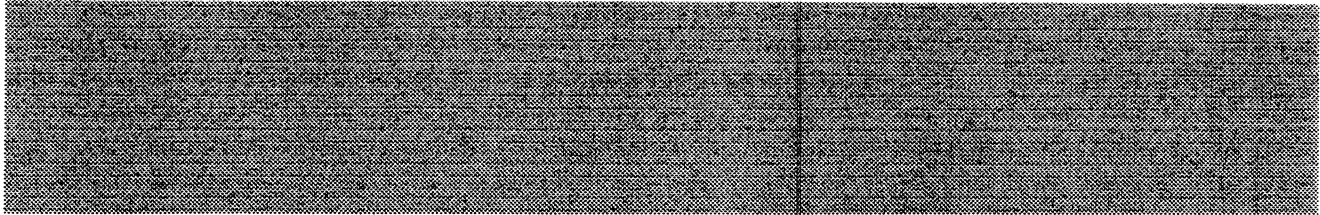


Proposal for Change: a global approach



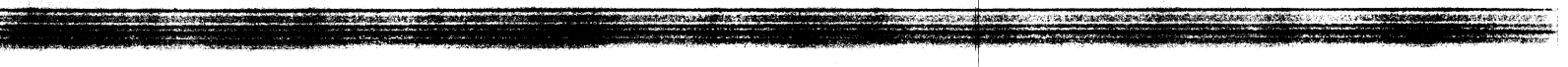

**Critical Review of the existing
education system and suggestions of
desirable actions:
A preliminary report.**

MIE, July 1997



Following the Bissoondyal Report on Abolition of Ranking at the CPE, this report has been prepared by a group of Academic Staff of the MIE, under the Chairmanship of the Acting Director, Mr. Preaduth Chitamun. It is however not intended to be MIE's official opinion on the issues discussed.

14.07.1997



1.0 Background: Existing Situation

The CPE result is the only criterion for admission to a secondary school. There is **no objective criteria** for arguing that an exam can judge the ability of a child at the age of 11 or 12.. Our CPE examination, used for selection purpose, has the disadvantage of attempting to determine the future of a child too soon in his/her academic career. The situation is similar to the **11 plus** examinations in the UK in the 1960s and early 1970s

Failure to secure a rank of 200 or better practically diminishes the horizon of expectations of all children, as a child **can rarely aspire for an scholarship** for further education after completion of the secondary education.

It is particularly demotivating to **late developers**, a category which is **too soon labeled** as failure in our system.

As a result opportunity for further education is largely restricted to the privileged **few who get access** to the best State Schools & Confessional Schools.

It is therefore absolutely important that the **stress created** in the child struggling to **join a five star secondary school** is minimised.

The major objectives of any change in such a context should be :

- To **open access to further education** for a larger number of students **regardless of school attended**.
- To provide a system where each one is allowed to develop at one's own pace. The present structure of six grades to attain the CPE regardless of the ability of the child should be reviewed in order to allow the slower learners as well to attain a good grade at the end of the primary education.

2.0 Facts about the systems and suggestions to reduce disadvantages.

Parents want access to secondary schools which would offer opportunity for further education.

Equality of opportunity of the system of education is often judged from the 'outcome' of the system: the number of passes and number securing good secondary schools. The rush for better schools is due largely to the higher probability for access to further education which exists today as a result of attending such schools.

Suggestion one:

The opening up of opportunity for further education to a higher number of college students can be met through an increased provision of rewards at the end of the

secondary circuit, regardless of the category of school attended, state or private. **Refer to Section 5.0 for changes to be brought in the actual system.**

For a maximum number of children to benefit from the system, every individual must be empowered to take advantage of the opportunities offered. One way out is to go towards the community and as a result to bring the latter closer to the school. **Enhancing the involvement of the home in the education of the child is proposed in section 6.0**

As a result the following must be aimed at:

Equality of access: Provision of more opportunity for access to further education to all students regardless of school attended.

Equality of inputs: Upgrading of educational facilities already available, both in terms of quantity and quality.

Suggestion 2

A better system of **quality control of all schools, State or Private** must be developed, so as to make investment incurred in the system more cost effective. The disadvantages of the actual system addressed in **sections** must be minimised through concrete **measures as suggested in section**

Suggestion 3

Enhancing Communication between the state and the public on educational matters

Facts about the system are unknown to the public. Communicated with the public on the real opportunities offered at different levels must be done in a professional manner, by professionals in the field.

For instance: Improve knowledge of access opportunity offered through the University of Mauritius (UOM)..

Many of those who obtain access to the University of Mauritius are actually students who have secured good results in the HSC examinations, *regardless of school attended*. Since UOM is not paid, securing admission to UOM is a quasi scholarship, but no one recognises it as it is not channeled through the State. It is therefore high time that the population at large is made aware of the access provided by the State which is actually invisible to the public, as the name of students who go to the UOM does not appear on the list of 'Laureates'.

A study of the school of origin of students who are admitted to the UOM will probably point out that greater access to higher education, than actually visible, is already operational, but unknown as it is not officially channeled.

Recognising and counteracting the lack of confidence of parents in the School

There is a feeling among parents that all schools do not cater for the above average child. Sending a child to a school labeled as a low achieving school, there is the risk that the

child's ability will not be fully recognised and developed, because in that school 'nobody's interested in education'. As a result a child starting as above average at the pre primary level, has the risk of ending up as a low achiever. This is a risk parents do not want to take. Every parent also has the legitimate right to expect one's child to move up to the above average level.

Each school in the Island must cater for its higher achieving student. Opportunities in all schools for the above average must exist, even if the number is just a few. Additional opportunities for the bright student must be provided in all schools. With the system of rewards proposed at the end of the secondary education, more schools all over the island should play their roles more fully.

Misleading assumption about the ability of children to cope with the system.

All children cannot follow the straight jacket system of a 6 year course leading to a CPE. Eventually the system creates knowledge backlogs which the child can never acquire in order to be prepared for the CPE examination.

3.0 Medium term measures:

Review of inputs at all school level

1. Curriculum reform to take into consideration the needs of children - slow learners. MIE to set up curriculum review workshop to look into the so called "overcrowded" curriculum.
The curriculum must provide the 'amount' and 'complexity' which a child of 11 or 12 **can** learn, not what curriculum developers think he/she **should** know about their respective disciplines.
2. Teaching practices in school must be investigated: The role of the school itself in the "overcrowding" of the curriculum must be investigated.
3. Teacher education which helps teachers to develop skills in remedial education, as well as education of the above average child must be available.
4. Creating partnership with families: The role of the school and the teacher must be to help bringing in more parental involvement in the education process. *Discussed in section*
5. Review reward system so as to make it accessible to all children regardless of school attended. *Discussed in section*

4.0 Prerequisites for enhancing acceptance of Primary and secondary Schools and thus avoiding rush to a few schools only

Recognise the disadvantages of the present system and work towards gradual elimination of those disadvantages

The disadvantages of the existing system will be enumerated and then measures suggested which would help to counteract those disadvantages.

Disadvantages of the actual system

The System

1. The system produces a failure rate of 40%-45% who get out of school with no hope for any job which requires a formal qualification. Since it grades children according to a specific criteria, based on a single examinations, it tends to confirm the failures of all those who fail to make the grade and the superiority of a few who pass.
2. No reward for children of Tax payers who attend schools other than 'Star' secondary schools in terms of scholarships for further education, while they finance the education of the elites.

Primary Sector:

1. **Neglect of the above average starter in schools viewed as low achievers.** Many Schools fail to cater for high achieving students. This discourages parents who view their children as high achieving to send them to those schools.
2. Many parents feel that their expectations are not being taken into consideration by the school as Heads of schools take a **helpless attitude.**
3. The result is the **syphoning out of potential high achieving students** from certain regions, thus reinforcing the label of low achieving school in those regions.
4. The school **fails to create a partnership with the community**, and thus the school tends to be a place where the community is least involved.
5. Parents prefer to **travel long distances for 'Better Star Schools'**, putting a lot of strain on the child and themselves.
6. Parents are not aware of how to **cope with competition.**
7. The **hours of class is judged as inadequate** by teachers of Standard IV onwards. This is evident from the real school hours today: Starting at 8.00hrs. and ending at 17.00hrs at least three times weekly.
8. School does **not make provision for slow learners**, who may eventually make the grade at the final examination if given the opportunity and adequate time.

Managerial issues:

1. Heads of school **lack a common platform for exchange of ideas** for the betterment of the school. And thus there is a **lack of uniformity** of input at management level. Management of both Primary & Secondary schools is left to the Head Teacher or Principal/Rector of respective schools. The authority provides only administrative support and legal framework.
2. Pedagogical inputs from inspectors is not uniform throughout the island. **Inspectors tend to take a helpless attitude towards practices which they themselves condemn** at schools.
3. It appears that the legitimacy, and thus competency, of the inspectors is often questioned by Head Teachers and Teachers.

Secondary Schools: