



GUYANA

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Background

Over the years, the Government of Guyana has continued to invest increasingly in the education sector, an average being 15% of yearly expenditure. This level of steady commitment shows the importance given to this sector in providing relevant and quality education for all Guyanese. To accomplish this, emphasis is continuously placed on effective integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a support in teaching and learning practices at all levels. In this regard, the National ICT Strategy has as one of its objectives, developing human resources in ICT through the provision of laptops, equipped computer laboratories, reliable internet access and continuous training of teachers in the use of technology for teaching and learning.

Current Situation

At the Primary Level, ICT for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is supported by the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) and the Success Maker Program. At the Secondary Level, almost all of our schools are having access to computers and within the last two years over 3,000 students would have sat the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) examinations with 82% passes in grades 1-3.

Currently, of approximately 10,000 teachers, over 70% was exposed to digital literacy training, using the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers. This course has been packaged as both a paper based course and as CD ROM.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education, through its current consultations on the Professional Standards for Teachers, clearly articulated a vision of technology integration via the infusion of ICTs into the entire education system. This would entail planning and implementing the use of available technology, information and telecommunication systems to enrich curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. As a result of the Guyana Improving Teacher Education Project (GITEP), the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) has already benefitted from laptops, netbooks and online programs. In fact, 17 lecturers are doing online masters programs and two are doing their doctorates. And, at the University of Guyana, an additional six lecturers are doing online masters programs under GITEP.

Under the University of Guyana Science and Technology Support Project (UGSTSP), the University will soon benefit from internal internet network connections of all faculties and libraries coupled with an external international link. In conjunction with the connectivity

would be a data center which would provide software applications such as e-learning tools and digital content repositories to support the design and delivery of new curriculum.

This year, in an attempt to make tertiary education accessible to those living farther away from the coastland, the University of Guyana will be offering online degree programs through open and distance learning. In the initial phase, four online degree programs will be offered, and it is anticipated that those who want a tertiary level education, especially from the rural areas, will opt for this type of program.

The Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programs have continued this year at the University of Guyana with approximately 30 students being enrolled. These programs are being offered by the University of Guyana since 2007. In June 2014, under the Ministry of Education, 13 students will be graduated at the Lesley University, after having completed an online master's degree program in the field of counseling psychology and expressive arts therapies.

Next Steps

- The integration and infusion of ICT into education and training.
- To build a cohesive and comprehensive ICT system for proper data analysis and assessment.
- To design and implement monitoring and evaluation strategies, which will seek to measure progress made and the impact on students performance.
- Adoption and implementation of the Professional Standards for Teachers.
- To train teachers and lecturers in designing online courses and in the effective use of ODL for program delivery.

Challenges

- Lack of ICT infrastructure, interactive resources and internet connectivity at all levels.
- Lack of a structured monitoring and evaluation system to assess the impact of ICT, so far, in education delivery.
- Lack of adequate ICT expertise in the education system.
- Lack of 'buy-in' from all stakeholders including education officials, school head teachers, educators, senior teacher trainers, lecturers, etc.

Conclusion

Although there have been some positive strides toward ICT integration in the education system, there is still much more to be done. With recent and continued support from the World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, UNICEF and the Commonwealth of Learning, the Ministry of Education was able to broaden educational access through Open and Distance Learning. Therefore, in going forward, it is the intention of the Government to foster better collaborations and partnerships within the regional body so that a new online community can be developed, thereby improving teaching and learning and by extension, improving the quality of life.

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