



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Office of the Permanent Secretary

E: 19/1/28

30 August, 2021

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Clerk of the House
Office of the Parliament
Parliamentary Complex
Cabildo Building
St Vincent Street
Port of Spain

Dear Ms. Sampson-Meiguel

**First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration
on an inquiry into the effects of the hybrid learning system on student performance in
government and government-assisted schools during the revised COVID-19 restrictions**

Reference is made to your correspondence Ref. Parl.: 14/3/56 Vol. IV July, 12 2021 on subject at caption.

Please see the attached Ministerial response to the First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social Services and Public Administration on an *Inquiry into the effects of the hybrid learning system on student performance in government and government-assisted schools during the revised COVID-19 restrictions.*

If you require further information, kindly contact the Office of the Chief Education Officer at ceo@moe.gov.tt.

Yours respectfully


Lenor Baptiste-Simmons
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education



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

(Including Education, Health, Gender, Tourism, Public Administration, Labour, Culture, Community Development and other Social Services)

Request for written responses to

**The First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Social
Services and Public Administration**

**On an Inquiry into the effects of the Hybrid Learning
System on Student Performance in Government and
Government-Assisted Schools During the Revised
COVID-19 Restrictions**

First Report of the JSCSSPA on an Inquiry in the Effects of Hybrid Learning System on Student Performance in Government and Government-Assisted Schools During the COVID-19 Restrictions.

pp	Recommendation / Finding	Response
29 - 32	<p>4.1.31. Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:</p> <p>i. The hybrid/blended learning environment has had mixed levels of effectiveness across the school system with students from the lower-socio-economic bracket, low-performing students and special needs students being at a significant disadvantage.</p> <p>ii. The disparity in access to devices and connectivity has highlighted the widening Digital Divide in Trinidad and Tobago. Without devices and connectivity being made available to all students, the virtual learning environment is not accessible to the most vulnerable students.</p>	<p>Findings</p> <p>Questions i & ii,</p> <p>As early as March 2020 the Ministry collaborated with the Telecommunication Association of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT), the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) and service providers Digicel and TSTT to expand Internet connectivity to all locales. These service providers made internet access zero rated to students who access the Student Learning Management System (SLMS) for the three-month period ending July 31, 2020.</p> <p>One current project is the procurement of 10,000 MiFi Devices for students to facilitate the MOE's drive to integrate ICT into the teaching and learning environment through the medium of online learning. This is intended to mitigate the impact of school closures on students across communities where there is a lack of connectivity. The Ministry is working assiduously toward having these devices delivered in September 2021.</p> <p>Another such project is the provision of Wireless Connectivity/Distribution in Secondary Schools. Aimed at 134 Secondary Schools across Trinidad and Tobago, this project is intended to increase coverage to secure wireless internet access at all schools, facilitate secure delivery of electronic educational content to students and facilitate the secure delivery of online examinations to students, inter alia. This project, which will be carried out by Digi Data, is expected to cost \$7.352 Million. Related site surveys are currently ongoing. The project objectives are identified below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the coverage for secure Wireless Internet access at all schools for students and teachers.

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pp	Recommendation / Finding	Response
	<p>iii. <i>The system for collection and return of packages has been plagued by challenges which has diminished its efficacy;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for the Centralized Management of the Wireless Internet access by the Ministry of Education. • Facilitate the secure delivery of Online Examinations to students. • Create a medium to access an Education Management Information System; • Facilitate enhanced information sharing amongst various Education Stakeholders. • Facilitate secure delivery of Electronic educational content to students. • Facilitate secure delivery of the Ministry of Education’s Administrative Services <p>The Ministry in collaboration with TATT is also engaged in the TTWifi solution, which will see 72 primary schools receive bandwidth upgrades. TTWifi aims to increase access to and utilization of the Internet by all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and help to bridge the digital divide. Assessment of all sites has commenced and is due to be completed in October 2021.</p> <p>iii. Parental engagement and involvement are key factors in overcoming challenges in communicating with households as well as with student participation in schooling.</p> <p>The Ministry received student attendance data submitted by individual schools for the academic year 2020-2021. The data was collected for students on the synchronous/online and asynchronous/package rolls. With respect to students on the package roll, the data revealed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the Primary School level, the average percentage of students who collected packages for the academic year was 81.01%. • Of the 81.01% of collected packages, 72.21% returned the packages.

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	<p>iv. <i>Most stakeholders reported that printed packages were ineffective for teaching and learning. However, the packages were found to be somewhat effective in reinforcing material previously taught.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 444 Public Primary Schools in Trinidad, 43% indicated ‘parents not collecting packages’ as a major challenge experienced with the pre-packaged material mode of instruction. • At the Secondary School level, the average percentage of students who collected packages for the academic year was 20.01%. • Of the 20.01%, 28.94% of students returned the packaged material. • Of the 125 Public Secondary Schools in Trinidad, 49% indicated ‘parents not collecting packages’ as a major challenge experienced with the pre-packaged material mode of instruction. <p>iv. The following information was ascertained from the schools that provided printed packages to students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on an examination of packages prepared for collection most were found to be effective for teaching and learning since it contained concept development through practice exercises and activities. • Reports from school monitoring visits have recorded some challenges with the learning packages which may have posed a challenge to student learning such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the lack of timely collection and return of the packages by parents/guardians - the irregular collection and return of packages, especially in rural, remote areas and on the part of parents within the lower socio-economic bracket who identified lack of transport/finances for transport to collect packages

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on Student Performance in Government and Government-Assisted Schools During the
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	<p>v. <i>Though several special needs institutions received devices for their students, these devices were not equipped with the assistive technologies required to meet their unique needs.</i></p> <p>vi. <i>Mixed attitudes towards education in some households contributes to poor outcomes among some students. These attitudes may be more pervasive in low-income households where prioritising educational attainment over meeting basic household needs may not be practical.</i></p> <p>vii. <i>Insufficient research has been conducted to ensure that curriculum delivery strategies are data-driven.</i></p>	<p>v. The MoE notes the need for assistive technologies to meet the unique needs of students.</p> <p>vi. The MoE is cognisant of these attitudes and recognises that for the fully access educational opportunities support home is crucial. The MoE through the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) and the Teacher Education Performance and professional Development Division (TEPPDD) employed methods to inform parents of the need to prioritise education through the following sessions and courses;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting in education • Navigating the online learning platform • Supporting your child to learn online • Support online geared towards parents <p>Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) provided training to parents on how to use the devices provided for learning.</p> <p>vii. It must be noted that schools readily conduct diagnostic assessments of students on entry to secondary schools. Additionally, teachers have been utilising continuous assessments in the course of their practice which is directly linked to how they engage students and what strategies they utilise.</p> <p>Furthermore, Heads of Departments observe teachers in their practice as they deliver lessons, prepare and implement assessments and test with the aim to provide relevant feedback to them. This scientific process is data driven and relies on data collected either through teacher observation and/or via an assessment of student and teacher products in the virtual platform and those that are received hard copy.</p>

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	<p>viii. <i>The online learning environment has provided an opportunity for students and their caregivers to become more computer literate.</i></p> <p>ix. <i>Secondary School students adapted to the online learning environment more readily than Primary School students. Collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Private Sector has been effective in securing devices and connectivity for students.</i></p> <p>x. <i>The hybrid/blended system has intensified the need for students to access the Student Support Division for both educational support and psycho-social support.</i></p> <p>xi. <i>There needs to be a restructuring of the SSSD to function more effectively. Limited staffing and resources have significantly hindered the Division's ability to provide its</i></p>	<p>Moreover, the SSSD works with referred cases with students identified with learning and/or behavioural challenges and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other intervention strategies are implemented in accordance with the analysis of data obtained from student assessment.</p> <p>viii. The MoE has taken note of this finding.</p> <p>ix. The MoE has taken note of this finding.</p> <p>x. The Ministry of Education's Student Support Services Division (SSSD) continues to provide targeted interventions to the most vulnerable students, through the established school-based referral system as well as through various initiatives (SSSD Hotline/District-based (Walk-in) Intervention Programmes.</p> <p>xi. The MoE has taken note of this finding. See responses to recommendations A & B of this section.</p>

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	<p align="center"><i>clients with a consistent and reliable service. functions.</i></p> <p>Recommendations <i>In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:</i></p> <p>A. The Support system for Special Needs students to be strengthened via greater collaboration among stakeholders to improve educational outcomes for Special Needs students. This can be done in the form of a multi-sectoral taskforce charged with the responsibility of ensuring that a greater percentage of Special Needs students are in receipt of educational support.</p> <p>B. The Ministry of Education needs to develop targeted intervention strategies for vulnerable students, namely those with special needs, unidentified learning disabilities, low-performing students and students from low-income families.</p>	<p align="center">Recommendations</p> <p>A. The Ministry of Education acknowledges the usefulness of a multi-sectoral taskforce and supports the re-establishment of (multi-sectoral) National Task Force/Advisory Committee on Special Education to support/strengthen the work of the Special Education Unit. It is recommended that the a Task Force of this nature should be charged with responsibility to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revise policies, and design targeted programmes proposed by various stakeholder groups. 2. Implement the strategies identified to meet the identified needs of various disability groups 3. Advance recommendations to address gaps in the provision of human, material and financial resources to support programme delivery etc., and 4. Evaluate the systems implemented to meet identified objectives for the improvement of special education service delivery. <p>B. The Ministry of Education’s Student Support Services Division continues to provide targeted interventions to the most vulnerable students, through the established school-based referral system as well as through various initiatives (SSSD Hotline/District-based (Walk-in) Intervention Programmes. Targeted inventions are identified below:</p>

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		<p>SPECIAL EDUCATION TARGETED INTERVENTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Needs Assessment and referral to identify students with learning and behavioural challenges. ii. Screening of Students for Early Identification of special needs/disabilities. iii. Provision of Alternative Intervention Strategies to address learning gaps identified for students displaying characteristics of special needs. iv. Provision of Comprehensive Psychoeducational Assessment via the Developmental Assessment and Intervention Unit v. Development and Implementation of Individual Education Programmes (therapeutic interventions based on targeted recommendations) for students with diagnosed disabilities. vi. Multi-disciplinary collaboration and support for students with psycho-social issues, inclusive of learners from families with low socio-economic status. vii. Parent Information/Education Sessions to promote provide strategies to support learners with disabilities. <p>SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TARGETED INTERVENTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual and group work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tele counselling • Psychoeducational Group work • Targeted student support groups 2. Parenting in Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychoeducation – done through workshops and seminars • Parent support groups • Parenting activitie: - parents appreciation day 3. Community engagement

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Voices – It is a monthly stakeholder meeting to engage and work with all members of the community to address the needs of students, thus improving their life outcomes. • Networking/Linkages/external referrals. School Social Workers assist in guiding families to, and advocates on their behalf with external agencies that can best support their needs. • Home visits – Home visits are vital to student and family functioning assessments, and are especially conducted in the following cases: -chronic absenteeism, special needs students (disabilities and low income families, health/mental health concerns) <p>4. Crisis intervention is used to address critical challenges that impede learning. Interventions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trauma counselling, debriefing, family counselling and external referrals <p>CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS</p> <p>1. The MoE has provided reading and writing modules for English Language Arts (ELA) to assist low-performing students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These modules can be used at both primary and secondary levels, for students who are re-sitting the SEA and those who scored under 30% but moved on to secondary levels. • Specially prepared packages with lessons on the School Learning Management System (SLMS) were shared with schools in January 2021 targeting the re-sit and under 30% students. • A free, online resource was also provided to the students through which they can source self-directed support to improve skills.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the National Literacy Plan, selected participating schools have been supported through the implementation of the Oral Reading Fluency Assessment to detect reading gaps, which can then be remediated. <p>2. Targeted intervention strategies through the Laventille Morvant School Improvement Plan (LMSIP) commenced in April 2021 at selected schools in the Port of Spain & Environs District.</p> <p>Links to online instructional strategies –both teaching and assessment, remediation and diagnosis were shared with facilitators. Orientation on the use of Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) activities for Literacy and Numeracy skills development was also shared.</p> <p>3. A compiled list of intervention strategies implemented by the teachers (in the Caroni Education District) to assist students who are scoring in the lower bands, after each test is presented below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the Item Analysis Spreadsheet • Error Analysis • Use of student performance data to regroup students for needed intervention. • Regrouping of students based on data analysis and progress reports. • Use of concrete manipulative to re-teach primary content. • Focus on topics that need addressing and use of resources including ICTs. • Restructuring of timetable and/or classes. • Addition of a numeracy period • Fortnightly tests, Weekly mental Mathematics activities, quizzes • Use of selected items from valid assessments (SEA, National Tests) to create worksheets. • Mental mathematics strategies

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	<p><i>C. The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs needs to address legislative deficiencies with regard to enrolment of Special Needs Students in mainstream education as there have been challenges with interpreting the Education Act Chap 39:01, which has led to subjective interpretations.</i></p> <p><i>D. As part of this Ministerial Response, the Ministry of Education should provide an update on the Inclusive Education Project and adaptations required to facilitate Special Needs Students in a hybrid/blended learning environment. The Ministry needs to reconcile and streamline official ‘inclusive education ‘policy with ‘special schools’ and adequate specialist educators and support systems in the mainstream education environments.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Accommodations for student assessments. • Use of cooperative learning strategies to allow teachers time to provide individual attention. • Use of counselling as an explicit motivational strategy. • Building of students’ literacy skills in Mathematics: vocabulary. • Development of student Portfolios <p>C. The MoE is currently engaged in inter-divisional collaboration with respect to proposed amendments to the Education Act. Documentation will be reviewed by the MoE’s legal unit for forwarding to the Ministry of Legal affairs and the Office of the Attorney General.</p> <p>D. The Inclusive Schools Project (ISP), much like every sphere of the education arena in Trinidad and Tobago, was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and several key initiatives that were scheduled to occur within the project’s timeline, had to be deferred. However, important activities for the project are on-going:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Division of Education, Innovation and Energy (DEIE) in Tobago accepted the invitation from the Chief Education Officer (CEO) to select two primary schools, one secondary school, and one ECCE Centre to participate in the ISP. • The inclusion of one ECCE centre in each of the seven education districts in Trinidad in the ISP.

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	<p><i>E. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation and the Internet Service Providers should conduct a feasibility study on the use of itinerant mobile hotspots to provide internet access in communities without connectivity.</i></p> <p><i>F. The Ministry of Education should conduct an analysis on the effectiveness on the types of devices used by students. For example, the Ministry could look at how the use of smartphones and tablets versus laptops and desktops affect curriculum delivery.</i></p> <p><i>G. For vulnerable students that still rely on the printed packages, the MOE could consider partnering</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization of staff at all ISP schools in south Trinidad (north and central completed earlier), as well as all the schools and ECCE centre in Tobago. • Sensitization for ECCE administrators at centres in the ISP. <p>All thirty-two schools/centres in the ISP have participated in the Sensitisation Exercise. The ISP will focus on the following three significant areas of impact in the upcoming academic year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Professional Development, • National Sensitization Campaign, and • Infrastructural Upgrades. <p>The sensitisation process will facilitate streamlining of inclusive education policy among stakeholders.</p> <p>E. The MoE takes note of this recommendation and would engage the Ministry of Digital Transformation to determine the efficacy of such research.</p> <p>F. The MoE takes note of this recommendation.</p> <p>G. The MoE takes note of this recommendation.</p>

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	<p><i>with TTPOST and private courier companies to distribute packages to student homes on a regular schedule. This project can commence with a pilot initiative in one densely populated educational district.</i></p> <p>H. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with stakeholders serving Special Needs students should conduct a gap analysis on the assistive technologies required by Special Needs students.</p> <p>I. The Ministry of Education should develop a communication and outreach strategy to emphasise the importance of education to parents and guardians.</p>	<p>H. As a matter of priority, the MOE has committed to expedite the provision of ICT Devices and Assistive technologies to support students with disabilities to ensure accessibility to hybrid learning environments. Collaboration with stakeholder groups is ongoing with the aim of identifying developments in assistive technologies and the required investments in the acquisition, integration and training available for such technologies.</p> <p>I. The MoE recognises the critical need to engage parents in their child/ward's education. As such, all schools are required to prepare parental engagement and involvement strategies that generally are required to take place during the following events that are required as part of a schools Calendar of Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Primary and Secondary Registration – The expectations of parents, students and teachers are communicated to parents as well as the culture and norms required for their child/ward's effective participation in school. b. Termly Parent's Day – Parents meet all teachers and discussions are held with respect to the child's progress and necessary inputs required for improvement in student outcome are dealt with. c. Parent Conferencing – This involves targeted intervention for low or high performing students with respect improving performance or career guidance respectively.

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	<p><i>J. Viewership of the Ministry's programmes on TTT Live and other channels needs to be measured and evaluated for effectiveness.</i></p> <p><i>K. The Ministry of Education should conduct research on the school dropout rate at both primary and secondary levels and develop targeted interventions based on these</i></p>	<p>d. Choice of Subject – In collaboration with the Guidance Counsellors, parents and students are guided in choosing subjects to pursue for their certification examination.</p> <p>e. SSSD emphasises the importance of education to parents and guardians on a continuous basis through psychoeducational workshops and seminars, transition programmes, PTAs, etc.</p> <p>J. The MoE's Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD) developed a survey instrument to determine the efficacy of the TTT initiative. The survey instrument made available on the Ministry of Education's social media platforms and via email to Schools Supervisors and principals on May 18th 2021. The MoE received 2,483 responses. Preliminary analyses resulted in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 79% (1890) believe that the television broadcast is necessary - 30% (1682) said their child/ren watch the broadcast - 74% (1749) would prefer the broadcast to be available on YouTube rather than television <p>As such, the MoE is committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - continue its broadcast of lessons as a tool for curriculum delivery - package all broadcasts completed and air them on the Ministry of Education's YouTube channel. <p>K. Data on students absent for the entire academic year 2020 / 2021 has been collected.</p> <p>A total of 1,497 or 1.31% of the total Primary School student population was absent for the Academic Year September 2020 to July 2021.</p>

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	<p><i>findings. This study should be commenced by the end of the third quarter of 2021.</i></p> <p>L. The Ministry of Education should use findings from research conducted on the hybrid/blended educational system to inform adjustments to the National Curriculum as it relates to both using ICTs in Education Delivery and equipping students for the knowledge-based economy.</p> <p>M. The Ministry of Education should consider assigning more guidance counsellors and social workers to school districts. This deployment should be based on a needs assessment and analysis. More emphasis should be places on identification of emotional/behavioural issues and remediation.</p>	<p>A total of 2,215 or 2.76% of the total Secondary School student population was absent for the Academic Year September 2020 to July 2021</p> <p>L. The MoE is engaged in the TTWiFi project to provide school wide connectivity in schools. All teachers received training in the delivery of the curriculum utilising virtual platforms and online tools.</p> <p>Additionally, cabinet approval was obtained for the setting up of a Technology Education Unit and the MoE is currently engaged in recruitment to staff the Unit.</p> <p>Further, the MoE intends to develop a Digital Literacy and Online Citizenship curriculum for implementation in schools to ensure that our students are digitally literate and responsible digital citizens. This is expected to be piloted in the LMSIP schools.</p> <p>The MoE is presently reviewing its National Curriculum. The experiences from the hybrid/blended system will be considered in the proposal for the new National Curriculum.</p> <p>M. The MOE in conjunction with the office of the Chief Personnel Officer, is currently conducting a job evaluation exercise. Potential staff deficits in all SSSD units will be brought into focus.</p>

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	<p>P. The MOE shall give an update on the man power of the SSSD and include the following:</p> <p><i>i. The breakdown of number of persons assigned to the Division by portfolio;</i></p> <p><i>ii. The number of persons assigned between January 2021 and July, 2021 (include portfolios);</i></p> <p><i>iii. The vacancies of the SSSD as at July 2021.</i></p>	<p>P. Staffing of SSSD</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="784 394 1495 911"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Position/ Unit</th> <th rowspan="2">Approved</th> <th rowspan="2">Existing (Filled)</th> <th colspan="2">Vacant</th> </tr> <tr> <th>No.</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Manager</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">0</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Special Education</td> <td align="center">399</td> <td align="center">166</td> <td align="center">233</td> <td align="center">58%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Developmental Assessment and Intervention</td> <td align="center">42</td> <td align="center">24</td> <td align="center">18</td> <td align="center">43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Guidance and Counselling</td> <td align="center">286</td> <td align="center">252</td> <td align="center">34</td> <td align="center">12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School Social Work</td> <td align="center">156</td> <td align="center">132</td> <td align="center">24</td> <td align="center">15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Administrative</td> <td align="center">12</td> <td align="center">7</td> <td align="center">5</td> <td align="center">42%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Research Officer</td> <td align="center">2</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">1</td> <td align="center">50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL</td> <td align="center">898</td> <td align="center">583</td> <td align="center">315</td> <td align="center">35%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Position/ Unit	Approved	Existing (Filled)	Vacant		No.	Percent	Manager	1	0	1	100%	Special Education	399	166	233	58%	Developmental Assessment and Intervention	42	24	18	43%	Guidance and Counselling	286	252	34	12%	School Social Work	156	132	24	15%	Administrative	12	7	5	42%	Research Officer	2	1	1	50%	TOTAL	898	583	315	35%
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34, 35	<p>Findings</p> <p>5.1.8. Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee's findings are as follows:</p> <p><i>i. Students who were under-performing in the traditional system are most disadvantaged by the online learning environment. Additional support is therefore needed for these students.</i></p>	<p>Findings</p> <p>i. Feedback from teachers revealed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has been observed that with the use of virtual platforms for the delivery of the curriculum, students there was an increase in learning for some underperforming students. - The increased use of visuals such as videos, simulations and an increased opportunity for practise using different types of strategies led to increased interest and learning of some students. - The MoE is currently considering online solutions that can provide students with access to customised, needs based learning activities which students will be able to access on demand and work through at their own pace. The activities will be designed to provide students with feedback in real time. - Data analytics from the online solution will increase the MoE's capability to respond in 																																															

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		<p>real time to the actual needs of students with the various challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See response to Recommendation B., pp 29 – 32 on Targeted Intervention. <p>The MoE also explored several modalities to provide disadvantaged students with devices to facilitate teaching and learning. These include:</p> <p>Means Test to determine eligibility of students for devices.</p> <p>The means test was conducted at schools nationwide from April 12, 2021. The validation criteria for the need of a device was determined by family income, where in this context, the family is defined as two primary caregivers who are parents/guardians of the child. Based on the submission of pay slips for two (2) primary caregivers in the family, persons who are employed and earning less than TT\$10,000 per month, automatically qualified for a device. The same applies in the case of a single parent or one (1) caregiver.</p> <p><i>Status update:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of applications received: approximately 23,000 (17,000 primary and 6,000 secondary) • Approximately 1000 (4.3%) of applications fell outside of the income threshold. • Acquisition of 20,000 laptop devices from international suppliers • Distribution of 11,800 laptop devices based on the completion of the means test.

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		<p>Non- Reimbursable Technical Cooperation - Improvement of Online Education in Trinidad and Tobago – CAF (CAF-development bank of Latin America) /UNICEF and TT</p> <p>This agreement will see additional assistance being provided to students in the online learning platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of five digital textbooks for Mathematics and English, for the primary and secondary level, and in Spanish for the secondary level, with sections dedicated to each of the seven grades of primary education and each of the five grades of secondary education. • The implementation of tools for the self-training for educators in information and communication technologies (ICT) relevant to the use of the Learning Management System (LMS), an online teaching platform, which the government has put in place to mitigate the impact of school closings. • The training of one hundred primary and secondary education officials to provide relevant training for the use of LMS and transformation of pedagogical practices through the use of ICT. • The delivery of 460 laptop devices. <p><i>Status update</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply and delivery of the 460 laptop devices have already commenced; tenders will close on Friday 27th August. The means test will be used to identify these students. • Workplans have been prepared for the other areas.

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		<p>Provision of devices through the partnership with the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT)</p> <p><i>Status update:</i> A total of 9,264 tablets have been distributed throughout Trinidad</p> <p>Adopt a School Programme From its launch in September 2020 to present, 65 donors have committed to procuring and delivering 22,422 devices. <i>Status:</i> To date, approximately 18,122 devices are in the hands of students.</p> <p>Targeting Special Needs Students Approximately 1,276 such students have been identified by Officers of the Student Support Services Division. Validation of those names has commenced. <i>Status update:</i> Of the 1276 names submitted, 759 students are scheduled to receive devices and 203 have acquired devices to date.</p> <p>Conduct of Research The Ministry of Education has engaged in a Learning Loss Survey which targets administrators of primary and secondary schools with a focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students performance in end of term examinations • Students performance in course work • Students facing challenges with online learning • Teachers response to the online learning environment • Factors associated with student online absenteeism.

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	<p><i>ii. There has been insufficient data collection and analysis to compare student performance in the traditional vs. hybrid/blended learning environment.</i></p> <p>Recommendations <i>In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:</i></p> <p>A. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the various school boards should develop a targeted intervention plan for under-performing students to receive remedial tutoring.</p> <p><i>Types of tutoring support programmes could include peer tutoring as well as harnessing the networks of past student associations to recruit alumni volunteer tutors.</i></p> <p>B. The Ministry of Education should strengthen initiatives to train parents of vulnerable</p>	<p><i>Status update:</i> Respondents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 351 administrators from primary and secondary schools - 800 secondary school teachers - 1200 primary school teachers - Administrators and teachers perceptions will be combined with examination data from SEA, CSEC and CAPE 2021 in the completed report <p>ii. The MoE recognises that for reliable data collection several terms of data on student performance is required for meaningful interpretation.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>A. Collaboration between MOE and the various denominational and local school boards are commonplace. Examples are as follows: :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A partnership has been developed with SERVOL through their Junior Life Centres for students with learning challenges. - Collaboration with the Catholic Education Board of Management Limited (CEBM) during the pandemic led to the development of lessons for TTT, thus providing accessible content to those students who may not have benefitted sufficiently from online teaching and learning. - The MoE is moving towards providing online solutions to support independent and individualised student learning. This will be especially useful for remediation of students. <p>B. The Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago has developed videos in the use of devices for parents and students. These videos</p>

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	<p><i>students on how to effectively use digital learning platforms. This solution may involve creating video tutorials that can be viewed on demand.</i></p> <p>C. As part of its Ministerial Response to this Report, the Ministry of Education should indicate and share any research conducted to compare student performance in the traditional learning system with student performance in the hybrid/blended learning system.</p>	<p>were made available in online sessions conducted by TATT officers with the utilisation of the MoE platform.</p> <p>The MoE’s YouTube channel can be utilised to provide the necessary training for parents and students.</p> <p>The MoE also provided training for parents on digital learning platforms and videos have been developed and uploaded on the MoE platform for ease of access.</p> <p>C. The MoE has noted this recommendation and would do so upon finalisation of reports of such nature.</p>
39, 40	<p>Findings</p> <p>6.1.14. Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee’s findings are as follows:</p> <p>i. There was a reasonable amount of evidence to infer that Teachers have attempted to create adapted student assessments to the online learning environment. However, there has not been a process to standardise online assessments. Undoubtedly the dichotomy between students with full access to the e-learning environment and students without online access has contributed to the difficulty of standardising assessment techniques.</p>	<p>Findings</p> <p>i. In the course of delivering instruction to students, the completion of a school’s curriculum is impacted by the school’s approach to its implementation, which could be thematic, subject integrated, modular and/or adapted.</p> <p>As such, schools would have developed their own standardised tests and assessments, for the various levels, based on the coverage and approach to the curriculum.</p> <p>The eventual aim is for the preparation of students for the sitting of standardised terminal examinations, such as SEA, NCSE, and CXC’s CSEC and CAPE.</p>

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	<p>ii. <i>The integrity of the assessment process has been compromised by lack of standardized systems to accurately verify whether students have completed assessments on their own.</i></p> <p>iii. <i>The significant challenges encountered by special needs students in participating in the online learning has made it impractical to effectively assess the performance of this category of students.</i></p> <p>iv. <i>In Response to the inherent challenges of an online learning environment, it was evident that some educators have shifted to a more project-based assessment and individual assessments. This has allowed for increased creativity in the assessment process and greater accommodation of different learning styles.</i></p>	<p>ii. This observation runs true for all online assessments whether at home or abroad. However, crucial examinations and tests that will be used for validating student progress will require students to have their cameras on. This allows for supervision of the test-taker. In this way, the collection of data on student performance can be validated in an online environment.</p> <p>iii. This statement has some merit. Even with devices and assistive technologies, face-to-face interaction with this category of students is preferable.</p> <p>iv. The MoE notes this observation.</p>
	<p>Recommendations <i>In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:</i></p> <p>A. <i>The Ministry of Education should conduct an evaluation of the assessment tools and strategies used by teachers during the pandemic. The results should be used to develop an assessment</i></p>	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>A. The MoE notes this finding.</p>

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	<p><i>policy for the online learning environment inclusive of rubrics.</i></p> <p>B. <i>The Ministry of Education should develop an honour code system. As part of this system, both parents/guardians and students should sign an agreement to uphold the integrity of the assessment process.</i></p> <p>C. <i>Given the additional expense to procure software used to monitor and assess students, the MOE could consider collaborating with the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation and Private Sector Information Technology professionals to develop monitoring and evaluation software suitable to the local education environment.</i></p> <p>D. <i>The Ministry of Education in collaboration with Special Education stakeholders should develop policies and guides for assessing the performance of Special Needs students in the Online Learning Environment.</i></p> <p>E. <i>The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that Teacher's Aides are assigned to a greater number of students who require this type of support. Given existing resource constraints confronting the Ministry, the deployment of these Aides can be done following a standardised needs assessment of students.</i></p>	<p>B. The MoE notes this finding.</p> <p>C. Inter-Ministerial collaboration and the engagement of the private sector for the development of software solutions would still incur a cost. As with the procurement of goods and services, the efficacy of the finding must still be determined at the end of the procurement process as government funds will be expended. The MoE will, however, continue to engage the Ministry of Digital Transformation on all matters related to education technology.</p> <p>D. The MoE notes this recommendation.</p> <p>E. The MoE recognises the valuable contributions of Special Education Teacher Aides to the learning and inclusion of students with disabilities and other special needs. As such, the MOE has prepared a Cabinet Note to extend the provision of this resource through the Special Education Unit of the SSSD.</p> <p>The established policy of the MoE's Special Education Unit identifies that the</p>

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	<p>F. MOE needs to ensure teachers have hardware (computers/tablets) and maintenance needed to execute in the hybrid system. Teachers also need subvention for Wi-Fi access to be able to carry out their duties in the hybrid learning environment.</p>	<p>deployment/assignment of Special Education Teacher Aides is based on the determination of eligibility of students, which is dependent upon the confirmation of a diagnosed disability.</p> <p>F. The MoE has consistently provided access to hardware to teachers during face-to-face instruction and as well during the pandemic that saw the move towards online learning. To that end:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2,725, representing 45.27% of all Primary School teachers accessed a MOE loaned laptop during the academic year 2020 / 2021. - 3,731, representing 59.90% of all Secondary School teachers accessed a MOE loaned laptop during the academic year 2020 / 2021.
42, 43	<p>Findings 7.1.13. Based on the preceding evidence, the Committee’s findings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The 2020 CXC results were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is limited empirical evidence to state how the pandemic affected student performance. ii. Limited empirical data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been gathered on the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on SEA preparation and results. iii. The deficiency in the student assessment mechanism is a significant problem as assessments plays an important role in the process of learning and motivation. iv. The MOE collaborated with international organisations to 	<p>Findings</p> <p>The Ministry notes the findings at i, ii, iii and iv and would develop inter-divisional committees to treat with the issues identified.</p>

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	<p>provide training to teachers in remote learning.</p> <p>Recommendations In light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends the following:</p> <p>A. The MOE should conduct research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both preparations for CSEC and CAPE examinations and the results.</p> <p>B. The MoE should collaborate with its regional counterparts to request that CXC consider the various variables and conditions generated that the pandemic, which are adversely impacting the preparation of Secondary school students for the high-stake examinations of CSEC and CAPE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Recommendations</p> <p>A. The MoE notes this recommendation.</p> <p>B. The MoE has supplied multiple recommendations to the CXC since March 2020. Additionally, the MoE has collaborated with the other territories via CXC led conferences on the CSEC and CAPE Examinations.</p> <p>In the process of decision-making at conferences, CXC's provision is one voter per territory. Not all the concerns of each participating territory, though tabled, may be dealt with adequately, as each territory experiences different challenges. As a result, many of the concerns expressed by Trinidad and Tobago may not garner sufficient support to occasion redress.</p>