

Conveners' names¹: Mrs. Stacey Payne- Mascall and Mrs. Kadian Camacho

Number of Consultations: Three (3)

Dates held:

1. October 12, 2021- December 21, 2021
2. June 17, 2022
3. July 27, 2022

Themes/titles:

Antigua and Barbuda Education Sector Strategy Consultations
Developing National Teaching Standards: Adopting/Adapting the CARICOM Standards for the Teaching Profession
Transforming Education Summit Inter- Sectoral Consultation

Types:

1. National, inter-sectoral
2. National, educational
3. National, inter/multi-sectoral

Geographic focus: Antigua and Barbuda

Number of participants for each consultation:

1. Over 100 participants
2. Fifty (50) participants
3. Thirty-five (35) participants

Language used: English

Total number of participants by age:

Participants were not asked their age.
However, the following participated in the consultations.

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of participants in national consultations

Consultations	Student Attendees	Parents/ Parent Associations	Other Professionals	Total
Antigua and Barbuda Sector Strategy				Over 100
Developing National Teaching Standards	9	3	38	50
Transforming Education Summit Inter- Sectoral Consultation	10 (Secondary and Tertiary level)	1	24 (multi-sectoral)	35

¹ Also the authors of this report

Table 2: Participants by gender

Consultations	Male Attendees	Female Attendees	Total
Antigua and Barbuda Sector Strategy	-	-	-
Developing National Teaching Standards	-	-	-
Transforming Education Summit Inter- sectoral Consultation	12	23	35

Table 3: Number of Participants from each sector

Sector	Antigua and Barbuda Sector Strategy	Developing National Teaching Standards	Transforming Education Summit Inter- Sectoral Consultation
Education		50	29
Child Protection			1
Health			1
Labour			1
Environment			
Finance			1
Nutrition			
Communication			
Information Technology			
Social Protection			
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene			
Social Policy Planning and Research			2
Total	Over 100	50	35

Number of participants from each stakeholder group for consultations held:

It is worth noting that some participants represented more than one (1) stakeholder group.

How did you organize the consultation to ensure the following principles of national consultations?

1. A whole-of-government approach;
2. Inclusion and equality and
3. Focusing on youth as ‘agents of change’.

In accordance with the guidelines provided, the consultations involved a wide cross section of public and private sector entities. There was particular focus

on areas that lend themselves to inherent synergistic collaboration and how continued partnership can lead to greater benefits for all.

What was/were the main area(s) of focus of the national consultation(s), based on the TES five thematic action tracks and the issues outlined in the Discussion Papers and the Futures of Education Briefing Notes?

Antigua & Barbuda opted to focus on thematic track #3: “Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession”. Not only does this area provide the opportunity to include aspects of all the other listed areas, it must be noted that the human resource is most important in any organization, sector or nation. It is that sentiment that has driven the many consultations held aimed at updating the country’s National Sector Strategy and discussing the adopting/adapting of the CARICOM teaching strategies.

Teachers need to be active expert participants in the development of all strategies (short, medium and long- term) to support the educational transformation necessary in Antigua and Barbuda. Therefore, considering their needs (along with the student learners and the wider society) is crucial to the education transformation process. As teachers cannot teach beyond the skills and training they possess, it is imperative that every opportunity is provided them to improve their practice.

The TES consultation has taken an inter/multi-sectoral approach, therefore, recognizing that the Ministry of Education alone cannot do all that is needed by the teaching practice toward the development of the nation, with its multi-faceted needs.

The Youth organizations invited to participate were forthright with their commentary lending much credence to the value of “youth voice” in such exercises. The students were particularly vocal about the disconnect between their expectations of the education system and what the system had on offer. Their perspective proved critical in shaping and reimagining the education system in Antigua and Barbuda.

What are the main outcomes regarding the four key components of the national consultation(s)?

The four key components of the national consultations as listed below drove the discussions held.

1. Recovery from Covid-19 disruption [short-term]
2. Transformation of education [medium-longer-term]
3. Review of national education targets and benchmarks
4. Ensuring sustainable public financing

Table 4: Response to COVID-19

	Response to COVID-19 to date
School Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of protocol documents 2. Provision of hand-washing stations (per population size) 3. Provision of signage 4. Provision of additional space (outdoor learning spaces) 5. Provision of Psychosocial support 6. Provision of nurses and nurse stations
Student Engagement and Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Printing and distribution of physical learning manuals and assignments 2. Investing in online platforms such as zoom and google classroom 3. Partnering with and using national media/stations to broadcast lessons/tutorials (thereby becoming an effective vehicle in the teaching and learning process) 4. Providing training in the use of online teaching tools 5. Equipping teachers and students with technological devices (with the focus being on the secondary school level initially) 6. Accelerating the strengthening and expansion of the telecommunications infrastructure/backbone to allow for enhanced internet services to schools 7. Cancelling national assessments in 2020 8. Homeschooling 9. Implementing a Summer Intervention Program to facilitate learning recovery
Human Resource	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employ school protocol attendance monitors (SPAM Officers) 2. Hire school nurses 3. Engage substitute teachers (some of whom are now permanently employed) 4. Provide opportunities for continuous professional development and training
Nutrition and Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review/implement national school meals program 2. Deliver meals to vulnerable students during lockdown phase 3. Provide food hampers during curfew periods of the lockdown

The priorities arising from the consultations, therefore, reflect what needs to be done to bolster capacity in the teaching sector, with proposed additional measures to support further recovery in the short term including:

1. Focus on STEM education;
2. Make the Summer Intervention Program a staple in the education offering;
3. Institute a literacy camp for Early Childhood (K-3);
4. Provide continuous professional development for teachers;
5. Provide affordable and adequate internet to homes (such that internet access becomes a public good) and
6. Engage numeracy coaches and provide them with the requisite resources.

Conclusion

Antigua and Barbuda like many other jurisdictions had begun to undertake several exercises to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector. While like many other countries issues such as the digital divide in education, the seemingly prohibitive cost of internet services, the nutritional sustenance of students (especially those coming from destitute families), the need for enhancing the digital competency of students and teachers, the provision of technological hardware and devices among other topics dominated much of the discourse during and in the immediate aftermath of the peak periods of COVID-19, Antigua and Barbuda made a deliberate decision to focus on teachers, teaching and the teaching profession.

Much of the discussion preceding the preparation for this year's TES summit, therefore, was very much aligned with the areas that the TES in September endeavours to highlight. Antigua and Barbuda is encouraged that reimagining the education sector and mobilizing resources to finance the same, are key discussion point for consideration.