

EDUCATION & JOB CREATION

Education – the key to growth and development

Education is the single most important factor in building a platform for economic development and social stability. It determines the quality of our human capital, our level of productivity and competitiveness, and our ability to attract the investments we need to transform our economy, reduce poverty and build prosperity.

We regard education as a fundamental human right. It must therefore be universally available and everyone must have equal access. It is the inescapable duty of the government to provide the policy framework and facilities to achieve this.

Our Pledge

16.1 Improved parenting culture

- Promote, through the health and children's services and in collaboration with community organizations, better parenting techniques, greater awareness of the potential of the child and its nutritional and emotional needs and better preparation of its capabilities for the formal learning process.

- Promote the establishment of day-care centres independently operated, and at the workplace to ensure proper care of children of working parents.

16.2 Emphasis on early childhood education

- Commence primary school enrollment at age 5 instead of 6 years.
- Establish stand-alone infant schools and infant departments at selected primary schools to increase the availability of basic school places.
- Provide grants to private basic schools to enable them to meet the minimum standards prescribed by the Early Childhood Act.
- Enforce maximum class size of 20 for all basic schools.
- Ensure at least one trained teacher in each basic school and Level 2 certification for other early childhood practitioners.

- Extend school feeding programme to all basic schools.
- Develop standardized early childhood curriculum.

16.3 Improved school management

- Establish performance standards and targets for schools to include student performance as well as the operation and maintenance of school facilities.
- Provide training in management practices for school board members, principals and bursars and hold them accountable for the performance of schools.
- Eliminate the shift systems in all schools.
- Establish a system of zoning to determine the GSAT placement of students from primary to secondary schools.
- Regional education authorities will be required to monitor performance of each school and provide technical support including the provision of specialist teachers.
- Establish a National Schools Security Policy to be adopted and implemented by all schools to ensure the safety of students and staff and the protection of school property.
- Establish standardized electronic accounting and reporting system for all schools.
- Institute management information system to record, collate and analyze data on student performance.
- Performance of each student should be ranked against class, regional and national averages and should be reported annually to parents.

- Strengthen the support system available to each school through the increased involvement of PTAs, alumni, citizens association, student councils, etc.
- Encourage churches, NGOs and private sector entities to assume greater responsibility for the management of individual schools.

16.4 Teacher performance

- Accelerate programme of upgrading of teacher skills to Bachelor of Education level.
- Significantly increase specialist training and the provision of Master Teachers in Mathematics and English.
- Institute a performance-based remuneration component for teachers determined on the basis of improvement in student performance.
- Establish a system of licensing and certification of teachers to be renewed every 5 years.
- Employ retired teachers of excellence on contract.

16.5 Student performance

- Establish compulsory school attendance for all children between the ages of 3 and 18.
- Abolish tuition fees at government-operated secondary schools.
- Strengthen the student assessment process supported by remedial programmes to ensure that students attain minimum proficiency standards before advancing to higher grades.

- Employ trained remediation specialists for remedial programmes.
- Identify children with special needs and provide required support.
- Introduce character education courses commencing at Grade 4 and culminating in certification at CXC level to instill values and attitudes appropriate to national development.

16.6 Improved lesson delivery

- Review and update curriculum at all grade levels and constantly evaluate its impact on student performance.
- Expand internet access to primary and secondary schools as a critical learning tool.
- Focus e-learning project on providing standardized distance lessons in critical subjects to support classroom lesson delivery.
- Institute homework programme in after-school hours supervised by teachers (with special remuneration) and NYS workers.

16.7 Health and nutritional support

- Conduct health screening at entry point for basic, primary and secondary schools to identify any factor that might impair learning ability.
- Collaborate with health services to provide periodic dental, optical and hearing examinations and treatment.
- Identify children in need of special nutritional support and provide appropriate response, e.g. breakfast programmes.

16.8 Extend school-leaving age

Extend the school-leaving age from 16 to 18 by: increasing the number of

schools in strategic locations offering Grades 12 and 13 (6th Form) integrating Grade 11 school-leavers into other education and training opportunities (tertiary, HEART, vocational and apprenticeship programmes, etc.)

16.9 Expanding school capacity

- Upgrade and expand existing schools to standards required for the Education Transformation Programme.
- Develop a 5-year capital expenditure programme to construct new primary and secondary schools to meet current and anticipated demand and to achieve the desired class sizes.
- Establish on a regional basis schools with special emphasis on Arts and Sciences for children with exceptional talent or proficiency in these disciplines.
- Establish strategically located schools at primary and secondary levels for highly gifted children and provide boarding facilities or grants for those who live beyond commutable distances.

16.10 Financing the Education Transformation Programme

- Increase the budgetary allocation to education by 1% per annum to a level of 15%.
- Reallocate budgetary resources to increase the expenditure per student at basic, primary and secondary levels.
- Issue government-guaranteed Education Bonds to significantly increase the loan amounts available to tertiary students through the Student Loan Bureau at reduced interest rates subsidized by annual budgetary provisions.

- Dedicate proceeds of Diaspora Bond floated among the Jamaican Diaspora.
- Negotiate long-term concessionary loans from multilateral agencies (World Bank, IDB, CDB and European Union)

Creating a productive workforce

Our most important factor of production is our human capital.....our people. They contribute significantly to the productive process and are direct beneficiaries of that process.

A trained and motivated workforce is an essential component of our strategy for investment, growth and job creation. It runs a crucial leg in the relay to achieve the world-class competitiveness on which our future rests.

Our Pledge

17.1 Education and training

Implement policies as outlined in Section 16 to ensure a well-educated and skilled workforce.

17.2 Labour market reform

- Vigorously uphold the right of workers to representation and collective bargaining.
- Conclude, in collaboration with employers and workers organizations, the deliberations on labour

market reform to ensure that our workforce and labour market practices are able to meet the challenges of new, technology-driven investments.

- Provide through the HEART Trust grants to facilitate institutional and on- the-job training of workers to upgrade their skills and improve productivity levels.

17.3 Improved conciliation machinery

- Promote in strategic sectors agreements similar to the MOU within the bauxite sector to establish competitiveness-enhancing measures and ensure that workers share in the gains from improved productivity and efficiency.
- Increase the number of trained conciliation officers to enable speedier intervention in industrial disputes.
- Improve the facilities at the Industrial Disputes Tribunal.

- Strengthen the facilities for protecting the rights of non-unionized workers.

17.4 Improved labour market information

- Improve the Labour Market Information System to provide more information on the characteristics of and developments within the labour market and encourage greater use as a Labour Exchange.

- Institute an annual survey to measure and report on labour productivity.

17.5 Modernize regulatory mechanisms

Review and modernize regulatory mechanism dealing with the workplace environment such as occupational safety, health and factories regulations.