

Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
Education Reform Unit (OERU)



MONITORING EDUCATION REFORM
IN THE OECS:

REPORT OF
EDUCATION DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS
WORKSHOP

For Education Planners

September 12-14th, 2001
Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

REPORT OF
EDUCATION DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS WORKSHOP
OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU)

September 12-14th, 2001
Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Workshop was convened at the Conference Room of Cara Lodge, Kingstown, St. Vincent. All OECS countries were represented except for the British Virgin Islands, whose representative was affected by flight cancellations due to the attack on the USA the morning of travel. St. Vincent and the Grenadines' full attendance was affected by an unavoidable conflicting undertaking. See Participants' list Appendix # 1.

1.0 Welcome

On behalf of the OERU Mark Ernest, ICT Specialist, welcomed participants to the Workshop. Mrs. Verna Fahie, Anguilla and Mr. Marcus Edward, St. Lucia were congratulated and wished well in their new roles of acting CEO and Deputy CEO respectively. This workshop – the fourth such meeting of Education planners and Statisticians, marks an important transition from a role of Working Group on Indicator Development to the role of Technical Advisory Committee(TAC) on Information Management and Monitoring of OECS Education Reform.

2.0 Agenda

Monica Woodley, Workshop Convenor, placed the workshop Agenda within a context of a determination to improve weak systematic areas of Information Management within Ministries of Education and within schools and school systems. Such weak areas included

- poor data collection;
- little data analysis;
- insufficient resources – human and technical;
- identified difficulties with the OECS Performance Management Tools;
- unsatisfactory student outcomes;
- poor school-based management
- issues in the development of EMISs in the OECS.

The attached Agenda (Appendix # 2) attempted to address all these issues. In addition the Agenda also included the development of the Terms of Reference(TOR) for the new Education Planners Technical Advisory Committee(TAC).

3.0 Technical Advisory Committee(TAC)

The first section of the workshop focused on the latter. The rationale for and overview of the TACs, based on the OERU Strategic Plan was provided (See

Appendix # 3). The Strategic Plan had been circulated prior to the meeting. The final result of the group and plenary work on the various sections of the TOR and further extensive discussion, is the attached Draft Terms of Reference – Appendix # 4. The agreed name is the OECS Education Planning and Information Management Technical Advisory Committee – OEPIM TAC

The shift from “ Education Planners” as in the Strategic Plan to “ Education Planning” gives credence to the factor that persons other than titled Planners may sit on the Committee. For example, Montserrat does not have an official titled “ Planner” at present. It also recognizes that the desired membership is of persons with responsibility for education planning functions within a ministry. In addition in order to satisfy the suggested skills for the TAC, persons other than Planners may be selected. It was also noted that it would be expedient to attempt to maintain the successes and the thrust of the current Monitoring/Planners group.

3.1 Issues raised with regard to the TACs

Some issues were raised that related to the number of TACs (7) specified in the Strategic Plan

- concerns about duplication and fragmentation
- a question of countries/MOE's having sufficient Human Resources to spread themselves. Some persons may be required to sit on more than one TAC.
- OERU staff resources to effectively manage the number of TACs
- the need for cohesiveness between TACs given the multi-faceted nature of education

4.0 Performance Management Tool (PMT)

Mrs. Esther Chitole Joseph, Statistician St. Lucia, reported on the assistance she provided to 8 countries during visits with the OERU April - May 2000. (See Appendix # 5.) She offered a comparative status of the Indicators developed by each country, indicating a varying range of completion of data collected and input. Mrs. Joseph provided a list of recommended changes and corrections that need to be made to increase the accuracy of the Tool. **It was agreed that a revised version of the PMT was now necessary. It was recommended that the OERU contract Mrs. Joseph to make such a revised version.**

Each country present reported on the status of the PMT in their country, identifying some of the obstacles to an effective use in their schools. Such obstacles included:

- Insufficient time within the Planning Units for follow up and assistance to principals
- Need for support personnel e.g. other education officers
- A lack of personal computers
- Insufficient capacity to use Excel
- Concentration on the EMIS (St. Lucia)

Lack of understanding of utility or ownership by principals. They are “doing it for the MOE or Officer”.

Some countries and some schools have made significant progress in completing the data tables and consequently the education indicators. Others indicated a required closer follow-up by the Ministries, and increased training in the use of Microsoft Excel for principals and education officers. The need for Education Officers to be trained in the PMTs in order to ensure greater assistance to principals was reiterated several times during the course of the Workshop

4.1 Following is a list of Solutions developed that Planners/Statisticians responsible for instituting the PMTs might employ for more effective use of the Tool:

1. Explaining/demonstrating purpose of Tool on a continuous basis.
2. Understanding and clarifying school management role.
3. Setting priorities and time allocations by principals & teachers.
4. Delegating and sharing responsibility for data collection from principals to teachers to secretary or support staff.
5. Principal is accountable for data analysis, reporting and use.
6. Micro Soft Excel & computer training
7. MOE to provide technical support for computer hardware.
8. OERU to issue an updated version of the PMT
9. Institutionalize use of PMTs by enlisting Education Officers as trainers and to monitor the use of the PMT.
10. Provide comparative incentives for schools effectively utilizing the PMT – e.g. the best education plan based on the PMT, might get a printer.

5.0 Performance Management Handbook for Schools

Mr. Werner Meier, Facilitator, presented a Performance Management Handbook for Schools, which he had developed to be used as a supplementary resource in the use of indicators for school level management. Subsequent discussion on the effective use of the Handbook concluded that it held a great deal of valuable information, and could be a useful resource. However some concerns were raised in discussing its utility for Principals:

Its target or end-user needed to be clarified. E.g. It would probably work well for Planners and other Education Officers, but may be too wordy to appeal to busy principals' usage.

Needs to be more user-friendly, beginning with the cover and title and including animation in content. The Introduction needs to begin with an issue that speaks to the Principals' day to day interest rather than the OECS.

Need to show linkages between data management and school management.

As a companion to the PMT it needs to be more practical e.g. steps to using PMTs; flowcharts; helpful forms to completing the tables.

Needs a specific section on the interpretation of statistics and the PMT education indicators.

5.1 Recommendations/solutions to enhance the use of the handbook included:

1. The OERU to improve presentation of Document.
2. Develop/produce a separate Technical User-Guide Manual for the Tool.
3. Develop a Manual for Data Analysis and Interpretation.
4. Content Revision.

6.0 Interpreting and Managing School Performance

Werner Meier introduced three Case studies which groups were asked to work together on and present their findings. One group did not complete the assignment. Based on the work of the two groups, the case studies were discussed extensively, providing a very useful approach to analysing and interpreting the indicators generated by the PMT. In essence, participants were able to develop cause and effect analyses, flows and linkages based on information on the following:

School Profile

Description of Catchment Area
Administration, Planning and Supervision
Student Enrolment
School Budget: Income and Expenditures

Academic Performance

Student Achievement
Student Attainment

Climate for Teaching and Learning

Student-Teacher Ratio
Pedagogical Approaches
Use of Textbooks and Instructional Materials
Student Assessments and Feedback
Teacher-Student Relations

School Resources

Instructional and Support Staff
Facilities and Equipment
Computers for Teaching and Learning
Teaching-Learning Materials

Trends and School Improvement Challenges

Problem Identification and Diagnosis
Recommended Action Plan

As previously requested by the Planners, Mr. Meier utilized a train-the-trainer approach in his interactive presentation on school-based data analysis. The expectation is that this group of participants would use the same case studies and train education officers and principals in this next critical step of the use of the PMT – analyzing and managing school performance. The process, including the case studies, is also included in the Performance Handbook.

This very practical session on data analysis was appreciated and received with enthusiasm by participants, several of whom expressed willingness to immediately take it to their Principals and others using the PMTs.

6.1 Charts and Tracking

In concluding the section of the Workshop dealing with data analysis and reporting, Mr. Meier led the participants through a practical hands-on session on creating and utilizing Charts as a means of tracking trends and developing comparative analyses of particular educational phenomena.

Participants working with their laptops, installed pre-prepared education indicators from Mr. Meier's Case Studies based on PMTs. They learned and practiced with enjoyment, the development/creation of charts from education indicators generated by the PMTs - using Microsoft Excel. For example working with a 3-4 year period, selected variables/indicators of Student Achievement and Teacher Attendance could be charted, compared, analyzed and interpreted in terms of cause and effect or impact.

7.0 Education Management Information System (EMIS)

Mark Ernest, OERU ICT Specialist, presented an update on the OECS EMIS Pilot Project. One of the major challenges faced by the EMIS Pilot relates to staff turnovers and training. Mr. Ernest advised that the current process includes an objective evaluation of the OECS EMIS by Mr. Moses Peart. Under the DFID Initiative, there is to be an assessment of EMIS capacity in St. Lucia, Dominica and St. Kitts-Nevis.

Prior to the Workshop, Planners had expressed a wish to have a detailed demonstration of the capabilities of the GPI system being piloted in St. Lucia. Ms. Nadia Thomas, from the MOE, St. Lucia presented a comprehensive and practical demonstration of the capabilities. These included capturing of information on each student and teacher in every school and time-tabling. Participants noted with positive comment the capacity for qualitative data on student profiling e.g. personal development and work habits.

The OECS Pilot presentation was followed by a discussion of each country's status in terms of establishing an EMIS. Most countries were continuing the use of the PMTs as an interim and sensitization measure. St. Lucia is awaiting the

results of the OECS assessment/evaluation of the Pilot. Anguilla was ready to move, and has been actively seeking funds for a system. They had received offers – some very appealing, but were prepared to wait on the OERU assessment of the Pilot. However, concern was expressed that a decision be made soon.

Participants discussed the value of a common system in terms of reduced costs and in moving towards the desired harmonization of OECS education reform. **It was recommended that (1) this issue be placed on the Agenda for the first Planners TAC in December, at which a common position may be established to be taken to OETEC and the Ministers Council. (2) The Ministers be given a thorough demonstration of the EMIS at the next Council Meeting.**

In their presentations, most countries reported on-going efforts in developing ICT capacities including

- hardware acquisitions for school labs, staff and/or Principals' offices;
- capacity building among MOE staff
- learning outcomes
- teacher training in ICT
- The St.Kitts & Nevis Community College is offering CAPE level courses to teachers.

8.0 Summary of Actions to be Taken and Required Follow-up

As the workshop concluded, Monica Woodley provided a summary of issues identified to be taken forward to the December TAC meeting, and activities that needed to be followed up immediately:

1. Issues to be carried over to the first Education Planning & Information Management TAC:

1. Performance Management Tools
 - Update on increased usage
 - Handbook Adaptation
2. UIS Mapping
 - Statement on mapping to be used in the OECS
3. OECS Publication on Status of Education
4. Process for the completion of Qualitative Indicators
5. EMIS Harmonization
6. Discussion on the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) s offer to assist the OECS further with work begun on Indicators and Information Systems.

2. Activities to be undertaken Immediately:

- Terms of Reference for Planners TAC to be amended and circulated.
- PM Handbook to be revisited.

Countries to send in data for OECS Publication on Indicators.
PMTs -

5. National Data Analysis Workshops –
Revised PMT –
7. EMIS assessments – pilot and country

9.0 In Conclusion

Mark Ernest thanked participants for their attendance despite busy schedules, and their demonstrated commitment to carrying forward the work on Education Indicators and Information Management. He thanked Mr. Meier for his facilitation and for his interesting, timely and valuable content input on data collection, data analysis and reporting. He also thanked Mrs. Joseph for her willing and proficient work on the PMTs; Ms. Thomas for her commendable EMIS demonstration, and Ms. Woodley for convening the workshop and her effective work with the Planning Group.

Mr. Cools Vanloo, SVG, apologized for SVG's intermittent participation in the workshop due to overriding unexpected commitments at the Ministry. He wished the participants an enjoyable time during the rest of their stay in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, particularly during the boat cruise that had been arranged for participants, who were scheduled to stay over that evening.