



Response to the question/comment raised by the Member for Nariva at the House of Representatives on Friday June 4, 2007.

**BY**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING**  
**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

The question/comment is as follows:

**“The change in Government policy with regards to its dealing with the Denominational School Boards of Education.”**

The response is as follows:

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to inform this Honourable House of some of the current developments in Educational Policy and how erroneously, these developments are being interpreted as changes in Government policy and our relationship with the Denominational Boards of Education.

Government's Policy with regard to its dealing with Denominational School Boards of Education has been developed over the past forty five years. This Policy is guided by two Major documents:

- The Concordat of 1960
- The Education Act 1966

The Concordat States:

- i) In relation to property, the ownership and right of direct control management of all denominational primary and secondary schools will be assured to the denominations in whatever modifications of the existing system that may subsequently be introduced in the new Education Ordinance, and all existing rights, so far as property is concerned, will be repeated.
- ii) In denominational schools, no books or apparatus to which the denominational authority formally objects, will be introduced or imposed.
- iii) The right of appointment retention, promotion, transfer and dismissed of teachers in primary Schools will rest with the Public Service Commission.

Specifically with respect to Secondary Schools the Concordat emphasizes that:

- i) The Governing Bodies of these schools will continue to be responsible for the administration of these schools and for their maintenance, repair and furnishing.
- ii) These schools will continue to qualify for Government aid"

The Education Act (1966) states as part of the General Business:

"The powers conferred on the Minister by this Act shall be exercised so as to ensure –

- (a) the promotion of the education of the

people of Trinidad and Tobago,  
and the establishment of institutions  
devoted to that purpose by means of  
which he shall thereby contribute towards the development of the human  
resources, physical, mental, moral and spiritual of the community;

- b) the establishment of a system of  
education designed to provide adequately for the planning and  
development of an educational service related to the changing needs of the  
community;
- c) the effective execution of the education  
policy of the Government.”

With respect to Board of Management of Assisted Schools the Act states.

“(1) Subject to this Act and of any regulations  
made there under a Board with regard to  
assisted schools under its management –

- a) shall have the control and management  
of all matters relating to the establishment and maintenance of new  
schools, the making of applications for recognition of new schools, the  
maintenance of existing schools, the  
re-building or extension of schools and such other matters relating to the  
organization of such schools as  
may from time to time be referred to them;
- b) shall receive, disburse and account  
for the expenditure of such grants-in aid as may from time to time  
be  
allocated to them from public funds;
- c) shall be responsible to the Minister  
for the efficient maintenance of schools under its authority, for the  
provision of all requisite furniture and for keeping school buildings  
in a good state of repair and sanitation.”

This is an indication of the joint responsibility between Denominational Boards of  
Education and the Government.

Specifically with respect to accountability the Act enunciates:

- i) *The Board of an assisted school shall  
provide for full and true accounts,  
respecting receipt and expenditure of*

- public funds, to be kept in the manner prescribed by Regulations made under this Act, or (if the manner of keeping the accounts is not so prescribed) in a manner approved by the Minister.*
- ii) For the purpose of the audit such accounts, the Board of an assisted school is a statutory authority within the meaning of Part V of the Exchequer and Audit Act.*

The Ministry's current approach in **NO WAY** reflects a change in Government policy or relationship, especially a negative change. Rather, it shows Government's intention to deepen the relationship between the Denominational Boards and the State

Some current practices which espouse Government's Policy with regards to its dealing with Denominational Board of Education are as follows.

- i) With respect to the staffing of Schools the Boards interview prospective teachers for appointments to Teaching Service and recommend prospective teachers to be employed in their schools.
- ii) The Boards make recommendations to the Teaching Service on matters of promotion and transfers.
- iii) The Ministry of Education generally supports the Boards in their recommendations with respect to the above.
- iv) The Government pays the full salaries, gratuities and pensions Denominational Schools.
- v) Each Denominational School receives a grant for the operation of each school under its purview. These grants include:
  - vi) Upkeep allowance
  - vii) contributions to salaries of ancillary

staff

- Viii) Minor equipment
- ix) Per capita grant for practical subjects
- x) Denominational Secondary Schools are allowed to select 20% of their intakes to their schools on The basis of merit in the SEA
- xi) The Government contributes  $\frac{2}{3}$  of all construction cost for repairs and renovation works to Denominational Secondary Schools and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of construction cost for Primary Schools. The Boards are required to pay **only**  $\frac{1}{3}$  and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of these costs respectively.
- xii) The Government contributes 100% for works related to sanitation and electrification.

### **REFORM INITIATIVES**

Since 2002, the Ministry of Education has embarked on a number of reform initiatives in its quest for a modernized system that provides **quality education for all**. The Ministry of Education has informed and involved the Denominational Boards on each step along the way. These reform initiatives which are part of a holistic Education plan include:

- Modernization of the curriculum
- Implementation of school based management
- Use of School Development
- Continuous assessment
- Teacher Professional Development
- Monitoring and Supervision of Schools

All of these to ensure:

- Quality education for all
- Certification for all
- The development of well rounded innovative and caring citizens
- Productive citizens to contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

Arising from the modernized curriculum is the necessity to have physical facilities which are in accord with the requirements of a modernized curriculum. The upshot of this is a comprehensive programme for the rebuilding, upgrading and renovation of almost all

schools – ECCE through the secondary level. The cost of the construction are as follows:

- an appropriate ECCE Centre - \$2m
- a new primary school (720 enrollment model) - \$30m
- a modernized secondary school (875 enrolment model plus 6<sup>th</sup> Form) - \$120m.

### Challenges

Immediate Challenges arise from the reform initiatives.

These Challenges include:

- accountability
- transparency
- total involvement of the community

To overcome the challenges the Ministry of Education developed a National Model for Education from ECCE through Secondary, and a supporting Memorandum of Understanding for ECCE and Contract for Primary and Secondary Schools to guide the process of School construction so as to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public funds. These Memorandum of Understanding and Contract are important in light of the costs of school construction. Mr. Speaker I repeat:

- \$2 m for an ECCE centre
- \$30m for a Primary school
- \$120m for a Secondary School

### The National Model

The national model is a framework or structure which guarantees that education being delivered to our young citizens, of whatever group, among other things:

- Promotes national unity;
- produces innovative and caring citizens as required by Vision 2020 and its developmental thrust;
- gives a central role to democracy, citizenship and diversity with the intent of imbuing in our young citizens a sense of patriotism.
- provides for a duration of a well articulated universal education programme from 3 – 18 years. That is 15/16 years of formal education in keeping with international standards of developed countries.

The Ministry of Education and Denominational Board of Education have been in intense discussions for two years now. They have been engaged in step by step collaboration on

- the National Model
- the process and procedures for construction works
- the process of accountability and transparency

Mr. Speaker there is an essential need to meet the mandates of the:

- Financial Act
- The Auditor General's Annual Investigation

Failing to do so will result in matters of answering to the Integrity Commission and Public Commissions of Inquiry.

Discussions with the Denominational Boards of Education were based on:

- 100% cost to government to upgrade and rebuild schools at
  - \$2m for ECCE Centres
  - \$30m for Primary Schools
  - \$120 m for Secondary schools

The Boards must sign a Memorandum of Understanding/Contract on how these funds must be managed to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public funds.

If we do not do this Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the members on the other side would be the first to call for the Auditor General to investigate what is happening in the Ministry of Education.

Our call for transparency is also in keeping with the relevant sections of the Education Act (1966) which states,

I repeat again; Section (18) of the Education Act:

- (1) The Board of an assisted school shall provide for full and true accounts, respecting receipt and expenditure of public funds, to be kept in manner prescribed by Regulations made under this Act, or (if the manner of Keeping the accounts is not so prescribed) in a manner approved by the Minister.***
- (2) For the purpose of the audit of such accounts, the Board of an assisted school is a statutory authority within the meaning of Part V of the Exchequer and Audit Act.***

And also Section (17) (1) of the same Act

- a. shall have the control and management of all matters relating to the establishment and maintenance of new schools, the making of applications for recognition of new schools, the re-building or extension of schools and such other matters relating to the organization of such schools as may from time to time be referred to them;***

- b. shall receive, disburse and account for the expenditure of such grants-in-aid as may from time to time be allocated to them from public funds;*
- c. shall be responsible to the Minister for the efficient maintenance of schools under its authority, for the provision of all requisite furniture and for keeping schools buildings in a good state of repair and sanitation...*

Thus the Ministry's current approach in **NO WAY** reflects a change in Government policy or relationship, especially a negative change. Rather, it shows Government's intention to strengthen an effective working relationship between the Denominational Boards and the State.

9. The Ministry of Education continues to be guided by the Concordat and the Education Act and **DOES NOT** intend to deviate from the tenets of the Concordat and the Educational Act. We do look forward to a continued harmonious relationship with the Denominational Boards of Education and will continue to dialogue with the Denominational Boards to achieve and maintain this. The Ministry of Education has been very attentive and accommodating to the suggestions of the Denomination Board of Management. The main reason for this is to promote and ensure a harmonious relationship between Denominational Boards of Management and the Ministry of Education.
  
10. The Ministry of Education is convinced that through the National Model and its accompanying Memorandum of Agreement and contract the relationship between the Denominational Boards of Management and the Ministry of Education will be strengthened, resulting in an enhanced effective system of education in which all will be winners and this in itself will lead to an effective joint responsibility in the education system as required by law.

June 4, 2007