1.1 Mission, Core Values and Mandates

During the consultations the Vision, Mission and the Core Values underpinning the work of the Ministry were reviewed. There was still broad consensus that the Ministry must not only be contributing to the material development of the country in the form of well educated and trained human resources but that it should also be a major agency in promoting harmony and respect among citizens of all races, economic groups and religions. There was also almost unanimous agreement that improving literacy and numeracy must continue to be the major focus of the Ministry. Consequently the Vision, Mission and Core Values of the Ministry remain generally what they were in 2003.

* + 1. Vision

The Vision of the Ministry of Education is to be, and to be recognized as, the main and most effective contributor to the development of a citizenry able to: modernize Guyana; to support the citizenry in becoming more productive and tolerant; and to live in mutual respect.

* + 1. Mission Statement

To provide an education system that delivers quality education and training at all levels and in particular:

* eliminate illiteracy
* modernize education
* strengthen tolerance
  + 1. Core Value and Mandates

The Ministry of Education is dedicated to ensuring that all citizens of Guyana, regardless of age, race or creed, physical or mental disability, or socio-economic status are given the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential through equal access to quality education as defined by the standards and norms outlined by the Ministry. The commitment to quality and equity in education, with no barriers in access to anyone, is clear in this declaration.

The Ministry defines education as more than the instrumental activity for supporting greater national development or reducing poverty, even though it can contribute significantly to both of these objectives. It has intrinsic value. It is the main way to help each human being achieve his/her highest potential. It should be able to give the nation’s citizens the necessary knowledge, skills and values to lead happy and productive lives. On the basis of the education they receive, they should love their country and respect the diversity of their country’s ethnic, religious and political traditions. They should adhere to the ideals and practice of democracy, justice, peace, diversity and accountability.

In addition, although children are, and should be, the main target of educational efforts, rapidly changing economic circumstances and changes in technology require that the Ministry commits to a policy of providing continuing education and training opportunities to the adult population.

Although private schools will be encouraged to operate, the Ministry is committed to providing free and compulsory education from the pre-primary to secondary levels. The Ministry also remains committed to strengthening its partnerships with stakeholders, in particular teachers and their respective organisations, parents/guardians and communities.

* 1. Overview of the Sector

The Education sector of Guyana has been changing rapidly in the last two decades. Since 1966, there have been five discernible phases in its evolution:

TABLE 1

Phases in the Development of the Education System

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1966-1976 | Development of an indigenous curriculum.  Expansion of educational opportunities. |
| 1976-1990 | Free education.  Extension of access to educational opportunity. |
| 1990-1995 | Equality of access.  Increase in capacity to meet manpower requirements for future economic development. |
| 1995-2000 | Free quality education from nursery to age 15 (Basic Education). |
| 2001-2008 | Emphasis on the attainment of better levels of literacy and numeracy in Basic Education.  Evolution towards a sector approach. |

Within these phases, following almost universal trends in the region, Guyana’s educational effort has had three major emphases which are outline below.

* + 1. Free Access to Formal Education for All

Compulsory education was introduced in 1876 by the colonial government, and in 1976, a century later, the commitment to free education was ratified by the government of independent Guyana. The national policy has long been to offer children, young people and other interested persons the opportunity to participate in the educational process free of cost.

Education is now compulsory for children aged five years and nine months to 15 years. Although there are only three years of compulsory secondary education, children are expected to remain in General Secondary and/or not a great problem. Statistics show a high level of coverage at the nursery and primary levels, with a significant increase at the secondary level. This is a signal achievement for a poor country whose population, though small, is disturbed over a large land mass. There is room for improvement, but the data on general access are encouraging, although qualifications have to be made to the raw figures.[[1]](#footnote-1)

TABLE 2

Percentage Coverage at each Level[[2]](#footnote-2)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level | Gross National Enrollment at each level | | | |
|  | 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2006/7 |
| Nursery | 83 | 81 | 77 | 71 |
| Primary | 102 | 101 | 98 | 94 |
| Secondary | 84 | 84 | 86 | 87 |

At the post-secondary level, there has been an expansion in continuing education. In particular, in the coastal regions 2, 4, 6 and 10, the opportunities for school dropouts and slow learners to access technical and other types of programmes are increasing.

1. The qualifications mainly concern the quality of the education offered and the results of the service provided by the schools at the different levels. Problems like attendance and dropout rates also cast doubts on the meaning of these numbers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The figures are gross enrolment ratios based on population estimates from the Statistical Bureau and enrolment data from the Planning Unit of MOE. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)