

# **FOCUS ON THE FUTURE**

**White Paper on Education  
1972**

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## **Introduction**

1. The Ministry of Education & Culture offers this brief statement of government's basic policies for the development of education in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas Islands. Many of the ideas contained herein must, of necessity, be fluid. This is inevitable, because education is essentially a continuing process and its benefits tend to become more widespread, and its evolution more natural and sound, when rigidities of philosophy and structure are avoided. Moreover, these flexibilities, it is hoped, will allow for and provoke much constructive public and private discussion within the community, so as to assist the professional educators to establish truly national processes of education which are responsive to the needs of all citizens.

## **Opening Remarks**

2. For a long time there has been an awareness of the defects of the inherited tradition and systems of education which have been implanted on our soil. By now, every ex-Colonial territory and countries like ours which have shown signs of growing up must, at the same time as they cope with the problems of a developing country, face the inherent educational drawbacks and impediments of an alien system. At the best, the system introduced is narrow, meager, ill-suited and irrelevant.
3. With increased responsibility for our own system of education and the steps taken to move to eventual nationhood, it is imperative that the country begins a concerted effort to work towards a national system of education. This national system must embrace a philosophy which is characteristic of the nation's ideals, values, beliefs and customs; and must be prepared both to transmit such characteristics, and to act as agent for modifying them.
4. To achieve these aims, there must be planning and there must be development. It is important that we bear in mind that the

less developed countries which have been poor and stagnant for centuries are in a state of revolt against poverty, disease, ignorance and dominance by stronger nations, and they are no longer disposed to entrust their future exclusively to the forces of the market, the whim of nature or the judgment of colonial rulers. The advanced countries likewise are committed to growth, and the more rapid and spectacular the better. Their aspirations, indeed, are no longer earthbound, but extend as well to the exploration of outer space and possibly even other planets. This almost universal quest for forward movement is in essence a revolution which has no precedent in history. It is fired by rising aspirations for economic, social and political progress and it is based upon the optimistic conviction that man, in this century of science, can move forward by leaps instead of steps.”

5. This planning and development must presuppose a nexus of interrelated policies which have to ensure that the system provides an education for our people which is of the right kind and sufficient both in quantity and quality to meet the intellectual, moral, emotional and physical needs of all. In addition there should be other goals designed to direct and influence the planning and development.
6. The goals which must be sought and encouraged by the educational programme must include:
  - i. The provision of opportunities for a sound liberal and general education, that are as nearly equal as possible, and which provide possibilities for all young people to attain the full development of their potentialities;
  - ii. The continued extension of appropriate forms of education and training to citizens who experience physical, emotional or intellectual handicaps;
  - iii. The encouragement of a knowledgeable appreciation of the physical environment, and the cultural and social heritage of the Bahamas;

- iv. The improvement of the manpower resources of the economy;
- v. The encouragement of the choice and acceptance of those ideals of conduct and endeavour that are valued by a Christian and democratic society. Every citizen will be urged to assume a personal responsibility for the economic, social, spiritual and political life associated with free nationhood, and the efficient and harmonious management of the Bahamian nation. The pursuit of these ideals will include the promotion of peace and unity through the individual and official relationships between the people of the Bahamas and other nations;
- vi. The co-operation of the society in attempting to assist professional educators in fostering the growth of proper educative processes;
- vii. The awareness of developments and techniques which relate to such matters as instruction, testing, curricula, buildings and teacher education;
- viii. The development of community-wide education of young people and adults, for the wise use of leisure, individual satisfaction and a full and meaningful life for all.

### **Pre-school Education**

7. It is realized that early success in formal schooling is an important factor in the future learning of an individual. This early success depends to a large extent on verbal ability, positive attitudes and broad experiential backgrounds. However, the problems of staffing, accommodation and equipment might militate against the provision of full scale programmes of pre-school training at the present time. The early education, especially of the less privileged, must be kept in view for planning purposes.

8. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education & Culture will create and take advantage of opportunities to engage and increase the knowledge, interest and concern of the whole community in pre-schooling. Teachers, persons in allied professions whose work involves the early years of life and individuals and organizations who operate pre-school groups are encouraged to make full use of opportunities to educate the adult community through Parent and Teacher Associations, church activities, the news media and other means.
9. The Ministry of Education & Culture will pursue policies which include the stressing of readiness skills in courses of basic and in-service teacher training, appropriate assistance and encouragement to the operators of pre-school groups and specific training at home and abroad for applicants who express interest in pre schooling. In addition, government intends that pilot schemes in pre-schooling will be established in the densely populated areas of the country, preferably in the proposed community centres.

### **Primary Education**

10. Primary education will continue to be provided in neighbourhood schools. The fundamental objectives of these schools will include the introduction of every young citizen to the tools and mechanics inherent in a civilized community, and to help him to enquire the knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, beliefs and values that enhance the human race and give strength and life to Bahamian society. Further, these objectives will include curricula instruction which satisfy the curiosity of the young child, emulate his imagination and arouse his appetite for learning. An effort will be made improve the cultivation of the arts of communication, the learning of skills which are appropriate to the primary level and the strengthening of such areas of the curriculum as mathematics, science, health and citizenship. These activities

will be motivated by the aim to foster the abilities of critical thinking and evaluation and will be infused with attention to the development of humane, moral and ethical values. Every effort will be made to ensure that these learning experiences take place in the proper physical and social contexts and relate in a significant way to the real world of experiences such as the child does know, can know and comprehend. Thus, not only will learning be facilitated, but also a sense of national pride and identity be nourished.

11. These objectives necessitate constant care to improve the quality of education at primary level and determined efforts to rectify inadequacies where they exist. Not only must there be a sufficient number of teachers to undertake the awesome duty of providing primary education, but they must be ever professionally able, informed and sentient men and women. They will be assisted in the performance of the more formal and obvious aspects of their professional work by programmes of training, retraining and field supervision, designed with determination to upgrade the qualifications of teachers and to bring to their attention the increasing changes and developments in knowledge and in processes of curriculum revision, renewal and enrichment. Essential as this assistance is and will increasingly be, the quality of the service provided to every young Bahamian boy and girl in the nation's schools, and to this very real extent the health of the present and future society of the Bahamian nation, depends on the personal commitment of every teacher. Government is determined to do whatever is possible to facilitate the functioning of schools and teaching, but in the area of teacher commitment it can do little more than honour its teachers by inviting each one of them to be constantly aware that his professional and personal satisfaction largely depends on what he willingly gives while the realisation of the highest aspirations of the Bahamian people is equally entrusted to them.

12. The interests of social justice demand, and government will make even more determined efforts to provide, the facilities and trained teachers required to equalize opportunities for boys and girls in all Family Islands and to equate these opportunities with those available in New Providence. It is not out of place, however, to consider the financial resources necessary to advance education and learning and the part the well-thinking citizen should play in provision of these resources.

### **Secondary Education**

13. With a view to establishing an integrated national system of education, efforts are being and will continue to be made to reform as well as to expand the existing secondary level provision in New Providence and the Family Islands. Because education is essentially a continuing process, and its efficacy can be severely hindered by rigidity of structure, policies of integration will aim at increasing flexibility, so as to permit for that evolution which is both natural and desirable. Flexibility is particularly apt, as the secondary school is envisaged as the gateway to the professions and technical skills, the avenue to life in his own society and in the world at large. Therefore, the learning experiences of all young Bahamians must be organized to make them intelligent citizens in their own country participating in its affairs fully and understanding its context completely. In this way they will be able to enjoy to the utmost their basic rights as human beings and as Bahamian citizens.

14. With a view to integrating the nation's schools, policies are being and will continue to be pursued which: facilitate the flow of pupils from primary to secondary levels and between secondary schools; allow for greater flexibility by offering a variety of options in order to cater to the wide range of abilities and aptitudes of students, as well as to the varied economic and social needs of the nation as a whole. Among

the immediate policies and objectives implicated in this endeavour are:

- i. A basic structure of junior secondary education (generally for children aged 11 to 14), followed by their senior high school stage (normally for pupils over age 14) during which equal opportunity is afforded to every child.
- ii. Junior Secondary Schools will be neighbourhood schools and will be made available to the majority of Bahamian children of secondary school age:
  - a) There will be no selection for entry to junior secondary school;
  - b) All pupils at junior secondary stage will be provided with the same basic curriculum and learning experiences which are a continuation of primary education. The overall curriculum aim here remains the continuation of a general education for all pupils;
  - c) At the end of the junior secondary stage there will be national examinations, testing and assessments of attainment, interests and potential for all pupils. This would assist the transfer to, and the provision of, proper pre-vocational education in senior high schools;
- iii. The aims of education in senior high schools will be to provide students with a variety of immediate goals and experiences so as to help them identify and develop their needs, interests, talents and abilities, bearing in mind the economic and social needs of the nation.
  - a. The programmes of these schools will cater to the complete range of abilities and aptitudes so that they reflect and administer to the needs and aspirations of the wider society;
  - b. The programmes will provide experiences which include academic and fine arts courses as well as pre-vocational experiences in such areas as teaching, nursing, social work, hotel and catering, engineering



and construction, marine sciences, agriculture and market gardening, landscaping and commerce. Exposure of this nature will help the student to discover and nurture his own interests and talents while simultaneously preparing himself for living in all aspects;

- c. Vocational guidance and the curriculum must be designed in conjunction with teachers, with institutions of further education both in the Bahamas and abroad, and with employers and other government departments.
- iv. A determined effort will be made to develop and improve secondary education in the Family Islands. This will present enormous and complex problems both personal and administrative, quite apart from the tremendous costs such commitment entails. Where distances and existing or projected economic development permit, government intends to centralize educational facilities, particularly at the secondary level and beyond. It will not be government policy to impose a rigid structure or curriculum on all secondary schools everywhere. Due regard will be paid to the realistic aspirations of the citizens of each community or group of communities, the national interest and what it is possible for government and citizens to achieve in partnership. Thus, secondary education in the Family Islands will probably take several structural forms, among which may be:
  - a. The New Providence system of junior secondary followed by senior high, some of which may be boarding institutions;
  - b. The community school providing a full range of schooling for primary through post-secondary education;

- c. A central secondary school providing educational leadership and assistance to surrounding all-age and primary schools.
15. It is vital to the development of the nation as a whole that its citizens, and especially those in the Family Islands, assist in the evolution of secondary education in their islands so that equal opportunities for personal and corporate development are afforded to all Bahamians.

### **Independent or Voluntary Schools**

16. It will continue to be the policy of the government to encourage partnership within the national system in the interest of educational development. To this end, there will be a continuous dialogue between government and voluntary school authorities. It is envisaged that this partnership will continue to take at least the following forms;
- i. Voluntary schools are invited to continue to be involved in the efforts of the Curriculum Division of the Ministry to provide an outline of study which ensures that all children have similar basic educational experiences. This will contribute to easing problems of pupil transfer and movement where these occur;
  - ii. It is hoped that the substantial contributions voluntary schools receive for government will assist them in fulfilling completely their obligations to the parents and children of the nation whom they admit to their schools;
  - iii. It is envisaged that a degree of pooling of facilities will be possible, to the extent that it may not be necessary for government to provide schools where voluntary schools exist;
  - iv. Government will continue to recognize its debt to voluntary school authorities by assistance in the form of aid, though it is only to be expected that regulations governing aid will be reviewed in the light of new plans and policies, and the agreements reached in the course of continuing discussions

with voluntary school authorities in the best interests of the educational development of the nation. It is the hope of the government that dialogue, co-operation and collaboration will facilitate the step towards a national and unified system in which the voluntary and independent bodies will play an important role.

### **Special Services**

17. The Ministry of Education & Culture has been increasingly involved in the provision of an expanding range of services, most of which attempt to ameliorate problems which are often not educational in origin, but all of which are essential to realising the aim of responding to the needs of all citizens. These services include a speech therapy service and liaising with governmental agencies which are charged with the health and welfare of all children. In addition, government assists voluntary bodies which manage schools for the deaf, blind and retarded through financial grants, the provision of equipment and supplies, the recruitment, training and emoluments of skilled personnel, the identification and diagnosis of pupils with special needs and the arrangements of programmes to meet such needs.
18. The Ministry of Education & Culture values the co-operation and assistance it receives from other Ministries and departments of government, service clubs, voluntary agencies and numerous individuals who unselfishly offer assistance and encouragement in these activities. Government also pledges itself to keep the needs of citizens requiring special forms of education under active review and will continue programmes of assistance and of training in this area.

### **College of the Bahamas**

19. The apex of the systems of primary and secondary education for the nation will be the College of the Bahamas. This essentially and intentionally flexible, though integrated,

institution is intended to meet the special needs of the Bahamas in education, training and cultural development. The College will provide for the further or continuous education of citizens. Therefore, the concept of the College will include hotel, technical, business and educational studies, the academic arts and sciences and the creative arts. It will have an important role as a centre of research and will, therefore, influence policies regarding the provision and operation of a national library, public archives and museums.

20. Thus, a part of the scheme will be to embrace in the first instance the present programmes now carried on at the sixth form of the Government High School, the Bahamas Teachers' College, the San Salvador Teachers' College and the C R Walker Technical College. The greatest care will be exercised to ensure that during the process of transition from their current unrelated status, to their roles as constituent parts of the College of the Bahamas, the capacity of these institutions to serve individual students and the national good is enhanced.

21. During the formative years of the College of the Bahamas formal and informal relationships will be forged with institutions of higher education abroad, wherever such relationships are to the benefit of the College and its task of responding to the national need for qualified manpower at various levels. The concept of the College is flexible enough so as not to prevent students qualifying for admission to foreign institutions for such education and training as the College might not provide. This flexibility will also permit the development of the sort of institution of higher education that can respond to changing individual and national needs and demands.

### **Academic Studies**

22. It will have been noted that, in the evolution of the College of the Bahamas, all existing resources should be used

to full advantage. Over the years, the Government High School has been noted for its contribution to education in the area of academic studies. It would, therefore, appear to be the logical unit from which the Arts and Science Division of the College might develop.

### **Technical Studies**

23. Trade, vocational, business, administrative and technical studies will form a most important part of the College of the Bahamas. They will be consolidated and rationalized mainly under the auspices of the C R Walker Technical College, without the implication that these studies take place only on the site of that College, or are conducted in isolation from a wide range of activities in the schools, other divisions of the College of the Bahamas, the community at large and the world outside the Bahamas. The overall purpose of the technical studies of the College of the Bahamas is to provide trained, skilled and satisfied citizens fit to take their places in useful and rewarding occupations in society. Therefore, the Technical Division of the College of the Bahamas will ensure that its organization and curricula are relevant to the manpower and economic requirements of the nation, as well as to the cultural and social aspirations of adult citizens as can most reasonably be fulfilled within the orbit of things technical.

24. The function of this division of the College of the Bahamas is so important that it is worth expanding on this point. Until very recent years, secondary education in our country has been almost exclusively concerned with educating students of average and better than average academic ability, thereby bypassing a large section of the school population. The outcome of this in economic and social terms has been a legacy of inequalities, which by militating against large sections of the potential human wealth of our people, has led many to become frustrated,

unhappy and unproductive. It is against this background that the C. R. Walker Technical College must operate.

25. More specifically, the following aims and objectives will be pursued by the Technical Division of the College:

- i. Motivating and sustaining a desire to learn by maximising flexibilities of course length and methodologies to allow for attention to the removal of student deficiencies emphasising success-oriented approaches and activities and active student participation;
- ii. Providing courses of a vocational, technical or commercial nature which both introduce young citizens to vocations and create a foundation for, and a continuation of, technical training;
- iii. Ensuring that admission processes and instruction are realistic, relate to changing Bahamian situations and are not dictated solely by such considerations as external examinations, or other inflexible terminal standards;
- iv. Making productive work, where possible, an essential part of the training provided;
- v. Ending the virtual dependence on non-Bahamians in nearly every vocation;
- vi. Encouraging positive attitudes toward vocational learning schemes and manual skills;
- vii. Ensuring that the approach to such academic studies as are proper to the Technical Division of the College of the Bahamas is business-biased or related to the skills which are needed;
- viii. Involving the continued co-operation and support of industry, other government ministries and departments and business in various facets of the activities of the Technical Division of the College of the Bahamas.
- ix. Offering scope for day-release training;
- x. Making available evening studies for adults in many fields;

- xii. Being actively involved in the co-operative processes of training teachers for the practical areas of the schools' curricula.

### **Teacher Training**

26. The high priority which government has consistently given and which is implicit in this paper's vision of an expanded and inevitably development nexus of structure, curricula, policies, aims and objectives to ensure properly educated and trained citizens for the greater good of the nation, has vital implications for the supply, education and training of teachers. The national educational philosophy has been shown to involve provision for the development of the wide range of abilities and aptitudes of all students through varied and flexible programmes of educational experience, both academic and pre-vocational, which would help them to discover and develop their own interests and talents, and at the same time prepare them for living in all its aspects, including preparation for earning a living. The successful implementation of these overall aims depends, to a large extent, on proper staff provision.

27. An independent Bahamas will require a teaching force that is of true professional quality and industry, and which understands the problems and aspirations of the Bahamian people which it is privileged to serve. The social and political climate demands that the teaching force be Bahamianised as soon as it is consistent with sound educational progress. And, in the best interests of the country and its people, such a force, once Bahamianised, must be continually made aware of educational and social developments that have implications for the important service it provides. This briefly, is the function of the Teacher Education Division of the College of the Bahamas, which is composed of the Colleges in Oakes Field on New Providence and at San Salvador.

28. The training of teachers to serve the needs of the nation is envisaged as a very comprehensive task. Teacher Education must make a reality of the national educational philosophy and what it promises to all citizens as individual human beings and as productive members of society. To this end, the Teacher Education Division of the College of the Bahamas will concern itself with the following:
- i. The initial basic training of students who, having completed senior high school, wish to continue their education in a teachers' college;
  - ii. The provision of the numbers of professionally able teachers and instructors who are known or anticipated to be needed within and without the formal structure of the national educational system;
  - iii. The encouragement of community efforts in the area of pre-school training through such means as:
    - a) Including instruction in this area as a part of the training for primary teachers;
    - b) Initiating and/or participating in discussions, training and the actual operation of pre-school activities which involve individuals or groups of citizens who are interested in, or committed to, pre-school training;
  - iv. The efficient maintenance of the primary school base by ensuring an adequate number of professionally trained and able teachers of the nation's schools and by cooperating in such activities as in-service training which aim to ensure and enhance such knowledge and professional expertise as is desirable for primary teachers;
  - v. The training of a sufficient number of teachers to staff the secondary schools adequately;
  - vi. the establishment of more definite links between teacher education and technical education to their mutual benefit;



- vii. the production of an adequate number of professionally expert teacher educators to meet the nation's needs for education and training.

### **Other High Education and Training**

29. A number of considerations make it unrealistic to suppose that the College of the Bahamas can provide all the higher education and training desired by or thought necessary for all Bahamians. It will continue to be necessary for students to go abroad to study. In this way, it is intended that the education and training in the Bahamas will be constantly infused with developments in the areas of knowledge and professional practices. Moreover, it is hoped, that relationships might be established between the developing College of the Bahamas and institutions of higher education abroad which will admit Bahamian students.

### **Costs**

30. In the 1960's recurrent expenditure on education rose annually and between 1967 and 1971 increased by just over two and half times. Capital expenditure has been erratic, but pressure for funds here has been persistent. The costs of constructing renovating and maintaining school buildings and teachers cottages throughout the country, as well as the costs of equipment and supplies which are essential in the preparation of all our citizens for productive and satisfying lives, are high, and can be expected to make increasing demands on the public purse.
31. Consideration of the costs of education must also include the financing of policies to ensure a quality performance from those who teach our people. It is a major plank of government policy that as far as possible, and as soon as possible, our teachers should be Bahamian nationals. A determined effort is being made to achieve a position by 1976/77 in which the overwhelming majority of teachers in

all areas of the government maintained sector of education are Bahamian and are equipped to provide the variety of services which are both explicit and implicit in this document. Moreover, it can be anticipated that government may have to assist voluntary school authority efforts to Bahamianise their teaching staffs. While to an increasing extent, much of the necessary training and re-training will be more economically provided in the College of the Bahamas, it will obviously continue to be necessary to expose numbers of Bahamian teachers to study abroad. Hence, in the area of teacher supply and education, costs can be expected to increase, as they most surely will in the areas of building and supplies.

32. There is, therefore, no doubt that despite prudent control of expenditure, and of developments in educational provision, increasing costs will, in the Bahamian nation, as in other nations, be an inescapable reality. This is particularly so at this stage of our history and development and because we all believe that the people of the Bahamas are, and must continue to be, its most treasured asset. This being so, it may be necessary to consider other means of financing education than those presently in operation.

## **Conclusion**

33. It is to be hoped that the policies outlined in this paper permit for the evolution of proper processes of education and that a wide range of groups and individuals in society will engage themselves in assisting the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure that every citizen of the Bahamian nation has the opportunity to exercise the right to develop his personality to the full and the skills to serve the nation.