



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN GUYANA

National Consultation - Final Report

Ministry of Education

July 2022



BACKGROUND

Education is the most critical driver of human development in any country/nation-state. Global crises and the disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the worldwide challenges faced by education sectors in the delivery of quality education and lifelong learning for all. Recognizing the potential adverse impacts that these challenges could engender in the long-term, particularly for the global development agenda, United Nations (UN) Secretary General, António Guterres, will convene a Transforming Education Summit (TES) in September 2022 to mobilize governments and other stakeholders to “*renew the global commitment to education as a pre-eminent public good.*” The Secretary-General has called on countries to conduct national and sub-national consultations ahead of the TES to mobilize collective action towards achieving SDG 4 (quality education). Input from these consultations will feed into creating a shared global vision for the future of education.

For Guyana, this worldwide conversation on transforming education comes at an opportune time when as a sector, the Ministry of Education is prioritizing system transformation in response to its priority of improving governance and accountability and reducing the inefficiencies in the education system. These efforts align with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) - System Transformation Grant (STG) process, which involves an assessment of the education sector using the Enabling Factor Analysis (EFA). The EFA reviews and takes stock of the essential elements of a well-functioning education system and flags potential gaps in the system. The findings of the EFA can then be used to develop a partnership COMPACT, which outlines the approach to be undertaken for transforming the education system. Adopting and aligning the methodological approaches of the TES with the partnership COMPACT allowed for a broad-based consultative process with participation of various actors and stakeholders in the education system in Guyana. This approach was extremely useful and provided scope for engagement on a wide range of issues, as described below.

APPROACH AND METHOD OF CONSULTATIONS

The National Convenor met with the UN Resident Coordinator and UNICEF to discuss and refine the Action Plan developed for the consultation process. The Action Plan was premised on the three (3) guiding principles identified by the UN for the consultations, and stakeholders were invited to participate in keeping with these principles. Outlined below is the list of participating stakeholders pursuant to the three principles.

1. **Whole government approach** – The Ministries of Finance, Health, Social Services, Local Government, Amerindian Affairs.
2. **Multiple constituencies** - The Local Education Group (LEG), Guyana Teachers Union (GTU), inter-religious organisations, teachers, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), National Commission on Disability and other disability organisations, Parent-Teacher Associations, University of Guyana, migrant population; the private sector with representation from the Chambers of commerce and
3. **Youth - student** governments and students.

Consultations with stakeholders took the form of *town-hall discussions, workshops (group-work and plenary sessions) and focus group sessions* that lasted a minimum of 2 hours. See Appendix 1 – Analysis of Consultation

The consultations were organized around the four critical components identified by the Secretary-General (i. ensuring full recovery from COVID-19 education disruption, ii. identifying the major strategic transformation, iii. ensuring strengthened and more sustainable public financing of education, iv. raising the ambition of national education targets and benchmarks) and these were aligned to the five thematic action tracks.

KEY OUTPUT(S)/OUTCOMES FROM CONSULTATIONS

A. ENSURING FULL RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 EDUCATION DISRUPTION (SHORT-TERM)

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 ON EDUCATION: LEARNING LOSS, STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT, INCREASED SCHOOL DROPOUTS, NON-ENROLLMENT. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING NUTRITION, HEALTH, & WELL-BEING OF LEARNERS & TEACHERS

CONTEXT

Guyana, like many countries around the world, had system-wide education disruptions for all levels of learners. This disruption, coupled with a protracted national and regional election process, placed the gains in access and learning at high risk. The vulnerable and the poorest, found mainly in the hinterland and riverine areas, were most severely impacted. This subgroup accounts for 61% of the schools; 33% of teachers; and 34% of students who are severely impacted. A recent Public Expenditure



Review (2021) described the economic cost of the education disruption in the following way:

“[Guyana] risks losing between 0.9 and 1.1 Learning Adjusted Years of School (LAYS) per student on average, due to elevated dropout rate and learning loss.” If not addressed, it is estimated that there will be an average reduction in future earnings of USD 791 per student per year. The present value of all *future lost earnings* across Guyana is estimated at USD 1.2 billion (GYD 256 billion).

Learners’ engagement during this time was further impacted because teachers from the hinterland and remote riverine areas

were at an even greater disadvantage since neither they nor their learners had access to devices and an internet connection. The result nationally was that there were large numbers of learners (51%) who went unengaged for the better part of two years, and only 2% of students who were engaged online came from the hinterland (1502). The Ministry of Education is only now understanding the extent of the deleterious learning loss that occurred due to the abortion of meaningful educational contact and engagement.

In terms of **re-enrolment** in schools across Guyana, at the nursery level, 98% of teachers and 52% of learners returned to school when face-to-face learning resumed in September of 2021; at the primary level, 96% of teachers and 64% of learners returned; and at the secondary level, 90% of teachers and 46% of learners attended school for

in-person classes. In 2022 the re-enrolment for in-person classes stands at **78% of** the nursery pupils, **88% of** primary pupils and **85% of** secondary school students.

Box 1 - Steps taken to recover the pandemic related loss

Using flexible inclusive pathways to a full range of knowledge, skills & behaviours, MOE Guyana has:

- ❖ Developed and implemented of the diagnostic assessment in numeracy and literacy across levels (**Let's REAP**); to assess the extent of the learning loss and to guide the remediation intervention for each learner.
- ❖ Developed and implemented the **consolidated curricula** to mitigate against learning- loss.
- ❖ Developed curriculum-aligned **television and radio content** to provide multiple distance-education pathways for learning.
- ❖ Expand the **Guyana Learning Channel (GLC) and EdYOU radio access and reach** across the country.
- ❖ Provisioned **textbooks** for primary and secondary students in the hinterland and riverine areas, with the intention that each child has access to **digital, paperback textbooks** and **examination preparatory materials**.

The disparities within the teacher population with respect to internet access and device ownership were amplified during the pandemic. On account of this, some **teachers** could neither engage their learners nor access their professional development pathways and opportunities.

Box 2 - Steps were taken to provide protection, and support health, nutrition, and social well-being

The support to teachers and learners entailed:

- ❖ Provision of **social safety nets** for teachers by maintaining the payment of their full salaries during school closure.
- ❖ Arranging access to subsidized services such as life insurance, health and dental plans, and access to credit services at favourable rates at commercial banks.
- ❖ Care and wellness packages (PPE and vitamin support)
- ❖ Provision of sensitization program and psychosocial support for teachers during school closure
- ❖ Intensify implementation of Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) programme in schools.
- ❖ Retrofit all schools across levels with hygiene hubs and

Additionally, some teachers lacked the relevant skills to interface with the technology once learning had shifted to virtual platforms. Consequently, only 49% of the student population was engaged virtually during school closure (82,782 learners). These are some issues that impacted learning and threatened the

reversal of progress made on SDG 4. Boxes 1 & 2 below present some of the measures the Ministry of Education has taken to address pandemic-related learning loss.

Box 3 – Steps to be taken towards recovery

In the medium-term recovery efforts entail:

- ❖ The implementation of the drafted Education Management Information System (EMIS) policy and Masterplan to ensure that education policy and management at all levels in Guyana are informed by the most timely, detailed, and accurate data.
- ❖ Implement a tutoring program for the learners in low-performing schools.
- ❖ The development of an early warning system at the Primary and Secondary levels to identify learners who are at risk of dropping out.
- ❖ Improving the Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) by expanding the early screen services to identify children with learning disabilities so that early intervention through the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP).
- ❖ Expansion of English as a Second Language (ESL) after-school programme by training more teachers to teach ESL.
- ❖ Utilize tools such as GIS referencing database to inform the construction of climate resilient infrastructure.

Optimal health and well-being for both teachers and learners are essential for positive learning outcomes. In this context, the Ministry of Education is focusing on initiatives that can have positive impacts in these areas. The Ministry has collaborated with UNHCR and is offering after-school tutoring to the school-aged migrant population in regions 1 and 3, as well as specialized psychosocial programmes for school welfare officers to respond to the needs of

all children. We recognize that as we progress towards recovery, we need to ensure our teachers' and students' mental and physical health and well-being are addressed; to date, 43% of our teachers across levels are vaccinated.

STAKEHOLDERS' FEEDBACK - ENSURING FULL RECOVERY FROM COVID-19.

Flexible, inclusive learning pathways

The interventions described above to **support learning recovery** were discussed with stakeholders, who expressed the need to continue several initiatives such as the provision of **textbooks** and other **learning materials** (study packages, lesson-planning guidance), language capacity building support for migrant students with the provision of training in **English as a Second Language, blended learning approaches**, the use of the **consolidated curriculum**, especially in rural and hinterland areas, and **support for teachers** to manage and be more responsive in **disaster/emergencies**.

Access to health nutrition and protection

Stakeholders advocated for the continuation of social services support in the form of **cash grants**, worksheets, and **care**



packages for students. Provisions given to dormitory students and **school feeding** programmes for primary and secondary school students were highlighted as especially useful.

B. MAIN STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION FOR REIMAGING EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

CONTEXT

Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools

Guyana is off track in achieving some of the targets that “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all.” Before the pandemic, the country had made substantial gains in completion, especially at lower and upper secondary levels. However, improvement is needed in learning outcomes, teacher competencies and qualifications, and data timeliness and availability. The country is now implementing measures to address data timeliness and the difference between national and international data on learning outcomes.

One of the main obstacles with respect to comparable learning assessment data availability is the fact that Guyana does not participate in any of the international assessments, and as such, the data on



learning outcomes that measure the minimum learning proficiency are not comparable. Another challenge is the inefficiencies in spending across levels and within regions (sub-national levels). Overall, the sector is underspending in education, resulting in inefficiencies and inequities within the sector. As such, there is a need to ensure harmonization and alignment across the system at the Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary and Postsecondary/TVET levels to improve the system's overall efficiency. Inequities and exclusivities are threatened and are evident in data on boys' underperformance in national learning outcomes. A broader multi-sectoral approach for an appropriate contextual response to this perennial issue affecting boys' underachievement is therefore warranted. This broader multisectoral approach will also augur well for fulfilling the sector goal to reduce the inequities within the education system.

Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

The 2021-2025 Education Sector Plan (ESP) objective of “*providing opportunities for quality, equitable education and lifelong learning for all*” is being advanced by the Government’s investments in skills development to improve human resource capacity. To this end, the government is focusing on initiatives for expanding and enhancing pre-vocational skills training offered at the secondary level; and skills development at the post-secondary level through the upgrading of TVET facilities, collaboration with the private sector to facilitate industry attachments, as well as supporting the development of business incubators system. These measures will contribute to youth/adult access to life skills programmes and opportunities. Evidence-based actions, such as rapid labour market surveys, tracer studies, and strengthening the sub-sector policy coordination and organisation are enablers to support the quality and relevance of post-secondary/non-formal education programmes, to keep the emerging sector and augment traditional sectors all in pursuit of national capacity development.

Digital learning and transformation

Access to digital learning opportunities is hindered by connectivity to the internet and availability of and access to digital devices. Additionally, the disparities in technological capacity contribute to unevenness in learning and productivity across various socioeconomic subgroups.

The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of access to and use of computing devices by both teachers and learners as essential tools in the 21st century. As such, the recently drafted ***Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Policy and master plan***

highlights and supports the need for the procurement of computing devices and the expansion of connectivity as essential drivers of technology-assisted learning in schools.



Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession

The significance and impact of qualified, experienced, and well-motivated teachers on positive student outcomes are established both empirically and anecdotally. However, globally, there is a shortage in the number of qualified and experienced educators, and a concomitant decrease in professional satisfaction among those who are, and a general decrease in the attractiveness of the teaching profession. In Guyana, the teaching force stands at 11470 members (1681 males and 9789 females) across levels; 48% (5485) of whom are minimally qualified (associate degree graduates from the Cyril Potter College of Education - CPCE). Of the 2435 (21%) teachers who are trained graduates, i.e., are degree holders, 7% (168) serve in Hinterland or remote riverine locations.



Against this backdrop, Guyana faces many of the same challenges encountered by low and middle-income countries, in that there is a perceptible shortage of qualified and experienced teachers in the hinterland and riverine areas. The current reality is that the majority of untrained, undertrained, and inexperienced teachers are serving the most vulnerable learner populations. The cost of living is generally higher in the Hinterland compared to the coastland, so a teacher's basic salary cannot sustain their livelihood in the same way as their coastland counterparts. This is one deterrent in attracting more qualified teachers to the hinterland areas. Teachers' salaries are generally not commensurate with the level of effort, commitment, and training required to serve optimally in the vocation. Even for those seeking training, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, all CPCE satellite centres were closed to face-to-face delivery, thus preventing any further upskilling for teachers. When an online solution was introduced, this caused a deeper equity fracture given that these teachers could not access devices nor the internet or were challenged by their inability to interact and engage with the technology properly.

In light of the context presented on the national realities around these **four action tracks**, the urgency of system changes is now more evident. For example, the need for real-time, student-level data and information on education delivery is critical for evidence-based planning, improved administration, students' learning and participation, and teacher capacity development. The implementation of the sector's draft Education Management Information System (EMIS) policy and masterplan which outline the bold steps and processes to realize the vision of "*an integrated, accessible, and responsive EMIS that can inform education decision-making at all levels, foster accountability and lead to educational improvement.*" The role of adaptive,

transformational, and culturally responsive instructional **leadership** at the **school and system levels** are critical sector imperatives to drive transformation.

Feedback from the stakeholders presented below is also aligned with what the sector foresees as levers to catapult transformation in Guyana.

STAKEHOLDERS' FEEDBACK ON THE FIVE ACTION TRACKS

Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools-

Features of the education system most important to continue & strengthen - quality, safety, and inclusion of school learning environment

One of the principal issues raised by participants pertaining to the quality of education offered was maintaining the distribution services that support and/ or enhance learning, e.g. the distribution of grade-specific textbooks and support materials like worksheets, the Guyana Diagnostic Assessments, and the installation of smart televisions and radio sets for access to the Guyana Learning Channel and EdYou FM. Respondents also proposed that the MOE continue pursuing capacity building for teachers in student-centred methodology related to STEM education, literacy across the curriculum, distance education engagement, and teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to improve their delivery of the curriculum. Participants were also supportive of learners' physical return to school so that they could benefit fully from these inputs.

Contributors also focused on student welfare and actions the MOE should continue as protective factors in this regard. For them, the MOE should continue hosting academic and non-academic extra-curricular activities to keep learners engaged and/or provide non-threatening remediation pathways. Some suggestions included IT clubs, extra lessons, and athletics programmes. They

also appreciated that the MOE had made strides to expand the welfare division of the agency focused on truancy, as well as increase its visibility on work being done to promote inclusion and better its service delivery to learners with disabilities and their families. Participants also supported the MoE's efforts to expand educational opportunities for early school leavers through the GOAL and GROW initiatives and increased resources for the Adult Education Association (AEA) and Kuru Kuru Cooperative College, which are established "second chance" subvention agencies within the MOE.

Current education practices that need to be abandoned – quality, safety, and inclusion of school learning environment

Respondents also identified MOE output that they thought should be abandoned and the most prevalent element was the use of solely online instruction in some locales. Respondents noted that the digital divide needs to be first addressed if virtual instruction were to be used exclusively. Participants were highly concerned at the prevalence of passive teaching and learning techniques to which teachers defaulted upon returning to school. Participants strongly recommended the cessation of "chalk and talk," the use of outdated and outmoded texts and classroom resources, and the dictation of notes to learners during the

instructional period. Some student respondents also posited that schools should reduce the amount of homework given since they felt that excessive homework was being substituted for adequate content sharing and research by teachers in their delivery in the classroom.



A common observation by teachers and administrators who were participants was that records, like lesson plans, should be prepared, shared, and stored electronically. Participants shared that student-teacher relations, though didactic, should still carry an expectation of respect from teacher to learner. They cautioned that teachers should be mindful of their tone and mannerism when interacting with students. Overcrowded classrooms were also flagged for attention and correction in the shortest possible timeframe. Respondents noted that schools generally should be fully accessible spaces that cater to the needs of learners with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Innovation transformation is envisioned as the desired feature of education transformation-

When called upon to suggest areas in which the MOE could improve its output or reimagine a new or different services that the agency could provide, participants' responses focused on curriculum implementation being more responsive to the needs of learners with special education needs, necessary security measures, and suggestions for future directions.

Concerning curriculum, participants suggested that implementation be done in interactive ways with learners meaningfully engaged in experiential and explorational learning, where learners get to fully inquire and immerse themselves in understanding the "nature of things." The assessment modes and stratagem employed should also follow this course, where paper and pencil-based assessments are replaced by those that allow learners to demonstrate their understanding in divergent ways. An example given was through quiz gamification using the 'Kahoot!' platform. The upskilling of teachers through CPD to deliver on these considerations was also brought to the fore. Consideration was also given to how the present system could be most responsive to the learner of the future, i.e., how best to prepare learners for a world where presently "non-traditional" vocations may become mainstream, and today's mainstream careers, rendered obsolete. It was suggested that developing transferable skills like critical and flexible thinking, resilience for problem-solving, and becoming agents or enactors of thoughts and ideas should become the dominant skills fostered by the school system- instead of the regurgitation of easily acquired facts. Adjunct to curriculum implementation is

timetabling, and participants advocated that “heavier” subjects like Mathematics and Science be taught in the morning session.

Participants also discussed the need to reinvent the way the regions cater for children with special education needs. According to contributors, there is need for special education needs curriculum to facilitate inclusive education in schools, with sign language being taught at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. It was also suggested that adaptations for candidates with special needs be implemented, e.g., exam scribes, larger text, braille, and sharper images.

Participants also deliberated on the matter of safety in schools. They concluded that occupational health and safety measures ought to be implemented in schools and that there should be better security for the locations given the rising incidence of unrest, theft, and vandalism. They also underscored the need for stricter disciplinary measures in classrooms and for safe and discrimination-free mental health spaces across schools with well-trained counsellors and welfare officers available to provide service. There was also a call to review and potentially revise legislation around discipline in education.

Other suggestions proffered by participants for consideration and implementation in the medium and long term were as follows:

- 1). Making it compulsory for a language other than English to be taught from the Primary level given the influx of Spanish-speaking migrants and other migrants from our continental and regional neighbours,
- 2). Designing a remediation programme to address learning loss, especially for students

from the Hinterland and low socio-economic status (SES).

3). An examination of the impact of social isolation on our youngest learners since they lost a lot of time in which developmentally significant child-to-child and non-familial child-to-adult interactions would have taken place. The rise in autism spectrum diagnoses in children aged 3-5 years also warrants examination.

Strengthen school infrastructure, organization, administration, and support

Secure social and infrastructure support is necessary for the overall success of the schooling experience. Respondents indicated that the MOE should endeavour to maintain proper lighting and ventilation of learning spaces to ensure the physical comfort of learners. They also contend that the School Feeding Program should continue at the primary level and be expanded to the secondary level since proper nutrition is vital to brain function, cognition, and general well-being. Respondents felt closer attention must be paid to nutrition since we are losing children to diabetes, especially in the hinterland. Management of state-run dormitory schools, with a particular focus on nutrition and meal planning, was also raised. Participants also felt that the MOE was providing a vital service in distributing hygiene materials (sanitary napkins) to girls, and care packages (PPEs and vitamin support) for learners and teachers and said that this should continue.

With respect to the administration of schools, participants almost universally lamented the fact that teachers are bogged down with excessive record-keeping and administrative duties which results in less contact time with learners. In the same vein,

they also condemned the fact that on account of teachers' attending university classes during class hours, learners also experienced diminished contact time.

Respondents also highlighted with concern the matter of pollutants and their impact on the learning environment. For example, it was suggested that the use of plastic bottles should be banned from canteen services if there is no clear way to collect them for recycling purposes; and that the waste disposal mechanism needs to be urgently revisited with the establishment of effective facility maintenance systems in schools to avoid unhealthy and unsanitary environments, with classrooms and surrounding areas constantly monitored to ensure cleanliness. Some participants also identified noise pollution that disrupts teaching and learning during school time as an issue to be addressed especially for schools that border main roads.

Finally, a common complaint related to the school's physical infrastructure itself and the inadequate supply of furnishings. It is believed that old edifices need to be rebuilt and that all new structures should be built using durable materials instead of the substandard materials and poor-quality workmanship presently utilized.

Disaster risk management concerns featured prominently in the discourse on solutions to address certain realities in schools. It was suggested that a program be put in place to assist students during floods, and a risk allowance be provided to teachers in challenging locales. Participants also recommended that the MOE seek to facilitate improved infrastructure to prevent flooding and highlighted that schools should be regularly assessed for damage and any

renovation needs. Good ventilation systems should also be installed. There was also a call for more visits to schools by MOE officials, especially during rainy seasons. Monitoring should be seen as the most important element. Further, participants felt that Moe should collaborate with the Ministry of Public Works to ensure streets and roads in school communities are kept in good condition. There was also a call to rebuild child-friendly classrooms and washrooms to improve spacing and ventilation.

Respondents felt that for real and lasting improvement in resourcing for SEN spaces and learners, the policy environment needs to be created to support change. The posited solution was crafting an inclusion policy, which would serve as the foundation for the potential development of a school for learners who are deaf.

There was also a call for inter-ministerial partnerships to manage welfare concerns for learners and families experiencing impoverished circumstances, with respondents suggesting that the MOE collaborate with the Ministry of Human Services to support and incentivize families in extremely vulnerable circumstances and in need of social support. Participants also suggested collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health to provide regular medical services to teachers and students in the Hinterland communities. They also called for organized, and state-supported transportation services for students by any of the typical means of conveyance.



Learning Skills for life, Work and Sustainable Development

Features of the education system most important to continue & strengthen – ensure learning and skills to support the school to work transition

Stakeholders indicated improving teachers' technological skills using pro-Futuro, AutoCAD and pedagogical content knowledge to deliver TVET content are essential features that can continue being implemented and strengthened. The GOAL scholarship initiative and GROW program could also be expanded and skills training could begin from Grade 9 to support the school to work transition. Upgrading and resourcing prevocational spaces and TVET spaces, as well as increasing parental involvement in skills development in schools, with parents serving as co-creators to support lifelong skill development and training, were also identified as useful measures for strengthening.

Expand the right to education throughout life

Youth/student respondents indicated that MOE should expand the GROW programme to make it available to more students in the hinterland and riverine areas; intensify TVET training in schools, starting at the foundational level (Grade 7), and continue the provision of materials and equipment in schools that support lifelong skills courses.

Innovation transformation envisioned as the desired feature of education transformation-Ensure learning and skills support for school-to-work transition.

Participants encouraged the MOE to consider school-to-work transition programs for students with Special Education Needs (SEN). These programs should address skills development for this sub-group. Skills training should be taught as a complement to other subjects and should include a management component.



Digital learning and transformation

Respondents generally examined the projected future trends in digital/technological learning and transformation (e.g., substitution of machines for human decision-making; erosion of intellectual and personal freedom; digital technology and commercial interests and life in virtual worlds).

Center the Most Marginalized

Contributors unanimously agreed that access to devices and strong connectivity were absolutely necessary for any digital or educational transformation to occur in Guyana in a way that is equitable for all citizens, irrespective of where they are located. The participants suggested the further establishment of internet hubs in local communities, while others indicated that internet services for teachers and learners be subsidized so that they could have access in their homes. Schools also suggested that bandwidth speeds should be upgraded to properly handle the number of users (based on school population). They wished to see the resuscitation of the ‘one laptop per family’ and ‘one laptop per

teacher’ benefit programs. The two should be mutually exclusive so that a teacher would not have to share this resource with her family. It was also suggested that pre-loaded tablets should continue to be distributed to learners from the most underprivileged or underserved communities as a socio-educational safety net.

Participants wished to see the MOE continue producing and publishing resources for student and teacher use on its website (e-textbooks, worksheets, past papers, videos, and interactive platforms like Quiz Me) and they said that the interface should be more user-friendly for persons with disabilities. They also proposed that the site be linked to the Guyana Learning Channel and EdYou FM online and that these two resources keep producing curriculum content that could support classroom instruction, both online and offline. Participants also indicated that they would like to see countrywide access to these two resources and wanted the MOE to continue to expand infrastructure to support this.

After addressing the geographical and economic divide in how resources are distributed or accessed, participants expressed concern about the welfare of learners with special needs and disabilities, and about how expanded access to technology and digital learning could also benefit them. Participants believed that special education needs classrooms should also be outfitted with technology for digital learning, that assistive technologies should be in SEN classrooms based on specific learner needs, and that teachers should be trained to use the technologies. They also posited that the MOE should revisit how learning materials and exam scripts are prepared for children with special needs, using technology to make it screen-based, or with enhanced features (fonts, contrast, braille) if they are still to be paper-based. It was also proposed that all schools have a separate resource room with a specialized teacher to support learners with challenges.

Respondents also contended that all schools should have properly outfitted computer labs and that all classrooms become smart spaces with at least an interactive smart board. The consensus was that resources in classrooms across the country should be standardized so that all learners have equal access to resources for learning. Some respondents were of the view that schools should be rebuilt to international standards of modernity and accessibility. Importantly, respondents contended that the MOE needs to have more effective maintenance mechanisms for technological devices, and those procured should be of good quality and not defective.

Ensure that Digital Technology in Education Empowers and Connects People

Given how technology and digital learning have made everything more globally accessible, respondents felt that teachers could help each other by sharing their lesson plans, good practices, action research, and success stories in the form of a web or cloud-based Open Education Resource (OER) repository. This would provide teachers with culturally responsive resources endemic to the Guyanese context. Related to this, participants suggested that the MOE create a free application that would be adaptable for mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers, to access MOE services and learning materials.

Taking note of some distance education success stories, participants felt that distance engagement could now be a pathway for learners who prematurely left the school system and wish to return. They also felt that the MOE should assist in some way to increase the technological competencies of parents and caregivers so that they could also contribute to student learning through these means. Parents should be vigilant as children interact in the online space, coaching them on how to practice good digital citizenship. In some groups, parents felt that schools also needed better surveillance so that they could be able to observe classrooms in real-time to improve vigilance and accountability by all (students, teachers, administration, and families).

Require Technology to Serve Educational Purposes

The consensus among respondents was that technology and digital learning should complement, and not replace, in-person teaching. They agreed that teachers should be able to properly leverage the use of

technology and digital learning stratagem to improve and make classroom engagement more exciting and meaningful. With immediate access to global information repositories, teachers now should assume the role of navigator and not clearinghouse of information. The teacher now can focus on how learners filter information vs misinformation and the manner in which it is used, i.e., in service to humanity and the common good to further or better the global body of knowledge. Learners should be able to, in developmentally appropriate ways, experience adaptable education, where they are allowed to grapple with complex things and ideas.

In addition to the foregoing regarding the redefinition of the role of the teacher, participants also felt that there needs to be a shift in what obtains in the physical classroom. It was proposed that teachers leverage their use of learner management platforms to facilitate genuine interaction and practical engagement with the subject matter, for example, through flipped learning, where the information sharing is done in advance of learners coming to class so that class time is devoted to discussion, experimentation, and application of content. The platforms should be used to share notes, resources, and assignments. Likewise, with the availability of digital tools in the classroom/school, virtual experimentation and simulations can be conducted to give learners access to experiential learning safely and non-threateningly. Respondents suggested further that all schools have Information Technology as a timetabled subject.

Respondents felt that technology should also be leveraged for teachers' preparation for student engagement and record keeping. It was suggested that productivity software be used to create and store lesson plans and other records since working with electronic copies increases productivity, is cost-effective and is timesaving. With this move to store data and information electronically, participants also called for creating and implementing policies and laws to address cybercrimes on account of the mismanagement of data and information. They advocated for the sector to build and sustain a culture of quality data production, dissemination, and use. Regarding social considerations, participants called for the enforcement of laws around cyberbullying and the posting and sharing of pornographic content on social media platforms and general governance of good and responsible behaviour online, i.e., being good cyber citizens.

Participants were of the view that the pandemic created the opportunity for the education sector to use technology to its advantage, and now that schools have reverted to face-to-face modality, participants said that deliberate efforts should be made to ensure that these gains are not lost. To this end, participants wished to see the Ministry discontinue the requirement for hardcopy submissions of worksheets and assignments, as well as paper copies of lesson plans, registers, and other records. They believed that the use of blackboard and chalk and the dictation of notes during the instructional period should be abandoned.

Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession

The feedback received from participants in the national consultations can be distilled into the three (3) proposed areas for transforming education in this domain. The first is increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession by examining how to recruit talented candidates to the sector, improving emoluments and conditions of service, and enhancing conditions for optimal job performance. The second area proposed is improving professional induction, development, and ongoing support through avenues to improve the quality of output of teachers across their journey from novice to seasoned professional practitioner. and fostering partnerships with teachers to improve pedagogy, research, and policy. Lastly, the third pathway proposed is fostering partnerships with teachers to improve pedagogy, research, and policy that would chart the future of education in Guyana by advancing teachers' own action research, collaborative knowledge creation, adopting a "systems" view to managing schools, and exploring avenues to individualize students' learning.

Increase the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession

Participants encouraged the Ministry of Education to maintain its distribution of teaching and learning supplies to schools and teachers directly, or through the issuance of grants that would facilitate the purchase of same by the school. Participants were keen to point out that this should be done in a timely manner i.e., before the beginning of the term/school year. Noting that this resourcing, is not equitably distributed across the country, participants indicated that this gap should be bridged especially for those from the Hinterland and remote riverine locales. They were also keen on the Ministry of Education continuing its

increase provision of technological resources like laptops and tablets to schools/teachers as well as smart TVs and radio sets for better access to the Guyana Learning Channel. They cautioned, however, that these devices should be of good quality with sound specifications. There was a call for teachers themselves, as a resource in schools, to be more equitably placed/assigned with overstaffed schools being used to bring balance and much-needed support to schools that are understaffed. Respondents applied the same principle to managing the supply and demand for qualified and trained teachers in the Hinterland and remote riverine areas, where the need is greatest for trained personnel.

Participants were also of the view that teachers are being increasingly asked to perform – to the detriment of time devoted to teaching and learning- administrative and clerical tasks. They, therefore, recommend that schools hire more administrative/clerical professionals so that this practice can be stemmed. In instances where this is not feasible or possible, it was recommended that the practice be limited and that teachers tasked with administrative and clerical tasks be allowed to maximize use of the technologies available to them by permitting the electronic preparation, maintenance, and storage of records and plans.

Participants also recognized that teachers are increasingly being expected to perform the specialized roles and functions of counsellors, social workers, and welfare personnel. They suggested that the MOE invest in expanding the pool of personnel who are engaged for this purpose and provide further capacity building for them.

Respondents also promoted the introduction of a substitute or supply teacher regime so that classes are never left unattended, or co-teachers overburdened, in instances of teacher absence from the learning space.

The conditions under which teachers serve were also a point of discourse for participants. The need for reduced class sizes, the abolition of multi-grade learning spaces, better quality and increased quantity of teacher furniture, the provision of better-quality housing for teachers serving in remote locations, and more efficient systems for the appointment of teachers were among some of the items discussed in this regard. Issues of reliable electricity supply and internet connectivity were also raised. Participants suggested that the use of school grants to purchase “capital” expenditure items be allowed.

Teachers’ psychosocial well-being was another area highlighted by participants, when they posited that recently initiated support to teachers (provision of PPE and vitamin support, access to counselling services, and price reductions for welfare services) should continue and be expanded. It was suggested that support be expanded to include free health, dental, and vision care as well as free psychological services.

Most of the respondents’ contributions focused on increased emoluments and benefits for teachers. Suggestions ranged from subsidies for internet costs, increases in the value of uniform allowances, increases in station allowances for out-of-home-district placements, increases in the frequency of paid leave allowances (e.g., Whitley Council biennially instead of on a 4-year cycle), addressing the de-bunching structure, and having salary increases that are commensurate with the cost of living. There was a collective agreement that more

quality candidates, more male candidates, and more candidates focusing on SEN need to be attracted to and retained in the profession. For that to happen, more incentive systems for teachers were promoted. Some of the suggestions included allowances for upgrading teacher status, cash grants, pension plans, and periodic payment of gratuity (every 10 years, e.g.) instead of having to wait until the age of retirement (55 years).

Improve Professional Induction, Development, and Ongoing Support

Participants reflected on the fact that new, or novice teachers require longer and more dedicated mentorship from instructional leaders from within the school (at all levels- Nursery, Primary, Secondary) and that more training is required in this regard i.e., instructional leadership. They also highlighted the fact that having initial teacher training and tertiary education offered online (GOAL, UG) would help to ameliorate issues around turn-taking for training (quota system) and educators abandoning instructional sessions to attend classes. This way, the sheer volume of candidates that could be trained in the profession increases. Participants were keen on trainees going through the rigors of longer and more frequent stints of teaching practice so that they become practically sound.

The need for a solid monitoring, evaluation, and mentoring framework for pre-service and novice in-service teachers was also highlighted. Some respondents were of the view that it is necessary to have teachers demonstrate their proficiency in the utilization of technology for instruction and innovation (output from Pro Futuro training), or any other aspect of the delivery of the curriculum. They cautioned, however,

that such measures should be valid and reliable and not subjective, or peer based.

Continuous professional development for teachers, throughout their teaching careers in both pedagogy and methodology (whether self-selected or Ministry mandated), was identified as an area of critical need, both in the short term – as learning loss for teachers had also occurred and as part of the natural course of constant upskilling and capacity building. Different ideas were shared regarding priority areas for CPD inclusive of STEM education and training cohorts of specialist teachers in these areas, the teaching of the creative and expressive arts, the use of distance education modalities and strategies, the effective use of cross-curricular integration to drive more interactive teaching and learning and increasing technological proficiency in the use of LMSs and digital tools.

There was also pointed feedback from contributors on what should obtain at the teachers' training college (CPCE). Apart from having more satellite centres, especially in the riverine areas, participants felt that there should be a general retooling of what is taught at the college in addition to how it is taught. For them, less emphasis should be placed on the theoretical underpinnings of teaching and learning, and more given to methods and strategies that make learning more engaging, meaningful, and fit for purpose for today's learners. Respondents also believed that a new focus around training for teachers in ESL or Indigenous language instruction, using technology for instruction, literacy across the curriculum, the teaching of reading, and responding to special education and disability needs in the general education classroom, should be prioritized. They also posited that these points of focus should also

become part of the in-service teachers' CPD offerings.

Engage Teachers in Improving Pedagogy, Research, and Policy for the Futures of Education

Participants lauded the Ministry's efforts to renew curricula across the levels since the system did not benefit from interventions of this nature for decades. They saw it as extremely beneficial that the persons tasked with authoring the curricula were Guyanese educators who could properly represent the Guyanese experience in the teaching and learning space while promoting best practices in the document. Participants praised the MoE for seeking out international partnerships to keep master teachers optimally trained so that they could continue to serve as local resource persons for teachers across the country. They also suggested that a return to having local experts write textbooks for the education sector is a good way to preserve the brain trust of content leaders across disciplines.

Teachers are a critical stakeholder group in education. As such they should be consulted in advance of any proposed policy changes and should be integrally involved in the decision-making processes that can and will affect their ability or inability to function optimally. Participants noted that as a collective, teachers do not feel that they are adequately consulted ahead of significant decisions being made – decisions which ultimately affect them. One example shared was the generalizing of school protocols for all schools. In the Hinterland, schools were forced to close when there were no COVID cases, resulting in massive learning loss for students who were already being underserved. Consequently, stakeholders advised that this practice be discontinued, recognizing that teachers are innovators and

leaders in their own right and may be the source of viable system solutions.

Respondents also posited that shifting pedagogy around educating children with special needs would require a paradigm shift in how teachers are oriented and trained to respond to and nurture children with special needs within the classroom. Adaptation and modifications made to the lived and prevailing curriculum, a robust teacher observation framework with modern instruments for the same, and a differentiated assessment approach, form part of the reformation process stakeholders hope to see for SEND programming. They also hope to see SEND support teams active within schools as part of the education delivery team. They also suggested that people be incentivized if they choose to pursue SEND as a specialization to attract more teachers to the field.

Participants observed that best practices in education change as the body of evidence grows. They contended that teaching methods should be frequently re-examined, and that curricula should be adjusted to suit the needs of the learners of today, with the use of stratagem like inquiry-based learning and teaching, cross-curricular integration, flipped learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and competency-based education. As such, teachers need to

be active knowledge seekers and researchers themselves in order to tap into these methods and approaches and be given the autonomy to co-create the learning pathway. In this way, teachers can contribute to the ever-growing body of knowledge/evidence by co-creating solutions to real-world issues. With these approaches, learner pathways are no longer uni directional. It was therefore suggested by a respondent that improvements would be needed in teacher accountability mechanisms.

Guyana is a country that welcomes persons escaping conflict and humanitarian crises. With an ever-increasing number of native Spanish-speaking learners entering the school system designed for English speakers, policymakers, and teachers themselves are called upon to innovate together around solutions for a system ill-prepared for this new dynamic. One suggestion arising from the consultations was training for teachers on how to deliver English as a second language. These teachers can be supported by bilingual teachers or community members who can become classroom assistants in spaces with larger migrant communities. In Region 3, there are over 730 native Spanish-speaking children in the school system, with many more out of school.

C. ENSURING STRENGTHENED AND MORE SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC FINANCING

The current state of financing of education

Education financing as a share of **GDP** has moved from 5.6% in 2019 to **6% in 2021**, which is indicative of a steady increase over the last decade. Government expenditure on education as a share of total **government expenditure** ranges between **15% - 18%**. The average expenditure per student in thousands of Guyana dollars (GYD 000) is 221,000 for Nursery, 156,000 for Primary and 190,000 for secondary. External funding for education serves as an important investment to fill the gap in the sector; this source of financing accounts for on average between 8-10% of overall local expenditure on education.

How can public financing of education be strengthened?

The **trajectory** for education **investment** over the **medium to long term** is to continue to invest in human capital development, which is investing in improving the quality of education at the basic levels (Nursery, Primary & Secondary) and strengthening skills development for youth and adults, including expanding access to higher education.

Efficiency in use is envisaged through increasing current expenditure on non-salary categories, undertaking the quantitative service delivery survey (QSDS), and improving the distribution of trained teachers across education districts, particularly where they are most needed. Ensuring capital expenses match infrastructural needs by conducting school mapping exercises to inform construction, extension, and rehabilitation; and improving sector coordination between the central and regional levels are high priorities. (Public Expenditure Review, 2021).

Greater **equity** in resource allocation must be ensured by increasing the per capita spending on education based on pre-defined equalizing rules; along with strategic investment in regional development and intentionally addressing Universal Secondary Education (USE) strategies.

D. RAISING THE AMBITION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION TARGETS AND BENCHMARKS

National Education Target & Benchmarks

At the time of this report, the country had set its SDG 4 benchmarks, which include the seventh indicator on **gender equity**, utilizing the **upper secondary completion rate** which is reflective of the maximum level of ambition given the investment that has been made and will continue to be made in ensuring secondary education completion.

National elaboration of other SDG target(s) (Skills development, youth, adult literacy, higher education enrollment, vocational & tertiary education)

The Government's commitment to addressing the above-mentioned SDG is elaborated in its development plan and the ESP. In this regard, the Guyana Online Academy for Learning (**GOAL**), which aims to provide 20,000 tertiary level scholarships to Guyanese citizens is an integral part of the development plan and the ESP. Through **GOAL** and the Get Ready for Opportunity to Work (**GROW**) a second chance program is offered, targeting Guyanese who never got the chance to complete secondary education. Those persons will now be able to matriculate to the tertiary level.

Reinvigorating the community literacy programmes for youth and adults, through the establishment of the National Literacy Department, is also evidence of the government's dedication to improving the quality of life of citizens through education. Investments in **skills development** and **Technical and Vocational training** in secondary and post-secondary institutions include modernization of the TVET curricula; conducting Rapid Labour Market

studies; tracer studies etc. These interventions have allowed the setting of the following national targets:

- ❖ By 2030, at least 50% of graduate outputs from TVET institutions are employed.
- ❖ By 2025, 30% of youth are participating in skills training in the formal and non-formal sectors.

Political accountability for achieving the national SDG 4 benchmarks could be further improved by strengthening its systems through strategic policy positions & coordination, investments, and monitoring systems.

National SDG 4 benchmarks, by indicator

		2025	2030
4.2.2: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning	100	100
4.1.4: OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATE	4.1.4a Children of primary school age	1	1
	4.1.4b Adolescents of lower secondary school age	1	1
	4.1.4c Youth of upper secondary school age	15	10
4.1.2: COMPLETION RATE	4.1.2a Primary	100	100
	4.1.2b Lower secondary	100	100
	4.1.2c Upper secondary	70	80
4.1.1: LEARNING PROPORTION OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING AT LEAST A MINIMUM PROFICIENCY LEVEL	4.1.1a Grade 2 or 3, mathematics	60	80
	4.1.1a Grade 2 or 3, reading	60	85
	4.1.1b End of primary, mathematics	50	80
	4.1.1b End of primary, reading	70	80
	4.1.1c End of lower secondary, mathematics	50	60
	4.1.1c End of lower secondary, reading	75	85
4.C.1: TRAINED TEACHERS PROPORTION OF TEACHERS WITH MINIMUM REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS	4.c.1a Pre-primary	80	90
	4.c.1b Primary	80	90
	4.c.1c Lower secondary	84	95
	4.c.1d Upper secondary		
		84	95
1.A.2: PUBLIC EDUCATION EXPENDITURE	1.a.2 As share of total government expenditure	20	25
	1.a.GDP As share of GDP	6	8

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), 2022

APPENDIX I

Number of consultations (if more than one consultation takes place): __

Basic information on all the consultation(s) convened

Date	Titles	Geographical Focus	Participants	Language Used
31/05/22	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	National	Parent-Teacher Association of Guyana (Interim)	English
31/05/22	Inclusive and safe schools	Regional	Secondary School Student Government in Region 4 & Georgetown	English
1/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	National	Disability Organizations	English
1/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	Subregional	Headteachers across levels - Upper Mazaruni -region 7	English
2/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	Regional	Migrant Population - Parents & Teachers - Region 3	English & Spanish
3/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	National	Local Education Group (LEG), Inter-religious, Private Sector Commission, Right of the Child, Women & Gender Equality Commission, Ethnic Relation Commission, Guyana Teachers Union, Ministries of Health, Amerindian Affairs, Social Protection, Finance, Local Government, MP Natasha Singh-Shadow Minister, and Development Partner	English
6/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	Regional	Students & Teachers - Hinterland Schools - Region 9	English

7/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	Regional	Regional Democratic Council - Region 2	English
8/6/2022	Transforming education in Guyana - Looking towards 2050	Regional	Headteachers across levels - Region 10	English
Total			948	

Age Range of Participants: (insert number)

158	0-17 years
195	18-29 years
579	30-59 years
14	60+ years

Participants Gender: (insert number)

215	Male
730	Female
3	Prefer not to say

Number of participants from each Stakeholder Group: (insert number)

223	Teachers, educators, facilitators, and professors
70	Youth and students (including children and adolescents)
60	School leaders (e.g., from UNESCO ASPnet school network)
5	City and local government representatives
437	Parents and caregivers
3	Small/medium enterprises/unions
0	Large National Businesses

1	Members of Parliament
3	Multi-national corporations
12	Local authorities
2	Government and national institutions

223	Public Servants
1	Regional economic community
2	Local Non-Governmental Organizations
0	International and/or Regional financial institutions
0	International Non-Governmental Organizations
135	Indigenous people and community leaders
10	Scientific community, academic, universities and research institutes
4	Media
454	Other (Please explain) Special Needs & Migrant Population