

STATEMENT BY  
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MINISTER OF EDUCATION  
IN THE SENATE ON THE NATIONAL MODEL FOR  
- Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary -  
EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
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Madame President,

It is my pleasure today to inform this honourable House, that Cabinet last Thursday, agreed to a National Model for education in Trinidad and Tobago, ranging from early childhood care and education through the secondary level.

This is indeed another major milestone for Trinidad and Tobago in our journey of educational development, as we seek quality education for all and the achievement of the objectives of Vision 2020 – innovative and caring citizens .

Immediately we will begin a second round of discussions with our valued partners - the denominational boards of education, the National Parent Teacher Association, student councils and

other senior students various associations with a commitment and interest in education e.g. the Association of Principals of Assisted secondary schools, the Association of Principals of Primary Schools and associations connected with early childhood care and education), as well as other Non Governmental Organisations and community groups - on the implementation of the National Model and the way forward. The denominational boards have so far shown an interest in the framework and some have already agreed to begin its implementation.

The National Model is designed such that within a seamless education system, education delivered to our young citizens from early childhood through secondary will guarantee the following:

- Effective social and cognitive development of ECCE pupils so that they may benefit from a primary education, and that as early as at that level the children will exhibit critical thinking skills.
- Primary school pupils will be:
  - able to read proficiently upon leaving school and also be sufficiently equipped with the numeracy

skills so as to cope with the demands of a secondary level education

- able to think analytically and critically
- enquiring and innovative
- imbued with qualities of good citizenship, with a sense of discipline, order and love of one's country.

- Secondary school leavers will:

- demonstrate the ability to think critically and analytically
- show their appreciation for science and technology and indeed be science and technology oriented
- be free of prejudice
- be innovative in outlook
- be tolerant and respectful of others and with a strong sense of nationalism and patriotism
- be democratic in outlook.

In this scenario, schools will be staffed appropriately both from quantitative and qualitative points of view. At the ECCE level the

children: teacher ratio is 15:1; at the primary level the pupil: teacher ratio is 20:1 for infants and 25:1 for the standards. Moreover, all teachers will be recruited from a pre service professionally qualified pool of personnel. This means to say that all teachers at all levels will be required to be professionally qualified upon entering the teaching service.

Madame President, all of this means that the National Model guarantees that the education system will be in harmonious alignment with Government's Strategic Plan- Vision 2020. The education system will then be producing students who are imbued with a sense of patriotism and nationalism, who will have the qualities as recognized by all, as being essential for good citizenship, democracy, advanced learning and being able to fulfill their economic and social roles as members of the society. And that the education system will facilitate the development of innovative and caring citizens as required by the mandate of Vision 2020.

Furthermore the National Model will address the many challenges facing our education system today. Among these are:

1. Management, especially at the school level. It will address this challenge by focusing on school based

management and instituting a career path for teachers comprising of two strands;

-Management Pathway– from teacher to head of department, dean to vice principal (management) and principal

- Curriculum and Instruction Delivery Pathway- from teacher to Master/Mentor teacher to Vice Principal ( Curriculum and Instruction delivery)

2. Quality Education for All. The National Model will address this through appropriate curriculum, appropriate staffing and appropriate physical facilities to complement the curriculum and teaching methodologies as well as suitable monitoring and evaluation activities.
3. Inclusiveness (the challenged to the gifted). It will address this through the concept of mainstreaming, suitable physical facilities for the challenged as well as special schools for the severely challenged and special programmes and specialized schools for the advanced learners.
4. Apparent threat to stability and violence and indiscipline in schools. This will be addressed through the curriculum which will include Diversity as a special

element of the social studies programme, a special emphasis on morals and values education, democracy and greater involvement of students and parents in the education process. A strengthened and modernized Peace Promotion Programme with the support of the Ministry's Student Support Services Division. This means the establishment and effective operations of student councils and parent teacher associations in all schools and strengthened linkages with other relevant Ministries and agencies.

5. Total Involvement of the community. Through this approach the Ministry hopes to ensure that that the education and training provided to the students are relevant to the needs, goals and ambitions of the community and region, impacts positively on the development and growth of the community, have the support of the community and most of all are recognised by the community as being able to address poverty alleviation in the region. This includes the establishment of local school boards, the involvement of association of ex pupils groups national and regional organizations e.g. the Lions, the Rotary, etc. The setting up of parents and community days for school visits and

the establishment of community events for the schools  
e.g Sports, exhibitions, Scouts, etc.

This National Model ensures that all our young citizens will pursue a common core of subjects, regardless of the school which they attend. It ensures that all students of all schools will enjoy the benefits of modern technology, appropriately professionally developed teachers, modern teaching techniques, and enjoy the opportunity to benefit from technology programmes. It furthermore ensures that all school leavers at the secondary level will be certified as well as provided with a certificate or transcript which will indicate to employers or providers of education and training at another level/dimension what they can do.

Madame President, for quite a while now the Ministry of Education has been concerned that the students of the secondary schools which receive the better performing students on the basis of the SEA, are not given the opportunity to pursue technology programmes. Indeed this is a shortcoming of the system and it promotes inefficiency in the development of human capital. If indeed we are to produce innovative students it seems reasonable that high performing students should pursue technology

programmes. The National Model does exactly this. It demands that every school should offer at least one technology programme at the upper level.

For some time now the general population has been concerned that approximately just forty percent of the secondary school leavers are properly certified or provided with a certificate or transcript for entering the world of work, or entering the next level of education/training. The National Model through the introduction of the National Certificate of Secondary Education will ensure that all students will be provided with a transcript or certificate upon leaving school. This certificate will attest to their competencies and signal to their prospective employers or training agencies their achievements.

Madame President permit to emphasise that our approach to educational planning and development is a holistic one geared to the development of well rounded citizens who are nationalistic in spirit but outward looking.

There can be no doubts as to the benefits – individual and national – to be reaped from this National Model. We are certain that the education system must address such matters as good citizenship,

democracy, human capital development, patriotism and nationalism, transmission of culture and values and freeing the minds of our young citizens from prejudices. We know that education can be destructive or it may serve as a unifying force to weld together the different groups of the society together. The intention of the National Model is social cohesiveness, making the society one rooted in law and order rather than being ungovernable as has been stated as the intention of some others. The intention of the National Model is to produce innovative and caring citizens with appropriate labour skills and attitudes in keeping with a first class and developed nation. The estimated cost for the construction programme to build, upgrade and furnish and equip ECCE centres, primary and secondary schools over a nine year period (2007 – 2015) is two billion dollars (TT\$2bn.)

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