generally available, all secondary school teachers in both Government and Government-aided schools will be required to undergo training within a specified time.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The rapid expansion taking place within the country presages an era of vigorous social and economic development and the University of Guyana cannot but be responsive to its environment, nor can it avoid being shaped by this environment.

The old concept of a university as an ivory tower away from the hustle and bustle of life is not possible. The University of Guyana is very much in the public domain, and is answerable to the public in a manner in which the more detached older universities and even the University of the West Indies is not. It is Government's view that the university has a dual responsibility - to the world of knowledge and to the tax-paying community which supports it.

Therefore, while acknowledging the academic inviolability of the university, Government wishes it to be clearly understood that it intends to seek a mutually acceptable agreement with the university on matters of policy and administration.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT LOANS

Three Guyana Scholarships are offered annually - one exclusively for boys, one exclusively for girls and one open Scholarship.

The Government proposes, as from 1970, to change this and to award a total of six scholarships, one in each of the following fields - Arts, Natural Science, Social Science, Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture. Guyana Scholarships will be made tenable at the University of Guyana in such disciplines as the University offers.

Conditional Scholarships, re-introduced in 1965, are awarded to persons in and out of the Public Service and are offered, on a competitive basis. Government in the past had exercised very little control over the subjects selected by the students, but the present policy is to give preference to courses of study which are most likely to be of value to Guyana.

Scholars are requested to enter into agreements to return and serve the Government for three or five years after successfully completing their training.

The Government proposes to introduce stringent measures for the recovery of loans to students, as in the majority of cases, loan students are reluctant to return to fulfil their obligations. This has resulted in a grave deficit in loan recovery.

The Government has done much to facilitate the loan student by reducing the amount of guarantee required from double the amount of the loan to a single guarantor covering the loan. In return, it is expected of the students that they will demonstrate a sense of responsibility and of loyalty to their country. Government proposes to take legal proceedings against students or their guarantors for failure to honour their contractual obligations.

A further distressing feature of both the scholarship and the loan scheme, is the frequency with which demands are made for extensions of time to continue overseas study after the qualifications for which the student had originally applied had been gained. Government's policy in such cases is that the student should return to serve within the country for the contracted number of years immediately after qualifying overseas. It must be realised that, with the tremendous shortage of qualified personnel, the adventure into further knowledge delays the rate of progress within the country.

ADULT EDUCATION

Financial and professional assistance is given to the Adult Education Association, and there is much valued co-operation between this voluntary body and the Ministry of Education. It is Government's intention to encourage the Adult Education Association to extend its activities and to maintain its individual initiative and responsibility.

No proper facilities exist in Guyana for systematic instruction in Indian and African languages. Government proposes in collaboration with the University of Guyana to introduce courses in African and Oriental languages, offering tuition on an extra-mural basis at centres throughout the country.

The full implementation of vocational training for adults will demand collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Labour has already sought from the International Labour Organisation the services of an adviser to provide local training in industrial design, industrial crafts and commercial arts. It is agreed that the Government Technical Institutes and Home Economics departments will be involved.

SCHOOL WELFARE SERVICE

In order to grapple with the problems of truancy and delinquency among children of school age, Government has recently appointed five School Welfare Officers to serve in the three counties. It is the duty of these officers to ensure the attendance at school of children who have not been able to fit in readily with the acceptable standards of behaviour in their society. The Welfare Officers are

expected to collaborate with probation officers and other social workers. It is proposed to appoint another five officers in due course.

COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

Teachers' Service Commis

Discussions have been held with the Christian Social Council representing the Governing Bodies of Denominational Schools and the Guyana Union of Teachers regarding the establishment of a Teachers' Service Commission in accordance with the terms of the Constitution. Agreement has already been reached on the establishment of a Commission which will function for teachers in primary schools in like manner as the Public Service Commission for Civil Servants. Eventually a unified teaching service will be established within the control of the Commission.

National Advisory Board

A National Advisory Board on Technical Education is to be established to co-ordinate the work of the Technical Institute and to relate training to the areas of need. Membership of the Board will be fully representative of Government, industry, trade and commerce and educational bodies.

National Educational Council

A National Educational Council, also representative of the varied interests within Guyana, will be set up to serve as a consultative body for the Ministry of Education.

DUAL CONTROL

enduring services of the denominational schools. However, with the spiralling costs of educational services, some religious bodies are finding it difficult to maintain and equip, much less improve their schools. Accepting therefore that it is the prime duty of the state to educate its citizens, the Government adheres to the policy that all new schools erected or established wholly or partly by Government funds should be financed and run by Government and should be known as Government schools.

All grant-aided schools at present owned and managed by denominational bodies will continue under such ownership and management and will enjoy the same conditions as at present prevail, save and except for such matters as will be vested in the Teachers' Service Commission.

FACING THE PROBLEM

This White Paper has enunciated and defined the Government's educational policy. It must, however, be understood that the over-riding factor in the implementation of this policy, is the cost to the nation. Major capital works and expenditure may be initiated by grants and loans from overseas technical assistance funds. But recurrent expenditure, resulting from capital undertakings, must be met out of local funds. The school building programme, for instance, provides an example

of the high recurrent costs created by capital investment.

Every new school must be furnished and equipped; every new school must be staffed. In 1964, teachers' salaries represented 55% of the total budget for education. Today, increased staff to meet the requirements of new schools, the rise in the percentage of trained (and therefore higher paid) teachers from 34% to 44% as well as the normal incremental process have brought the teachers' salaries bill to some 75% of the total recurrent budget available to education.

The Government, nonetheless, firmly believes that education is the chief means of democratising and developing the society. It is the surest means of carefully mobilising the diverse talents of the population to contribute effectively, regardless of class, creed or means, to the development of a truly independent nation.

The Government will therefore give top priority to education in its Seven Year Development Programme.

The following are the main policy proposals made:

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| (a) | new educational legislation to be enacted; | (P.3 Educational Legislation) |
| (b) | the all-age school system to be discontinued in Guyana; | (P.3 Educational Legislation) |
| (c) | primary schools to provide instruction for children between the ages of 5+ and 16; | (P.3 Primary Schools) |
| (d) | secondary education to be of the multilateral type giving equal emphasis to technical and scientific training as to traditional grammar school education; | (P.6 Curriculum Reform) |
| (e) | immediate attention to be paid to full-scale curriculum reform throughout the educational system; | (P.6 Curriculum Reform) |
| (f) | the Government's Seven Year Development Programme to concentrate on the reorganisation of secondary education and the provision of new and modern schools and facilities; | (Pps. 6 & 7) |
| (g) | a new Training College for teachers to be built; | (P.8 Teacher Training) |
| (h) | all public examinations in Guyana to be subject to supervision by the Ministry of Education; | (P.7 Examinations) |

- (i) the content of all examinations to be reviewed and changed where necessary to reflect the new educational pattern. Government to continue its co-operation with the Caribbean Governments on the question of regional examinations to replace external examinations;
- (Pps. 7 & 8 Examinations)
- (j) six Guyana scholarships to be offered from 1970;
- (P.9 Scholarships and Student Loans)
- (k) a Teachers' Service Commission to be established;
- (P. 11 Teachers' Service Commission)
- (l) a National Educational Council and a National Advisory Board on Technical Education to be established;
- (P.11 National Advisory Board - National Educational Council)