



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Education



E: 48/1/24

May 20, 2024

Mr. Brian Caesar
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Mr. Caesar,

Seventh Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration, Fourth Session (2023/2024), Twelfth Parliament on an examination of the state of the regulation and administration of public and private early childhood institutions in Trinidad and Tobago

I refer to your correspondence Parl.: 14/3/69 Vol. II dated April 22, 2024, on the subject at caption.

Please see the attached Ministerial response to the recommendations /comments contained in the Report.

Should you require further information, you may contact Dr. Peter Smith, Chief Education Officer, via telephone at 622-2181 ext. 2344/2347 or email at ceo@moe.gov.tt.

Sincerely,

.....
Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ministry of Education

Office of the Permanent Secretary

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Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad

**Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public
Administration**

7th Report

**“An examination of the state of the regulation and
administration of public and private early childhood
institutions in Trinidad and Tobago”**

May, 2024

OBJECTIVE 1: To assess the regulatory framework that governs the Early Childhood Care and Education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago

- A. *In its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should inform the Committee of the status of the following:*
- B. *Amendment to the Education Act (pg. 40);*
- C. *The policy commitments as outlined in the Education Policy White Paper 2017-2023 (p. 41)*

The office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC) prepared a draft Bill to amend the Education Act and forwarded it to the Ministry of Education for review and comments. The Ministry provided additional information requested by the CPC. Additionally, instructions regarding the amendment of the Act in accordance with the approved Education Policy 2023–2027 were sent to the CPC. The Ministry of Education and CPC are collaborating on refining the draft Bill.

Regarding the policy commitments outlined in the 2017–2022 Education Policy, the Ministry of Education completed one (1) aspect of the framework, pertaining to curriculum delivery and the development of children. However, the policy commitment of conducting or commissioning research on the aspects of the quality of services that are most critical to child development in order to inform ECCE policy is ongoing. While the development of the qualifications and quality frameworks has not commenced, the Ministry has recently recruited the relevant staff to fulfill this commitment.

- F. *The Committee acknowledges the Ministry of Education's efforts to taking steps toward addressing unregistered ECCE centres. It is recommended that the Ministry give consideration to conducting a nationwide data collection drive to gather updated information on all ECCE centres, with specific emphasis on private ECCE centres. In its Ministerial Response, the MOE is asked to indicate the feasibility of completing such a data gathering exercise by August 2024. To ensure that the most updated information is presented, it is recommended that once created, the database should be updated on a quarterly or a biannual basis. (p. 41)*

The Ministry of Education recognises the value of data collection. However, the suggested timeframe of August 2024 is not feasible due to other competing priorities. The process of data collection can take approximately one (1) year. Therefore, it is proposed that the data collection drive be undertaken in 2025, giving the Ministry sufficient time to gather data on existing and new private schools utilising the new registration policy. Thereafter, the data would be updated annually.

G. Over the course of the next 6 months, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education relaunch its' information sensitization drive on the registration process as well as the importance of registration. The informational/sensitization drive can be hosted on the Ministry of Education's social media platforms and website. The steps/stages for registering and means of obtaining assistance should be clearly articulated. (p. 42)

The Ministry of Education is continuously communicating with private providers on the registration process and its criteria. The strategies currently utilised to notify providers are as follows:

- a. Posting registration information on the Ministry of Education's website: <https://www.moe.gov.tt/registration-of-private-schools-policy-2023-2027/> as well as on its social media pages;
- b. addressing queries from providers through a dedicated Ministry email: privateschool.registration@moe.gov.tt ;
- c. posting of the recording from the three (3) virtual Town Hall sensitisation sessions with private providers during the period October 10 – 12, 2023 and a follow-up meeting held on January 31, 2024; and
- d. access to guidance via telephone.

H. Further to the previous recommendation that the Ministry of Education, in keeping with the Government's digital transformation strategy, should facilitate aspects of the registration, process online. This may entail applicants uploading their relevant documentation on a website and having

the capability of tracking the progress of their application. The Ministry of Education can consider sending field officers to assist with the registration of schools in rural areas. (p. 42)

Registration is an online process, where the provider can access and complete the Online Registration Application Form via the following website: <https://www.moe.gov.tt/registration-of-private-schools-policy-2023-2027/>

I. While there has been some movement towards integrating migrant children into the local education system, it is recommended that clear legislative provisions under the Education Act and Immigration Act be included to ensure that these children have access to formal education beginning from the ECCE level. Ample consideration must be given to the relevant international treaties and conventions to which Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory. (p. 42)

In February 2024, the Immigration Regulations were amended to allow the children of Venezuelan nationals who registered under the Migrant Registration Framework and who continue to be registered annually, to attend schools in Trinidad and Tobago. These children must have been declared in 2019 and must now be under the age of 18.

The Ministry of Education will continue to collaborate with the Ministry of National Security and other relevant Ministries and agencies to formalise broader access of migrant children to schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

J. As part of the teaching requirements, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education request that teachers have basic first aid certification. Using the 1:15 ratio, it is recommended that at least one teacher have basic first aid certification per fifteen students. Teachers and administrators should also have basic training in identifying and referring children who they suspect may need diagnostic and remediation for special needs education support. (p. 42)

As outlined in article 7.3.2 of the National Standards for Regulating Early Childhood Care and Education in Trinidad and Tobago, “All members of staff must be trained and qualified to

administer first aid by the St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross, or an equivalent agency. One trained member of staff should always be present on site when children are present.” Additionally, as part of professional qualifications such as the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) for teachers offered by accredited tertiary institutions, teaching staff are exposed to courses in Health and Safety, which include a first aid component, and Inclusive/Special Education, which equips teachers with the necessary skills to identify children with learning or developmental delays.

K. While the Committee acknowledges the professional development programmes offered to ECCE teachers, it is recommended that the promotion of these offerings is improved by either frequent posts of upcoming programmes on the Ministry's social media pages or direct calls, especially to private ECCE centres, across Trinidad and Tobago. (p. 43)

It is the practice of the Ministry of Education, through the Teacher and Teacher Development Division, to offer training to its teachers at all levels. Given the demand for such training, the Ministry is unable to provide or facilitate training to private providers.

L. Within this fiscal year (2023/2024), the MoE should review the procedures and protocols followed in relation to the renewal of employment contracts for ECCE teachers with a view to determining whether there are any aspects that are not in alignment with good HRM and industrial relations practices. (p. 43)

The Ministry of Education continues to be guided by good industrial relation practices and makes every effort to ensure that its procedures and protocols are in alignment with same.

M. Within the next three months, the Ministry of Education reiterate and communicate via their social media platforms that discrimination in school entry violates basic human rights, referencing the Equal Opportunity Act. Additionally, it is recommended that the Ministry provide clear steps for filing reports on cases of discrimination. These steps should include: (p. 43)

- *Clear contact information for the department responsible for complaints;*
- *Outline of steps that would be taken by the department;*
- *Identification of possible outcomes of reporting; and*

- *Duration of time before a solution is presented to the parent/guardian.*

The recommendation has been noted.

Currently, the steps for addressing complaints are as follows:

- Person/s can email their issues for the attention of the Director of ECCE at ecce@moe.gov.tt;
- The matter is investigated by the Director of ECCE; and
- A report with findings and recommendations is submitted for the attention of the Chief Education Officer (CEO).

This entire process takes at least four (4) weeks. In the interim, based on the issue, monitoring will be conducted. Consideration will be given to enhancing existing practices.

OBJECTIVE 2: To assess the performance of Government and Government-assisted ECCE Centres for the period 2017-2022, inclusive of system implemented to combat learning loss experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic

C. The Committee acknowledges the steps taken by the Ministry of Education to develop a standardized assessment tool for the ECCE level. In its Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should inform the Parliament of the results of the: (p. 47)

a. Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP), which was previously piloted in 2022; and (p. 47)

b. The Draft National Child Development Assessment Instrument. (p. 47)

The Ministry of Education should also identify the ECCE centres across the country where these instruments were piloted.

- a. Under the Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP) pilot, 55 ECCE children were screened, as detailed in Table 1 below. The SNAP instrument assisted with the development of Alternative Intervention Strategies (AIS) for the children who were assessed.

Table 1: Children Assessed using SNAP across Education Districts

Education District	Number of children assessed using SNAP
Caroni	4
North Eastern	5
Port of Spain & Environs	3
St. George East	14
St. Patrick	10
South Eastern	5
Victoria	14
Total	55

- b. The Draft National Child Development Assessment Instrument is still in its pilot phase at 31 Government and Government Assisted Centres, as well as 14 SERVOL Centres, as listed in Table 2 below. This trial period spanned the entire academic year of 2023-2024 and is expected to conclude by July 5, 2024.

Table 2: ECCE Centres under the pilot phase for the Draft National Child Development Assessment Instrument

Government / Government Assisted Centres	SERVOL Centres
Aripo Government ECCE	All In One ECCE
Buen Intento Government ECCE	Cunaripo ECCE
Clarke Rochard Government ECCE	Esperance ECCE
Corinth Hills Government ECCE	Freeport ECC
Debe ASJA ECCE	La Romaine ECCE
Gopie Trace Kindergarten ECCE	Lawrencia Motas ECCE
Harmony Hall Government ECCE	Lengua TIA ECCE
Kids Kampus ECCE	Little Joys ECCE
La Romaine Government ECCE	Navet ECCE
Laventille Extension Road ECCE	Servol Demonstration ECCE

Government / Government Assisted Centres	SERVOL Centres
Lower Cumuto Government ECCE	St. Andrews ECC
Madras Government ECCE	St. Joseph ECCE
Malabar Government ECCE	
Malabar Phase 4 Government ECCE	
Maloney Gardens 2 Government ECCE	
Maloney Government ECCE	
Maraj Hill Government ECCE	
Morvant Government ECCE	
Munroe Road Government ECCE	
North Trace Government ECCE	
Palmiste Government ECCE	
Princes Town TML ECCE	
Raghunanan Road Government ECCE	
Sangre Grande Government ECCE	
SWAHA Sangre Grande ECCE	
Upper Laventille Government ECCE	
Valencia Government ECCE	
Vega De Oropouche Government ECCE	
Wallerfield Government ECCE	
Warrenville TIA ECCE	

D. In addition to checking for infrastructural compliance, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education conduct clinical assessments on the delivery of lessons to determine the quality of teaching at various points of the academic year. It is recommended that emphasis be placed on private ECCE centres to ensure that they are keeping in line with the National Curriculum Guide and overall basic requirements for the age group. (p. 48)

The monitoring team of the ECCE Division has been strengthened with additional Curriculum Programme Facilitators, Quality Assurance Officers, and Family Community Support Officers.

Their responsibility is to conduct frequent visits to both public and private ECCE Centres nationwide, ensuring that quality standards are upheld through the utilisation of the National Standards for Regulating ECCE and the National ECCE Curriculum Guide. Additionally, technical support is provided as necessary.

OBJECTIVE 3: To assess the health and safety compliance of ECCE Centres

A. By the next six months, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education develops a definite and standardized risk management/assessment prioritization rubric for the inspection of schools. (p. 57)

The Ministry of Education is currently finalising a rubric for the inspection of schools. This is anticipated to be completed by December 2024.

B. In terms of the challenges to comply with Health and safety requirements (which generally stem from the inability to finance the required infrastructural improvements), it is recommended that the Ministry of Education provide technical support in collaboration with MTS and the Occupational and Health Agency (OSHA) to registered private institutions. (p. 57)

Recommendation is acknowledged. The Policy on the Registration of Private Schools currently includes guidelines for compliance with health and safety requirements from the statutory authorities such as WASA, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, Town and Country Planning Division. It is important to note that these guidelines apply specifically to private institutions.

C. The response of the MoE should include an overview of the proposed strategy of the Ministry for encouraging private ECCE schools to participate in the proposed three-year moratorium. (p. 57)

The Ministry of Education is actively engaging in ongoing communication with private proprietors in an effort to ensure compliance with the registration process within the three-year moratorium.

As part of its continuing efforts to provide assistance and guidance to private providers, the MoE continues to:

- a. all information pertaining to the registration of a private school is available on the on the MoE's website: <https://www.moe.gov.tt/registration-of-private-schools-policy-2023-2027/> as well as on its social media pages;
- b. queries from providers are addressed through a dedicated MoE's email: privateschool.registration@moe.gov.tt ;
- c. video recordings from the virtual Town Hall sensitisation sessions are available on the registration website;
- d. guidance provided to providers via telephone;
- e. follow-up meetings providing support;
- f. reminder of the expiration of the moratorium will be sent to private proprietors, as well as placed on MoE website one (1) year prior to its expiration.

D. The Committee endorses the recommendations made by MTS regarding the placement of two officers at the ECCE centres nationwide. This placement should be based on security and surveillance best practices as well as general Risk Assessments of ECCE centres to determine which schools should be assigned additional officers. (p. 57)

The recommendation has been noted. It is crucial to emphasise that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) remains committed to supporting the Ministry of Education by supplying additional mobile surveillance and monitoring for at-risk centres.

E. In their Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should indicate the amount paid to MTS since the commencement of the new fiscal year 2023/2024 and the value of outstanding payments owed to the MTS to date. (p. 58)

Request is noted, this will be provided in writing at a later date.

F. The MoE should consider collaborating with the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs to develop a “flagging system” as part of its revision of the registration process. This system would promptly notify the Ministry of Education when the Ministry of Legal Affairs registers an early childhood centre as a business. Such a system aims to facilitate proper inspection processes for schools and prevent them from operating without completing the entire registration process. (p.g 58)

Personnel from the Ministry of Education are currently engaging in discussions with counterparts from the Ministry of Planning and Development regarding that Ministry’s existing flagging system. The recommendation is noted, and steps will be taken to include the office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs.

G. Within three months of the presentation of this report, the procedure for reporting complaints concerning poor health and safety arrangements in ECCE centres should be prominently published on the Ministry of Education’s website and social media pages. (p. 58)

A dedicated email address, privateschool.registration@moe.gov.tt is published on the Ministry of Education's website for individuals to report complaints.

OBJECTIVE 4: To assess the ECCE curriculum in relation to preparation of children for primary school

F. As part of its Ministerial response, the Ministry of Education should provide an update on the following: (p.g 64)

- National Child Development Assessment Instrument as well as the re-vision of the National Curriculum Guide for ECCE.*
- The outcome of the consultation with the OJT department to provide aids for students.*
- An update on the status of the revised National Curriculum Guide*

- (i) The National Child Development Assessment Instrument is still being piloted on a total of 1,366 children across 31 Government/Government-Assisted centres and 378 children from 12 SERVOL centres, making a combined total of 1,744 children.
- (ii) The Ministry of Education maintains its collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, specifically through the On-the-Job Training (OJT) department, to secure aides for children with special educational needs.
- (iii) Minor changes were made to the National Curriculum Guide, namely sample activity plans, curriculum webs and topic webs, which are being implemented.

G. The Committee acknowledges the point made by the Division of Education, Research and Technology (DERTech) that there should be a standardized framework or syllabus to be used across all ECCE sectors. The Committee accepts the recommendation made by DERTech that the curriculum needs to be upgraded accordingly. (p. 64)

There is an established National Curriculum Guide used by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry notes the concerns of DERTech and will engage with the Division to address those concerns.

H. There is need to increase the number teachers trained in special needs education to meet the growing needs of students in the ECCE sector. (p. 64)

The Ministry of Education is continually strengthening its capacity by training and recruiting additional teachers in the field of Special Education. Concurrently, teachers are pursuing professional certification in Special Education at various accredited tertiary institutions the University of the West Indies and the University of Southern Caribbean.

I. Considering the provision of student aides, the Ministry of Education can also consider developing a partnership with UTT to allow final year Special Needs educators to work at various

ECCE centres as part of a paid internship in addition to sourcing student aides via the OJT programme. (p. 64)

The recommendation has been noted and will be explored.

J. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education establish strategic partnerships with private educational and developmental psychologists. This collaboration can take the form of a “support a child” programme where the corporate community is encouraged to sponsor the psycho-social assessment, re-mediation and support of a special needs child. This collaboration aims to address the increasing demand for comprehensive assessments and intervention plans catering to children at the ECCE level. (p. 64)

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) exists between the Ministry of Education and the University of the West Indies’ (St. Augustine) Psychoeducational Diagnostic and Intervention Clinic (PEDIC), facilitating the provision of Psychoeducational Assessment and Evaluation Services for identified students. The Ministry is currently in the process of expanding this programme to enhance accessibility.

