

FEATURE ADDRESS
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

LAUNCH OF THE SUBSTITUTE TEACHER
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (STMS)

Yara Auditorium
Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business

Wednesday 16th October 2007

9.00a.m

In keeping with the spirit of Vision 2020, for the development of a caring society, the Ministry of Education remains committed to its mandate as we seek to provide a quality seamless and result-oriented education framework, especially from the perspective of the individuals in the classroom:- The student and the teacher.

The commitment to quality and excellence in education led us to seek solutions to two major questions:-

- Firstly, what *value* does the provision of a quality seamless, result-oriented education frame work have, if *teachers* are not in the classroom to make quality a reality for our education system?
- Secondly, what good does it serve if the teachers are in the classroom, but they lack the right mix of skills and attitudes to nurture and motivate our students to learn and to excel?

Over the last five years, the Ministry of Education has shaped bold solutions to the many problems that have plagued the school system for some time. We realised that if we were to make a difference, then several solutions would be found through what we did about:-

- Teacher management
- Teacher development and
- Teacher quality

We have found solutions to improved teacher management by implementing policies that:-

- Shift responsibility for decision making and accountability to the school. The school is now the arena of local control through the cluster of policies that support school based management such as the system of Heads and Deans; Local School Boards and Student Councils
- Another major teacher management solution is the introduction of a new performance management appraisal system designed to be developmental rather than punitive.

We found solutions to teacher development by working assiduously with the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education to convert our teacher training colleges to university campuses. In addition:-

- During the period 2002–2007, through our Secondary Education Modernisation Programme we implemented professional development training programmes in “new” curriculum areas like:-
 - Visual and Performing Arts
 - Technology Education
 - Physical Education

We also conducted numerous professional development programmes for Principals and Vice-Principals in school administration and leadership.

Expenditure under professional development and teacher and learning strategies increased from \$26.5 m in 2002/3 to \$91.5 m in 2005/6, an overall increase of well over 200%.

Ladies and gentlemen, the many solutions we have adopted for teacher management and professional development are part of a solution driven agenda for teacher quality and by extension quality in education.

It is well known in the literature that solutions to improved teacher management and performance take place in a rich reform environment that addresses:-

- The Pedagogical
- The Financial and
- The Administrative

Today, I am pleased that we have reached yet another administrative milestone in our journey towards quality education.

Today, we introduce a Substitute Teacher Management System for secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The STMS solution is geared to address both Primary and Secondary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago, using a phased approach.

Secondary Schools have been selected for the first phase pilot project since there are 134 Secondary Schools as opposed to 479 Primary Schools where computer labs are still being installed.

A substitute teacher system engaged our attention, long before the National Parent Teachers' Association brought to the attention of the general public, the fact that too many teachers were absent from the Nation's classrooms.

Today *for the first time ever*, we introduce a system that uses modern technology as a solution designed to alleviate challenges associated with attendance gaps created within the education system when substantive teachers are absent for a few days at a time on *Ministry approved* leave.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Human Resource Division, the Finance Section, the IT Unit and all our stakeholders who collaborated in this exercise, deserve our applause!!!

The Substitute Teacher Management System provides Principals with ready access to a pool of teacher-substitutes through the use of a recruitment database which resides on the World Wide Web.

Using the STMS programme, you - our Principals, will now be able to source replacements from this data base using the Internet. The database enables you to access substitute teachers both locally as well as regionally as we are part of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

The substitute teacher system has clear guidelines from application stage to the receipt of remuneration.

- Applicants from the non-government sector are invited to visit the STMS webpage at [\[www.moe.gov.tt/stms/index.php\]](http://www.moe.gov.tt/stms/index.php)
- They go to the “[Applicant login/ Registration Form](#)” where the user is asked to fill out a comprehensive yet user-friendly form.
- The information from this registration form is then saved to the STMS database

- Each applicant gets to save his/her own username and password to update the information on his/her respective profile in the future.
- Only one profile update is allowed every thirty (30) days.
- All successful applicants are invited for orientation/training by the Ministry. After the orientation is completed, the new substitute teacher's name is flagged on the web-database as ***“available.”***
- Principals can then proceed to engage these available persons as the need arises.

Ladies and gentlemen, the long five year journey is now exciting and rewarding as this database provides a searchable list of substitute teachers. As authorised officials of the Ministry of Education you are responsible for screening applicants.

Only authorised officials of the Ministry of Education are given passwords to access, search and extract reports using this web database.

These authorised officials are:-

- School Principals
- 8 School District Officials
- 6 Officials of the Head Office of the Ministry of Education and
- 4 Human-Resource Officials

Principals... the Substitute Teacher Management System is yet another empowerment tool as the reform agenda deepens the shift to school based management. STMS marks yet another shift as the control and accountability for managing teachers shifts into the hands of the Principal.

Principals... you have a great challenge as the integrity of operating this system is in your hands. One of our senior officers working on the development of this system put it aptly when he said:-

“Principals need to rise to the occasion to ensure that this system is not abused, for if their integrity is compromised, the entire system is compromised.”

Principals... we believe that if our education system is to seriously improve, you hold the key. We expect you to maximise the benefits to be derived from the many new policies that support the shift in our education system to school based management. You now have:

- Local School Boards in place in all government secondary schools
- School safety officers
- Heads and Deans and school councils as part of school governance
- Additional funding up to \$1 million per school per year
- Increased wages and from today
- A substitute teacher management system as:-

We believe that our Nation's children deserve to have their full quota of teacher contact at all times

We believe that parents should be satisfied that their children are taught when regular teachers are absent on approved leave

We` expect principals to ensure that **all** teachers prepare lesson plans and have them readily available so that instruction can proceed smoothly, whenever there is a need for a replacement teacher.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the STMS is another demonstration of the commitment the Ministry of Education has made to ICT's in education. Over the last five years we have:-

- Developed an ICT policy
- Developed a Policy on cell phones that promotes the use of mobile technology for e-based learning
- Trained teachers in the use of curriculum courseware: *Classworks* to enhance teaching/learning in Mathematics and Language Arts in some pilot schools.

In addition, over a thousand primary and secondary school teachers benefited from ICT training this year alone and there are teachers, at the *coach* and *expert* levels who mentor teachers in ICT integration

The Ministry of Education also supports the integration of ICT's in education by making free Internet access available to schools. At present 180 primary and secondary schools benefit from this service

Principals... we are pleased to note that there is increased use of technology in lesson preparation and delivery of excellent lessons using authoring ware such as Hyper Studio. We congratulate you for embracing the technology and expect this activity to go from strength to strength

And now, the Substitute Teacher Management System (STMS) Database comes to provide you with:

- Common Solutions through its quick universal approved-leave tracking by key user groups
- Web-based solutions, making multiple substitute teachers accessible to many schools at the same time and the sharing of
- A common Screen so that *all* stakeholders see the *same* information ... always!

I can almost hear the principals in the audience asking:- When can we begin to use the STMS Solution-tool?

The good news is **with immediate effect !!!**

All Secondary School Principals can access all pre-qualified and available substitute teachers immediately. There is online as well as telephone support available to further guide you in the use of the STMS.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the STMS Programme has started on a sound footing as evidenced by the overwhelming response from the public.

We received over four hundred (**400**) online responses from the seven (7) educational districts in Trinidad and also from Tobago.

Out of these online applicants, over one hundred (**100**) such persons were successfully screened, and oriented for induction into the various classrooms in our Secondary Schools.

One of the primary tools used to screen applicants was a Police Certificate of Character. Only applicants with Certificates of Good Character were allowed to complete the STMS enrollment process.

Applicants were screened by a Screening Panel comprised of personnel from our Human Resource and Curriculum Departments

All applicants, both successful as well as unsuccessful, were communicated with by email

It is to be noted that registration for the STMS has neither closing date nor time. Anyone can apply at any time, day or night since the application form is Internet based.

Today, each Secondary School Principal will receive the following items:

- ✓ **One (1) copy of the STMS Code of Conduct**
- ✓ **One (1) copy of the STMS Operating Guidelines**
- ✓ **One (1) copy of the STMS Handbook**
- ✓ **STMS User Login ID**
- ✓ **STMS User Password**

Given the great progress that we have made in bringing this ICT solution to you, I challenge you to support the direction for ICT's in Education as we continue to reform our education system for the 21st century.

Our policy has been and continues to be focused on providing schools with:-

- Computer and media labs
- Hardware and software for our teachers to utilise e-based learning
- Training and professional teacher development and
- Support to help them effectively monitor our cell phone policy that looks at the developmental usage of the technology

Principals... technology is changing the way your office functions; the way your classroom operates; the way you and your teachers work.

I invite you to contribute to the success of the STMS as we make yet another significant stride in the history of our education system.

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I charge you with the responsibility for letting teachers know that STMS is not for teachers who are regularly or spontaneously absent, but for those absent on approved Ministry leave.

I now encourage your immediate commencement and appropriate usage of the STMS database to demonstrate commitment to building a quality school system.

We thank you for your continued support with this endeavour