GPE KIX LAC HUB

KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION EXCHANGE

COUNTRY REVIEW

Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Saint Lucia

SUMMA

Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean

OECS
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

IDRC · CRDI

Canada

Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Saint Lucia

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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. Dixton 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.

KIX LAC Team

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAMDU	Curriculum and Materials Development Unit
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CDGC	Child Development Care Centre
CPU	Corporate Planning Unit
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
DOEIGR	Department of Education Innovation and Gender Relations
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EDMU	Education Development Management Unit
OESS	Education Sector Strategy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GINET	Government of St. Lucia Integrated Wireless Network
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HDI	Human Development Index
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JBTE	Joint Board of Teacher Education
KIX	Knowledge & Innovation Exchange
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MoE	Ministry of Education

OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
SALCC	Sir Arthur Lewis Community College
SBA	School Based Assessment
SEU	Special Education Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLP	St Lucia Labour Party
SLTU	St Lucia Teachers' Union
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	University of the West Indies
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UWI	University of the West Indies
UW	World Health Organization
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 share information, innovation and best practices, and includes a funding mechanism that provides grants at the global and regional levels to invest in knowedge generation and innovation in eligible countries. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is the grant agent for KIX. In the Eastern Caribbean SUMMA & the OECS 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 specific project.

This national overview of the education system was commissioned for four countries in the Eastern Caribbean: Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. It presents an overview of some key aspects of the education system in an effort to highlight current needs and challenges within the system, and to provide evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen education provisions, and by extension the educational experience for every learner.

This country review is necessary for the setting of a relevant agenda that will guide discussions between each country and KIX between April 2021 and December 2023 to support education development that is aligned with their most relevant educational needs.

The report presents a general overview of the education system in St. Lucia. Specifically, it examines the national education context, provides a brief overview of the current impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the education system, and an overview of education policy frameworks, and education programmes and priority areas for education reform in St. Lucia. The report also presents an overview of teachers and teaching conditions and a description of circumstances facing vulnerable and at-risk students.

This report was developed from data which were collected and analysed in two concurrent phases, and from two key sources – documentary analysis, and field research via interviews and open-ended questionnaires distributed to several key personnel and national education stakeholders in St. Lucia. The desk review and analysis of key education documents from each country was the agreed methodology for the study.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

St Lucia is known as the 'Helen of the West' after Helen of Troy because of its natural beauty and of course the battles that were fought for its ownership. The official language of St. Lucia is English, but it coexists alongside a French Creole known as Kwéyòl. St. Lucia is therefore considered to be a bilingual country. It is this language situation which is the basis for the development of the *St Lucia Language Policy* which speaks to the inclusion of the national language Kwéyòl in instruction, as a means of developing early bilingualism and biliteracy in children.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Students in St. Lucia can access Early Childhood Centres/ Preschools when they turn 3 years of age until they are 5 years. All of the island's 94 preschools are private institutions. Free compulsory or formal education as stated in the Education Act is from 5- 15 years, for a total of 10 years. All students are ensured a place at a secondary school because of universal secondary education (USE).

According to data for 2017/2018, there are 94 private preschool centres, 74 public primary schools, 22 public secondary schools, 5 public special needs centres, 1 post-secondary and 1 public tertiary institution in St. Lucia. The post-secondary institutions offer access the CSEC programmes alongside selected tertiary courses or programmes. The tertiary institution offers a wide range of higher education programmes. Students at all education levels are able to access public assistance programmes which are geared at improving access to education.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In St. Lucia the Minister of Education heads the education system. He or she is assisted by the Permanent Secretary and Chief Education Officer (CEO). The CEO is responsible for the general Administration of the Education Act while The Permanent Secretary works alongside with the Minister who is responsible for policy directions.

For each of the key areas of the education system which were reviewed, a number of strengths and weaknesses and or knowledge gaps were noted. For instance, the education system is characterized by a number of initiatives which point to efforts at ensuring equity and inclusion, such as the availability of student support programmes for needy and vulnerable students, the GINET network from which students with no home internet access can access the internet, the E-books programme geared at providing students with electronic devices and the current efforts to complete the implementation plan to accompany the St. Lucia Language Policy. The education system can also be credited for providing varied options for in-service training to teachers and of course the large percentage of trained teachers at the primary

and secondary levels. St. Lucia's membership in key regional and sub-regional organizations has also guided the development of education policy.

The noted weaknesses and or gaps included issues of equity related to access to electronic devices and the internet, the need to streamline the procedures for students to access available support services and issues of student performance according to gender. Further, issues of teacher competence to deliver and assess online instruction, incentives to join the service, their health and safety, the need for more research to underpin the implementation and management of policy were noted.

In order to deal with the highlighted issues, the following recommendations were made:

•   As a matter of urgency, the revision and ratification of all policies to ensure inclusion and equity that are still in draft form, needs to be completed

•   Continued training of teachers and educational leaders in the integration of ICT in instruction is necessary.

•   The equipping of teachers and students with electronic devices that are suitable for blended and or online instruction should be done urgently

•   There is a need to strengthen the pedagogical capacities of teachers of preschools and Kindergarten levels to ensure that foundational concepts are properly taught to students.

COVID-19 AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The COVID19 outbreak resulted in the initial closure of all schools at all education levels in St Lucia (Preschool, Infant and Primary, Secondary, Tertiary level and Special Needs Institutions). Schools were initially closed for the period March 16th- April 13th, 2020. However, that period of closure was extended. Schools were officially reopened on September 14th, 2020. The guidelines which governed the reopening of public schools in September 2020 were as follows:

-   Pre-schools: Capacity would be determined based on available space, as student seating was to be 3 feet apart. Due to this new restriction some centres had to reduce their student numbers due to space constraints.

-   Primary Schools: 3 feet spacing between desks had to be adhered to. Some schools were able to accommodate all their students while the larger primary schools had to utilize an alternate day programme for the various grade levels.

-   Special Needs Institutions: Special Education centres were able to have all students in school when school officially reopened.

-   Secondary Schools: Similar to the primary schools, the secondary schools with smaller numbers were able to have the entire population return daily, while the larger ones used the alternate day arrangement.

After schools were again closed in October 2020, special permission was given by the Ministry of Education and the Chief Medical Officer for students who had to engage in practical sessions or labs and their teachers, to access their school facilities while adhering to strict protocols. Therefore, students and teachers in key grade levels (Grades 6, Forms 4 and 5) had the option of returning to the classroom as of the week 30th November, 2020. Public preschool, primary, secondary and special needs schools in St Lucia reopened on January 11th, 2021. Subsequent to that reopening date, all students were supposed to have attended school daily. However, again because of community spread of COVID19, all institutions were closed and reverted to online instruction. All educational institutions are expected to reopen on April 19th, 2021.

In terms of teacher engagement during the periods of closure, in cases where students had no access to the internet or electronic devices, primary and secondary school teachers went into their schools to print work sheets and to prepare packages for students. Teachers also conducted classes on various platforms. Students with access to the internet and electronic devices participated in those classes. Connectivity was aided by the GINET – Government of St. Lucia Integrated wireless network. This wireless network would have enabled wifi connectivity in key population areas around the island. Research into the proportion of students accessing education during the closure revealed that uninterrupted engagement in learning activities was reported by over 90 percent of household with children. Students would have also received learning packages from the schools.

From the 4.5 percent of households in which children did not engage in any learning activities, lack of access to virtual learning classrooms, lack of take-home teaching aids, lack of learning materials, and/or lack of knowledge on appropriate responses to school closures were cited as the main contributors to their situation.

KEY CHALLENGES:

- While the Government of Saint Lucia Integrated wireless network (GINET) made connectivity in key population areas possible, internet connectivity remains a major challenge to providing instruction during periods when schools have to be closed.

- Additionally, many students still do not have access to electronic devices and in instances when they do, some devices such as phones cannot handle the demands of accessing and working on e-learning platforms. These issues suggest that there is need for the close monitoring and evaluation of distributed instruction and student engagement and of the impact on student performance during the 2020-2021 academic year.

- Teachers also need additional support in assessing students effectively in online contexts, further training in the use of e-learning platforms, maintaining student interest and in integrating and applying interactive activities during online instruction.

- The lack of funding/ financing of infrastructural needs of educational institutions to meet the standards and requirements of 21st century classrooms is also an issue which needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to deal with the impact of the issues highlighted above, the following suggestions are for consideration:

- An impact assessment of distributed learning during the 2020-2021 academic year to ascertain the extent to which instructional objectives were achieved. This is the foundation for the proper planning and application of interventions for teachers and students where applicable. Such an assessment would also have bearing on the development of policy in the future.

- Continued training and capacity building of teachers and educational leaders in the integration of ICT in instruction is necessary pending needs assessments. Teachers need to understand how to adapt teaching content and methodologies successfully on the online platform.

- Equipping of teachers and students with electronic devices that are suitable for blended and or online instruction would ensure that the learned skills would be applied or practiced. In other words, ensuring access is critical. This can be achieved with support from donor partners in education.

- A centralized outlet or platform for teachers to share their experiences with the new mode of teaching. 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.

- There is also need for continued collaboration between parents and teachers so that parents will be able to provide the necessary assistance to their children at home. This may be achieved through workshop sessions.

POLICY AND PROGRAMS

The education policy-making process in St. Lucia is centralized yet consultative to allow stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to this process.

The main policy priorities in St. Lucia at present are:

- ICT in Education (ICTE)- which provides quality infrastructure, devices, connectivity, adequate Broadband Services, content (programming) and training of teachers to allow them to (i) understand and use the technology, and (ii) apply the technology as an effective pedagogical tool (thereby demonstrating their mastery) in Blended and Distributed teaching/learning approaches.

- TVET- which is centered around developing and aligning TVET with national priorities, labour market needs, employment and other policies; Strengthening the TVET enabling environment inclusive of re- skilling of trainers and the retooling and digital upskilling of entrepreneurs in emerging markets; Enhancing skills training offerings using a competency-based education and training (CBET) approach to TVET to provide labour market-relevant skills to the population; Making CVQ training and certification available to all secondary schools and special schools in order to bring about widened and inclusive participation to TVET learning opportunities (inclusive of blended approaches using Open Educational Resources (OER) and/or appropriate modalities); Instituting a national internship/traineeship/apprenticeship programme to provide such opportunities within industry for trainers and students; Establishing a National TVET Institution and a Workforce Development Centre (EDF 11) to provide cutting edge, locally relevant and globally recognised TVET programmes for attaining greater national productivity, job creation and sustainable development in Saint Lucia.

- ECE – Increasing access and enrolment to quality Early Childhood Education in keeping with standards developed specifically for ECE; Universal Early Childhood Education, Implementing the finalized and approved Early Childhood Services Regulations; Registration and Licensing of all ECE Centres; CVQ training for Early Childhood practitioners, Repurposing facilities within primary schools to facilitate pre-K; Providing financial assistance to underprivileged families (through Ministry of Equity) to facilitate payment of Early Childhood Education Services.

- Numeracy – Improving student CSEC performance in Mathematics also through the integration of ICT in Math instruction. Mathematics has consistently recorded the lowest pass rate, which is a hindrance for students to enter tertiary education since a mandatory pass is required for most courses; Support for the numeracy hours project to facilitate the expansion into other schools.

The education system in St. Lucia is currently guided by the *Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020,* as planning continues on the new education sector plan. Education sector plans at the national level have strong linkages to the OECS Education Education Sector Strategy 2012-2021. Supplementing this plan is the *Medium-Term Development Strategy: 2020-2023: Nou Tout Ansanm*. Other National Level Policies in Education include the following:

- The Early Childhood Policy

- ICT in Education Policy and Strategy for Saint Lucia 2019-2022

- The Training and Development Policy for The Saint Lucia Public Service

- The St. Lucia Social Protection Policy: A National Roadmap to Transformative Social Protection

One of the most important current educational reforms and programs in St. Lucia is the e-Books Programme which will allow for the distribution of an estimated 13,

000+ e-book devices and licences to students and teachers across Saint Lucia. This programme started in Feb 2020 and will roll out over the period of 3 years.

CHALLENGES:

Some of the challenges and recommended areas for development in regard to education policy in St Lucia include:

- The need for increased stakeholder engagement: The final say on educational policy lies within the purview of the Cabinet and Parliament and the Chief Education Officer who is responsible for developing administrative principles and procedures for implementing general policies and administering the school system (Education Act, Section 7, 2b, p. 562). This reinforces that the process is in fact centralized.

- The need for Impact Assessment and Evaluation research and/or data) which would support more effective education planning in Saint Lucia: one of the main impediments to the development of policy is inadequate research or impact assessments to inform, support or guide policy development and implementation.

- Convincing teachers to share their research with the Ministry of Education upon completion of studies: teachers do not always submit final copies of their research projects to the Ministry of Education. This is perhaps one of the reasons for a dearth of research.

- Issues of funding: funding for much needed research on impact assessments is not always available.

- The need for and the maintenance of a centralized EMIS to facilitate data entry at educational institutions, and retrieval of this data at the Education District and Ministry level: Access to this centralized database would allow for timely access to data required for policy decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to deal with those issues related to research and policy development, the Government of St. Lucia should:

- Provision/sourcing of funding to facilitate the needed impact assessment studies which would provide information on various educational issues which the country faces through the generation of empirical data.

- It is also necessary to seek funding from regional and international agencies to build a research repository which can continue to inform the development of policy decisions. The 2018 Research Agenda provides a useful guide.

- The creation of a centralised EMIS for the collection storage and retrieval of education administrative data.

TEACHERS AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

There were 357 preschool teachers serving in the island's 94 private preschools in 2017/18. There were also 1004 teachers serving in the 74 public primary schools, and 1006 teachers in the island's 22 public secondary schools. According to the 2018 data, a total of 83% of teachers at the primary and secondary levels in St. Lucia are certified as trained (90% Primary and 77% Secondary). Females account for 68 percent of the teachers at Primary level, and 71 percent at the secondary school level.

Preservice training accounts for 80 percent of the teacher training structure in St. Lucia. In service training is also offered to teachers at the Associate Degree, Bachelors and Diploma (Dip. Ed) levels. These programmes are delivered in collaboration with the UWI, Cave Hill Campus. Teachers receive training in *Early Childhood Education; Primary Education; Secondary Education* (with specialisation in the teaching of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, History, Geography, Business, Modern Languages); and *Technical and Vocational Education* (Industrial Arts and Home Economics)**.** As of the 2020/2021 Academic Year, untrained teachers can also access the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. This program is a four-year programme.

Promotions and higher benefits for teachers in St. Lucia are dependent on providing evidence of improved qualifications from further studies and/or professional development sessions completed (both short- and long-term) that will support the development of current competencies. The career options for teachers are contingent upon having the requisite qualifications: Qualified/ trained teacher (which requires an ADE Primary or Secondary Education Certificate or having completed the Bachelor of Education Degree), Graduate Teacher (which requires completion of a Bachelor's or Master's Degree), Vice Principal (which requires completion of a Bachelors or Masters Degree, Principal (which requires completion of a Master's Degree), District Education Officer (which requires completion of a Master's Degree) , or School Counsellor position (which requires completion of a Masters' Degree). Career options also include teachers becoming education specialists as well as specialists in respective subject areas, and teacher educators.

CHALLENGES:

The national teacher's union identified the following as major issues affecting teachers:

- Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions- most recently these would have had to do with issues of air quality and the presence of mould at various educational institutions, and safety issues precipitated by the COVID19 pandemic.

- Insufficient teacher readiness to effectively engage in Distributed Learning

- Limited Professional Development opportunities

- A lack of social engagement opportunities with the Ministry of Education and other partners, in the education reform process

- Lack of participation of teachers in dialogue on a range of professional issues – curricula, pedagogy, student assessment and organization of education within schools; and

- lack of psychosocial and pedagogical support by the employer, particularly given the impact of and disruptions in the business of teaching and learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have in many situations felt helpless and unprepared to assist students.

Other challenges identified included:

- The need for training of teachers in outcomes-based assessment and using assessments to adjust the curriculum.

- The need for strengthening teachers' pedagogical skills through increased opportunities for professional development. Especially in areas such as the employment of differentiated instructional practices and catering to multiple intelligences in the classroom.

- The need for better equipping teachers to address the gender learning gaps between boys and girls across the education system. This includes deepening understanding into the neurobiological and learning differences between boys and girls to ensure their application of this knowledge in pedagogical strategies that foster improved achievement for both boys and girls

- The need for increased training for teachers in managing transitions at critical levels, Kindergarten, Grade 3 and Form 1

- The need to address the dearth of male teachers in the education system

- Strengthening preparedness for the rigours of online instruction

- The need for improving incentives to attract teachers into the teaching service

- The need for continued training in the effective use of ICT for both teachers and other educational leaders

- The need for continued formal induction sessions for new teachers

- The need for strengthening engagement opportunities with the Ministry of Education and other partners, in the education reform process.

- The need for increased participation of teachers in dialogue on a range of professional issues – curricula, pedagogy, student assessment and organization of education within schools.

- Inadequate psychosocial and pedagogical support by the Ministry of Education and by extension the Government of St. Lucia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some general recommendations which are based on the data collected for this report. Attention to these recommendations would also contribute to meeting the goals of the Education Sector plan and of the Medium-Term Strategy for education and benefit teachers and educational leaders:

- Create incentives for teachers particularly males to join the teaching profession and to train to teach critical areas of specialization should be considered. These incentives can include mentoring and induction programmes, opportunities for autonomy along with strong administrative support, curricula with clear guidelines (David, 2018)

- Continued engagement of the St. Lucia Teacher's Union on working conditions and health and safety matters and training/ These engagement is critical to minimize instances of interruptions in the teaching and learning process.

- The revision and ratification of all policies related to strengthening inclusion and equity (which are still in draft form), need to be completed. These are necessary to ensure compliance with the recommendations of organizations such as UNICEF.

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

While there are continued issues of domestic violence, birth registrations and child labour (less than 2%) (UNICEF, 2017), the Constitution of St. Lucia guarantees a comprehensive set of fundamental rights and freedoms to which every individual is entitled. The education system generally strives to provide equal opportunity for both boys and girls and eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. Special Education Needs Learners and At-Risk learners, however, remain a priority when it comes to the development of educational policy, planning and development in St. Lucia. Key priorities include:

- Closing the performance gap between boys and girls; most of the repeaters and students who drop out of school tend to be boys across primary and secondary schools

- Enhanced performance of all learners, particularly those at-risk; and

- Equality and equity in education irrespective of socio-economic, religious, ethnic, gender, etc. background of children.

- One of the main challenges faced by special needs students is that some of them in mainstream schools have significant achievement deficit compared to their peers, but do not present for comprehensive assessments. These students subsequently tend to advance through school because of automatic promotion practices with little appropriate intervention support.

- Lack of policy frameworks and legislation to ensure the full protection of children under the law

- There is a need for the formal implementation of the EDC Policy so as to address important issues related to the instruction and assessment of students at that level.

- Some special needs students in the mainstream education system do not benefit from testing and other interventions because they are not presented for assessment because of parental delinquency and or their financial standing.

- Disparity in academic performance at both the primary and secondary school levels according to gender (male repetition and dropout rates are higher) needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The strengthening of the pedagogical capacities of teachers of preschools and Kindergarten levels to ensure that foundational concepts are properly taught to students is necessary. This can be done by expanding programming at Division of Teacher Education and Educational Leadership of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College to provide opportunities for training in ECD pedagogical practices at the Bachelor's Degree Level.

- The formal implementation of the ECD Policy so as to address important issues related to the instruction and assessment of students at that level.

- Make more government resources available to allow for the timely testing of testing and diagnosis of Special Education students so that they do not get lost in the school system.

- Establish and implement necessary policy frameworks needed to ensure the protection of all children in the school system; this is needed as a matter of priority.

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered to be a fundamental pillar in Caribbean development. For many individuals who reside in the region, it is the key to social advancement. For many small island governments such as those in the Caribbean, investing in human capital through relevant quality education and training is deemed to be critical to sustainable economic growth and development. This commitment to education in St. Lucia is clearly evident in the current *Medium-Term Development Strategy: 2020-2023: Nou Tout Ansanm,* the *Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020* and the *Research Agenda: Suggested Themes 2016-2018* which is the most recent research agenda.

One of the seven developmental pillars of the *Medium-Term Developmental Strategy*, which has bearing on the education sector is "enhancing the labour force through education, training and workforce development" (Government of St. Lucia, 2020, p.10) This developmental pillar is specifically targeted at realizing Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 9 and 17. 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.

This report presents an overview of some key aspects of the education system in St. Lucia in an effort to highlight current needs and challenges within the system, and to provide evidence-based recommendations that can strengthen education provisions, and by extension the educational experience for every learner. Specifically, 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 St. Lucia while classes were suspended, and the extent of current planning to compensate for learning loss in the immediate post COVID -19 period.

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

Chapter Four presents a description of the characteristics of the teaching profession of the country and its main challenges.

Chapter Five presents insight into the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and concerns related to gender gaps and trends in education, as well as gaps which may exist in access, academic attainment and school completion across the country.

Finally, **Chapter Six** presents a summary of the conclusions, recommendations and implications for research based on an analysis of the overall aspects of the education system as presented in this report.

The need, relevance, and timeliness of this project for the region is 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 and inclusion, and technological infusion/integration into teaching and learning have especially taken centre 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, innovation and best practices, and 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.

METHODOLOGY

This report was developed based on data collected and analysed in two concurrent phases, and from two key sources – documentary analysis, and field research via interviews and open-ended questionnaires distributed to several key personnel and national education stakeholders in St. Lucia. The desk review and analysis of key education documents from each country was the agreed methodology for the study.

In Phase 1 of the research, secondary data relevant to the identified indicators were sourced through an initial desk review, and subsequent engagement with an identified focal point person in each country who worked with the research team to identify and source specific documents as 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 the Ministry of Education in filling in the gaps where

possible. In some cases where gaps still exist, information was unavailable from the ministry of Education.

Phase 2 involved the collection of field data from a number of key sources inclusive of education administrators/policy makers; the teachers' union, the teacher training department, primary data and will include interviews of key stakeholders in education in each country.

The following is a summary of the key informants utilized in the field research aspect for the report.

Table 1: Key Informants for Field Research

Key Respondents/ Interviewees	Area of Responsibility
Dr Fiona Mayer	Chief Education Officer, St. Lucia
Ms Schenelle Leonce	Planning Officer, MOE, St. Lucia
Mr. Bernez Khodra	School Safety Officer, MOE, St. Lucia
Mr. Dale St. Juste	Education Officer: Special Education, MOE, St. Lucia
Dr Anthony Felicien	Dean: Division of Teacher Education and Educational Leadership, SALCC
Ms Vern Charles	Deputy President, St Lucia Teachers' Union
Dr. Verna Knight	SOE, UWI Lecturer and research representative documenting the implementation of the OECS Education Sector Strategy

Each interviewee/respondent in the small field research element of the data collection for this report, was purposively selected based on their experience and level of knowledge of the education system in the relevant country, and ability to fill the gaps as it related to information needed for specific sections of the report. It was agreed that the researchers would provide research participants with an open questionnaire and follow-up with a zoom or telephone interview immediately after. Because of conflicting demands facing each 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 a face-to-face interview. Where necessary, follow-up emails and WhatsApp messages were utilized to obtain further details, and clarifications based on initial data submissions.

The role of a focal point person was crucial to the communications with the Ministry of Education and obtaining contact details for key persons. The consultant worked with the identified focal point personnel for St. Lucia to obtain the secondary data (relevant reports, legislative documents, and other available data), as well as to identify key country level stakeholders to be interviewed as part of the field research process. Table 2 proves a summary of the methodology employed for data collection.

Table 2: Summary of Methodology Relative to Report objectives

Objectives	Methodological Approach
To outline the main features of the educational systems in the countries and describe their main social, economic and demographic indicators, as well as political characteristics and historical events that are relevant to understanding the education systems as they are today;	**Desk Review and Document Analysis** • Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation - e.g. Education Policy papers, legislative documents etc.);
To explore the countries main educational challenges 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 organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation - e.g. policy papers etc. from the various Ministries of Education) • Open ended Questionnaires and One-on-one (virtual) interviews • Open ended Questionnaires and Interviews with key educational stakeholders
To understand how institutions and the interactions among key actors contribute to shape 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 organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation - e.g. policy papers etc. from the various Ministries of Education) • One-on-one (virtual) Interviews • Interviews with key educational stakeholders

To analyze the knowledge mobilization and use of educational evidence in the countries, through a bibliometric analysis that helps illuminate which are the documents/ pieces of research that are taken into consideration in policy-making.	**Desk Review and Document Analysis** • Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation - e.g. policy papers etc. from the various Ministries of Education) • Open ended Questionnaires and One-on-one (virtual) interviews • Open ended Questionnaires and Interviews with key educational stakeholders
Development of Matrix	**Desk Review and Document Analysis** • Review and analysis of secondary data from reputable educational organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNESCO and local sources of educational documentation and data - e.g. policy papers etc. from the various Ministries of Education)

CHAPTER 1:
OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

St Lucia is located in the Caribbean at 14N and 61W, between Martinique and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Its area is 238 square miles. The island is divided into the following districts: Gros Islet, Castries, Anse-le Raye, Canaries, Soufriere, Choiseul, Laborie, Vieux- Fort, Micoud and Dennery. The capital city is Castries, and the towns are Vieux-Fort and Soufriere. The island is volcanic and as such, has a mountainous interior. Consequently, all the districts are located along the island's coastline. The island is known as the 'Helen of the West' after Helen of Troy because of its natural beauty and the many battles that were fought for its ownership.

1. 1 POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTEXT

While St. Lucia gained independence from Britain on February 22nd, 1979, after being granted self-governance in 1967, its tumultuous political history must be highlighted. In fact, the island changed hands between Britain and France fourteen (14) times (ruled by each power seven (7} times) from 1605 until it was finally ceded to the British in 1814 via the Treaty of Paris. The official language of St. Lucia is English, but it coexists alongside a French Creole known as Kwéyòl. St. Lucia is therefore considered to be a bilingual country. It is this language situation which is the basis for the development of the *St Lucia Language Policy* which speaks to the inclusion of the national language Kwéyòl in instruction, as a means of developing early bilingualism and biliteracy in children. From an equity vantage point, this is an important achievement.

Since gaining its independence from Britain, the affairs of St Lucia are managed within a framework of a parliamentary democratic constitutional monarchy, of which Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of State. Her Majesty is represented locally by the Governor General who is appointed by Her Majesty and who, on the advice of the Prime Minister and the other members of the Cabinet of Ministers, executes his or her duties which are mainly ceremonial. The *Constitution of St Lucia* (2016) however, does allow the Governor General (GG) discretionary residual powers. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet enjoy the actual power (executive branch).

The ruling government is selected on the basis of the application of the first-past-the post system. Under this system, a parliamentary seat is awarded to the candidate who receives the majority of the votes after each voter casts one vote for the candidate of his or her choice.

Following General Elections, the Prime Minister is the individual who leads the party which wins the majority of votes and is appointed by the Governor General. The bicameral Parliament comprises Her Majesty (represented by the GG), a Senate (11 Senators) and

a House of Assembly (17 representatives, one for each parliamentary constituency), forming the legislative branch of the government. The wining government serves for a 5-year term.

The main political parties are the United Workers Party and the St. Lucia Labour Party. The island is currently ruled by the United Workers Party (UWP) since their 11:6 majority win on 6th June 2016. General elections are constitutionally due by October 2021. The current and 7th Prime Minister of St. Lucia is the Hon Allen M. Chastanet. The cabinet ministers including the Minister of Education may be selected from among members of the ruling party who have won their parliamentary seats or from the pool of government senators.

Education is indeed a priority of the Government of St. Lucia as it is one of seven development pillars (also referred to as Key Results Areas) of the Government of Saint Lucia's *Medium Term Development Strategy 2020-2023*. For instance, in the medium-term, emphasis will be placed on the promotion of Post-Secondary TVET and the Provision of Post-Secondary and Tertiary Programmes. With regard to the latter, the focus will be on improving Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) course offerings, diversifying the modes of delivery of SALCC programmes and an SALCC Student Learning Support Unit (Government of St. Lucia, 2020, p.45)

1. 2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

St Lucia is member of both international and regional organizations. This includes regional organizations such as the OECS and CARICOM. CARICOM is grounded in encouraging four pillars of integration which are economic integration; foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security (CARICOM Caribbean Community, n.d) while St. Lucia's membership in the intergovernmental OECS according to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, allows access to "a single financial and economic space where goods, people and capital move freely," within the Eastern Caribbean (OECS, n.d). St. Lucia is also a member of international organizations such as the United Nations and UNICEF which also help shape the direction of local education policies particularly those on equity and inclusion.

The main source of income for the citizens of St. Lucia comes from the Tourism Industry which accounts for 65% of the GDP (Moody's Analytics, n.d), a move from a heavy reliance on the agricultural industry. Table 3 summarizes the income/composition of resources indicators for St. Lucia in 2017. The gross national income per capita stands at 14, 616 (constant 2017 PPP$) while the income index and GDP total are recorded at 0.753 and 2.8 (2017 PPP$ billions) respectively. According to the UNDP (2020) the poverty rate in St. Lucia stands at 20.0%.

Table 3: Income /Composition of Resources Indicators

Criteria	Figure
Gross national income (GNI) per capita (constant 2017 PPP$)	14, 616
Estimated gross national income per capita female (2017 PPP$)	11, 476
Estimated gross national income per capita male (2017 PPP$)	17, 851
GDP per capita (2017 PPP$)	15, 449
Gross domestic product (GDP), total (2017 PPP$ billions)	2.8
Income Index	0.753
Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers (%)	50.0

Source United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports 2020 – Human Development Indicators St Lucia http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LCA

Life expectancy in St Lucia is 76.2 (years) while the life expectancy index is 0.865 and current health expenditure is 4.5% of the GDP (United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports 2020 –Human Development Indicators St Lucia). The infant mortality rate (per 1 000 live births) in St. Lucia was reported as 20 per 1000 live births (based on 2019 estimates and is considered relatively higher the average level in other OECS member states, and the regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean which is 14 per 1000 live births) (World Bank, 2020).

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS

In terms of its composition, the population of St. Lucia is said to be predominantly of African descent (85.3%), and mixed race (10.8%) (PAHO, 2017). At the last census conducted in 2010, the population was 165, 591. Mid-year 2014, the population of St. Lucia was estimated to be 167, 769 and by 2030 is expected to be at high projection – 185, 657, medium projection – 172, 241 and low projection 159,860. According to the *Saint Lucia Population Estimates and Projections Report 2019*, these projections are based on "assumptions of moderate and high fertility occurring simultaneously with moderate to high increases in life expectancy and small to moderate levels of migration" (Government of St. Lucia, 2019, p. 9). The 2020 census period was supposed to have been between May and September 2020 but had to be postponed against the backdrop of the COVID-19 outbreak (The Central Statistical Office of St. Lucia, 2020). Data from the World Bank cites the population as 182, 790 in 2019 (World Bank, n.d.).

The *Saint Lucia Population Estimate and Projections Report* (2019), also states that at mid-year 2014, the number of people under age 15 years numbered approximately 42,000 or 25% of the total population. This represents a decline in numbers of nearly 6,000 persons when compared with the 2001 population. In 2014, the youth population ages 15-29 years totalling about 43,000 persons accounted for one quarter of the population and showed a very small increase over 2001, of 259. The prime working age population of ages 30-64 years increased by 27.6% from 53,797 in 2001 to 68,650 by 2014

and accounted for about 41% of the total population up from 34.3%. The large growth in this age group is primarily attributable to the ageing of the survivors of the high fertility periods of the past thirty to forty years (p.14). In fact, a reduction in younger age groups and an ageing population were then highlighted. Figure 1 highlights population differences between 2001 and mid-year 2014. The decline in the young population may account for the fact that school populations at both the primary and secondary school levels have dwindled. That information is contained in Figure

Figure 1: Differences in the Population of St. Lucia between 2001 and Mid-Year 2014
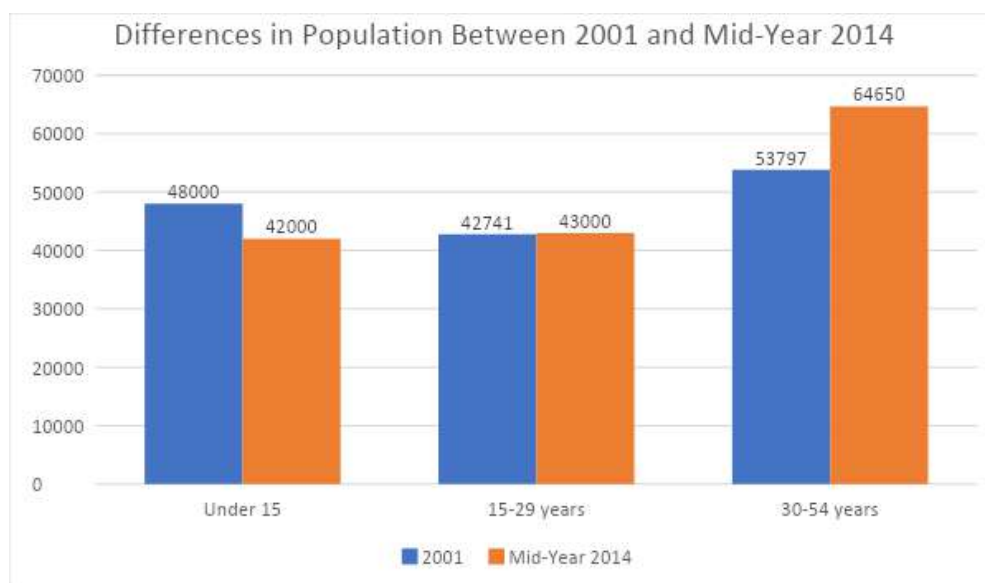
According to Figure 2, in 2017, the total number of migrants into St. Lucia stood at 12, 771, while the figure for migrants from St. Lucia was 53,364. These figures are significantly higher than those figures for 1990 which were 2689 and 22, 006, respectively.

Figure 2: Differences in Migration between 1990 and 2017
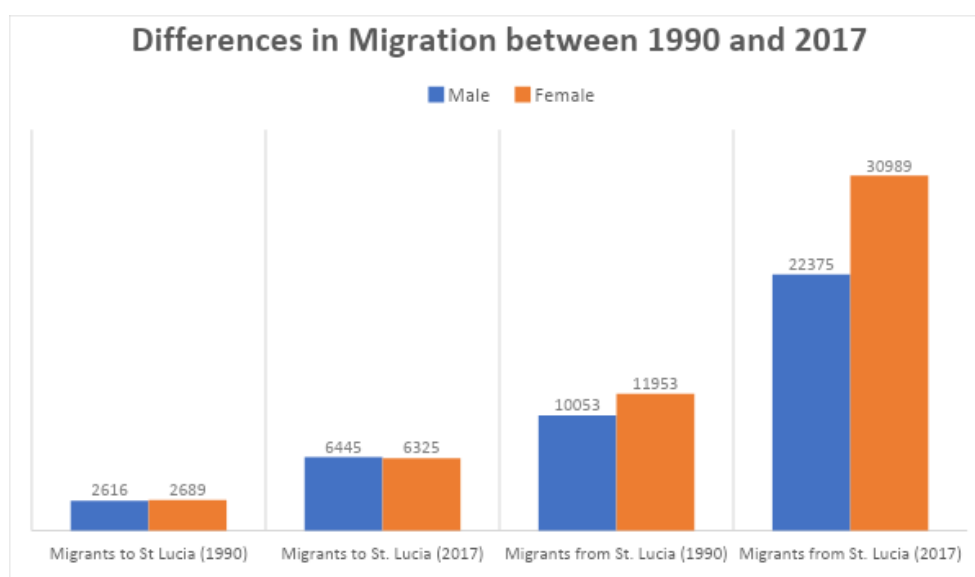
Source of data: United Nations Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision

1.4 EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTS

The main educational laws of St. Lucia are enshrined in the *Education Act (1999): Saint Lucia (No. 41).* The education system in St. Lucia comprises 8 education districts based on geographical location. These education districts oversee the needs of the primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions. The Early Childhood Development centres are part of electoral districts and not education districts. Each education district is managed by a (District) Education Officer who is appointed by the Teaching Service Commission after the individual applies for the position and goes through the interview process. The tertiary institution is managed by a Board of Governors.

In the 2017-2018 academic year the total government expenditure in education as % of GDP was 3.3 % while the expenditure in education as % of national budget was 12.7% (EDMU, 2019). A comparative analysis of government expenditure on education in the Caribbean region indicates that for St. Lucia, both the expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP and as a percentage of total government expenditure is lower than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. Table 4 highlights the aforementioned figures for selected Caribbean countries.

Table 4: A Comparison of the Caribbean Governments' Investment in Education as a Percentage of GDP based on World Bank Statistics Updated Between 2017-2020

Caribbean Countries	Education as a Percentage of GDP (%)	Education as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure
Grenada *(most recent updated year 2017)*	3.2	14
Dominica *(most recent updated year 2019)*	5.6	9.4
St. Lucia *(most recent updated year 2018)*	3.3	14.4
St. Vincent and the Grenadines *(most recent updated year 2018)*	5.7	18.8
Barbados *(most recent updated year 2017)*	4.4	12.9
Haiti *(most recent updated year 2018)*	2.8	14.4
Jamaica *(most recent updated year 2019)*	5.2	17.3
Turks and Caicos Islands *(most recent updated year 2018)*	2.9	12.1
Latin America and the Caribbean Average *(most recent updated year 2017)*	4.5	17

Source: World Bank (2020)

From 2016-2017, the per student expenditure in education (PPP constant USD) for Early Childhood and Tertiary levels in St. Lucia were as follows: Early Childhood: $1324.49, (OECS: EDMU, 2017); Tertiary: $2432.16 (OECS: EDMU, 2017). According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (n.d.), in 2018, the per student expenditure in education for

primary students was $1999. 70 (PPP constant USD) while for secondary students it was $2703.20 (PPP constant USD).

Students in St. Lucia can access Early Childhood Centres/ Preschools when they turn 3 years of age until they are 5 years. All of the island's 94 preschools are private institutions. Compulsory or formal education as stated in the Education Act is from 5- 15 years, for a total of 10 years. All students are ensured a place at a secondary school because of universal secondary education (USE). This was introduced in the 2006-2007 academic year. The implementation of USE was an important turning point for the education system as it addressed inequity in the system, which was stemmed from the fact that until then, only students who succeeded the Common Entrance Examination at the end of primary school went to a secondary school.

 Each academic year at all levels of the system begins in September and ends in July. In terms of instruction, the *Schedule of School Terms* serves as a guide for instructional time at the preschool, primary and secondary school levels in any given year. According to the *Schedule of School Terms 2020/2021* students' exposure to instruction for the academic year should have been as follows: Term I- 69 days, Term II- 68 days and Term III - 58 days for a total of 190 days of weekly instruction (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations & Sustainable Development, 2020).

According to data for 2017/2018 outlined in Table 5, there are 94 private preschool centres, 74 public primary schools, 22 public secondary schools, 5 public special needs centres, 1 post-secondary and 1 public tertiary institution in St. Lucia. Table 5 also outlines the numbers of students at each level of the education system for which the Government of St. Lucia had responsibility, during the 2017/2018 academic year. The projected numbers of students for the 2019/2020 academic year were 14, 587 primary school students and 10, 738 secondary school students. Schools would have been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic during the second half of that academic year. The actual enrolment at the island's sole public tertiary institution during the 2019/2020 period was 2043 students. The post-secondary institutions offer access the CSEC programmes alongside selected tertiary courses or programmes. The tertiary institution offers a wide range of tertiary level programmes at various levels.

Table 5: School Enrolment

School Level	Total Number of Schools (Public)	Total Enrolment 2017/2018	Projected Enrolment 2019/2020	Actual Enrolment 2019/2020	Projected Enrolment 2020/2021
Preschool	94 (private)	3482	-	-	-
Primary	74	14, 894	14,587	-	14, 512
Secondary	22	11551	10, 738	-	10, 547
Special Needs Centres	5	395		-	-
Tertiary	1	2168	-	2043	-
Post Secondary	1	269	-	-	

Source: Government of St. Lucia, Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020, (2019) Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development (govt.lc).

An examination of gross enrolment data at both the primary and secondary school levels, seems to reinforce trends in terms of a reduction in the youthful population which have been reported for St. Lucia. Figure 3 points to a 17% difference in enrolment figures between 2010 and the 2017-2018 academic year. The gross enrolment figures at the secondary school level for the same period also show a steady decline in enrolment numbers and a 24% difference in enrolment between 2010 and the 2017 -2018 academic year.

Figure 3: Gross Enrolment Figures at the Primary and Secondary School Levels between 2010 and 2018
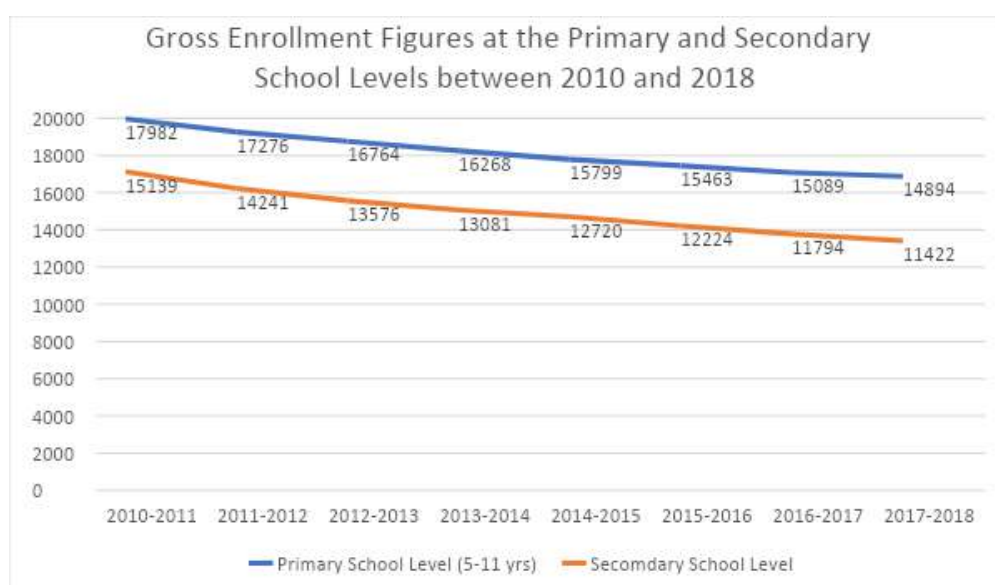
Students at all education levels are able to access public assistance programmes which are geared at improving access to education. These programmes include the Ministry of Education Community Day Care (MOE), Scholarships/Bursaries (MOE),

the School Transportation Programme (MOE), Education Assistance (SSDF), the Community After School Programme, Student Support Services (MOE) and the School Feeding Programme (SFP) (MOE) (St. Lucia National Report of Living Conditions: 2016, 2018 p. 160). The share of educational budget and the processes for the selection of students to benefit from these programs are highlighted in Chapter 5.

The data on education indicators presented in Table 6 indicate the presence of internet access at all primary and secondary schools in St. Lucia and that close to half of the total population 25 years and over (49%) have had access to some secondary school education. Typically, St. Lucians are expected to spend 14 years advancing through the various school levels. The education index for the country is 0.672.

Table 6. Education Indicators

Criteria	Figure
Expected years of schooling	14.0
Education index[1]	0.672
Expected years of schooling (f)	14.7
Expected years of schooling (m)	13.3
Government expenditure on education (%of GDP)	3.7
Gross enrolment ratio, pre-primary % of preschool-age children	74
Gross enrolment ratio % of primary school –age population	103
Gross enrolment ratio % of secondary school –age population	89
Gross enrolment ratio % tertiary school-age population	14
Mean years of schooling (years)	8.5
Mean years of schooling female (years)	8.8
Mean Years of Schooling male	8.2
Percentage of primary schools with access to internet	100
Percentage of secondary schools with access to internet	100[2]
Population with at least some secondary school education % ages 25 and older	46.0
Population with at least some secondary education, female (% ages 25 and older)	49.2
Population with at least some secondary education, male (% ages 25 and older)	42.1
Primary school dropout rate (% of primary school cohort)	8.0
Primary school teachers trained to teach (%)	89
Pupil-teacher ratio, primary school (pupils per teacher)	15
Survival rate to the last grade of lower secondary general education (%)	98

Source: *United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports 2020 - Human Development Indicators St Lucia* http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/LCA

1   Education index is calculated using mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling (UNDP, n.d).

2   While there is fiber-optic internet access at all schools in St. Lucia for both administrative and instructional purposes, classroom access is limited (Marius, 2020).

CHAPTER 2:
THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The COVID19 pandemic has had significant effects on many aspects of life in St Lucia including education. For instance, 43 percent of individuals who had been employed before March 20th, 2020, were not able to work by the week of the COVID19 telephone survey (The Central Statistical Office of St. Lucia, 2020). Further, by that time, 71.2 percent of households had experienced decreased income. Family businesses suffered 60 percent income losses while 30 percent suffered complete loss of income. The education sector, too, suffered the impact of the pandemic in many respects. These impacts are delineated in the sections that follow.

2.1 DISRUPTIONS TO SCHOOLING AND IMPACT ON LEARNING

The COVID19 outbreak resulted in the initial closure of all schools at all education levels in St Lucia (Preschool, Infant and Primary, Secondary, Tertiary level and Special Needs Institutions). According to the OECS (2020), in St Lucia, schools were initially closed for the period March 16th- April 13th, 2020. However, that period of closure was extended. Schools were officially reopened on September 14th, 2020. The arrangement then was the introduction of shift Systems with alternate days for larger schools and a four (4) day cycle with one (1) day for teacher preparation at small schools (OECS, 2020). Grade 6 and Forms 4 and 5 students attended school for the full day.

The guidelines which governed the reopening of public schools in September 2020 were as follows:

- Pre-schools: Capacity would be determined based on available space, as students' furniture was to be placed 3 feet apart. Due to this new restriction some centres had to reduce their numbers due to space constraints.

- Primary Schools: 3 feet spacing between desks had to be adhered to. Some schools were able to accommodate all their students while the larger primary schools had to utilize an alternate day programme for the various grade levels.

- Special Needs Institutions: Special Education centres were able to have all students in school when school officially reopened.

- Secondary Schools: Similar to the primary schools, the secondary schools with smaller numbers were able to have the entire population return daily, while the larger ones used the alternate day arrangement.

However, schools were closed on October 15th, 2020 due to an increase in the numbers of COVID19 positive cases on island. During that period, online platforms for teaching

and learning were used. It must be noted that gaps in terms of student reach were identified as a major concern. These gaps were because some students had no access to the internet or to electronic devices. The students most affected would be the marginalized and or disadvantaged who would more than likely be the beneficiaries of the support services provided by the Ministry of Education. Questions on the levels and quality of engagement both by teachers and students during periods of online instructions have also been raised. The resulting impact on assessment and on student performance is therefore a concern.

After schools were again closed in October 2020, special permission was given by the Ministry of Education and the Chief Medical Officer for students who had to engage in practical sessions or labs and their teachers, to access their school facilities while adhering to strict protocols. Therefore, students and teachers in key grade levels (Grades 6, Forms 4 and 5) had the option of returning to the classroom as of the week 30th November 2020. Public preschool, primary, secondary and special needs schools in St Lucia reopened on January 11th, 2021. Subsequent to that reopening date, all students were supposed to have attended school daily. However, again because of community spread of COVID19, all institutions were closed and reverted to online instruction. The same arrangements for students in key grade levels (Forms 4 and 5) outlined previously, were again implemented. All educational institutions reopened on April 19th, 2021. It is important, therefore, that the impact assessment of the shift between face-to face and distributed learning on multiple occasions on teachers, learners and instruction in general is conducted.

Like the primary and secondary schools, most tertiary institutions engaged in online instruction during the periods of closure. The island's sole public tertiary institution (Sir Arthur Lewis Community College) transitioned to online instruction as an emergency instructional response in March 2020 and will continue to provide instruction via that modality throughout the 2020/2021 academic year, offering learners continued access to programmes at the Certificate, Associates Degree, and Bachelor's Degree levels. Special permission was granted by the Chief Medical Officer and the Ministry of Education for certain students to be on the main campus on designated days: Science students for lab sessions, Hospitality students who run the college restaurant (practical sessions) and for other practical sessions (Auto-Mechanics, Electronics Drama, etc.) again guided by the mandated protocols.

In terms of teacher engagement during the periods of closure, in cases where students had no access to the internet or electronic devices, primary and secondary school teachers went into their schools to print work sheets and to prepare packages for students. Teachers also conducted classes on various platforms. Students with access to the internet and electronic devices participated in those classes.

The Central Statistics Office of St Lucia (2020) in the analysis of the first round of data collection for the *Socio-Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Saint Lucia: Findings from the Saint Lucia COVID-19 High Frequency Phone Survey (COVID-19 HFPS)*, reported based on information from a sample of individuals/ households who were assigned 1093 telephone numbers, reported that in spite of the closure of school in

some instances, uninterrupted engagement in learning activities was reported by over 90 percent of households with children. About 37 percent of households in the sample reported having at least 1 member between the age of 5 and 18, who represented having at least 1 member enrolled in school. Of these, about 95 percent of households had experienced school closure because of the COVID 19 pandemic. However, 90 percent reported experiencing no major disruptions to learning activities. This may be attributed to the presence of the GINET- Government of Saint Lucia Integrated wireless network. The presence of this network has enabled Wi-Fi connectivity in key population areas around the island (Marius, 2020).

Apart from access to the internet, students of the households included in the survey may have also experienced little disruption in learning activities because of receiving learning packages from the schools. From the 4.5 percent of households in which children did not engage in any learning activities, lack of access to virtual learning classrooms (38.8%), lack of take-home teaching aids, lack of learning materials (15.4%), and/or lack of knowledge on appropriate responses to school closures were cited as the main contributors to their situation (Government of St Lucia, 2020. p. 12). The 38. 8% of students who had no access to virtual learning classrooms suggests that some of the nation's school age children may be facing issues of equity which may impact school performance.

In order to cater for those learners who accessed the School Feeding Programs (SFP) for meals, during the periods of closure, food packages were prepared using the food items which had been procured by the Ministry of Education and distributed to the households of students in need. These food packages were distributed once a month. The distribution of food only once a month may have been an issue because monitoring how the food packages were being allocated and managed within the students' households would have been nearly impossible.

The social impact of the pandemic on the students' households was evident on the strain placed on parents who may have had limited resources and education to assist their children at home would have been quite stressful. Furthermore, children would have felt the impact of being isolated from their peers for extended periods.

2.2 GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 INCLUDING DISTANCE EDUCATION POSSIBILITIES

After the first closure of public schools in March 2020, the initial government plans to provide education included:

- initial plans for discussion with Digicel for the donation of portal internet devices for students with no internet access at home

- exploring various online platforms for e-learning

- discussions with the Teachers' Union to discuss a response plan

- provision of Electronic Devices for Teachers and Students

- psychosocial Support

- provision of Meals for less fortunate students

- activities to deal with Psychosocial needs of teachers

- development of videos for Special Needs Students to explain the current situation.

- bridging the digital divide (OECS Education Sector Response and Recovery Strategy to COVID19 2020, pp. 22-23)

During the periods of the suspension of face-to-face classes, instruction for students at the primary and secondary school levels was provided via Distributed Learning; specifically using online tools, TV, radio and printed work packages. There were also special arrangements made by education districts particularly for students of Grade 6 only (at the primary school level), Form 4 and 5 (only at the secondary school level). The latter students were allowed to access their schools to complete labs and School Based Assessments (SBA) in order to fulfil requirements for CSEC examinations. Thus, students preparing for national and regional examinations were allowed to be in school in small groups of (15), daily. It must be noted that during the initial periods of closure, no arrangements were made for the instruction of special needs students nor for students within the early childhood sector. This is evidence of a gap and suggests that greater consideration must be given to ensuring equal access to education for students of all sectors of the education system, particularly during periods of disruption or lockdown. It is important to note, however, that the *Education Sector Continuity plan (COVID-19) for Schools in Saint Lucia,* addressed this issue.

When access to public schools for instruction was suspended, teachers did not receive formal training to facilitate adapting to the new teaching requirements. Some public-school teachers, however, were able to access free training organized by the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College for the lecturers of the institution. Lecturers received training in the use of various online learning tools such as Edmodo, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams, but more specifically the use of MOODLE which is the platform used by the institution to facilitate online instruction. It must be noted that through the COVID19 Response and Recovery Strategy, training of teachers is expected to begin between April and May 2021. In fact, focus Area 2 (Transition to Distributed Learning) of the *OECS Education Sector Response and Recovery Strategy to COVID19: Partnership Against COVID 19* speaks to the importance of training programs for teachers which will focus on pedagogy aimed at achieving a higher quality of teaching both online and at home. The expectation is that this training program will result in a resilient system which will be able to deal with the effects of COVID-19 and any other situations that may affect instruction in the future. The aforementioned initiative is made possible because St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica and Grenada, the four Global Partners for Education (GPE) under the umbrella of the OECS, were beneficiaries of a COVID19 planning grant of US$ 3 million (GPE, n.d).

PLANS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

The *Education Sector Continuity plan (COVID-19) for Schools in Saint Lucia* governs all levels and types of educational institutions inclusive of Early Childhood Development Centres, Special Education Centres, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions, in the resumption of classes from January 2021. The understanding is that protocols will be customized for school populations as required (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020). For instance, if schools need to be closed for an extended period of time, at-home learning will be anticipated, and information will be shared with the school community and then forwarded to parents and guardians. Additional protocols include the following:

- In a case where a number of students from a school or a number of schools need to be quarantined, it may be necessary to transition to/continue with the use of Distributed Learning to serve students at school and at home. As such communication of instructional materials would be sent via:

  1. Social media messaging e.g., WhatsApp to Parents/Guardians, Facebook posts

  2. Email to Parents/Guardians; and

  3. Correspondence through traditional media to Parents/Guardians (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020, p.3)

- In instances of interruptions to regular schooling as well as students being absent due to quarantine/isolation teaching and learning will continue via Virtual/Face-to-face instruction as appropriate and safe. The Distributed Learning Approach will be applied using: Study Ladder, Khan Academy, Google Classrooms, MOODLE, Schoology, Microsoft Teams, Worksheets, Textbooks etc. where students have the skills to continue their learning journey in a number of environments.

- Instructional materials will be shared as hard copies in instances where students have to access to online services or electronic devices

- Both summative and formative assessments will be administered to students

- School materials will be distributed to and picked up by students (where necessary) from strategic locations (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020 p.13.)

EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

Provisions have also been made for the Early Childhood Sector in order to deal with interruptions to regular schooling. To this end, the Early Childhood Services Unit Facebook page will be used to facilitate teaching and learning for children under the age of 5 years. Learning materials are to be organized electronically in a presentable and manageable manner. The information is expected to be used for persons working

with children from home including parents, guardians, caregivers, and older siblings. Parents/Caregivers are expected to work with children using the available learning resources.

The Continuity Plan for the Early Childhood Sector is as follows:

- Technical Officers of the Early Childhood Services Unit (ECSU) will prepare stimulation activities.

- Messages will include a preamble, stimulation activities presented in two parts (children from birth-3 years, children from 3-5 years), and Parenting Tips.

- Activities will be posted at 10:00 a.m. Monday to Friday on the ECSU Facebook Page.

- Administrators will be notified regarding the link for the daily stimulation activities.

- Parents/Guardians/Centre Staff will also be introduced to the Ministry of Education website particularly the CAMDU page, in an effort to access posts regarding ECD documents and other learning materials.

- The activities are expected to be ongoing. (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020, p.18)

SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

In Special Education Schools, Face-to-face instructional support will be provided to a maximum number of students on site. Students will be required to wear face masks and/face shields to the extent that their disabilities allow.

The following general principles will apply to COVID-19 protocols for special schools:

- Where it is deemed unsafe for a student to be in attendance at school, appropriate distributed learning support will be provided to the student at home.

- The following means will be used to continue teaching and learning:

  - Learning support printed packages sent through parents - Social Media platforms used for Instructional Support and Therapy e.g., WhatsApp;

  - Online classes through online forum where appropriate e.g., Google Classrooms, Zoom;

(Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020 p.19). The preceding considerations for students of Special Education schools highlights a focus on equity in education provisions which are geared at dealing with the impact of COVID-19.

STAKEHOLDERS

A number of stakeholders collaborated to ensure the continuation of instruction. More specifically the *Education Sector Continuity plan (COVID-19) for Schools in Saint Lucia* was the result of the efforts of:

- Ministry of Education

  - School Supervision Unit

  - Curriculum and Materials Development Unit (CAMDU)

  - Early Childhood Services Unit

  - Special Education Unit

  - Corporate Planning Unit

  - District Education Officers

  - Counselling Unit

  - St. Lucia Teachers' Union

  - National Principals' Association

  - Secondary Schools Principals' Association

  - Ministry of Health and Wellness

Other stakeholders included:

- The OECS Commission: Compilation of the Assessment of The Transition to Virtual Learning in the OECS which focused on learning management systems

- The St. Lucia Bureau of Standards: Development of the "Guidelines for the Reopening of School" and COVID-19 Protocols for the Early Childhood Education Sector

- The World Bank: Compilation of *The Socio-Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Saint Lucia: Findings from the Saint Lucia COVID-19 High Frequency Phone Survey (COVID-19 HFPS)*

Short-term plans

In terms of its short-term plans, The Department of Education is considering the provision of the following:

- Electronic devices needed based on needs assessment for instructional purposes

- Provision of food items for vulnerable children

- Secondary School Transportation Subsidy as per needed

- Printing Material (CAMDU – Production Unit): Assistance with printing of packages to schools with limited printing facilities

- Psychosocial support in the case of any COVID-19 related death of any member of the school community (Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, 2020, p.20).

2. 3 AFTER COVID-19

Plans are ongoing in order to cater for the needs of the education system in a post COVID19 environment. The *Medium-Term Development Strategy: 2020-2023: Nou Tout Ansanm,* articulates medium-term plans for the education sector which include elevating the quality of teaching and modes of delivery and adapting the curriculum to meet the changing demands of the global economy. These are discussed in detail in Section 3.4.

SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

While the Government of Saint Lucia Integrated wireless network (GINET) has made connectivity in key areas population areas possible, internet connectivity remains a major challenge to providing instruction during periods when schools have to be closed. Additionally, many students still do not have access to electronic devices and in instances when they do, some devices such as phones cannot handle the demands of accessing and working on e-learning platforms. These issues suggest that there is need for the close monitoring and evaluation of distributed instruction and student engagement and of the impact on student performance during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Further, teachers need additional support in assessing students effectively in online contexts, further training in the use of e-learning platforms, maintaining student interest and in integrating and applying interactive activities during online instruction. The lack of funding/ financing of infrastructural needs of educational institutions to meet the standards and requirements of 21st century classrooms is also an issue which needs to be addressed. 21st century classroom standards are influenced by the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools Framework, the CARICOM New school model; Guidelines for schools as sustainable and resilient learning spaces found in *the Saint Lucia National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2018-2028* as well as in the Model Safe School Programme with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and CDEMA. In addition, 21st century classroom standards are also influenced by the *ICT in Education Policy and Strategy for Saint Lucia 2019-2022*.

CHAPTER 3:
POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The goal of this chapter is to summarize the main policies and programs that shape the educational system in St. Lucia. It is expected that it will reflect the national priorities in terms of education, the most important reforms and the main characteristics of the programs that are currently being implemented.

3.1 ACTORS AND POWER DISTRIBUTION

The main influencers of educational policy in St. Lucia are the Minister of Education, the Permanent Secretary, Chief Education Officer, Deputy Chief Education Officer-Instruction, District Education Officers, Curriculum Specialists, School Denominational Boards, Principals, Teachers, Parents and Students[3]. As stated in the Education Act, the Minister of Education is responsible for the overall administration of the Education Act and for general policy directions. Sections 4-6 of the *Education Act* 1999: SAINT LUCIA No. 41 outline in detail the duties and powers of the Minister, respectively. For instance, the Minister of Education is responsible for ". . . the framing of an educational policy designed to give effect to the purposes of [the] Act" and "the effective execution of the educational policy of the Government" (p. 558). The Administrative Head of the Ministry of Education is the Permanent Secretary who works in tandem with the Minister. The Department of Education, is under the supervision of the Chief Education Officer (CEO). The CEO is responsible for the general Administration of the Education Act, subject to the directions of the Minister of Education. The CEO is guided by Section 7 of the Education Act.

The Deputy Chief Education Officer is responsible for instruction and is supported by Education Officers in the following areas: Special Education, Early Childhood Development, Assessment, TVET and Adult Education. The management structure also includes a team of eight (8) Education Officers who are responsible for the schools that fall within their assigned education districts. The work of the Education Officers is supported by the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit (CAMDU), to which Curriculum specialists in the following areas are assigned:

• ICT Integration

• English Language

• Theatre Arts

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3   Teachers, parents, students and members of civil society and social movements are able to influence policy when they are invited to participate in various levels and rounds of stakeholder consultations so as to obtain their feedback/input towards the development and implementation of education policy.

- Early Childhood Development

- Health and Family Life Education

- Physical Education

- Social Sciences

- Natural Sciences

- Music

- Modern Languages

- Visual Arts

There are three denominational bodies, Catholic, Anglican and Methodist which through their boards of management, have some say in the appointment of the supervisors/principals of the denominational schools and the management of these schools. Principals are responsible for the day-today management of schools and their duties are outlined in Section 141 of the Education Act while those of Deputy Principals are in Section 140. The rights and responsibilities of parents and students are articulated in Sections 20 and 17 respectively.

Apart from the aforementioned individuals, other stakeholders are usually invited to participate in education policy and development in St. Lucia. These stakeholders provide support to the Ministry of Education in various forms inclusive of: projects, technical assistance, infrastructural works, equipment and supplies, grants and loans, legal advice, peer review and collaboration and professional networking.[4] 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: Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, UK DFID, OAS, Commonwealth of Learning, EU Commission and DIGICEL.

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4   These stakeholders include governments/agencies, universities, media, NGOs and development partners such as: National Principals' Association, Secondary Schools, Principals' Association, St. Lucia Teachers' Union, National Student Council, National Youth Council, Attorney General's Chambers, Department of Innovation, Department of Gender Relations, Department of Sustainable Development, Department of Finance, Department of Economic Development, Department of the Public Service, OPM-Performance Management and Delivery Unit, OECS EDMU, Caribbean Examinations Council, Caribbean Development Bank, CARICOM Secretariat's Directorate of Human and Social Development, Saint Lucia National Commission for UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, UK DFID, JIICA, OAS, Commonwealth of Learning, EU Commission, Youth and Sports, Department of Infrastructure, Department of Physical Planning, Department of Equity, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, University of the West Indies, Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan), Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, Government Information Service/NTN, Department of Health and Wellness (with the onset of COVID), National Competitiveness and Productivity Council.

3.2 POLICY CYCLE PROCESSES

The education policy-making process in St. Lucia is centralized yet consultative to allow stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to this process. The Cabinet and Parliament ensure that education policy respects legal, ethical parameters in keeping with the law of the land so as to confirm the legitimate character of education policy. The most typical process for formalizing and implementing a national policy involves:

- **Providing evidence of the need for policy**: This stage requires preparing a statement on how the issue originated; identifying instances which highlight the importance of the issue to be addressed; defining the problem and its main causes; identifying effects on the population, and any philosophical, ethical issues and controversies that emphasise the importance of the issue.

- **Listing information inclusive of internal and external documentation supporting the specific policy and examining economic, financial, legal, procedural and organisational considerations**. This would include the Saint Lucia Education Act, international obligations, model legislation, and existing policies including laws and current guidelines or codes of practice.

- **Identifying potential linkages.** These include: Departmental or agency structures to deliver programmes; Framework agreements and partnerships with other governments or organisations; Privatisation or commercialisation of government services; and Public investment in private enterprises.

- **Considering short- and long-term operational requirements** such as organisations and personnel needed to administer the policy, for instance, officers to assess benefits or conduct inspections.

- **Engaging and consulting with other government departments and education stakeholders**. Several rounds of stakeholder consultations and training (where relevant) must be undertaken. As far as possible, stakeholders would be engaged to get their feedback/input in addition to securing their buy-in for the policy. However, there continues to be a need for increased stakeholder engagement in practice.

- **Choosing the solution that best achieves the policy objective**. This involves the comparative analysis of costs and benefits where applicable.

a.   *The Agenda Setting for the Policy*
     Typical players: Policy and Administration Unit, School Supervision Unit, Corporate Planning Unit, Legal Officer

b.   *Policy Formulation*
     Typical players: Policy and Administration Unit, School Supervision Unit, Corporate Planning Unit, Legal Officer

c.   *Implementation*
      Typical players: Teachers, Heads of Departments, School Counsellors, Vice-Principals Principals, Curriculum Officers, District Education Officers, School Supervision Unit

d.   *Monitoring and Evaluation processes*
      Typical players: Corporate Planning Unit, School Supervision Unit, District Education Officers, Curriculum Officers, Principals, Vice-Principals, School Counsellors, Heads of Departments

3.3 EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRIORITIES

The main policy priorities in St. Lucia at present are:

- **ICT in Education (ICTE)**- Providing quality infrastructure, devices, connectivity, adequate Broadband Services, content (programming) and training of teachers to allow them to (i) understand and use the technology, and (ii) apply the technology as an effective pedagogical tool (thereby demonstrating their mastery) in Blended and Distributed teaching/learning approaches.

- **TVET**- Developing and aligning TVET with national priorities, labour market needs, employment and other policies; Strengthening the TVET enabling environment inclusive of re- skilling of trainers and the retooling and digital upskilling of entrepreneurs in emerging markets; Enhancing skills training offerings using a competency-based education and training (CBET) approach to TVET to provide labour market-relevant skills to the population; Making CVQ training and certification available to all secondary schools and special schools in order to bring about widened and inclusive participation to TVET learning opportunities (inclusive of blended approaches using Open Educational Resources (OER) and/or appropriate modalities); Instituting a national internship/traineeship/apprenticeship programme to provide such opportunities within industry for trainers and students; Establishing a National TVET Institution and a Workforce Development Centre (EDF 11) to provide cutting edge, locally relevant and globally recognised TVET programmes for attaining greater national productivity, job creation and sustainable development in Saint Lucia.

- **ECE** – Increasing access and enrolment to quality Early Childhood Education in keeping with standards developed specifically for ECE; Universal Early Childhood Education, Implementing the finalized and approved Early Childhood Services Regulations; Registration and Licensing of all ECE Centres; CVQ training for Early Childhood practitioners, Repurposing facilities within primary schools to facilitate pre-K; Providing financial assistance to underprivileged families (through Ministry of Equity) to facilitate payment of Early Childhood Education Services.

- **Numeracy** – Improving student CSEC performance in Mathematics also through the integration of ICT in Math instruction. Mathematics has consistently recorded

the lowest pass rate, which is a hindrance for students to enter tertiary education since a mandatory pass is required for most courses; Support for the numeracy hours project to facilitate the expansion into other schools.

In St. Lucia, a major strength of the approach to identifying and implementing policy priorities such as those outlined previously is that this process is grounded in and governed by various regional, and sub-regional policy frameworks. Some of these policies are identified and summarized in the subsequent sub-sections.

THE BROAD EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Broader education policy frameworks such as the CARICOM Human Resource Development Strategy 2030; and the OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2021, generally inform education planning, and programme development across the OECS member states; the most clearly 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) is clearly highlighted in the last 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 clearly reflected in the other sub-regional 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 programmes.

THE OECS EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGY (OESS) 2012-2026

The regional policy framework which has the greatest influence on education planning, programmes and practices at the national level however is the OESS. As a Member State of the OECS, Education planning for the education sector in St. Lucia 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 sub-region. 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 implementation of a common education strategy across the OECS region. The seven agreed areas of priority under the OESS are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Strategic Imperatives and Supporting Outcomes (adapted from the OECS Secretariat, 2012)

	Strategic Imperative	Outcomes
#1	Improve the quality and accountability of Leadership and Management	Qualified leaders in place across the education system supported by Boards (where applicable) and governing bodies. Education leaders and managers have access to continuing professional development. Revised legislation, knowledge management and accountability frameworks that devolve decision-making to schools.

#2	Improve Teacher's Professional Development	Improved teacher quality.
		Pre-service training and professional development programmes in place for all prospective and in-service teachers' and teacher trainers' respectively, relevant to each stage of their career.
		Regular and systematic teacher appraisal operates in conjunction with established teacher professional standards.
		Reduced numbers of out-of-field teachers in schools.
#3	Improve the quality of Teaching and Learning	Learners engaged with all learning and their expectations met.
		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	Flexible, learner-centred curricula with assessment at each stage which includes a wide range of learning outcomes targeting academic, technical and personal development skills;
		A relevant and comprehensive education and skills strategy operates nationally and across the OECS region with resulting curricula that are learner-centred and competency-based to meet the needs of all learners.
		All performance measures for learner outcomes indicate improvement year-on-year at each stage and match comparable international benchmarks.
		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	National operational plans developed and implemented to pre-primary education for all learners aged three to five.
		Formal Early Childhood Development Services meet required minimum standards.
		A sustainable funding strategy for ECD, supported by both public and private sectors investment in place and operational.
		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	Primary school curricula, teaching and learning incorporate exploratory learning experiences that develop basic technical competencies and an appreciation for the world of work.
		Competency based curricula linked to CVQ framework established across secondary and tertiary education and in all other educational settings in work and in community.
		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	Sustainable funding mechanisms for tertiary and continuing education to meet the economic, social and labour market needs of the OECS and learners can access affordable tertiary education.
		A legal and institutional framework that improve the status, sustainability and outcomes of tertiary and continuing education institutions across the OECS.
		Accredited tertiary and continuing education institutions in and outside the OECS produce high quality relevant programmes and research results fostering creativity and innovations.

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 sub-regional working group which 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 programmes 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. Notably, St. Lucia was highlighted as showing specific line items in its annual budgets reflective of OESS priorities. Most of the funding for OESS priorities came from donor agencies which engaged directly with countries, and at other times with the OECS sub-region as a whole 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 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.

OTHER NATIONAL LEVEL POLICIES IN EDUCATION

- *The Early Childhood Policy*: The objectives of the *Early Childhood Policy* are to:

  - Ensure that all children in St. Lucia between the ages of birth to five (0-5) have the opportunity to access age-appropriate and developmentally oriented early childhood services.

  - Ensure that the quality of early childhood service provision is adequate for the health and safety of the children and appropriate for their developmental needs.

  - Increase the percentage of certified and competent early childhood practitioners.

- Increase the active participation of parents, community and [the] private sector in the development of the nation's children (Government of St. Lucia, n.d., pp.3-4).

- *ICT in Education Policy and Strategy for Saint Lucia 2019-   2022*: This policy is influenced by the following:

  - Regional and international factors: Goal 4 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the Strategic Imperatives of the *2012–2021 OECS Education Sector Strategy*- "integrating technology in the classroom and in education (OECS, 2012, p. 28).

  - National forces: National ICT Policy and Strategic Plan which was developed and ratified in 2010; the Education Sector Development Plans (2000–2005, 2009–2014 and 2015–2020) all call for the inclusion and integration of ICT in education

  - ICT Potential in Education: for example to support early childhood development

  - Status of ICT in St Lucia: Laptop programme which provided Form Four students and teachers with laptops; improvements in ICT infrastructure (computer labs in all schools, broadband connectivity in all schools)

- The *Training and Development Policy for The Saint Lucia Public Service*: outlines the administrative framework and procedural guidelines, for the administration and management of training and development initiatives in the Public Service (Government of St. Lucia, 2019). As a means of facilitating the funding of study and research, government employees including teachers can apply for Study Leave with Pay according to this policy. In order to be eligible, among other requirements, the applicant:

  - Must be a permanent employee with five or more years of continuous service.

  - Must ensure that he/she is pursuing, or intends to pursue, a course of study that is included in the applicable List of Approved Areas for Study Leave with Pay Awards.

  - Must ensure that the study area is relevant and of priority to his/her Agency's mandate vision and mission (Government of St. Lucia, 2019, p.32).

- *The St. Lucia Social Protection Policy: A National Roadmap to Transformative Social Protection*:

  - The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear framework for enhancing equity, efficiency and transparency in the delivery of social protection services. This framework shall promote synergies among agencies, programmes and interventions to reduce poverty and protect the most vulnerable population of Saint Lucia, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts (Government of St. Lucia, 2015 p.18).

All of the sub-regional and local policies outlined previously are aligned because they seek to ensure the creation of quality education systems that are focused on areas such as learner achievement, teacher professional development, capacity building, increased access to early childhood development services, opportunities for increased access to TVET and tertiary education and education that is equitable and devoid of disparities based on gender or ability to access and participate in available learning activities. However, policy planning and implementation can be significantly improved through continued research, monitoring and evaluation, data Governance and management expertise (CEO, 2021). In fact, Impact Assessment and Evaluation research and/or data) would support more effective education planning in Saint Lucia.

3.4 REFORMS AND INNOVATIONS

Previous Reforms in Education

The most important educational reforms in St. Lucia to date are outlined in the *Foundations for the Future (1991-2000)* and *Pillars for Partnership and Progress (2001-2010) documents, respectively.* In order to compile the data for Foundations for the Future, a working group was charged among other duties with analysing the education systems of the sub-region, compiling a profile of priority areas from which regional projects [could have been] developed for external funding and arriving at the most effective strategy for education reform in the sub-region (pp. 2-3). The final reform strategy developed by the working group includes as a matter of priority:

• Strategies for Harmonizing the education system of the sub-region.

• Strategies for Reforming Early Childhood Education

• Strategies for Reforming Primary Education

• Strategies for Reforming Secondary Education

• Strategies for Reforming Tertiary and Adult Education

• Strategies for Reforming the Terms and Conditions of Service of Teachers

• Strategies for Reforming the Management and Administration of the Education Systems

• Strategies for Reforming the Financing of Education

• Strategies for the Reform Process (p.5)

The purpose of the *Pillars for Partnership and Progress (2001-2010)* was to develop a revised long-term strategic framework geared at continuing the reform of education in the OECS. Additionally, focus was placed on reviewing the progress made by member states of the OECS in the implementation of the strategies outlined in Foundation for the Future document. This was considered to be "part of the process of developing consensus among the OECS member states with respect to outstanding commitments

in the implementation process and new priorities that reflect and respond to changes and development since 1991" (OECS Education Reform Unit, 2000, p.2). These foundational documents continue to provide guidance for the development of sub-regional and local policies on education.

Current Reforms in Education

The last education reform implemented in St. Lucia was the OECS Education Reform Project. Its mission included enabling OECS states to pursue common education policies and approaches, and harmonized curricula. This project led to the development of common grade names for the primary and secondary school throughout the OECS and existence of a harmonized curricula would facilitate harmonized standards for performance/achievement at each grade level so that these standards could lead to common/equivalent forms of tests/evaluation at the primary and lower secondary levels.

One of the most important current educational reforms and programs in St. Lucia is the e-Books Programme which will allow for the distribution of an estimated 13, 000+ e-book devices and licences to students and teachers across Saint Lucia. This programme started in February 2020 and will roll out over the period of 3 years. This programme should assist with increasing access to devices which will give students and teachers, access to instructional content. The GINET initiative should provide invaluable support to this programme.

The *Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020* has as its priorities Alignment of Purpose, Service Excellence and System Integration, Educational Leadership Governance, Accountability and Resource Stewardship and Resource Management. Supplementing this plan is the *Medium-Term Development Strategy: 2020-2023: Nou Tout Ansanm* put forward by the Government of St. Lucia (2020). According to this plan, one of the major thrusts of the government as concerns education, is in the medium term, to improve the quality of and access to education and to increase the enrolment of students into post-secondary institutions and TVET programmes by 7500 (p. 45). Additionally, the following reforms will be a priority during the designated period:

- Strengthening the participation of children in early childhood education. In fact, The Government of St. Lucia has identified Early Childhood Development level to be of special interest and priority. In the case of ECD, a special priority for the government is realising Universal Early Childhood Education.

- Adapting the curriculum to meet the changing demands of the global economy

- Elevating the quality of teaching and modes of delivery

- Increasing access to post-secondary and tertiary education

- Strengthening and expanding TVET

These are to be achieved through:

- The revision of the Education Act

- Policy on the Standardization of Learning outcomes for ECE, PE, Special Needs Education, SE

- National Policy on school-based management and governance

- National Policy on the establishment and implementation of School boards

- National TVET Policy

- National TVET and Open Education Resources Policy for schools

- Adult Education Policy

- Policy on Creation of Centres of Competence/ Excellence

- Curriculum and Assessment Policy

- Schools and Libraries Infrastructure Policy (p.45)

3.5 RESEARCH AGENDA AND NEEDS IN ST LUCIA

The goal of this section is to provide a general picture about the I+D+I ecosystem in the country (priorities, resources, allocated, key actors) and, specifically, to understand the role of the State and other organizations (private sector, civil society) in promoting innovation and knowledge generation, mobilization and use (with specific focus on education).

The state plays a significant role in articulating, driving and promoting knowledge production and mobilization mechanisms in education. This responsibility is specifically assigned to the Corporate Planning Unit (CPU) of the Department of Education, Innovation and Gender Relations (DOEIGR). The unit is responsible for research, strategic planning and data management on behalf of the DOEIGR. Additionally, it is tasked with providing analytical data and evidence-based recommendations in order to guide the policies, programmes and projects of the DOEIGR. The unit is headed by the Chief Planning Officer who works with a team which comprises planning and research officers, a procurement specialist and statisticians. Their main functions are to:

- Monitor, analyse and report on the status and trends in Saint Lucia's education sector.

- Collect and analyse data on school facilities, students and teachers, and utilize such data to plan and forecast for the new academic year and beyond.

- Identify efficient and equitable means of meeting Saint Lucia's education demands

- Assist in formulating, updating and implementing policies and plans aimed at improving the quality of education in Saint Lucia.

- Formulate and monitor the implementation of the Education Sector Development Plan

- Collaborate with other government and non-government agencies, key stakeholders and other external bodies in pursuit of the DOEIGR goals and sharing of research.

- Assist with the effective management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of large-scale projects undertaken by/ on behalf of the DOEIGR.

- Recommend cost-effective/ cost-beneficial strategies aimed at addressing issues and challenges in the education system.

- Design and develop internal policies, structures and procedures for undertaking and conduct research.

- Compile, update, analyse, and disseminate to policymakers, administrators, external partners, educators and other stakeholders all available data and information on the education sector in a timely manner.

According to the *Research Agenda: Suggested Themes 2016-2018,* the 'Research Agenda' specifies the research priorities for the education sector and reflects national reform concerns (Government of St. Lucia, 2016). When the aforementioned document was created, it was done in alignment with goals of *The Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020* (Government of St. Lucia, 2015). Additionally, the Research Agenda is a guide for individuals who wish to undertake research within the education sector. It is a guide on the basis of which academic researchers and students can focus their studies as well interact with other researchers and funding agencies. Individuals who complete research in the areas identified are encouraged to share the findings/results of their research with the Ministry of Education and relevant partners. The Ministry of Education grants approval for a request to carry out research work in public schools on the condition that Ministry of Education reserves the right to be provided a full copy of the study. Table 8 highlights the main themes of the previously cited research agenda and some examples of the suggested topics for each theme.

Table 8: *Research Themes and Topics*

Equity

- School Zoning: Perceptions, approaches and implications for schools.
- A comparison of the Public Perception of Selected Schools: Low vs. High performing primary and secondary schools.*
- An evaluation of the MOE's Partial Zoning Policy.
- An investigation of effective strategies for stimulating male adolescents' interest in school.
- An assessment of the psychosocial services provided by the Ministry of Education: Counselling Services, Transportation Subsidy, School Bursaries, Insurance etc.
- An evaluation of the SEN programmes in general education schools.
- Audit of national provisions for special education/ gifted students.
- Teachers' and principals' perceptions on the provision of accommodations in national examinations (MST & CEE).

Quality

- Curriculum Content: Core and optional content, its relevance and modernization.
- Evaluation methodologies for curriculum, and modalities for improvement of existing methodologies.
- Provisions in the curriculum in areas that support the development of gender balance.
- The review cycle of the curriculum in all subject areas.
- The value of sports in education.
- An investigation into Alternative/Authentic forms of Assessment: Primary and secondary schools.
- What are the implications of National Assessment/Minimum Standards Tests (MST) results on students' performance at the Common Entrance Examination?
- Language Planning: A review of National Literacy Policy in Saint Lucia
- The introduction of Kwéyòl language into the formal education system.*

Technical and Vocational Training

- Caribbean Vocational Qualification: Curriculum planning, assessment strategies, certification, implementation, training and effectiveness.
- TVET in relation to for labour market.
- Current status of TVET and recommendations for improvement and curriculum reform
- Examination of strategies for TVET programmes to exploit the diversity of skills and competencies of Saint Lucians.
- TVET Curriculum Reform in Saint Lucia: National Qualification Framework.*

Information and Communication Technology in Education

- Evaluation of the One Laptop per Child Program: Effect on student performance and instruction.
- Provision of technology-based instruction in all subject areas: Providing and integrating technology in the 21st Century classroom.
- The impact of ICT on the education system in Saint Lucia after seventeen (17) years (1999–2016).
- The impact of ICT use outside school on student motivation/learning outcomes.
- Cost-benefit analysis on the use of technology in the education system.
- The Principal as a Technology Leader: Managing change.
- The role of science and technology in Saint Lucia's education system
- 8. Investigating the feasibility of IT certification programs as an alternative to CSEC IT at the secondary schools

Human Resource Training

- An evaluation of Teacher Training Programmes in Education (SALCC, MOE, UWI): Their present configuration/ Needs Analysis of Teacher Training Effectiveness in preparing teachers for classroom practice
- An audit of existing Human Resource Skills within the Education sector.
- Orientation programming for new teachers/ principals and Ministerial staff.
- Meta-Analysis of Teachers' Appraisals conducted within the last five years.
- Reforming Teacher Education: Impact of CSME, CARICOM's Proposal for Teaching Councils
- Impact of teacher training programmes on facilitating early detection of learning problems.
- Teacher Performance: A comparative study of teacher performance and years of service before and after attaining permanent status.
- Ethics and Professionalism: Dealing with poor performance among permanent staff.

Support Services

- Factors contributing to student dropout: Prevention Strategies for at risk students.
- An investigation into the impact of counselling on indiscipline in primary and secondary schools.
- How effective is "Second Step": A social/emotional programme used in grades K–2 to foster students' social/emotional development.
- The extent to which special programmes introduced in schools cater to the needs of gifted children.
- Reasons why children do not attend school:
  a. Who are those children?
  b. Where are they located?
  c. What are the reasons for non-attendance?
- An investigation into the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the infant years (K– Grade 2) of primary education in Saint Lucia.
- Teacher perception of students: The impact on teaching and learning.
- Student perception of teachers and school climate: Impact on behaviour and performance.

Governance and Management

- Investigate inter-school networking for improved information sharing and management.
- Development of a database with core information on the quality of each school's management.
- Communications and Networking within the MOE, Departments, Units, Sub–Offices.
- EMIS in practice
- Policy guidelines for the modernization of library services

General Topics for Quality/Improvement

- Effectiveness of a formal school review system.
- The development of minimum facilities standards for schools.
- The engagement of student councils in school improvement and school effectiveness.
- School context and our changing environment: Implications for effective planning.
- Input vs Output: A study of school's performance versus the resources at their disposal.
- A case study of School–Lead Reform
- Assessment of schools' conformance with UNICEF's Effective School Policy.
- An investigation into the impact of Child Friendly schools.

The research agenda in St. Lucia is also aligned with the goals of agencies such as the OECS, CARICOM and UNESCO. For instance, the *Strategic Plan for The Caribbean Community 2015 – 2019: Repositioning CARICOM Vol. 1 - The Executive Plan* (CARICOM, 2014) identified one of the main priorities of the organization, the *Mainstreaming of Research and Development and Innovation in all aspects of development of the Region.* This strategy involved the following initiatives:

- Consistently adopting an evidenced-based approach in managing the affairs of the Community, building a research agenda in collaboration with regional universities;

- Advocating for resources (state and private sector) to finance R & D in business development;

- Facilitating an enabling legislative environment for R & D and Innovation e.g. protection of intellectual property, incentives for the private sector, incentives for innovation which capitalize on indigenous knowledge and resources;

- Identifying and promoting opportunities for functional cooperation in R & D and Innovation; (e) Advocate for national school-based programmes (primary, secondary and tertiary) that drive, enable and reward R & D and Innovation (p.45).

Apart from demonstrating alignment with the goals of the regional agencies mentioned above, the research agenda for St. Lucia with its focus on areas such as ECD and language policy and the inclusion of Kwéyòl in education, is reflective of encouraging equity and inclusion of all students and local culture. This is a strength with warrants special mention.

Some specialized organizations or agencies that provide research, and/or provide support for the development and innovation in education in Saint Lucia include but are not limited to the Commonwealth of Learning, Global Partnership for Education, UK Department for International Development, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, JIICA, European Development Fund, Embassy of ROC-Taiwan, World Bank, GEF Small Grants Programme, Caribbean Development Bank, Compete Caribbean, OECS Commission, Invest Saint Lucia, Export Saint Lucia, Ministry of Finance Research Department, Ministry of Education Corporate Planning Unit, National Competitiveness and Productivity Council, and Advanced Intellectual Methods.

Provisions for the management of educational research in St. Lucia are articulated in the *Saint Lucia Education Act 1999* (revised 2005). The Act articulates the legal framework that permits continuous improvement and adequate articulation between actors in the public sector, the private sector, academia, and civil society in order to detect needs and to articulate joint work strategies as it specifies the function of the Planning Unit of the Ministry of Education and the function of the research officers as well as the role of key stakeholders such as Curriculum Officers and the Educational Testing Unit. The Planning Unit is to conduct research on behalf of the Ministry of Education while the Research Officer is charged with developing a research agenda.

Curriculum Officers and the Educational Testing Unit are also expected to engage in research.

The dissemination of research and data is facilitated by the *Saint Lucia Open Data Policy 2017*. According to the *St. Lucia Open Data* webpage, under the Open Data Policy data is 'free and easily accessible for use and reuse" (Government of St. Lucia, 2017). This policy details one consistent approach to the sharing of data held by all agencies of government including financial information, core reference information such as maps, company register and weather, census and statistical information, education information, tourism information and other "high value" datasetswhich are in great demand and/or are of great importance to a high number of data users.

3.6 RESOURCES INVOLVED IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, MOBILIZATION AND USE

Funding constraints continue to negatively impact research and innovation efforts and these constraints have become even more pronounced with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, the total expenditure for research and innovation allocated to the Department of Education for the 2020/2021 period was $224, 583, 500.00 EC while for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Health it was $18, 018, 200.00 EC and $182, 422, 800.00 EC, respectively (Government of St. Lucia, 2020 p. vii). According to the *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2020-2021*, in an effort to encourage, promote and facilitate innovation in the public and private sector in areas of entrepreneurship, technology, products, services and inventions, in 2020-2021 $656,512.00 EC was allocated while the projection for 2021/2022 is 674,045.00 EC (Government of St. Lucia, 2020, p.444).

PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION INCLUDE:

- Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through the enabling environment, enhancing skills training offerings, instituting a National Apprenticeship/Internship/Traineeship Programme, and establishing a Workforce Development Centre to better align educational outputs to the demands and dynamism of the labour market.

- Strengthening Data Governance and Management (inclusive of improving datasets for Education and other sectors)

- Business incubation and acceleration programmes that will foster a higher level of entrepreneurship within Saint Lucian society

- The Establishment of an Innovation Lab (currently being established at the SALCC)

- The Strengthening of a Research Repository

3.7 KNOWLEDGE USE AND DISSEMINATION MECHANISMS

The channels of dissemination of innovations and general knowledge on educational policies in education include but are not limited to:

- Small Scale Technical Support through the Innovation and Career Development Centres

- Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Symposium 2020

- Social media platforms of the Department of Education

- National media broadcasts

- Stakeholder Consultations

- Various seminars and conferences across both public and private sectors

The extensive data compiled in the *Education Statistical Digest* also allow for extensive use of evidence in decision-making processes in the school community. The data are readily available to education and other stakeholders in both the public and private sector. Data also inform policy design both at the level of the Ministry of Education and at the school level by principals and other administrators. The Education Statistical Digest and other research reports can also be accessed online because of the *Government of St. Lucia, Open data policy*. Notwithstanding, there is need for the development of a centralized EMIS which would allow for educational institutions to engage in the entry of data which would be available to education districts and the Ministry of education.

Teachers undergoing in-service training also contribute to the pool of available educational research in St. Lucia. When teachers read for the Bachelors' Degree in Education (UWI or SALCC), and the Diploma in Education they complete research methods courses which equip them with the necessary theoretical knowledge on the basis of which they must complete research projects implementing Action Research or other types of research to investigate classroom phenomena as a means of improving instructional practice. One issue is that this research is not always made available to the CPU.

School communities incorporate the use of evidence and knowledge in working within professional learning communities via which school communities are also able to share evidence and knowledge. School administrators use evidence and knowledge to develop School Development and/or School Improvement Plans, teachers apply evidence and knowledge in Unit and Daily Lesson Planning as well as instructional delivery. Students are provided with opportunities to use evidence and knowledge in various curricula, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as projects.

3.8 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Some of the challenges and knowledge gaps related to the development and implementation of educational policy in St Lucia are:

- The need for increased stakeholder engagement: The process for developing educational policy is described as being centralized, yet consultative. However, policies are decided by the Cabinet and Parliament while the Chief Education Officer is responsible for developing administrative principles and procedures for implementing general policies and administering the school system (Education Act, Section 7, 2b, p. 562). This reinforces that the process is in fact centralized.

- The need for Impact Assessment and Evaluation research and/or data) which would support more effective education planning in Saint Lucia: one of the main impediments to the development of policy is inadequate research on impact assessments of various issues. These assessments are necessary to guide the process of policy development.

- Convincing teachers to share their research with the Ministry of Education upon completion of studies: Teachers do not always submit final copies of their research projects to the Ministry of Education. This is perhaps one of the reasons for a dearth of research.

- Issues of funding: funding for much needed research on impact assessments is not always available.

- The need for and the maintenance of a centralized EMIS to facilitate data entry at educational institutions, and retrieval of this data at the Education District and Ministry level: Access to this centralized database would allow for timely access to data required for policy decisions.

CHAPTER 4:
TEACHERS & EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

The purpose of this chapter is to characterize the teacher profession in St. Lucia, to identify the main challenges faced by the profession and to analyse the identified challenges. Moreover, knowledge gaps as well as innovations that could have been implemented and need to be disseminated/ scaled up are highlighted.

4.1 TEACHER POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

The following information on the characteristics of the teacher population focuses mainly on gender and on whether the teachers are trained or untrained.[5] The number of schools at each educational level, the number of teaching staff assigned and students for each level (where applicable), pupil/teacher ratios and surpluses are outlined in Table 9. The data presented are according to that published by the *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018*: *Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020* (Government of St. Lucia, 2018). Data on the aspirations and socioeconomic status of teachers are unavailable.

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5   Data on the qualifications of primary school teachers and preschool teachers were unavailable.

Table 9 : Characteristics of Teachers in St. Lucia during the 2017-2018 Academic Year

Level	Public/Private	Number of institutions	Distribution (Urban/Rural)	Teaching Staff	Gender of Teaching Staff (%)	Trained/Untrained Teachers	Specialist Teachers	Surplus/Demand	Student enrolment	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
Pre-school	Private/Church Assisted	94	Urban/Rural	357		N/A	N/A	N/A	3482	10
Primary	Public	74	Urban/Rural	1004	68% F 32%M	90%/907 Trained (107M; 800F) 11.79% M, 88.2% F	263	Surplus 14	14894	D1-21 D2-24 D3-22 D4-18 D5-19 D6-20 D7-11 D8-13
Primary	Private	6	Urban	73	95%F 5%M	N/A	N/A	N/A	980	13
Secondary	Public	22	Urban/Rural	1006	71%F 29%M	77%/ 770 Trained (209M; 561F) 27.14% M; 72.85% 70%/ 702 (Graduate Teachers-Teachers with at least a Bachelor's Degree)-78.2%/ 549 Trained; 21.79%/ 153 Untrained	N/A	Surplus 15 (2017-2018) 16: Projected surplus 2021-2021	11551	11
Secondary	Private	3	Urban	32	78%F 22%M	N/A	N/A	N/A	242	8
Special Education	Public	5	Urban	68		51 Trained	N/A	N/A	395	6
Post-Secondary	Public	2	Urban	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	269	N/A
Tertiary	Public	1	Urban						1866	N/A
Tertiary	Private	1 college 3 off-shore medical schools 1 University	Urban/Rural	18 54 (data for 2 out of 3 medical schools)	54%M, 46%F (data for 2 out of 3 medical schools)	N/A	N/A	N/A	209 311 (data for only 2 out of 3 medical schools) 559	N/A

Source: Government of St. Lucia. (2018). *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020.*

According to Table 9, three hundred and fifty seven (357) teachers served the 94 private preschools on island during the 2017-2018 academic year. These preschools are distributed around the island across both rural and urban areas and had a total enrolment of 3482 students. During the same period, 1004 teachers (68% F, 32% M) served the 74 public primary schools in St. Lucia, in which 14894 students were enrolled. Of these teachers, 90% were trained (11.79% M, 88.2% F). At the primary schools, there

were also 263 specialist teachers who taught areas such as Special Education, Music, French, and Physical Education. Most teachers in the primary school system have therefore completed teacher training and this can be viewed as a strength of the system. A surplus of 14 teachers was recorded for the period.73 teachers (95% F, 5%M) served the 980 students enrolled at the 6 private primary schools. While the 74 public primary schools are distributed across both urban and rural communities, the 6 private schools are all located in the capital city, Castries.

11,551 students were enrolled across the 22 public secondary schools. 1006 teachers (71%F, 29% M) were recorded for these institutions. Of the 1006 teachers, 77%/770 were trained (27.14%M; 72.85% F). 702 of the total numbers of secondary school teachers were identified as Graduate Teachers. i.e., teachers with at least a Bachelor's Degree. Of these, 549 or 78.2% were trained. A surplus of 15 teachers was noted for the period. The total pupil/teacher ratio at the secondary school level is 11. The secondary schools are located across St. Lucia in both rural and urban communities. 32 teachers (78% F, 22%M) were attached to the 3 private secondary schools which had a total student enrolment of 242 students. All 3 private secondary schools are located in the capital city, Castries. 68 teachers serve the 395 students enrolled at the 5 Special Education centres. Of these 51 are trained.

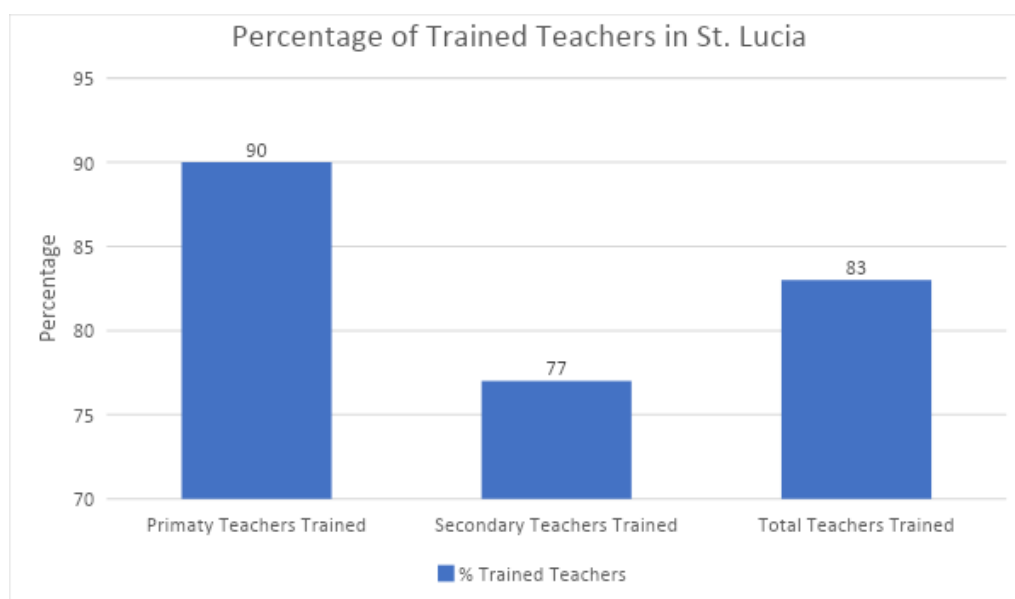**Figure 4: Percentage of Trained Teachers in St. Lucia**

Source: Government of St. Lucia. (2018). *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020*.

According to the 2018 data, a total of 83% of teachers at the primary and secondary levels in St. Lucia are trained (90% Primary and 77% Secondary). This is noteworthy and speaks to the overall competence of teachers for instructional practice. Figure 4 summarizes the preceding data. In terms of the total distribution of teachers at the primary and secondary levels according to gender, most teachers are female. Females account for 69.5% of the total number of teachers at the two levels. Figure

5 provides details. At each level, the male teachers account for less than half of the teacher populations. The data therefore suggest a shortage of male teachers in the education system.

Figure 5 Proportion of Male and Female Teachers by School Level in St. Lucia
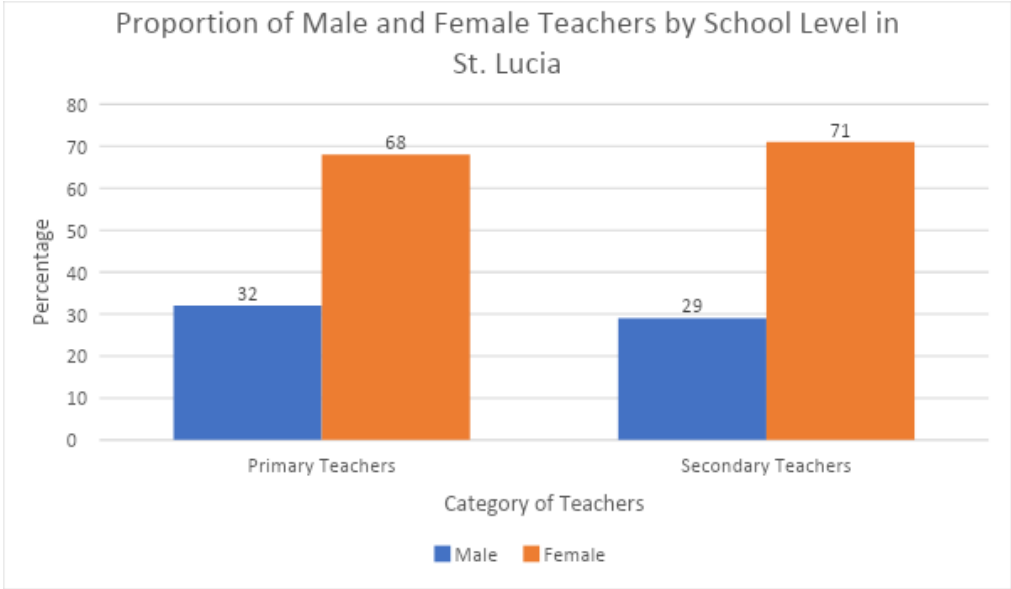

Source: Government of St. Lucia. (2018). *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018*: *Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020.*

The two (2) post-secondary institutions located in an urban area, offer post-secondary and tertiary level programmes including CAPE subjects and other programmes. 269 students accessed their offerings. The sole public tertiary institution has its main campus in the capital but offers some of its programmes through the post-secondary institutions located in the south of St. Lucia. During the 2017-2018 academic year 1866 students were enrolled.

During the 2017-2018 academic year five (5) private tertiary institutions were identified in St. Lucia. The available data indicate that one (1) of these, a college located in the capital, employed 18 faculty to serve 209 students. A combined total of 54 teachers (54%M, 46%F) were employed at 2 of the 3 registered offshore medical schools. These teachers served a combined total of 311 students. 559 students were enrolled at the University of the West Indies Open Campus, St. Lucia, which is located in the capital.

4.2 PRE-SERVICE EDUCATION

Currently there are no policies or programs which serve as incentives to recruit teachers in St. Lucia and that can be considered a weakness of the system. In terms of pre-service training, the Pre-primary teacher requirement is the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate. In order to teach at the Infant or Primary levels, individuals must possess a Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate with at least 5 subjects

at General Proficiency levels 1, 11, or 111, including English Language, and Mathematics and at least one Science subject. To teach at the secondary school level, individuals must possess a General Certificate of Education Advanced ("A") Level passes or CAPE passes. SALCC certificates are accepted in place of "A" Levels along with degrees in relevant subject areas. Preservice training accounts for 80 percent of the teacher training delivery structure in St. Lucia (Knight, 2019). This training is provided primarily through the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.

At present, the actions and operations of teachers in St. Lucia are guided by the *Education Act of St. Lucia* (1999) and the *St. Lucia Teachers' Union Code of Ethics*. The latter document articulates the importance of maintaining the esteem of the profession in the eyes of students and the general public and earning the respect of these two stakeholders. To this end, the *St. Lucia Teachers' Union Code of Ethics* articulates guidelines aimed at encouraging respectable teacher conduct. The areas covered by the guidelines are *Commitment to Students, Relation to Colleagues, Commitment to the Profession, Commitment to the SLTU* and *Commitment to the Community*. The aforementioned guidelines govern all categories of teachers, including principals.

It is important to note, that the *OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012-2026*, states that one of the performance indicators for achieving the Strategic Imperative, *Improv[ing] Teacher Quality, Management and Motivation*, is the establishment of teacher professional standards (p.33). The (1) *OECS Teacher Professional Development Model* and a (2) *Harmonized Policy Framework for Teacher Education in the Caribbean* have enabled Saint Lucia to put teacher professional standards in place.

4.3 IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND CAREER PATH

In September 2019, for the first time, both the Department of Education, Innovation and Gender Relations and The St. Lucia Teachers' Union organized induction sessions for pre-service teachers. The sessions organized by the union focused on familiarizing teachers with the St. Lucia Teachers' Union Code of Ethics, the Collective Agreement and the Education Act. Due to the COVID19 pandemic these sessions were not held in 2020 by either entity. Prior to the formal induction sessions, the norm was that school administrations would conduct induction sessions for new teachers.

In service training is offered to teachers at the Associate Degree, Bachelors and Diploma (Dip. Ed) levels. Untrained teachers can access the Associate Degree offerings of the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE). The JBTE, established in 2000 via Ordinance 14 of the Charter of the University of the West Indies, serves as the main certifying body for teachers of the member countries and is responsible for regulating the programmes offered. Teachers receive training in *Early Childhood Education; Primary Education; Secondary Education* (with specialisation in the teaching of English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, History, Geography, Business, Modern Languages); and *Technical and Vocational Education* (Industrial Arts and Home Economics).

In St Lucia, the JBTE programmes are accessed solely from the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College over a two-year period. Teachers who successfully complete the programmes are awarded the Associate Degree in Education (ADE). This certification is recognized as the equivalent of the first year/ Level 1 of the UWI Bachelor of Education Programme. The JBTE comprises Ministries of Education and national colleges in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Teachers' Associations; and the School of Education at The Cave Hill campus.

As of the 2020/2021 Academic Year, untrained teachers can also access the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education. This program is a four-year programme. Those teachers who have already successfully completed the JBTE Associate Degree in Primary/Secondary Education, are expected to complete this program in two years. Graduate teachers who are untrained, can access the Diploma in Education offered by the School of Education of the University of the West Indies, Cave-Hill Campus. This program is offered through the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College and should be completed within one academic year. Untrained teachers can enrol in the Bachelors Degree in Education offered by the School of Education, UWI, Cave-Hill Campus and also access at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. This is a 3-year part-time programme. Table 10 summarizes the options for in-service training in St Lucia. That there are multiple options for in-service training provided to teachers is a strength of the education system in St. Lucia.

Table 10 Options for In-Service Training of Teachers in St. Lucia

Programme	Duration	Offering Institution	Accessed by
Associate Degree in Primary or Secondary Education (ADE)	2 years (full-time)	ECJBTE/Sir Arthur Lewis Community College	Untrained Teachers
Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed)	1 year (part-time)	School of Education, UWI, Cave-Hill Campus/Sir Arthur Lewis Community College	Graduate Teachers
Bachelor's Degree in Education (Educational Leadership, Social Studies)	3 Years (part-time	School of Education, UWI, Cave-Hill Campus/Sir Arthur Lewis Community College	Trained Teachers
Bachelor's Degree in Primary Education	4 years/ 2 years (full-time)	Sir Arthur Lewis Community College	Untrained and Trained Teachers respectively

Additionally, in-service education for teachers who are already employed by the government includes training in instructional delivery that is more student-centered, and that infuses ICT in their pedagogical practice as is evidenced in the Blended and Distributed approaches.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the need for the reconceptualization of planning for instruction. Teacher educators need to be very sound in technology integration and the use of ICT to enhance instruction. This issue also extends to principals. In order to address this issue, the Government of St. Lucia, in the *Medium-Term Development Strategy: 2020-2023: Nou Tout Ansanm* (2020), highlights the formulation of an ICT initiative which is geared at retooling and upskilling principals, teachers and other relevant stakeholders of the education system in the use of ICT, to ensure quality and effective instruction, equipping schools with the requisite ICT infrastructure, the introduction of e-books and the increase of the personnel attached to the ICT Unit. The preceding is in keeping with previous plans to improve the rigour and the quality of the education system articulated in the Education Sector Development plan 2015-2020 (2015) which focused on a need for:

- Enhanced teaching capacity and competence

- Enhanced technological literacy for effective delivery of curriculum; [and an]

- Improved culture of professionalism among educators.

Another of the major issues is attracting and subsequently retaining the services of qualified teachers particularly in some critical subject areas such as Mathematics, Science, English and ICT (OECS, 2012, p.23). Also linked to this issue are instances of teachers being assigned to teach subject areas in which they are not qualified.

It is important to note that the Education Sector Development plan 2015-2020, lists plans which point to areas which can be considered to be knowledge gaps. This document identifies the need to:

- Train teachers in outcomes-based assessment and using assessments to adjust the curriculum;

- Develop a strategy to enhance the use of varied pedagogical practices in the classroom employing differentiated instructional practices and applying multiple intelligence theory and practice in pedagogy;

- Increase teachers' understanding of the neurobiological and learning differences between boys and girls to ensure their application of this knowledge in pedagogical strategies that foster improved achievement in both boys and girls;

- Train and coach teachers in managing transitions at critical levels, Kindergarten, Grade 3 and Form 1 to enhance teachers' understanding of students' needs for adapting to the new demands of schooling;

- Develop teachers' and principals' interpersonal skills with a focus on training in communication, conflict management and emotional intelligence to be followed by modelling of appropriate behaviours for students.

4.4 TEACHER SALARY AND WORKING CONDITIONS

In order to get access to higher positions or to get a higher salary, teachers are required to present evidence of improved qualifications after taking advantage of several professional development opportunities (both short- and long-term) that will enable them to build on their current competencies and/or to become re-trained, re-skilled and re-tooled for the 21st century classroom and beyond. The career options for teachers which are contingent upon having the requisite qualification are Qualified/ trained teacher (AD Primary/ Secondary Education, B'Ed), Graduate Teacher- Bachelor's/ Master's Degree, Vice Principal- Bachelors/ Masters Degree, Principal- Masters Degree, District Education Officer- Masters Degree, School Counsellor- Masters' Degree. Career options also include teachers becoming education specialists as well as specialists in respective subject areas and teacher educators. While the opportunities for salary increases on the basis of qualifications exist, the career options within the education system are limited for teachers.

Table 11 outlines the various grades and monthly salaries ($EC) of individuals employed by the government of St. Lucia within the public and teaching service. This means that the salaries of teachers are comparable to those of civil servants. After 10 years of experience, the salary of a teacher would not be determined solely on the basis of experience. Qualifications are the basis upon which salaries are determined. There are special circumstances in which a combination of qualifications and experience are considered as the minimum qualifications for a post. For example, the minimum qualification to become a principal of a primary school is a Bachelor's Degree in Educational Administration or a related field, plus a Certificate/Diploma in Education, plus five (5) years' experience as a Qualified Teacher while for a secondary school principal it would be a Bachelor's Degree in Educational Administration or related field, plus five (5) years of experience in administration (i.e. head of department, dean of discipline, year head). The designations of teachers under the purview of the Teaching Service Commission based on qualifications are:

- Graduate Teacher III, II, I (Salary Grades 13, 12, 11 respectively)

- Principals IV, III, II, I (Salary Grades 17, 16, 15, 14 respectively)

- Teacher II (a)- Salary Grade 5, II (b)- Salary Grade 4, II (c)- Salary Grade 3

- Teacher III (a)- Salary Grade 7, (b)- Salary Grade 6

- Teacher IV- Salary Grade 10

- Vice Principal

- Special Teacher (Cadet)

A teacher who is untrained and possesses only pre-service training would be placed at Grade 6 or 7 and would be paid based on CAPE or Associate Degree Qualifications. A trained teacher would be placed at Grade 9 A graduate teacher with a Bachelors Degree and evidence of being trained in teaching pedagogy and going through a

practicum would be at Grade 12 Step 2. Teachers/lecturers at the Sir Arthur Lewis community college are paid between Grade 14 and 15 based on qualifications which would distinguish them as Assistant Lecturers or Lecturers. A lecturer with post graduate qualifications and who is teacher-trained would be paid at Grade 15 Step 4. Deans are placed at Grade 19.

Table 11 Government of St. Lucia Monthly Salary Scales ($EC)

Grade	Min Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Max Step
21	12,831.00	6,810.35	6,892.30	6,597.28	4,958.23	3,253.54
20	9,828.00	6,449.77	6,523.53	6,261.57	4,597.63	2,884.75
19	8,559.50	6,113.76	6,187.51	5,925.26	4,237.03	2,515.98
18	6,728.40	5,777.75	5,851.50	5,589.25	3,876.39	2,204.55
17	6,376.01	5,441.73	5,515.49	5,23.25	3,564.96	1893.13
16	6,040.00	5,122.12	5,187.69	4,892.66	3,196.17	1,581.70
15	5,703.99	4,761.52	4,827.09	4,532.06	2,827.39	1,270.29
14	5,367.98	4,400.92	4,466.49	4,171.46	2,466.81	
13	5,056.55	4,040.33	4,105.90	3,819.03	2,155.37	
12	4,695. 95	3,704.30	3,761.66	3,507.60	1843.95	
11	4,335.36	3,392.88	3,450.24	3,138.81	1,532.53	
10	3,974.76	3,024.09	3,081.45	2,770.02	1,221.12	
9	3,646.94	2,655.30	2,712.66	2,417.63		
8	3,335.51	2,319.29	2,368.46	2,106.20		
7	2,966.72	2,007.86	2,057.03	1,794.78		
6	2,597.94	1,696.44	1,745.61	1,483.36		
5	2,270.12	1,385.01	1,434.19	1,171.95		
4	1,958.68	1,073.60	1,22.77			
3	1,647.27					
2	1,335.84					
1	1,024.43					

Source: Government of St. Lucia. (2020). *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2020-2021.*

The workday of a Primary school teacher runs from 9 am to 3pm (6 hours). That of secondary schools is also typically within that time period. The norm is that each teacher works within a single school. However, teachers such as the Literacy Coordinators would be responsible for coordinating literacy activities within schools within specific education districts. School Counsellors are responsible for the schools (primary and secondary) that are located in their assigned education district.

The Teaching Service Commission which along with the Public Service Commission, comprises the Services Commission of St. Lucia, has as its priorities the following:

- Review appointment and disciplinary processes/procedures, with a view to promoting consistency in the treatment of individuals and orderly employment relations;

- Assessment of the effectiveness of the exercise of the revised delegated appointing authority to Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department;

- Review of existing Public and Teaching Service policies, congruent with Public Sector Reform process; and

- Development of performance measures that contribute to achieving the Agency's strategic objectives.

Additionally, the Teaching Service Commission is concerned with achieving the following key results:

- Reduction of the lead-time between processing of requests and final decision of the Commission

- Increased public confidence in the government hiring practices

- A more disciplined work force

- Recruitment and selection of skilled, competent, qualified persons with integrity and

- Improved established appointment and disciplinary procedures/processes

- Increased level of compliance of delegation of authority

4.5 TEACHER UNIONS

The only Teachers' Union on island is the St. Lucia Teachers' Union (SLTU), which was established in 1934. The Executive of the St. Lucia Teachers' Union comprises the President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, Treasurer and Public Relations Officer. The individuals who serve in these positions are teachers who do so while maintaining their teaching or administrative positions with the exception of the General Secretary who is seconded to the SLTU for the period of service. The members of the executive are elected by the membership of the SLTU every two years. All teachers who teach from early childhood to tertiary levels are eligible to join the SLTU. The St. Lucia Teachers' Union is the sole bargaining agent for teachers, principals, and curriculum officers in the education system.

The objectives of the (SLTU) are:

1. To unite all the teachers of St. Lucia into a common association.

2. To obtain and maintain just and proper wages, terms and conditions of employment and generally to protect the interest of members. To provide for members legal and / or other advice and assistance when and where necessary in connection with their employment.

3. To examine, promote and / or comment on any and all legislation and regulations affecting the union, and / or its members both as teachers and as citizens.

4. To promote and advance the case of social justice through education.

5. To work towards the elimination of illiteracy within the shortest possible time.

6. To afford the government and Education Authorities the benefit of teachers' collective ideas, opinions and experiences on educational social and cultural matters.

7. To work towards the establishment and maintenance of a relevant domestic system of education which allows teachers and students the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes.

8. To create institutions within the union that will improve and ensure the social, economic, professional and cultural welfare of teachers.

9. To seek to exert the influence of teachers on matters of national importance.

10. To establish, carry on or participate in the business of printing or publishing newspapers, journals, books, pamphlets or other publications that are in agreement with the aims of the union.

11. To regulate relations and to settle disputes between members, members and employer and between members and other workers by amicable agreements whenever possible.

12. To establish and maintain relations with Teachers' Organizations and Trade Unions locally, regionally and internationally, and to promote the Trade Union Movement.

The SLTU networks with other organizations (Regional, International) such as Education International, International Labour Organisation and Caribbean Union of Teachers to stay connected with global education issues which impact education and workers. The SLTU operates independently of the government as the sole collective bargaining representative for the employees guided by *The Collective Agreement between the Government of Saint Lucia and the St. Lucia Teachers' Union April 01, 2019 – March 31, 2022* (2019). The document contains 52 articles and its purpose is:

1. To maintain orderly collective bargaining relations between the Employer and the Union;

2. To promote the mutual interests of the Employer and its employees.

3. To achieve the highest level of employee performance consistent with good health and safety;

4. To establish salaries, wages and conditions of employment consistent with the salaries, wages and conditions of work in the area of positions of comparable duties and responsibilities; and

5. To provide for the establishment of procedures for the expeditious settlement of grievances binding the Employer and the Union, thus ensuring that work shall proceed without interruption, pending the investigation and/or settlement of grievances and disputes.

From the perspective of the SLTU, however, the major issues affecting teachers include but are not limited to:

• Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions- most recently these would have had to do with issues of air quality and the presence of mould at various educational institutions and of course with the safety issues precipitated by the COVID19 pandemic.

• Teacher readiness to effectively engage in Distributed Learning (utilizing multiple teaching modalities);

• Limited Professional Development opportunities.

• A lack of social engagement opportunities with the Ministry of Education and other partners, in the education reform process.

• Lack of participation of teachers in dialogue on a range of professional issues – curricula, pedagogy, student assessment and organization of education within schools.

• lack of psychosocial and pedagogical support by the employer: particularly given the impact of and disruptions in the business of teaching and learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have in many situations felt helpless and unprepared to assist students.

4.6 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

The following challenges were noted for teachers:

• a dearth of male teachers in the education system

• lack of preparation for the rigours of online instruction

• the need for incentives to attract teachers into the teaching service

• the need for continued training in the effective use of ICT for both teachers and other educational leaders

• need for continued formal induction sessions for new teachers

• Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions

- Limited Professional Development opportunities.

- A lack of social engagement opportunities with the Ministry of Education and other partners, in the education reform process.

- Participation of teachers in dialogue on a range of professional issues – curricula, pedagogy, student assessment and organization of education within schools.

- lack of psychosocial and pedagogical support by the Ministry of Education and by extension the Government of St. Lucia

CHAPTER 5:
VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the main educational gaps in terms of access, attainment, completion and achievement. Furthermore, special attention is given to diversity and intercultural education both in practice and in the curriculum. This chapter also illustrates any potential gender inequality as well as any other phenomenon contributing to or threatening identities or reproducing inequality for any group because of sexual orientation or gender identity. It ends with a summary of main challenges and knowledge gaps specific to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

While there are continued issues of domestic violence, birth registrations and child labour (less than 2%) (UNICEF, 2017), the Constitution of St. Lucia guarantees a comprehensive set of fundamental rights and freedoms to which every individual is entitled. The key national policies, laws and programmes which provide for equality and fundamental rights and freedoms are:

- Constitution of St. Lucia

- The Children and Young Persons Act (revised 2001)

- The Family Court Act (revised 1994, 2001)

- The Earning Act, 1996

- The Criminal Code of 1957 (revised 1992 and 2003)

- The Domestic Violence Act of 1995 (revised 2005)

- The Protocol for the Management of Child Abuse and Neglect in St. Lucia (draft 2008)

- The Counter Trafficking Act, 2010 (UNICEF, 2017)

Additionally the following protection bills exist:

- The Child Justice Bill: The main purpose of the Bill is to provide for the care, protection and adoption of a child and to ensure that the child's best interest is of paramount consideration.

- The Child Care Protection and Adoption Bill: The main purpose of the Bill is to establish a judicial process applicable to a child in conflict with the law and to protect the rights of the child (Government of St. Lucia, n.d).

One challenge related to the needs of children is that there are still areas to ensure their complete protection under the law which need to be addressed. These areas are

legislative and policy framework, survival rights and protection rights UNICEF, 2017 pp. 10-11).

Some points related to the Legislative and Policy framework were the need to:

- Approve and implement Draft ECD (Early Childhood Development Policy)

- Accelerate the final drafting and approval of the four OECS "Model Bills" currently under discussion, including those dealing with juvenile justice and child protection.

- Complete and implement draft regulations for the Status of Children legislation.

- Develop and implement a Juvenile Justice policy that includes guidelines for training of all staff working with juveniles across departments and in residential centres.

- Develop and promote policies that eliminate corporal punishment, keep children in school as well as policies that encourage positive parenting approaches.

Special Education Needs Learners and At-Risk learners remain a priority when it comes to the development of educational policy, planning and development. Therefore, issues which reflect inequalities or gaps in educational access which these students may face are discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

5.1: GENDER GAPS: TRENDS AND POLICIES

This section summarizes some of the areas in which gender gaps have manifested in St. Lucia. The Education Sector Development Plan (2015-2020) specifically highlights the following as key priorities:

- Closing the performance gap between boys and girls;

- Enhanced performance of all learners, particularly those at-risk; and

- Equality and equity in education irrespective of socio-economic, religious, ethnic, gender, etc. background of children.

These areas of focus remain relevant especially given current gender differences in education. These differences are evident in terms of school dropout and repetition rates, as well as results from standardized assessments.

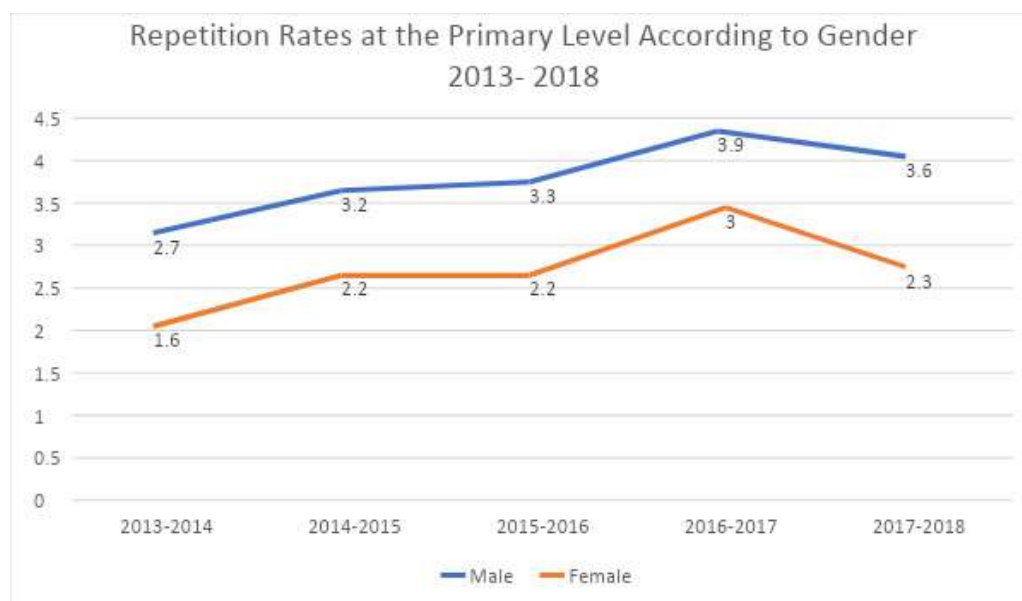### REPETITION AND DROPOUT RATES AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

Four hundred and forty-nine (449) repeaters were recorded at public primary schools in 2017/18, of which 62% were boys. The repetition rate was therefore 3.5 percent for Males and 2.2 percent for Females. There was also a decrease of 16.4% in the number of repeaters from 2016/17 to 2017/18. However, for that period, the data available[6] indicate that out of the 449 repeaters, 222 were at the Kindergarten level. This is 49% of the

6   Data on repetition rates according to grade level are available only for Grades K- 6.

total and a cause for concern because it suggests that perhaps students may have difficulty with foundational concepts. Of these Kindergarten students, 132 were males, representing 59% of the group suggesting that a disparity in performance according to gender manifests from the earliest formal educational level. The dropout rate at the primary school level in the same year was 0.1 percent for Males, but no females dropped out during that year. Observations of repetition rates between 2013 -2018 also indicate a higher rate for males than females. Figure 6 highlights the differences.

Figure 6: Repetition Rates at the Primary Level between 2013 and 2018

Source: Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020, 2019.

REPETITION AND DROPOUT RATES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

There were two hundred and twelve (212) school leavers in 2016/17. This figure included the number of students who dropped out and transferred out of Saint Lucia. As in the previous years, the male dropout rate was higher than that for females. Males accounted for approximately 62% of the total number of dropouts. This suggests that issues with male dropouts persist to the secondary school level. The dropout rate at the secondary level was 1.7 M and 1.2 F and the repetition rate was 0.4 Males and 0.4 Females. At this level, the repetition rates did not indicate a disparity according to gender.

EXAMINATION PERFORMANCES: PRIMARY LEVEL

The data on performance of primary school students in the national examinations are presented in Figures 7-9.

Figure 7 Grade Two Performance on National Assessment (2017-2018)
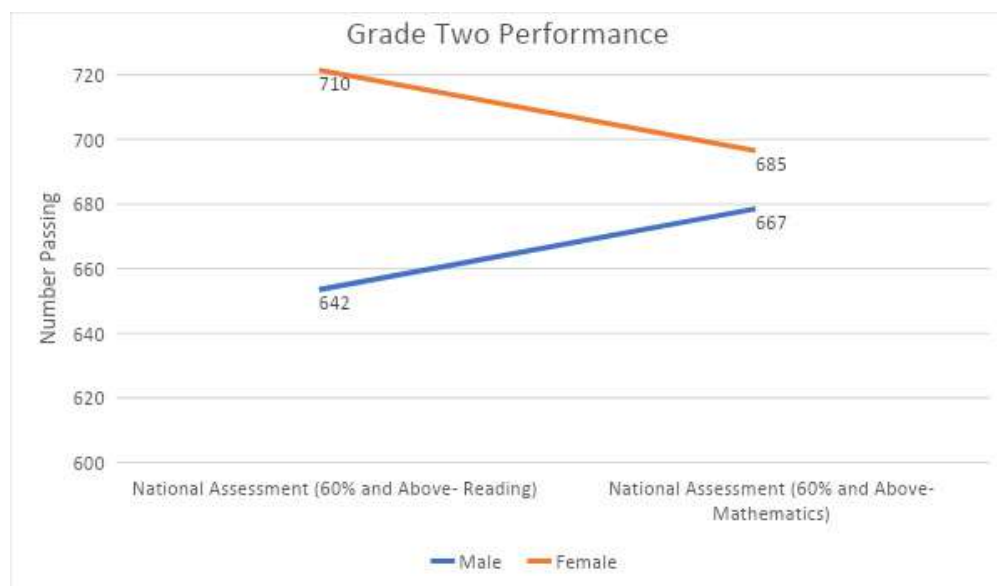
Source: OECS Education Statistical Digest (2017-2018)

In terms of the Grade two performance in the National Assessment, the number of females gaining 60% and above was higher for both Reading and Mathematics.

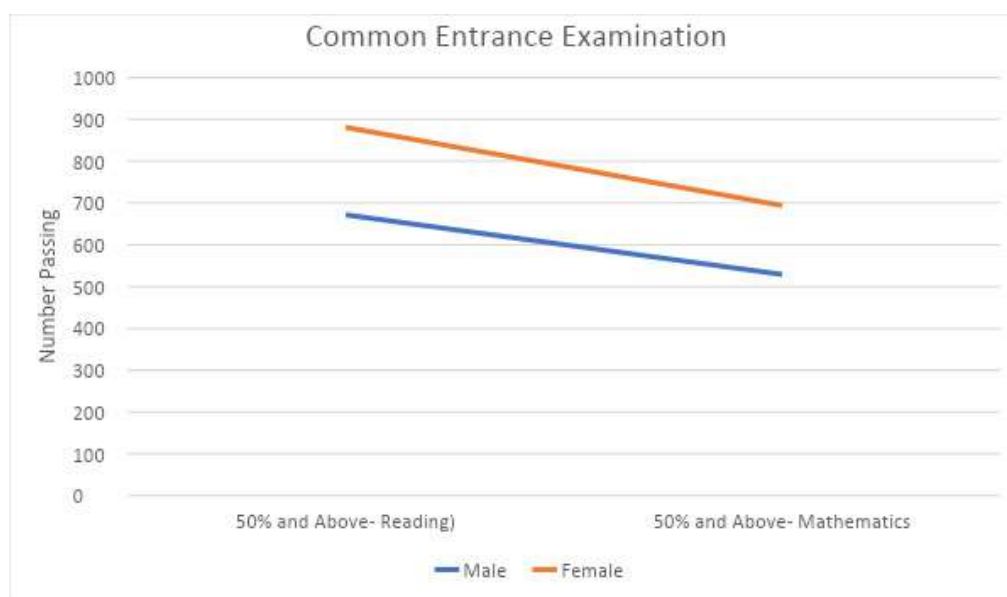## Figure 8: Grade Four Performance on National Assessment (2017-2018)
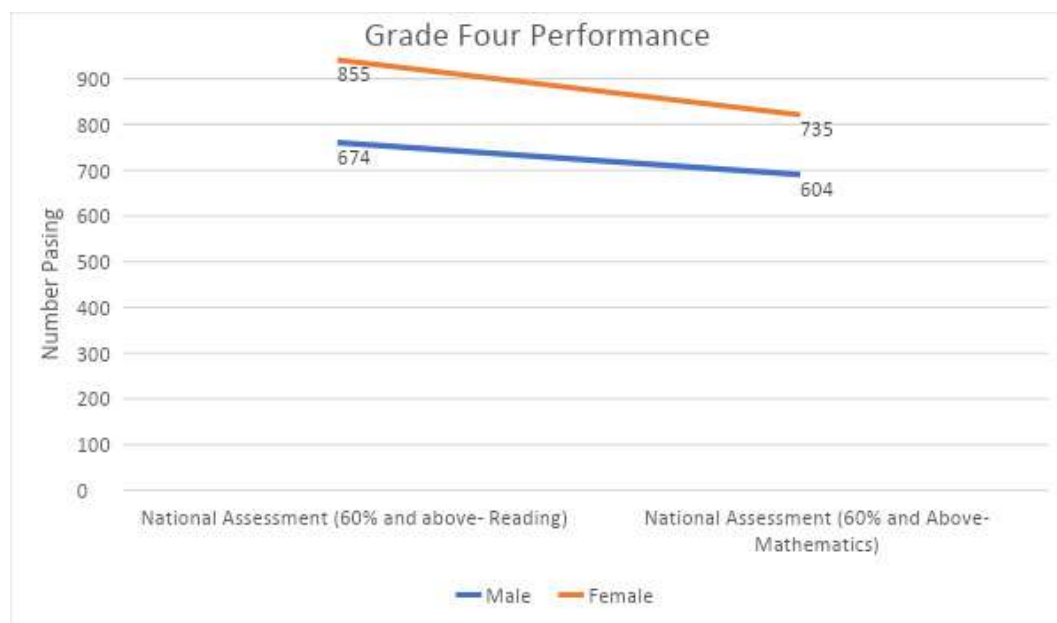
Source: OECS Education Statistical Digest (2017-2018)

Similar to the National Assessment performance recorded for Grade Two students, more females attained 60% and above on the Reading and Mathematics Assessments at the Grade Four level.

Figure 9: Common Entrance Performance 2017-2018

Source: OECS Education Statistical Digest (2017-2018)

The Common Entrance performance in the 2017-2018 academic year also indicated that the females outperformed their male peers on the Reading and Mathematics Assessments.

## EXAMINATION PERFORMANCES: SECONDARY LEVEL

According to the *OECS Education Statistical Digest (2017-2018)*, in 2018 when secondary school students sat the regional CESC examinations girls generally tended to perform higher than their male counterparts. Table 12 indicates the performance of the cohort by gender in selected subject areas.

Table 12 *National Performance in 2018 CSEC Examinations According to Gender*

Subject	% Males Passing	% of Females Passing
English A	62.50%	72.80%
English B	57.9	83.7
Math	48.4	50.4
Principles of Business	89.8	91.7
Physics	60.9	74.1
Biology	71.1	70.3
Chemistry	75.4	77.2

The tendency of females to outperform the male peers was also evident when TVET results are considered. While more males would have been examined in each subject area, the performance of the females were better, save for Clothing and Textiles. Figure 10 contains this information.

Figure 10: National CSEC Performance in TVET Areas According to Gender (% Grades I-III)

National CSEC Performance in TVET Areas According to Gender (% Grades I-III), 2018
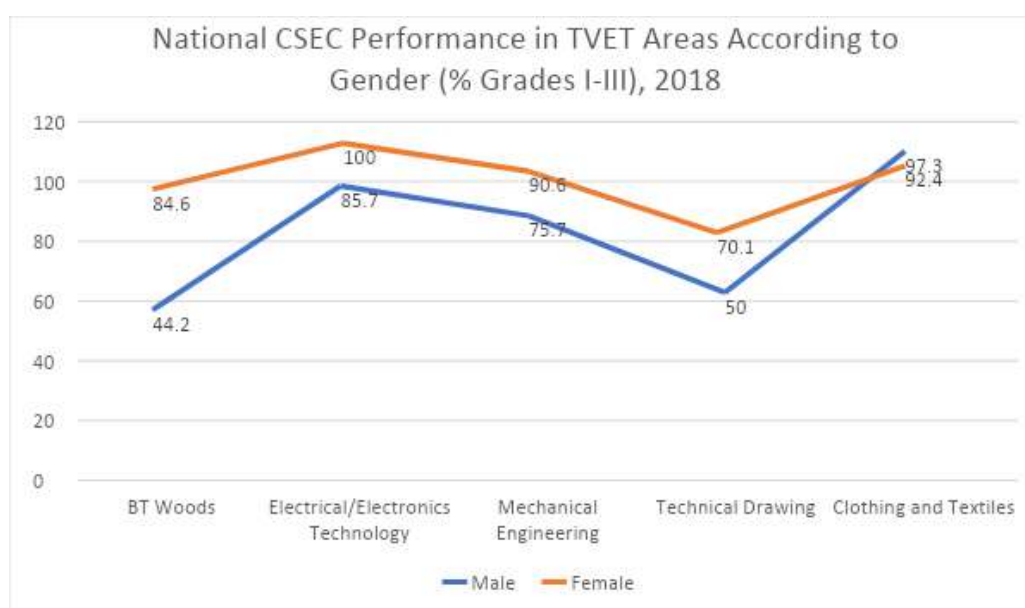
Source: OECS Education Statistical Digest (2017-2018)

As outlined in the Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020, the education system strives to provide equal opportunity for both boys and girls and eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. The disparity between the performance of boys and girls is cause for concern given that boys' dropout rates are higher, and that girls outperform boys in virtually all subject areas at the local and regional level. The gap between the performances of the two genders suggests the need to understand how boys learn, and to effectively facilitate the education of boys through specific teaching methodologies. Various schools have put mentorship and "big brother' programmes in place in an effort to assist with addressing the gender disparity between the performance of boys and girls.

5.2 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS/STUDENTS

One of the main documents providing guidance on support for vulnerable or disadvantaged learners is the Education Act, Division 4: Sections 83-86 – which speak to provisions for learners with special needs. These sections define special education students, special education programmes, identify who bears responsibility for the cost of the programmes and the procedures for determining special education needs. Additionally, the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) has always outlined plans and provisions for special needs education. The last ESDP, *Education Sector Development Plan 2015-2020*, opted to view special needs education as a crosscutting factor throughout the Education Sector, applying considerations for diverse learners of all ages, as well as the agencies that support them. It is noteworthy that the annual *Estimates of Expenditure* includes a budget for the Special Education Subsector in

each publication. For example, according to the *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2020-2021*, the allocation for Special Education was $4,557,342.00 EC while the Forward Estimates for 2021-2022 is $4, 638, 736.00 EC (Government of St. Lucia, p.419).

The Special Education Unit (SEU) is the main entity within the Government Service which conducts the assessment of students within the school age range, and the identification of special needs under the auspices of the Chief Education Officer. The Child Development and Guidance Centre (CDGC) is a non-profit, which receives an annual subvention to assess children in the 0 – 5 years age range. The Special Education Unit (SEU) falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education Innovation and Gender Relations of the Ministry of Education. It was established in 2000 and is charged with providing support services to learners with special educational needs. The SEU oversees:

- Academic assessments

- Speech/language evaluations

- Cognitive function testing

- Policy development

- In-service teacher training

- Student placement

- Special school supervision

Five (5) Special education centres cater for students with special needs including developmental and sensory impairments in St. Lucia. These centres are:

- the Blind Welfare Association (caters to individuals with visual impairments and multiple handicaps)

- the Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre (caters to individuals with hearing impairments, learning disabilities and multiple handicaps)

- the Dunnottar School (caters to individuals who are mentally challenged, display autistic behaviours and have learning disabilities)

- the Soufriere Special Education Centre (caters to individuals who have multiple handicaps, are physically challenged, have learning difficulties, have hearing and visual impairments, are autistic, are mentally retarded)

- the Vieux Fort Special Education Centre (caters to individuals who have multiple handicaps, are physically challenged, have learning difficulties, have hearing and visual impairments, are autistic, are mentally retarded. This centre was established by the Government of St. Lucia and is fully funded and maintained by the government.)

According to the *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020*, at these centres, student enrolment and total

number of teachers for 2017/18 were three hundred and ninety-five (395) and sixty-eight (68) respectively. Forty-one percent (41%) of students enrolled were female. The teacher-student ratio at the special education centres remained the same as the previous year at 1:6. There were fifty-one (51) trained teachers in 2017/18, an increase of ten (10) teachers from the previous year (Government of St. Lucia, 2018, p. xxv).

One of the main challenges faced by special needs students is that some of them in mainstream schools have significant achievement deficit gaps with their peers, but do not present for comprehensive assessments, either because of parental delinquency or economic challenges. These students advance through school because of automatic promotion practices with little appropriate intervention support. Dealing with this issue may lie in an examination of overarching goal 13 of *the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.* This goal focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals.

5.3 THE STUDENT SUPPORT UNIT AND PROVISIONS FOR VULNERABLE STUDENTS

The *National Government Social Protection Policy: A National Roadmap to Transformative Social Protection* defines Social Protection as "a set of interventions whose objective is to reduce social and economic risk and vulnerability, and to alleviate extreme poverty and deprivation. Apart from Safety Nets, it includes public and private social insurance and active labour market programmes (Government of St. Lucia, 2015, p.9). The total allocation for the *Ministry of Equity, Social Justice, Local Government And Empowerment* in the *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2020-2021,* includes the allocation for Social and Economic Support Services, which in 2020-2021 was $17, 660, 41.00 EC while the brought forward estimate for 2021-2022 is $8,551,489.00 EC (Government of St. Lucia, 2020, p. 387).

In order to assist students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the Ministry of Education operates a Student Support Services Unit, which offers the following services: Special Education, School Attendance, Counselling Services, and Student Welfare (school feeding and book bursary). Beneficiaries of the book bursary either contact the unit directly to request assistance from the book bursary or are referred by school principals. External units such as the Human Services unit may also provide referrals for students who require book bursaries and welfare assistance. A weakness of this process is that the procedure for accessing the services is not consistent or structured, as parents can seek the assistance for students on their own without any recommendation or support from school principals. As concerns the school feeding programmes, teachers and principals make recommendations on which students are in need of the assistance. The students to benefit from special education programmes would be determined on the basis of assessments undertaken both on the school and education district levels. Additionally, all Form 1 students entering secondary school for the first time, receive a one-off bursary of $500 EC.

All of these are accounted for in the ESDP and the Ministry's budget in the annual Estimates of Expenditure. For example, according to the *Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2020-2021*, the allocation for 2020-2021 for Social and Economic Support Services provided by the Ministry of Education was $3, 246, 810.00 EC while the Forward Estimate for 2021-2022 is $3,285,750 (Government of St. Lucia, 2020, p.419).

The Student Support Services Unit provides assistance in the form of bursaries and the School Feeding Programme to needy students in public primary schools. The *Department of Education, Statistical Digest 2018: Past Trends, Present Position and projections up to 2019/2020* states that one thousand six hundred and ninety-eight (1698) or 11.4% of the students from public primary schools benefited from bursaries in 2017/18. The School Feeding Programme is operational at seventy (70) of the seventy-four (74) public primary schools. In 2017/18, five thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven (5787) students or 39% of the public primary students benefited from the School Feeding Programme (Government of St. Lucia, 2019, p. xxi).

The Transportation Subsidy Programme and the School Feeding Programme were the welfare programmes offered to students attending public secondary schools. Of the eleven thousand, four hundred and twenty-two (11422) students enrolled at public secondary schools, two thousand, six hundred and ninety (2690) or 24% benefited from the Transportation Subsidy Programme. The School Feeding Programme was available at five (5) of the twenty-two (22) secondary schools. A total of two hundred and fifty (250) students were beneficiaries of this programme (p. xxiii). There is no educational policy for the young LGTB+ population. This represents a gap in terms of inclusion in the education system in St. Lucia.

5.4 DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

Taking into account cultural diversity is the draft *Language Policy St. Lucia* which was finalized in 2018. That policy takes into account the linguistic complexity of St. Lucia and articulates the place of each of the language varieties spoken on the island in education, particularly the indigenous language St. Lucian French, Creole known as locally as Kwéyòl, St. Lucian Standard English and the foreign languages French and Spanish. The policy is yet to be ratified as the Language Policy Technical Working Team is currently developing the Implementation Plan which is to accompany the policy. That this policy has been developed highlights the importance placed on integrating this critical aspect of St. Lucian culture into the education system and is a major strength. It also speaks to the inclusion and valorisation of a language which is still a first language of many of the nation's children.

5.5 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

The challenges faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of students in St. Lucia may be summarized as:

- Lack of policy frameworks and legislation to ensure the full protection of children under the law

- There is a need for the formal implementation of the ECD Policy so as to address important issues related to the instruction and assessment of students at that level.

- Some special needs students in the mainstream education system do not benefit from testing and other interventions because they are not presented for assessment because of parental delinquency and or their financial standing

- Disparity in academic performance at both the primary and secondary school levels according to gender (male repetition and dropout rates are higher) needs to be addressed.

CHAPTER 6:
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview and assessment of the education system in St. Lucia. It examined the national education context, provided a brief overview of the current impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the education system, education policy frameworks, and education programmes and priority areas of focus in St. Lucia. The report also described teachers and teaching conditions and the circumstances facing vulnerable and at-risk students. The assessment was punctuated by a series of strengthens and weaknesses which are outlined below.

STRENGTHS

The educational system in St. Lucia has realized many successes. For instance, education is a priority of the Government of St. Lucia and that is evident given that it is highlighted as one of the seven development pillars (also referred to as Key Results Areas) of the Government of Saint Lucia's *Medium Term Development Strategy 2020-2023*. Another notable feature of the system is that all students are able to access secondary level education because of the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) regardless of failing the Common Entrance Examination. This was a major achievement which sought to address issues of inequity in education. Equity has also been addressed through the provision of public support services including bursaries, special education services etc to students of all education levels, in order ensure that they have to access to education. The research agenda for St. Lucia with its focus on areas such as ECD and language policy and the inclusion of Kwéyòl in education, speaks to encouraging equity and inclusion of all students and local culture being a priority.

Additionally, all of the island's primary and secondary schools have been equipped with internet services which are supposed to enhance administrative and pedagogical practice. Students are also able to benefit from the presence of the GINET- Government of Saint Lucia Integrated wireless network which has enabled Wi-Fi connectivity in key population areas around the island. This certainly augurs well for any disadvantaged students who benefit from the e-Books Programme which will facilitate the distribution of an estimated 13, 000+ devices to teachers and students over a three-year period. These students will therefore be able to make maximum use of the devices.

The education system has benefitted extensively because of St. Lucia's membership in regional organizations. These institutions include CARICOM and the OECS. An examination of local education policies and the research agenda in many instances

reveals alignments with policy frameworks developed by these organizations in order to guide local policy development. For example, St. Lucia was highlighted as showing specific line items in their annual budgets reflective of OESS priorities even when that was not being included in the education sector plans of other members.

Another strength of the education system which warrants mention is large percentage of trained teachers at the primary and secondary school levels. This may be due in part the varied options for the in-service training of teachers. Notwithstanding, there is still need for greater incentives to attract teachers into the service.

WEAKNESSES

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The chapter on the overview of the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system brought to the fore that gaps in terms of student reach for instruction exist. These gaps were because some students had no access to the internet nor to electronic devices to engage in and access instructional activities. Certainly, the students most impacted would be marginalized or disadvantaged students. Consequently, the levels and quality of engagement both by teachers and students during the periods when schools were closed must be addressed. The impact of repeated lockdown and repeated school closures on assessment and learning are a cause for concern. According to the OECD (2020) school closure results in a massive loss in the development of human capital and can have significant long-term economic and social implications. In fact, this is a strong stress test for the education system and an opportunity for educational innovations.

Another major weakness which came out of the examination of the initial COVID response in St. Lucia was that many teachers and educational leaders lacked formal training in the proper use of ICT for instruction. That includes the use of e-learning platforms, strategies to maintain student interest and integrate and apply interactive activities during online instruction. In short, teachers were not ready to for their new roles as co-creators, mentors and facilitators of learning (OECD, 2020). Students also suffered the impact of unfamiliarity with various platform and needed extended amounts of time to do so. The preceding may be compounded by the lack of funding/financing for infrastructural needs of educational institutions to meet the standards and requirements of 21st century classrooms.

IMPLICATIONS

One implication of the COVID 19 pandemic outlined above is the potential differences in instructional time across schools both at the primary and secondary levels. Many students were inconsistent with their attendance in live sessions, and some were only able to access packages provided by their teachers because they had no electronic devices or internet access. Teachers too because of their unfamiliarity with the suggested learning platforms may have exhibited differences in instructional quality.

Additionally, teachers may have lost opportunities for administering summative assessments which would have provided invaluable information for instructional planning and intervention. All of these factors would place students at risk for falling behind and may lead to significant differences in scores on national and regional examinations.

The absence of data on the impact of the lockdowns and distributed learning on student learning 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 with respect to knowledge gaps, resource distribution, etc. to create feasible strategic plans and to access adequate funding.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

From a social standpoint the COVID 19 pandemic would have impacted students' ability to socialize with their peers and to develop collaborative skills necessary to function as part of the wider society. Also, during lockdown periods, parents had to offer instructional assistance to their children whether with packages or with online learning. In many instances they may have struggled to do so because of little to no orientation and experience and limited resources and education.

Equitable access to devices was another issue highlighted. The eBooks programme will hopefully go a long way in bridging the divide among students and ensuring equity in that regard. This project is aligned with the four Strategic Priorities which give direction to the CARICOM 2030 Strategy - namely, Access, Equity, Quality and Relevance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to deal with the impact of the issues highlighted above, the following suggestions are for consideration:

- It is necessary that an impact assessment of distributed learning during the 2020-2021 academic year is carried out to ascertain the extent to which instructional objectives were achieved. This is the foundation for the proper planning and application of interventions for teachers and students where applicable. Such an assessment would also have bearing on the development of policy in the future.

- Continued training and capacity building of teachers and educational leaders in the integration of ICT in instruction is necessary pending needs assessments. Teachers would have to understand that 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, is not always correct (University of Illinois Springfield, 2021). Further, the equipping of teachers and students with electronic devices that are suitable for blended and or online instruction would ensure that the learned skills would be applied or practiced. In other words, ensuring access is critical. This can be achieved by

accessing funding from donor agencies. This should be pursued as a matter of urgency.

- 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. The centralized platform may also have the added benefit of encouraging a culture of collaboration which is one of the main characteristics of Professional Learning Communities. Through that avenue, teachers would also be afforded to opportunity to share best practices.

- There is also need for continued collaboration between parents and teachers so that parents will be able to provide the necessary assistance to their children at home. This may be achieved through workshop sessions.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Factors that impact the research agenda and by extension the creation of policies that are grounded in research were also highlighted. These included:

- The need for increased stakeholder engagement: The final say on educational policy lies within the purview of the Cabinet and Parliament and the Chief Education Officer who is responsible for developing administrative principles and procedures for implementing general policies and administering the school system (Education Act, Section 7, 2b, p. 562). This reinforces that the process is in fact centralized.

- The need for Impact Assessment and Evaluation research and/or data) which would support more effective education planning in Saint Lucia: one of the main impediments to the development of policy is inadequate research on impact assessments of various issues. These assessments are necessary to guide the process of policy development.

- Convincing teachers to share their research with the Ministry of Education upon completion of studies: Teachers do not always submit final copies of their research projects to the Ministry of Education. This is perhaps one of the reasons for a dearth of research.

- Issues of funding: funding for much needed research on impact assessments is not always available.

- The need for and the maintenance of a centralized EMIS to facilitate data entry at educational institutions, and retrieval of this data at the Education District and Ministry level: Access to this centralized database would allow for timely access to data required for policy decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to deal with those issues related to research and policy development, the Government of St. Lucia should continue its support of the Ministry of education through increased funding to facilitate the needed impact assessments which would provide explanations for the occurrence of various educational issues which the country faces through the generation of empirical data. It is also necessary to continue seeking funding from regional and international agencies to build a research repository which can continue to inform the development of policy decisions. The 2018 *Research Agenda* is a useful guide.

 Further, that funding should extend to the creation of the centralised EMIS for the collection storage and retrieval of data.

In order to ensure that all relevant stakeholders contribute to the development of educational policy, the full process for policy development which includes the contributions of all governmental and social partners should encouraged and continued.

TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

THREATS

One significant threat to the education system is the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unpredictability of the occurrence of community spread, it may become necessary at any given point to close schools and revert to distributed learning. In the absence of training and orientation for teachers and students and access to electronic devices and the internet, concerns about the quality of teacher and student instructional engagement will persist. Also related to COVID-19 is the threat of employment and the ability of parents to provide students with learning tools particularly electronic devices and internet access during periods of distributed learning.

Teachers have raised concerns about health and safety in the classroom when it comes to the COVID19 pandemic. These issues include exposure to infected students and deep cleaning of educational institutions. If these are not addressed, quality and frequency of instruction may be impacted. Continued engagement with the SLTU is therefore necessary.

Another possible threat to the education system is attracting and subsequently retaining the services of qualified teachers particularly in some critical subject areas such as Mathematics, Science, English and ICT. These areas are critical areas given the importance of STEAM education. Therefore, teachers must be trained to deliver in these subject areas. The issue of low numbers of male teachers in the education system is also one which merits attention. Both of these threats are linked to the lack of incentives to attract teachers into the teaching service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations which are based on the data collected for this report. Attention to these recommendations would also contribute to meeting the goals of the Education Sector plan and of the Medium-Term Strategy for education and benefit teachers and educational leaders:

- Incentives for teachers particularly males to join the teaching profession and to train to teach critical areas of specialization should be considered. These incentives can include mentoring and induction programmes, opportunities for autonomy along with strong administrative support, curricula with clear guidelines (David, 2018). The increase in the number of male teachers may also provide students with the opportunity to interact with positive, non-violent role models who would model positive interactions with women (Marian University, 2021).

- Continued engagement of the St. Lucia Teacher's Union on working conditions and health and safety matters and training/ These engagement is critical to minimize instances of interruptions in the teaching and learning process.

- The revision and ratification of all policies to ensure inclusion and equity that are still in draft form, needs to be completed. These are necessary to ensure compliance with the recommendations of organizations such as UNICEF.

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

From an instructional perspective two major causes for concern are the performance gaps according to gender on national and regional examinations and the high repetition rates at Kindergarten level. On both national and regional examinations, females outperform males. This suggests that there is a need for continued investigation into pedagogy that is suitable for improving the performance of males and allowing them to achieve learning outcomes. The high repetition rates recorded for Kindergarten students suggests that learning outcomes at that grade level are not being achieved.

Special needs students sometimes remain in mainstream classrooms without benefitting from testing that would allow them to be correctly diagnosed and given the appropriate interventions. This means that these students may receive interventions either too late or not at all.

Another issue is the Lack of policy frameworks and legislation to ensure the full protection of children under the law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The strengthening of the pedagogical capacities of teachers of preschools and Kindergarten levels to ensure that foundational concepts are properly taught to students is necessary. This can be done by expanding programming at Division of Teacher Education and Educational Leadership of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community

College to provide opportunities for training in ECD pedagogical practices at the Bachelor's Degree Level. There is also a need for the formal implementation of the EDC Policy so as to address important issues related to the instruction and assessment of students at that level.

Additionally, more government resources should be made available to allow for the timely testing of testing and diagnosis of Special Education students so that they do not get lost in the school system. The policy frameworks needed to ensure the protection of all children in the school system should be implemented as a matter of priority.

A SWOT Analysis of the education System in St. Lucia was conducted to highlight strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities associated with the education system of St. Lucia. These are highlighted in Table 13.

Table 13: S.W.O.T Analysis of the Education System of St. Lucia

Strengths	Weaknesses
• All students are ensured a place at a secondary school because of universal secondary education (USE).	• Inequity in terms of student access to electronic devices and internet
• Students at all education levels are able to access public assistance programmes	• Teachers require additional support in assessing students effectively in online contexts, further training in the use of e-learning platforms, maintaining student interest and in integrating and applying interactive activities during online instruction.
• The presence of the GINET-Government of Saint Lucia Integrated wireless network which has enabled Wi-Fi connectivity in key population areas around the island	• Need for continued research, monitoring and evaluation, data governance and management expertise to improve policy planning and implementation
• Membership in OECS and other regional institutions	• the need for increased stakeholder engagement
• Local policies are grounded in broader sub-regional policy frameworks	• The need for and the maintenance of a centralized EMIS to facilitate data entry at educational institutions, and retrieval of this data at the Education District and Ministry level
• the e-Books Programme which will allow for the distribution of an estimated 13, 000+ e-book devices and licences to teachers and students	• A lack of social engagement opportunities with the Ministry of Education and other partners, in the education reform process.
• The research agenda for St. Lucia with its focus on areas such as ECD and language policy and the inclusion of Kwéyòl in education, is reflective of encouraging equity and inclusion of all students and local culture.	• High repetition rates at Kindergarten level
• Large percentage of Trained Teachers at primary and secondary levels	• No clear special education (inclusion) policy
• Multiple options for in-service training of teachers	• Need for procedures for accessing student support programmes to be more systematic
	• performance gaps according to gender on national and regional examinations

Opportunities	Threats
• The revision and ratification of all policies to ensure inclusion and equity that are still in draft form, needs to be completed	• Attracting and subsequently retaining the services of qualified teachers particularly in some critical subject areas such as Mathematics, Science, English and ICT
• Continued training of teachers and educational leaders in the integration of ICT in instruction.	• Student access to instruction and instructional materials due to disruptions because of COVID-19
• The equipping of teachers and students with electronic devices that are suitable for blended and or online instruction	• Unhealthy and unsafe working conditions for teachers
• Strengthening of the pedagogical capacities of teachers of preschools and Kindergarten levels to ensure that foundational concepts are properly taught to students.	• No incentives to attract teachers into the Teaching Service
• Seek funding from regional and international agencies to build research repository which will inform policy	• Growing number of unemployed individuals

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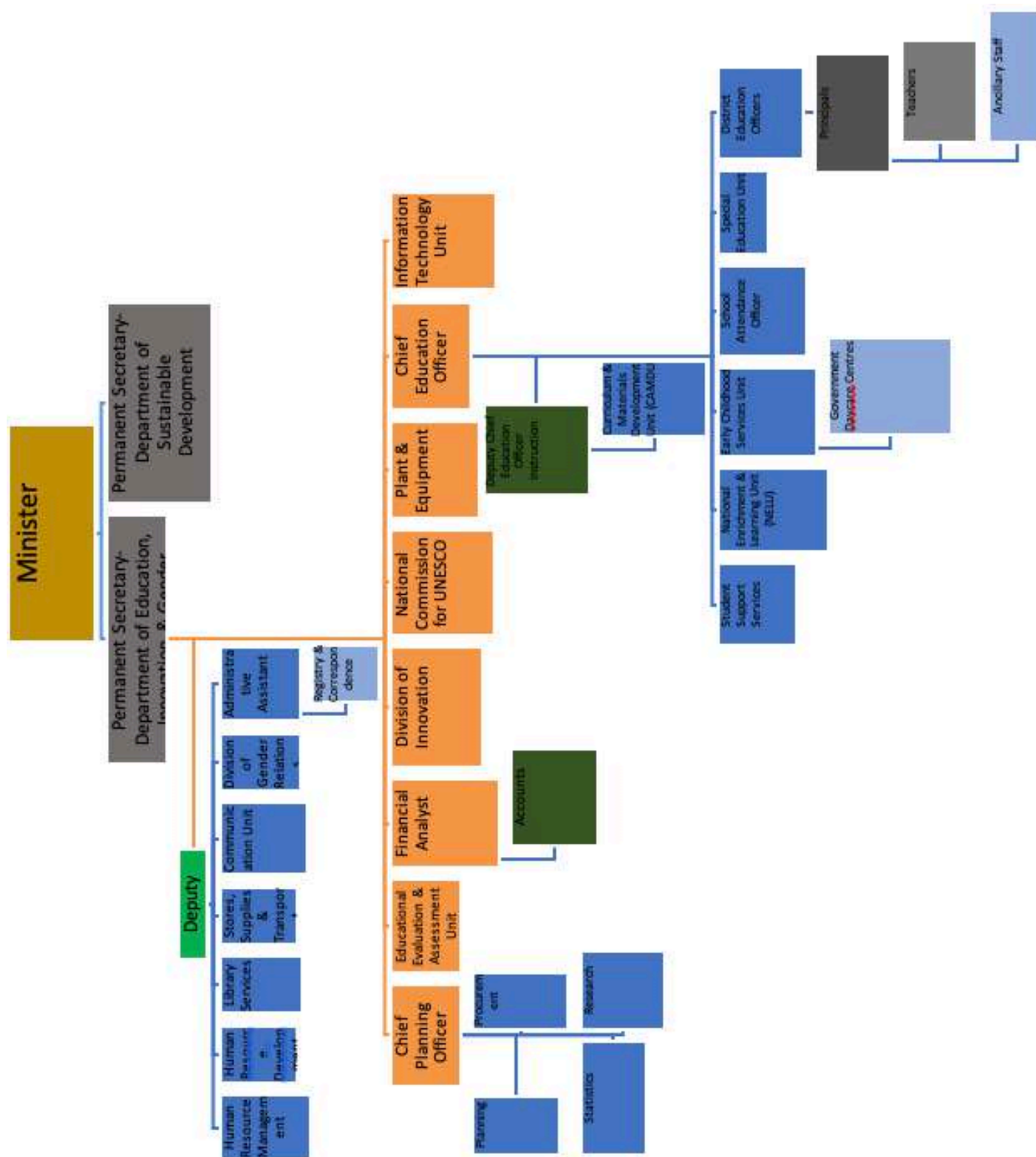
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ANNEX A

Organizational Structure

Department of Education, Innovation & Gender Relations – St. Lucia

SAINT LUCIA

GP KIX LAC HUB
KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION EXCHANGE

SUMMA+ | Laboratory of Education Research and Innovation for Latin America and the Caribbean

ECS
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

IDRC · CRDI
Canada