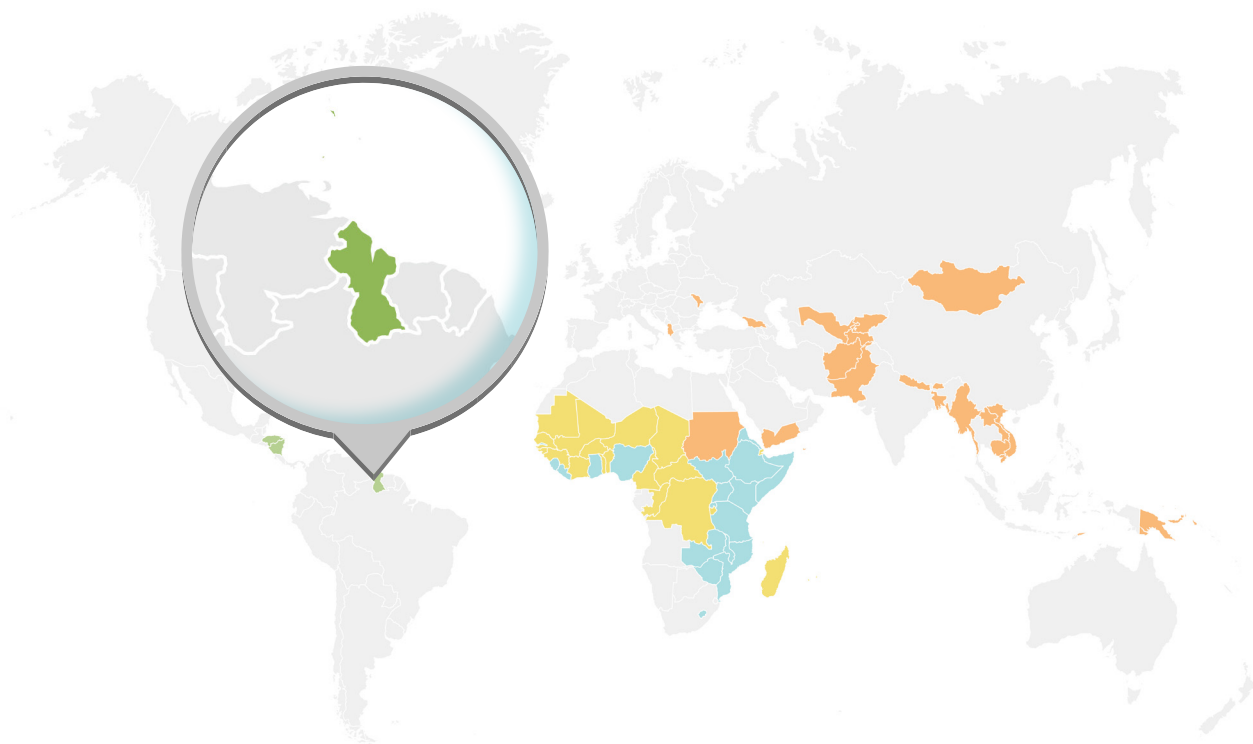




COUNTRY REVIEW

Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Guyana



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Challenges and opportunities in the education system of Guyana



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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 GUYANA'S ROUNDTABLE

APRIL 6TH, 2021

Participants¹

From SUMMA: Dr. Javier González, Raúl Chacón, Ivana Zacarias, Carolina Osorio and Mar Botero.

From AIR: Dr. Naomi Ziegler and Dr. Rebecca Stone (AIR)

KIX LAC Representatives: Dr. Roslyn Khan (Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Guyana), Dr. Charmaine Bissessar (University of Guyana), Mr. Mark Lyte (President, Guyana's Teacher Union)

The goal of the meeting was to present the main findings of Guyana's educational system review, carried out by AIR and led by SUMMA and the OECS, in the framework of the KIX Initiative, and to discuss them with KIX LAC representatives from the country, given their roles within their organizations. A draft version of the document was shared with them before the event.

During the first ten minutes, Dr. Stone and Dr. Ziegler shared a presentation informing the results of their research. After delineating the general features of the educational landscape, they highlighted which they believed the main Guyana's educational challenges are: (1) the inequalities between the coastal and the hinterland regions; (2) ensuring equal access to resources, personnel, and technology across all regions of the country; (3) improving the public education sector's efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of management, planning, and monitoring and evaluation; (4) ensuring that agenda and policy formulation in the MoE is based on the latest evidence or data; (5) the inability to pass the new education bill in Parliament; (6) regional disparity among Guyana's trained teachers; (7) quality of teacher training and professional development programs; and (8) recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. These challenges and others, as well as the strengths of the system, are thoroughly approached throughout this document.

AIR's presentation was followed by a discussion, where representatives were invited to share their opinion and perspectives about the document as well as the presentation. The general discussion focused on the needs of teacher training, considering the role that University of Guyana and the teachers' union play in this topic.

About that, Dr. Khan mentions that low salaries in the teaching profession prevent prospective students from pursuing a career as a teacher. Another problem she finds, especially in these times, is the difficulty in reaching students, considering many of them

¹ Because of a last-minute call by the Minister, Ms. Nicola Johnson (Ministry of Education) and Ms. Quenita Walrond (NCERD) were unable to attend.

do not have internet access, mainly in the hinterland regions. However, there might be a window of opportunity in online instruction, because of the needs the University has in terms of physical infrastructure. In this line, Dr. Bissessar commented on her research with students teaching in the hinterland, who benefited from online classes (before they had to spend a lot of money on transportation and now they can add credits to their cell phone for a much lower amount). Besides, she raised her concern about the inequalities within the hinterland as well.

On the other hand, Mr. Lyte stressed the difficulties that teachers have been having, since the breakout of COVID, in adapting to the use of technologies for instructional purposes. This implied tremendous efforts for changing mindsets and enormous workload. Moreover, they had to go on with their daily responsibilities at home. That is why providing them with psycho-social support is so important. Dr. Khan and Dr. Bissessar agreed on this last point, enriching the conversation with examples from their own practice.

Followed by questions by Dr. González, the session turned then into a deeper discussion about the characteristics of the teacher training, trying to take advantage of the experience of University of Guyana. About that, Dr. Bissessar stressed that quality assurance is one of the universities' priorities. About that, she and Dr. Khan shared perspectives about the problem of master's students putting off their thesis, allegedly because the program is part-time and they have many other responsibilities. Increasing the number of lecturers holding a PhD has also been a challenge for them. Concerns were raised, by Mr. Lyte, about the evaluations of the thesis as well.

At the end, Dr. González also shared the strengths of SUMMA and KIX, and how they could contribute to improving Guyana's KIX LAC's representatives' work.

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.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFC	Alliance for Change
AIR	American Institutes for Research
BoS	Bureau of Statistics, Guyana
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPCE	Cyril Potter College of Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DCEO	Deputy Chief Education Officer
DPI	Department of Public Information
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GTU	Guyana Teachers Union
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICT	Information, Communication, and Technology
MoE	Ministry of Education

MERD	Monitoring, Evaluating, Reporting, and Development
NCERD	National Center for Educational Resource Development
NGFA	National Grade Four Assessment
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NGSA	National Grade Six Assessment
NGTA	National Grade Two Assessment
PIM	Policy Implementation and Monitoring
PNC	People’s National Congress
PPP	People’s Progressive Party
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
RDC	Regional Democratic Council
RED	Regional Education Department
SEN	Special Education Needs
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UG	University of Guyana
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1:

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTEXT.

Guyana is a constitutional democracy led by a president in the executive branch, who is the head of government and head of state, and a unicameral legislature, the National Assembly. The judicial branch is the Supreme Court of Judicature, composed of the Court of Appeal and the High Court. Previously colonized by the Netherlands and then the United Kingdom, Guyana became an independent state in 1966. The current Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana (Guyanese Constitution) dates to 1980 (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2020). Elections are held every 5 years, and adult suffrage is universal. The 1992 elections were considered the first free and fair elections in the country, and the most recent elections were held in 2020. Guyana has a decentralized administrative system in which the country is divided into 10 regions governed by popularly elected Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) (Universalia, 2018).

The country's political parties nominate presidential candidates, and the candidate of the victorious party who received the popular vote becomes the president. The president in turn appoints the Cabinet. Although Guyana has a multi-party system, two main parties have dominated the political landscape since the country gained its independence: the People's National Congress (PNC) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP). Political party affiliation tends to align with ethnic group identity: The PNC is largely supported by Afro-Guyanese people, and the PPP is predominantly supported by Guyanese of South Asian origin. This divide has generated tensions among the country's ethnic groups during electoral cycles (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020a).

After a period of single-party rule post-independence, the PPP took control of Guyana during the 1992 elections and remained in power until 2015. During the 2015 election cycle, the PNC joined the Alliance for Change (AFC) and other smaller opposition parties under the coalition A Partnership for National Unity (APNU)-AFC to defeat the PPP and elect President David Granger (Richardson & Menke, n.d.). However, the results of the March 2020 elections were contested due to claims of fraud, leading to a period of social upheaval and political uncertainty throughout much of 2020. Ultimately, the Court of Appeal ruled against the March results and incumbent President Granger, and instead instated PPP candidate Irfaan Ali as president in August 2020 for a 5-year term (BBC News, 2020; Yahya-Sakur & Kurmanaev, 2020). These elections were particularly significant because they dictated who will manage the forthcoming influx of wealth and economic growth from recently discovered offshore oil reservoirs.

1.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT.

Guyana is a small, upper-middle-income country located in northern South America and bordered by Suriname to the east, Brazil to the south, and Venezuela to the west. Although Guyana is situated in South America, it is a member state of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and shares economic, social, and cultural ties with the Caribbean region. It is divided into 10 regions (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Map of Guyana, by region



According to the latest figures from the World Bank, the Guyanese gross domestic product (GDP) totaled 4.28 billion United States dollars (USD), with a GDP per capita of 6,609.57 USD in 2019 (World Bank, n.d.a, n.d.b). These figures represent a significant increase since the early 2000s, due largely to the discovery of offshore oil beginning in 2016 (Universalia, 2018). The economy's main industries include agriculture (sugar and rice), forestry (timber), and fishing (shrimp); extractive industries; manufacturing; and services (CIA, 2020; MoE, 2020a). However, the proportion of the GDP gained from oil drilling and production is expected to increase significantly as the offshore reservoirs are exploited.

According to the most recent national census (2012), Guyana has a total of 746,955 inhabitants. As of 2019, the World Bank estimates the country's population to be 782,766 (Bureau of Statistics [BoS], Guyana, 2016a; World Bank, n.d.d). The country's Human Development Index value was 0.670 in 2019, ranking 123 out of 189 countries and territories globally (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019). As of

2018, the average life expectancy is 69.8 years, and the average number of expected years of schooling is 11.5 (UNDP, 2019). According to the 2012 census, the Guyanese literacy rate averaged 90% nationally, with nearly 98% of young people aged 15 to 24 found to be literate in 2014 (BoS, 2017; MoE, 2020a). English is the primary language spoken in Guyana, along with Guyanese Creole, which native speakers refer to as Creolese. However, there are also eight main indigenous languages, spoken largely in the rural hinterland regions (BoS, 2017; MoE, 2020a; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). No comprehensive data are available on the fluency and usage of these indigenous languages (MoE, 2020a, p. 12).

As of 2010, 30% of the population lived in moderate poverty, and 17% lived in extreme poverty (MoE, 2020a, p. 13). The only available data from the World Bank on Guyana's Gini index was from 1998, when the index was at 44.6 (World Bank, n.d.c). The disparity in Guyana's economic and social indicators between the coastal and the so-called hinterland regions of the country is extreme (BoS, 2016c; BoS, 2016d; BoS, 2017; MoE, 2020a; Universalia, 2018). The Guyanese population is heavily concentrated along the coast, where most of the services, infrastructure, and economic activity can be found, including in Georgetown, the capital city. Indeed, although the hinterland regions compose over two-thirds of the country's landmass, the 2012 census noted that only 10.9% of Guyanese live there (BoS, 2014, p. v). These regions are significantly poorer and more isolated than their coastal counterparts. A 2014 study reported that between 70% and 98% of the populations of hinterland regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 fell within the poorest quintile in Guyana (MoE, 2020a, p. 13). Likewise, although only 10% of the Guyanese population on average is illiterate, the illiteracy rate in the hinterland regions is much higher at 16.5% (BoS, 2017; MoE, 2020a, p. 14). The vast majority of hinterland residents are indigenous Amerindian people (BoS, 2017; MoE, 2020a, p. 14).

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS.

Although the most recent Guyana Population and Housing Census is from 2012, it provides a comprehensive picture of demographic trends in the country. Guyana is currently facing national population loss, with the official population count of 746,955 in 2012 representing a small decrease from the 2002 total of 751,223 (BoS, 2014; BoS, 2016a). At the time of the 2012 census, Guyana's sex ratio, at 375,337 women compared to 372,547 men, stood at 99 men for every 100 women (BoS, 2014, p. VII). The national average household size was 3.6 persons per household, with a larger average of 4.7 persons per household in the hinterland regions. These figures represent a decrease in average household size since 2002 (BoS, 2014, p. VII).

The diverse Guyanese population comprises six primary racial-ethnic groups. These groups are classified in the census and other government documents as African, Amerindian, Chinese, Indian, Mixed Race, and Portuguese/White. Among these groups, Indian-origin Guyanese make up the largest proportion of the population (39.8%), followed by Afro-Guyanese (29.2%), Mixed Race Guyanese (19.9%), and Amerindian Guyanese (10.5%) (BoS, 2016c, p. 2). People of Indian, African, and Mixed Race origin

tend to be concentrated in the coastal regions, whereas Amerindian people tend to be concentrated in the hinterland regions (MoE, 2020a). Guyana is home to nine main Amerindian tribes: the Akawaios, Arawaks, Arecunas, Caribs, Macushis, Patamonas, Wai Wais, Wapishana, and Warraus (MoE, 2020a, p. 12). Although the overall national population has been slowly decreasing in size, this reduction is unevenly represented across racial-ethnic groups. While the shares of ethnically Indian- and Afro-Guyanese groups among the overall population both have been decreasing, the sizes of the Mixed Race and Amerindian groups relative to the overall population have increased (BoS, 2016c).

Guyana is concerned about both immigration and emigration, although these trends affect the country in very different ways. As of 2012, foreign-born individuals make up a mere 1% of Guyana's population, and of this group, 41.1% originate from other CARICOM member states (BoS, 2016b, pp. 8, 11–12). Top countries of origin include Suriname, Brazil, Venezuela, the United States, and China. However, since the 2012 census, Guyana has been experiencing an influx of Venezuelan migrants and refugees relative to traditional immigration rates and the host country's overall population (MoE, 2020a, pp. 44–45; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Precise figures are unavailable, but these arrivals appear to be most heavily impacting regions 1, 2, and 3 thus far (MoE, 2020a, pp. 44–45; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

From an emigration perspective, Guyana has long been a sending country, and departures are believed to be a large contributing factor in the country's decreasing population size (BoS, 2016b, pp. 15–17). According to the 2012 census, a larger proportion of women relative to men are emigrating, and men are also returning at higher levels than women (BoS, 2016b, pp. 15–17). Although the census reported a net migration rate of -0.26% of the overall population between 2007 and 2012, it also found that these numbers likely are a significant under-representation due to sampling and reporting bias (BoS, 2016b, pp. 15, 18).

1.4 EDUCATION SYSTEM CONTEXT.

The Guyanese education system is governed by the Education Act, Chapter 39:01, which was last updated in 1998. This act defines the norms and structure of the system and provides guidelines on the government's official positions relative to the education sector, including on attendance, student age, and school construction (Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1998). The MoE conducts its planning through a series of ESPs and has produced five of them to date, with the sixth plan currently being finalized for 2021–25. The ESPs are structured around a series of strategic objectives that guide interventions and funding at all levels of the education sector.

Although a bill proposing updates to Chapter 39:10 of the Education Act was introduced for the first time more than a decade ago and was reintroduced in 2014,

it has yet to be enacted (Guyana Chronicle, 2014; MoE, 2020a, p. 34; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). The passage of this bill remains a priority for the MoE under the ESP for 2021–25 (MoE, 2020a, p. 34; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). However, the 2021–25 ESP has already been endorsed by the Minister of Education; therefore, parliamentary approval is not necessary for ESPs (N. Johnson, personal communication, January 6, 2021).

In Guyana, public education is mandatory and free for students between the ages of 5 and 15, and it includes at least 3 years of secondary school (MoE, 2020a). The MoE is the main body that oversees the Guyanese education system. The system is governed on a regional basis, with 10 education districts aligned with Guyana’s administrative regions and an 11th district for the city of Georgetown (MoE, 2020a, p. 19). Regional education officers supervise 10 of the districts, and a principal education officer is responsible for the Georgetown district. However, the MoE retains overall responsibility for and authority over the system (MoE, 2020a, p. 34).

Although precise figures are unavailable, an estimated 10% of Guyanese children are currently educated in private schools, and the remaining 90% attend public schools (MoE, 2020a, p. 34). In 2017, 26,595 students in the public education system were enrolled at the preprimary level; 81,115 students, at the primary level; 5,398 students, in the secondary departments of primary schools; 56,635 students, in general secondary schools; 3,539 students, in technical and vocational education and training (TVET); and 7,800 students, at the tertiary level (see Exhibit 2) (MoE, 2020a, p. 35).

Exhibit 2. Number of students in Guyanese public schools by educational level, 2017

Level	Number of students
Nursery	26,595
Primary	81,115
Secondary department of primary	5,398
General secondary	56,635
TVET	3,539
Tertiary	7,800
Total	181,622

Source: Ministry of Education, Guyana

The public system is divided into nursery, primary, secondary, postsecondary, and tertiary levels (see Exhibit 3) (MoE, 2020a). Nursery school lasts for 2 years, and students may enter at the age of 3.5. Primary school lasts for 6 years, and students

may enter at the age of 5.5. Primary school concludes with the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), which determines which secondary school students are placed in, but the primary cycle also includes the National Grade Two Assessment (NGTA) and the National Grade Four Assessment (NGFA), both of which provide indications of achievement levels throughout the cycle. A similar National Grade Nine Assessment is administered during secondary school to measure student progress after the first 3 years of the secondary cycle. The MoE’s Examination Division administers all four national assessments (MoE, n.d.d).

Exhibit 3. Guyanese public schools, by level

Level	Age of entry	Number of years	Assessments
Nursery	3.5	2	
Primary	5.5	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Grade Two Assessment (NGTA) ■ National Grade Four Assessment (NGFA) ■ National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA)
Secondary department of primary	11/12	5 (academic track) 3 (vocational track)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National Grade Nine Assessment (NGNA) ■ Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC)
Secondary	11/12	5 (mandatory) +2 (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE)

■ National assessment to assess achievement ■ Regional assessment

Secondary school generally consists of a 5-year academic track, although a small number of students follow a 3-year vocational track. Some schools offer both primary and secondary education; the secondary departments of these schools offer either a 3-year vocational track program or a 5-year academic track program. Other schools only offer general secondary programs, which are on a 5-year academic track, but they also offer some vocational courses as well as a secondary competency certificate program for those at risk of dropping out.

Some primary schools have secondary departments because there are not enough secondary schools in some communities, particularly in the hinterland regions. Students are placed in the secondary department of primary school based on

scores obtained on the NCSA (N. Johnson, personal communication, January 6, 2021). Students who complete a 5-year academic track at either a general secondary school or in the secondary department of a primary school take the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) exam at the end of secondary school, which provides the necessary qualifications for tertiary education. Students may also choose to continue for an additional 2 years and then take the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), which is considered a higher level qualification equivalent to the United Kingdom's O (Ordinary) Levels and regarded as similar to the Advanced Placement® exam (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Currently, there are 10 postsecondary TVET institutions in Guyana and two tertiary institutions, the University of Guyana (UG) and the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE), both located in Georgetown. As discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, UG and CPCE are the two important institutions of higher education for teacher training. In addition, UG offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in a variety of other subjects.

According to the Education Act, school attendance is mandatory except in cases of a "reasonable excuse." This includes a lack of schools less than 2 miles away from the child's home "measured according to the nearest road" and "illness and other avoidable [causes]" (Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1998, para. 14). Children cannot be legally hired outside of the household if they are under the age of 15, and they can legally work to help their parents only if their work hours fall outside school hours (Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1998, para. 17). Although the 2014–18 Education Sector Plan (ESP) proposed implementing a flexible academic schedule for Guyana's hinterland regions during the rainy season or crop-harvesting periods, this initiative has not been implemented to date (MoE, 2015a, 2020a).

According to the 2015–20 academic calendar on the MoE website, the school year is divided into three terms, beginning in September and ending in early July (MoE, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2015f). The length of the term varies between 11 and 15 weeks, with a 3-week December/January vacation, a 2-week April vacation, and an 8-week July/August vacation (MoE, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2015f).

Public schools are fully funded by government allocations and foreign assistance (MoE, 2020a, p. 82). Education spending as a percentage of GDP was 5.6% in 2018 (MoE, 2020a, p. 82). There is very little data available on private schools (about 10% of the education sector), including financing, in official documentation from the Ministry of Education, however, the 2014 Education Bill (never passed) would have required a permitting and reporting process administered by the MoE (Guyana Chronicle, 2014). So far, this has not been implemented.

CHAPTER 2:

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

2.1 DISRUPTIONS TO SCHOOLING AND IMPACT ON LEARNING.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Guyana's population and institutions across a range of sectors, including education. The country reported its first coronavirus case on March 11, 2020, and then–Minister of Education Dr. Nicolette Henry closed schools on March 13, 2020 (Isaacs, 2020; Reuters, 2020; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], n.d.). Although the closures initially were planned for only 2 weeks, schools remained closed for the duration of the 2019–20 academic year (Isaacs, 2020; Reuters, 2020; UNICEF, n.d.). Despite these closures, students did return briefly throughout the summer to prepare for and take the NGSA, the Guyanese exam for students graduating from primary to secondary school, and the CSEC and CAPE, the regional exams required to complete secondary school and enter tertiary education (Department of Public Information [DPI], 2020a; MoE, 2020b). However, the national assessments for grades 2, 4, and 9, which serve as MoE benchmarks for student achievement, were canceled for the 2019–20 academic year (Guyana Times, 2020). According to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), 169,743 students in public schools and approximately 8,000 students in private schools were affected by school closures (GPE, 2020, p. 3). Students from the hinterland regions and students of low socioeconomic status from both the hinterland and coastal regions were deemed to be particularly at risk during school closures. Collectively, these students make up approximately 34% of the country's learners (GPE, 2020, p. 3; C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

Throughout the remainder of the second and third terms of the 2019–20 academic year, education was ensured through a variety of methods, including television and radio broadcasts, online resources downloadable from the MoE website, and distribution of print resources (GPE, 2020; MoE, n.d.f; UNICEF, n.d.). However, the MoE's response to the pandemic was hindered by the country's lack of a working government and thus no annual budget, due to the contestation of national election results between March and August 2020 (GPE, 2020; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). With the instatement of President Mohamed Irfaan Ali in August, a new government was formed, and the MoE changed leadership from Minister Henry to Minister Priya Manickchand (Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, n.d.).

The GPE project application for the Guyanese education system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic indicates that since school closures in mid-March 2020, Guyana

continued to distribute biscuits and juice to students on the coast, hot meals to 26,823 students in the hinterland regions, and cash vouchers to 15,000 vulnerable students on the coast (GPE, 2020, p. 5). However, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) reports that school feeding programs closed on April 13, 2020, and that hot meal services restarted only in previously participating schools that were open during the exam preparation period (IADB, 2020).

Guyana began the 2020–21 academic year on September 14, 2020, with a blended remote instruction approach that sought to reach students across multiple media channels, including print, online, television, and radio (Boodie, 2020b; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Despite these multifaceted efforts, which have provided diverse educational content, some students nonetheless are likely to face access barriers (Damon, 2020b; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). After nearly 2 months under this system, secondary schools reopened on November 9, 2020, for limited in-person instruction for students in grades 10, 11, and 12, primarily to ensure their preparation for the regional CSEC and CAPE exams; the 2021 schedule for these exams has not yet been set by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) (Boodie, 2020c; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). While Guyana cannot adjust the schedule for the CSEC and CAPE exams and must follow the decisions of the CXC, the MoE has chosen to postpone the nationally administered NGSA for 2021 (Boodie, 2020d).

Physical distancing measures have been implemented since the return to in-person learning, including through a rotation of classroom schedules; personal protective equipment (PPE) has been distributed to teachers and students; and facilities have been outfitted with sanitation equipment (Boodie, 2020c; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). An official return schedule for younger students has not been released, but return to school is likely to occur in a phased approach (Boodie, 2020c; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

2.2 GOVERNMENT PLANS TO PROVIDE EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of in-person schooling, the MoE has implemented a diverse range of programming to reach students from different regions and socioeconomic backgrounds. These methods include online instruction via web-based platforms, downloadable resources from the MoE website, public television programs on the Guyana Learning Channel, radio broadcasts, and printed worksheets and resources.

Secondary schools in which students and instructors have electronic devices and regular access to the internet have been using online platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom, as well as individual messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger (Damon, 2020b; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10,

2020). The MoE also has provided downloadable resources on its website for students and their families (MoE, n.d.f; UNICEF, n.d.). Available materials include NGSA practice exams, textbooks and worksheets from the nursery through secondary school levels, coloring books, and educational websites and games (GPE, 2020; MoE, n.d.f; UNICEF, n.d.). As of April 27, 2020, nursery-level materials had been downloaded 45,650 times; primary-level materials, more than 211,340 times; and secondary-level materials, over 106,620 times (GPE, 2020, p. 6). In the hinterland regions, printed worksheet packets have been distributed to ensure coverage for students without reliable access to the internet, television, or radio (Boodie, 2020b; Damon, 2020b; GPE, 2020).

The MoE also has implemented educational broadcasts via radio and television. Television programs include dedicated hours (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.) for nursery, primary, and secondary students on the Guyana Learning Channel as well as documentaries (Boodie, 2020b; Damon, 2020a; GPE, 2020; UNICEF, n.d.). Radio programming includes interactive sessions on mathematics, social studies, and science for grades 1 through 3 (Boodie, 2020b; Damon, 2020a; GPE, 2020; UNICEF, n.d.). While the Guyana Learning Channel is a public, government-managed station, the radio sessions are broadcast on other channels for shorter periods, although the government plans to create a dedicated public radio channel for educational content (Damon, 2020a).

Although initially the lack of a government operating budget hindered comprehensive rollout of these programs, the new government and budget enabled the MoE to expand its response and to develop a more systematic plan for distance learning for the 2020–21 academic year (Boodie, 2020a, 2020b; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). The National Center for Educational Resource Development (NCERD) has been developing local content to broadcast on the Guyana Learning Channel, which has made television learning more relevant and enriching for students (Damon, 2020b; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Additionally, efforts have been made to ensure that all students are included in remote learning through expanded distribution of paper materials and radio broadcasts. MoE representatives have reported progress in reaching all students, despite the country's significant heterogeneity in access to technology and internet across and even within regions (Damon, 2020b; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). However, the Guyana Teachers Union (GTU) has criticized the MoE's reliance on paper materials and the lack of structural improvement in the country's internet connectivity (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). According to the World Bank, as of 2017, 37.3% of the Guyanese population has access to the internet. Indeed, internet access and consistent electricity service are particularly challenging in the hinterland regions even today (World Bank, n.d.e; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020). Furthermore, the MoE reports that the connectivity levels at public schools in the country remain low outside of the greater Georgetown area (MoE, 2020a, p. 83).

Despite these challenges, from a teacher training perspective, the MoE emphasizes the importance of improving instructors' information, communication, and technology (ICT) skills during the pandemic. One of the central, MoE-led initiatives is the ProFuturo

program, a 100-hour, online, in-service training program for teachers that focuses on innovation and ICT skills in remote teaching, lesson planning, and classroom management skills (MoE, n.d.e; DPI, 2020b). For the 2020–21 academic year, ProFuturo training is mandatory for all teachers. Nearly 5,900 teachers—more than half of the country’s teaching body—had signed up for the program by October 8, 2020 (DPI, 2020b). The training is free on major Guyanese mobile networks, and it is available on the websites of the MoE and the Organization of American States (DPI, 2020b).

The GTU also has prioritized ICT as a component of ongoing professional development for its members and supports them in using platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, and Google Classroom more effectively (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). However, the GTE criticized the MoE’s emphasis on the ProFuturo program, arguing that most instructors are using other platforms without government-initiated training or guidance (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Similarly, CPCE has expanded its use of technology-based solutions, both in its instruction through remote learning and Moodle and in its emphasis on technology and innovation that its students can apply in their own classrooms (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

UG also responded quickly to the pandemic, providing devices and training in online teaching for instructors and shifting to remote teaching, online student services, and the use of Moodle for the first time without significant delays in the spring semester (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). In addition, UG’s Faculty of Education and Humanities adapted its practicum and applied assignments to virtual format to ensure that students studying education would still gain this practical experience despite the pandemic (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020). Due to these significant shifts, both CPCE and GU were able to continue instruction during the lockdown.

2.3 AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Guyana already has begun to reopen schools after the extended closure, to facilitate exam preparation and sessions. As discussed in Section 2.1, these exams were necessary at the national and regional level for students to complete primary school and to obtain valid qualifications at the end of secondary school (Boodie, 2020c). However, nonmandatory assessments were canceled, and students have been exempted from them without penalty (Guyana Times, 2020).

The Guyanese public education system has significantly expanded its use of technology at all levels over the past several months, and it is highly likely that ICT will continue to play an important role, even after in-person instruction fully resumes. Despite initial hesitation, teachers and administrators have begun to embrace the use of technology in their teaching and administration, and there appears to be consensus among key actors that adaptations in technology and innovation necessitated by the COVID-19

pandemic will have important implications once the pandemic ends (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

At the tertiary level in particular, the shift to using platforms such as Moodle and partial remote instruction will continue even after the pandemic. These methods have afforded greater efficiency and flexibility for administrators, instructors, and students and can serve as tools for expanding access to higher education for students unwilling or unable to study in Georgetown (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). Remote and blended offerings proved popular with tertiary students at both CPCE and UG. In fact, UG's enrollment increased in the 2020–21 academic year compared to previous years (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

Guyana already has begun planning for the post-pandemic period, with an emphasis on compensating for the loss of education throughout 2020. With support and funding from the World Bank and GPE, the MoE has designed a diagnostic tool to measure education loss during the pandemic among all students. The results will enable the MoE to better target its efforts to provide remedial learning after the COVID-19 pandemic (GPE, 2020, pp. 9, 12; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). Teachers are currently being trained to use this diagnostic instrument (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). In addition, the MoE is working to strengthen its information management system to ensure that education data are stored and organized for optimal planning, policy development, and monitoring (GPE, 2020; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

2.4 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS.

One of Guyana's biggest challenges, even before the pandemic, has been to effectively ensure education across a system that is heterogeneous in terms of resources, personnel, and access to technology. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the divide between students of different socioeconomic statuses with respect to educational access and attainment. Students from more affluent families are able to easily access distance learning through a variety of options. This disparity, like many other forms of inequality throughout the country, tends to be concentrated on the coast and in the hinterland regions. As a result, some students in the hinterland regions and other students from low-income families may have been left behind despite the MoE's efforts to reach them. Once implemented, the planned assessments of education loss will provide greater clarity on remediation efforts required.

Another challenge is that Guyanese students must take mandatory national and regional exams. As a result, the MoE has had to open secondary schools for older students who must take these exams, thus prioritizing this group for in-person learning while younger students continue distance learning. Because the MoE does not dictate the CSEC and CAPE schedules, schools had to open in June and July to ensure that secondary students could prepare for and take the 2020 exams and again in November for the 2021 round of exams. Grade 6 students also temporarily resumed in-person learning to prepare for and take the NGSA in summer 2020. Although significant efforts have been made to expand knowledge and use of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges persist. Not all instructors, let alone students, have access to the necessary electronic devices, and the electricity and consistent internet connectivity needed for remote learning. In addition, older generations of instructors tend to be more resistant to adopting technology in the classroom. Although important strides have been made in training teachers and offering a variety of remote learning options, it is essential for teachers and students to have access to devices and internet connectivity.

In addition to the pandemic, Guyana experienced a nearly 6-month period without a functioning government in 2020. As a result, the education system faced delays in funding and implementation of regular operations as well as certain distance learning programs. Funding was eventually restored with minimal disruption to operations (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

CHAPTER 3.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

3.1 ACTORS AND POWER DISTRIBUTION.

The MoE is the lead government agency responsible for education in Guyana. The Minister of Education is the government-appointed political leader of the MoE. On the technical side, the MoE is led by the Chief Education Officer (CEO) and three Deputy Chief Education Officers (DCEOs) responsible for the Policy Implementation and Monitoring (PIM) Unit (the DCEO for Administration); the Monitoring, Evaluating, Reporting, and Development (MERD) Unit (the DCEO for Development); and the TVET Unit (the DCEO for Technical Education) (MoE, n.d.b). In addition, the CEO is supported by three Assistant Chief Education Officers responsible for the nursery, primary, and secondary levels (MoE, n.d.a, n.d.b). Beyond the PIM, MERD, and TVET units, the MoE is composed of the Examination Division; the Planning Unit; the Distribution Unit; the Allied Arts Unit; the School Health, Nutrition, and HIV/AIDS Unit; the Management Information System Unit; and the Permanent Secretary (MoE, n.d.d). The CEO and the Permanent Secretary are political appointees, but the other MoE employees are technical staff whose employment status is not dependent on political affiliation (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). The heads of each unit are also part of the Education System Committee, which approves major technical policy and programmatic changes (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

According to public MoE documents and the experts interviewed for this report, most Guyanese civil servants in the field of education are highly educated. All have at least a bachelor's degree, generally in conjunction with a Trained Teachers Certificate from CPCE. Some teachers also hold a master's degree, and some have a doctorate (MoE, n.d.i; C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Many Guyanese civil servants studied at UG; some earned degrees abroad and returned to Guyana to work (MoE, n.d.i; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

The MoE collaborates horizontally with a number of political and nonpolitical actors in the education sector. NCERD is an agency of the MoE; the organizations work together on teacher training and capacity building, curriculum reform, distance learning,

and national assessments (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). UG and CPCE are public institutions funded by the government, but these institutions also interact with the MoE on teacher placement, recruitment, and lodging (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). CPCE's curriculum is dictated in part by the MoE's planning objectives, as teacher training may be reoriented to emphasize certain areas previously lacking or in demand, depending on the planning cycle (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). In addition, because both the CEO and the Permanent Secretary sit on the UG University Council, the MoE is engaged with university leadership through this channel (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

The GTU liaises with and advocates on behalf of teachers to the MoE on issues of teacher welfare, benefits, and training (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). The Union also provides input on certain MoE policies and plans, largely at the invitation of the MoE department in question (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Parents are involved in the education system, generally through parent-teacher associations (PTAs), whose expansion has been a recent priority for the MoE (MoE, 2020a; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). In addition, the MoE works with other branches of the Government of Guyana, depending on the matter in question, including the Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs regarding indigenous students and teachers; the National Commission on Disability regarding students with disabilities; the Ministry of Finance on budgeting matters; and the Ministry of Public Health regarding the health and well-being of teachers and students, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic (MoE, 2020a). Key external development cooperation partners in the education sector include UNICEF, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), GPE, and the World Bank (Universalia, 2018, p. 7).

The MoE engages vertically with regional education authorities, given that the Guyanese education system is decentralized. As discussed in Section 1.4, the system is divided into 11 education districts: 10 districts corresponding to the country's 10 administrative regions and an 11th district for the city of Georgetown (MoE, 2020a, p. 19; MoE, n.d.a). Each region is governed by a popularly elected RDC, which in turn manages the educational budget, implements interventions, and conducts monitoring in its district through the Regional Education Department (RED) and its Regional Work Plan (MoE, 2020a, p. 19; MoE, n.d.a). Each region also has a Regional Education Committee, which liaises with and provides support and guidance to both the RED and the rest of the RDC. The MoE is responsible for these functions in Georgetown and also provides overall supervision, guidance, and policy agenda-setting across all education districts.

3.2 POLICY CYCLE PROCESSES.

As illustrated in Section 3.1, the Guyanese education policymaking process is complex and encompasses both centralized and decentralized aspects. The initial agenda-setting and policy formulation phases of the policy cycle are largely centralized. Members of Parliament can introduce bills, and the entire body has the authority to vote on and approve bills and enact laws related to education. The education budget is generated by the Ministry of Finance with input from the MoE (MoE, 2020a, pp. 80–81). The Minister of Education sets a policy agenda when appointed into office, and the MoE contributes its own priorities, policies, and plans, necessitating collaboration and accord among political and technical staff (MoE, 2020a, pp. 19, 79). In contrast, policy implementation and program administration are decentralized at the regional level and occur under the authority of regional actors. REDs receive their allocated budgets and must follow the priorities of the Central Ministry, but they have autonomy over their policy prioritization and implementation processes (MoE, 2020a, pp. 80–81). The MoE also conducts monitoring and knowledge management at the national level. This divided system was designed to provide regional flexibility and accountability at the local and regional levels (MoE, 2020a, pp. 80–81; MoE, n.d.a).

While the education policy process is largely government driven, other actors play essential roles at different stages of the policymaking cycle. For instance, although the MoE was criticized for not incorporating the viewpoints of nongovernment stakeholders during the development of the 2014–18 ESP, the process for writing the next ESP was much more consultative and included perspectives from the different education districts, youth, organizations supporting people with disabilities, and other key actors (MoE 2020a, pp. 1, 86; Universalia, 2018; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). The GTU also implements certain projects of mutual interest with the MoE, such as granting scholarships to its members for teacher training programs (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Similarly, the government funds and shares its global policy priorities with CPCE and UG and supports teacher placement and lodging, but the institutions of higher education develop their own curricula, manage their facilities, instruct students, and set priorities independently.

Guyana's education policymaking process has been criticized as inefficient and confusing, including by the MoE itself. For instance, the MoE cannot fully set its own budget; the final budget allocation is determined by the Ministry of Finance (MoE, 2020a, p. 80). In addition, the policy development process has not always been systematic or evidence based (MoE, 2020a, p. 80). Furthermore, the precise nature of the leadership and management dynamic between the Central Ministry and regional education authorities has not always been clear, leading to confusion about who is responsible for supervision or direction (MoE, 2020a, p. 80; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Improving the efficiency and accountability of the system's management and processes, has been an objective of the ESPs since 2003 (MoE, 2015a, pp. 44–45; MoE, 2020a, p. 79).

3.3 EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRIORITIES.

The MoE structures its policies and priorities through the ESPs, which are drafted in 4-year cycles. The ESP for the 2021–25 academic period is currently being finalized. This plan is the sixth ESP that the MoE has developed (Universalia, 2018). Exhibit 4 lays out the new plan’s overarching priorities and intermediate outcomes.

Exhibit 4. Guyana Education Sector Plan: 2021–25

Overarching Priorities	
<i>Providing opportunities for quality, equitable education and lifelong learning for all</i>	<i>To contribute to employability and reduction of poverty, by increasing performance at all levels and reducing the disparity between sub-groups</i>
Intermediate Outcomes	
<p>1. Improving governance and accountability Activity areas include strengthening the MoE’s knowledge management and technical capacity, improving teacher accountability and training, improving managerial capacity, providing stronger teacher deployment and better materials distribution, and creating better learning conditions (reviewing facilities; increasing STEM and early childhood education offerings; providing a mobile psychosocial unit; and creating policies on safe schools, language, and flexible learning).</p>	
<p>2. Improving performance at all levels Activity areas include strengthening different skills and capacities at each level: nursery, primary, and secondary.</p>	
<p>3. Improving the efficiency of the educational system Activity areas include ensuring that students complete the full primary and secondary cycles through financial and psychosocial welfare support, community involvement, strengthened PTAs, and improved learning facilities.</p>	
<p>4. Reducing inequities in education Activity areas include equitable teaching and access to resources, including in terms of special education, mother tongue instruction, and improvement of learning and attendance.</p>	
<p>5. Contributing to lifelong learning and employability Activity areas include literacy and life skills, the relevance of tertiary education, and employability through strengthened distance modalities; improvement in the TVET sector; and an emphasis on entrepreneurship.</p>	

Note. STEM is science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. PTA is parent–teacher association; TVET is technical and vocational education and training.

The 2014–18 ESP took a systems approach to education policy, with the overall objectives of “increasing the learning achievements at all levels of education and for all sub-groups and decreasing the differences in learning outcomes between sub-groups, especially between students in coastal and hinterland schools” (MoE, 2015a, p. 1). The plan emphasized the importance of literacy and numeracy, as well as a secondary focus on science and technology (MoE, 2015a, p. 1). To obtain these results, the MoE delineated six intermediate outcomes. The 2020 ESP reported that 37% of the proposed activities were achieved and that although overall student achievement increased throughout the planning period at the grade 4, grade 6, and CSEC levels, the achievement gap widened among students in the hinterland regions, as measured by the NGSAs and CSEC (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The first intermediate outcome of the 2014–18 ESP, “the performance of government departments responsible for ESP initiatives improves,” included the initiatives of conducting an MoE-wide audit to assess organizational capacity and then build capacity in departments lacking these capabilities (MoE, 2015a, pp. 44–45). However, this audit did not occur, and the sole achievement under this intermediate outcome was to develop the terms of reference for the actor who would conduct the audit (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The second intermediate outcome, “accountability system that creates incentives to improve student learning outcomes is established and functioning,” focused on applying the results of student assessments to better inform policy, strengthening the existing assessments, engaging stakeholders such as PTAs, and increasing the availability of information to these external stakeholders (MoE, 2015a, pp. 45–47). Progress made under this intermediate outcome included the recruitment of a PTA coordinator in the MoE, the establishment of PTAs in 87% of schools, and the development of school improvement plans in 59% of schools (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The third intermediate outcome, “quality of school facilities improves,” included engineering audits of school facilities and infrastructure, preventative management plans, and school construction and maintenance (MoE, 2015a, pp. 47–48). Progress on this outcome included the production of a condition survey on all education facilities in the country, which informed budget requests for rehabilitation and maintenance, as well as the construction of 11 nursery schools and two secondary schools (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The fourth intermediate outcome, “the quality of teaching improves,” included initiatives such as establishing standards for trained teachers; implementing lessons in areas in which instruction was lacking; increasing recruitment in the hinterland regions; improving training for head teachers in literacy, numeracy, TVET, life skills, and special education needs (SEN); and strengthening NCERD’s teacher professional development program (MoE, 2015a, pp. 48–51). The most progress was made on this outcome, including adjustments to the teacher professional development program, building teachers’ and Ministry experts’ capacity for curriculum writing, and improving academic standards for all new students at CPCE (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The fifth intermediate outcome, “teaching-learning materials/instructional tools/assisted devices aligned to facilitate better learning outcomes,” included improving textbook distribution; revising and adapting the curriculum, textbooks, and associated teacher training; and ensuring that the curriculum and textbooks align with international standards and that they are inclusive (MoE, 2015a, p. 51). Although curriculum reform began at the end of the planning period, the MoE’s Distribution Unit implemented a system to measure the timeliness of textbook distribution (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The sixth intermediate outcome, “students’ instructional time increases,” focused on attendance and included initiatives to reduce educational costs, introduce flexible school schedules, and improve identification of and guidance to at-risk students and students with disabilities (MoE, 2015a, pp. 51–52). During the planning period, school feeding programs were expanded, the Centre for Children with special needs was established, and a database with information on at-risk students was created (MoE, 2020a, p. 33).

The current ESP initially aimed to cover the 2019–23 period, although it met with delays and is being finalized at the end of 2020, particularly with respect to funding requirements (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). It is now referred to as the “2021–25 ESP” and has been approved by the current Minister of Education (N. Johnson, personal communication January 6, 2021). This plan is aligned with Guyana’s national development priorities and international standards, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (MoE, 2020a, p. 87). The overarching priorities for the planning period are “providing opportunities for quality, equitable education and lifelong learning for all” and “contribut[ing] to employability and reduction of poverty, by increasing performance at all levels and reducing the disparity between sub-groups” (MoE, 2020a, p. 87). The Plan has five intermediate outcomes, as listed in Exhibit 4 and described below.

The first intermediate outcome for this planning period is “improving governance and accountability” (MoE, 2020a, p. 88). This outcome is related to management, knowledge, services, and resources; areas of intervention include undertaking an organizational audit, establishing an integrated information management system, strengthening accountability for school and teacher performance, improving teacher deployment and materials distribution, building capacity of managerial staff, and improving teacher training (MoE, 2020a, pp. 88–89). Activities related to effective learning conditions include conducting a review of learning facilities; strengthening the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) infrastructure; assessing needs in early childhood education; creating a mobile psychosocial support unit; and creating policies on safe schools, language, and flexible learning (MoE, 2020a, pp. 88–89).

The second intermediate outcome is “improving performance at all levels” (MoE, 2020a, p. 90). Activities under this outcome include recommendations regarding skills and capacities on which to focus at the nursery, primary, and secondary levels to improve learning and outcomes at each level (MoE, 2020a, pp. 90–92).

The third intermediate outcome is “improving the efficiency of the educational system” (MoE, 2020a, p. 92). Initiatives in this area focus on ensuring that students complete the full primary and secondary cycles through support for their financial and psychosocial welfare, community involvement, strengthened PTAs, and improved learning facilities (MoE, 2020a, p. 93).

The fourth intermediate outcome for this ESP is “reducing inequities in education,” particularly between the national average and students in the hinterland regions and other remote areas, as well as for students with disabilities and students who are non-native English speakers (MoE, 2020a, p. 93). Strategies under this outcome focus on equitable teaching and access to resources in terms of special education, mother tongue instruction, and improvement of student learning and attendance as described under intermediate outcomes 2 and 3 (MoE, 2020a, p. 94).

The final intermediate outcome is “contributing to lifelong learning and employability” (MoE, 2020a, p. 94). Interventions in this area target literacy and life skills; the relevance of tertiary education; and employability through strengthened distance modalities, improvements to the TVET sector, and an emphasis on entrepreneurship (MoE, 2020a, p. 95).

One topic not addressed by the ESP, but that has garnered significant attention recently, is the practice of corporal punishment in schools. According to the 2002 *Manual of Guidelines for the Maintenance of Order and Discipline in Schools*, corporal punishment may be used in limited circumstances, such as to restrain a learner from an act of wrongdoing, to quell a threat to others, to obtain possession of a weapon or dangerous object from a learner, to defend oneself, to protect persons or property, or to preserve order (MoE, 2002). This punishment is only to be administered by the head teacher and must be carefully documented on the same day it is administered. A cane or strap is to be used on the hands for both female and male students or on the buttocks for male students only (MoE, 2002). However, Guyana has come under pressure from international organizations that have called for the abolition of corporal punishment. The MoE has been working with schools to ensure that they practice positive discipline and hold parent education sessions to teach parents how to use positive discipline instead of corporal punishment (Human Rights Council, 2020a). According to an MoE official, corporal punishment is no longer sanctioned by the MoE, nor is it used as a disciplinary method in schools (N. Johnson, personal communication, January 6, 2021).

3.4 REFORMS.

The Guyanese education sector has undergone several reforms in recent years, although several of the experts interviewed for this report indicated that more reform is needed. Each new government brings a new agenda to the sector, but education in Guyana generally has involved multi-partisan support (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11,

2020). The policy priorities of the current government, which was instituted in August 2020, and the MoE are well aligned, according to Nicola Johnson, chief planning officer at the MoE (N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

One key area for reform is the passage of a new education act, which would provide a comprehensive update to the legal groundwork of the education system, given that the current Education Act dates to 1998 (Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 1998; Guyana Chronicle, 2014; MoE, 2020a). While the current (and former) Minister of Education, Priya Manickchand, has proposed an education bill to replace Education Act 39:10, the Guyanese Parliament has not ratified it (MoE, 2020a, p. 34; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). The proposed bill calls for an update to the legal framework of Guyanese education, including in educational system administration, discipline, regulation of private schools, special education, teacher qualifications, school inspection, and curriculum standards (Guyana Chronicle, 2014). The MoE views the passage of this bill as a priority for the 2021–25 planning period (MoE, 2020a, p. 34; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

Beyond the cycles of ESPs that have shaped MoE programs and priorities, two key policy documents based on national consultations were published in the 1990s: the MoE's *State Paper on Education Policy* (1990) and a joint publication of the MoE and the Ministry of Education and Cultural Development, *An Education Policy and Five-Year Development Plan for Guyana* (1995) (MoE, 2020a, p. 80). The 1990 policy document focused on literacy and numeracy, STEM education, increasing access to higher education, and greater participation in sports and cultural activities (Ministry of Education and Cultural Development, 1995). The 1995 publication, which was an update of the 1990 policy document, included an emphasis on early childhood education, greater participation in school for children with special needs, and enhanced engagement with parents and other members of the community (Ministry of Education and Cultural Development, 1995). Although no equivalent document has been published since, the priorities outlined in these publications are notably similar to many of the MoE's current objectives. Other recent reforms include a 2014 decrease in the starting age at the nursery level from 3 years, 9 months to 3 years, 6 months and the 2010 introduction of an automatic promotion policy at the secondary level (MoE, 2020a, pp. 34, 54; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

Another significant reform, discussed in Section 4.2, was the modification of Guyana's teacher training programming in 2010 with the support of the World Bank (MoE, 2020a; World Bank, 2010; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). This reform streamlined the teacher training curriculum at CPCE, introduced a new associate's degree track, and ensured a smoother transition from CPCE to UG (MoE, 2020a; World Bank, 2010; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

An important, ongoing reform is the update of the Guyanese curriculum. Originally planned for implementation in 2014–18, the curriculum renewal process began in 2018 and will continue through 2021–25 (N. Johnson, personal communication,

October 26, 2020). The current primary and secondary curricula, which have been in use since 1990, are viewed as outdated, disjointed, and no longer aligned with current regional and international standards (MoE, 2020a, p. 67; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Therefore, this reform will bring a much-needed update to Guyanese instruction. NCERD is leading the reform process, which covers grades 1 through 9, in collaboration with external consultants and contributions from stakeholder consultations (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). However, GTU president Mark Lyte has stated that the GTU was not sufficiently incorporated from the beginning of the process (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

The new curriculum “ensures that good principles of curriculum design are respected by articulating well-established principles of learning, assessment, and inclusivity. . . [It] speaks to the role of the classroom teacher, optimal learning environments, the importance of partnerships with families and communities, educational leadership focused on learning rather than control, and the firm foundation that is achieved when disparate educational institutions, departments, and units, work in partnerships and create system alignment” (MoE, 2018, p. 3). The curriculum document defines an educated person in Guyana as someone who

1. “Lives, communicates and collaborates effectively and respectfully with others;
2. Possesses proficiency in literacy and numeracy;
3. Demonstrates respect for Guyanese heritage, languages, and cultural diversity;
4. Enjoys physical and socio-emotional well-being;
5. Demonstrates technological empowerment; and
6. Interacts with the environment and the world as a curious, innovative, creative and ethical individual who employs critical thinking to make decisions and solve problems.” (MoE, 2018, p. 4).

The new curriculum delineates the principles of learning, assessment, inclusivity, and differentiated learning. Teachers are regarded as facilitators of student learning more than deliverers of content. The curriculum emphasizes personalized, student-centered education; creation of optimal learning environments; forging of partnerships with parents and schools; and collaboration with stakeholders outside the educational system. While the new curriculum has a “common core” based on international best practices, it is adapted for relevance to Guyanese culture, society, and populations (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). In particular, racial and gender representation and equity are key values, especially as they relate to indigenous cultures and practices (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

Beyond a necessary, general update, this reform effort also aligns with the MoE’s educational commitments under the Indigenous People’s Plan, discussed in Section 5.2.c. NCERD director Quenita Walrond-Lewis emphasized that beyond comprehensive

shifts such as the curriculum reform, the Guyanese education system is at an important crossroads; mindsets and approaches to education are beginning to change in the country. This change is reflected in the curriculum update to include more Guyanese content aligned to international standards; the move toward student-centered learning and formative assessment; and the adoption of technology in the classroom, which likely will continue even after the COVID-19 pandemic (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). In Ms. Walrond-Lewis's view, key actors in the system are highly committed to collaborating and working to improve education in Guyana (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Finally, the curriculum that has been prepared is for all education districts. There is no autonomy from region to region in terms of curriculum preparation (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, January 3, 2021).

3.5 INNOVATIONS.

Innovative and creative approaches to reaching all students, particularly through the use of technology, are a priority for the Guyanese education system. This focus has emerged by necessity, due in large part to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of face-to-face education in March 2020. These innovations have come from both MoE leadership and individual institutions. As a result of the pandemic, distance instruction has grown increasingly common, and instructors and administrators alike have been adopting and adapting their use of technologies such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Moodle, and even WhatsApp and Telegram (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). At the tertiary level, both CPCE and UG have embraced, or are embracing, Moodle for the first time; are using more creative solutions such as radio to reach students without consistent internet access; and have created more online student support options (P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). In addition, UG has taken advantage of the remote learning context to expand its curriculum by inviting lecturers from abroad to teach remotely, thus expanding its offerings and increasing the number of faculty with PhDs (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

The MoE prioritized innovation in the education sector even before the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics) teaching and learning at the secondary level is a key priority for this planning period (MoE, 2020a; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). Ministry officials are working to strengthen the information management system to more effectively ground policies and programming in educational outcomes and other data (MoE, 2020a; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020). In

addition, as a result of the pandemic, the MoE has worked quickly and diligently to promote diverse forms of distance learning, including online, television, and radio (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2). This push has necessitated an emphasis on teachers' technology skills and usage in the classroom, as evidenced by the mandatory ProFuturo training. The GTU also has played an important role in promoting the use of technology among its members (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

Beyond the question of technology, NCERD and UG promote knowledge generation, research, and innovation related to education in Guyana. NCERD is an official body of the MoE that works to improve and strengthen Guyanese educational resources including the curriculum, teacher training, and examinations (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020; MoE, n.d.g). Accordingly, this center is a key source of knowledge generation and systems strengthening for the country's education system.

UG is also making innovations in education through a number of initiatives at the Faculty of Education and Humanities. Research and best practices related to the linguistic diversity of Guyana and the greater Latin America and Caribbean region are key areas of innovation (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). For example, the Faculty of Education and Humanities is working to generate knowledge and understanding of Amerindian society and language, as well as to validate Guyanese Creole (known as Creolese). Both initiatives have important implications for the education system, particularly in light of the ongoing curriculum reform and the MoE's emphasis on closing the achievement gap between students on the coast and those in the hinterland regions, and for those who are non-native English speakers (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). In addition, the Faculty of Education and Humanities is working to open a language institute, which would provide a platform for intraregional exchange and training to improve Guyana's English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Finally, the Faculty of Education and Humanities reviews its curriculum every 3 to 5 years to ensure that it aligns with national, regional, and international standards and with innovations in the field (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

3.6 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS.

One of the primary challenges faced by Guyanese education policymakers is the lack of coherent, systematic planning and decision making, both within the MoE and between the Central Ministry and regional education actors. According to the last several ESPs, it is not entirely clear at which level the decisions about planning, financial allocation, and implementation should be made (MoE, 2015a, 2020a). In addition, agenda and policy formulation in the MoE does not always occur systematically on the basis of evidence or data (MoE, 2015a, 2020a). This absence of clarity prevents effective policymaking and prevents relevant actors from implementing all proposed activities on time. Reforms are needed to better delineate the different roles and responsibilities

among actors, as well as to base policies more systematically on evidence related to student achievements, teacher weaknesses, or infrastructural needs. One way in which the MoE is responding to these challenges is by strengthening its information management system to facilitate programmatic decision making and effective monitoring and evaluation.

Another challenge is the inability to pass the new education bill in Parliament. Passage of this bill would result in an important update for the country's education system. One particular area highlighted in the 2021–25 ESP, as well as by experts interviewed for this report, was the need to have accurate data on private schools, whose reporting would be mandated by this policy. However, this bill is not a policy change that can be enacted by the MoE or other technical actors in the education sector, as it requires political will on the part of the Parliament.

An additional challenge underscored by the outcomes of the 2014–18 ESP is the lack of completion of key initiatives with only 37% of the proposed activities in the ESP being finalized by the end of the planning period. Consequently, many of the proposed initiatives have been deferred to the 2021–25 planning period, thus hindering advancement in curriculum reform and institutional audits and improvement of student achievement levels.

CHAPTER 4.

TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

4.1 TEACHER POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS.

The most recent data from the MoE on the Guyanese public teacher population comes from the 2017–18 academic year, when there were 1,841 teachers at the nursery level, 3,833 teachers at the primary level, and 4,035 teachers at the secondary level, for a total of 9,709 teachers across the entire system (MoE, 2020a, p. 65). The experts interviewed in 2020 for this report placed the number at more than 10,000 teachers nationally but included tertiary-level instructors in this figure (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

The vast majority of Guyanese teachers are women, with a national average of 86% female teachers, and only one region (Region 9) with fewer than 80% female teachers (MoE, 2020a, p. 65). This trend is particularly notable at the nursery level; many regions have no male teachers at this level, and those that do have a total of only one or two (MoE, 2020a, p. 65). Mark Lyte, president of the GTU, cited this disparity as one that the education system is working to change (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

The MoE defines a trained teacher as one who holds any of the following degrees:

- “a Trained Teachers Certificate [or] the Associate’s Degree in Education, from CPCE or
- [the] BEd., Diploma in Education, [or] Masters in Education from the University of Guyana or
- [An] equivalent recognised professional qualification from an institution outside of Guyana” (MoE, 2020a, p. 62).

As of 2017, according to MoE figures, 70% of teachers in Guyana hold one of the above-listed recognized qualifications, including 69% of nursery teachers, 77% of primary teachers, and 71% of secondary teachers (MoE, 2020a, p. 62). These rates have remained largely stable since 2013, when, on average, 70% of nursery teachers, 78% of primary teachers, and 67% of secondary teachers were trained (MoE, 2020a, p. 65). Experts interviewed in 2020 for this report estimated the total percentage of trained teachers in the country to be between 75% and 80% (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). However, these relatively high numbers conceal large disparities among regions. For instance, during the 2017–18 academic year, 82% of the teachers working in the Georgetown Education District were trained, whereas in the hinterland regions, only 36% of teachers

in Region 1, 49% of teachers in Region 7, 13% of teachers in Region 8, and 36% of teachers in Region 9 had one of the requisite qualifications (MoE, 2020a, p. 66). Exhibit 5 details the number of trained teachers by level.

Exhibit 5. Number of teachers and proportion of trained teachers in Guyana, by education level, 2017

Level	Number of teachers	Percentage of trained teachers
Nursery	1,841	69%
Primary	3,833	77%
Secondary	4,035	71%
Total	9,709	70%

Source: Ministry of Education, Guyana

It is both a national and an international priority for Guyana to have at least 80% of its teachers trained by 2023. All qualified candidates eligible for teacher training (preservice or in-service) are invited to enroll in CPCE and the college is ready to open regional hubs to meet demand. For example, in 2018, there were 34 applicants from Region 2 (Anna Regina) who would have required dormitory accommodations at existing training centers. Because no dormitory space was available, CPCE established a new preservice center in the region. The first cohort of students completed their program and graduated in December 2020 (V. Rowe, personal communication, January 7, 2021).

Although the MoE acknowledges that some reports indicate that Guyana has a shortage of teachers—particularly trained teachers—MoE statistics do not reflect this need in terms of absolute numbers. During the 2017–18 school year, the national average student–teacher ratios fell below MoE targets: 14:1 at the nursery level, 21:1 at the primary level, and 16:1 at the secondary level (MoE, 2020a, p. 66). However, the 2020 ESP noted a lack of secondary-level teachers specializing in mathematics and the sciences, as well as a need for trained teachers overall (MoE, 2020a, p. 66). The low number of teachers in the hinterland regions has been of particular concern, although in recent years, significant efforts have been undertaken to address this gap (P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

While these comprehensive data are available for Guyana’s public schools, as discussed in Section 1.4, equivalent data for the private sector are unavailable. According to the MoE’s best estimate, just under 10% of Guyanese students are enrolled in private schools (MoE, 2020a, p. 34). The city of Georgetown and Regions 3 through 6 are home to the most private schools in the country (MoE, 2020a, p. 34). The proposed education bill, which would call for the replacement of Education Act 39:10, would mandate that private schools report such data to the MoE in the future (MoE, 2020a, p. 34; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020).

4.2 PRESERVICE EDUCATION.

Guyana has two tertiary-level institutions for teachers' preservice education: CPCE and UG (MoE, 2020a; MoE, n.d.c; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). CPCE, which opened in 1928, has a main campus in Georgetown and 19 satellite centers across all 10 administrative regions of the country (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). The college initially operated out of its Georgetown location but began to expand its presence via the satellite centers in the late 1990s through the early 2000s (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

CPCE currently offers three main degree programs: the associate's degree, the Trained Teacher's Certificate, and the Foundation Program, all of which offer options to combine studies at CPCE with additional coursework at UG. These institutions offer their programming through multiple modalities, including full time, part time, preservice, and in-service, as discussed in Section 4.3. Although teachers without pre-existing training can be hired, the MoE currently prioritizes preservice training to maximize the number of trained teachers in the country. Exhibit 6 shows the different tracks to becoming a trained teacher in Guyana.

Exhibit 6. Teacher training in Guyana

Degree	Number of years	Institution	Entry requirements
Associate's Degree	2 (most candidates)	CPCE	5+ CSECs with an average score between 1–3 (including English and math)
	1 (research track, for candidates who already have prior professional experience)		
Trained Teacher's Certificate	3	CPCE	4+ CSECs with an average score between 1–3 (including English and math)
Foundation Program	Preparation to enter the TTC program	CPCE	Candidates who do not meet the qualifications for the TTC or the AD but still want to be trained
Bachelor of Education (BEd)	2 years (if already holding an associate's degree)	UG	5+ CSECs with an average score between 1–3 (including English and math); students generally complete a degree at CPCE first
	3 years (if already holding a Teacher's Certificate)		
Master's in Education	2–3 years	UG	Bachelor of Education or other equivalent degree

Notes. CPCE is Cyril Potter College of Education. CSEC is Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate. TTC is Trained Teacher's Certificate. AD is Associate's Degree.

Throughout much of its history, CPCE offered the Trained Teacher's Certificate as the main qualification credential for teachers. The 9-year certificate program consisted of 4 years of study followed by a 1-year practicum and concluded after another 4 years of study (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). Structured in this format, this certificate was comparable to the training required to enter the medical field in other countries (P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020). However, in 2010 the program underwent reform with support from the World Bank under the Improving Teacher Education project (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; World Bank, 2010). This reform introduced the associate's degree, changed the structure of the teacher's certificate program to make it shorter and more practical, streamlined the transfer process from CPCE to UG, and strengthened CPCE's infrastructure and offerings (MoE, 2015a, 2020a; World Bank, 2010; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). The Foundation Program, post-associate's degree technical tracks, and a 1-year associate's degree also were subsequently introduced, leading to the full list of options currently offered by the college (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

The 2-year associate's degree program targets high school graduates who have obtained at least five CSECs with scores between 1 and 3, including in English and mathematics. These qualifications are the same as the requirements necessary for admission to UG (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). After 2 years of full-time training in pedagogy and methodology, students have multiple options for further study. They may continue on an academic track and pursue a Bachelor of Education degree at UG with an additional 2 years of full-time study, or they may continue on a technical training track to become a technical and vocational teacher (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). In addition, CPCE offers a 1-year associate's degree in education for candidates with alternative previous qualifications who want to gain additional research skills (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). As with the 2-year program, students in the 1-year program may transition to UG for an additional 2 years of study. These students are encouraged to obtain the Bachelor of Education degree, although this is not required. The associate's degree is offered through both preservice and in-service modalities.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the college has expanded its remote learning offerings and plans to continue offering instruction through this option even after the pandemic, given the popularity of remote instruction among students (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). Three of CPCE's centers offer full-time, preservice coursework, and the remainder offer part-time, in-service night classes. All preservice teachers across centers receive a monthly stipend for the duration of their studies at CPCE (2 years). Students who live in dormitories receive less than those who live in the community. Preservice students who are on leave from regular teaching duties in the hinterland regions to attend CPCE full time continue to receive a monthly salary like their in-service counterparts (V. Rowe, personal communication, January 7, 2021).

After graduation, teachers are required to work in Guyana for 5 years if they completed the preservice track or 3 years if they completed the in-service track, in order to meet the need for teachers, particularly in the hinterland regions (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020; MoE, 2020a).

At UG, the Faculty of Education and Humanities offers bachelor's and master's degrees for teacher training in several departments, including Foundations in Education Management and Curriculum and Instruction (UG, n.d.; C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). The Faculty of Education and Humanities has a total of over 1,000 students, including 137 master's-level students (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Undergraduates in the Foundations in Education Department focus on early childhood and primary education, while the Department of Curriculum and Instruction offers a variety of specialized majors for secondary teachers such as English, Spanish, history, and geography (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Students generally matriculate into these programs after completing their studies at CPCE; they earn their bachelor's degree in six semesters if they have obtained the associate's degree, and in eight semesters if they have obtained the Trained Teachers Certificate (World Bank, 2010; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Depending on their major, students must complete at least a one-semester practicum at the bachelor's level (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020; R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). In addition, students must complete applied assignments, which often consist of practical components related to their work and/or challenges faced in their schools, as well as a bachelor's dissertation (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020). The practicum program begins at CPCE and consists of guided teaching (observation, team teaching, individual teaching, commencement of action research and individual study projects) in 34 to 35 days spread over two semesters. Later in the program, students complete a final practicum in 18 to 20 days spread over two semesters. During this time, students complete study reports and engage with individual teachers who assess their performance (V. Rowe, personal communication, January 7, 2021).

The Faculty of Education and Humanities also offers master's degrees in early childhood education, curriculum and instruction, and administration (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Like their bachelor's-level counterparts, master's-level students complete practical research assignments and a dissertation at the end of their coursework (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020). In addition, the Faculty Education and Humanities is planning to establish a language institute to facilitate ESL training and exchange with students across Latin America and the Caribbean (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

4.3 IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND CAREER PATH.

Teachers are permitted to enter the field of education in Guyana without training, particularly in regions in which teachers are needed, although they are expected to undertake in-service training after hire (World Bank, 2010; M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). These individuals often do not have the requisite CSEC qualifications to enter the associate's degree program or the Trained Teachers Certificate program (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). However, given the lack of sufficient enforcement regarding teacher qualifications, some teachers do not undergo in-service training, leading to a sizable population of untrained teachers working in Guyana, particularly in the hinterland regions (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). In addition, many teachers, particularly female teachers, marry and start families at a relatively young age before returning to CPCE and/or UG for teacher training later in life (C. Bissessar, personal communication, December 1, 2020).

CPCE is engaged in efforts to reduce the number of untrained teachers in Guyana. Because they are the primary teacher training institution in the country, they do not advertise their programming. However, they do collaborate with the REDs to collect information that helps them identify untrained teachers and reach out to those teachers with information about training pathways (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). The college is flexible about opening satellite centers if a cluster of teachers working in proximity to one another is interested in one of the training programs. Furthermore, CPCE is willing to adapt its instruction to reach candidates regardless of their internet connectivity or their ability to attend in person, particularly during the pandemic. This is done through radio instruction, printed modules, or preloaded USB flash drives (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

As discussed in Section 4.2, CPCE offers an in-service track for untrained teachers who are currently working in the field so they can obtain formal training, primarily through part-time evening classes (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). From a content standpoint, this track is equivalent to the preservice program, in contrast to the in-service professional development, as explained below. A rotation system is in place to manage in-service teacher training at CPCE and UG. This system generates a schedule and a wait list that indicates when teachers may leave their classrooms to pursue higher education, to ensure that classes at schools are covered and that there are no gaps in instruction (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). One option for in-service training is the associate's degree, as described in Section 4.2.

Beyond the associate's degree, CPCE offers the Trained Teacher's Certificate, a 3-year program. After completing this program, students have the option to complete an additional 3 years of study at UG to obtain a bachelor's degree. Although this was originally the flagship teacher training program in the country, it is currently being phased out in the coastal regions in line with the reform project; however, it remains an in-service option for candidates in the hinterland in Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 and in parts

of Region 10 (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). While applicants for the associate's degree must previously have satisfactorily completed five CSEC subjects, CPCE now accepts candidates with four CSEC subjects for the Trained Teacher's Certificate, as a strategy to "capture" untrained teachers who do not have the requisite CSEC qualifications for the associate's degree. For candidates who do not qualify for either diploma, the college offers the Foundation Program, which prepares candidates to enter the Trained Teacher's Certificate track (MoE, 2020a; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

Through the oversight and direction of NCERD, the MoE offers continuous professional development (CPD) workshops for teachers who already possess the required qualifications. These training sessions take place primarily over the summer months. Although the trainings are not mandatory, participants who attend earn credits that count toward their career advancement (MoE, 2020a, p. 64). In 2014, the MoE reported that an average of about 500 teachers per year were participating in the annual workshops (MoE, 2015a, p. 19). Some regions, primarily those on the coast, hold regular cluster meetings among teachers from the same education district. For logistical reasons, these meetings are much more challenging to hold in the hinterland regions (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). To date, workshop topics are developed mainly in collaboration with the RED. The workshops focus on classroom management; education management; instruction in the core areas of mathematics, science, and literacy; life skills; special education; and building teachers' ICT skills (MoE, 2015a, p. 49; MoE, 2020a, p. 64; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

As with the 2014–18 ESP, the current 2021–25 ESP focuses on improving these CPD workshops as a strategy to improve teachers' effectiveness and thus students' achievement levels. During 2014–18, the workshop methodology was adapted to better target those areas in which teachers needed more support (MoE, 2015a, p. 49; MoE, 2020a, p. 33). In addition, through the 2021–25 ESP, the MoE and NCERD aim to implement several reforms to strengthen the workshops further (MoE, 2020a, p. 64). The CPD workshops will be designed based on data from national and regional exams to systematically address documented difficulties that students are experiencing and to ensure that teachers can address areas of student weakness (MoE, 2020a, p. 64). In addition, NCERD aims to focus more on challenges at the school and classroom levels, rather than on generalized, large-group programming (MoE, 2020a, p. 64). The MoE is also discussing whether to make CPD workshops mandatory for all instructors (MoE, 2020a, p. 85). Quenita Walrond-Lewis, director of NCERD, explained that NCERD is encouraging regional education officers to check in more regularly with teachers in the hinterland, who may not be able to attend workshops or cluster meetings often, to ensure that they receive the necessary support and capacity-building assistance (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020).

Beyond the MoE-led efforts, the GTU is promoting professional development among its members, with a current focus on teachers' use of technology (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). The Union facilitates training programs for

teachers in the hinterland and riverine regions in collaboration with regional and international partners. Additionally, the GTU collaborates with the MoE to provide higher education scholarships each year to 50 of its members (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). GTU president Mark Lyte noted that many teachers in Guyana are motivated to gain additional training during their careers, as evidenced by their enrollment in university degree-offering, distance education programs as well as free, open-source classes through platforms such as Coursera on their own time and with their own funds (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

4.4 TEACHER SALARY AND WORKING CONDITIONS.

The 2021–25 ESP provides some limited statistics on the MoE’s annual expenditures on teachers’ salaries between 2014 and 2018 (MoE, 2020a, p. 77). Based on the number of teachers reported for the 2017–18 school year (9,709) and the total salary expenditures in 2017 (73,379,000 USD), each teacher earned approximately 7,557.83 USD per year, or 629.82 USD per month. However, while this figure gives us an idea of teachers’ average salary, it represents only an average across all teachers, regardless of seniority, level of education, or position. This calculation also may include benefits or social charges beyond monthly paychecks. For comparison, according to Mr. Lyte, the typical salary of a Guyanese teacher is approximately 500 USD per month (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Dr. Roslin Khan, dean of the Faculty of Education and Humanities, estimated that at the university lecturer level, salaries are lower than at other institutions in the region, ranging between over 200,000 (about USD 960) to over 400,000 (about 1,920 USD) Guyanese dollars (GYD) per month, depending on seniority (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Mark Lyte of the GTU, Viola Rowe of CPCE, and Dr. Paulette Henry of UG emphasized that teachers’ salaries generally are not considered competitive in the Guyanese labor market, leading to challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. Teacher candidates may be attracted to other professions, and current teachers are willing to move on to other sectors offering more competitive wages when given the opportunity (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020; P. Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). Dr. Khan linked these challenges with teacher retention to the broader economic downturn in Guyana and the trend of international labor emigration (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Mr. Lyte observed that this drop-off is particularly notable among men, perhaps contributing to the sector’s gender imbalance, as discussed in Section 4.1 (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Ms. Rowe noted that the trend of teacher attrition has decreased in the past decade and that teachers appear more willing to remain in the field, perhaps due to a lack of alternative employment options in the labor market (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020). However, the advent of oil wealth in Guyana and the potential expansion of employment in the extractive field may entice some teachers to leave the education profession (V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

Another salary-related challenge faced by the sector is the lack of sufficient compensation among teachers who have received higher degrees. Mr. Lyte estimated that teachers who acquire a master's degree receive only about 50 USD more per month than the baseline, while teachers who obtain a doctorate receive about 150 USD per month (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). Because teachers do not feel well compensated for earning an additional degree, they may not be motivated to pursue further tertiary education at the master's level, let alone at the doctoral level. That said, currently the only ways that teachers can receive raises are through advancement in professional rank, education, and exposure to professional development (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, January 3, 2021).

4.5 TEACHER UNIONS.

The GTU is the sole union representing the teaching profession in Guyana. Among the more than 10,500 instructors across the country, the GTU counts over 7,075 dues-paying members across the primary, secondary, and tertiary school levels (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). The Union's primary objectives are to advocate for improvements in pay, benefits, and working conditions for its members; support professional development and encourage teacher training; and enact disciplinary measures when necessary (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020).

The GTU collaborates with the MoE, although the nature and closeness of the relationship varies based on the current government and its policies, and especially its consideration of teachers' needs (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). For instance, Mark Lyte, GTU president, asserts that the Union's relationship with the current government is "cordial," with some room for additional collaboration and dialogue, and that the GTU has maintained a largely positive relationship with the previous administration, barring a period of teacher strikes in 2018 (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). The GTU was involved in the consultation process for the latest ESP and was satisfied with its level of inclusion and participation, in contrast to previous ESP iterations. However, the Union perceived its inclusion in the current, NCERD-led curriculum renewal process to be insufficient and as occurring too late in the process (M. Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020). In addition to its cooperation with the Government of Guyana, the GTU collaborates with parents as necessary and has external partners in teacher training and professional development, as discussed in Section 4.3.

4.6 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS.

One of the key challenges for Guyana's education system is the regional disparity among its trained teachers. In several of the hinterland regions, the proportion of trained teachers is half, or even less than half, that of trained teachers in the coastal regions, thus creating disparities in the quality of education that students are receiving. Although efforts are under way to close this gap, such as through outreach

and in-service, part-time training modalities, additional programs and reforms are necessary to ensure that the entire country benefits from trained teachers.

A related challenge is the quality of teacher training and professional development in Guyana, which has significant implications for student achievement levels, which remain low across all grade levels. Less than 50% of students pass the NGTA and NGFA in English and mathematics, with even lower percentages of students meeting the government's optimal standards (MoE, 2020a, pp. 57–61). Despite some gains in student performance during the 2014–18 planning period, the same trend of low pass rates occurred for the NGSA. Further, only one-third of students receive CSEC passing scores (MoE, 2020a, 57–61).

Although student performance is not tied to teacher training alone, more research is needed on the relationship between these results and the content and methodology of teacher training and professional development in the country. For instance, Dr. Khan of UG recommended an additional review of the CPCE curriculum, given that students entering the Bachelor's in Education degree program are not always prepared for introductory-level university classes (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020). While there has been interest in expanding CPCE's offerings to include a bachelor's degree program, more support and review are necessary before this reform can take place (R. Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020; V. Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

This strengthening of teacher training will not be possible without additional funding and infrastructural support for both CPCE and UG. For instance, CPCE lacks adequate technology, such as laptops and scanners, for its instructors and administrators. Furthermore, UG received just over half of its requested budget for 2020. These institutions have strong, motivated faculty, staff, and students, but without the necessary financial assistance, they cannot innovate and expand in proposed areas, such as increasing online and remote learning, reaching all untrained teachers, or reviewing and reforming curricula and course offerings. Dr. Paulette Henry, Director of Excellence for Teaching and Learning, recommends a number of innovations, such as the use and study of artificial intelligence and additional emphasis on entrepreneurship teaching, to better prepare Guyanese students to contribute to the country's future development. These kinds of key innovations and policy changes will not be possible without additional investment in Guyanese higher education.

It is clear that the issue of teacher salaries, which are strongly linked to teacher recruitment and retention, remains a challenge for Guyana. Wages are generally not sufficient for teachers to support themselves, making the education sector less competitive and attractive to teacher candidates and leading to teacher attrition.

CHAPTER 5.

VULNERABLE AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

5.1 GENDER GAPS: TRENDS AND POLICIES.

Gender equality and general equity in education are priorities in Guyana. Indeed, these concepts are enshrined in the Guyanese Constitution and have been the focus of several ESPs (MoE, 2020a). Gender equity is also an essential tenet of the country's new curriculum reform effort led by NCERD (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Guyana has achieved near-universal primary education, with a drop-off around the beginning of secondary school (MoE, 2020a, pp. 35–44). However, although enrollment rates are lower for both genders throughout the secondary cycle, girls are more likely than boys to attend and finish school (MoE, 2020a, pp. 35–44; UNICEF, 2017). According to figures from the MoE, which are supported by a joint study with UNICEF on out-of-school children in Guyana, as of 2016–17, the number of girls enrolled at the secondary level was 6% higher on average than the number of boys (MoE, 2020a, pp. 35–44; UNICEF, 2017). Similarly, in an assessment of student completion rates, a 2017 MoE analysis found that only 39% of boys who enroll in general secondary school complete their final year of the cycle, compared to 62% of girls (MoE, 2020a, p. 56).

One of the most important explanations for this gender gap is that boys often begin to work during their adolescence, frequently in agriculture, gold mining, or other extractive industries (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020; UNICEF, 2017, p. 57). This trend is particularly notable in the hinterland regions, where the child labor rates are much higher than the national average. In 2014, 18.3% of Guyanese children between the ages of 5 and 17 (disaggregated by 19.7% of boys and 17% of girls) worked to help their families (UNICEF, 2017, p. 59).

Teenage pregnancy causes girls to drop out of school, although the MoE has developed a support program to help young mothers reintegrate into the education system after giving birth (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020; UNICEF, 2017). Although the teenage pregnancy rate has decreased over the past two decades, Guyana's teenage fertility rate, as measured by the number of births among women aged 15 to 19, was 72.87 per 1,000 in 2018 (World Bank, n.d.f).

Despite girls' greater access to and acquisition of education, barriers to equality remain in Guyanese society more broadly. For example, women are less likely to be employed than men; despite making up 51.4% of the working age population in the country, Guyanese women comprise only 41.7% of the active labor force (BoS, 2020). Salaried women and men have similar wages, with a national average of 94,773 GYD

(452 USD) and 94,309 GYD (450 USD), respectively, in monthly income. However, self-employed women earn, on average, only 52,696 GYD (251 USD) per month compared to the 78,765 GYD (375 USD) that self-employed men earn on average (BoS, 2020).

The 2019 Guyana Women's Health and Life Experiences Survey Report illustrates the high prevalence of intimate partner violence and other forms of violence against women and girls in Guyana. Despite constitutional guarantees about gender equality and a dedicated Women and Gender Equality Commission, the country's participation in key international accords on gender-based violence—and relevant, domestic legal frameworks on the issue—violence against women and girls remains widespread and higher than the international average (Contreras-Urbina et al., 2019, pp. 13–15). The 2019 study found that 55% of Guyanese women who had ever had a male partner had experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, including 38% of respondents who had experienced physical or sexual violence (Contreras-Urbina et al., 2019, p. 9). Patriarchal norms about men's superiority and women's responsibilities within the household were found to be central drivers of this violence in Guyana.

5.2 DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION.

Guyana is a culturally and ethnically diverse country, and the MoE has made equitable access to education for all a central priority in the most recent ESP (MoE, 2020a). Diversity and inclusion are also central tenets of the ongoing curriculum reform (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Despite this emphasis, achievement gaps remain between certain vulnerable groups and those in the national average, particularly among students living in the hinterland regions, students who are non-native English speakers, and those with disabilities (MoE, 2020a, p. 94).

For example, MoE figures indicate that in 2013, 31% of Guyanese students scored 50% or higher on the NGSA in mathematics, 20% of students scored 50% or higher in English, and 18% of students scored 50% or higher in science (MoE, 2015a, p. 26). However, disaggregation of these data reveals stark differences between students on the coast and those in the hinterland regions. In science, 28% of students on the coast scored 50% or higher, whereas only 9% of students in the hinterland regions did. In mathematics, 42% of students on the coast scored 50% or higher, compared to only 18% of students in the hinterland regions. In English, 28% of students on the coast scored 50% or higher, while only 10% of students in the hinterland regions did (MoE, 2015a, p. 26). Achievement rates increased nationally during the 2014–18 planning period, and although a key objective of the MoE during this period was to decrease the achievement gap between students in the hinterland regions and on the coast, this disparity increased by a few percentage points at the NGSA and CSEC levels (MoE, 2020a, pp. 22, 33, 57–61). Consequently, addressing this gap remains an area of focus in the current ESP (MoE, 2020a, p. 94).

Table. Achievement according to region

Coastal/Hinterland Achievement Disparities			
% of students scoring higher than 50% on national grade assessments	All	Coastal	Hinterland
NGSA Math	31%	42%	18%
NGSA English	20%	28%	10%
NGSA Science	18%	28%	9%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2020

5.2.A DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities are a population of key concern for the MoE, including in both the 2014–18 and the 2021–25 ESPs (MoE, n.d.h). The right to an education for students with disabilities is protected by Guyanese policy, including that of the MoE, as well as the 2010 Persons with Disabilities Act (MoE, 2020a; UNICEF, 2017, p. 73). In addition, NCERD’s SEN unit works to assess existing SEN policies and materials and to develop new ones to ensure that the Guyanese education system provides this student population with a quality education (MoE, n.d.h). The MoE is prioritizing the education of students with disabilities, with an emphasis on developing effective materials and ensuring inclusive classrooms (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Despite these efforts, however, achievement gaps remain between students with disabilities and those in the national average.

The 2021–2025 ESP summarizes a National Commission on Disability study, which found that about 11% of surveyed adults with disabilities never attended school and nearly 50% had only attended primary school (MoE, 2020a, p. 44). Current students cited barriers similar to those of adults, including financial and transportation challenges, difficulties finding a school, peers’ negative attitudes toward them, and to a lesser extent, physical barriers and teachers’ negative attitudes toward them (MoE, 2020a, p. 44). According to a 2017 UNICEF study, just over 80% of surveyed students with disabilities were mainstreamed into general education tracks, while just under 20% attended specialized schools (UNICEF, 2017, p. 70). The 2021–25 ESP reported that approximately 400 students are studying in schools specifically for students with disabilities (MoE, 2020a, p. 44).

The 2014–18 ESP emphasized the need to improve the system’s response and assistance to children with disabilities, despite significant strides such as the appointment of a national SEN coordinator, MoE partnerships with relevant NGOs, enhanced teacher training, and early screening to identify children with disabilities in an effort to better respond to their needs (MoE, 2015a, 19). At the end of this planning period, the MoE

reported small, positive gains regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in national assessments; their ongoing inclusion in curriculum reform; the establishment of the Center for Children with Special Needs; and more options for accessible transportation to school and improved, in-class support (MoE, 2020a, 33). The 2021–25 ESP also prioritizes students with disabilities as a key target population in the push to reduce achievement gaps, including by strengthening educational materials and facilities intended for students with disabilities, improving SEN teacher training, and expanding transportation options (MoE, 2020a, pp. 2, 94, 116–123).

5.2.B. SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

The Guyanese legal framework and social norms strongly oppose non-heterosexual and/or nonbinary sexual activity, relationships, sexualities, and gender expression. According to the 1983 Criminal Law (Offenses) Act, sexual acts between two men are punishable by up to 15 years of detention, making Guyana the only Latin American country to criminalize sexual activity between same-sex, consenting adults (Carroll & Mendos, 2017; Red Internacional de Derechos Humanos, 2020). Cross-dressing was also considered a crime for decades, although a Caribbean Court of Justice decision overturned this law in 2018 (Human Rights Council, 2020a; Nurse, 2018). Guyanese who are LGBTQ+ face many forms of discrimination and violence, and Guyana has received international criticism for its policies toward and lack of protections for this population (Carroll & Mendos, 2017; Ceccanese et al., 2018; Human Rights Council, 2020b; Red Internacional de Derechos Humanos, 2020).

Although the Guyanese Constitution and legal frameworks, including the 1998 Education Act, guarantee universal education and freedom from discrimination, LGBTQ+ students face violence in and exclusion from Guyanese public schools (Ceccanese et al., 2018). A report from Georgetown University’s Human Rights Institute found that LGBTQ+ students are often bullied verbally and physically by their peers and treated unjustly by teachers (Ceccanese et al., 2018). In addition, low support from family members and a lack of financial means lead many LGBTQ+ students to drop out of school (Ceccanese et al., 2018).

5.2.C. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/FIRST NATIONS

Indigenous students are another population of key concern for the MoE, particularly with respect to achievement gaps and mother tongue instruction. As discussed in Section 1, Amerindian Guyanese make up about 10.5% of the country’s population and live primarily in the hinterland regions, although some indigenous communities live in Regions 2 and 5 of the coast (BoS, 2014; MoE, 2020a; UNICEF, 2017). Indigenous students are more likely to not attend school than other groups. According to a 2017 study, 16.1% are not enrolled in nursery school, and 3.2% are not enrolled in primary school (UNICEF, 2017). The hinterland regions also face higher levels of illiteracy, a lack of infrastructure, lower levels of trained teachers, and academic achievement gaps relative to the national average (BoS, 2014, 2016b, 2017; MoE, 2017, 2020a).

At the national level, the rights and protections of the Guyanese indigenous population are governed by the 2006 Amerindian Act. This population is also protected by the Guyanese Constitution (MoE, 2017). In the education sector, the Indigenous People's Plan delineates the MoE's policies concerning its indigenous citizens. Drawing on consultations with community members in Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9, this plan identified priority areas of need, including a linguistically and culturally relevant curriculum and teaching materials, improved teacher training on diversity, and training a greater number of indigenous teachers (MoE, 2017).

Consequently, NCERD is prioritizing the representation and inclusion of indigenous students, practices, and references in the country's curriculum renewal (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Through this process, the MoE aims to produce a curriculum that is more relevant to and engaging for all Guyanese students, with an emphasis on indigenous students (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). In addition, the 2021–25 ESP targets mother tongue instruction as an important area for improvement during the planning period, particularly among indigenous communities. In particular, the MoE is currently piloting a mother tongue instructional program at the nursery level in Region 9 (MoE, 2020a, p. 12; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Another key objective of the 2021–25 planning period is to decrease inequalities between students in the hinterland regions and those in the national average. Measures to achieve this objective include strengthening school readiness, increasing the number of trained teachers in the hinterland regions, and providing better technological support in these regions (MoE, 2020a).

5.2.D. MIGRANTS

As discussed in Section 1.3, Guyana traditionally has been a country of emigration with minimal immigration rates; however, a recent influx of Venezuelans has created a new migrant student population in the Guyanese educational system. Although Guyana does not have a specific educational policy on Venezuelan children, these children have access to the Guyanese educational system under the guarantee of universal education in the country and are a target population in the latest ESP (MoE, 2020a; N. Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020; Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). This influx has created challenges for the Guyanese educational system, which lacks enough teachers qualified in Spanish and/or ESL instruction (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). However, the MoE is currently working to strengthen teacher capacities in these areas (Q. Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020). Furthermore, the Venezuelan student population faces certain vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding access to school feeding and integration (GPE, 2020, p. 3).

The 2021–25 ESP reports that as of May 2020, 739 Venezuelan students were enrolled in Guyanese schools (MoE, 2020a, pp. 44–45). Region 3 hosts the most Venezuelan students, with an enrollment of 104, followed by Region 1 with 100, Region 2 with 73, and

Region 4 with 60 students. In addition, an estimated 600 Venezuelan children may currently be out of school, although some 15% of this population may be children of Guyanese who returned from Venezuela (MoE, 2020a, pp. 44–45). Efforts are under way to strengthen instruction and provide educational materials in Spanish, and the MoE has identified Venezuelan students as a beneficiary population for another pilot program in mother tongue instruction (MoE, 2020a, p. 94).

5.2.E. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

Survivors of human trafficking, including children and youth, are a population of concern who have been deprived of liberty in Guyana. The Government of Guyana has prioritized the prosecution of human trafficking criminals and the prevention of trafficking in persons through the Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons, the strengthening of the 2005 Combating Trafficking of Persons Act, the expansion of services for survivors, and efforts to combat child labor in the country more broadly (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2020). However, children—particularly girls—are vulnerable to sex trafficking and other forms of trafficking in persons, particularly near extractive industry sites and among Venezuelan and other migrant communities (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2020).

Trafficking interrupts children’s education, as highlighted in the 2017 UNICEF report on out-of-school children (UNICEF, 2017). Girls are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking when they do not have sufficient familial support or the means to remain in school (UNICEF, 2017, p. 57). However, child survivors of sex trafficking are not a huge population of concern in Guyana: The government reported a total of 102 trafficking survivors in 2019, which included both sex and labor trafficking (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2020). However, these official figures may be an under-reporting of the true rates.

5.2.F. SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students are a key, vulnerable population for the MoE; socioeconomic disparities have been identified as one of the main drivers of educational inequalities in the country. Children from families in the lowest income quintile are the most likely to be out of school, receive lower exam scores compared to the national average, and have access to fewer material and human resources in the educational system (MoE, 2020a; UNICEF, 2017). Students from low-income families are concentrated in the hinterland and riverine regions, which confront additional challenges such as lack of employment opportunities, trained teachers, and internet access compared to students in the coastal regions (MoE, 2020a; UNICEF, 2017).

The 2021–25 ESP targets students from low-income families across several thematic axes, including in the priorities of “improving performance at all levels” and “reducing inequities in education,” which focus on decreasing the stark disparities described above (MoE, 2020a, pp. 1–2). These efforts build on the priorities of the 2014–18 ESP,

which included outcome targets of decreasing the hinterland/coastal disparity in exam results for the NGS and CSEC, expanding training levels among teachers in the hinterland regions, and providing support for at-risk students (MoE, 2015a, 2020a).

5.3 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS.

One of the main challenges to Guyana's diversity and intercultural education is the disparities between students on the coast and in the hinterland regions. These disparities have the greatest impact on indigenous students, who are more likely to live in the hinterland regions and to come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This coastal-interior divide is a challenge for Guyana's educational system across a range of thematic areas. The current curriculum reform emphasizing indigenous representation and inclusion and the mother tongue instruction pilot project are key policy measures, but their efficacy will need to be measured in the forthcoming years after implementation has been fully rolled out. Ministerial objectives discussed in other chapters, such as those related to teacher training or innovation, may also have important effects on these disparities during the current ESP planning period, but consistent, systematic reform is necessary to close these gaps.

Another significant challenge is the status of LGBTQ+ youth, who do not benefit from targeted programming, protection from the MoE, or the Guyanese legal system at large. Although several NGOs such as the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) and Guyana Trans United advocate on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community in Guyana and strides such as the decriminalization of cross-dressing have been made, formal government measures are lacking and, indeed, sometimes contribute to the problem. Greater research is needed on the numbers, characteristics, and lived experiences of queer Guyanese youth in order to provide more targeted assistance and advocacy for their education.

Finally, the phenomenon of Venezuelan refugee children poses a new challenge for Guyana's education system, which has not previously had many non-Guyanese, non-native English-speaking students. Given that the current political and economic situation in Venezuela is not likely to abate any time soon, the impact on the Guyanese educational system is likely to continue, at least in the short term. Thus, Guyana will need to put additional resources into ESL and Spanish language materials and teacher training to accommodate the Venezuelan refugee population.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

6.1 CONTEXT OF THE COUNTRY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION.

Guyana is a small, multicultural country with a population of about 750,000 people concentrated primarily on the coast, and approximately 10% of the populace—primarily the indigenous Amerindians—living in the remote hinterland regions. A large divide exists between the coast and the hinterland regions on a number of levels, including educational quality, infrastructure, and attainment. Although the Guyanese economy traditionally has been based on sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and mining, recent offshore oil discoveries have the potential to drastically shift the country's economic prospects in the forthcoming decade. This transformation has important implications for the country, its people, and its institutions, including education.

Even though Guyana faced political turmoil in 2020, education has long been a nonpartisan priority for the Government of Guyana. For example, education expenditures remained consistent, at between 12% and 18% of the national budget, from 2008 to 2018, despite a change in government in 2015 (MoE, 2020a, pp. 16–17). Education is mandatory and free for children between the ages of 5 and 15, with access to nursery school before this period and 2 years of secondary school afterward. The education system in Guyana is modeled after the British education system; students take national exams before entering secondary school and Caribbean regional exams at the end of secondary school. The country has two public, tertiary educational institutions—UG, a research and teaching university, and CPCE, a teacher training college—as well as 10 TVET institutes. The MoE is the leading government institution responsible for education in Guyana, although the system is administered across 11 districts through a decentralized approach. The MoE designs, implements, and monitors its main policies and programs through ESP cycles.

6.2. MAIN CHALLENGES.

Among the different challenges faced by Guyana's education system, one significant challenge both stands above and exacerbates many other challenges: the divide between the hinterland and coastal regions. This division in human capital, infrastructure, and other indicators is not unique to the education sector; however, its consequences for student achievement and teacher training within education are especially important. On national and regional exams, the performance of Guyanese

students in the hinterland regions is significantly lower than that of the national average, although the MoE has prioritized the closing of this divide in several previous rounds of ESPs. One potential explanation for this division is that students in the hinterland regions do not have access to the same quality of teaching as students on the coast. This situation may also be explained by the socioeconomic disparities among regions, with students in the hinterlands much more likely to come from low-income households. The status quo is unjust and is hindering the education of these students, a population composed largely of indigenous Guyanese.

Another important challenge facing Guyana is the need to improve the public education sector's efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of management, planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Since 2003, the MoE has sought to improve these areas, but the need for reform remains, including strengthening the information management system to better inform planning with evidence, systematizing the policy planning process, and more clearly defining the lines of authority and reporting between the Central Ministry and regional education authorities.

A final challenge, or perhaps an opportunity, for Guyana will be to effectively use the forthcoming, widely anticipated revenues from the oil industry to improve the welfare of its citizens, including their education. Teacher salaries remain low and are not competitive in the Guyanese labor market, leading to the problem of attrition. Universal access to internet connectivity and electronic devices remains a challenge, despite prioritization by the Government of Guyana, particularly during the last year. Leaders at both UG and CPCE have bold programming ideas but lack the necessary infrastructure and funds to fully implement them. Thus, the impending oil wealth represents an important opportunity for the government to invest in the educational system and provide resources to shape learning in Guyana for the better.

6.3 INNOVATIONS.

Despite the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the pandemic has ushered in a period of important innovation in distance learning. Teachers and administrators at all levels of education have embraced different technologies to reach and engage students, often for the first time. In addition, the MoE has been using creative solutions to reach its heterogeneous student population, including radio, television, and print. Likewise, UG and CPCE both adopted innovative, technology-based approaches to reach their students and to ensure consistent teacher training as much as possible.

Another key innovation is the MoE's current emphasis on locally relevant and inclusive educational content, both in its ongoing curriculum review and in the content developed for public television programs on the Guyana Learning Channel. This shift toward materials created in Guyana for Guyanese students is extremely important and will strengthen the curriculum's relevance and equity.

6.4 KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND FURTHER RESEARCH.

This report identified key challenges faced by the Guyanese educational system, but more research is needed on the causal relationships among these issues. The following are relevant questions for this kind of research:

- *Which is the most pressing cause of low student achievement and gaps among certain groups?* Achievement gaps persist among several key groups and the national average, including among students in the hinterland regions, students with disabilities, and those who are non-native English speakers. Although socioeconomic status is an important factor, a more nuanced assessment of the areas in which these students are falling behind—beyond a review of test scores alone—would help Guyana better assess this gap, which has persisted although the MoE has focused on ameliorating the gap throughout several planning periods.
- *What is the role of teacher training in Guyana, and how can it be strengthened?* Guyana has made a number of strides in strengthening and updating its teacher training, but untrained teachers remain in the classroom. Even when trained teachers are present, student achievement remains relatively low, both in terms of the achievement gaps discussed above and the national averages on assessments. This situation illustrates that teacher training, and the policy framework surrounding it, need to be updated to attract more candidates and to ensure that teacher skills are sufficient to help Guyanese students succeed academically.
- *What other shifts would greater MoE efficiency achieve in some of the highlighted areas?* The MoE has identified a lack of evidence-based decision making and unclear reporting lines within the system. These issues likely contribute to some of the inefficiencies in the policymaking process and prevent progress and implementation of ESP objectives, for example. However, more institutional analysis and data are needed to understand the causal relationships.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS.

Based on the data obtained during this study and the interviews with key education stakeholders in Guyana, the authors suggest that a focus on improving teacher training systems and support would have a significant effect on improving Guyana's educational system. In addition, there is a need to provide teachers with more pedagogical materials (textbooks, workbooks, computer and TV/radio broadcast programs) to support teaching and learning in school or at a distance. Guyana is in need of materials developed specifically for its context instead of always relying on purchasing programs, especially broadcast programs, from other countries.

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EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Charmaine Bissessar and Paulette Henry, personal communication, December 1, 2020

Nicola Johnson, personal communication, October 26, 2020, and January 6, 2021

Roslin Khan, personal communication, November 20, 2020

Mark Lyte, personal communication, November 10, 2020

Viola Rowe, personal communication, November 11, 2020, and January 7, 2021

Quenita Walrond-Lewis, personal communication, November 2, 2020, and January 3, 2021



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