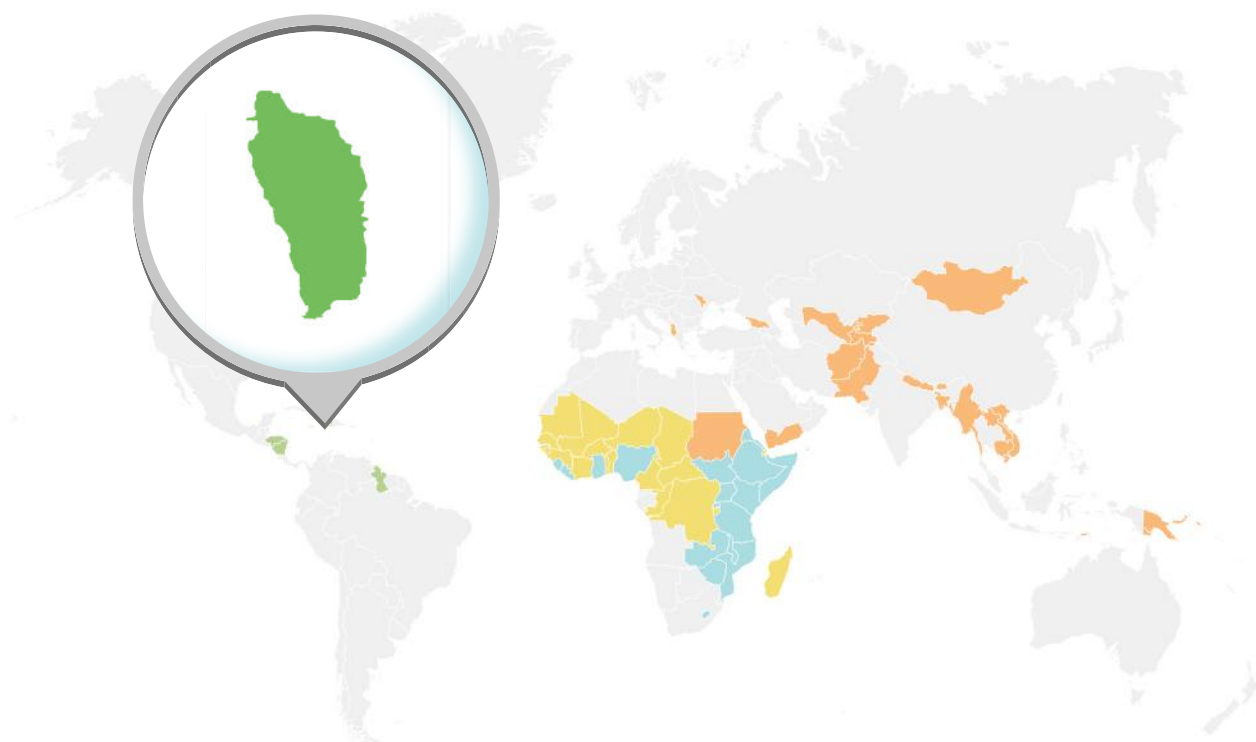


COUNTRY REVIEW

Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Dominica



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ISSN: 2735-6221 (online).

To quote this document: Knight, V., Marshall, J., Depradine, K., & Moody-Marshall, R. (2021). *Country review. Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Dominica*. Serie Working Papers SUMMA. N° 9. Published by SUMMA. Santiago de Chile.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of SUMMA, OECS and IDRC, or its Boards of Governors. This work has been prepared by the KIX Regional Hub with the support of the Global Partnership for Education and the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

Challenges and opportunities in the education system of **Dominica**



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ABOUT SUMMA

SUMMA is the first Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was established in 2016 by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with support from the education ministries of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay.

Since 2018, the ministries of Guatemala, Honduras and Panama have also joined. Its mission is to contribute to and increase the quality, equity and inclusion of the region's education systems by improving the decision-making process for education policies and practices. To accomplish its mission, SUMMA organizes its actions in three strategic pillars that allow the promotion, development and dissemination of (1) cutting-edge research aimed at diagnosing the main challenges in the region and promoting shared work agendas, (2) innovation in education policies and practices aimed at providing solutions for the main education problems in the region, and (3) collaborative spaces that allow exchange between policymakers, researchers, innovators and the school community, based on a shared regional agenda.

ABOUT OECS

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) was created in 1981 as an intergovernmental organization for promoting cooperation, harmonization and integration among its member states.

OECS has developed a considerable amount of valuable knowledge sharing and direct technical assistance among Ministries of Education. It has also been part of the Regional Education Strategy and has supported participatory planning and monitoring processes. In this regard, the OECS has a strong leadership role with the Caribbean States, and especially in supporting the countries that belong to this territory: Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As a current partner of the GPE, the OECS has led the implementation of the Education Sector Plans in these states.

ABOUT KIX LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange Hub (KIX) of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is a joint initiative of the Global Partnership for Education – GPE – and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), which brings together various stakeholders in education. The regional network is led by SUMMA (Educational Research and Innovation Laboratory for Latin America and the Caribbean), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and aims to contribute to the strengthening of education systems in partner countries: Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

KIX connects expertise, innovation and knowledge to help developing countries build stronger education systems and move towards SDG 4: inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

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SUMMARY OF KIX LAC EASTERN CARIBBEAN ROUNDTABLE

The Eastern Caribbean Roundtable was held on July 8th and it counted on the presence of the following KIX LAC representatives:

Dominica

Bekissa Labadie
Mr. Mervin Alexander
Dr. Kimone Joseph
Mrs. Octavia Timothy

Saint Lucia

Claudia Louis
Merphilus James

Grenada

Mrs Michelle Brathwaite
Dr. Nicole Phillip-Dowe
Mr. Frankson Marshall
Miss JudyAnn Auld
Mr. Glenroy George

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Mr. Dixon Findlay
Mrs. Michelle King Campbell
Mr. Oswald Robinson

Dr. Verna Knight and her team at the University of West Indies (Dr. Rasheda Moody-Marshall, Dr. Jason Marshall and Dr. Kathy Depradine) presented the main findings of the research for the Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines separately, although at the end they stressed common challenges and opportunities for the sub-region.

After the presentation, some of the representatives shared their perspectives and gave inputs for further discussion. Overall, there was a collective perception that the four countries are not as different as they think they are. In this sense, Dr. Kimone Joseph (UWI – Dominica), Dr. Phillip-Dowe (UWI-Grenada) and Frankson Marshall (Teachers' Union, Grenada) highlighted this aspect.

Improving access to technology, evidenced by the COVID-19 context, was something that representatives such as Dr. Kimone Joseph, Mr. Oswald Robinson (Teachers' Union, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and Michelle Brathwaite (Ministry of Education, Grenada) mentioned.

Additionally, Mr. Robinson raised the topic of inclusive education and how special education is integrated into the school system. Although it wasn't directly approached during the presentation, researchers informed that the subject is covered in the four reports. Actually, Ms. Schenelle Leonce (participant from the Ministry of Education of Saint Lucia informed us that they are working specifically to provide access to education for our special needs children.

On the other hand, both Mr. Robinson and Mrs. Brathwaite underlined the importance of ongoing training for administrators, school leaders and teachers for both emergencies and for a virtual context.

Finally, Dr. Neva Pemberton (OECS) gave the final remarks, where she emphasized the extent to which evidence-based policy action and sector planning has been and remains a developmental priority for the OECS and KIX LAC. In the end, these documents would help OECS and KIX LAC in designing some of the key activities in their new education sector program, specifically in terms of capacity building for teachers and educational leaders, to support improved learning.

As Dr. Knight pointed out, these reports are not intended to tell countries what to do. Instead, KIX LAC purpose is that they are used as inputs, especially given that Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are now in the process of developing a new sector plan.

FOREWORD

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) continue to face major social challenges, and their education systems are a mirror of the contexts of inequality in which they are embedded. Today it is urgent to move forward under the commitment of transforming our education systems into living, collaborative ecosystems that make use of evidence, innovation and knowledge sharing to address the challenges related to improving quality, equity and adaptability in the face of the new challenges of recent years. At the core, Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative emphasizes the ultimate purpose of improving the holistic learning outcomes of all students in the region.

For this reason, the KIX LAC Hub, led by the partnership between SUMMA - Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Education for Latin America and the Caribbean - and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), concentrates its efforts on contributing to the improvement of the equity and quality of the region's education systems through its three main pillars of work: identifying a regional education policy agenda, mobilizing knowledge to respond to countries' needs and strengthening the institutional capacities of country partners.

In this context and with the conviction of the importance of consolidating a regional education policy agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, SUMMA and OECS have promoted a series of studies with specialists, under the common denominator "Challenges and opportunities in the education systems of the KIX LAC countries". As a result of this research, it was proposed to develop a series of working papers aimed at updating the educational diagnosis of each country and identifying the difficulties, strengths, challenges and current priorities faced by the following countries: Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

This series of working papers focuses on six thematic areas prioritized by KIX such as: (i) early childhood education, (ii) learning assessment systems, (iii) gender equity, (iv) data systems, (v) equity and inclusion, and (vi) teaching and learning. The research papers drew on secondary sources and interviews with key local stakeholders that delve into the challenges and experiences of different education systems from various perspectives: legal and policy frameworks, governance and financing, the impact of the pandemic, curriculum and learning materials, teachers, learning environments, and the contribution of educational communities and students.

This valuable research is the result of collaborative work between the SUMMA, OECS and researchers from the region, and it counts with the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). It is hoped that these documents will encourage reflection and public policy dialogue, open a regional collaboration agenda that will strengthen learning environments among countries and become a real contribution to the construction of fairer and more sustainable education systems.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CFS	Child-Friendly School
CRRP	Climate-Resilience and Recovery Plan
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DLP	Dominica Labour Party
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDMU	Education Development Management Unit
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HDI	Human Development Index
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
JBTE	Joint Board of Teacher Education
KIX	Knowledge & Innovation Exchange
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean

MoE	Ministry of Education
NRDS	National Resilience Development Strategy
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
OESS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Education Sector Strategy
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
PGDE	Post Graduate Diploma in Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SUMMA	Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UWI	University of the West Indies
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project was funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and was commissioned under the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative in the Eastern

Caribbean. This initiative seeks to connect the expertise, innovation, and knowledge of GPE partners to aid developing countries in strengthening their education systems. KIX consists of regional KIX hubs, where partners share information, innovations, and best practices. It also includes a funding mechanism that provides grants at the global and regional levels to invest in knowledge generation and innovation in eligible countries. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is the grant agent for KIX. In the Eastern Caribbean, SUMMA and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have partnered to create and promote the development of a KIX Regional Hub in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). SUMMA was designated as the leading institution on this specific project.

This overview and analysis of the education system in the region was commissioned for four countries in the Eastern Caribbean: Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This report provides an analysis of some of the key features of the education system in Dominica. It also highlights the current needs and challenges within the system and provides evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen education provisions, and by extension, the educational experiences for every learner.

In addition to understanding the nuances of Dominica's education system, this country review is also necessary for the setting of a relevant agenda that will guide discussions between each country and KIX, from April 2021 to December 2023. The aim is to support education development that is aligned with the most important educational needs in Dominica. To assist with identifying the priority educational needs, multiple data collection methods were used to obtain the information required for this report. Working closely with the education focal point identified for Dominica, important legislative and policy-related documents were accessed and reviewed. This was done in conjunction with desk research using reputable online sources from international organizations inclusive of the CDB, EDMU, GEM, World Bank, and UNESCO.

Along with using secondary sources of information, data were also gathered from key educational stakeholders, including senior ministry officials, union members, and teacher trainers. These individuals were either interviewed or completed questionnaires which included questions designed to obtain specific information about the educational realities in Dominica.

The key findings were reported according to the main thematic research areas for the project. These are reported below.

COVID-19 AND EDUCATION

COVID-19 has changed the face of education in the Caribbean. In Dominica, over 12,337 students and over 1,178 teachers were impacted by the disruption caused by the pandemic. Many parents were also impacted, some of whom found themselves jobless because of the pandemic. While the Ministry of Education has received support from international and regional organizations to mitigate the negative consequences of COVID-19, the shift to emergency remote teaching has brought several challenges that have to be addressed if all students are to benefit from the high-quality education they deserve.

Key Issues: The pandemic significantly impacted education in Dominica. Some of the main challenges that have emerged because of the pandemic include:

- Unequal access to technology among students.
- Lack of online pedagogical readiness by teachers.
- Loss of instructional time.
- Poor internet connectivity.

Recommendations: Given the unpredictability of COVID-19, the Ministry of Education will need to:

- Continue its push to ensure that each student has access to technology.
- Utilize different methods (i.e., radio, television, etc.) to reach those students who have issues with internet connectivity.
- Work closely with the Telecommunications Service Providers to improve bandwidth across the country.
- The Government is encouraged to continue to ensure the safety of all education stakeholders.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Education policy heavily impacts the operations of schools in Dominica; accordingly, the Minister of Education has overall responsibility for ensuring that the education system functions efficiently. The Minister is generally expected to work in collaboration with the Chief Education Officer (CEO) to make policy decisions that affect education. Although the Education Act delineates the legislation related to education, there are still a few concerns about education policy.

Key Issues: Government decision-making in Dominica is highly centralized. Although the Government has remained committed to improving education through policy, there are still important challenges for them to navigate. These include the following:

- The quality of early childhood education

- Lack of human and financial resources to effectively monitor and evaluate policy
- Additional research needed to inform decision-making by the political directorate

Recommendations: The Ministry of Education should consider strengthening its push to improve quality early childhood education and to improve its monitoring and evaluation processes.

- With regards to early childhood, this can be achieved by increasing the number of trained caregivers. Incentives can be provided to those individuals who undertake training.
- To strengthen its monitoring and evaluation processes, the Ministry of Education will need to build on existing best practices (i.e., systematic collection of data of its Educational Digest) as well as invest human and financial capital to improve its current processes and Education Management Information System.
- Strengthen the quality and increase the amount of education research conducted on policy-related issues.

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The teaching profession in Dominica continues to be one of the most important aspects of education in the country. Pre-service training is provided and most individuals complete this training before entering the teaching profession. On average 64% of teachers at the primary level and 51% at the secondary level are trained. However, efforts need to be made to increase the percentage of teachers trained at both levels.

Key Issues: The main educational challenges in the teaching profession include the following.

- The salary scale for entry-level teachers is relatively low.
- Attracting highly qualified individuals to the profession.
- Increasing the percentage of trained teachers.
- There is a shortage of male teachers.
- There is a shortage of special needs education teachers (with specific disciplines/skills).
- Curriculum reform.

Recommendations: The challenges facing the teaching profession in Dominica can be improved if the Government considers the following:

- Raising the minimum qualification level for entry-level teachers (i.e., teachers must have a First Degree).
- Increasing the amount of remuneration for entry-level teachers.

- Establishing a formal mentorship program for entry-level teachers.
- Making training a mandatory requirement for teachers before entering the teaching profession.
- Creating a recruitment drive to attract male teachers and dispel the notion that teaching is a feminized profession.
- Review the current teacher training curriculum with more innovations that reflect the current educational realities.

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Inclusion in education is critical. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with other organizations, has implemented several education initiatives designed to support individuals from economically disadvantaged groups. Also, there have been initiatives to address achievement gaps; these achievements are laudable. The government should be supported in further improvements in these areas as well as in other priority areas such as special education.

Key Issues: While many policy issues are driven by students in the mainstream classroom, more attention also needs to be given to students with special needs and other vulnerable populations (i.e., persons from low socio-economic backgrounds). These issues are outlined.

- Integrating special education students in the mainstream classroom.
- An inadequate number of teachers trained in special education.
- Slow progress on the integration.
- High unemployment numbers (increased number of persons requiring government assistance to access quality education).

Recommendations

- Training and increased continuous professional development opportunities for teachers (both special education teachers and teachers in the mainstream classroom).
- Improvements in early intervention detection for students with special education needs.

Apart from the challenges identified above, results from a S.W.O.T analysis that was conducted revealed that there are also various strengths and opportunities. Some of these include:

STRENGTHS

- Universal access to secondary education.
- Support of socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
- Support of privately-owned childhood centers.

Opportunities

- Increasing access to funding from international organizations.
- Improving ICT infrastructure at schools.
- Improving teacher online pedagogical competency.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental pillar in Caribbean development. For many individuals who reside in this region, it is the key to social and economic advancement. In the Small Island States and developing economies such as those in the OECS, investments in human capital through high-quality education and training are deemed to be critical to sustainable economic growth and development. Therefore, it requires regional governments to be committed to developing this sector. Dominica's commitment to education development is clearly expressed in its mission—*to educate and prepare all students to live productive lives in a complex and changing society*—the driving force of educational reforms and innovations throughout the country. The primary goal of this inspirational motto is to improve the quality of life for *all* citizens.

Propelled by the national vision of improving the quality of life for all Dominicans, the government bodies continue to partner with various agencies and stakeholders in various current plans/strategies for infrastructural, social, and economic development, namely:

- *The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration*
- *The CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030*
- *OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012–2026*
- *National Resilience Development Strategy (2020)*
- *OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 (2021)*

The common priority areas among the strategic initiatives include: 1) efficient COVID-19 response; 2) strengthening human and social development; 3) building a stronger economy; 4) promoting quality governance and effective public administration; 5) embracing national pride, identity, and culture, and 6) resilience to climate change. Investments in education and training are key to successfully attaining goals associated with these priority areas, and thus is a principal contributor to the development of human resources for personal, economic, and social development. The key to achieving these coveted outcomes through education, however, is continuous assessment and reviews of the education sector to inform relevant planning and decision-making for strengthening and supporting timely innovation and reform as needed.

Accordingly, this report presents an overview of key aspects of the education system in Dominica, intended to highlight current needs and challenges within the system, and provide evidence-based recommendations that can improve education provisions, and by extension the educational experiences for every learner. Consequently, the report is comprised of six key chapters. The main components of each are presented below.

Chapter One presents an overview of the national context undergirding the education system. Specifically, this chapter provides a summary of the demographic context, the political organizational context, the social and economic context, and a description of the general structure of the education system.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the initial impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the education system and its main actors (teachers, students, and their families). This section offers insight into some of the relevant decisions taken to guide the provision of education in Dominica while classes were suspended, and the extent of current planning to compensate for instructional time lost in the immediate post COVID -19 period.

Chapter Three includes a summary of the main policies and programs that shape the educational system of the country. It specifically highlights the national education priorities, the most important reforms, and the main characteristics of programs that are currently being implemented.

Chapter Four describes the characteristics of the teaching profession of the country and its main challenges.

Chapter Five provides insight into issues of inclusion. It focuses on the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the country, and concerns related to gender gaps and trends in education, as well as gaps that may exist in access, academic attainment, and school completion across the country.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, provides a synopsis of the key areas that affect the education sector in Dominica. Recommendations and implications for research based on an analysis of the overall aspects of the education system are also examined in this final chapter.

The need, relevance, and timeline of this project for the region are especially underscored by the plethora of educational issues that have been reignited by the sudden and unpredictable arrival of COVID-19. Issues such as equity, social justice, inclusion, and technological infusion/integration into teaching and learning have especially taken center stage as the region grapples with this new reality. As such, with COVID-19 as one of the main focal points, the research is not merely a data collection pursuit, but it presented an opportunity for each country to holistically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the current educational structures, as each country engages with its educational partners and stakeholders to collaborate on ways to strengthen the overall educational system.

This report was funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and was commissioned under the Knowledge & Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative in the Eastern Caribbean, which seeks to connect the expertise, innovation, and knowledge of GPE partners to help developing countries build stronger education systems. KIX consists of regional KIX hubs, where partners come together to share information, innovations, and best practices in education. It is also a funding mechanism that provides grants at the global and regional levels to invest in knowledge generation

and innovation in eligible countries. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is the grant agent for KIX. In this context, SUMMA & the OECS – organizations with important educational experience in the region – have partnered together to create and promote the development of a KIX Regional Hub in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). SUMMA was designated as the leading institution on this project.

SUMMA is the first educational laboratory for the Latin America and the Caribbean regions. It was created in 2016 by the Inter-American Development Bank, with the support of the ministries of education of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. It is also supported by the ministries of education of Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. Data collected under the KIX initiative were gathered from Member States of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a subregional, inter-governmental organization dedicated to facilitating regional integration in the Eastern Caribbean. The Member States include Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This report focuses on the data gathered on the education system in Dominica.

METHODOLOGY

This report was developed using data collected in two sequential phases. Two key data collection processes were used – documentary analysis and field research via interviews with senior education officials. The interviews were conducted to supplement data collected from these officials using surveys comprising several open-ended questions. In Phase 1 of the research, documentary analysis was used to gather secondary data relevant to the thematic issues. This was completed through an initial desk review and subsequent engagement with an identified focal point in Dominica. The focal point worked with the researcher to identify and source specific documents that were needed for developing each chapter of the report. The data collected from Phase 1 provided guidance for identifying gaps in existing data and engaging the support of senior personnel from the Ministry of Education in filling these gaps, where possible. In cases where gaps still exist, information was not readily available from the Ministry of Education.

Phase 2 involved the collection of field data from several senior education officials inclusive of education administrators. A summary of the key individuals who provided information on important aspects of the research is outlined below.

Key Respondents in the Data Collection Process:

Key Respondents/Interviewees	Area of Responsibility
Dr. Jeffrey Blaize	Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education
Ms. Weeferly Jules	Senior Planning Officer, Ministry of Education
Mrs. Bekissa Robinson	Statistician, Ministry of Education
Mrs. Octavia Timothy	Coordinator, Special Education & Student Support, Ministry of Education

Each interviewee was purposively selected based on their experience and depth of knowledge of the education system in Dominica, as well as their ability to provide additional information needed for specific sections of the report. These participants were provided with a survey that comprised open-ended questions and telephone interviews were arranged following the completion of the survey. Due to conflicting demands facing the relevant personnel at the MOE as they grappled with the evolving pandemic and its impact on school processes, some persons were able to complete the questionnaire but unable to make time for an online interview. Where necessary, follow-up emails and WhatsApp messages were utilized to obtain further details, and clarifications based on initial data submissions.

The focal point was crucial in establishing communication with senior personnel in the Ministry of Education who provided important data that assisted with meeting the objectives for this project. Information that pertains to the key objectives of the consultancy, as well as the strategies used to collect the data, is outlined below.

Summary of Methodology Relative to Report Objectives:

Objectives	Methodological Approach
To outline the main features of the educational systems in Dominica and describe their main social, economic, and demographic indicators, as well as the political characteristics and historical events that are relevant to understanding Dominica's education system.	<p>Desk Review and Document Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organizations (i.e., World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UN, GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, and local sources of educational documentation – i.e., Education Policy papers, legislative documents, etc.).

To explore the main educational challenges in Dominica in terms of (a) the impact of COVID-19; (b) governance and regulation; (c) resources; (d) policies and programs; (e) students; (f) teachers and educational leaders; (g) curriculum and pedagogies; (h) accountability and support; (i) innovation and knowledge mobilization; (j) vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

Desk Review and Document Analysis

- Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organizations (i.e., World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UN, GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, and local sources of educational documentation - i.e., policy papers, etc. from the Ministry of Education)
- Open-ended Questionnaires and One-on-one (virtual) interviews
- Open-ended questionnaires and interviews with key education stakeholders

To understand how institutions and the interactions among key actors contribute in shaping the educational system as well as its outcomes, trying to understand what factors explain educational change.

Desk Review and Document Analysis

- Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organizations (i.e., World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UN, GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, and local sources of educational documentation - i.e., policy papers, etc. from the Ministry of Education)
- Surveys with Open-ended Questions and One-on-one (virtual) interviews
- Open-ended questionnaires and interviews with key education stakeholders

To analyze the knowledge, mobilization, and use of educational evidence in Dominica, through a bibliometric analysis that helps identify the key documents/ pieces of research that are taken into consideration in policymaking.

Desk Review and Document Analysis

- Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organizations (i.e., World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UN, GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, and local sources of educational documentation – i.e., policy papers, etc. from the Ministry of Education)
- Surveys with Open-ended Questions and One-on-one (virtual) interviews
- Open-ended questionnaires and interviews with key education stakeholders

Development of Matrix

Desk Review and Document Analysis

- Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organizations (i.e., World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UN, GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation– i.e., policy papers, etc. from the various Ministries of education)

CHAPTER 1:

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth of Dominica is an independent state and a member of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States—OECS, nestled between Guadeloupe (North) and Martinique (South). It is the largest, most northerly, and mountainous Windward island in the Lesser Antilles region, located between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean (PAHO, 2021). The island was originally inhabited by the Kalinago people and later colonized by the Europeans in the 1700s (World Bank, 2020). The name of the capital is Roseau. The major (official) language is English; French patois is a common tongue as well.

Dominica is in a seismic zone and is referred to as the “Nature Isle of the Caribbean” because of its bountiful natural beauty. Its mountainous terrains cover a large part of the country (extending above 1500 meters in elevation). The mountainous terrain creates an abundance of water in the form of perennial streams, rivers, lakes, and waterfalls. The tropical forests are teeming with rare indigenous fauna and flora species, as well as an attractive boiling lake (the second largest in the entire world). “Dominica’s climate is classified as ‘humid tropical marine’, which is characterized by strong and steady trade winds. There is a distinct dry season between February and June and a wet season between (July and December). Like other Caribbean countries, Dominica is exposed to tropical storms and hurricanes. The official hurricane season extends from June 1st to November 30th, with peak storms observed between August and September on average. All the natural features mentioned above make Dominica a convenient target for various emerging innovations such as climate resilience, specifically related to the National Energy Policy (OECS, 2020).

The physical makeup of Dominica represents one among many other factors that directly and indirectly influence the business of schooling across the nation. The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of how Dominica’s unique natural, economic, political, and social characteristics influence the education system and ultimately the nurturing of its young populace.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTEXT

Dominica has a Westminster parliamentary system of government. Under the Constitution adopted at independence on the 3rd of November 1978, politics in Dominica takes place within a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic,

with an elected President, that does not acknowledge an external head of state, while the executive power rests with the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The President is elected for a 5-year term by the parliament. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who commands most elected representatives in the parliament and, also appoints members of the parliament as cabinet ministers, with the Prime Minister's recommendation. The parliament is unicameral, with 21 elected members and 9 appointed senators in the House of Assembly (World Bank, 2020). The President, Prime Minister, and the Cabinet of ministers have executive power and legislative power is vested in the parliament, while judicial power lies with the courts. The government's administrative divisions are aligned with the 10 parishes and the local government system is made up of 43 cities, towns, villages and, Kalinago (indigenous) councils (UNICEF, 2017). The village councils relay information between government offices and the communities (World Bank, 2020).

The current President of Dominica is Charles A. Savarin. The current Prime Minister is the Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit; his Dominica Labour Party (DLP) secured a fifth consecutive term in the general election conducted December 6th, 2019. The next general election is scheduled for December 2024. Dominica's legal system is based on English common law. The judiciary consists of the Magistrates' Courts, the High Court, and the Court of Appeal. Cases can be appealed to the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (located in St. Lucia). Dominicans recently voted to take on the Caribbean Court of Justice as the court of final appeals, as opposed to the Privy Council.

The current minister for Education is the Honorable Mrs. Octavia Alfred. The Assistant Chief Education Officer is Dr. Jeffrey Blaize, and the Permanent Secretary is Mrs. Chandler Hyacinth. The process of education has been maintained and kept consistent for the most part regardless of recent civil and political upheavals among the public. However, in the months leading to the 2019 election in December, various protests were occurring, and people were demanding electoral reform.

1. 1 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Dominica's economy is heavily service-based and dependent on education and tourism; agriculture is also a main part of the economy. Dominica's currency is the East Caribbean dollar. According to the United Nations (2020), the GDP per capita was USD7,691.3. The country relies on these primary determinants of economic growth and when they are threatened, the people face challenges in the supply of food and income (UNICEF, 2017; OECS, 2020). For example, in the past, the country relied on the banana industry as the main economic export and when the Windward Islands' guaranteed fixed share of the European banana market was abolished in 2009, right after the effects of the 2008 global recession, the country slid into an economic crisis (UNICEF, 2017). Added to this, the economy suffered a further setback with the passage of tropical storm, Erika, in 2015 and hurricane Maria in 2018. Tourism, which contributes significantly to the economy, is currently being negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Several major historic and current events continue to shape the Dominican society. As part of the economic challenges, poor infrastructure, including the lack of a large airport stemmed the economic potential of the country and its ability to gain financially through tourism. This is coupled with the fact that the country is very vulnerable to hurricanes. Tropical Storm Erika devastated houses, other infrastructure and killed 34 people on the island in August 2015. Hurricane Maria was a category 5 storm (on a scale of 1 to 5) that caused dozens of deaths in September 2017. It destroyed 90% of the buildings and caused around USD 1.3 billion in damage (150% of annual GDP) (UN, 2020). Given the public debt at 83% of GDP in 2019, this event triggered cascading expenses for the government and is still affecting aspects of the economy and lifestyles of the Dominican people today. Despite its economic challenges (i.e., the decline in the banana industry, high unemployment rates, poverty, hurricanes, etc.), the country has been witnessing fluctuations in growth in its GDP (the current GDP is USD 582, 403, 704); however, a significant decrease is forecasted for 2021 (Trading Economics, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

The island remains vulnerable to natural disasters and is currently working towards a sense of normalcy since the devastation of the hurricanes. The country continues to strive towards climate resilience making it ripe for various research and pilot studies to implement innovative climate-resistant policies and infrastructure. According to the World Bank (2020), Dominica ranked 111th (out of 190 economies) as business-friendly in 2020; this resulted in the country having the cheapest citizenship-by-investment program in the world to increase competitiveness.

As it relates to the crime/murder rate, Dominica remains below average within the Caribbean region. Gender-based violence, due to gender gaps, continues to be a nuisance. Burglaries mark the highest nature of crime in the country and drug trafficking is common, specifically cocaine supplied to Europe. In terms of social stability, there was a popular dissatisfaction with the long rule of the DLP, resulting in anti-government protests in 2019 with violent confrontations between police and protesters. Additionally, there were projections for increased risk of anti-government protests in the second half of 2020 due to the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic such as high job instability.

1. 2 DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS

Dominica's land area is approximately 290 square miles or 750 square kilometers, measuring 47 km in length by 25 km wide. In relation to the census data, the population growth rate is (0.25%) and there are approximately 71,986 inhabitants, due to high emigration to other countries (United Nations, 2020). As of January 16, 2021, the population was 72,083 (UN, 2021). The infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births) was reported as 31 per 1000 live births (based on 2019 estimates, and is considered much higher than the average level in other OECs member states, and to the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean which is 14 per 1000 live births).

According to the data, a substantial amount of Dominicans migrate to the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and France. The urban population makes up 71.1% of the total population (2020). The population, according to the country divisions, is outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Population List by Cities (UN, 2020)

Division	Population	Division	Population
Roseau	16,571	Soufriere	1,416
Portsmouth	3,633	Pointe Michel	1,202
Berekua	2,608	Colihaut	890
St. Joseph	2,184	Rosalie	802
Wesley	1,933	Pont Casse	702

The dispersion of the population can have educational implications, particularly access and resource mobilization across the country. For example, the number of people in each division gives a statistical indication of the denser regions and the number of schools built in those zones, bringing the idea of equity and sufficiency into consideration. An exploration of the schools in each district may lead to challenges or gaps. It is important to note that the population is projected to increase to approximately 73,000 by 2025–2030, hence, the need for more educational resources.

The ethnic diversity includes people who are of African, Indo-Caribbean, East Indian, and European (Irish, British, and French) descent as well as small groups of Lebanese, Syrians, and Asians. One aspect of the demographic that is unique to Dominica’s population is a very small population of approximately three thousand Caribs in the entire world. The native Pre-Columbian Carib population, now referred to as Kalinago, lives in villages along the eastern coast of the island. Another unique demographic feature is that Dominica has three times the average number of centenarians of developed countries (UN, 2020). A more detailed breakdown of the population, according to ethnicity, is outlined in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Ethnic Breakdown, Dominica (UN, 2020)

Ethnicity	Population (%)
Black	86.8
Mixed	8.9
Kalinago	2.9
European	0.8
Other	0.7

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: (i) a long and healthy life, (ii) access to knowledge, and (iii) a decent standard of living. According to the United Nations Development Programme Report (2020), Dominica's HDI is 0.742 (2020). This means the country falls within a high human development category at 94 of 189 countries. According to the United Nations (2020), the sex ratio is 103:100 (males to females) and the current life expectancy is 74.7 males and 80.9 females (Moody Analytics, 2020).

EDUCATION CONTEXT

The goal of education in Dominica is to create and maintain an enabling environment to nurture holistic, personal, physical, and social development among the children. It is expected that these students will one day become capable citizens who can contribute to the sustainable development of society. Aligned with this expectation, the curricula for both levels (primary and secondary) have moved from the traditional academic format and now expose students with a far greater variety of academic subjects to hone a wider range of abilities. Aligned with the varied subject contents and methodologies, the testing and measurement processes are also expected to change or improve. For example, more innovative subject areas are being implemented by CXC and CAPE. To achieve this, education at the primary and secondary levels is free and compulsory between the ages of five (5) and sixteen (16).

In 2018, Government spending on education as a percentage of GDP was 5.5%; fast forward to 2019, the government expenditure on education was 7.4% of GDP, and the total percent of government expenditure was 8.0% (Ministry of Education, 2021). Government expenditure per student at the secondary level was 5.6% and 43% of government expenditure on education (World Bank, 2020).

COMPARATIVE REGIONAL EDUCATION INVESTMENT

Table 1.3: A Comparison of the Caribbean Governments' Investment in Education as a Percentage of GDP based on Most Recent World Bank Statistics

Caribbean Countries	Education as a Percentage of GDP (%)	Education as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure
Grenada (2017)	3.2	14
Dominica (2019)	5.6	9.4
St. Lucia (2018)	3.3	14.4
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2018)	5.7	18.8

Source: World Bank (2020)

Table 1.4: Government Expenditure Across Sectors

Sector	Government Expenditure (% of government expenditure on education)	Government expenditure per student (% of GDP per capita)
Preprimary	n/a	n/a
Primary	46	14.6
Secondary	43	18.8%
Tertiary	9	n/a

Source: World Bank Figures for the year 2015.

Internal efficiency figures revealed a continuous need for teacher training as a major challenge. Several positive outcomes are indicated as well. The data supporting these conclusions were derived from statistics from UNESCO (2020), the World Bank (2020), and updated data from the Dominica Education Statistical Unit (2021). The indicators are outlined:

- Trained teachers at the primary school level comprised 62.86% in 2019; (i) male teachers comprised 59.02%, (ii) female teachers comprised 63.36% in 2019 (UNESCO, 2020). Note, that the number of male trained teachers continues to lag in comparison to the number of trained female teachers. Recent data include figures for the total trained teachers: 64% at the primary level, 51% at the secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2021).
- Dropout rates: according to UNESCO (2020), data as of September 2020 showed an increase in the number of children out of primary school from 61 or 0.96% in 2016 to 228 or 3.73% in 2019. The number and percent of females out of primary school was 130 or 3.26% in 2019. The number and percent of males out of primary school was 130 or 4.18% in 2019. Data from the Ministry of Education documented the dropout and completion rates by gender in 2020: 0% dropout/100% completion at the primary level, 2% dropout/98% completion males, and 1% dropout/99% completion female at the lower secondary level, and 3% dropout/97% completion males, and 1% dropout/99% completion females at the upper secondary level.

The institutional structures are classified as Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. The primary and secondary schools are categorized as public, government-assisted, and private institutions. As it relates to the scheduling of school terms, generally, Term 1 runs from early September to mid-December; Term 2 runs from early January to the end of March, and Term 3 runs from mid-April to the end of June with vacation breaks ranging from 2-3 weeks in terms 1 and 2, and for 8 - 9 weeks in Term 3.

Like the other Caribbean education systems, the churches played a significant role in the country's establishment of formal and informal institutions, especially at the

pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. Most schools are owned by churches and are supported by the Government. Data reflecting the internal efficiency of these institutions are summarized in Table 1.4.

PREPRIMARY EDUCATION

Data reflecting the most recent statistics (2019–2020), from the Dominican Ministry of Education (2021) indicated that there were thirteen (13) daycare institutions and seventy-two (72) preschools on the island. Among the eighty-five (85) institutions in this sector, all the daycare centers were privately owned; from among the preprimary schools, twenty-three (23) were public, thirty (30) were privately owned, and nineteen (19) were church-owned. These preschools cater to children between the ages of three (3) to five (5) years of age.

The overall student enrolment for the period 2019–2020 was one thousand, three hundred, thirty-two (1,332). In the government-owned preschools, there were two-hundred and seventy (270) students enrolled, compared to one thousand, sixty-two (1,062) students enrolled in the private preschools. The child to caregiver ratio was reported as 11:1 in 2016 (World Bank, 2020).

Government is generally the main provider of student support services at the public pre-school level. In comparison to the higher institutions, support is limited at this level but includes school lunch programs, special needs support, and counseling. However, training is provided for teachers and caregivers, given an increasing emphasis by the OECS governments to expand the early childhood sector and improve the quality of ECD services.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Data gathered between the period (2019–2020), indicated that there were fifty-eight (58) primary schools: forty-six (46) public schools, seven (7) private schools, and five (5) government assisted schools (MoE Statistical Unit, 2021). These primary schools cater to children between five (5) and eleven (11) years of age. In 2019, the number of pupils at the primary level was 6,144 (World Bank, 2020), which increased slightly by approximately 41 students, bringing the total enrolment for 2020 to six thousand, one hundred and eighty-five (6, 185). Among this population, 47% of the students were females, and 53% were males. The student to teacher ratio was reported as 13:1 in 2016 (World Bank, 2020). Concerning government input, textbook support is generally provided when needed, through a textbook loan program.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Data gathered between the period (2019–2020), indicated that there were fifteen (15) secondary schools: seven (7) public schools, two (2) private schools, and six (6) government-assisted schools (MoE Statistical Unit, 2021). On average, students attend

secondary school between the ages of eleven (11) to sixteen (16). For the period, 2019–2020, four thousand, seven hundred and fifty (4,750) students were enrolled in secondary schools. The percent gender enrolment figures indicate that females comprised 48% (lower secondary) and 53% (upper secondary), while males comprised 52% (lower secondary) and 47% (upper secondary). The student to teacher ratio was 7:1 (upper secondary) in 2016 and 14:1 (lower secondary) in 2014 (World Bank, 2020).

SPECIAL EDUCATION

There are three (3) institutions dedicated to special education across the island. According to the OECS Education Digital Digest-Dominica (2017–2018), the overall student enrolment at the public/government-assisted primary school was four (4), with 100% males and 0% females. There were nine (9) students at the lower secondary level; 56% males and 44% females, and fifteen (15) at the upper secondary level, 87% males and 13% females. No data were available for the preprimary level within this category.

According to Ministry Personnel (2021), special needs schools or centers are generally considered to be part of the primary level education as these schools deliver a curriculum that does not progress beyond the primary level. Support is generally provided at individual special needs schools or centers for students with moderate to serious disabilities. Students with mild to moderate disabilities may be placed in special needs units attached to mainstream primary schools or included in mainstream classrooms. Although the institutions are currently supported by the government and private sectors, there are still gaps related to teaching–learning resources and specified training needs, for instance, there are currently three persons highly qualified within the Ministry of Education with a Master’s degree and one person with a post-graduate certificate. The category of special needs ranges from learning challenges, intellectual impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments, and autism.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

The Dominica State College is an amalgamation of the Technical College (established in 1972) and the Sixth Form College. Today the college provides access to various in-demand traditional and vocational disciplines such as agriculture, hospitality, nursing, teacher training, and tourism to thousands of students. A list of the main tertiary institutions are outlined:

- Dominica State College, (formerly) Clifton Dupigny Community College in Roseau
- The University of the West Indies
- The All Saints University of Medicine in Roseau
- Princess Margaret Hospital School of Nursing

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION (PLEASE SEE ANNEX A)

Key members within the Ministry of Education include the top leadership (Honorable Minister, the Permanent Secretary, and the Chief Education Officer). The second category includes personnel from the four departments: (i) Library and Information Service; (ii) School Operations Unit; (iii) Curriculum and Measurement Unit, and (iv) Education Planning Unit. The Curriculum unit head is Mr. Robert Guiste. There are seven (7) curriculum officers, one measurement officer, one general editor, and two administrative the implemented curricula at the primary level, secondary level and, the within the Technical Vocational Education and Training programs. Both instructional and curricula support is provided to all the schools. The Education Planning Unit is the foundation of the organization and is responsible for dissecting and planning educational priorities and allocating the necessary resources.

The third category includes the stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, and development partners). Some of Dominica's most consistent development partners over the years include:

- OECS- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
- UNICEF-United Nations Children's Fund
- Child Fund International
- CXC-Caribbean Examinations Council
- Dominica State College
- UWI-University of the West Indies

CHAPTER 2:

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

According to the World Health Organization (2021), Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, which is spread primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person's coughs or sneezes. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus tend to experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are at great risk of becoming seriously ill or dying. Prevention and slowing down of the transmission have been noted as the most common strategy supported by research and implemented for successfully dealing with the virus across the world (WHO, 2021). This is achieved through the implementation of precautionary measures such as frequent sanitization of common spaces, frequent hand washing or use of alcohol-based sanitizers, physical distancing when in the company of others, and the wearing of masks (WHO, 2021).

Since the declaration of COVID 19 as a global pandemic by the WHO on March 12th, 2020, we have also seen increased restrictions for travel implemented at borders across the region, as well as the closure and/or additional protocols implemented for the operation of schools and businesses as additional measures to curb the spread of the virus. These latter measures have especially directly affected the education sector across the OECS region. While, it is generally expected that the impact of the pandemic will have socio-economic repercussions for families and children especially in low-income homes, the temporary closure of schools in many countries, and the increased reliance on online mechanisms to facilitate remote learning has potentially negative implications for student learning, student assessment, and students' psychosocial health. As such, the impact of the pandemic on education is a key area of current concern and interest for educators, education administrators, and other education stakeholders alike. The following is a report on the current situation as it relates to Dominica.

2.1 DISRUPTIONS TO SCHOOLING AND IMPACT ON LEARNING

Coronavirus is an enemy to the OECS Education System, causing the closure of schools and the social distancing between students and teachers. In these times of crisis, OECS has created a strategic response with several initiatives to mitigate the impacts of Coronavirus (OECS, 2020, p.1).

On April 1st, 2019, the government of Dominica declared a state of emergency to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the country, and schools were closed on the 23rd, March 2020. This state of emergency was extended to the 30th June 2020 during which night-time curfews and total lockdowns on weekends and holidays were implemented. Dominica does not have a high number of reported cases of COVID-19 infections. There have been 121 recoveries and no deaths so far (PAHO, 2021; WHO, 2021).

2.2 GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

The mission stated by the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning Vocational Training and National Excellence is to educate and prepare each to live productive lives in a complex and changing society. This mission is much more vital considering the pandemic and is conveyed in various ways. There is a temporary adjustment towards a digital classroom; Moodle is now being used to transform the way technology is used to provide education in Dominica. This platform is a temporary online solution to accommodate the delivery of instruction during the pandemic. Grade tracking platforms are available on the official ministry website through an EMIS-Education Management Information System where students can view their grades and teachers can track attendance and print report cards online.

Resources in the form of support materials are digital to help keep the students aligned with daily lessons. A readily available handbook about facilitating flexible learning in COVID-19 can be downloaded. There was an active support link called CHOICES: [CHOICES Career & Education Advice \(choicescaribbean.com\)](http://choicescaribbean.com) Career & Education Advice, with a hotline as well. This platform was used to assist students and parents to prepare for educational success through what are called 'REACH OUT' Zoom sessions for all the stakeholders (Ministry of Education-Dominica, 2021). Furthermore, there are reading materials and audio-visual media about how to make effective career decisions, exploring learning styles, exploring math concepts, lifelong learning, tips for learning at home and, many more important skill-development guides.

According to personnel from the Ministry of Education, classes were suspended for pre-schools, primary schools, special needs institutions, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All institutions were suspended for three and a half months, except for the pre-schools that were suspended for four and a half months and no specific information is available concerning the special needs institutions. Table 2.1 shows the month during which classes resumed for each academic level in 2020.

Table 2.1: School Closure: Months Suspended & Resumed in 2020

Academic Level	Classes Suspended (Month)	Classes Resumed (Month)
Pre-schools	March	September
Primary Schools	March	September
Secondary Schools	March	September
Special Needs Institutions	March	September
Tertiary Institutions	March	September

Source: Personal Communication (2020)

Details about the process of reopening the schools according, to Ministry personnel, include the following:

- Protocols for the re-opening of schools were established after several meetings with all the stakeholders from mainly the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. Most protocols were taken by individual countries but reported at regional level forums to allow regional agencies to have a summary picture of what is happening. These briefings included plans for the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Nation-wide decisions are made based on the dynamic effects of COVID in the country.
- Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit understood that people are anxious concerning the reopening of schools, but he urged the stakeholders to follow the proper guidelines ascribed by the health authorities (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020). He also mentioned that “it is a bold step, it is a very important move by the government, from all reports by the Minister and the staff and myself speaking to several principals across Dominica, they are satisfied we have things generally under control and in place” (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020, p.1).
- The pre-schools required more preparation due to the age and vulnerability of the children.
- Effects of the pandemic on the number of students in the Country: Table 2.2 outlines the academic levels and the numbers of students affected.

Table 2.2: Academic Levels and the Number of Students Directly Affected by School Closure.

Academic Level	Numbers
Pre-school	1,402
Primary school	6,171
Secondary School	4,764
Special Needs Institutions	N/A
Tertiary Institutions	N/A

Source: *Personal Communication (2021)*

- Arrangements were made for all the students to access educational materials and resources during the disruption of classes. Vulnerable students were identified and fed through their schools with the help of the staff.
- Education was mostly delivered via online platforms as teachers taught online for students who had devices and internet access. Flash drives that stored the various lessons were provided for students with devices and no internet access. Worksheets were provided for students without devices; recorded lessons were accessible via television and radio for students and the continued use of the textbooks was promoted as well. The internet connection at home across the country was described as 'average'. There is no current effectiveness of these programs at a local level; however, Ministry officials are conducting data collection in this area. Considering the wider scope of online teaching and learning, numerous studies suggest that online learning might offer productivity benefits compared with traditional place-based schooling (University of Illinois Springfield, 2021). However, there are not many studies that rigorously measure the productivity of online learning systems relative to place-based instruction at the primary and secondary school level. Mainly because intricate factors govern these levels within the teaching-learning process. Nevertheless, a study showed that most students agree that e-learning helped them in terms of gaining access to unlimited resources; allowed them to make connections between subjects; promoted critical thinking; and facilitated more interaction and sharing (Tunmibi, Aregbesola, Adejobi and Ibrahim, 2015)

There were differences in the provisions put in place for the delivery of education during the pandemic among education districts/sectors. Due to the location of the Eastern District, most of the students had internet access issues and were mainly engaged with the use of the (flash drive) storage devices and worksheet programs. Currently, there are no published data available reflecting this strategy.

- Within the Early Childhood Sector, different protocols were made for the babies and toddlers to return to the daycare centers (as they required special care).

- Teachers received online training to aid in the improvement of their techniques for online teaching and delivery.

2.3. AFTER COVID-19

Like other countries in the region, the government of Dominica was forced to close its borders, schools and, non-essential businesses. Lockdowns and social distancing strategies were promoted to reduce the spread of the virus. As a result of this, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on children and young people include (i) school closures and the uncertainty about the education process; (ii) exposure to various forms of violence due to an increase in time spent at home; (iii) stress factors due to unemployment and poverty (UNICEF, 2020). In the middle of 2020, strategic plans were not put in place, addressing deficiencies or gaps in education post COVID; this is mostly due to a lack of data. Since then, Ministry officials were in the fields collecting the necessary data to inform plans and policies. Fast forward to February 2021, various response strategies such as the distribution of tablets and worksheets were more widespread.

When the school reopened in September, student assessments were conducted. The supervision and support officers of the Ministry worked closely with the schools to cater to the underperforming students. Education Minister, Mrs. Octavia Alfred, spoke about the assessment of students in the first week of the school term. The purpose of the assessment was to determine remedial action for those who were affected by the closure of school during the pandemic (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020). Mrs. Alfred said:

I encourage all concerned that in the midst of our challenges we shall remain strong and steadfast, placing the well-being of our children always at the forefront of our minds. As we grapple with this crisis, we call for collective efforts and responsibilities to advance the interest of all of our Dominican children (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020, p.1).

2.4 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Challenges presented by COVID-19 were mainly financial, as devices had to be provided to schools and students to facilitate the teaching/learning process. Other costs such as cleaning and sanitizing supplies were increased across the institutions. Also, more space had to be provided for students to promote social distancing and this process also required an increase in staff. One challenge that remained unresolved was the fact that all staff and students did not have the required devices and efficient internet access. Concerns regarding potential learning loss are now being voiced, as countries have been mostly preoccupied with reactive measures to address current access to learning resources and instruction during the pandemic. Strategic plans for

addressing post- pandemic learning loss will be implemented after data are collected, organized, and presented to the relevant stakeholders.

The ministry personnel specifically mentioned that there are:

- i. issues with classroom space and furniture due to the need for social distancing. There is a need for larger amounts of cleaning supplies for sanitizing purposes. There is also the need for more water troughs at schools to encourage hand washing.
- ii. existing data needs or necessary research within the education sector to address the impact of COVID-19 on education is the impact of blended learning and the effective use of blended learning in the classrooms.
- iii. the need for additional human resources to serve as hygiene wardens at schools as well as space requirements in light of the strict adherence to social distancing.

Several main external (non-governmental) education stakeholders who provided support to the national effort to ensure the continuation of education during the pandemic are listed below:

- UNICEF-provision of tablets to vulnerable students
- ISRA AID-provided technical support and hygiene supplies to assist with sanitization of schools
- OECS-technical assistance and proposed provision of hygiene materials and furniture.
- IT4 Dominica (based in Canada)-provision of chrome books and connectivity materials to schools as well as technical assistance.

Three main lessons learned during the pandemic (that can help improve education for the future) are:

1. The need for continuous training for teachers and ministry officials in online teaching-learning processes and platforms
2. More stakeholder participation
3. The importance of proper systems in the collection and analysis of data.

The emergency teaching-learning process created various types of challenges and knowledge gaps, for example:

- Primarily, not all teachers and students are enthusiastic about the new model of schooling. Many teachers and learners are often skeptical about online learning mainly due to the lack of equity and accessibility of technology. This is a significant issue in the rural and lower socioeconomic communities.
- Both students and teachers now require at least a minimum level of computer literacy to navigate the new learning environment.

- There are constant frustrations with the limitations of technology especially if internet access is not strong enough, or the equipment being used is not compatible with the other devices.
- Lack of essential online qualities of the teacher in terms of being able to deliver content and assessment virtually.
- Alternating medium for the curriculum: certain content and methodologies that are successful in face-to-face format may not always translate to a successful online program due to the difference in learning instruction paradigms (University of Illinois Springfield, 2021).
- Eventually, there will be a gap among the students in terms of learning; achievement levels may be further affected, especially at the primary and secondary levels. Hence the demand for more professionals who are versed in various fields related to online education and technological course development.

SHORT-TERM PLANS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

The continuation of face-to-face sessions with strict compliance to protocols by the Ministry of Health.

Enhancement and continuation of teacher professional development training aimed at improving pedagogy with a focus on ICT integration; to include E-Learning and the promotion of distributed learning that will allow for the seamless transition to remote learning in case of emergencies.

Distribution of technological devices to teachers and students to bridge the digital divide.

LONG-TERM PLANS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

The continuation of blended learning programs along with a more diversified approach to the use of technologies across sectors. Concerns regarding potential learning loss are also now being voiced, as officials have been mostly preoccupied with reactive measures to address current access during the pandemic. Plans have not yet been put in place for addressing post-pandemic learning loss.

CHAPTER 3:

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

This chapter identifies the key stakeholders and institutions that influence the education policy cycle in Dominica. Emphasis is placed on describing the power distribution among the key decision-makers in education. A synopsis of the main policies and programs that shape the educational system in the country is also provided. The chapter includes a summary of the country's national priorities in terms of education, the most important education reforms, and the main characteristics of the programs that are currently being implemented. Key challenges and knowledge gaps related to educational policies and programs conclude this chapter.

3.1 ACTORS AND POWER DISTRIBUTION

The precise description and dedication of the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and, National Excellence is to provide ongoing leadership and support with the collaboration of all stakeholders for the benefit of creating and maintaining an enabling environment for the provision of holistic personal and social development of students who will one day become capable citizens, empowered to contribute to the sustainable development of the society. Various actors, forming a network of key players with specified roles are involved in carrying out the mandate. Accordingly, the top leadership of Dominica's education sector comprises:

- Honorable Minister: Mrs. Octavia Alfred
- Permanent Secretary: Mrs. Chandler Hyacinth
- Chief Education Officer: Dr. Jeffrey Blaize
- Senior Public Service Officers
- Education Stakeholder Representatives:
 - Teachers Union
 - Association of Principals of Secondary Schools
 - National Council for Technical, Vocational Education and Training

The main educational stakeholders who are usually invited to participate in education planning and policy development in Dominica include:

- OECS- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
- EDMU-Education Development Management Unit

- CDB–Caribbean Development Bank
- CXC–Caribbean Examination Council

These organizations support the government by providing technical support when the need arises, particularly during regional workshops. The main education development partners (non-governmental) who usually provide support (in terms of funding, expertise, training, etc.) to the national efforts to improve education are UNICEF, ISRA AID, CDB, UNESCO, OECS EDMU, CARICOM. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), which is based in Paris, and the Education Planning Institute in Jamaica make up the list of specific groups prioritized in educational policy planning and development.

3.2 THE POLICY-CYCLE

The educational policy-making process in the country is generally centralized, but with stakeholder participation. The role of the Cabinet and local/national parliament in the development and implementation of educational policy is to approve the policy before implementation. The civil society provides input in terms of feedback on policy positions before implementation. The agenda-setting begins with pronouncements by Cabinet or by Senior Officer if there is a need for a particular policy change or to address a specific problem. Stakeholder participation is important to get the public 'buy in'. This is followed by the drafting of the policy, which again goes through a consultative process before finalization and then submission to Cabinet for approval. Policies are implemented after Cabinet approval.

AGENDA SETTING

Concerning policy formulation, the Cabinet of Ministers is responsible for policy formulation and this is done in conjunction with Senior Public Servants. The Minister of Education's responsibility includes identifying and addressing issues that could potentially compromise the quality of education offered in the country. The education policy issues that are identified and placed on the government's agenda can either originate from an existing or emerging educational concern that is considered problematic and may be affecting a wide cross-section of education stakeholders (i.e., COVID-19). They can also be issues that the government has formally decided to undertake as part of their policy-mandate on education (i.e., target areas in education identified to be addressed in the government's political manifesto).

Furthermore, given that Dominica is a Member State of the OECS, its Government's policy and agenda setting for education is guided by the strategic education priorities of the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS). This Strategy was designed to coordinate efforts among the Member States to develop and implement education policies and initiatives that seek to achieve the Strategy's vision for the *success of every learner* (OECS Education Sector Strategy, n.d.). Other entities that can potentially influence

education policy in Dominica include the Joint Board of Teacher Education of The Eastern Caribbean Education (JBTE), particularly as it relates to teacher education. Teacher Education Institutions, and the University of the West Indies.

For a policy to be placed on the agenda, there must be a consensus that the situation is significantly problematic to warrant the government's intervention. This requires extensive consultation with key education stakeholders (i.e., the Chief Education Officer, members of, civil society, and other stakeholders) to identify the problematic aspects of the situation, propose solutions, and engage in activities that influence the government and pressure it to intervene, including identifying groups that can play an active role in addressing the problem.

POLICY FORMULATION

Having gained consensus on the problem, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (in conjunction with other arms of the Government) will seek to chart a path forward to address the problem(s) through the creation of a relevant policy. During this stage, several probable solutions to the problem are explored before the education policy is finalized. This usually requires extensive consultation with the stakeholders who will be affected by the policy.

Several factors influence the formulation of policy, including the likelihood that the policy will be effective; the availability of resources; the feasibility of the policy, and the buy-in of relevant stakeholders. The CEO and the team from the Ministry of Education are responsible for overseeing the implementation of policy directives. It is important that the minister (and the team of administrative and technical experts), through the ministry, formulates and implements policies that are designed to improve the standard of education in the country. The implementation process is undertaken by the administration, school leaders, and teachers. *Monitoring and evaluation are conducted by the administrators: schools inspection unit, senior education officer, curriculum officers, supervisors, and support staff including principals, then conduct the necessary monitoring and evaluation.*

3.3 EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

THE BROAD EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

Several international, regional, and subregional education policy frameworks which more directly inform education planning and programs in Dominica have been briefly outlined with the main areas of focus.

THE EDUCATION 2030: INCHEON DECLARATION

This international education framework to which the CARICOM countries are also signatory, reaffirms the vision of the worldwide movement for Education for All initiated in Jomtien in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000, and represents a commitment to fulfilling the implementation of SDG 4 – to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. As it relates to *Inclusion and Equity*, this includes a commitment to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities, and inequalities in access, participation, and learning outcomes. As it relates to gender equality, this includes supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning, and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools. As it relates to quality, this includes a commitment to improving learning outcomes, through strengthening inputs, processes, and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress. It also includes ensuring that teachers and educators are “empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems” (UNESCO, 2015, pg. iii-iv).

To achieve SDG 4 on education (and the education targets included under other SDGs), UNESCO (2015) notes that it will be necessary to mobilize national, regional, and global efforts that are aimed at:

- achieving effective and inclusive partnerships
- improving education policies and the way they work together
- ensuring highly equitable, inclusive, and quality education systems for all
- mobilizing resources for adequate financing for education
- ensuring monitoring, follow-up, and review of all targets.

The strengthening of education policies, plans, legislation, and systems was noted as being key to progress on these goals.

THE CARICOM HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2030

The HRD 2030 Strategy like the Caribbean Community Strategic Plan (2015–2019) highlights regional human resource development as being vital for social and economic prosperity, regional integration, building resilience, and sustainable development. It was therefore developed to signal a renewed commitment to ensuring the development of skills and competencies across the region to fulfill the mandate of Heads of Government as it relates to the development of skills and competencies for the economy, as well as for personal development and good citizenship across the Member States.

The CARICOM 2030 Strategy is intended to i) establish new priority areas for the Region’s HRD; ii) facilitate regional convergence of HRD policies and initiatives by

Member States for effective transformational change and actions; and iii) address the measures in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with particular reference to SDG 4 which targets inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all (as well as SDG 8 - which addresses education and training of youth and adults leading to sustainable employability and employment (CARICOM, 2017).

The four Strategic Priorities which give direction to the CARICOM 2030 Strategy - namely, Access, Equity, Quality, and Relevance - have been specifically targeted to address the significant inefficiencies and wastage in education and training systems throughout the region. Specifically, Schools and Learning Communities have been identified as one of the key pillars in the process of attaining the targeted outcomes. Focus areas for emphasis include Universal Access and participation in Schools; Multiple Curricula Pathways; Student Support Services; Equitable Access Policies; Managed Gender Disparities; Special Needs Education; ICT in Education; Learning for Migrant children; Displaced & Refugee Children; and other areas which are reflected in the other subregional policy frameworks, as well as national policy frameworks.

OECS EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGY 2012-2026

As a Member State of the OECS, Education planning for the education sector in Dominica is also guided by the regional OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) 2012-21 (recently revised to 2026). Over the last nine (9) years, the OESS has provided a common education framework for facilitating collaboration for the development of education across the OECS subregion. It is anticipated that over time all national education strategies and plans will be aligned to the regional strategy to allow for greater convergence in the implementation of a common education strategy across the OECS region. The seven agreed areas of priority under the OESS are:

1. Improvements in the quality and accountability of leadership and management in education.
2. Improvements in teachers' professional development.
3. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
4. Improvements in the curriculum and strategies for assessment.
5. Increased access to quality Early Childhood Development services.
6. Increased provisions for Technical and Vocational Education and Training; and
7. Increased provisions for tertiary and continuing education (OECS, 2020, P.1)

The Chief Education Officer or his or her representative is part of a subregional working group that annually reports on national progress towards the achievement of education outcomes related to each of these outcomes.

LOCAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS THAT GOVERN THE EDUCATION PROCESS IN DOMINICA

The Education Act No. 11 of 1997 was passed in October 1997 in the House of Assembly (Parliament). This Act is associated with the Harmonized OECS Education Bill and provides the regulatory framework for the process of education from pre-primary to tertiary. Since then, numerous policies were formed and amended; these include the:

- Council of Legal Education Act Chapter 2809
- Education Act 1997 Act 11 of 1997
- Education Amendment Act 2002 Act 6 of 2002
- Education Amendment Act 2008 Act 10 of 2008
- Education Council on Early Childhood Education Order 2005 SRO 14 of 2005
- Education Early Childhood Education Regulation 2003 SRO 39 of 2003
- Education Regulations 2011 SRO 7 of 2011
- Education Trust Fund Act Chapter 28-02

In addition to the progressively improved policies, Dominica has implemented several major reforms in the education sector since 2006. The focus of the reforms was to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system, as well as promote equity of access in terms of educational opportunities (UNICEF, 2020). The purpose of the reforms was influenced by the major areas of concern (listed below):

- High percentage of untrained staff.
- Underachievement at the secondary level.
- Inequality of access to secondary schools, particularly in the rural areas.
- Inadequate supervision of instructional delivery and shortages of equipment and supplies; and
- Insufficient tertiary education opportunities.

Aspects of these major concerns currently persist in the education system. For example, increasing access to secondary education; improving the quality of teaching, and improving the supply of materials and maintenance services among the schools. Dominica relies heavily on donor support to address these challenges.

The Education Act 1997 Act 11 of 1997, adopted on the 13th of November 1997 and published in the Official Gazette, Acts, pp.141-225 contained several important policies about:

- The compulsory school-age (between five and sixteen years)
- Child education rights

- Age of employment-the fact that it is an offense to employ a person of school-age during the school year but students over fourteen years may be employed during vacations or within vocational training programs
- Corporal punishment- which can be administered in specified circumstances
- List of duties and responsibilities outlined for teachers and principals
- Stipulations that teachers have the right to an 'adequate working environment', protection from harm, and compensation for injury or loss incurred during the execution of duties.

EDUCATION PRIORITY AREAS

The current educational priority is the development of a Sector Plan which aims at improving school leadership, blended learning methodologies, and assessment practices. The most important educational program currently in place is rooted in teacher professional development, support for learning, and a focus on the early childhood sector. To become a teacher, one must undertake the pre-service teacher training program before taking up a position, hence constant training is required. Also, teachers who are already in the system will require retraining in online learning and assessment.

In the past, there had been issues related to the basic requirement for becoming a teacher (the challenge of teacher supply and quality). The typical requirements are five or six CSEC passes required as a minimum or primary teaching and a similar number plus a CAPE, or similar, required for secondary. The requirements are not as specific at the pre-primary level, as some of the schools in the private sector are willing to take those who may only have three CSECs. As a result, there is an issue with pre-primary teachers in terms of them having the requisite knowledge and skills to teach children at this tender stage of life. Hence the need for the training of more teachers at this level. Teachers in all sectors require professional training. If the government decides to raise the requirements, for example at the primary level, it may have an immediate effect on the potential inflow of teachers. An issue like this would affect the number of entrants into the profession within each sector, hence the need for constant training across the board.

Teacher training will require innovative curricular reform. The curriculum used in teacher education institutions can no longer remain the same. The mode of teaching underwent a drastic change. Hence the theory and practice prescribed for teachers in the Caribbean must adapt to the current environment and pandemic situation. Most concepts were grounded in the face-to-face methodologies and now the integration of various forms of online and technological platforms are required in teaching and testing.

One factor that may affect consistent teacher training is the cost to the government. At present, it is expensive to pay the salaries of those on study leave as well as the

course fees. Especially with the financial impact on education by COVID, finances are being channeled in other priority areas.

Other priority areas include current plans related to:

- The construction/rehabilitation of schools. The Dominican government had declared a focus on the new construction of schools and to seek out available spaces at existing schools to promote COVID protocols.
- Also, given the challenges with equity and knowledge gaps, inclusion is another main priority area, i.e. the inclusion of all children from varied backgrounds during this challenging time. The goal is to foster inclusive education: the process through which schools aspire for equity by responding to everyone as individuals, especially when creating curricular programs, especially in the online environment and mobilizing resources.
- Student achievement is currently a major priority in Dominica and data related to assessment outcomes are being collected across the education sectors (particularly at the primary and secondary levels). Moreover, there is more focus on issues related to testing and measurement during a crisis like the current COVID pandemic.

3.4 REFORMS

Currently, there is no specific reform being implemented within the Dominican education system, although the Prime Minister generally suggested that with the innovations happening nationwide, the education system will require a revamping as well. According to ministry personnel, an important educational reform in Dominica to date is the Universal Access to ECD. The last education reform was rooted in the expansion of opportunities across sectors. The main challenge in education at present is delivering quality education amidst the COVID pandemic. Technical assistance in policy development, evaluation, monitoring, and additional human resources capacity is the expertise needed to improve policy planning and implementation. Currently, ministry officials believe that more data via the evaluation of the impact of current policies are needed to forward various education visions and goals. These types of data or research are important to support more effective education planning in Dominica.

THE BROAD EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Broader education policy frameworks such as the CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030; the OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2021, and the National Sustainable Development Plan 2020-2035 all generally inform education planning, and program development across the OECS member states; the most observable policy framework evident being the OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2021.

The CARICOM Policy Framework and the National Education Policy Context

The general philosophy of achieving the Ideal Caribbean Person (CARICOM 1998) was highlighted in the past comprehensive education sector plan as a key part of the policy framework for education. Additionally, both the previous and most recent CARICOM framework for action – the Caribbean Community Strategic Plan (2015–2019), and the CARICOM HRD 2030 strategy, however, also provide some guidance for the current regional and national context. Both documents highlight regional human resource development as a key focus for education investments and view education and human resource development as being vital for social and economic prosperity, regional integration, building resilience, and sustainable development. The current CARICOM 2030 Strategy for example is intended to: i) establish new priority areas for the Region’s HRD; ii) facilitate regional convergence of HRD policies and initiatives by Member States for effective transformational change and actions; and iii) address the measures in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with particular reference to SDG 4 which targets inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all (as well as SDG 8 – which addresses education and training of youth and adults leading to sustainable employability and employment (CARICOM, 2017).

The four Strategic Priorities which give direction to the CARICOM 2030 Strategy – namely, Access, Equity, Quality and Relevance – have been specifically targeted to address the significant inefficiencies and wastage in education and training systems throughout the region. Specifically, schools and learning communities have been identified as one of the key pillars in the process of attaining the targeted outcomes. Focus areas for emphasis under the CARICOM 2030 HRD Strategy include Universal Access and participation in Schools; Multiple Curricula Pathways; Student Support Services; Equitable Access Policies; Managed Gender Disparities; Special Needs Education; ICT in Education; Learning for Migrant children; Displaced & Refugee Children; and other areas which are reflected in the other subregional policy frameworks, as well as national policy frameworks.

The CARICOM 2030 (CARICOM, 2017) also acknowledges the following policy frameworks as having informed its development: the Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015–19; the Regional Framework for Action for Children (2002–15); the Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda (2013); and the Regional TVET Strategy for Workforce Development and Economic Competitiveness (2013).

The CARICOM 2030 framework report also noted that the sub-region has embraced the philosophy of education for sustainable development, SDG 4 which emphasis inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, and SDG 8, which focuses on youth and adult training for employability to support economic prosperity, as key pillars of Member States’ development programs.

THE OECS EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGY (OESS) 2012-2026

The regional policy framework which has the greatest influence on education planning, programs, and practices at the national level however is the OESS. As a Member State of the OECS, Education planning for the education sector in Dominica is guided by the regional OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) 2012-21 (recently revised to 2026). Over the last nine (9) years, the OESS has provided a common education framework for facilitating collaboration for the development of education across the OECS subregion. It is anticipated that over time all national education strategies and plans will be aligned to the regional strategy to allow for greater convergence in the implementation of a common education strategy across the OECS region. The seven agreed areas of priority under the OESS are outlined in the table below.

Table 3.1: Strategic Imperatives and Supporting Outcomes

	Strategic Imperative	Outcomes
#1	Improve the quality and accountability of Leadership and Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qualified leaders in place across the education system supported by Boards (where applicable) and governing bodies. 2. Education leaders and managers have access to continuing professional development. 3. Revised legislation, knowledge management, and accountability frameworks that devolve decision-making to schools.
#2	Improve Teacher's Professional Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved teacher quality. 2. Pre-service training and professional development programs in place for all prospective and in-service teachers and teacher trainers respectively, relevant to each stage of their career. 3. Regular and systematic teacher appraisal operates in conjunction with established teacher professional standards. 4. Reduced numbers of out-of-field teachers in schools.

#3	Improve the quality of Teaching and Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learners engaged with all learning and their expectations met. 2. Achievement levels significantly improved, all learners acquire required levels of literacy, numeracy, and technological skills, and are equipped to use relevant competencies at school, at college, at home, and for future work.
#4	Improve Curriculum and strategies for Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexible, learner-centered curricula with assessment at each stage which includes a wide range of learning outcomes targeting academic, technical, and personal development skills. 2. A relevant and comprehensive education and skills strategy operates nationally and across the OECS region with resulting curricula that are learner-centered and competency-based to meet the needs of all learners. 3. All performance measures for learner outcomes indicate improvement year-on-year at each stage and match comparable international benchmarks. 4. All learners can demonstrate core knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies needed to be successful 21st-century Caribbean citizens, and can confidently contribute and progress at school, college, in their communities, and at work.
#5	Increase access to quality Early Childhood Development Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National operational plans developed and implemented for pre-primary education for all learners aged three to five. 2. Formal Early Childhood Development Services meet required minimum standards. 3. A sustainable funding strategy for ECD, supported by both public and private sectors investment in place and operational. 4. Functioning inter-sector, parent, and community collaborative mechanisms in place in all Member States, made up of a variety of stakeholders.

#6	Provide opportunities for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for all learners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary school curricula, teaching, and learning incorporate exploratory learning experiences that develop basic technical competencies and an appreciation for the world of work. 2. Competency-based curricula linked to CVQ framework established across secondary and tertiary education and in all other educational settings in work and community. 3. A Qualification Framework established that enables learners to move seamlessly between academic and vocational qualifications in formal and informal educational settings.
#7	Increase access to and relevance of Tertiary and Continuing Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable funding mechanisms for tertiary and continuing education to meet the economic, social, and labor market needs of the OECS and learners can access affordable tertiary education. 2. A legal and institutional framework that improves the status, sustainability, and outcomes of tertiary and continuing education institutions across the OECS. 3. Accredited tertiary and continuing education institutions in and outside the OECS produce high-quality relevant programs and research results fostering creativity and innovations.

Source: Adapted from the OECS Secretariat (2012)

The OECS Education Development Management Unit (EDMU) has been a key agency in facilitating the coordination of education planning among the OECS member states as it relates to implementing the common agenda of the OESS policy. The Chief Education Officer and education planner for each OECS member state is part of a subregional working group that meets annually to report on national progress towards the achievement of education outcomes related to each of these above seven strategic imperatives and their outcomes with funding support from regional and international education development partners. This coordination and collaboration have been critical to achieving a common agenda among most member states on key strategic imperatives.

An overview of the annual reports on regional progress on the various strategic imperatives show a predominant emphasis on the implementation of programs and

activities related to improving leadership and management; improving teacher's professional development; improving the quality of teaching and learning; increasing access to quality Early Childhood Development Services, and providing increased opportunities for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for all learners. The weakest area of progress has been on strategic imperative 7 – increasing access to tertiary education (UWI, 2019).

In the sixth year of implementation, a mid-term review report on the implementation progress on the OESS (OECS, 2019) revealed the following as inhibiting factors affecting national and regional progress on implementing the seven imperatives: budgetary constraints which have not always been able to meet the needs of existing education sector plans and by extension funding for addressing the priorities identified in the OESS; understaffed ministries of education; natural disasters which are often detrimental to the infrastructure as well as the social and economic context of affected countries; and frequent changes in education leadership and management at the ministry level, among other challenges. The report recommended an extension of the current implementation timeline (from 2012–2021 to 2012–2026) and a five-pronged phased approach to continued implementation efforts at the national level. The five-pronged approach included 1) prioritization and determination of relevant strategies and activities to be undertaken; 2) costing of inputs for all planned activities to assist with the budgeting process for OESS initiatives; 3) budget inclusion of these planned activities; 4) consideration of innovative approaches to achieving targets (such as working with other member states and maximizing the use of existing structures and systems); and 5) replication of best practices in other countries.

The findings from the report noted that generally national education sector plans were found to be aligned with the OESS, but funding was often either unavailable or unallocated for OESS priorities during the annual budgeting process. In terms of good practice, Dominica has specific line items in their annual budgets reflective of OESS priorities. Most of the funding for OESS priorities came from donor agencies that engaged directly with countries and at other times with the OECS sub-region through the EDMU office. In recent years these agencies have included CDB, UNICEF, OAS, and Global Partnership for Education.

The mid-term review report on the OESS noted has estimated that achieving the remaining agreed education reforms across the Member States will cost approximately US\$44.5 million. Development finance and expertise from key development partners and donor agencies will therefore be critical in supporting the reform efforts earmarked for countries such as Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

A further additional inhibiting factor for progress on implementation of the OESS has also been incomplete reporting by countries on the OESS performance indicators, and generally a weak monitoring and evaluation framework and mechanism for the OESS. Of important note also is that at least 30 percent of the gap in reporting was from the school level.

SPECIFIC PAST REFORM AND SPECIAL PROJECT

The Child-Friendly School concept, facilitated by UNICEF and endorsed by Dominica, is a concept based on promoting good leadership (effective school principals) that will guide the process of improving children's holistic learning and developmental experiences by making schools more welcoming, more encouraging, healthier and safer for children (UNICEF, 2020). The main goal was to improve student retention and produce well-rounded, confident, and independent citizens through strategies aligned with the strengthening of clubs, extra-curricular activities, sporting, and other social/educational areas designed to motivate children to not only remain in school but to make memorable experiences as well.

The program was implemented across sectors, for example, in twenty-eight primary schools and in the secondary schools in March 2013. A key area that was closely monitored among the initiative, unique to Dominica, was the gender issue concerning the question (raised by a ministry official) that still plagues the country today: "why are our boys under-performing compared to our girls? We want boys and girls to be performing at the same rate as well as student's participation" (Melena Fontaine, Special Education Coordinator and CFS focal point, 2013, p.1). According to Mrs. Fontaine, Dominica was at the forefront of the rest of the Caribbean region in implementing the model and that the other island states keenly observed the implementation process as a form of model or standard (Fontaine, 2013).

Challenges that were encountered with the initiative included buy-in from several principals, teachers, and school staff. Nevertheless, the program was generally successful within the schools, evidenced by accounts of more positive school culture, increase student engagement, and more positive student behavior (Fontaine, 2013).

A more recent project within the system was the *Support to Implementation of Regional Education Strategy Project*; a collaboration between the governing education bodies and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In Dominica, there is a persistent challenge with large percentages of students completing primary education without achieving the desired competencies in reading and mathematics. Such low learning achievements were indicative of several issues in the quality of education across the nation. These are outlined below:

- *Lack of clear learning standards to specify learning outcomes expected at every grade level to guide teaching and classroom assessment.*
- *Teachers are insufficiently trained to provide effective instruction as well as few professional development opportunities to improve their skills.*
- *School leaders with limited capacity to support teaching and ensure that teachers perform at desired levels (World Bank, 2020, p.1).*

To address these challenges, Dominica's governing education body produced and implemented a set of common learning standards among the core primary subjects; created a standard teacher training program; created a certification program for

school leaders, and prepared new systems for monitoring performance (World Bank, 2020).

The project interventions included:

- *Learning standards that specified expected learning outcomes in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in primary grades (1-6).*
- *A formative assessment framework to aid teachers in evaluating student progress toward achieving the learning standards.*
- *Training for primary teachers to integrate the standards and assessment into daily teaching.*
- *A framework to guide each country in devising its professional development plan.*
- *Funding for training activities included in national professional development plans.*
- *Certification for school leaders in management competencies required to support teachers and improve learning achievement.*
- *Support for national monitoring and evaluation teams in establishing processes for systematic monitoring and reporting of education sector initiatives (World Bank, 2020, p.1).*

RESULTS FROM THE INITIATIVE

Outcomes were evidenced in the establishment of a National Professional Development Team and the development of a National Professional Development Plan, which resulted in 67% of all primary teachers in the overall region (2,182 of 3,264) being certified according to OECS and ministry standards. The trained teachers were able to integrate learning standards and assessment framework into their teaching-learning process and follow-up support visits aided teachers in planning lessons and implementing formative assessment techniques (World Bank, 2020). As a result, 24% of all regional primary school teachers were monitored during the implementation of specific assessment strategies to measure each student's progress toward achieving learning standards (World Bank, 2020).

Concerning the Education Leaders, a competency-based Professional Certification Program, that is rooted in the OECS School Leadership Standards was developed, and 110 primary school principals were certified. Eighty-seven percent of the regional primary school leaders demonstrated competencies by presenting School Improvement plans with performance metrics (covering leadership, teacher, and student performance indicators). Furthermore, the knowledge and skills of Monitoring and Evaluation teams were fortified with training in data collection, analysis, management, and outcome monitoring.

In summary, this project accessed 43,000 children, 2,300 teachers, and school leaders across the four countries. With the provision of US\$2 million, the citizens of Dominica,

Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines can benefit from revised learning standards, assessment frameworks, teacher PD frameworks, and certification frameworks for school leaders (World Bank, 2020). Moving forward, *project results are expected to be sustained as they align closely with the strategic imperatives of the OESS, which were recently extended for three more years (World Bank, 2020, p.1).*

3.5 INNOVATIONS

Current innovations in Dominica center around two major threats to the island: hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this section, two main innovations are generally described related to (1) Disaster Management and (2) Crisis Management for the COVID pandemic (especially where it concerns achievement).

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Although Hurricane Maria devastated the island in 2018, the effects are still evident across the country. Hence the need for innovations that also improve aspects of the education system. One example of this is the nationwide initiative to make Dominica a climate-resilient nation. This initiative came into existence mainly because of the continuous damaging effects of the storms, which not only created physical damage but emotional and spiritual pain among the people as well. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit described living through the 2017 hurricane season as being on the frontline in the war against climate change; as a result of this, he committed to make Dominica the first climate-resilient nation, building to a more weather-proof standard across the nation (King, 2018).

Various sectors and communities that are involved include the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team, OCHA, WFP, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), which also provided direct support to the local Disaster Management mechanism. A Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), led by the World Bank and facilitated by UNDP, was undertaken to inform a substantive recovery program (King, 2018). The main approach undertaken by the project was the re-roofing buildings—including community infrastructure such as schools, clinics, and hospitals. The innovation included the use of modern technology; advocacy and capacity building using technical expertise, as well as procurement and installation of the appropriate materials (King, 2018). The main goal of the project was to strive towards resilience that would reduce vulnerability to natural disasters and facilitate more rapid recovery, to move forward in achieving national and global development goals. As a result, by the end of July 2018, numerous houses, 4 hospitals, 5 medical clinics, 3 schools, and 6 buildings at the Dominica State college were restored (King, 2018).

Fast forward to 2021, a National Resilience Development Strategy (NRDS), which incorporates Dominica's Climate-Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP), specifies forty-three targets that must be achieved before Dominica can be labeled the first

climate-resilient nation in the world (OCHA, 2021). Several current challenges that are being resolved include financial resource constraints, inadequate human resource capacity, and urgency. However, the various agencies and stakeholders involved are dedicated to the project because the nation of Dominica simply does not have an option if it is to secure the country's future and the continued well-being of its people (OCHA, 2021).

CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR THE COVID PANDEMIC

To bridge knowledge gaps and learning opportunities in the region since the pandemic, the Eastern Caribbean States, inclusive of Dominica, took several steps to reach all students. The GPE supported the Organization of Eastern Caribbean to work towards bridging the digital divide by ensuring that all children can learn online during the closure of schools (EDMU-OECS, 2020). Inevitably, the Coronavirus crisis in the OECS region will have a socioeconomic impact on students, affect instruction time, modes of student assessment, as well as their psychosocial health. As a consequence of this, the EDMU of the OECS Commission in collaboration with the Member States has developed the OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 which provided a US\$3 million grant for Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (GPE, 2021).

Through the partnership with civil society and the public and private sectors, the strategy focusses on the following:

- Harmonizing policy responses in Education Policies
- Implementing a 6-9 months Academic Recovery Program
- Transitioning to a Digital Education System/online learning through policy recommendations related to learning
- Procurement and distribution of devices
- Strengthening Safety Nets for Students/students' well-being
- Promoting Engagement
- Teacher training for primary and secondary levels

It is important to note that the strategy is associated with the mandates of the: OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS), OECS Growth and Development Strategy,

CARICOM Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy 2030, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

ACHIEVEMENT: MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

To bridge knowledge gaps and learning opportunities in the region since the pandemic, Dominica took several steps to reach all students. Needs assessments are

being conducted primarily related to student achievement within the context of the COVID-19 crisis (Personal Communication, 2021). In the past, the governing education body addressed the achievement gap issues by producing and implementing a set of common learning standards among the core primary subjects; created a standard teacher training program; created a certification program for school leaders, and prepared new systems for monitoring performance (World Bank, 2020). Fast forward to 2020–2021, these issues require more attention due to the pandemic. Inevitably, the Coronavirus crisis in the OECS region will have a socioeconomic impact on students, affect instruction time, modes of student assessment, as well as their psychosocial health.

One advantage of this situation is the fact that crisis often drives innovations in education (Clark, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic advanced plans/policies that may have not been in the implementation phase but were now practically urgent. As it relates to testing, CXC introduced an E-Testing program in 2017/2018. This program was improved/fortified and is in high demand as a response to the continuation of scheduled assessments during school closures. As a result, the new 2020–2025 strategic plan that is based on the policy for digital e-testing transformation was forwarded as urgent (see link: [In Face Of COVID-19 Pandemic, CXC Offers Revised Exams Process – CARICOM Today](#)).

3.6 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Specific educational issues/knowledge gaps extracted from the above subsections are outlined below:

Generally, in terms of the policy cycles, it may be difficult to generate decisions when external factors, such as politics are closely involved; most political leaders bring party goals with other agendas (Everett, 2003).

Technical assistance in policy development, evaluation, monitoring, and additional human resources capacity is the expertise needed to improve policy planning and implementation. Currently, ministry officials believe that more data via the evaluation of the impact of current policies are needed to forward various education visions and goals.

Dissemination Mechanisms: Small systems like Dominica, require efficient and effective collaboration with timely regional-level technical assistance to address the challenges within the ministry of education to achieve innovative goals in the education sector (World Bank, 2020). Specialized organizations or agencies that provide research, and/or provide support for the development and innovation in education are the Ministry of Education, EDMU, OECS, and CARICOM. If collaboration strategies are impeded, this can affect policy cycles.

There is no legal framework that allows for the sharing of education data, needs, and planning between actors in the public sector, the private sector, academia, and civil

society. However, national consultations are undertaken when the need arises. The sharing of education data occurs upon request. The channels for the dissemination of innovations and general knowledge on educational policies in education are in the form of media, consultations, and workshops.

Length of time for data collection and organization to inform policies-Evidence in the decision-making process within school communities is circulated in the form of a compilation of data in the annual school questionnaire. The information is disseminated to several regional and local agencies, namely: OECS, CDB, CARICOM, UNESCO, and other government sectors. The information is used by the Ministry and other interested stakeholders. School communities incorporate the use of evidence and knowledge into their work by formulating evidence-based development plans.

The mode of teaching is changing-The curriculum used in teacher education institutions can no longer remain the same. The theory and practice prescribed for teachers in the Caribbean must adapt to the current environment and pandemic situation. Most concepts were grounded in the face-to-face methodologies and now the integration of various forms of online and technological platforms are required in teaching and testing. Teachers are expected to adapt to the new changes with short (technological) learning curves; this factor can affect teacher inflow, outflow, and retention as well.

The need for consistent construction/rehabilitation of schools. The Dominican government had declared a focus on the new construction of schools and sought out available spaces at existing schools to promote COVID protocols.

Equity and knowledge gaps-all children from varied backgrounds require monitoring and support during this challenging time. The goal is to foster inclusive education, the process through which schools aspire for equity by responding to everyone as individuals, especially when creating curricular programs in the online environment and mobilizing resources.

Student achievement and data related to assessment outcomes-issues related to testing and measurement during the current COVID pandemic.

Challenges related to the education reform-needs assessments are being conducted primarily related to student achievement and teacher education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

CHAPTER 4:

TEACHERS & EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the teaching profession in Dominica. The chapter outlines the teacher population characteristics (i.e., the age range of teachers and the percentage of trained teachers). This is followed by a synopsis of the main features of pre-service and in-service teacher education. Teacher salary and working conditions are discussed in the context of the country's collective agreement between the Dominican teachers' union and the government. The chapter culminates with a summary of the knowledge gaps and the main challenges in the teaching profession.

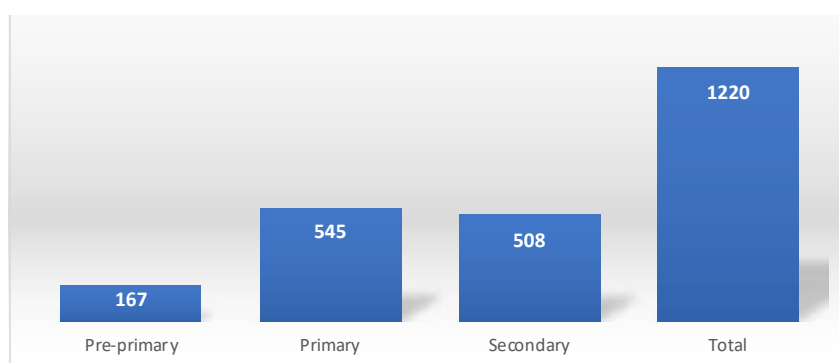
The focus of the OECS Education Strategy is the success of every learner which is directly linked to teacher quality (Thompson, 2013). To achieve this, teachers, who are the main backbone of the education system must be cared for and supported according to their professional needs. This was the mandate subscribed via the comprehensive Education Sector Strategy that was used to guide the development of the OECS education systems between 2012 and 2021. Since 2012, the Member States have invested significantly in the training of teachers to enhance competence among the teaching population.

4.1 TEACHER POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

In Dominica, the minimum age requirement to teach at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary school levels is 18 years. The minimum retirement age is 55 years; the maximum retirement age is between (60–65). Across the island, most teaching jobs exist in the urban regions, for example in the two cities (Portsmouth and Roseau). Most teachers work in public school settings. Opportunities also exist for ex-pat teachers, often in international schools that teach a British or North American curriculum.

Data derived from the OECS Statistical Digest (2017/18) showed a total of 1,220 teachers employed in both private and public schools in Dominica. At the pre-school level, there were 167 teachers; at the primary level, there were 545 teachers, and at the secondary level, 508 teachers. This data is displayed in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4. 1: Number of teachers employed across education sub-sectors in Dominica-2018/19 (Total_1,220)



Source: OECS Statistical Digest (2018)

A general analysis of the number of teachers employed in the public and private institutions reveals a sharp contrast among the sectors. The private schools have a more equal spread (in terms of the percentage of teachers employed at each education level) versus the public setting. This may be due to the number of schools facilitated by each type of institution and enrolment. This situation may also affect the pupil-teacher ratio. Note that the low number of teacher employment at the public pre-primary level is a recurrent area of concern.

Figure 4. 2: Number of teachers employed in the private education sectors-2018/19 (% of 768)

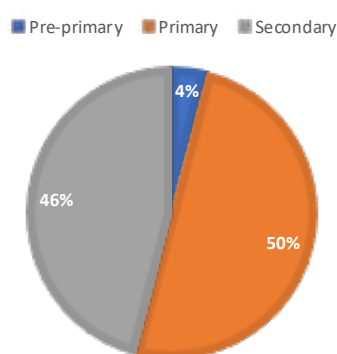
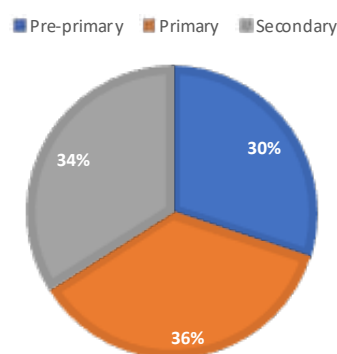


Figure 4. 3: Number of teachers employed in the private education sectors-2018/19 (% of 458)



Source: OECS Statistical Digest (2018)

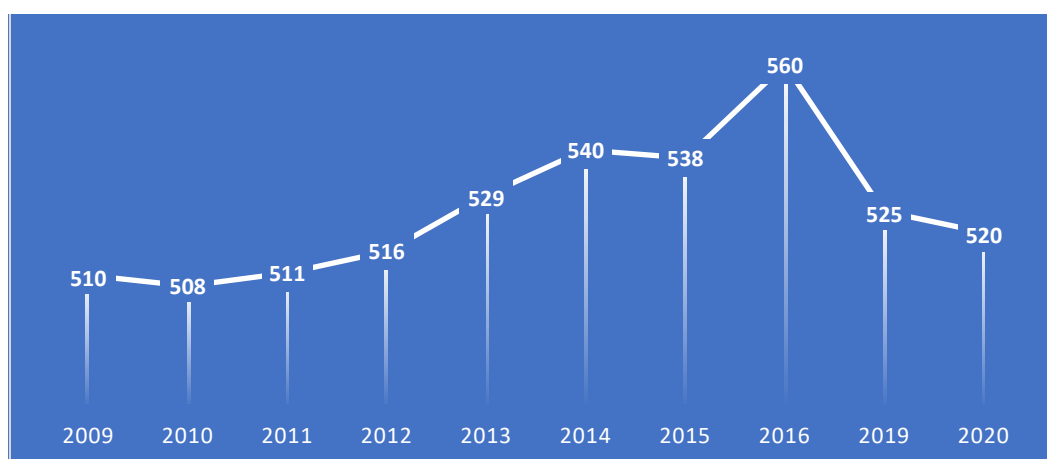
Between 2010 and 2019, the approximate number of teachers at the primary school level fluctuated slightly in recent years. For example, in the primary education sector, the number of teachers ranged from 508 to 540, followed by a slight decrease in 2015 (538) to an increase in 2016 when there were 560 teachers. Fast forward to 2019, there was a decrease with a count of 520 teachers (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.4).

Table 4.1: Number of Teachers in the Primary Education Sector Between 2010 and 2020, Showing Change in Percent.

Year	Number	Change %
2020	520	-0.95%
2019	525	-6.25%
2016	560	4.09%
2015	538	-0.37%
2014	540	2.08%
2013	529	2.52%
2012	516	0.98%
2011	511	0.59%
2010	508	-0.39%
2009	510	2.00%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2021; World Bank, 2020; OECS, 2018

Figure 4. 4: Number of teachers in the primary education sector between 2010 and 2020



Source: World Bank (2020)

The figure shows a slight drop from 2009 to 2010, followed by a steady increase from 2010 to 2014. Between 2015 and 2016, there was a sharp increase, followed by a sharp decrease through to 2020. Although the overall count ranged between 508 and 510, it would be interesting to understand the main factors that affected the trend during the ten-year period.

THE GENDER GAP

Typically, gender gaps exist among the teaching population in the Caribbean. A higher percentage of female teachers are often equipped with a first degree and teaching qualifications. Teaching has long been dominated by women but there are about the same numbers of men in several secondary schools (Thompson, 2013). When compared to the other Member States, Dominica's authorities have been aware of the need for more male teachers for years. To rectify this issue across the Caribbean, several authorities may appoint an untrained, yet qualified (in terms of degrees, etc.) male to a vacant position than a female in some instances (Thompson, 2013).

Interestingly, there is a marked difference in the male-female ratio of trained teachers between 2010 and 2019. More specifically, there was a dramatic change in the gender gap in three years, i.e. there were 20% males and 80% females across the Dominican primary and secondary schools in 2010; comparatively, in 2013, the figures were 41% males and 43% females (Thomson, 2013). Skip forward to 2019, 37% of the male teachers and 48 % of the female teachers were trained at the secondary level (World Bank, 2020). In that same year, 59% of the male teachers and 63% of the female teachers were trained at the primary level. Accordingly, in recent years, the male teacher population had increased slightly; the scale is a bit more balanced. Nevertheless, it is still evident that males are underrepresented in the teaching profession. Additionally, in the wider Caribbean, there seemed to be a trend of having a higher percentage of men in senior positions than in the ordinary classroom. One main reason for this situation may stem from the existence of a gender bias when it comes to appointing individuals in leadership positions, such as principals, etc. (Thompson, 2013).

4.2 PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION

The focus of the OECS Education Strategy is the success of every learner which is directly linked to teacher quality (Thompson, 2013). To achieve this, teachers, who are the main backbone of the education system must be cared for and supported according to their professional needs. This was the mandate subscribed via the comprehensive Education Sector Strategy that was used to guide the development of the OECS education systems between 2012 and 2021. Since 2012, the Member States have invested significantly in the training of teacher to enhance competence among the teaching population.

Trained teachers at the secondary level are those who have received the minimum formal teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, that is required for teaching. Teachers require a tertiary level education to meet the basic requirement for any teaching opportunity. Generally, to become a certified teacher, candidates must have attained four subject-passes on the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), including both English and Mathematics. Teacher training is completed at the Dominica Teachers Training College. The teacher-training program and subsequent courses are administered under the auspices of the Faculty of Education of the University of West

Indies. There has been an increase in the number of opportunities to complete tertiary education mainly to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified in the profession.

At the early childhood level, an increase in the number of teachers is needed to facilitate and promote quality and effective early childhood education programs. At the primary and especially the secondary levels, teachers are more aligned to specified disciplines and are required to be versed in aligning the curriculum with the assessment objectives specified by examination bodies such as CXC and CAPE. The requirements are passes in four CXC/GCE subjects which is a requirement in the public service as well as a qualification in the field of ECE. At the primary level, the teacher requires passes in five CXC/GCE subjects inclusive of English Language. At the secondary level, successful completion of a minimum of six GCE 'O' Level or CXC subjects, including the English Language, and two GCE 'A' Level subjects or their equivalent. There are requirements for specialized subject areas specifically: CAPE - 2 units or an Associate Degree in the specialist subject or GCE Advanced level passes for the Major- At least a Grade 1 pass at the CSEC level or the equivalent in the specialist subject for the Minor.

PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO

The subject of pupil-teacher ratio does not seem to be an issue within the Dominican schools. According to the World Bank (2020), the current data shows the pupil-teacher ratio outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Pupil-Teacher Ratio Across Education Sector

Level	Ratio (pupil-teacher)	Year
Pre-Primary	11:1	2016
Primary	13:1	2016
Secondary	11:1	2015
(Upper)	7:1	2016
(Lower)	14:1	2014

Source: World Bank (2020)

Teachers who work within the tertiary education sector are expected to have high qualifications such as Masters or Doctoral degrees. At the vocational education level, the TVET subjects are integrated with the school curriculum and aligned with the secondary curriculum. Hence teachers within this sector are expected to have industry experience and to understand and administer assessments for the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs).

TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The status of the pre-service teacher education program delivery in Dominica is approximately 40% (Knight, 2019). There are programs/incentives to recruit teachers, in the form of paid tuition for individuals to attend the State College. Teachers enter the occupation conventionally through school leavers entering an undergraduate teacher education course to train as a teacher, or to enter an undergraduate course and then undertake post-graduate teacher training (Thompson, 2013).

Over the years there have been improvements in the number, type, and level of teaching programs offered at various institutions on the island. For example, the introduction of the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)—a course that provides a teaching diploma for a teacher that already has a first degree in a particular subject. Various Community Colleges now offer an Associate Degree in TVET alongside primary and secondary teaching programs.

4.3 IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND CAREER PATH

New teachers must experience an inductive 2-day period and sessions are held annually by the Ministry. Continuous monitoring is done following the training. As part of the in-service education, the government offers 'day release programs, whereby the teachers can pursue teacher training two days per week.

Professional teachers within the local, international, and private schools have a bachelor's degree and a teaching license, as well as some previous teaching experience. At the primary level, teachers are deemed to be qualified and trained if they have achieved five or six CSECs and completed an approved course of training. The situation at the secondary level is more complex because the curriculum is subject-specific, and teachers are expected to be well versed in the subjects they are teaching. These subjects will sometimes vary from year to year, dependent upon demand and on occasion the availability of teachers.

As a result, there will be a consequent need to match the teachers with the subjects that are offered in the individual schools. It is this challenge that has led to large numbers of teachers reportedly teaching out of the field (Thompson, 2013). Generally, in the region, many teachers were capable of teaching subjects that were not in their area of study/training. The long-term goal is for all the teachers in the secondary schools to have a first degree, or an equivalent relevant qualification, in the discipline that they teach, particularly at the higher levels. Fortunately, more teachers have higher degrees such as bachelor and master degrees at the secondary level in comparison to those who teach at the primary school level.

Focusing on the data, the OECS figures for teachers regionally, who have degrees and training qualifications were between 40% and 45% in 2010. Fast forward to 2019, there were 43% trained teachers at the pre-primary level, 62.86% at the primary level, and 45% at the secondary level (World Bank, 2020). Comparatively, there was a slight increase

in the percent of trained teachers across the sectors (excluding the preprimary level) in 2020 (see table 4.3.). A further detailed breakdown of the teacher-related data is summarized in table 4.3.

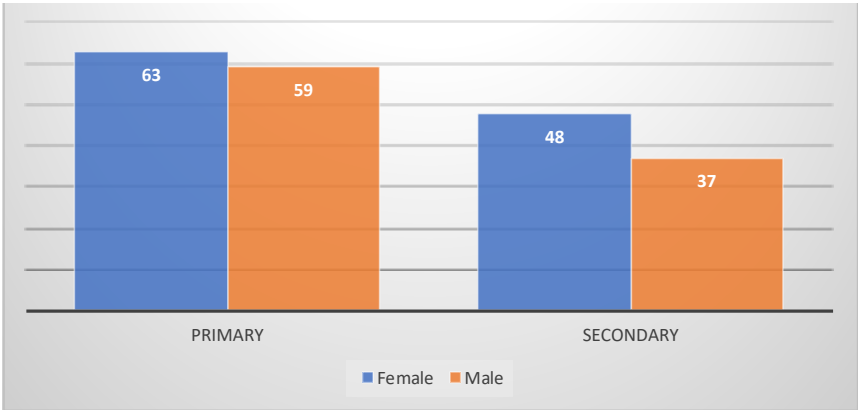
Table 4.3: Trained Teachers Across the Education Sector in Dominica

School Level	Total % 2020	Total % 2019	Sex	Approximate Percent (%)	Year
Pre-primary	n/a	43	Males	n/a	n/a
			Females	43	2019
Primary	64	62.86	Males	59	2019
			Females	63	2019
Secondary (Upper)	51	49 (2016)	Males	41	2016
			Females	52	2016
Secondary (Lower)	51	48 (2016)	Males	41	2016
			Females	51	2016

Source: Ministry of Education-Dominica (2021); UNESCO (2020); World Bank (2020)

Trained teachers at the primary school level comprised 62.86% in 2019; (i) male teachers comprised 59.02%, (ii) female teachers comprised 63.36% in 2019 (UNESCO, 2020). Note, that the number of male trained teachers continues to lag in comparison to the number of trained female teachers (Figure 4.5). Recent data indicated the total trained teachers: 64% at the primary level, 51% at the secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Figure 4. 5 : Trained Teachers across two education sectors in Dominica by Gender in 2019



Source: World Bank (2020)

CAREER PATHS

Career options that are available for teachers include the position of school leaders (principal) or support staff within the Ministry and these are based on output and qualifications. To access a higher position or to get a higher salary, teacher output in the current position and attainment of at least a first degree in Education Management, Literacy Studies, Educational Planning, etc. are carefully examined. In the past, it has been noted that a distinct career pathway does not exist for teachers and the incentives were insufficient (Thompson, 2013). This has also been cited as a reason for teachers being seemingly happy to remain in a single teaching position for many years once they have achieved permanency. Today, the governing bodies recognize the importance of providing a pathway for teachers to progress when deliberating on teacher pay scales and terms of conditions.

The challenges with teacher career paths are related to the permanency issue to some degree. Many teachers remain in their same position for so many years because there is a limited number of Principals positions and Vice-Principal positions available. Becoming a Head of Department can be useful when applying for a position of Principal although it is not a requirement to be a Head of Department before taking on the job as a Principal at a Secondary school (Thompson, 2013).

4.4 TEACHER SALARY AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The salary and benefits while teaching in Dominica vary based on the private and public settings. Salaries range from approximately USD 1,000–2,000/month, depending on a specific contract, qualifications, and school type. Working hours are 40 hours per week on average. Vacations are on all national holidays. Health insurance may be provided, depending on specific schools and contract the duration is often secured annually.

TEACHER SUPPLY

Teacher supply can be affected by economic factors and this is particularly the case in the primary schools where teachers tend to be more highly qualified than those at the secondary level. There are 45% of trained teachers at the secondary level in comparison to 63% trained teachers at the primary level (World Bank, 2019). The system must make every effort it can to retain teachers, especially those that are highly specialized or who work in areas of short supply. At present, the salary of a teacher is almost wholly determined by the qualifications that a teacher has rather than by seniority within a school or the highly specialized nature of the work. The only formal promotional positions that carry with it a financial reward are the positions of Principal at all schools and Vice Principal in several others, virtually all secondary and a few primary schools. There are Heads of Department positions in the secondary schools but the reward for winning one of these seems to be less financial and more

the fact that a Head of Department carries a lower teaching load in exchange for the administrative duties that have to be undertaken.

4.5 TEACHER UNIONS

The main teacher unions are the Dominica Association of Teachers and the Public Service Union. In terms of the association of these unions with the governmental agency, both unions are treated the same. Three main areas of concern for teachers are outlined below:

- **Teacher training:** there is a need for greater flexibility in the mode of teacher education delivery. Supply can be increased greatly if a residential component of training can be creatively combined with a distance/online or virtual component. A proposal such as this means that more teachers can be in the field while completing courses (Thompson, 2013). Teacher quality can be enhanced if there is effective teacher support, regular professional development, and mentoring.
- **Teacher benefits:** In January 2019, the Association of Teachers held its general meeting to discuss key priority areas inclusive of the changes to the group's Insurance, salary negotiations, the appointment of teachers into different positions particularly those working for five years, and mortgage financing and the need for additional benefits (Facebook Post, 2019).
- **Virtual teaching responsibilities:** The curriculum used in teacher education institutions can no longer remain the same. The mode of teaching underwent a drastic change. Hence the theory and practice prescribed for teachers in the Caribbean must adapt to the current environment and pandemic situation. Most concepts were grounded in the face-to-face methodologies and now the integration of various forms of online and technological platforms are required in teaching and testing. Hence teachers also require support in accessing equipment (for online teaching) and relevant resources.
- **Data mining, access, and sharing:** To supplement teacher supply, work conditions, mobility, benefits, etc., a secure, centralized database can be useful. Despite various initiatives, there is still a need for improved data collection in particular areas related to teacher records. For example, information about teacher age, their formal professional qualifications, salaries, and professional courses that have been undertaken, etc. Issues such as confidentiality will require full attention. A single collection/central data point would be effective. Currently, different types of data are aggregated in various places such as the Human Resource Division, which may be a part of the MoE or may be a part of the national public service and other sections of the MoE hold the pieces of information that they specifically need (Thompson, 2013).

4.6 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Challenges persist in the teachers' abilities to effectively impart knowledge and skills required in meeting various educational demands. Particularly those required to hone qualities among students who will be able to cope in a global 21st-century world environment. Most of the challenges have been in existence for several years; policy development and strategies to improve the challenges must be consistently implemented. Several challenges are outlined below:

1. The issue of permanence: a probationary period before being recommended for permanent hire is prolonged in some instances.
2. In the past, teachers among Member States of the OECS indicated an ongoing imbalance in the supply, demand, and utilization of teachers particularly at the secondary level (Thompson, 2013). Currently, most of these challenges exist in the pre-primary and special education sectors (Personal Communication, 2021).
3. Teacher workload and extra-curricular activities: There is a huge range in the level of commitment shown by teachers. In some situations, teachers seem ill-prepared to put in extra effort into the other responsibilities. This is important because schools must provide more than academics for the children, especially at the primary level (Thompson, 2013). It is quite inevitable that with the changing environment, the workloads for teachers will vary.
4. There is continued demand for teachers in more complex teaching disciplines such as vocational education and training expertise, modern STEM, and Information technology skills, as well as the growing demand for environmental education for sustainability knowledge and skills.
5. Gender Gap related to professional teachers: More females than male teachers are trained. It would be desirable to have greater male participation in all parts of the system. The need to have male role models in the schools was noted by many people and is seen as one of the reasons for the male underperformance in education generally. Teaching is seen as being a female-dominated field and not many boys aspire to enter the profession (Ansell, 2016; Bailey, 2014).
6. There exist gaps related to teaching resources among the education sectors, especially the Special Education sector.
7. Although there is room for improvement, some progress has been made concerning teacher training, but many challenges exist concerning student achievement levels. Perhaps, emphasis needs to be placed on testing and measurement within the teacher training curriculum.
8. In some areas, there may be issues with teacher mobility between urban and rural areas.
9. One major issue among teachers is the idea of reform or innovative changes that occur within the curriculum itself and/or new modes of testing are required within

the school system. For example, there are curriculum changes that may require additional teaching resources and the abilities to use them or new programs that require continuing professional development (CPD) among the teachers. Issues such as general resistance to change, teacher burnout, and lack of available resources to implement the innovation are all obstacles to various new programs or new strategies that were mandated to improve the systems.

10. Teacher benefits: efficient group insurance, mortgage financing, salary negotiations, appointment, and mobility issues require effective negotiations.

CHAPTER 5:

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the main educational gaps in terms of access, attainment, and completion. Furthermore, special attention will be given to diversity and intercultural education both in practice and in the curriculum. The chapter should illustrate any potential gender inequality as well as any other phenomenon contributing to threaten identities or create imbalanced situations for any group because of SOGI (sexual orientation or gender identity). Therefore, the chapter will consider not only the curriculum but also the social dynamics at schools and other educational institutions. Special attention should be given to those situations that might not be addressed by what is reflected by statistics.

5.1 GENDER GAPS: TRENDS & POLICIES

There is a persistent battle against issues related to gender inequalities in the Caribbean region, these include but are not limited to: higher achievements among girls that do not translate to higher participation in the labor market and closing of the wage gap. As school leavers, girls experience occupational segregation as women, tending to have lower-wage occupations in the economy and a lower female labor force participation. Eventually, such a foundation leads to a high proportion of female-headed households in poverty and with high dependence ratios (Caribbean Development Bank, 2020).

Primarily, at the school level, there are educational gaps at the secondary and tertiary levels with mixed results for boys and girls (CDB, 2016). The effects of the educational gaps include but are not limited to male dropout, which often leads to juvenile misbehaviors, and female dropout, which often leads to teenage pregnancy and incomplete education. In Dominica, there is the issue of male underachievement in comparison to their female counterpart (Personal Communication, 2021). One reason for this can be the feminization of schooling, in which the tendency to have more female teachers than male role models in the school may affect the teaching-learning process, specifically learning styles that may not be holistically effective for boys (Ansell, 2016; Bailey, 2014).

The gender inequalities mentioned above represent serious constraints to the economic growth and well-being of the country (CDB, 2016). The Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) gender equality rating (1–low to 6–high) was 3 in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). This is an indication that Dominica installed institutions and programs to enforce laws and policies that promote equal access for men and women in education, health, the economy, and protection under the law to a

moderate extent (World Bank, 2021). Although there is a gender policy in existence (the National Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality), put in place in 2006 and updated in 2014, there is no national strategic action plan on gender-based violence (World Bank, 2020). Education reform in Dominica can be grounded in global initiatives and roadmaps to strengthen effective leadership that in term will fortify the education system, making it ready to respond to the specified gender-related challenges by providing access to information and resources, equity, gender equality, and achievement standards.

5.2 DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Marginalized and disadvantaged groups in Dominica can be classified as children of migrant parents, those living with disabilities, and those living in remote, single-parent households or poor urban communities. There are provisions/educational policies safeguarding children and the young population with special needs according to the Education Act 1997. The vision of the Ministry highlights the motto: *education for all*. This motto guides the vision and mission of the ministry and is no doubt captured in every aspect of service to the nation (Personal Communication, 2021). Particularly, the unemployment rates among vulnerable groups such as women and young people also contribute to high levels of poverty. However, poverty reduction has been a focal point of the Government and has led to the implementation of various initiatives aimed at reducing the poverty and indigence rates by providing support for individuals and families living below the breadline.

DISABILITIES

As it relates to special needs, there is no specific line item in the current budget; however, the budget for this sector falls under the budget for all ages, and students are assessed through the office of Special Education. There are no valid statistics within this area of concern since diagnosis requires more human resource capacity (Personal Communication, 2021). Although there are provisions (three dedicated special education schools) made to assist students with special educational needs, concern still abounds about the level of attention given to these students. Much of this concern arises from the fact that not all students with special educational needs are identified and appropriately placed.

Some educational officials have noted that while the three dedicated Special education facilities cater to students with more severe disabilities, many students who have mild learning challenges are still integrated into regular primary and secondary schools which do not have the required educational resources to assist these students. This poses challenges for both teachers and students, especially given that many of the teachers are not trained in special education. This means that the quality of instruction and the specific educational needs of the child are potentially being compromised as many of the students experiencing these issues may go undiagnosed (Personal

Communication, 2021). Additionally, the re-integration of students into the mainstream schools seems to be somewhat ad hoc. Decisions on re-integration are mainly decided based on discussions between the teachers and parents.

UNDERREPRESENTED/MINORITY GROUPS

Apart from special education, some other general focal areas regarding inclusion in education encompass gender identity, migrant populations, and refugee children. Most children from these minority groups are fully integrated into the Dominican education system. As such, there are no specific education policy concerning these groups.

Policies for children and young LBTB+ population are not detailed in any policy; there is no provision in the education system specifically related to LGBT. All students are treated equally irrespective of gender (Personal Communication, 2021). Furthermore, all students are treated equally irrespective of race, class, or gender. Students of the Kalinago indigenous population use the same textbooks and all other materials as all other students in the system and as a result, they are assessed the same way (Personal Communication, 2021).

According to the ministry officials, there is no present policy for the migrant population and as such there are no valid statistics; however, plans are afoot to commence collecting data on migrant students. As of the next school year, this will be included in the annual school's questionnaire. Concerning children and the young population from socioeconomic disadvantage backgrounds, the school safety net programs by the Ministry and transportation provide school feeding, textbook, and uniforms, etc., all included in the annual budget. Currently, valid statistics based on the socio-economic student indicators are lacking and would require direct participation/input from the schools, which represent the main source of such information. As to whether there are other classifications of disadvantaged groups, juvenile offenders represent one such group and there is no policy regarding continued education or a safe place for them while they are incarcerated (Personal Communication, 2021).

5.3 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

The main indicators that consistently require attention within the Dominican context are related to inclusion, gender, child development, child safety, student achievement, and other social determinants of poverty. Accordingly, several points are highlighted:

1. Gender gaps and student achievement: particularly male underachievement is an area of concern that is currently being monitored by the ministry of education and supporting stakeholders.
2. Inclusive education has many recurrent limitations, such as a lack of human resources, limited access to materials and equipment, and a continued silent

culture of exclusion among schools (Personal Communication, 2021). This area requires efficient policy development.

3. Another major limitation of inclusive education in Dominica is teacher training (related to specific learning difficulties in students) and consistent support in terms of proper equipment and resources.

Several changes are occurring in Dominica, hence the need for more innovative policies that address the issues (listed above) at various school levels. The policies will need to promote gender equity, effective strategies for inclusion, reduced achievement gaps by creating innovative curricular reform (with subjects or disciplines that promote lifelong learning, adaptive critical thinking/problem solving, and innovative creative thinking for current and future issues associated with disease control or pandemics, various forms of pollution, sustainability, and technological advancements).

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the main educational challenges associated with the prescribed themes that were explored in the report. A detailed summary of the main innovations and knowledge gaps that require further investigation is provided. Finally, several implications and recommendations are put forward.

In general, Dominica is similar to the other Member States in terms of its social, economic, and demographic makeup although natural disasters like the recent hurricanes had more profound effects on the country regarding these indicators. Hence, major differences in the social, economic, political, and educational sectors are due to the constant devastation of hurricanes. For example, many innovations that are currently occurring in Dominica are aligned with sustainable development standards, hurricane preparedness, and green preservation efforts. Given the current situation, adaptive research, strategic plans, and innovations are geared towards responding to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The prescribed themes explored in this report were (a) the impact of COVID-19; (b) governance and regulation; (c) resources; (d) policies and programs; (e) students; (f) teachers and educational leaders; (g) curriculum innovation and pedagogies; (h) accountability and support; and finally (i) vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Aligned with the themes listed above, the emergent challenges, implications, and recommendations are discussed in more detail.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

CHALLENGES

Besides the closure of schools, issues associated with COVID-19 within the education system in Dominica were mainly financial, as appropriate devices and adequate internet access had to be provided to schools and students to facilitate the teaching/learning process. Related to these issues, concerns regarding potential resource mobilization issues, learning loss, and gaps are current priorities across the region. As a cascade effect, issues related to testing and measurement during the COVID-19 pandemic are emergent. Student achievement is a priority in Dominica; hence, data related to assessment outcomes are being collected across the education sectors, particularly at the primary and secondary levels to get a better idea about the factors associated with this challenge. Other costs were required, such as payments for extended human resources, i.e. more staff (janitors), cleaning/sanitizing supplies,

access to water, and infrastructural expansions for students and teachers to promote social distancing.

IMPLICATIONS

Primarily, school closure creates a massive loss in the development of human capital with significant long-term economic and social implications; this is a strong stress test for the education system and an opportunity for educational innovations (OECD, 2020). The adverse consequences of school closures mainly impact the most vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls. These consequences include:

- 1. Interrupted learning:** children and youth are deprived of experiences and opportunities to grow and develop in healthy ways.
- 2. Social isolation:** schools are places for social activity and human interaction, so when schools close, many children and youth are not able to enjoy social contact, which is an important aspect of learning and development.
- 3. Parents unprepared for distance and homeschooling:** most parents found themselves struggling to facilitate learning at home; this is especially true for parents with limited education and resources.
- 4. Gaps in childcare:** in the absence of alternative options, parents often leave children alone or with various individuals and this may lead to risky behaviors and various forms of abuse.
- 5. Increase exposure to violence and exploitation:** when schools shut down, there is an increase in early marriages, gang recruitments, sexual exploitation of girls and young women, teenage pregnancies, and child labor.
- 6. Challenges measuring and validating learning:** the assessment process, particularly high-stakes examinations that are important for admissions to new institutions or advancement to upper levels, are not stabilized. Issues such as the postponement, skipping and administration of exams online or distant continue to raise serious concerns about fairness, especially when access to learning is challenging in several cases.
- 7. Poor nutrition:** many schools provide children with free or discounted meals that are prepared according to dietary standards and when school closes, nutrition is compromised as well.
- 8. Confusion and stress for teachers:** due to the emergency lockdowns, teachers are often unsure about their obligations and how to maintain connections with students to support continuous learning. Given the professional backgrounds and circumstances, transitions to distance learning platforms may be daunting and frustrating.
- 9. Increased pressure on schools and school systems that remain open:** when several schools remain open due to more space or appropriate infrastructure,

the schools may be pressured by the governments and parents who redirect their children to these schools.

- 10. The unintended strain on healthcare systems:** Frontline workers either are away from their children for long periods due to quarantine practices or cannot easily attend work because of childcare obligations that result from school closures. This means that many medical professionals are not able to work, helping patience during the health crisis.
- 11. High economic costs:** parents who work are more likely to miss work when schools close, primarily to take care of their children at home and this results in wage loss, increasing the tendency to negatively impact productivity (UNESCO, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To help address the challenges and by extension, the implications, several recommendations are forwarded:

- 1. Bridge learning & achievement gaps:** the implementation of strategic plans to address post- pandemic learning loss will require research efforts—after data are collected, organized, and presented to the relevant stakeholders, more efficient solutions can be formulated. Access is the first issue that needs to be addressed; it is important to forge ways to provide various resources, for example, support materials in different formats (physical/digital) to help keep the students aligned with daily lessons. Readily available handbooks/guides (that give instructions about creating goals, adhering to schedules, resisting peer pressure, enjoying rewards, and applying resilience during a crisis) can be presented in appealing and fun ways. These are important tools to not only facilitate flexible learning but also *nourish the soul*, catering to the psychosocial wellbeing of each student. Most importantly, these guides should be accessible in print, digital, television, radio, internet, and any other innovative format.

It is a normal expectation that all teachers and students will not be enthusiastic about the new emergency model used for schooling. Many teachers and learners are often skeptical about online learning mainly due to limited knowledge about the use of devices or software platforms, as well as the lack of equity and accessibility of technology. This may be a significant issue among the rural and lower socioeconomic communities. Students and teachers will require at least a minimum level of computer literacy to navigate the new learning environment. It is recommended that these groups will need to be strategically targeted and given support that is adjusted to their specific need.

An additional nuance that contributes to the knowledge gap is the idea that certain content and methodologies that are successful in the face-to-face format may not always translate to a successful online program due to the difference in learning instruction paradigms (University of Illinois Springfield, 2021). Perhaps strategies associated with blended learning can be applied as a solution. Shift

Rotation Schedules can be used to maintain COVID-19 protocols (allowing smaller groups to meet) in a physical space where more effective teaching methods that are suitable for the content (for example, laboratory experiments, etc.) are implemented. Whenever this is not applicable and in the case of more stringent lockdown protocols are enforced, there are creative virtual course platforms that can supplement specific methodologies that require practical components.

Finally, assessments are a major issue on the online platform. Consistent and effective communication among the stakeholders and testing agencies is required. Innovative strategies involving a blended mode of assessing may be a practical solution as well. The mode will depend on the nature of the content and skillsets evaluated. Special protocols drafted will need to be clear and communicated in an effective manner. Test makers will need to be versed in various types of assessments, associated with specific purposes, methods, and within suitable contexts. As for the formative assessments during the normal lessons, a database/framework containing various types of assessments and when to use them can be created and made readily available/accessible for teachers.

- 2. Strengthen support for teachers:** a centralized outlet or platform can be created for teachers to share their experiences with the new mode of teaching. A safe space can be created for this form of communication. The information can then be used within the education sector to categorize the emergent factors of blended learning. Officials and policymakers can use the information to inform the strategic planning processes, particularly where they concern teachers' wellbeing and efficiency; comfortable and happy teachers create better learning experiences and nurture healthier young minds.

One way to make teachers more comfortable is by providing continuous training, encouraging them to hone specific skills related to online teaching-learning processes and platforms. These training initiatives should be guided by needs assessments. The teacher professional training should be an enhancement/continuation of teacher professional development aimed at improving pedagogy with a focus on ICT integration, E-Learning, the promotion of distributed learning, and e-testing that will allow for the seamless transition to remote learning in case of emergencies. The Dominican officials have plans in place to work on these strategies. It is important to note that ministry officials who are overseeing and evaluating teachers can undergo this training first and provide cascading support for the teachers later.

During special professional training, it is normal to expect resistance from some group of teachers because this is a natural aspect of change theory, particularly as it relates to any form of reform or innovation. It is recommended that the team leaders who are facilitating the training, find ways to identify and classify their (teacher population) according to Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Management Theory, which includes: *innovators*, *early adopters*, *early majority*, *late majority*, and *laggards* (Sirk, 2020). Any other innovation management model can be used, depending on the context or conditions that exist. When choosing team leaders

to facilitate the training, it is advisable to source professionals who are versed in various fields related to online education and technological course development.

- 3. Strengthen the parent-teacher relationship:** more than ever, parents rely on teachers and teachers rely on parents for the holistic well-being of the children during the COVID-19 crisis. *Setting positive, caring intentions to meet our shared goal of nurturing students* (Cort, 2021, p.1) should be the main motto that guides this collaboration.
- 4. Access financial support:** more stakeholder participation is required in the way forward; adapting to the pandemic and creating policies for future crises require sufficient resources. One highlighted strength revealed from the research is that Dominica is currently supported by several external (non-governmental) education stakeholders to ensure the continuation of education during the pandemic but there is always room for more support, particularly in this extensive sector; these include:
 - UNICEF-provision of tablets to vulnerable students
 - ISRA AID-provided technical support and hygiene supplies to assist with sanitization of schools
 - OECS-technical assistance and proposed provision of hygiene materials and furniture.
 - IT4 Dominica (based in Canada)-provision of chrome books and connectivity materials to schools as well as technical assistance.

RESOURCES

CHALLENGES

The main priority areas within this category include (a) equitable access to learning materials, (b) data acquisition and management (c) human resources, and (d) physical infrastructure. Knowledge gaps are formed among students who have digital/internet access versus those who are unable to afford such resources and may live in rural areas without internet access. Regarding data acquisition and management, it is important to conduct research such as needs assessments and various forms of evaluations to inform or supplement policies. More specifically, data mining, access, and sharing can be used to guide important initiatives during crises or threats such as hurricanes and pandemics. During such catastrophes, strategic responses that require sufficient financial support are necessary to supplement extended human resources in various areas (for, sanitization efforts, special projects, and data collection), as well as the infrastructural demands.

IMPLICATIONS

- a. **Equitable access:** Procurement and distribution of devices (computer, tablets, cell phones, external storage devices, select software) and other necessary resources (such as reliable internet access) requires dedicated input from governing bodies, private sector institutions, stakeholders, and external organizations to bridge achievement and knowledge gaps among students.
- b. **Data acquisition and management:** The consistent lack of data means that there is not a clear understanding of the challenges that exist across the education sectors. It is best to have a good idea about what is happening within the communities concerning knowledge gaps, resource distribution, etc. to create feasible strategic plans and to access adequate funding.
- c. **Extending human resources** for sanitizing of schools etc., resource distribution, as well as for special projects and data collection, affect plans to continue schooling safely and productively, both directly and indirectly. If there are not enough people to maintain sanitized school environments, for example, this translates to COVID-19 protocols not being met and hence can perpetuate the issue of educational setbacks.
- d. **Infrastructural rehabilitation:** Since the island was devastated by past hurricanes, there has been a need for consistent construction/rehabilitation of schools. The pandemic created added pressure and expense where it concerns infrastructural rehabilitation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. One of the main goals in Dominica during the pandemic is to encourage and support the schools to promote equity by responding to students' needs, especially by ensuring that each child has access to their curricular programs. These efforts can help reduce knowledge gaps and promote inclusion among all the children from varied backgrounds during this challenging time.
2. Data are needed to understand current situations, the main factors, implications, and recommendations that can be used to support policies, innovations, and reform actions. A single collection/central data point would be more effective, mainly to reduce inefficiencies in having many individuals, groups, or organizations seek the same information. Currently, various organizations are completing similar studies, seeking the same type of data, and creating aggregated information in various places. If the data are housed in a centralized database that is accessible to the stakeholders, less time and money would be required for example to seek information about knowledge gaps, resource mobilization, and students without virtual access during COVID.
3. Besides the need for more people concerning infrastructural rehabilitation, resource mobilization, and sanitization, more human resources will be necessary

for research initiatives, such as instrument design, data collection, analysis, report, strategic planning, data mining, and project management.

4. As it relates to infrastructure and the construction/rehabilitation of schools, the Dominican government had declared a focus on constructing new buildings and is seeking available spaces at existing schools to promote COVID protocols. These initiatives will require efficient procurement, budgeting, and accounting strategies.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges in the implementation of policies/programs is the lack of a legal framework that allows for the sharing of education data, needs, and planning between actors in the public sector, the private sector, academia, and civil society. National consultations are undertaken when the need arises. The channels for the dissemination of innovations and general knowledge on educational policies in education are in the form of media, consultations, and workshops.

IMPLICATIONS

The process for program implementation can be quite long. The length of time for data collection and organization to inform policies are very extensive in the region. This may lead to various priority targets not being met and various social/physical problems being perpetuated.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Technical assistance** in policy development, evaluation, monitoring, and additional human resource capacity is the expertise needed to improve policy planning and implementation. Currently, ministry officials believe that more data via the evaluation of the impact of current policies are needed to forward various education visions and goals.
2. **Dissemination Mechanisms:** Small systems like Dominica, require efficient and effective collaboration with timely regional-level technical assistance to address the challenges within the ministry of education to achieve innovative goals in the education sector (World Bank, 2020). Specialized organizations or agencies that provide research, and/or provide support for the development and innovation in education are the Ministry of Education, EDMU, OECS, and CARICOM. If collaboration strategies are impeded, this can affect policy cycles.
3. **Areas that require policy and program development:** Several changes are occurring in Dominica, hence the need for more innovative policies that address the issues (listed above) at various school levels. The policies will need to promote gender equity, effective strategies for inclusion, reduced achievement gaps by

creating innovative curricular reform (with subjects or disciplines that promote lifelong learning, adaptive critical thinking/problem solving, and innovative creative thinking for current and future issues associated with disease control or pandemics, various forms of pollution, sustainability, and technological advancements).

ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUPPORT

With the dawn of the pandemic, one emergent challenge related to accountability and support is that of equity, access, and ensuring the wellbeing of all the students. The main educational stakeholders who are often invited to participate in education planning and policy development in Dominica include (but is not limited to):

- OECS- Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
- EDMU-Education Development Management Unit
- CDB-Caribbean Development Bank
- CXC-Caribbean Examination Council

These organizations mostly provide technical support to the government when the need arises. The main education development partners (non-governmental) who usually provide support (in terms of funding, expertise, training, etc.) to the national efforts to improve education are UNICEF, ISRA AID, CDB, UNESCO, OECS EDMU, CARICOM. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), which is based in Paris, and the Education Planning Institute in Jamaica make up the list of specific groups prioritized in educational policy planning and development. In terms of the implementation of national policies and programs, the Chief Education Officer or his or her representative is part of a subregional working group that annually reports on national progress towards the achievement of education outcomes related to each of these outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION

1. One general recommendation is to strengthen the relationship among national and international organizations, who are willing to support educational initiatives, especially those that focus on the overall wellbeing of the children. Currently, response strategies are needed to consistently monitor and support all children by finding mechanisms to first, better understand their unique situations, and second, provide them with necessary, holistic solutions and support.
2. At the local level, to maximize the possibility of the successful implementation of new education policies and programs, it is recommended that the Government continues to support the Ministry of Education through the provision of increased resources (i.e., financial, human, and technical resources) to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation processes. Even though this may be challenging in these difficult financial times, it must be considered as an investment designed to reduce wastage of resources and improve efficiency. That is, by strengthening

the current monitoring and evaluation system, the Government will be able to make more informed decisions regarding the effectiveness of their education policies and programs, whether any modifications are necessary, and how these modifications should be made.

3. A major aspect of monitoring and evaluation in education is the efficient collection and analysis of data to ascertain the progress made with a particular project. While this usually requires skilled and trained experts to manage the process, it also necessitates good record-keeping by individuals directly involved in the delivery of education (i.e., principals and teachers). As such, there must be a buy-in of these stakeholders to ensure accurate and efficient record-keeping. Improved record-keeping will also require efforts to strengthen the country's Education Management Information System (EMIS). In a 2012 assessment report, the country's EMIS was rated as emerging, which suggests that substantial improvements were needed (Porta et al., 2012). Even though there has not been a recent assessment of the EMIS, the unavailability of basic educational data suggests that there is room for improvement.

STUDENTS

CHALLENGES

The main areas that require attention concerning the student population include gender gaps, particularly in terms of student achievement. There had since been an issue concerning male underachievement. This is particularly an issue at the secondary and tertiary levels with mixed results for boys and girls (CDB, 2016). The effects of the educational gaps include but are not limited to male dropout, which often leads to juvenile misbehaviors. Many factors are influencing this phenomenon.

One unsaturated area of interesting research that can give an account of this challenge is in the field of adolescent sociology and psychology, with a particular focus on the feminization of schooling. This concept is grounded in the idea that there is a tendency to have more female teachers than male role models in the schools and this may affect the teaching-learning process, specifically learning styles that may not be holistically effective for boys (Ansell, 2016; Bailey, 2014). Another area of concern is the psychosocial issues that are plaguing children while at home, during lockdowns and, during school closures. As a result of this situation, students are experiencing anxieties concerning knowledge and achievement gaps.

IMPLICATIONS

- a. Needs assessments are being conducted primarily related to student achievement and teacher education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis. As a precaution against knowledge gaps, student assessments were conducted in September. The supervision and support officers of the Ministry worked closely with the schools

to cater to the underperforming students. Education Minister, Mrs. Octavia Alfred, spoke about the assessment of students in the first week of the school term.

- b. The purpose of the assessment was to determine remedial action for those who were affected by the closure of school during the pandemic (Caribbean National Weekly, 2020). Actions like these can minimize knowledge gaps, anxieties among the students, and promote male achievement as well. The main aim is to understand the level of knowledge and skill acquisition that each child has at a specific point in time. The results can better guide the stakeholders in terms of individualized attention for each student, which translates to equitable access.
- c. Contrary to student achievement, one area that is not being fully addressed is the psychosocial well-being of students in Caribbean households. It is very challenging for children to cope with various aspects of life during the pandemic. added to this, disruptions and confusions about assessments create stress for students and their families, which may create disengagement from learning and progressing academically (UNESCO, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Increase finances and build capacity** to support needs assessment strategies. A well-structured framework can be fashioned to guide this process. Aspects of the framework should include ways to find out about children who have no access to devices, and the internet; this can be addressed by providing innovative means of communication, inclusive of house visits to ensure that the environment is conducive to progressive learning. Schools should create closer partnerships with other schools and organizations such as (social welfare/child services).
- 2. Implement Crisis Leadership Strategies:** There is a need to increase and build human capacity—more counselors and leaders who will need to apply crisis leadership strategies are required to help students to cope with various psychosocial issues that they are experiencing as a result of the pandemic.

TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

CHALLENGES

The main areas of concern under this category include a gender gap within the teaching profession, as women dominate teaching across sectors, especially at the lower levels. Dominica's authorities have been aware of the need for more male teachers in the school system for years and have encouraged more male application and retention since 2013. Associated with this issue is an imbalance of teacher supply across sectors. In the past, teachers among Member States of the OECS indicated an ongoing imbalance in the supply, demand, and utilization of teachers particularly at the secondary level (Thompson, 2013). Currently, most of these challenges exist in the pre-primary and special education sectors (Personal Communication, 2021).

Teacher supply issues are connected to the process of teacher training; this continues to be a challenge in the region. There is a need for greater flexibility in the mode of teacher education. After preservice teachers are successfully inducted, issues concerning career pathways and benefits are realized. In the past, it has been noted that a distinct career pathway does not exist for teachers and the incentives were insufficient (Thompson, 2013). When the issue of permanence is explored, challenges with prolonging probationary periods before being recommended for permanent hire emerged as a factor that influenced low teacher morale, motivation, and retention.

IMPLICATION

- a. It would be desirable to have adequate male representation at all levels; male role models are needed in schools as this may influence male student performance/achievement in education generally. During recruitment, specific strategies can be implemented to get more men involved in teaching. Connections can be made between 1. the schooling and nurturing of young men with 2. the social ills such as high crime rate, poverty, and low productivity; these can be used to motivate and recruit males who want to affect social change within their communities.
- b. Teacher training will require innovative curricular reform. The curriculum used in teacher education institutions can no longer remain the same. The mode of teaching underwent a drastic change. Hence the theory and practice prescribed for teachers in the Caribbean must adapt to the current environment and pandemic situation. Most concepts were grounded in the face-to-face methodologies and now the integration of various forms of online and technological platforms are required in teaching and testing.
- c. One factor that may affect consistent teacher training is the cost to the government. At present, it is expensive to pay the salaries of those on study leave as well as the course fees. Especially with the financial impact on education by COVID, finances are being channeled in other priority areas.
- d. Supply can be increased greatly if a residential component of training can be creatively combined with a distance/online or virtual component. A proposal such as this means that more teachers can be in the field while completing courses. Teacher quality can be enhanced if there is effective teacher support, regular professional development, and mentoring. Linked to this, teacher retention can be bolstered by the efficient appointment of teachers into different positions particularly those working over an adequate number of years.
- e. Today, the governing bodies recognize the importance of providing a pathway for teachers to progress when deliberating on teacher pay scales and terms of conditions. Meaningful group's Insurance, salary negotiations mortgage financing and, the need for additional benefits represent the personal priorities among teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Innovation in Teacher Training:** flexible modes of teacher education delivery are required, especially during the pandemic. For example, the residential component of training can be creatively combined with a distance/online or virtual component. When teachers are comfortable with the new modes of teaching, this can aid in the reduction of knowledge and achievement gaps among students. Teacher quality can be enhanced if there is effective teacher support, regular professional development, and mentoring with more novel/practical principles and models such as crisis leadership, transformational teaching strategies, virtual learning trends, and sustainability education frameworks.
- 2. Measures for Teacher Supply and Retention:** The challenge of attracting suitably qualified teachers must be strategically addressed. This will require large-scale research that includes in-service, pre-service teachers as well as the public at large. Once again, the teacher-related data can be mined in a single collection/central data point and can potentially include factors (within the Dominican context) related to (a) teachers' perceptions of the profession; (b) common teacher attributes; (c) experiences and concerns of individuals in the teaching profession; (d) the factors that attract persons (especially males) to the profession; (e) the factors that deter individuals from the profession. The empirical information can be used to generate a strategic framework/model mainly for recruitment addressing key areas of concern that dissuade persons from pursuing teaching as a career path.
- 3. Negotiating Benefits:** it is crucial to revisit the requirements for career progression with shorter timelines for appointment to senior positions (i.e., 6 years instead of 10 years to become a senior teacher). It is also important to revisit the current compensation and benefits package to further incentivize individuals to consider pursuing the profession. As a starting point, a thorough comparative analysis (applying models like S.W.O.T) can be carried out to explore the different remuneration packages offered to teachers in the Caribbean region and worldwide. This can be used to inform future policies/strategies. Even though it may be challenging for the Government to facilitate any salary increases at this point, it will be worthwhile to research innovative strategies that can be used to improve the compensation and benefits offered to teachers (for example, providing innovative benefits such as increased internet connection, additional storage devices for data, etc.) associated with the new way of schooling, i.e. the blended mode of teaching during a pandemic.

CURRICULUM INNOVATION AND PEDAGOGIES

CHALLENGES

The most prioritized area for reform in Dominica is concerns about student achievement, specifically addressing male underachievement. However, a general evaluation of the

student underachievement revealed a persistent challenge with large percentages of students completing primary education without achieving the desired competencies in reading and mathematics. Such low learning achievements were indicative of several issues in the quality of education across the nation. These include a lack of clear learning standards to specify learning outcomes to guide teaching and classroom assessment; teachers insufficiently trained to provide effective instruction as well as few professional development opportunities to improve their skills, and school leaders with limited capacity to support teaching and ensure that teachers perform at desired levels (World Bank, 2020, p.1). These issues were worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic because of underlying issues of equitable access and assessment on the virtual platform. Hence, the main challenge in education at present is delivering quality education amidst the COVID pandemic.

IMPLICATIONS

- a. In the past, the Dominican governing education body addressed the achievement gap issues by producing and implementing a set of common learning standards among the core primary subjects; created a standard teacher training program; created a certification program for school leaders, and prepared new systems for monitoring performance (World Bank, 2020).
- b. Fast forward to 2020–2021, these issues require more attention due to the pandemic. Inevitably, the Coronavirus crisis in the OECS region will have a socioeconomic impact on students, affect instruction time, modes of student assessment, as well as their psychosocial health. One advantage of this situation is the fact that crisis often drives innovations in education (Clark, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic advanced plans/policies that may have not been in the implementation phase but were now practically urgent. To bridge knowledge gaps and learning opportunities in the region since the pandemic, the Eastern Caribbean States, inclusive of Dominica, took several steps to reach all students.
- c. As a response, the EDMU of the OECS Commission in collaboration with the Member States has developed the OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 which provided a US\$3 million grant for Dominica and other countries in the region. Added to this, the GPE supported the Organization of Eastern Caribbean to work towards bridging the digital divide by ensuring that all children can learn online during the closure of schools (EDMU-OECS, 2020).
- d. As it relates to testing, CXC introduced an E-Testing program in 2017/2018. This program was improved/fortified and may be in high demand as a response to the continuation of scheduled assessments during school closures. As a result, the new 2020–2025 strategic plan that is based on the policy for digital e-testing transformation was pushed forward (CARICOM Today, 2021). Advantages of the online assessments include (a) faster exam preparation relative to having prepared physical documents for shipping and additional mobilization logistics; (b) assessments can be implemented in many forms/modes (for example, orally

and captured using videos, etc.). Limitations stem from the fact that the success of these initiatives relies on equitable distribution and access to technology and the standard modes of testing may not cater fully to students with various forms of learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. Strengthening Existing Policies/Strategies:** through the partnerships among civil society and the public and private sectors, several guidelines are outlined to strengthen instructional delivery and assessment in the virtual environment:
 - Use existing online distance learning platforms
 - Develop new online teaching platforms (virtual classrooms)
 - Partner with private educational platforms
 - Collaborate internationally to mutualize existing online educational resources
 - Use all electronic means as appropriate
 - Provide teachers with digital learning opportunities
 - Balance digital with screen-free activities
 - Use the variations within and across countries to learn (share resources)
 - Keep a pulse on students' emotional health (OECS-Policy Responses to COVID-19, 2020).
- 2. Transforming testing digitally:** There is a general assumption that the management of assessments can be problematic on the online platform. To guard against this, consistent and effective communication among the stakeholders and testing agencies is required. Primarily, consultations among stakeholders are encouraged for example among CXC, ministry of education, management, principals, teachers, parents, and students. Secondly, consultation should include acquisition and piloting of the new hardware/software systems, for example, practicing simulations, etc. Special focus will need to be concentrated on aligning relevant targets/objectives with appropriate instructional and assessment methods. Also, to alleviate student anxieties and student underachievement, teachers who are already in the system will require retraining in online learning and assessment. They will then be able to guide students in the use of the software programs and how to manage the virtual learning space. Candidates need to practice and demonstrate the capacity to use any software or item type etc. before they are expected to take any electronic/online assessment.
- 3. Special protocols:** to guard against certain limiting factors, innovative strategies involving a blended mode of assessing may be a practical solution as well. The mode will depend on the nature of the content and skillsets evaluated. Special protocols drafted will need to be clear and communicated in an effective manner.

Test makers will need to be versed in various types of assessments, associated with specific purpose, methods, and within suitable contexts. As for the formative assessments during the normal lessons, a database/framework containing various types of assessments and their purpose of use can be created and made readily available/accessible for teachers.

- 4. Developing Capacity:** as it relates to the curriculum, pedagogies, and assessments, there are numerous plans to gather information about the effects of COVID-19. Research findings can be used to inform policies for teacher training, workshops for principals in the field of remote work; the deployment of online classes, and recruitment and training of task forces (comprised of counselors) to support parents and students.
- 5. Reducing Resistance to Change:** One major issue among teachers is the idea of reform or innovative changes that occur within the curriculum itself and/or new modes of testing required within the school system. For example, there are curriculum changes that may require additional teaching resources and the abilities to use them or new programs that require continuing professional development (CPD) among the teachers. Issues such as general resistance to change, teacher burnout and, lack of available resources to implement the innovation are all obstacles to various new programs or new response strategies.
- 6. Other Areas of Opportunity:** There is continued demand for teachers in more complex teaching disciplines such as vocational education and training expertise, modern STEM, and Information technology skills, as well as the growing demand for environmental education for sustainability knowledge and skills. There is a need for a creative/innovative curricular reform that considers disciplines that promote lifelong learning, adaptive critical thinking/problem solving, and innovative creative thinking for current and future issues associated with disease control or pandemics, various forms of pollution, sustainability, and technological advancements.

Table 6.1: Existing and Required Innovations in Dominica's Education System

Existing Innovations	Required Innovations
Early Childhood Education	
	Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Development
	Positive Parenting
	Parental support
<i>Child-Friendly Schools</i>	Psychological, Emotional, and Social Development
OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2026	Digital Citizenship
	Nutrition
	STEM foundations
	Environmental Sustainability Education foundations
Primary Education	
<i>Child-Friendly Schools</i>	
School Feeding Program	Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Development
<i>The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration</i>	Positive Parenting
<i>The CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030</i>	Psychological, Emotional, and Social Development
<i>OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2026</i>	Digital Citizenship
<i>OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 (2021) [Laptops and tablet drives]</i>	STEM principles
	Environmental Sustainability Education/Action for Climate Resilience
Secondary Education	
<i>The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration</i>	
<i>The CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030</i>	Technology
<i>OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2026</i>	Digital Citizenship
National Resilience Development Strategy (2020)	Experiential learning opportunities
<i>OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 (2021) [Laptops and tablet drives]</i>	STEM development
	Environmental Sustainability Education / Action for Climate Resilience
	Entrepreneurial hub
Special Education	

Local Inclusion Programs (in the past)

The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration–CARICOM countries

Child-Friendly Schools

OECS Education Sector Response Strategy to COVID-19 (2021)

Technology

Inclusion in mainstream education

Literacy

Training [Human resources]

Capacity building

Updated Special Education program

Tertiary Education/ Technical and Vocational Education

Technical and Vocational Education

The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration

The CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030

OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012–2026

National Resilience Development Strategy (2020)

Training for Employment Program

Entrepreneurial hub

STEM 'In Action'

Environmental Sustainability

Education/Solutions and Civil Actions

Teacher training: creative/innovative curricular reform that promotes lifelong learning, adaptive critical thinking/problem solving, and innovative creative thinking for current and future issues associated with disease control or pandemics, various forms of pollution, sustainability, and technological advancements

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

CHALLENGES

Not everyone has the luxury of easy access to education; some individuals are at risk of not benefitting from quality education. These include socio-economically disadvantaged groups, students with learning disabilities, and underachieving males. Even though the Government continues to implement innovative strategies to reach those in the most disadvantaged groups, much more can be done. It is important to invest in initiatives that support these groups. For example, inclusive education has many recurrent limitations, such as a lack of human resources, limited access to materials and equipment, and a continued silent culture of exclusion among schools (Personal Communication, 2021).

IMPLICATION

Countries that fail to invest in policies for the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups risk increase in various social-economic problems such as high crime rate, high teenage pregnancy rate, high unemployment rate, low literacy rate, large underachievement gaps, and myriad other social ills.


RECOMMENDATION



1. This area requires efficient data collection, policy development, and the formulation of efficient strategies all suitable for:
 - b. teacher training (in specific learning difficulties) and consistent support in terms of proper equipment and resources
 - c. special attention to male development
 - d. effective means of transporting instructional materials throughout the length and breadth of the country, particularly in the more remote regions of the island, to reduce gaps formed between students who have digital/internet access versus those who are unable to afford such resources.

S.W.O.T ANALYSIS

The S.W.O.T. analysis (Table 6.2) outlines a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats explored within the scope of this project.

Table 6.2: S.W.O.T Analysis Based on Select Indicators of the Education System in Dominica

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government’s commitment to improving education through strategic initiatives/innovations • High literacy rate • Universal access to secondary education • Government support of privately-owned early childhood centers • Membership of the OECS • Innovations in TVET • Financial support for students from indigent homes • Availability of educational scholarships • Strong Teachers’ Union • Funding from international and regional organizations • Universal access to secondary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of innovation in various subsectors in education • Inadequate number of trained teachers • No clear special education (inclusion) policy • Inadequate infrastructural support systems for students with special education needs • Unequal access to pre-primary education • Student readiness for primary education • Skills-deficit in the use of technology among teachers • Unequal access to technology for students • Monitoring and evaluation of policy • Centralization of decision-making • Compensation and benefits package for teachers • Attracting highly qualified teachers • Student performance in STEM subjects • Poor educational research culture (data gathering and management) • Shortage of male teachers at the primary and secondary levels

Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased educational funding from international and regional organizations • Development of a Special Education Teacher Training Program • Pedagogical & assessment training in the infusion of technology • Use of technology to strengthen the level of parental involvement in children’s education • Strengthening of the public-private sector partnership in early childhood education • Improvement in ICT infrastructure throughout the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to coronavirus vaccines to promote the normal process of schooling • Continuation of the coronavirus pandemic • Equitable access (learning materials/devices/information) • Poor ICT infrastructure • Growing number of unemployed individuals • Economic downturn • Increase psychosocial issues among children • Lack of parental involvement due to exhaustion/frustration

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