

Guyana's Declining Secondary School Retention and Completion Rates: Causes and
Solutions

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Guyana's Declining Secondary School Retention and
Completion Rates: Causes and Solutions

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to
change the world”*

-Nelson Mandela-

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Abstract

Despite international initiatives to ensure Universal Secondary Education, many countries continue to face issues with secondary school retention and completion. As this thesis will demonstrate, this may be due to a wide variety of economic, institutional and social factors which influence a students decision to discontinue their secondary education. Utilizing Guyana as a case study, this thesis illustrates the multiplicity of factors causing a decline in secondary school completion rates. The decline in secondary school completion rates signals a critical concern for the future of Guyana's national development objectives. Given the importance of secondary education to the development process, this thesis recommends that Guyana address these issues through a multifaceted approach that includes their current educational policy, the Education Strategic Plan 2008-2013, and an incentive based approach such a as a Conditional Cash Transfer.

August, 2011

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Chapter One

Introduction

Education is a fundamental development tool that enables social and economic development to occur (Lockheed, 1991). It is a key that has been unlocking social, cultural and technological advancements in nations for centuries. It has the potential to mold and transform individuals, by influencing their way of thought and their perceptions of reality. Education has been and continues to be regarded as an integral part of any developing nation's development scheme. Organizations such as the United Nations, Oxfam and Amnesty International all recognize and stress the importance of providing education for all.

Universal primary and secondary education are both paramount to determining a nation's social and economic future. Education, specifically primary education allows nation's to "improve the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions. Furthermore, as societies are being transformed by development, namely technological advancements and other methods of production, they need an educated society that is a "well-trained and intellectually flexible labor force" (ibid) to sustain and embrace the process of modernization.

Many international initiatives and commitments have been made to achieve universal primary and secondary education, as the *Education for All* initiative and *Millennium Development Goals* (goal number two) demonstrate. Despite ongoing commitments and efforts to achieving universal primary and secondary education, there

are about 77 million children of school age, including 44 million girls, who are still not in school due to financial, social, or physical challenges, including high fertility rates, HIV/AIDS, and conflict (World Bank, 2009). This means that over 77 million children worldwide are unable to take advantage of the benefits education provides. The *Education for All* (EFA) initiative was launched in 1990, and it represents a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. In addition to EFA, the United Nations has also adopted *Millennium Development Goals* (MDG's), through which they hope to ensure that by 2015, every child attends and completes primary school (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

The benefits of primary and secondary education are numerous, however, the benefits that are brought about by education can only be attained if students are accessing and demanding the service that is being provided. The factors preventing universal primary and secondary education are numerous, and can range from indicators of poverty, such as socio-economic status, or they can be associated to perceived relevance of education. Cultural and social barriers such as gender and class stratification can also influence how access to education is shaped. For many developing nations, the socio-economic and cultural barriers to education are the most difficult to overcome.

Continued efforts and commitment to achieving the goals of EFA have allowed many developing nations to improve their educational sectors dramatically. This has meant that more and more developing nations are nearing universal primary education. As a result, the educational policy focus of many developing nations has now shifted from simply ensuring basic primary education to additionally ensuring that secondary education

is also adequately accessed. Secondary education is essential for “individual children to achieve their full potential, and for nations to advance social and economic development” (UNICEF, 2007). It builds upon primary education, allowing for post-secondary education to be pursued; it increases employment opportunities in the future, and generally sets the stage for increases in national productivity. Guyana, like many other Latin American and Caribbean countries, is nearing universal primary education. However, as UNESCO’s *Education for All* Assessment Report (UNESCO, 2000) indicates, there is a significant decline in enrolment, retention and completion at the secondary level of education in Guyana. This decline in secondary school completion signals a critical concern for the future of development and is a problem that requires immediate attention.

Methodology

The focus of this thesis is to determine what factors cause a decline in secondary school completion rates in Guyana. Although this is the primary objective of this research, this Thesis also aims to demonstrate that there are a wide array of factors which are currently not being addressed by the ESP 2008-2013, and that an incentive-based solution may assist in ameliorating the problem.

To achieve this research objective, I conducted field research in Berbice, Guyana (Region 6). This region is home to the highest dropout rates in the nation, which made it an interesting region to study. To determine what factors were contributing to an increase in secondary school drop outs, I collected primary data, through naturalistic observations and conversations with community members. Additionally, data was collected from

various country reports and case studies on Guyana. Guyana's past educational policy documents, the current Education Strategic Plan 2008-2013, as well as UNESCO's *World Data on Education 2010/11: Guyana*, and the 2000 EFA Global Monitoring Report form the basis of data. Through naturalist observations and conversations with community members, along with the data collected from country case studies, I was able to determine what factors were contributing to a decline in secondary school completion rates. This data is presented in Chapter Five and is discussed in the context of Guyana's National Development Strategy in Chapter Six.

Through data analysis, I was able to determine that there are a wide variety of economic, institutional and social factors which cause students to forgo their secondary education. This data was analyzed in the context of Guyana's current ESP, to demonstrate the policy's shortfalls. This data also forms the basis for the recommendations made in Section II, Chapter 6.

Research Focus

In 1995, the Ministry of Education in Guyana implemented its Secondary School Reform Project, which focused on the need for improvement and expansion of the secondary levels of education. Components of the project included curricular reform, acquisition of equipment and teaching/learning materials (including textbooks), teacher training, and institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2004). Focus was placed on the quality, relevance, equity and efficiency of education. In 2002, the MoE introduced its Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2007, which encompasses the

government's plans for achieving Millennium Development Goal number two, the Education For All goals, as well as the strategic objectives outlined by national consultants. The current ESP 2008-2013 employs a similar approach as the SSRP as it aims to increase inputs into the educational sector to address the current education problematic. Its intention is to: eliminate the three-tiered system, improve facilities and increase the number of secondary schools, develop a unified curriculum for all secondary schools (grades seven to nine), increase the number of qualified teachers in the secondary system and increase financial resources for non-salaried expenditures (MoE, 2004, 17).

In the context of providing secondary education, the MoE continues to place its focus on inputs into the secondary sector of education. Both the SSRP and the ESP focus on increasing infrastructure, materials and teachers; however, both strategies do not address any socio-economic or cultural constraints to education, which could also be contributing to the problem. Since their implementation both the ESP and SSRP have been inadequate in increasing enrolment and retention rates at the secondary level of education. This is why, as I will argue, additional reforms and solutions, such as incentive based programming, are needed at the secondary level of education in Guyana.

Guyana's ESP 2008-2013 fails to take into account many of the socio-economic and cultural factors that ultimately contribute to the decline in secondary school enrolment and retention that the country is facing. The decline in secondary school retention and completion suggests that Guyana could shortly face alarming levels of functional illiteracy (Government of Guyana, 1996). Solutions are needed immediately to reverse this trend in

Guyana, as a continuous decline in enrolments and retention at the secondary school level could have detrimental effects on both its social and economic development.

Thesis Structure

The thesis consists of six Chapters. Chapter Two, The Literature Review will highlight the key theoretical perspectives and debates regarding education and development. This chapter will discuss the role of secondary education to development as well as highlight key barriers to secondary education. The final section of this chapter will discuss incentive based solutions to education, which have been proven to increase enrolment and retention rates in many of the country's that have similar programs.

Chapter Three, Section I, provides a snapshot of Guyana's political, economic and social development. This section provides a succinct overview of the country's turbulent development history and provides a picture of the country's current situation. Section II, of this Chapter focuses explicitly on Guyana's educational policy options, highlighting key aspects of their secondary school policy selections.

In Chapter Four, empirical data are presented to demonstrate what factors are causing an increase in secondary school dropouts. Primary data was collected through field research, in addition to data from various country reports and case studies on Guyana. Guyana's past educational policy documents, the current Education Strategic Plan 2008-20013 as well as UNESCO's *World Data on Education 2010/11: Guyana, and the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report* form the basis of data that is presented in this section. Through naturalist observations and conversations with community members,

along with the data collected from country case studies, I was able to determine what factors were contributing to a decline in secondary school completion rates.

Chapter Five, synthesizes this data, and discusses the factors that impact secondary school dropout rates in Guyana. Section II of this Chapter discusses the data to demonstrate the broader development implications of increased dropout rates in the context of Guyana's National Development Strategy. Chapter Six, concludes this thesis by providing recommendations, based on the findings in Chapter Five, to assist Guyana and other developing nations in ameliorating secondary school retention and completion issues.

Argument

Throughout this thesis, I will argue that the factors indicated above are not best addressed through increased educational inputs, as Guyana's Ministry of Education currently does. Increasing these educational indicators in Guyana will require a multi-pronged approach, which targets not only institutional concerns, but also the myriad factors that limit educational access or demand in the first place. Policies which address a multitude of barriers, in conjunction to institutional reform policies, such as the inclusion of educational incentives in the ESP 2008-2013 are needed to ensure that Guyana can achieve universal secondary education.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The objective of this research is to determine what factors are contributing to the decline in secondary school enrolment and completion rates in Guyana and secondly to suggest that an incentive-based program, such as a conditional cash transfer (CCT), in the context of Guyana's Education Strategic Plan 2008-2013, may assist increasing these indicators. This literature review will highlight the key issues and debates relevant to this research focus.

Section I: Education and Development

Universal Education- Building Capabilities and Human Capital

Although there is a strong debate surrounding the discourse on education and its role in development, this thesis will adopt the universalistic perspective on education. This perspective perceives education as a tool to reinforce positive social norms by teaching children how to act and integrate into society, as well as contribute to individual growth and development through enabling capabilities and human capital. The potential that education could provide needs to be considered, and the focus should be placed on the positive outcomes of education, rather than the negative. If education has the potential to enable such transformations in societies, then we should focus our efforts on ensuring that educational is accessed by all.

When considering what role universal education plays in the development of a nation, some will argue for universal education, as they view education as an enabler of much more than simply economic growth. The universalistic perspective is closely aligned with the theoretical perspective of modernization. This universalistic perspective argues that education should be provided to all people in the same manner, regardless of difference or cultural influences that may make another approach more appropriate. The modernization perspective, which adopts the notion that education is crucial to development, saw education as a means to ensure that societies transitioned from being traditional to being modern. This process requires the adoption of “modern-man” which can only be done through the process of formal education systems (Mkandawaire, 2005: 1).

This can be seen through various works, most notably Inkeles, who found that education was a prime factor in determining the level of man’s modernity and that the act of providing individuals with modern ideals, would provide them with a far more comprehensive form of education (Inkeles,1974:13). Inkeles maintains, that students “evidently also learned new attitudes and values, and developed dispositions to act” (Inkeles, 1974:19), which they would be able to carry forward into adulthood. How universal education is used in the development process will be discussed below. With a universalistic approach the role of the local, individual and culture are all minimized (Reichert, 2006: 24) and are over shadowed by the need for homogeny, as it is viewed as a means to achieving a uniform set of goals. Considering the perceived benefits that arise from adhering to this perspective, it is no wonder why many of the organizations working

to promote education have adopted this universalistic position. Although they do not make mention of modernization, universal education is stressed through the many educational initiatives of UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. These organizations have all outlined the importance of universal education, as illustrated through their commitments to the EFA initiative as well as through MDG two. They have made clear that universal basic education in the development process is essential not only to the success of a nation, but also to the entire international community. It is a tool for liberation or freedom and a catalyst for the development of capabilities, as Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen illustrate (Fuke, 2007).

Sen's work was concerned with education as an enabler of capabilities, which is also known as the capabilities approach. With Sen's capabilities approach, attention is focused on what people could do rather than how much they could purchase (Saito, 2003:19). The role of education in this approach is viewed as providing capabilities which comprise what a person is able to do or be (ibid), the focus of this approach is not to increase economic capital.

The other benefit that stems from formal education is that people can develop capabilities which allow them to have options in their lives. According to Dreze and Sen: "the notion of capability is essentially one of freedom- the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of a life to lead" (Dreze, 1995:11). Furthermore they contend that education enables people to overcome social and personal constraints, which limits their ability overcome these hindrances. Therefore, education is not only a tool in development, but it also provides increased personal freedoms.

The role of education in the development process has been the subject of much debate. For some, education is seen as vital to the social and economic development of a nation. Yet for others, formal education is seen as a hindrance to development and it acts as a mechanism enabling indoctrination and social control (Kelly, 1995:147). Kelly (1995), Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Stephen P. Heyneman (2003) argue that education is used as a “subtle form of social control and denial of individual empowerment”(Kelly, 1995:146). Furthermore, education inhibits the development of both individual and human knowledge itself (ibid). The critics of universal education argue that it is a tool for Western countries to disseminate ideologies which support their own interest. The channeling of education resources, values, and methodologies, is seen as a way of imposing or favoring a particular way of thinking (Biraimah in Zajda, 2008:196).

However, this is where the opposing viewpoint emerges, which is often referred to as the cultural relativist’s perspective. This perspective is one that grew out of the realization of post-modernists, that the linear path to development that was being pursued by modernization theorists was one that would be unsuccessful in developing nations. It is also important to note, post-modernism and cultural relativism are not synonymous (Fuke 2007:21). Additionally, there is clearly no such thing as a postmodern theory of education, rather that a culturally relative approach to education borrows from postmodern thought (Green, 1997: 9). The cultural relativism perspective maintains that universal education is not the answer, and that an appreciation, and recognition of diversity in and among nations is required.

According to the universalistic perspective, education is the crux to development. However, cultural relativists tend to adopt the attitude that universal education serves as a purpose for western cultural imperialism, as it washes away the very traditions and practices that make each society unique. Furthermore, they will argue that universal education is a hindrance to the development process; therefore they will call for an end to universal education and will promote one that is tailored to meet the diverse cultural and social mosaics of nations.

For cultural relativist universal education is not viewed as a tool to development, but a impediment, as universal education is viewed as means for reproducing current social order and ensuring that the dominant ideology is passed on to the next generation (Fuke 2007)(Bourdieu,1977:32). This can be traced back to the colonial period when education was used as a means of control and domination in developing countries. Historically, education was a method to effect change, but only if it allowed colonizers to exert influence and control, as was the case in Africa and India (Carnoy, 1974:82). Therefore, many cultural relativists argue that this is precisely the role of universal education, today, and thus view it more as a hindrance to development rather than an enabler.

Human Capital

Education has also been viewed as a tool for increasing human capital, whereby “human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings” (Woodhall in Psacharopoulos, 1987:21). This approach to education is primarily concerned with

increasing human capital as a means of increasing economic opportunities in the future. Economists use the term “investment” to refer to “expenditure on assets which will produce income in the future” (ibid). This investment consequently provides an asset which will generate income in the future thus also producing capital. Traditionally, economic analyses of investment tended to focus solely on physical capital. Examples of this being, buildings, equipment or machinery, these would in turn create income in the future by creating what is known as productive capacity (ibid). Within the framework of classical economics, Adam Smith laid the foundation for education as an essential tool in increasing productivity. He pointed out that “education helped increase the productive capacity of workers, in the same way as the purchase of new machinery or other forms of physical capital that assisted in increasing the productive capacity of a factory or other enterprise” (ibid). He was able to explicitly draw the linkage of investment in physical capital and investment in human capital.

As a concept, human capital gained prominence in the early 1960's when American economist Theodore Schultz analyzed educational expenditure as a form of investment (Schultz, 1961). It then dominated the analysis of economics and education, now it is used in the analysis of “labour markets, wage determination, and other branches of economics such as the analysis of economic growth, as well as the expenditure on health care and the study of migration” (Woodhall in Psacharopoulos, 1987:21). Human capital and investment in it have proven to increase the earning capacity of individuals and therefore increase their lifetime incomes. The catalyst fueling the increased earning capacity and well-being is education and training (Baker, 1993). Although education is

seen as a critical investment in the generation of human capital and a more productive labour market, it is not without its critics.

The critics argue that “education does not increase the productive capacity of workers but simply acts as a “screening device” which enables employers to identify individuals with higher innate ability or personal characteristics which make them more productive” (Woodhall in Psacharopoulos, 1987:21). Furthermore, it is argued that there is no way to measure the rate of return¹ on investments in education. However, Schultz (1961, Beker, 1993 and Woodhall, 1987) all demonstrate that expenditures on education are essential to building human capital, and that it is a profitable investment, not only for the individual but for society as a whole. The rates of return on investments in education have been self evident with higher incomes and increased economic growth. As a result many governments throughout the world have opted to pay some or all of the costs of education and provide free or subsidized tuition in schools or higher education institutions. These investments in education enable the creation of human capital needed for economic growth.

Although this thesis will not adopt a gendered perspective, it is important to note that education provides increased benefits to girls. These benefits affect not only individuals, but they extend to future generations, as well as communities at large. As outlined by the World Bank, “the benefits of women’s education go beyond higher productivity for 50 percent of the population”(World Bank, 2009). It has been proven

¹ Rate Of Return: is the measure of the expected yield of the investment, in terms of future benefits, or income stream generated by the capital using the same techniques of cost benefit analysis and investment appraisal that have been traditionally applied to physical capital.

that, educated women also tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn more income, have fewer children, and provide better health care and education to their children, all of which eventually improve the well-being of all individuals and lift households out of poverty (ibid). The importance of girls' education is well noted, however, preliminary data analysis indicates that gender bias will not be an issue relevant to this thesis. The importance of girls' education to the development process is well noted, and is the focus of several international initiatives, including the MDGs and the EFA goals (UNEGI, 2002).

Universal Primary Education and Development; Education For All

Primary education is viewed as serving several purposes; firstly to teach students basic cognitive skills, secondly to develop attitudes and skills that children need to function effectively in society, the third is to advance nation building, all in addition to teaching children literacy, numeracy and problem solving (Lockheed, 1991:xv). Ensuring that these skills and knowledge are acquired serves two main purposes in the development process: first, to produce a literate and numerate population that can deal with problems encountered at home and at work; second, to serve as a foundation on which further education is built (UNESCO, 2009).

The Education for All initiative was launched in 1990 by UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank (Lockheed, 1991:16); at the World Conference in Education for All-Meeting Basic Learning needs (Haggis, 1991:1). It is global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. The Education-for-All initiative's mandate was to serve three purposes:

(i) to help generate an awareness of the need for education in developing countries; (ii) to help generate new resources devoted to education from international agencies and domestic governments, and (iii) help marshal all development assistance agencies to raise the priority of education in the overall agenda for development (Heyneman, 2009).

In a nutshell its goal was to ensure that education was a development priority for all donors. The global community pledged to achieve universal primary education (UPE) and greatly reduce illiteracy by 2000. In 2000, when these goals were not met, it again pledged to achieve UPE, this time at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, with a target date of 2015. In addition to the EFA initiative, the United Nations has also adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), through goal two, they hope to ensure that by 2015, every child attends and completes primary school (Lockheed, 1991:16).

These international commitments to education demonstrate the importance of education to the development process. Education is vital in increasing human capital (as outlined above) in addition to “improving the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions”(ibid). Furthermore, as societies are being transformed by development, namely technological advancements and other methods of production, education enables societies to gain the skills and knowledge to become a well-trained and intellectually flexible labor force (ibid). Universal education plays a critical role in shaping the success of a nations social and economic development.

Traditionally, the focus of international organizations and national governments has only been on ensuring that nations achieve universal primary education (UPE). The emphasis on primary education and contributed investments in it are due to higher rates of return in primary education when compared to other levels of education (Hicks, Psacharopoulos, 1987:101). This emphasis on primary education within the EFA initiative and MDGs has meant that secondary education has often been overlooked. Primary education, although beneficial, serves a limited role in the development process. Although primary education has been shown to increase productive capacities by providing basic literacy and numeracy, it is not enough to provide a nation with the capacities needed to ensure that citizens can fully participate in modern society.

The UNESCO World Education Report 2000 clearly demonstrates that there are critical issues in secondary education as primary education has expanded dramatically since the 1950's, but secondary school enrolments and retentions have been either stagnant or declining in many nations. As more and more developing nations achieve universal primary education, secondary school education is now coming to the forefront of the discourse on education and development for many developing nations.

Section II: Secondary Education and Development

The secondary sector of education is often difficult to define. This is due to its place between primary and tertiary levels of education as there is no universal agreement on where primary education ends and tertiary starts. It can vary from three years, as is the

case in El Salvador to eight years in Yugoslavia and Kuwait. The usual duration is between grades 7-12 (UNESCO, 2000:21). There are also a variety of secondary schools, all with their own pedagogy and purpose. Distinctions are made in curricula to emphasize the expected educational outcomes. For example, some schools allow for further education, or specialization in a skilled trade, which determines the occupation destination of students (Miller in UNESCO, 1996:3).

Donald R. Holsinger and Richard N. Cowell state that “without requisite education to guide their development not only would young people be ill prepared for tertiary education, or for the workplace, but they would also be susceptible to juvenile delinquency and teenage pregnancy, thereby exacting a high social cost”(Holsinger and Cowell, 2000:11). The report given by International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century (1996), gives special attention to the importance and relevance of secondary education for youth and development. As the authors explain, young people are living in, what for many is a turbulent, rapidly changing world, therefore they need value-oriented anchors, knowledge and skills which will enable them to find effective ways of coping with the tensions, pressures and contradictions which are apparent in society and their everyday lives (Delores et al. 1996). Therefore, secondary education plays an integral role in ensuring that future generations are equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to society.

Furthermore, the World Bank, (1993, 2005) and Wood and Mayer (1999) highlight the importance of secondary education to economic growth with increasing “competitiveness, especially in high value added and knowledge based sectors of the

economy, depends on knowledge, skills and competencies associated with abstract reasoning, analysis, language and communication skills, and the application of science and technology. These are most efficiently acquired through secondary schooling”(Lewis, 2006:6). Greater economic growth is also associated with balanced patterns of public educational investment and increases in human capital development. Those countries, which have grown the fastest, tend to have more balanced patterns of investment across different levels of education than those with heavily skewed distributions (ibid). Education plays a stronger role in economic growth once education levels reach a critical threshold and that "high levels of upper-secondary and tertiary attainment are important for human capital to translate into steady growth "(World Bank, 2002). This means that secondary education ensures not only personal but social and economic growth. Education and more specifically secondary education are critical to successful development and continued modernization.

The debate surrounding secondary education and development is rooted in its function in the development process. For some secondary education serves an individual function, allowing for personal development, preparation for an occupation and training for higher cognitive functioning. However, others view its role as social, as it includes nation building, economic development and poverty alleviation (Alvarez, 2000:6). Regardless of what position secondary education plays in the development process it is apparent that its role is required for any form of development, be it personal or social.

Section III: Barriers to Secondary School

Secondary School Access and Demand

Despite the benefits brought about by education, it bears no use to a society if it is not accessed or demanded. If education is not accessed, countries will consequently face declining educational indicators, such as Net Enrollment (NER) and completion rates, which could ultimately inhibit economic and social development. Access and demand to secondary education can be shaped by a multitude of economic and socio-cultural factors. How access and demand are shaped by these factors varies regionally and contextually. Furthermore, if the quality of the education is comprised, the benefits of this fundamental development tool are not maximized. The quality of the institution itself, including its pedagogy and curriculum, also plays a fundamental role in determining the outcome of NER and completion.

There are varying views on the issue, as some will argue that access is determined by the supply of education, and the output of resources towards to education (Lockheed, 1991: 165), rather than access being shaped by the socio-cultural and economic factors of a household. However, as the second stream of literature suggests, it is not simply the lack of educational institutions that are hindering access to education, but a myriad of socio-economic and cultural factors as well. This is why there is a need to analyze the socio-economic conditions and social norms of developing countries, as these factors primarily influence and shaped access and demand. This section of the literature review will highlight key economic and socio-cultural and institutional factors which can impede

access or demand for education. It is important to note, that this is not an exhaustive list of all the factors which can impede access or demand to education.

There appears to be a general agreement with authors (Chimbomo, 2005) who feel that access to education is shaped by a child's socio-economic condition, specifically in rural areas, where education is not viewed in the same light as in urban centers. Thus, due to conditions that are specific to rural areas, access to education becomes limited (Phillips, 1975:205). The focus of this thesis is to determine what factors contribute to a decline in enrolment and retention in a rural setting, therefore factors which impede access or demand in urban settings will not be explored in detail. Nonetheless, many of the factors which are present in the rural context are also visible in the urban context. The variant is the degree or combination of factors that shape access or demand. These factors are presented below in three subsections; economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors.

Economic Indicators

In the literature on the issues of access to education in developing countries many of the authors pointed to economic factors as serving as a hindrance for the poor and an enabler for the rich. Rural poor children faced even greater obstacles when accessing education than their rural middle-class or upper-class counterparts (Phillips, 1975:208). Phillips and others concur that education for the children of rural areas is already beset with most of the general problems of access to education, and they face even greater obstacles when attempting to access education. Moreover authors such as Chimombo (2005), Lewis & Lockheed (2007) and Reddy (1992) also agree that economic factors

impact attendance, enrollment and completion of a child's primary education and thus these factors directly shape how education can be accessed.

In attempting to determine which factors shaped access to education for rural youth, nature of occupation, opportunity cost and the direct cost of school appeared to be the most prevalent hindrances. Therefore, focus will be placed on examining these factors and how they contribute to shaping access.

Nature of Occupation

A major economic indicator that shapes access and demand for education, as outlined in the literature is nature of occupation. This directly affects income, which in turn affects whether or not education is accessed or demanded. Reddy (1992), Chimombo (2005) and Lockheed (1991) all concur that the occupation of households shapes access. As Reddy (1992) outlines, "the children of labourers are least likely to get enrolled" and studies such as the one by the Azim Premji Foundations, have also found that a high degree of illiteracy exists in children whose fathers are labourers. This is an important factor to consider when analyzing economic factors that shape access, as the nature of one's occupation directly affects one's income, which in turn as we have seen in the literature, directly impacts how children are able to access education. Furthermore, poverty is strongly correlated with a "range of home background variables, including parental education, which also influence children's educational outcomes" (UNESCO, 2008:9). This fact makes it difficult to separate these influences, and to understand the

extent to which the education of poor children is being held back by too few financial resources, rather than other home background factors (ibid).

Opportunity Cost- Labor versus Education

One of the most predominant economic factors that shapes access to education is the opportunity cost of education faced by parents. As Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) outline, many families in developing nations rely on a child's wage earning capabilities to provide income to the household. Thus, when parents are faced with a situation where they may lose a vital source of income the emphasis is placed on providing for the family, rather than acquiring an education. This appears to be a consistent factor which shapes access to education, as it is one that has also been noted by authors such as Govinda (2003) and Chimombo (2005). Chimombo and Govinda both note that for most developing countries, when poor parents are faced with the opportunity cost of sending their child to school or having them contribute to the families' income, greater weight was placed on domestic household chores and income generating activities.

For females, emphasis may not be placed on income earning capabilities, but rather household responsibilities. In most developing countries reproductive roles appear to be emphasized, therefore, "girls are not expected to make economic contributions to their families. Instead, they are expected to care for family members and carry out household chores, tasks for which education is not seen as necessary" (UNESCO, 2000). In many developing countries, the form of labor provided by girls is often essential to the functioning of their family, and for many it is too vital to give up. Additionally, it has been

found that caring for younger children is often an important role that older girl children play and this often means that they do not have the opportunity to attend school (Rao, et al., 2003; Mehrotra, 1998).

It appears that a child's contribution to the household is often given priority over the attainment of education. Thus, when many parents are confronted with the option of sending their child to school, the opportunity costs are far too great, and as a result youth are forced to relinquish their education.

Direct/Indirect Costs of Schooling

A factor that significantly shapes access or demand to education in developing nations, is the cost associated with attending an academic institution. The direct cost of schooling has been identified as a factor that hinders access to education by organizations such as UNESCO (2003). The "direct costs of school" refers to expenditures required for a student to attend an academic institution. These include: school fees, books, supplies, uniforms, transportation and any other expense that may arise as a result of attending school. For many families in developing nations expenditures such as these can make attaining an education prohibitively expensive. Thus, many parents will abstain from providing their child with an education, simply because it is beyond their financial means.

Furthermore, the direct cost of schooling appears to impact girls more negatively than their male counterpart. Mehrotra notes that "when private costs are high, and parents in poverty face the choice of sending a boy or girl to school, it is the boy who is sent" (Mehrotra, 1998:478). The cost of schooling and the financial burden placed on families

to provide their children with the tools necessary to attend an academic institution, serves as a factor that hinders access and demand to education.

Socio-Cultural Variables

In addition to economic factors that shape access to education, it appears that many socio-cultural variables also play an essential role in determining access. Factors which were presented by Lockheed and Verspoor (149, 1991), Hallack (1991) Fuke (2007) and the report by The Azim Premji Foundation all outline membership in a Scheduled Caste or Tribe and religion as significant socio-cultural factors that have influenced how access to education is shaped. Additionally, they note that members of these groups who are generally marginalized do not see the relevance in education, and thus this belief also shapes how education is accessed.

Membership in a Scheduled Caste or Tribe

Membership in a scheduled Caste or Tribe (SC/T) plays a vital role when considering how access is shaped to education. It appears that membership in a tribe or caste of lower standing, was consistent with diminished access, or demand as Fuke (2007:61) demonstrates. The findings were based on a study conducted in Uttar Pradesh by Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar. They concluded that there was “blatant caste discrimination” such as the denial of children of certain castes access to school or requiring children of different castes to sit separately. To avoid this discrimination many parents will opt to not send their children to school. As a result, many students will not

complete their primary education. These findings were consistent in most developing countries, as Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) and Chimombo (2005) reveal.

Furthermore, in many developing countries such as India, Thailand and Guatemala members of specific ST/C have been previously marginalized and reside in remote locations. Therefore, they already have limited access to resources such as healthcare and education. As a consequence of their remote location, many members of ST's, cannot access educational institutions, as they are unavailable in these locations (FUJIKO, 2002, 2). Although location is a variable that also shapes access to education, for the purposes of my research, it will not be discussed in detail.

Another variable that shapes access to education is that many of the members of ST/C's are living in relative cultural isolation and with distinctive linguistic and cultural barriers (FUJIKO, 2002; 3). Many do not have a sense of national identity, as they do not relate to the general population. The inability to relate to the education being offered is also a major factor that determines access or demand to education (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991:153). When parents do not see the value or relevance in education being provided by governments, they will opt to not send their child to school. This has also been noted by the Azim Premji foundation that "members of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, who have been historically disadvantaged socially, economically and educationally, have had lower school participation in terms of enrollment and retention compared to the general population" (Azim Premiji Foundation, 2004:7).

Caste affects access or demand for education in several ways. Firstly, caste can act as a form of discrimination, thus access is limited to students of a preferential caste.

Secondly, membership to a SC/T which is already a marginalized group, entails that access to education is further diminished, as many members of these groups do not see the relevance in accessing education. These factors also influence the demand for education, as those belonging to a SC/T may not relate or see the relevance of formal education, and therefore will opt not to access education.

Religion

Religion is another predominant factor that shapes access or demand for education, as shown through the Azim Premji Foundation's Report, as well as by Lockheed and Verspoor (1991:155). The Azim Premji report found that religion is an important socio-cultural variable which significantly influences school participation (Azim Premji Foundation, 2004:43) thus, due to religious beliefs one may be limited in their ability to access education or may simply not enroll their child. Religion and caste, serve as the basis of different forms of discrimination, as shown by Lockheed and Verspoor; this form of discrimination also can constrict access to education.

Many religious minorities are not afforded the same level of access to educational institutions simply based on their religious beliefs, or affiliation with specific religious groups. Religious and ethnic majorities will suffer from even greater inequalities in the education system (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991:153), for example, in Lebanon, where "some evangelical Christians, in an attempt to shelter their children from teachings about evolution, refuse to consider certain schools "(Heyneman, 2003:29). Religion can act as a

barrier to access by excluding those not of the faith being taught, and it can also influence whether or not parent will send their children to school.

Perceived Quality of Education

The final factor that shapes access to education is the perceived quality of education. As noted by Lockheed and Verspoor (1991:151), and Hallak those belong to many of the marginalized groups which are described above, do not see the value in the education being provided, therefore parents will limit or hinder access to education. Hallak identifies this perceived poor quality of education as encompassing the school environment and facilities, but also to the relevance of the education to the child daily life. In many rural communities parents are unable to relate to the education being provided in schools, and as a result they are reluctant to send their child to school (Fuke, 2007:64).

Institutional Factors

There are many institutional factors which can shape access or demand for education. Factors such as resources, physical facilities, curriculum and instruction all play a role in shaping access or demand. Factors which are present within the educational institutions themselves, can shape whether or not education is accessed or demanded for a variety of reasons.

For example, the state of the physical facilities could have a detrimental effect on how education is accessed or demanded. When school facilities are inadequate or unsafe, many parents may opt to not send their child to school. Factors such as inadequate desks

and sanitation facilities can be a hindrance to access or demand. Furthermore, as Fuke (2007) and Kumar & Vlassoff (1997) demonstrate the lack of resources within the school has contributed to low educational quality and is a possible factor as to why parents would limit access to education. Furthermore, many schools do not have the capacity to service the demand for education, as they lack the resources to do so. The classrooms may become overcrowded and learning can become disrupted due to repairs and maintenance on buildings. Dilapidated schools and unfit classrooms are factors which are limited to the institution, can ultimately shape demand or access for education.

Additionally, many schools lack resources such as teachers and learning materials such as textbooks. This equates to inefficient service delivery which may consequently hinder access or demand. In many developing regions a shortage of trained and qualified teachers is a major factor which can determine access or demand. If there is a shortage of teachers, parents and students may not demand or access education.

The curriculum that is implemented in educational institutions may also serve as a hindrance to access or demand. If the curriculum is not relevant or if it is outdated, students and parents may opt to limit access and demand. Pedagogy may also serve as a factor which may limit access or demand as the teaching style may not be appropriate for all students. If the curriculum and pedagogy are not applicable to students and parents in the community, they may opt to not access education. Furthermore, teacher absenteeism is also a factor which may shape access or demand for education. With inadequate staff on a consistent basis the quality of instruction in the classroom also becomes compromised. As a result parents may choose to not access or demand education.

The general school environment influences a student's decision to access or demand education. As explained by Lockheed and Verspoor, (1991), learning occurs more easily when order prevails, "if students and teachers attend class regularly and according to an established timetable, if facilities are clean and in good repair and if teaching materials are routinely provided" (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991:43), then an orderly school environment exists. However, in many developing countries, achieving an orderly environment is a near impossible task. As outlined above, many schools lack facilities and fundamental resources, such as teachers, to produce an orderly environment. Often times the conditions are so chaotic that is "seems miraculous that learning occurs at all" (ibid).

There are a multitude of other factors that can be considered when attempting to determine which economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors shape access and demand for education. However, within the context of this thesis these above mentioned factors appeared to be the most prevalent, and consistent among developing nations as economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors hindering access or demand to education. Although these factors affect all children it appears that females in general are additionally affected by the economic and cultural factors, as many societies have an underlying gender bias. All of these factors influence how education is accessed or demanded, and need to be addressed to increase educational indicators.

Enrolment and Completion

Enrolment and completion of education can be hindered by any combination of the above listed factors. These factors influence whether or not education is accessed or demanded thus consequently influencing NER and completion rates in developing

countries. For example, economic factors such as parents income can determine whether or not a family will demand or access education. A child from a low income home may be required to work to supplement the household income and as a result may have to forgo educational opportunities for income generating activities. The child may either not enroll in primary or secondary school or may have to drop-out once the financial constraints become too great.

Institutional issues such as the curriculum and quality of instruction can also effect enrolment and completion. These factors may influence completion specifically, as many students may opt to not continue their education as they may feel the curriculum is either irrelevant, too difficult or not challenging enough. Furthermore, if the quality of instruction is poor, students may feel disengaged with the teacher and curriculum consequently causing them to drop-out.

The factors that influence enrolment and completion rates will vary from region to region. A combination of social, economic, cultural and institutional factors can all determine whether or not a student will enroll or complete their education. Increasing dropout rates and decreasing enrolment rates, at both the primary and secondary levels of education, can be caused by a myriad of such factors. To remedy the situation, these factors should to be taken into consideration when developing educational policy in developing nations. However, as the subsequent section will demonstrate, only a handful of these factors are taken into consideration.

Section IV: Addressing Declining Educational Indicators

Secondary School Educational Policy

Noting the importance of education to the development process, many developing nations have adopted educational policies to assist in expanding their secondary school sectors. However, there are several critical issues that emerge concerning secondary school policies. As outlined in Section I of this literature review, much emphasis has not been placed on secondary education. In utilizing a cost-benefit analysis towards education, many developing countries had focused their attention on expanding the primary sectors of education as it was perceived to yield the highest return to their investments. This has meant, “from a purely economic point of view, it is more profitable to invest additional resources in the lower levels of education than to expand higher education, although the social and private demand for higher education has expanded rapidly in recent years” (Woodhall, in Psacharopoulos 1987)(Heyneman, 2009). This has resulted in higher investments in the primary sectors of education rather than the secondary sector. The EFA initiative also adopted this framework as it has traditionally focused on ensuring that universal primary education (UPE) was achieved. Although there was a slight mention of secondary education, none of the EFA goals explicitly targeted completion of secondary education.

However, with increased globalization and modernization, many countries have now focused their efforts on maximizing the benefits of education (listed in Section II) Today, many countries are nearing UPE and consequently universal secondary

education(USE) is quickly becoming a priority. This has meant that countries are now reforming their educational policies to include and incorporate secondary education. In order to expand the secondary sectors of education many critical issues need to be taken into consideration.

The most common issues that need to be taken into consideration are “how much and what type of education to provide for our youth”(Alvarez, 2000:3). Furthermore, issues also relating to priority, size and the financing of secondary education, or to its nature and function in society in addition to the structure and curriculum, are all critical to developing effective policy. These issues are contextual in nature and differ according to the development of education in each country or locality (ibid).

Another challenge when developing educational policy is to ensure cost-effectiveness in achieving their outcomes. Educational policy makers must successfully minimize their inputs while maximizing their outcomes. Using guidelines from the World Bank, the EFA initiative suggests that investing in “five principal inputs for improving learning; the curriculum; learning materials; instructional time; classroom teaching and pupils learning capacity”(Fordham, 1991)(Lockheed, 1991) will help countries reach their educational goals. Within the framework of EFA initiative, “limited educational effectiveness in developing countries is a direct result of failure, either at the level of policy or of its implementation, to provide the necessary minimum supply of those inputs necessary for learning (Fordham, 1991:28).

Although the World Bank and UNESCO have advocated this approach to educational policy, the evidence is mixed concerning the impact on learning of providing

more educational inputs. “Earlier surveys based on retrospective studies suggest that providing additional resources may have little impact on learning”(Glewwe, 2005:3). Others argue that the policies that have been endorsed by the WB, have been based solely on economic rates of return (Heyneman, 2003:330) and that they have not truly understood the needs of educational policy. The frameworks for educational policy endorsed by the World Bank and EFA initiative offer solutions to educational outcomes that address only a limited scope of issues. This narrowly focused framework does not take into consideration barriers to education which are autonomous from the institution itself, which results in educational policy that increases the supply of education without increasing access or demand.

Traditional input driven educational policies have been effective in addressing many institutional barriers to education. They have been effective in increasing the supply of educational materials, teachers, schools, and improving the curriculum. However, as noted in the previous section, there is a multiplicity of factors which can hinder access or demand for education. These economic and socio-cultural factors are generally overlooked in national educational policy initiatives. Scaling up investment in service provision and quality, as this approach does, is of course necessary, but it is not sufficient in ensuring universal access to educational services (Chapman, 2006:1). As a result, many countries have now turned to alternative approaches to increasing their educational outcomes. They have turned to specific policies to boost demand and expand equitable access to education services and are relying on cross-sectoral policies that address underlying causes of inequalities in educational outcomes (ibid), since the traditional policy approach does not.

Incentive-based Solutions to Increasing Educational Indicators

Since traditional educational policies do not offer a large enough scope for tackling the educational problematic, many countries have turned to innovative ways of targeting those who are the most excluded from the educational process. Some countries have provided subsidies for secondary education to the households that need them most. Colombia instituted a system of vouchers for children from poor households to attend private secondary schools (King, Orazem & Wohlgemuth, 1998 in Figueredo, 2003:12). Indonesia, where parents are responsible for fees and other educational expenses at all educational levels, is offering scholarships for needy students and has begun to provide block grants to the poorest 60 percent of schools (Yeom, 2001, in Figueredo, 2003:12). In Bangladesh, they introduced a Female Stipend Program (FSP), which offered an incentive to females to attend secondary school. The program yielded positive results, “ girls secondary enrolments increased from an average of 7.9% to 14% in some project area’s and dropout rates fell from 14.7% to 3.5%” (Raynor, 2006:1). Programs such as these have been successful in increasing educational indicators in the secondary school sector, as they are targeting key barriers to secondary school enrolment and demand.

One initiative that has been explored in many countries to address educational indicators is incentive based programs such as a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCTs). CCTs “link safety-nets directly to human-capital development, by making receipt of the transfer conditional on school attendance and health-care checkups. In most cases, CCTs are provided directly to mothers on the assumption that they are more likely to use the

resources to benefit their children” (Handa, 2006:1). These cash transfers can be an “effective way of targeting resources to the poorest and socially excluded” (Chapman, 2006:2).

The cash transfers directly help to alleviate current poverty and inequality and also to improve health and educational indicators. In regards to education, CCTs can address many of the financial constraints faced by poor families when attempting to access education. Therefore the cash that is received by poor families enables them to overcome some of these financial constraints, to enable their children to access education. The financial constraints that can limit enrolment and retention are; high transaction costs of education, the opportunity costs of education and income poverty. As a result there has been an increase in educational and health indicators in many of the 30 countries where similar programmes have been implemented (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009).

Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* (BFP) is an example of a CCT programme that has been successful in increasing enrollment and retention rates at the primary level of education. They have done so by providing incentives for primary school enrolment and attendance through direct monetary transfers to poor and extremely poor families. The incentive is given based on the condition that all children aged 6-17 in the household are enrolled in school and attend at least 85 percent of classes each month. Evidence from impact evaluations show that *Bolsa Familia* and its predecessor, *Bolsa Escola*, promote increased enrolment among the poor. *Bolsa Escola* was found to reduce dropout rates by 7.8 percent. Approximately 94 percent of all primary-aged children are now enrolled in school, and 92 percent of the poorest quintile is now enrolled (UNDG, 2007). It is important to note, that

these increases in educational indicators are due in part to *Bolsa Familia*, and were implemented in conjunction with other government policies and programmes to increase educational indicators in Brazil.

Although CCTs have increased educational outcomes in many countries, there are two major disadvantages which arise from the use of such programs. First, “some of the neediest households might find the conditions too costly to comply with, and thus may be deterred from taking up the benefit” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:47). For example, a family may need a child to work to supplement the household income, or they may have to work on a family farm and therefore can’t partake in formal education. For families in this situation, the costs associated with education are far too high to comply with the conditions; therefore the conditions may actually deter/exclude the people the program is intended for. Secondly, those households that do opt for the benefit may incur a “costly distortion to their own behavior for the sake of a little extra cash in the short run” (ibid) by pushing poor households to do something that they would otherwise not be doing, CCTs may be imposing “costly distractions on people who are trying to do the best thing for their family” (ibid). Furthermore, when used within the context of education, CCTs will not tackle key issues within the institutions themselves (outlined in Section III), such the shortage of staff, the quality of education, or teacher absenteeism. Thus CCTs for education can be limited in addressing a large scope of factors, which may be hindering the child from attending school in the first place (Reimers et al, 2006).

Fiszbein and Schady explain the rationale for conditioning a cash transfer; firstly, agents do not always behave exactly as one would expect fully informed, rationale agents

to behave. As they suggest, people do not always behave in the manner one would expect, often people suffer from self-control issues and excessive procrastination. Also, conflicts between parents on how to invest in their children versus how the child would invest in their future, also known as “incomplete altruism”(Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:49) all contribute to the argument for placing a condition on the cash transfer. These factors may cause a family to invest inadequately in human capital, thus conditionality ensures that investments are made (ILO, 2009:8). Furthermore, since CCTs are conditioned on a “good behavior” they are perceived as beneficial therefore they are more likely to be well received, more feasible and better endowed (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:50).

Despite the disadvantages of CCTs, they are now regarded as the “ new silver bullet” for educational policymakers. This is due to its simplicity and verifiable benefits (Reimers et al, 2006:1). “Virtually every country in Latin America has such a program. Elsewhere, there are large-scale programs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey, and pilot programs in Cambodia, Malawi, Morocco, Pakistan, and South Africa, among others” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:3). Interest in programs that seek to use cash to incentivize household investments in child schooling has spread from developing to developed countries— most recently to programs in new York City and Washington, DC (ibid). This incentive based solution to increasing demand for service delivery in key sectors such as education and health care, serves as an interesting point of study. Its proven benefits to increasing enrolments in primary education, begs the question, could an incentive based program increase enrolments and retention at the secondary school level in a country such as Guyana.

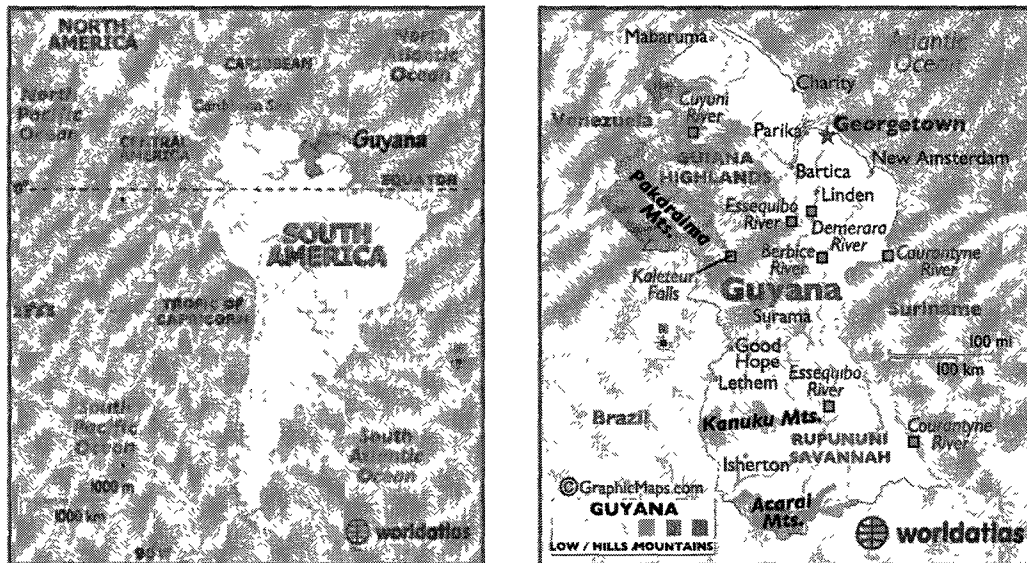
Chapter Three

Background on Guyana

I. Economic, Political and Social Development in Guyana: A Brief Overview

This Chapter of the thesis aims to shed light on Guyana's economic, political and cultural development to help situate the reader and to provide background information on Guyana. This chapter will be followed by Chapter Four, which will outline Guyana's past and current educational policy.

Figure 1- Guyana



Source: WorldAtlas, public website, 2011

Guyana, which is referred to as the *Land of many waters*, is located in Northern South America, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean and is between Suriname and Venezuela (CIA, 2010), as the Figure above illustrates. It stretches 82,978 square miles

and is home to approximately 772,298 people (Buckman, 2010:197). The country is divided geographically into four regions: the low coastal Region, the interior Highlands, the savannah Region along with the Hilly Sand and Clay belt (Gafar, 2003:3). Although the country is quite diverse ecologically, the majority of the population, nearly 85 percent resides in the coastal plains region (ibid). The coastal plains are comprised of largely of “rich alluvial mud which is swept out to the sea by the Amazon, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice rivers. This fertile soil is excellent for agricultural production, and most of the country’s agriculture is concentrated in the region”(ibid). Agricultural products such as; sugar, rice, shrimp, fish, fresh fruits and vegetables in addition to gold, bauxite, diamonds, timber which all contribute significantly to the country’s Gross domestic product (GDP) of \$2.026 billion US (estimate in 2009)(UNdata, 2011). Although Guyana is currently experiencing an annual growth rate of 3.2(ibid), its road to economic, social and political development has been a rocky one.

Colonial Roots and the Establishment of the Republic of Guyana

The economic history of Guyana is one that is marred with slavery, indentureship, colonialism and social stratification of society based on colour (Gafar, 2003:4). Guyana was first colonized by Dutch settlers in the 1600s (Merrill, 1992). The Dutch left their mark in Guyana, as key features of Guyana's current economic structure, especially the patterns of land use, can be traced to the period of Dutch stewardship (ibid). The Dutch West India Company, which administered most of the colony from 1621 to 1792, granted early Dutch and then British settlers ownership over 100-hectare tracts of land. This

allowed settlers to expand the narrow coastal tracts by clearing swampland and increasing their holdings inland (ibid). Many of the large sugar plantations that formed the basis of the colonial economy were established in this manner.

After the establishment of sugar plantations in Guyana, sugar became the most important plantation crop. Sugar was first grown in colonial Guyana in 1658 but it was not produced on a large scale until the late 1700s, about 100 years later than in the rest of the Caribbean region (Merrill, 1992). Guyana's plantation owners entered the sugar industry late, as a result they were able to import relatively advanced equipment for milling sugarcane.

This investment in advanced equipment gave the local sugar industry a firm foundation and made it the leading sector of the local economy. By 1800 there were an estimated 380 sugar estates along the coast. In the 1990s, almost two centuries later, the population was still concentrated on the same coastal strip of land, and sugar was still one of the nation's two most valuable products (Merrill, 1992).

The British formally took over the colony in 1814 but British Guiana's plantation economy fell into turmoil after 1833, when Britain passed the Act for the Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Colonies² (ibid).

² The law provided a five-year transitional period during which plantation owners were to begin paying soon-to-be- freed slaves for their services. In practice, however, owners alienated the slaves by wringing as much work as possible from them during the last years in bondage.

Previously, African slaves provided the supply of labor on the sugar plantations until emancipation in 1838 at which point they were asked to leave the plantations because the white plantocracy refused to grant them land (Gafar, 2003:5). This caused many of the ex-slaves to migrate to the towns and urban centers to engage in wage labour. Emancipation also brought about labour shortages on the sugar plantations and caused the agricultural sector to plummet (Merrill, 1992). To offset the labour shortages the British plantation owners brought over Portuguese laborers, as the first indentured workers (Gafar, 2003:6). After completing their contracts, the Portuguese left the sugar plantations for commerce. The Chinese were then brought in to replace them, however they too moved on, into retail trade, after completing their period of indentureship (Gafar, 7, 2003). From 1838 and 1917, the year indentureship ended, nearly 240,000 East Indian labourers were imported to supply the cheap labour needed on the sugar plantations.

The People and Culture

The history of slavery and indentureship explains the ethnic landscape of Guyana which is currently comprised of East Indian (43%), African (30%), mixed (17%), Amerindian (9%) peoples. The major religions are: Christianity (57%), Hinduism (28%), Islam (10%) and other religions (5%). The main languages are English, Guyanese Creole, and Amerindian languages, primarily Carib and Arawak (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2001). There are deeply rooted ethnic tensions within Guyana, and “ethnicity has been a key factor in the political history of Guyana since before independence”(Minorities

at Risk Project, 2000). Ethnic tensions mount during elections as the People's National Congress and Peoples Progressive Party are both ethnically supported.

Furthermore, the "Afro-Guyanese assimilated into the dominant European culture, however the East Indians maintained their culture" (ibid), this also served as a wedge between the two dominant ethnicities as they were unable to culturally relate to one another. Although the country is intensely ethnically divided, Guyana only experiences periodic ethnic violence, solely at election times (Misir, 2003). Through my own field research, I also noted that race was not an issue within Guyana, and I would agree with Misir that "...there is no dominant race-ethnic group, as evidenced through both East Indians' and Africans' relatively equal access to education and jobs" (Misir, 2003). Additionally I noted, as did Misir, that, "both major ethnic groups are well represented in the professions, especially in the legal, medical and teaching professions. Unemployment and poverty do not plague only one ethnic group and significant public projects are found in all ethnic locations" (ibid).

The Peoples Progressive Party and The People's National Congress

Guyana's political development was "crude, ugly, violent, turbulent and racially divisive" (Gafar, 2003:6). The country was tainted by violence and political corruption, fragmentation, i.e; separate administration and development of its three regions until unification in 1831 (DaCosta, 2007:4), and a rocky road to independence in 1966- preceded by the suspension of their constitution by the British in 1953 and ethnic violence (ibid).

Guyana's first political party was then known as British Guiana (Ishmael, 2004) was the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP). It was established by Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham; and the first popular elections were held in June 1953(Gafar, 2003:4). After winning the elections, the PPP led by the Jagan and Forbes proposed a bold program that included political independence and sweeping social and economic reform (ibid). This caused them to appear to be a "communist organisation" bent on "subverting the Government" and making it an ally of the Soviet Union (Ishmael, 2004). The proposed policies also did not sit well with the ruling class, which was made up of the sugar barons and the British government. To prevent *communist subversion* in Guyana, on October 9th 1953 Winston Churchill proceeded with a military invasion, suspension of constitution, and incarceration of the Jagans (not Burnham) and other leaders of the PPP (Gafar, 2003:5). The removal of the Jagan government resulted in a split in the PPP which allowed Burnham to leave and form his own party, the People's National Congress (PNC). The parties are deeply divided by race as the PNC is supported mainly by Afro-Guyanese and mixed races, while the Indo-Guyanese predominantly support the PPP (Gafar, 2003:6).

After winning elections in 1957 and 1961, the PPP demanded political independence. The 1961 Jagan government advocated a socialist economic model, and was friendly with the socialist bloc countries. Jagan's support of Marxist values resulted in a UK-US plan to overthrow him in August 1964. "With Washington's nemesis out of office, Britain granted Guyana political independence in May 1966; and Burnham ruled

Guyana in an “autocratic” and racist manner from December 1964 until his death in August 1985”(Gafar, 2003:8).

When the country gained independence in 1966, Guyana was one of the least developed areas in the Western Hemisphere (Merrill, 1992). Burnham’s Experimentation with “co-operative socialism” was perceived to have caused devastating effects on political, economic and social life in Guyana (Thomas, 1984). Guyana's gross domestic product (GDP) reflected the decline in output. Real GDP fell during the late 1970s and decreased by an estimated 6 percent per year during the 1980s (Merrill, 1992). The fall in GDP in terms of United States dollars was even more dramatic because of repeated devaluations of the Guyanese dollar (for value of the Guyanese dollar). In 1990 the GDP was only US\$275 million (ibid). Per capita GDP amounted to less than US\$369 per capita, making Guyana one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere (Merrill, 1992).

The government had proposed a plan to feed, clothe and house the nation however, its program failed to do so, instead it led to a severe crisis in food, clothes and housing in the 1970s and 1980’s (ibid). State ownership of the “commanding heights of the economy”(ibid) is also credited as leading to the virtual collapse in social infrastructure in Guyana. In the 1970s and 1980s, the economy deteriorated further after the government nationalized foreign-owned companies and took control of almost all-economic activity. Output of bauxite, sugar, and rice--the country's three main products--fell sharply (Merrill, 1992).

Between 1977 and 1989 a combination of factors including “the international oil crisis and the severely interventionist policies” resulted in a stark decline in per capita

income and widespread poverty (Ministry of Finance, 1997). The government's policies caused a production crisis, an increase in credit and public debt, the printing of money to meet current expenses, inflation, a decline in export earnings and imports and heightened the balance of payments crisis (Canterbury, 1991:12). The economic crisis facing Guyana in the early 1980s caused a rapid deterioration of public services, infrastructure, and overall quality of life (Merrill, 1992).

After Burnham's death in 1985, Vice President Desmond Hoyte became the new executive president and leader of the PNC (*ibid*). Hoyte gradually embraced the private sector, recognizing that state control of the economy had failed (*ibid*). He reversed many of socialist policies under Burnham, in an effort to embrace the market economy (Gafar, 2003:12). In 1989, the government introduced an Economic Recovery Programme and embarked on a far-reaching structural adjustment programme (Ministry of Finance, 1997), as a means to "overcome the economic and social decay brought about on the country by "co-operative socialism" (Canterbury, 1991). Although the economic recovery programme allowed the country to experience some economic growth, over 35 percent of the population was still below the poverty line and 21 percent were considered to be in extreme poverty (NDS, 2001).

Furthermore, the 1980 constitution divided Guyana into ten regions, each having a "Regional Democratic Council and a regional chairman. Regional councilors serve five-year terms concurrent with the term of the National Assembly, and the councilors of every region elect from among themselves one member to sit on the National Assembly and two members to sit on the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs" (Merril, 1992).

This system of local governments was designed to decentralize the government and provide greater political power to the people.

Due to pressures from the international community in the early 1990's, Hoyte was forced to hold the first free and fair election in Guyana since 1964 (Gafar, 2003:12). On October 5, 1992 Cheddi Jagan, leader of the PPP was elected president. He served as president until his death on March 6, 1997. He demonstrated a,

Commitment to democracy, followed a pro-western foreign policy, adopted free market policies and pursued sustainable development for Guyana's environment. Nonetheless, he continued to press for debt relief and a new global human order in which developed countries would increase assistance to less developed countries (United States Department of State, 1998 in Gafar, 2003:13).

Sam Hinds was then elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Guyana. As Prime Minister, Hinds had been the Deputy Leader of the PPP/Civic coalition and he was the head of the Civic Party before they joined with the PPP. In December 1997, elections were held, and Mrs. Janet Jagan, was appointed Prime Minister (GINA, 2005). When the PPP/Civic won the election on December 19, 1997, Mrs. Jagan became the President and she then appointed Sam Hinds her Prime Minister (ibid). In 1999, President Janet Jagan became ill and decided to resign from the office of President. In order to have Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo succeed her, Sam Hinds resigned as Prime Minister on August 9, 1999 allowing President Jagan to appoint Mr. Jagdeo to that office.

Mrs. Jagan then resigned from the office of President on August 11, 1999 and the now Prime Minister Jagdeo succeeded her as the Constitution required. On becoming President, Mr. Jagdeo appointed Sam Hinds Prime Minister once more (ibid).

The Current Situation

Although the PPP has lead the country since Jagan's election in 1992, political violence and ethnic tensions still emerge during elections. Bharrat Jagdeo, who has been the president of Guyana since August 11 1999, currently leads the PPP. His tenure in office has contributed to unprecedented social and economic reform in Guyana, with improved access to education, rehabilitation of the health system, far-reaching land reform and the biggest expansion of the housing sector in Guyana's history (Office of the President, online). He has also contributed to the expansion of water and sanitation systems, and large-scale infrastructure projects such as the development of roadways and air transport networks (ibid). Furthermore, Guyana's national debt was substantially reduced, new public procurement and competition laws were passed, and reforms to the tax, fiscal and investment regimes were implemented (ibid).

Guyana's National Development Strategy (NDS), which was which was launched on January, 6th 1997 by the late President Dr Cheddi Jagan, set out the priorities of the nation's economic and social development for the next decade (Ministry of Finance, 1997). Jagdeo was at the time the Minister of Finance, and played a crucial role in developing the Guyana's NDS.

The NDS followed a “macroeconomic strategy, which was directly concerned with economic growth, employment, the distribution of income, inflation, poverty and sustainability in fiscal, environmental and institutional terms” (Ministry of Finance, 1997). Social policies are given a central place in the NDS, as “social policies are viewed as crucial to satisfying the national objectives of poverty alleviation, satisfaction of basic social and economic needs, and sustainment of a democratic and fully participatory society”(ibid).

In the context of economic growth, the Guyanese economy has exhibited moderate growth in recent years. However, the economy is heavily dependent upon the export of six commodities - sugar, gold, bauxite, shrimp, timber, and rice (idib) which represent nearly 60% of the country's GDP (CIA World Factbook, 2011).

Despite dramatic shifts in political ideology, Guyana’s economic, political and social development has been tumultuous. Although there have been positive growth rates between 1991 and 2010 (with the exception of 1998, 2000 and 2005), the country still has a long way to go in terms of development, both economically and socially. From 1980 to 2010 Guyana's human development index³ (HDI) rose by 0.7 percent annually from 0.500 to 0.611, giving the country a rank of 104 out of 169 countries with comparable data (UNDP, 2010). However, when compared to regional data Guyana is still below the regional HDI average, which rose from 0.578 in 1980 to 0.706 today (ibid). In the 2010

³ The first Human Development Report introduced a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index, the HDI. The breakthrough for the HDI was the creation of a single statistic which was to serve as a frame of reference for both social and economic development. The HDI sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension, called goalposts, and then shows where each country stands in relation to these goalposts, expressed as a value between 0 and 1(UNDP, 2010).

Human Development Report Guyana ranked 0.758 percent in health, 0.463 percent in regards to income and .650 percent with respect to education (ibid).

Since the focus of this thesis is to gain a comprehensive understanding of factors causing a decline in enrolment and retention at the secondary school level in Guyana, we turn now to examine the NDS, with a specific focus on the educational policy options pursued by the PPP. The subsequent Section will outline the educational policy reforms carried out by the PPP.

II. Guyana and Education Policy

Compulsory education was introduced in Guyana in 1876 by the colonial government and in 1976 the government of Guyana abolished private education and became responsible for providing free education from nursery school through the university level. Within its National Development Strategy (NDS), education has always been identified as priority. In its latest development strategy, Guyana National Development Strategy 2001-2010, the government clearly outlines the importance of education to its national objectives. It states:

To attain high rates of growth and higher standards of living, there must be higher productivity. Many factors contribute to raising productivity but, above all, productive forces can be unleashed through better basic education.... Failure to develop adequately our country's human resources

can be the main constraint in the attainment of the nation's development goals (NDS, 2001).

Education has been perceived as a right for all and is accessible to all Guyanese children from the age of 3 years and 9 months to the age of 16, although education is only compulsory up to the age of 14 years nine months (UNESCO, 2010). The Ministry of Education is dedicated to ensuring that all citizens of Guyana, regardless of "age, race or creed, physical or mental disability, or socio-economic status are given the best possible opportunity to achieve their full potential through equal access to quality education" (MOE, 2008). Although the Constitution of Guyana does not enshrine a right to education, Article 27 confers on "every citizen [...] the right to free education from nursery to university as well as at non-formal places where opportunities are provided for education and training" (Article 27, Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in UNESCO 2010). Furthermore, Article 28 promises "every young person the right, *inter alia*, to ideological, social, cultural and vocational development" (Article 28, *ibid*).

Guyana has demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of education not only to its national development goals but for the society as a whole and the individual as well. This is clearly demonstrated to its NDS chapter on Education, as well as its numerous programs and policies to ensure equal access to education. Notwithstanding the country's objectives on paper, the reality of the situation is that many issues prevent Guyana from achieving its objectives. To understand the current situation in Guyana it is important to have an understanding of how the educational system is structured and what

the educational process is. Additionally, an understanding of what policy options the government has pursued will shed light on why the current ESP 2008-2013 overlooks the core issues, which will be expanded upon in Chapter Five of this thesis.

Administration and Policy Formulation: Guyana's Education Sector

Guyana is divided into eleven administrative education districts. Ten of these education districts correspond with the administrative and geographical regions of the country, while the capital, Georgetown, is treated as a separate education district (UNESCO, 2010). With the introduction of the regional system in 1980, a greater element of decentralisation occurred. As early as 1985, the ten Regional Democratic Councils were given the mandate to construct and maintain schools in their jurisdictions; allocate resources among schools; recruit and pay temporary and acting teachers; and ensure that schools operate according to regional and national objectives (NDS, 2001). Although each Region operates its own educational budget, Georgetown (the capital) is controlled by the MOE.

Regional Education Officers (REdO's) are responsible for all schools in their respective Regions. RedO's have a certain degree of autonomy in that they can transfer teachers within their Regions, grant leave, employ and dismiss teachers (UNESCO, 2010). The central Ministry retained responsibility for "monitoring educational indicators across the regions; ensuring that there are no significant disparities in the quality of education across regions; procuring and delivering textbooks to all schools; coordinating and administering the main primary and secondary school examinations; providing support

services to the schools in Georgetown; and directing the operations of most of the institutions of higher education, including the post-secondary institutions and the Teacher Training College”(NDS, 2001).

Structure and Process

Guyana’s educational system is comprised of four basic levels: nursery, primary, secondary, and post-secondary. In total there are “1,273 schools in Guyana: 386 at the nursery level; 426 at the primary, a similar number (426) at the secondary level, including 322 secondary departments in primary schools; 21 prevocational institutions; 1 teacher training college; and 1 university. Additionally, there are 7 special education and 5 private schools”(ibid).

Nursery education is available to children who are 3 years 9 months by the end of the first term of the school year. Students will spend two years in a programme which is “designed to develop their social, intellectual and psychomotor skills through activities that are based mostly on child development rather than on subject matter disciplines”(ibid). This is followed by primary education, which is compulsory and of six years’ duration. It is aimed at providing basic literacy and numeracy skills. The official age of entry is 5 years 9 months by December 31 of the year of admission (ibid).

The primary school curriculum focuses on the following subjects: “language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health and family life education, art, music, and physical education”(UNESCO, 2010). The core compulsory areas are language

arts/literacy, mathematics, social studies and science. Curriculum guides for teachers provide a general plan or programme of what should be taught at this level (ibid).

At the end of primary education, pupils sit the Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) for placement in one of the types of secondary schools. Pupils with the highest scores are offered places at the President's College, a residential school which provides a wide range of academic and extra-curricular programmes. Those with lower performances are placed in community high schools or in the secondary departments of primary schools. (MOECD Education Planning Unit 1996 in UNESCO, 2010). Under the Basic Education Access and Management Support project (BEAMS), the MOE piloted a Continuous Assessment Programme at grades 2, 4 and 6 levels, which allows teachers to identify weaknesses and strengths and make appropriate interventions. The pupils' performances are recorded at the three stages and it is proposed that this will be used instead of the SSEE for entrance to secondary schools (UNESCO, 2010).

Prior to completing the SSEE, which currently the National Placement Exam, students are generally⁴ placed in two secondary education programmes: a four-year programme which is offered in the Secondary department of Primary (All-Age) Schools and discrete Community High Schools. This programme offers a mix of "academic and pre-vocational skills with a strong bias towards the pre-vocational skills, especially in the final year"(NDS, 2001). The four-year programme offered in CHSs and the secondary departments of primary schools is geared "towards the acquisition of pre-vocational skills. The students study the compulsory academic subjects—English, mathematics, social

⁴ With the exception of students who excel on the SSEE, who are placed in Presidents College.

studies and science—in addition to health education, physical education, music and drama, in cases where there are teachers with the necessary qualifications”(UNESCO, 2010). In addition to core subjects, technical subjects are also taught, “such as agriculture, home economics, art and craft, industrial arts and business education”(ibid). After three years of schooling at this level, students then write the Secondary School Proficiency Examination (SSPE), Part 1. Those who obtain the highest grades are then transferred to a general secondary school, where they pursue a more academic curriculum. The other students will remain in CHSs or in the secondary department of the primary school and spend their fourth year specializing in the pre-vocational area for which they have shown some aptitude.

The five-year programme, which is more academically oriented, is done in General Secondary Schools. The programme prepares students to “write the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examination and/or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination ordinary level at the end of five years”(NDS, 2001). Students who perform well at these examinations have an opportunity to pursue studies for the GCE Advanced Level (‘A’ Level) Examinations or Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE)(ibid). In the first three years all students have to study English, mathematics, social studies and/or science, with more teaching periods being given to English and mathematics (UNESCO, 2001). At the end of the third year the students can choose the subjects that they wish to study for the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), Secondary Education Certificate and the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary level (GCE O-level) examinations (ibid). Students have a wide range of subjects

from which to choose, depending on the availability of a teacher qualified to teach the subject in their school.

After successfully completing the CXC many students may opt to pursue vocational training or other post-secondary school options. Although this level of education is essential to the development process, it is not the focus of this thesis and therefore will not be discussed in detail.

Guyana's commitment to Education For All

Guyana's commitment to education is represented through its NDS as well as its constitution; it has also adopted the EFA and the EFA-FTI (Education for All-Fast Track Initiative) framework to ensure the country meets the specified goals. These goals are outlined in the EFA 2000 Country report on Guyana and to a large extent were already reflected within their current NDS. The objectives outlined by the EFA initiative were;

- Expansion of early childhood care and development, especially for the poor.
- Universal access to and completion of primary education by the year 2000.
- Improvement in learning achievement based on an agreed-upon percentage of an age group.
- Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with special emphasis on female literacy.
- Expansion of basic education and training for youth and adults.

- Improvement in dissemination of knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2000).

Taking these goals, in addition to its own NDS objectives, the Ministry of education is focused on; increasing “access to education, curriculum reform, improvement in the administration, management and supervision of the education system, expansion of teacher training and human resource development, as well as strengthening community relationships so that educational services could be improved and enhanced”(UNESCO, 2010). These basic tenets can be found in Guyana’s 1990, 1995 Educational Policy Documents. Although there were differing approaches and strategies for achieving those goals, the mission of education in Guyana has always been to provide equal access to all Guyanese children and young people to quality education (EFA, 2000). To achieve these goals there were some changes made in the policy to reflect, “changes in socio-cultural, economic and the political needs of the society”(ESP, 2008). The Table 1 highlights key educational policy evolutions made by the Government of Guyana,

Table 1- Major Policy Evolutions in Guyana Educational Policy

Year	Major Policy Evolutions
1966-1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an indigenous curriculum • Expansion of educational opportunities
1976-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Education • Extension of access to educational opportunity
1990-1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of access • Increase in capacity to meet manpower requirements for future economic development
1995-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free quality education from nursery to age 15(Basic education)
2001-2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the attainment of better levels of literacy and numeracy in Basic Education.

Source: The Ministry of Education Guyana, 2008-2013 Education Strategic Plan.

Guyana’s educational policy has been amended to ensure equitable access to all levels of education. The MoE has focused on expanding access, first “through universal compulsory education at the primary level, then on providing at least three additional years of secondary schooling” (NDS, 2001). However, in more recent years, greater emphasis was placed on the quality of education and universal secondary education(USE) (ESP, 2008). The government has also increased educational expenditures, as a percentage of the national budget, and allocations towards education have “risen from a low of 4.4 percent in 1990 to an average of 15.5 percent in the last seven years”(MOE, 2008). Table 2 illustrates expenditures on education as a percentage of Guyana’s National budget and GDP.

Table 2- Education Expenditure as a % of National Budget and GDP

Year	National Budget	Education Budget	% National Budget	Education % GDP
2001	65,826,595	11,296,347	17.2%	8.5
2002	62,968,874	10,497,336	16.7%	8.9
2003	71,837,328	11,340,928	15.8%	7.9
2004	73,108,423	12,087,847	16.5%	7.7
2005	92,363,695	13,375,048	14.5%	8.1
2006	105,883,670	14,384,997	13.6%	7.9
2007	99,962,490	14,860,628	14.8%	7.6

Source: Ministry of Education, Guyana, 2008-2013 Education Strategic Plan.

Closer examination of Guyana’s educational expenditure based on the primary versus secondary sectors of education, reveals a fundamental issue which may be contributing to the issues that the secondary sector of education is currently facing. As the table below indicates, investments in the education sector have traditionally been geared

toward the primary sectors of education. Although the government is increasing funding to the secondary sector of education, there still remains a disparity between the two.

Table 3- Education Expenditure on Primary and Secondary Levels of Education, as a % of National Education Budget

<u>Year</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
2004	25.1	20.2
2005	23.1	21.1
2006	23.6	20.1
2007	26.2	22.2

Source: Ministry of Education, Education Strategic Plan 2008-13.

The 1999-2003 Guyana Education Access Program (GEAP), the 2002 Basic Education Access and Management Support (BEAMS), the 2003-2007 Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and their latest 2008-2013 (ESP) underline the importance of secondary education to the development process, and set out targeted policies for increasing provisions to the secondary sector of education in Guyana. Although the MoE and the GoG are committed to increasing service delivery and expanding secondary sectors of education, there are several issues which are preventing Guyana from achieving the targets outlined in its ESP and NDS.

Secondary Education; Policy and Issues

In 1995, the Ministry of Education in Guyana implemented its Secondary School Reform Project, which focused on the need for improvement and expansion of the secondary levels of education. Components of the project included curricular reform, acquisition of equipment and teaching/learning materials (including textbooks), teacher

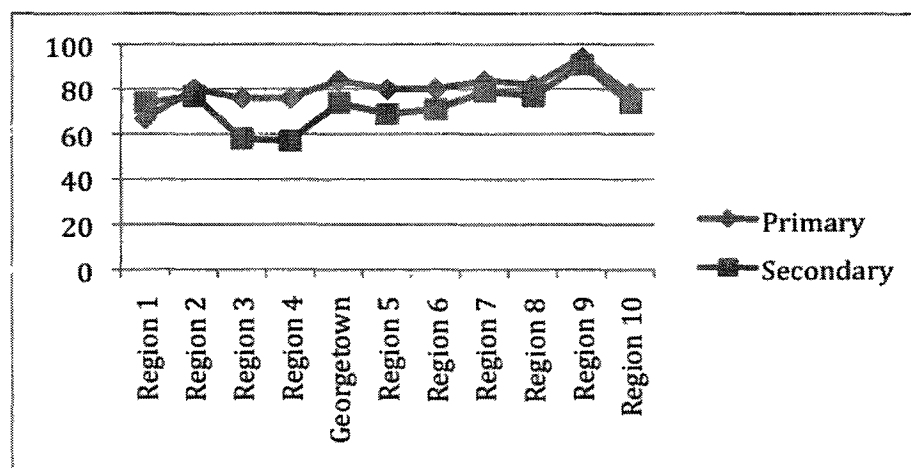
training, and institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2004). Focus was placed on the quality, relevance, equity and efficiency of education. In 2002, the MoE introduced its Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2007, which encompasses the government's plans for achieving Millennium Development Goal number two, the Education For All goals, as well as the strategic objectives outlined by national consultants. The ESP 2003-2007 employs a similar approach as the SSRP as it aims to increase inputs into the educational sector to address the current education problematic. Its intention is to: eliminate the three-tiered system, improve facilities and increase the number of secondary schools, develop a unified curriculum for all secondary schools (grades seven to nine), increase the number of qualified teachers in the secondary system and increase financial resources for non-salaried expenditures (MoE, 2004:17).

In 2008, The MoE launched its current ESP 2008-2013, the focus of this plan is to “ensure that the system of education contributes to raising the standard of living in Guyana”(ESP, 2008). Its mission and purpose are to, eliminate illiteracy, modernize education and strengthen tolerance while ensuring that the educational system delivers quality education and training at all levels (ibid). The plan focuses on eight priority areas: quality education, universal secondary education, teacher education, technical and vocational education (Education and the world of work), inclusive education, school health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, developing the managerial capacity of the sector and monitoring and evaluation (MOE, 2008).

Despite tweaking their educational policy, Guyana's educational sector and Guyana's educational system, which were once considered one of the best in the

Caribbean (NDS, 1996) have deteriorated severely. As UNESCO's Education for All Assessment Report (UNESCO, 2000) on Guyana indicates, there is a significant decline in enrolment, retention and completion at the secondary level of education in Guyana. With a transition rate of only 67.6 percent from the primary to secondary levels of education, it appears that students are simply not making the transition from the primary to secondary levels of education. The net enrolment ratio (NER) at the secondary school level is 66.6 percent compared to the primary level, which is at 89.0 percent. Net attendance rates (NAR) also decline from the primary to secondary level, from 96.6 per cent to 73.2 per cent (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2001). Figure 1, illustrates the Regional disparities in secondary school attendance rates when compared to the primary sector. Furthermore, repetition and completion affect secondary level of education disproportionately, as the primary repetition rate is 2.0 per cent and the dropout rate is 1.0 per cent, yet the secondary school repetition rate is 3.4 and the dropout rate is 9.6 per cent.

Figure 2- Primary and Secondary Attendance Rates by Region 2006-2007



Source: Ministry of Education, Education Strategic Plan, 2008-2013

Section 3.5 of the ESP 2008-2013, the MoE focuses specifically on achieving USE, and outlines goals to overcoming issues such as high drop-out and repetition rates. The government in conjunction with the World Bank commissioned a critical analysis of the policies and plans for achieving secondary education goals. The report comprehensively examined the issues acting as barriers to USE. The report made nine key findings and is summarized in Guyana's ESP 2008-2013.

The report found that “quality primary education outcomes are the basis for achieving USE. Essentially it is felt that Grade 6 completions rates, primary school attendance and the Secondary School Entrance Exam (SSEE) results determine the demand for secondary school education”(ESP, 2008) The report also states that “ there is a poor transition rate from primary to secondary across all regions but it appears to be greater for boys in Georgetown and Region 4”(ibid). The report also illustrates the “disparity between results of hinterland and coastal regions and coastal urban regions; the former having much lower averages in Mathematics and English”(ibid). Secondary grade repetitions are a major issue, specifically for males in Grade 7, especially when compared to that of the females (14.4% males 8.8% females in 2005).

Furthermore, “Hinterland Grade 7 repetition rate (17.6%) and Coastal urban repetitions (18.3%) are different phenomena but each threatens the viability of secondary education”(ibid). The report also states that “retention of students from Grade 7 through 11 is too low, overall only about 38 percent of Grade 7 students from 2001/2002 were still present in Grade 11 in 2005/2006”(ibid). The issue also disproportionally affects males, as male retention was 31.5 percent compared to 45.6 percent for girls (ibid). Additionally the

report indicated that the quality of teachers at this level, in terms of qualified and trained teachers, the range of subjects offered and shortage of manpower are all issues preventing USE.

Although the ESP 2008-2013 addresses certain issues contributing to the decline in enrolment and retention at the secondary school level, it fails to address a wide host of factors which could also be contributing to the problem. As outlined in Section III of Chapter 2(Literature Review), there are many socio-economic and institutional factors which can hinder demand or access to education. Guyana's current ESP 2008-2013, only addresses a limited scope of issues preventing enrolment and completions, and is therefore not addressing root causes contributing to the problem. In the context of secondary education, the MoE continues to primarily place focus on inputs into the secondary sector of education. Its SSRP and ESP (2001-2007 and 2008-2013) all focus on increasing infrastructure, materials and teachers; however, none of the strategies address any socio-economic or cultural constraints to education, which could also be contributing to the problem.

The reality of the situation is that there are a multitude of economic, social and institutional barriers that are contributing to the decline in enrolment and completion in Guyana. The following Chapter, will present empirical data to demonstrate a) that there a multitude of barriers which are not addressed by the current ESP or the EFA initiative and b) to suggest that a solution to the problem may be an incentive based solution, as outlined in Section IV in Chapter Two. Despite taking strides towards achieving UPE and USE, Guyana has been unable to do so yet. Although Guyana has recognized the importance of

and has committed to providing universal primary and secondary education, there are many core issues, which have prevented it from doing so. These issues need to be addressed should Guyana wish to see its NDS objectives come to fruition.

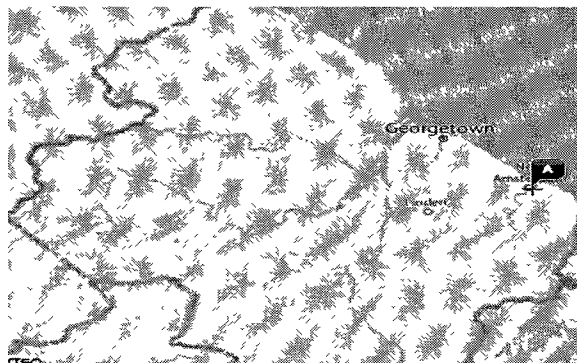
Chapter Four

Fieldwork Data

I. Declining Completion at the Secondary School Level in Guyana: Causes

Guyana's secondary school sector is currently plagued with decreasing enrolment and completion rates. Although the MoE has identified a number of possible issues that can be causing an increase in dropouts and decrease in completion, it does not tackle the wide array of factors which are presently contributing to this problem. This section of the thesis will outline key economic, institutional and socio-cultural variables which determine access/ demand to education. This data is based on primary and secondary data collected through field research in Guyana. Field research was conducted in Region 6 of Guyana, which is located in the costal region of East-Berbice Corentyne. The majority of my research efforts were concentrated in the Sub-Region of Corentyne, which is home to the major municipalities of New Amsterdam, Rose Hall and Corriverton. Observations were also carried out at local secondary schools in the villages of Port Mourant, Lower Corentyne and Albion.

Figure 3- New Amsterdam, Guyana- Field Research Location



Source: Yahoo Maps, public website, 2011

Region 6: A Brief Description

Figure 3 indicates where the town of New Amsterdam is located, the majority of my field research was conducted in this Region. The Region is comprised of rich farmlands that run along the coastline of Guyana and the Berbice-Demerera River. It is home to some of the largest sugar estates, which are currently owned and operated by the nationalized sugar company GuySuCo. The sugar estates currently employ approximately 20,000 workers in this region. Its rich farmlands, allow this region to provide the majority of the country's agricultural production and food resources. The large-scale production of; rice, corn and other local vegetables (squash, eggplant, Buk Choy) also provides a major source of employment for residents of this region. The region consists of a working class (most are employed in the sugar estates, rice fields or fishing industries) population, which is also afflicted with variants of poverty. The region is ethnically diverse, as Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese make up the majority of the population. Although the communities are somewhat divided by ethnicity (larger percentages of one ethnicity residing in a village) there were no apparent racial tensions among community members.

On Saturdays, there is a large market that is established by local vendors. This *Big Market* and the *Small Market*, (held in a smaller venue during the weekdays) plays a critical role in shaping the local economy. During the weekdays, only basics are made available at the *small market*, vendors of provisions such as fish, meat and produce make up the majority of vendors. However, on Saturdays vendors at the *Big Market* sell everything from live chickens, seafood, dried foods, gold, clothing, makeup, DVD's and a wide variety of fresh produce. It is a lifeline for the local community members and

provides them with income generating opportunities. There are also several smaller retail shops which provide everything from general electronics to groceries, general convenience, as well as several bars and restaurants. These also provide a source of income for the community and offer possible employment opportunities. During my stay in Albion, I observed that there were key public services available such as healthcare, education, security (police), infrastructure (roads, water and sanitation) in place, although the quality of the services could have been improved upon.

Region 6 made an interesting point of study, as it is also home to the highest percentage of dropouts in the Nation. According to the ESP 2008-2013, in 2006-2007, Region 6 experiences dropout rates of 20.10% for males and 19.90% for girls (ESP 2008-2013). The table below outlines dropout rates by region and sex, in 2006-2007,

Table 4- Secondary School- Dropout Rates by Region and Sex, 2006-2007

Region	Number of Dropouts		% Drop- Out Rate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	17	21	0.87	1.27
2	185	189	4.63	4.7
3	497	345	14.33	12.63
4	673	663	16.3	16.63
Georgetown	606	721	3.73	4
5	211	143	6.2	5.83
6	511	518	20.1	19.9
7	81	66	8.6	5.23
8	41	63	6.5	8
9	141	130	8.87	7.07
10	83	56	5.35	2.97

Source: Ministry of Education Guyana, Education Strategic Plan 2008-2013

Through visitations to various schools in the municipalities and villages of Region 6, I was able to gather data to help illustrate the problem. Through my own naturalistic

observations, as well as attendance at a Department of Education general meeting and through conversations with teachers and community members, I was able to identify several key factors which could be hindering demand/ access to education and consequently contributing to increased dropouts and decreased retention within Region 6, Berbice, Guyana. These factors are outlined in three sections and will be analyzed in the subsequent Chapter.

Economic Factors

As outlined in Section III of Chapter 2, there are many economic factors which could be hindering access or demand for education. These factors are correlated to indicators of poverty and socio-economic status, as students from a lower socio-economic status, or students living in a situation of poverty, faced these constraints to a greater degree when compared to a student from a higher socio-economic status. This form of stratification was readily apparent in Guyana, as socio-economic status played a key role in accessing not only education but in the necessities of life (water, food, shelter, etc.)

Nature of Occupation

The nature of occupation of a parent determines access or demand to education, as outlined in Section III, Chapter 2. This variable influences a parent's income and consequently determines if a child can access education. A lower income, places a greater financial constraints on a family, and they may be unable to afford the cost of schooling. In Guyana this is a key determinant to access or demand for education. Through

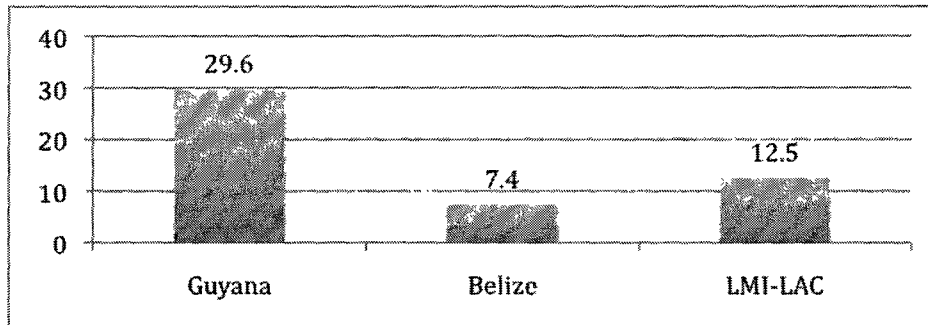
conversations with community members, I was able to determine that children from ‘broken homes’, ie single parents, or low income families are more likely to drop out, or not even enroll in the first place. This may be due to a wide host of factors, such as lack of emphasis on education in the home, or a greater degree of financial burden due to lower incomes.

Through conversations with teachers and principals it was revealed that many students leave school at 14, 15 to go and work because their family is poor and they simply cannot overcome the financial burdens. Many other community members expressed similar concerns regarding parent’s occupation influencing the high rate of dropouts in Guyana. There was a general consensus that parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to have their child work to supplement the family income, rather than to send their child to school.

Opportunity cost; Education Versus Income Generating Activities

As mentioned above parents often face an opportunity cost when sending their child to school. If the cost of schooling becomes far too great of burden parents will opt to send their child to work as the cost of education are too great to manage. This will prevent students from accessing education and consequently they will dropout. Data gathered from a USAID report indicates that Guyana has an exceptionally large percentage of economically active children, as the table below indicates.

Figure 4- Economically Active Children, Percentage of All Children, 7-14 Years



Source: World Development Indicators, 2007

This would indicate that a large percentage of students are leaving school to seek income generating activities. This data correlates to observations made during field research, as during school hours I would often observe school aged children engaging in income generating activities such as farming and selling at the market.

Contributing to this problem is the lack of income generating opportunities after graduation. As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, Region 6's economy is mainly comprised of a few key industries; agriculture, fishing and other entrepreneurial ventures. It appears that the composition of the region's economy plays a key role in increased dropouts, as many students are leaving school to work in these industries, once they are legally able to do so. Conversations with community members revealed similar sentiments in regards to the lack of employment opportunities for youth. Most felt that there was a lack of opportunities for students after graduation, therefore many would opt to start working when legally able to do so, in order to secure employment, now, and for the future.

While visiting several secondary schools, it was brought to my attention that it is common for students in Guyana to forgo their education, in pursuit of income generating activities. Many teachers and community members expressed similar concerns and outlined income generating activities and child labour, as major contributors to the decline in enrolment and completion at the secondary school level in Guyana. They also highlight that most of these students are from poor families, so when an opportunity to “*get out and make it on their own*” becomes available, students will be all too eager to leave school and pursue an income generating activity instead.

Direct cost of schooling

Another set of economic factors influencing enrolment and completion rates are the indirect/direct costs of schooling. As explained in Section III, Chapter Two, these costs are expenditures required for a student to attend an academic institution. These include: school fees, books, supplies, uniforms, transportation and any other expense that may arise as a result of attending school. For many families in developing nations expenditures such as these can make attaining an education prohibitively expensive, as was the case in Guyana.

The cost of transportation, due to the distance of some secondary schools, is a factor which impacts access or demand. During my stay in Guyana, I observed that most students would take a private car or taxi to school. There is no formal bus system, as all mini buses and taxis are privately owned and operated. This is the main form of transportation for those who do not have a vehicle themselves. Although I did observe

many students walking and biking to school, the majority of them were primary aged students. It was brought to my attention that there were more primary schools than secondary schools in Region 6, which meant that primary aged students could generally walk to their closest school, while secondary aged students had to find another means of transportation.

Furthermore, the cost of learning materials such as, textbooks, notebook, etc., can impact access or demand for education. This is also a factor in Guyana, since the MoE only provides one textbook to classrooms, many children are forced to purchase their own or simply do without. The cost of learning materials can influence a student's decision to dropout for a number of different reasons. For example, a student who is falling behind may not be able to access the material needed to catch up or stay on track with his/her peers. This will cause them to feel disengaged with the material, or the material may be too difficult for the student to apprehend, so the child will eventually dropout, or fail. However, on the contrary, if a student can afford to purchase a textbook, at the average cost of 5750⁵ Guyanese Dollars (approximately \$28.75 CAN) then they have an opportunity to learn the material at their own pace, as well as have access to it at all times to catch up if falling behind.

As explained in the previous section, education is compulsory for all children, up to the age of 14 years 9 months and is provided free of cost by the Government of Guyana. Although the barrier of tuition is removed, indirect costs such as the ones explained above, contribute to the problem of declining secondary school enrolment and retention in

⁵ This was the cost of a CXC intergraded Grade 10 Science Teaching Book. The cost varies for textbooks depending on grade level and subject.

Guyana. This issue is exacerbated for families with a lower socio-economic status, as their incomes tend to be lower, therefore these additional costs are difficult to overcome.

Through conversations with members of the community it became apparent that indirect costs, such as the cost of learning materials and transportation place a financial constraint on families and acts as a disincentive to education. Although, the MoE provides students with a subsidy of 1500 (Guyanese dollars, equivalent to approximately \$7.50 CAN) to cover the cost of uniforms, it does not appear to be enough to cover other costs required to send children to school.

Institutional Factors

Chapter Two, Section III outlines a multitude of institutional factors which could cause a decline in enrolment and retention at the secondary school level. Factors such as resources, physical facilities, curriculum and instruction all play a critical role in shaping access or demand, which consequently determine enrolment and completion. These are factors which are present within the educational institutions themselves and can shape whether or not education is accessed or demanded for a variety of reasons. In Guyana, there are numerous institutional factors contributing to the decline in enrolment and completion at the secondary school level.

Inadequate Financial Resources, Lack of Learning Materials and the State of the Physical Facilities

While in Guyana, I noted that most secondary schools generally lacked the resources to operate as effectively as they would like. Many schools lacked adequate classrooms, desks and chairs to accommodate the number of students enrolled in the school. Guyana's National Report on the *Development of Education* states, "learning rates in the schools are extremely low; a proportion of the teaching force is unqualified and untrained; absenteeism on the part of both teachers and students is rife; and textbooks and other instructional materials are often unavailable" (MoE, 2004). These issues have also been identified by the MoE in their SSRP 1995, ESP 2003-2007 and 2008-2013, and have been the focus of several initiatives for the improvement of the sector.

During my visits to secondary schools, I observed that teachers spent most of their instructional time reciting information from textbooks so students can copy down the material. In a visit to a Grade 10 Geography class, I noted that the teacher spent the entire period writing various parts of a teachers guide on the blackboard. Students were then asked to copy the material into their notebooks, although she did ask students to read and relate the material to a previous lesson, most of her time was spent on simply reciting the material. In a visit to a Grade 9 English class, the same teaching style was observed. In the other five classrooms I visited while in Guyana, this was the most commonly used approach to relaying the curriculum.

After completing observations at a secondary school in Port Mourant, a Grade 10 science teacher and I had an impromptu discussion about the teaching aids she was using. During my visit, I observed that her classroom was well equipped with learning aids, compared to other classrooms and schools I had visited. She had with her, two laptop computers (which she showed a video clip on), pictures and science diagrams. She explained that all of these teaching materials were her own; she had either bought them herself or received them from her teachers college. She offered that the MoE does not really provide learning aids, if teachers want to use them they have to buy their own, however most teachers won't.

Furthermore, during my visits, I observed that many schools were unequipped with desks and chairs. On several occasions, I noted that the state of the physical facilities (ie, the building and school itself) could act as a factor which may decrease enrolment and completion. In many cases there were inadequate desks and chairs for students, as a result two or three students will often share one desk. The lack of desks/chairs/ classrooms also contributes to the problem of overcrowding in some schools, which is a well noted issue in Guyana.

Shortage of Manpower, Instructional Issues

As Section III, Chapter Two mentions, issues concerning teacher absenteeism, the shortage of manpower and instructional issues can all limit how education is accessed or demanded. These factors were readily apparent in Guyana and served as a determinant in enrolment and completion.

The MoE's SSRP 1995, ESP 2003-2007 and its current ESP 2008-2013, all identify the shortage of manpower (teachers) as a major constraint facing the educational sector. As the table below correlates to this data and demonstrates the shortage trained and qualified teachers in the secondary sector versus other sectors of education.

Table 5- Number of Teachers in Schools by Categories 2007

School/Level	Trained Graduates	Untrained Grads	Trained Teachers	Untrained Teachers	Total
Nursery	118	3	882	873(47%)	1876
Primary	194	2	2134	1728 (43%)	4058
S.Dof Primary	11	1	201	287 (57%)	500
CHS	39	13	181	201 (46%)	434
GSS	317	162	1125	831 (34%)	2435
Total	679	181(2%)	4523	3920 (42%)	9303

Source: Ministry of Education Guyana, Education Strategic Plan 2008-13.

As the ESP 2008-2013 outlines in Section 3.9 “ one of the major problems that the sector faces with respect to teachers is the continuous loss of trained teachers. In general, the average loss is about 12% annually with 40 to 45 percent being trained teachers”. The MoE states in its ESP 2008-2013, “anecdotal evidence suggests that better salary options are a major reason for teachers from Guyana going to jobs in other sectors and to teach outside of Guyana”(ESP, 2008:31).

This correlates to data in the current ESP concerning attendance rates by education district. The table below indicates that there is a decline in attendance rates from the primary to secondary sectors of education, and it also demonstrates that secondary schools in Region 6 experience a student attendance rate of 71 percent. This decline can be attributed to a multitude of factors and will be further analyzed in the subsequent Chapter.

Table 6- Student Attendance Rate by Education District and Level 2006-2007

Education District	Nursery	Primary	Secondary
Region 1	68	67	74
Region 2	74	80	77
Region 3	78	76	58
Region 4	67	76	57
Georgetown	79	84	74
Region 5	73	80	69
Region 6	72	80	71
Region 7	75	84	79
Region 8	74	82	77
Region 9	91	94	91
Region 10	75	78	74
TOTAL	75	80	73

Source: Ministry of Education, Education Strategic Plan, 2008-13

With a shortage of trained and qualified teachers, the quality of instruction and education are also compromised. This appears to directly influence students' decisions to dropout. If the quality of instruction is compromised students may become disinterested and disengaged with the material and then decide to dropout as the education is perceived to be irrelevant anyways. The shortage of financial resources, learning materials and manpower are all key factors which influence the way education is accessed and demanded. A student's or parent's general dissatisfaction and disengagement with the educational sector has meant that students are more likely to dropout and parents in Guyana are generally more likely to be accepting of this fact.

The Curriculum and Standardized Tests

I was provided with a Compact Disk which outlined various secondary school subjects and the curriculum for Form 1,2,3 (Grade 7,8,9). The disk contained detailed

outlines of strategies and teaching objectives for various subjects ranging from home economics and agriculture to English and Math. It also contains a detailed outline of subjects such as industrial technology, study skills, and expressive arts.

Guyana adheres to a British style education system, within this structure, standardized test are the norm. Guyana and other CARIOM countries have standardized test which are issued through the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). In an article in the local newspaper, the Stabroek News, Register and Chief Executive Officer of the Caribbean Examinations Council, Dr. Didacus Jules stated,

The reality is, one of the problems of assessment in the Caribbean is that we are over-testing our children. There are all kinds many Ministries of Education that have all kinds of national examinations testing and testing our kids, and to what use is that testing being put to?... It's not being used for remediation, its not used for...policy decisions, but we keep testing (Stabroek News, 2011:5).

During a visit to a grade 10 science class, I noted that the teacher was using a CXC integrated Science teaching book. The students are learning about the reproductive system and are labeling a diagram the teacher has put up on the board. One student labels the diagram correctly, however quickly after the teacher corrects herself and explains that it is correct, however it is not labeled as such in the teacher guide, so do not label it as such during the CSEC. She later observed to me that it is because the children who do the best on the CXC are the ones who can remember the information needed and answer the

questions according to how they appear in the textbooks, even if there are multiple correct answers, it's what's written in the textbook that counts. Another teacher observed that the curriculum is good but it is solely geared towards the CXC. The textbooks are all designed to prepare students for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations (commonly called the CXC).

The CSEC and unequal distribution of educational resources has also has a negative impact on retention and completion for several reasons. While visiting various Grades of Schools and through concerns expressed to me by teachers and community members, I was able to determine that students in lower performing schools, (Levels B,C,D) (who are placed there as a result of scores on their National Placement Exams in Grades 2, 4,6) are not awarded the same treatment as students in A level schools, who have scored higher on their placement exams.

It appears that students from higher performing schools receive more resources than schools with lower performing students. I observed that A level schools have more learning materials and more teachers, when compared to level B,C,D schools. This was also mentioned by a teacher who taught at an A level school. She indicated that there was in fact a strong contrast between the Levels of school. Although the A level school may not have everything, they do not experience the same retention and completion issues as B,C,D, Level schools do.

Socio- Cultural Factors

In Section III of Chapter Two, there are several socio-cultural factors outlined which could hinder access or demand to education. As explained in Chapter Two,

Membership to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe and religion can act as significant socio-cultural factors which influence how access/demand to education is shaped. Although this could be an issue in other Regions of Guyana, there were no observable racial/ethnic or religious biases present in Region 6.

There were also no apparent gender biases that would affect girls enrolment or completion, in the Region. In fact girls have a higher completion rate nationally when compared to their males counterparts. Despite having a higher completion rate for girls, which is an outstanding achievement in and of itself, Guyana is still far from achieving gender parity. Although there are many critical issues within the context of gender in Guyana, they will not be discussed in this Thesis.

Despite the fact that girls are more likely to complete their education, there are still instances of girls dropping out. It is important to note that girls who drop out are afflicted by a variety of circumstances which are quite different from a males. For example, although they may seek income-generating activities (productive labour), girls are more likely to engage in reproductive labour⁶. In a conversation with a local community member she explained that girls were traditionally married at a young age, so many girls will leave school to “*get married and have babies*” instead of pursuing their education. She further explains that this is due to the social roles that are imposed on women, who believe that they have to follow this “natural” course of life.

⁶ “The distinction between productive and reproductive labour refers to the commonly accepted distinctions between work outside the home that creates new value and work inside the home that maintains people and society. Reproductive labour is used to refer to the domestic activities that include having and raising children and house work”(Newberry ,106, 2006)

Although the higher completion rate among females makes for an interesting point of study, the focus of this thesis is to determine what factors influence students, irrespective of gender, to discontinue their education. Although there were no apparent ethnic, religious or gendered barriers to education, I noted that Guyana was plagued by many other social issues, which are having a dramatic impact on the way education is accessed. I noted several major issues that could be contributing to this problem.

It appears that many students were discouraged from completing their education, as there was a general lack of economic opportunities available after graduation. This fact combined with the perceived irrelevance of education (due to the poor quality of education), caused many students to dropout prematurely and seek out income generating activities, as outlined in the first section of this Chapter. The lack of economic opportunities also contributes to the much larger social issue of emigration and brain drain within the country.

This was a problem that was expressed by many community members, as the issue of emigration and brain drain is one which is prevalent in Guyana. As an IMF working paper confirms, “Migration is the most observable problem that hinders upon the quality of human capital in Guyana” (IMF, 2006). The report indicates that Guyana emigration rates (in reference to educated labour force) stood at the highest amongst all countries, at 89% (IMF, 2006).

With such a high percentage of the educated labour force emigrating Guyana faces several key development issues, which will be expanded upon in the next chapter. With respect to education, the National Report on the *Development of Education* identifies the

hemorrhage of qualified teachers to the Caribbean, North American and Africa as a major issue for the sector (MoE, 2004). Local community members helped to shed light on how this impacts dropout rates. It combines a number of factors, which are outlined in this chapter but they all intertwine to weave the current situation. Essentially, it appears that teachers leave when they have the first opportunity to, as there is no incentive for them to stay in Guyana. Since there is a lack of opportunities for them to earn what some called a “decent salary” they seek opportunities that will provide them with the level of income they believe they are entitled to. Although it seems logical for them to seek out better job opportunities, the result is a shortage of manpower within the educational sector. This then causes a number of institutional issues (as outlined above) which then ultimately contributes to the problem of retention and completion.

Although there were no apparent religious, ethnic or gendered barriers to education, societal views towards the education system coupled with a general lack of economic opportunities, contribute largely to the regions issue of secondary school retention and completion. In attempting to determine what factors cause a decline in enrolment and retention at the secondary school level in Guyana, it appears that in Region 6 a wide variety of economic, institutional and social issues influence a student’s decision to drop out. The factors presented in this Chapter all combine and influence each other to create an environment where there is no incentive for students and families to pursue education. This fact combined with the large number of institutional issues all influence enrolment and completion in this Region. The following chapter will discuss/ analyze these finding to determine how the situation in Guyana can be ameliorated.

Chapter Five

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the fieldwork data presented in Chapter Four, in addition to the background data on Guyana's educational policies, it is apparent that there are many socio-economic and institutional factors which can influence secondary school retention and completion rates. The factors presented in Chapter Four highlight critical issues contributing to the decline in completion and retention at the secondary school level in Guyana, and the data demonstrates that there are many socio-economic and institutional and social factors are consequently preventing Guyana from achieving USE. These factors combine and influence each other to create an environment where there is no incentive for students and families to seek out education. Guyana's current ESP addresses only a few of these issues and it is apparent that there are many socio-economic and institutional factors which may contribute to declining completion, and that the ESP only addresses the problem superficially. Furthermore, it is not merely the quality of education or poor management that is contributing to the problem of increased dropouts in Guyana; rather, it is a wide variety of socio-economic factors which are also contributing to the problem.

Socio-Economic Status⁷, Opportunity Cost and Indirect Costs

Factors such socio-economic status (parent's occupation), the opportunity cost of education, and the indirect costs of education influence whether or not a child will continue their education. These factors can influence a student's decision to drop out, by

⁷ Socio-economic status is a measure of an individual's or group's standing in the community. It usually relates to the income, occupation, educational attainment and wealth of either an individual or a group. These types of variables are summarised into a single figure or socio-economic index. There is no general agreement on the definition of socio-economic status and so different socio- economic indexes are constructed for different uses (Mukerjee, 2009).

working independently or simultaneously. For example, as the previous Chapter illustrates, many families face financial constraint when trying to access education in Guyana. This is directly dependant on a families Socio-Economic Status (SES), as the lower the SES, the lower a child's ability to overcome financial constraints. The indirect costs of education, such as transportation, textbooks and even lunch money, can all place an increased financial burden on a family with a lower income. Therefore, parent's occupation, and indirect cost can influence a student's decision to dropout. However, other students may be lured away from their education in hopes of pursuing income generating activities, which may or may not be due to the SES of a family, but as the data indicates, for personal reasons.

When families face an increased financial burden due to education, students are more likely to forgo their education and dropout. This is a fact not only in Guyana, but in many other developing and developed countries as well. The financial burdens placed on poor families to provide education often limits a child's ability to access or demand education, which consequently causes them to dropout. This is evident through my fieldwork data, as conversations with community members and local officials confirmed that SES determines a child's ability to continue their education, and secondly that the lower a students SES, the more likely they are to dropout. Students from families with a low SES, tend to also be more susceptible to dropping out, due to the opportunity cost faced by education. As the data indicates, students from poorer households, may have no choice but to forgo their education in lieu of income generating activities. They may need to supplement the family income, or they may seek these income generating opportunities

to help overcome the financial burdens of education. This was a problem that was well documented during field research.

With a 67 percent labor force participation rate, Guyana's is slightly lower than the expected value (74 percent) for a country with similar characteristics (USAID, 2007). Guyana has a surprisingly high ratio of economically active children, this ratio of 29.6 percent exceeds the expected value, even with its broad standard error band (i.e., 7 percent plus/minus 10.7 percent) for a country similar to Guyana (ibid). It is also about four times as high as Belize's rate of 7.4 percent (ibid). The ratio is consistent with the data, as it indicates that not only is there a high percentage of secondary aged school children working, but is also consistent with the fieldwork data which shows that many students are dropping out due to participation in the labour force.

Although Guyana's Factories Act and the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act sets out minimum age requirements for employment of children, there are still instances of child labour. According to the Acts, "no person under age 14 may be employed in any industrial undertaking and no person under age 16 may be employed at night, except under regulated circumstances. The law permits children under age 14 to be employed only in enterprises in which members of the same family are employed"(UNESCO, 2010). Child labor in the informal sector is a major factor contributing to an increase in dropouts. The law enables students to seek out income generating activities rather than completing secondary school.

The indirect cost associated with secondary school, such as transportation, clothing and food can also act as factor contributing to increased dropouts at the secondary school

level. The data demonstrates, that many families in Region 6 face an increased constraint when trying to access education, as the indirect cost of schooling may be too much for them to endure. It appears that the Government's School Uniform Assistance Programme, it is not enough to cover any additional expenses. The Government's School Uniform Assistance Programme, provides families with a 1500 (Guyanese Dollar, \$7.50 CAN) subsidy, which is not enough to cover any of the additional expenses that families may have to incur. The program was initiated to address a barrier to education that many families faced, the cost of providing a uniform. Uniforms are mandatory at all public and private schools in Guyana. However, the program does not cover the full cost of the uniform as the average cost exceeds 2000 (Guyanese Dollars, approximately \$10 CAN). The program also doesn't take into account the cost of transportation or food at the secondary school level.

Despite education being provided free of cost in Guyana, many other indirect and direct costs related to education can impact a child's decision to dropout of secondary school. The indirect and direct cost of schooling, as indicated in Chapter Five, can negatively influence a student's decision to discontinue their secondary education. As outlined above, students from households with lower SES, face an increased risk of dropping out due to the cost associated with education. The cost of tertiary education was another interesting factor contributing to increased dropouts at the secondary level. Due to the current and future financial burden of education, secondary school aged students, faced with the grim reality of future tuition costs, would opt to dropout of secondary school.

Institutional Factors

Keeping in mind the economic factors presented in the previous section of this Chapter, this Section of the thesis will demonstrate how the institutional factors presented in Chapter Five contribute to secondary school dropouts in Guyana. The data in Chapter Four, indicates that the shortage of manpower (human capital) and the lack of financial resources within the educational sector (the lack textbooks, desks, chairs, teacher's salary etc) contribute to the increase in dropouts at the secondary school level. This is due to unequal resource distribution in primary and secondary sectors of education, as Table 3, indicates. It was noted that the secondary education sector in Guyana suffers from inadequate financial and human capital, which consequently comprises the quality of education and contributing to the country's secondary school retention issues. Furthermore, other institutional barriers such as the standardized tests and the unequal distribution of resources to Level A vs. B,C,D schools, causes students in lower Level schools to experience a higher rate of dropouts. This section of the Chapter will outline key institutional issues that influenced a student's decision to dropout.

Unequal Distribution of Resources to Lower Level Secondary Schools

Prior to analyzing institutional factors influencing dropouts at the secondary school level, it is important to note that the problem of retention and completion is one that affects Level B,C,D schools to a greater degree than Level A schools. Based on the data collected it appears that Level B,C,D schools experience a higher rate of dropouts than

Level A schools, which could be a result of greater resources being provided to higher achieving, Level A schools. As the data in Chapter Four indicates, Level B,C,D schools often lacked resources, however Level A schools did not. This bias in resource distribution causes a higher rate of dropouts to occur in lower level schools. The lack of resources (teachers and learning materials) in Level B,C,D schools, places a strain on not only students but teachers as well. The school environment is not one that enables the learning process or facilitates teaching, as a result students and teachers in these school become unmotivated; as they may not have the capacity to work under such strenuous conditions. Since these issues occur mainly in Level B,C,D schools, these students are more likely to dropout, when a series of institutional and economic factors are compounded.

Furthermore, Guyana's past and present educational policies focused heavily on the expansion of the primary sectors of education, often neglecting the secondary sector. Despite increases in funding to the secondary sector of education in recent years, the primary education sector still receives a greater percentage. Although primary education is the foundation upon which secondary education is built, both sectors require adequate investment to ensure the maximization of educational benefits (Chapter Two, Literature Review). Investments in the secondary sector are essential to its development and service delivery. Neglecting to adequately invest in secondary sectors of education, as Guyana has done, can cause a country to experience many of the institutional barriers to education, outlined below. This has further implications for Guyana's development as inefficiencies in the secondary sectors of education can lead to inadequate in human capital development.

A Lack of Resources, Physical Facilities

The quality of education and the sheer lack of resources available in the educational sector are contributing to the problem of secondary school retention in Guyana. The lack of vital educational resources, such as learning aids and textbooks compromises the quality of secondary education, which in turn causes students to dropout. The data indicates, that the lack of available learning resources also contributes to this problem. Although there are learning resources that are made available, they are still often inaccessible to the majority of students. There are only a few textbooks and visual aids available in most classrooms, often times students share textbooks or simply do with out.

As Chapter Four explains, the lack of teaching aids and materials limits the teacher's ability to successfully relay the curriculum. Inadequate teaching materials also means that only one form of instruction is applicable. This teaching style may not be applicable to all learners (auditory, visual, kinesthetic), thus causing only a small percentage of students to truly be engaged with the learning process. Unfortunately, once the student is detached from the material, the student will become disengaged with the whole educational process and opt to dropout.

Furthermore, the state of the physical facilities in many secondary schools deters students from demanding education, as the environment is not conducive to learning. Overcrowded classrooms, a lack of desks, chairs, sanitation facilities and classrooms all contribute to an unpleasant learning experience, which makes a child more likely to discontinue their education. This problem appears to impact students in Level B,C,D

schools disproportionately, as Level A schools do not experience this issue. It is apparent from the data, that the lack of resources in Level B,C,D schools also influences a higher rate of dropout among these schools.

Generally speaking, these schools tend to be home to students from lower SES, who due to a wide socio-economic reasons, are finding it difficult to excel academically. These students have also been identified as lower achievers based on their Grade 2,4,6 National Placement Exams. As a result these students may require additional learning materials and support tools to ensure retention of the curriculum. When these vital learning tools are unavailable, at the primary and secondary levels of education, students may become disengaged and disconnected with learning process. Coupled with the fact that they are placed into an environment that does not cater to various learning styles or does not provide adequate learning materials, these students are more likely to feel pressured in the education system, and consequently they may opt to dropout. Since these resources are not available to Level B,C,D, these schools experience a higher rate of dropout.

Shortage of Teachers and Instructional Issues

The lack of trained and qualified teachers at the secondary school level and the lack of educational resources (outlined above) cause issues in the quality of instruction and contribute the problem of secondary school dropouts in Guyana. As Table 5, indicates, there are only 1125 trained teachers in the secondary level and 2134 teachers at the primary level. This data indicates that there are fewer trained and qualified teachers

available in the secondary sectors of education. This shortage of labour leads to critical issues in instruction quality and a wide range of other issues, as outlined below.

The shortage of teachers contributes to overcrowding in classrooms and high student-teacher ratios, with teachers often teaching classes of 50 or more students. Although the MoE believes the student teacher ratio is approximately 20:1, the data from Chapter Five, indicates that this is not the reality of the situation. Moreover, issues such as teacher-student absenteeism and the shortage of qualified subject specialists at the secondary level, all influence a student's decision to dropout.

The shortage of teachers places an additional strain on scarce learning resources and also causes the teacher to unevenly distribute his/her teaching time and energy. This contributes to the problem of disengagement outlined above, as students are not receiving the attention needed to fully grasp the curriculum. Students and teachers also become detached from the educational process, as it becomes increasingly difficult to use a participatory approach to teaching.

The shortage of trained and qualified teachers contributes to a multitude of factors which can influence a student's or family's decision to dropout. Due to the compromised quality of education, many parents may also opt not to send their child to school, thus a student's decision to drop out may not be entirely his/her own. Parents may feel that their child is going to receive a low quality education as there are not enough qualified teachers, or teachers are consistently absent. As the data indicates, parents who perceive the education system to be of low quality and irrelevant will support their child's decision to forgo their education in search of income generating activities. It appears that in Guyana, the shortage

of manpower and resources severely compromises the quality of education, and therefore contributes to the increase in secondary school dropout rates.

The MoE has noted this as an issue, and it is the focus of several programs and initiatives in the country aimed at increasing the number of trained teachers for improvements in the quality of education. As outlined in Chapter Three, Section II, the SSRP 1995, ESP 2003-2007 and its current ESP 2008-2013 all outline that the proportion of trained teachers must be increased. However, none of the initiatives of the MoE have been able to improve the proportion of trained teachers at the secondary level and the sector continues to face a loss of between 10 to 18 percent annually (ESP, 2008, 10). In the next five years the MoE aims to address this problem by adding another 1818 trained teachers to its educational sector. This would allow sector to achieve its 70% target, with respect to number of trained and qualified teachers in the sector. Although this appears to be addressing a critical factor causing a decline in secondary school completion, it fails to take into consideration, that to increase the number of trained and qualified teachers, the Government of Guyana would also need to increase the number of students completing secondary levels of education. However, with the current situation in Guyana, the increases in dropouts at the secondary level could hinder the MoE's plans to increase its future supply of teachers.

Curriculum and Standardized Test; The National Placement Exam and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC)

As the data in Chapter Four demonstrates, the curriculum in both primary and secondary levels of education is geared towards preparation for Guyana's grade 2,4,6

National Placement Exams and the CSEC. As outlined in the EFA 2000 Country Report on Guyana, as a result of the National Placement Exam (previously the Secondary School Entrance Exam), “about half of Guyana’s eleven-year olds are shunted off to what are perceived as academically inferior programmes, which are of shorter duration, allow graduates access only to specialized lower level post secondary programmes and do not provide credentials that are recognised in the labour market”(UNESCO, 2000). Furthermore, the report indicates that the children who continue in the secondary departments of primary schools, leave these institutions ill-prepared for either further training or the world of work. Even more disadvantaged, according to the report, are the children of hinterland areas who have little or no access to General Secondary Schools or even Community High Schools (ibid).

This data correlates to The Ministry of Education digests of educational statistics from 1994 to 1997. This data reveals average dropout rates of 15% for Primary Tops, 5% for Community High Schools and 6% for General Secondary Schools at the Form 1 level (Grade 9). It is essential to note that these figures represent first form rates, and that the dropout rate rises dramatically to almost 50% by the third year (UNESCO, 2000). The curriculum and standardized test can influence retention and completion for several reasons.

Firstly, education is targeted towards a specific group of students, those wishing to pursue tertiary education. Those student’s who score in the upper echelons of the National Placement Exams, have an opportunity to enroll in a Level A “good school”, which will equip them with the skills to continue their education. Since the Level A schools are well

equipped (with staff and resources), these students can continue to thrive academically and will be more likely to, not only complete their secondary education, but possibly pursue tertiary education. However, students who score lower on the Exams, are forced to attend Level B,C,D schools which are plagued by many institutional factors which would increase the prevalence of dropouts (as explained above). Furthermore, as poor primary to secondary transition rates indicate, many students may be discouraged from even pursuing secondary education, based on what school they may be “shunted off to”.

Secondly, as evidenced through various conversations with community members and my own observations, Level B,C,D schools are generally perceived to be of poor quality. This is because parents and students feel that the level of service delivery in these schools is inadequate when compared to Level A schools. This coupled with the critical lack of resources in Level B,C,D schools contributes to an increase in dropouts for students in these schools. When students are placed in lower performing schools, and they in an environment that does not foster or nurture learning, they are more likely to dropout as they will feel disengaged and uninterested. Also, since education does not provide any future employment security, students become increasingly enticed by the option to dropout.

The MoE is attempting to address many of these institutional factors through its current ESP. The ESP aims to address the quality of education and service delivery by increasing resources into the secondary sector of education. It has adopted policies to rehabilitate and furnish 20 General Secondary Schools and build 6 new secondary schools. Although these inputs are critical to the sector’s development, they are only one piece of a

very complicated puzzle in Guyana. As the next section will outline, although institutional barriers do influence a students' decision to drop out, there are a myriad of other factors which combine and cause a student to drop out. The quality of education and service delivery are an essential components required for increasing demand for education. However, if, in the first place, there is a general disincentive for demanding education (a lack of demand), students will continue to forgo their secondary education, regardless of its quality, in pursuit of other opportunities, as is the case with Guyana.

The Perceived Relevance of Education-Rate of Return on Investment

As the previous section discussed, there many institutional factors influence a students decision to dropout of secondary school, Level B,C,D schools do not equip students with the skills required for further education or the work force, therefore it appears that many students will opt to dropout when they reach the legal age to start working. From a Guyanese secondary school student's perspective, this appears to be a logical option. It appears that students in Guyana truly feel as though they have no other option than forgoing their education in pursuit of employment opportunities. This is because students believe that the rate of return on investments in education, do not guarantee/yield an increase in their future earning capabilities.

As mentioned earlier, investments in education are made based on the rate of return on investment. This is a measure of the expected yield of the investment, in this case education. It is measured in terms of income stream generated by the capital, compared with the cost of acquiring the capital asset (education). In the context of

Guyana, students do not perceive there to be any rate of return on their investments in education; this in addition to other barriers a student may face, will cause them to dropout.

This point alludes to a much larger development concern, which could hinder Guyana's NDS objectives. As discussed earlier, investments in education are vital to the formulation of human capital, which is critical to the social and economic development of a nation. However, if a large percentage of students do not see the "profitability" of education, they will cease investments in education and seek out other income generating activities. This is confirmed through the higher than normal participation of 7-14 year olds in the labour force in Guyana. This is consistent with data collected during field research, and demonstrates why there is an increase in dropouts at the secondary school level. When analyzing this factor in the context of Region 6, it becomes apparent that the Region's contribution to the Nation's agricultural productive base, directly determines whether or not secondary aged school students will continue their education.

In Chapter Three Section I, I highlighted Guyana's economic dependence on a few key sectors, agriculture being one of them. Due to Region 6's fertile soil, it is home to the agricultural production hub, known by the locals as *Black Bush* and 3 GuySuCo Sugar Estates. *Black Bush* allows for small-scale farmers to engage in the large-scale production of cash and subsistence crops and GuySuCo mainly seeks general labour for the cultivation of sugar cane. These two industries do not demand highly skilled labour, therefore it was brought to my attention that it is easy to seek employment in the Region without completion of secondary education.

Consequently, Region 6 experiences the highest dropout rate in the Nation, with dropout rates of 20.10% for males and 19.90% for girls (ESP 2008-2013). Based on the data from Chapter Four, it appears that employment opportunities in these industries can act as an attractive lure for students seeking alternatives to secondary education. Since many students believe there is no rate of return on investments in education, they will dropout once they are legally able to work in one of these industries.

As the data indicates, many students feel they have no other option than to pursue employment opportunities when they have the ability to do so, as their education does not ensure increased future earnings. Thus, when the option of gaining meaningful employment arises, students discontinue their education and pursue income-generating activities.

In the context of determining what factors influence retention (dropouts) at the secondary school level in Guyana, it appears that students in Guyana face a wide array of socio-economic and institutional barriers to education, which creates an environment where there is a general disincentive towards secondary education. Based on the data presented in Chapter Four, the perceived relevance of education, in addition to the lack of verifiable benefits attained from education, places students in an environment that essentially encourages them to abandon their education in search of income generating activities. The situation in Guyana clearly demonstrates how a multitude of factors influence how education is accessed or demanded, which ultimately influences a student's decision to discontinue their secondary education.

Based on this understanding, and my own analysis, it is also evident that Guyana's current ESP 2008-2013, does not address many of the key factors causing a decline in secondary school completion rates. Since there are a multitude of factors that contribute to the problem, Guyana requires a multipronged approach in tackling a combination of factors. The logic behind Guyana's policy options is one that many governments adopt, as the World Bank and the EFA initiative endorse it. This input driven educational policy approach has been effective in addressing some institutional barriers to education, however many of the problems still persist in Guyana. For example, there is still no school in Region 6 staffed with trained and qualified teachers, and although many of the schools have been given a fresh coat of paint, they still remain sparse inside with inadequate desks, chairs and books. Although the situation is has improved in recent years, these critical issues still plague the educational sector and consequently retention. However, despite scaling up investments to increase in service provision and quality, Guyana has been unable to achieve universal secondary education.

Noting the importance of secondary education to the economic and social development of a nation, declining secondary school completion rates could signal detrimental limitations to Guyana's National Development Strategy objectives. Guyana aims to expand its productive capacities and decrease poverty in its country, as its NDS indicates. Through the ESP 2008-2013, the government confirms the role of education as a basic requirement for the socio-economic transformation and advancement of Guyana. However, as the data indicates, a large percentage of Guyana's youth are not equipping

themselves with the skills and knowledge necessary to enable the development Guyana envisions.

Chapter Six

Conclusion/ Recommendations

Education is a fundamental tool that enables a citizenry to gain the knowledge and skills needed to embrace the modernization process. It allows for the development of a highly skilled and educated labour force, which in our current era, is critical for economic and social development. As Guyana continues through the modernization process, it requires a skilled and educated workforce to sustain its development. Declining secondary school completion rates will not enable the economic and social development the country is striving for. Based on the issues raised above, Guyana faces a critical juncture in its development. Should the issue of declining secondary school completion rates continue in the country, Guyana will face major roadblocks in progressing with its NDS objectives. Although education is recognized as fundamental to the development process, it does no use to the people of Guyana if it is not accessed or demanded, as is the current situation.

Despite issues within the education sector, it was my experience that secondary education in the country is fairly accessible. With continued improvements to the infrastructure and with increases in resources (teachers, textbooks, desks etc.) many of the institutional barriers to secondary education could be addressed. However, issues such as the perceived relevance of education and the variety of economic factors which influence retention present a more complex problem. Based on my observations, the underlying issue in Guyana, is not the shortage of schools or teachers, although it is a major issue. In my opinion, I believe that the problem is the perceived relevance of education, in addition

to the low rate of return on investments in education, which are contributing to a decline in secondary school completion and retention. The current macro-economic situation in Guyana creates another disincentive for education, as the majority of employment opportunities do not require high levels of education. Compounding the problem in Guyana, is the lack of return on investment for those who do pursue tertiary education- which contributes to the country's issue of brain drain.

As the data indicates, high levels of brain drain further stall development in the country. It appears that those who do access Guyana's education system, prefer to immigrate when better employment opportunities arise. This leaves a fundamental gap in the country for highly skilled positions, such as teaching. In the context of education in Guyana, this then creates the issue of teacher shortages in a country. The implications of this on the education system were explained above. In the broader scheme of education and development, the shortage of teachers, which causes issues in the education sector, impacts secondary school dropouts. This consequently impacts the percentage of educated people in the labour force, causing a shortage of its supply, as is the case with Guyana.

Furthermore, it appears that those who are well educated seek employment opportunities outside of the country, do so when the first opportunity arises, as the high rate of immigration indicate (IMF, 2006). As explained earlier, brain drain contributes to a drain of a country's supply of educated and highly skilled labour. A shortage of this labour, causes a roadblock to occur in a country's path to development and modernization. Guyana is currently facing this issue as a large percentage of its citizenry is immigrating in search of *better opportunities*, which they believe Guyana cannot provide.

Based on the employment opportunities that are available, it seems rational for so many young people to forgo their education in pursuit of current income generating activities. As expressed in the previous Chapter, many youth feel as though they will yield the same income generating opportunity with or without their secondary education. Specifically in Region 6, this appears to be a logical decision for students and families to make, since the majority of employment opportunities in the Region, do not require a highly educated labour force. However, as Guyana continues to diversify its economy and expand its social infrastructure, it will require a well-educated workforce not only to foster this growth, but also to sustain it. Unfortunately, declining secondary school retention and completion rates will not enable Guyana to produce the labour force it requires for its future development objectives.

Given all of the factors outlined above, Guyana faces several challenges in promoting education and ensuring its benefits. Addressing these issues, will require a multitude of different approaches, which are not limited to only the educational sector. The solution to increasing enrolment and retention in secondary school is quite complex, as it will require investments in the primary and secondary sectors of education, improvements in fiscal and macroeconomic policies to stabilize growth and increase employment opportunities, all while providing an incentive for youth/families to increase demand for education.

Realizing that Guyana is a developing nation still attempting to stabilize its economy and foster economic growth, it is clearly recognized that achieving both economic stability, in addition to UPE and USE, is a near impossible task that even many

developed nations are still attempting to achieve. However, based on my perception of Guyana, it appears that the country is attempting to develop and shows great promise of doing so. The country is beginning to experience economic growth, however its struggling educational sector could potentially halt its future economic and social development. As Guyana continues to grow and introduces new forms of technological and social advancements into its country, it will need to ensure that its citizenry is capable of moving forward with its newly developing and modernizing nation.

I. Main Findings

As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, there are a wide variety of factors that influence secondary school completion rates, which are currently not being addressed through Guyana's ESP 2008-2013. As the data demonstrates, there are not only institutional barriers to secondary education, but there is also a perceived disincentive for demanding education. Should Guyana wish to continue on the path of progress and modernization, it will need to ensure that it adopts solutions tailored to increasing retention and enrolment in secondary school, along with increasing its macroeconomic stability. Secondary school retention rates of 31.5% for males and 45.6% for girls (ESP, 2008), won't allow Guyana to achieve and sustain its NDS objectives. If the issue of increasing secondary school dropouts is not addressed, Guyana will face difficulty in implementing its NDS objectives and will continue to face issues of poverty,

unemployment and brain drain. Based on the evidence, there are several key findings that can be extrapolated to explain the decline in secondary school retention rates in Guyana.

Firstly, a family's socio-economic status (SES) strongly determines a child's ability to access education. Essentially, the SES of a student determines whether or not they will be able to overcome the financial barrier. The lower the child's socio-economic background the more likely they are to be constrained by barriers to education such as, the indirect costs of schooling (transportation, clothing, food) and the opportunity costs of education. When a child is unable to overcome these economic barriers to education, they are unable to access education and consequently they are forced to drop out. These financial factors provide a disincentive towards demanding educations, and consequently cause a reduction in service utility. This is clearly illustrated through the data collected in Guyana, as students from lower SES faced a wider array of factors limiting their demand for education. Therefore there was an increased prevalence of dropouts, amongst schools with students from a lower SES.

Secondly, the findings suggest, an assortment of institutional factors, such as the lack of resources, as well as the shortage of trained and qualified teachers, contribute to increased secondary school dropouts in Guyana. Many of the schools lack adequate resources to create an orderly environment that promotes learning. This consequently impacts the pedagogy and contributes to what I observed, classroom environments that were not conducive to learning. This causes students and teachers to become disengaged; causing students to disconnect from the education process. High levels of teacher and

student absenteeism is a clear indication of this, and it also a factor contributing to increased dropouts at the secondary level.

As explained earlier, the shortage of teachers and learning resources, contributes to the overall decline in the quality of education at the secondary level. This decline in quality also contributes to its perceived relevance, as students and parents who believe the secondary education system is “worthless and irrelevant”, will consequently not demand the service, even if it is accessible. The shortage of teachers and resources plagues both the primary and secondary sectors of education in Guyana. However, as the data indicates, since investments have tended to favour the primary sectors of education (Table 3) the problem is one that impacts secondary schools to a greater degree than primary schools. This disparity in investment could be a key factor causing a decline in secondary school completion, as dropouts are not a major issue within the primary sectors of education,

Further complicating the issue in Guyana, is the Grade 2,4,6 National Placement Exam, which segregates students based on *high achievers* and *lower achievers*. As the data indicates, students who score poorly on their secondary level placement are streamed into what are perceived to be lower level schools. As explained earlier, these schools are wrought with a their own barriers to education, which ultimately influence their higher dropouts rates in Level B,C,D. The placement exams, which stream students into Grade A and Grade B type schools, causes students who are deemed to be low achievers to feel inadequate when compared to the *higher achieving* students. This blatant division creates psychological barriers that can cause a student to become discouraged and disengaged with the education system. This disengagement may consequently cause them to dropout.

It is important to note that scores on the Grade 2,4,6 could be attributed to a wide variety of factors. For example, students in primary schools with increased resources, in more affluent neighborhoods, may perform better when compared to students from neighborhoods with fewer resources. Furthermore, many students who are from families with lower SES may not understand the importance/value of primary education to their child's future. As a result many students do not acquire the skills necessary to perform well enough for entrance in a Level schools. This is why I believe that the National Placement Exam acts as a barrier in and of itself, because it categorizes students and places them in a system that already unevenly distributes its resources based on high achieving and low achieving schools. Although, the disparity among resources is noted as a key factor contributing to the problem, determining what factors cause disproportionate resource distribution among Level A and B,C,D schools, is not the research objective of this Thesis.

The data also indicates that resource distribution among high achieving and low achieving schools contributes to the problem of secondary school dropouts. Since B,C,D Level schools experience a higher rate of dropouts than Level A schools do, it appears that inadequate resources causes these schools to face the institutional issues outlined above to a greater degree. This finding signals a concern, which could make for an interesting point of study. Although determining why Guyana's educational resources are distributed disproportionately would allow for further improvements to be made to the secondary sectors of education, it is not the focus of this thesis. The focus of this thesis was to determine what factors caused a decline in retention at the secondary school level.

The findings also suggest that many of the students in Level B,C,D schools are from lower SES, thus they are more prone to facing additional barriers to secondary education, which may consequently cause them to drop out. Coupled with the institutional barriers that these students will face when they do access education, and the fact that they perceive virtually no benefit from their education, dropping out becomes the norm.

Furthermore, the curriculum in secondary schools is geared towards CSEC preparation, which contributes to increased dropouts as it not only caters to a specific learning style, but it also serves an objective for a specific groups of students, those wishing to pursue post-secondary education. As explained in the previous Chapter, CSEC is generally written by students who will be pursuing further educational opportunities. However, many students, especially ones from lower SES, may not wish to continue any further than secondary school. These students specifically, will become disengaged not only with the curriculum, but the general educational process. Since many students feel that the education system is not serving their objective they will opt, when legally able to do so, to pursue other opportunities and discontinue their secondary education.

Compounding the problem is the fact that students see no verifiable benefits from education, therefore they opt to pursue income generating activities instead of their secondary education. As explained in the previous Chapter, the rate of return strongly influence an individual's decision to invest in human capital formulation. However, if one does not perceive there to be any yield on their investment they will opt to invest elsewhere. This is precisely the situation in Guyana, as students perceive there to be no benefit from investing in education as it does not guarantee increases in future earning

potential. Since students are living and growing up in an environment where education is perceived to be irrelevant to attaining employment in many regions of Guyana; many students will opt to seek income generating activities once they legally able to do. These students feel social and economic discord, and this is ultimately contributing to a high rate of dropouts among upper levels of secondary schools.

As explained in Chapter Five, The Factories Act and the Employment of Young Persons and Children Act of Guyana makes it permissible for children of the age of 15 to engage in income generating activities, and children who are 14 years old may work for their families. As a result, the finding suggest that many students opt to seek out labour in the agricultural, mining, and fishing industries, once they are legally able to do so. The high rate of economically active 7-14 years confirms this finding, and indicates that this is a major factor contributing to an increase in secondary dropouts. It was also noted that this problem impacts males to a greater degree than females, as the higher rate of secondary school completion for girls suggests.

To summarize, the findings suggest that the increase in dropouts at the secondary school level can be attributed to; financial constraints faced by students from lower SES, institutional issues such as the shortage of resources, the quality of education, the perceived relevance of education, the lack of return on investments in education and the pursuit of income generating activities. All of these issues influence a students decision to continue their secondary school education in Guyana. The multiplicity of factors contributing to the problem indicates that the solution will require a multifaceted approach, and will need to focus on not only increasing inputs into the educational sector,

but increasing demand for education as well. The current situation in Guyana is one that requires immediate attention should the country wish to continue on its path to economic and social development.

As previously mentioned, Guyana's current ESP 2008-2013, does not address the full range of issues which is currently preventing it from achieving USE. The ESP, which should be addressing barriers preventing universal access to education, fails to do so adequately. Although, institutional factors do play a role in achieving USE, as investments in the sector increase the quality of service provision, it does nothing for increasing demand in a country where there is a perceived disincentive towards accessing education, such as Guyana. Unfortunately, the MoE's approach of painting new schools and building new dormitories does not address the core of the problem in Guyana. As the evidence demonstrates, students and families feel that there is no benefit to accessing the service, regardless of its quality. They believe secondary education will not provide them the skills that they need to gain meaningful employment as well as a return on their investment. Furthermore, since most students have the ability to seek out income generating activities, at an age where they should be enrolled in secondary school, means that more and more students are enticed by opportunities in the country's agricultural sector, than its education sector.

Even though Guyana appears to be addressing the issue of secondary school dropouts through its various commitments to EFA and USE and its ESP, it is, as the findings suggest, failing to do so. The approach that the Government of Guyana has adopted, is one that many developing nations follow when making reforms to their

educational sectors. As previously explained, many governments opt for an input driven, cost-benefit, rate of return analysis approach when developing their educational policy, which makes sense when utilizing an economics of education approach. However, the situation in Guyana, requires that in conjunction to core inputs in the sector, additional solutions are required to achieve its ESP and NDS objectives.

In my perspective, many students feel a sense of hopelessness in regards to their secondary education. I believe that students do understand the importance of secondary education, but because it provides them with no verifiable benefits, they logically opt to pursue other options. Based on these findings, it appears that creating an incentive for students to continue their secondary education, in conjunction to improvements in service delivery would address many of the core issues currently contributing to the problem in Guyana.

II- Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the previous Section, it appears that the root of the problem in Guyana is a lack of demand for service delivery, in addition to the lure of income generating activities. Since the root of the problem does not appear to be lack of access to education, but a lack of demand for education, Guyana should focus in adopting solutions, such as Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCT), which could address many of the factors that create a disincentive for education. This, in conjunction to increased capacity for it's ESP objectives may assist Guyana in increasing secondary school retention and completion rates.

Since there are a wide variety of factors contributing to the problem in Guyana, creating an incentive for education, as well as tackling issues outside the educational sector, could vastly improve the situation, as it has done in other LDC's. One example, is Brazil's *Bolsa Familia Program*, which has assisted the country in increasing primary school enrolment, retention and completion. The program has been successful as it provides an incentive for primary school enrolment and attendance through direct monetary transfers to poor and extremely poor families. The incentive is given based on the condition that all children aged 6-17 in the household are enrolled in school and attend at least 85 percent of classes each month (UNDG, 2007). The *Bolsa Familia Program* addresses many of the underlying factors which contribute to a decline in enrolment and completion at the primary and secondary school level. Based on the conclusions, a similar program in Guyana could address many of the core issues contributing to increased secondary school dropouts.

As the previous section outlines, many students face economic barriers to education. These barriers act as a disincentive to accessing or demanding education. Students from lower socio-economic status face these barriers to a greater extent, as their parent's income cannot overcome the financial constraints placed on a family. Additionally, many of these students are placed in a situation where income-generating activities take precedence over their educational pursuits. Many of these students will not access education even when it is available and accessible, as they believe there is no relevance to accessing it.

Based on this conclusion, it would appear that an incentive based solution could be a viable solution to increasing demand in the secondary education sectors of Guyana. As outlined in Section IV of the Literature Review, incentive based solutions to increasing educational indicators has been an approach that has been successful in many countries, facing similar enrolment, retention and completion problems.

A CCT program in Guyana could assist in ameliorating the problem, as it would be addressing many of the economic factors that hinder demand for secondary education, while providing an incentive for students to continue their education. This recommendation is based on the findings, which demonstrate that, financial constraints faced by poor families, in addition to a general lack of incentive for secondary education hinder demand for education. Therefore, an incentive based program which would provide families a monthly stipend to ensure their child attends and completes secondary education would address the problem in Guyana for several reasons.

Firstly, a cash subsidy would allow parents, especially those who from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the ability to overcome the financial burdens brought about by their child's secondary education. This financial incentive, would allow a parent(s) to afford the additional costs associated to education such as, transportation, food, clothing and text books.

Secondly, this increased cash flow would also allow families who face an opportunity cost in sending their child to school, the ability to overcome this barrier. The cash-transfer would also supplement a family's income; which would mean that students forgoing their education to support the family income, could now have the ability to attend

secondary school. Based on the conclusions, it would appear that a CCT program would be best targeted to males from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as they appear to be the most vulnerable to dropping out.

Additionally, the cash-transfer has a conditionality placed on it, as parents would be required to ensure that their child attends secondary school on an 85% basis. This would assist the situation in Guyana, as it would not only increase secondary school attendance rates, but also increase service utilization, which would have the effect at the national level essentially of increasing demand for education. Since a cash transfer provides an incentive to families and assists in removing many of the economic barriers secondary school students face, it appears to be a viable solution to increasing secondary school retention and completion rates in Guyana. Furthermore, the cash-transfer provides students and families an incentive for service utilization, this *incentive* may encourage students to continue their secondary school education rather than forgo it.

Keeping in mind the limitations of a CCT, it does not address any of the institutional issues which may act as barriers to demand. As discussed, Guyana's educational sector is riddled with many issues which cause a decline in secondary school enrolments. Many of these issues can be addressed through increases in national budget expenditures in education and increased managerial capacities within the educational sector. Increases in funding to the educational sector would allow for increases in resources, vital to service delivery, such as teachers, textbooks, schools, and other learning equipment. These investments allow for increases in service provision and quality. These investments are essential not only in the secondary sector but the primary sector as well.

Despite having committed to similar objectives in both the SSRP 1995 and ESP 2003-2007 Guyana, has been unable to adequately address these institutional issues. This may be due to the haphazard approach adopted by the MoE in addressing the issues. The ESP, although it is committed to ensuring that all students achieve equal access to secondary education, fails to take into consideration the different socio-economic factors that also impact service utilization. It has focused solely on increasing the supply of its service but has failed to look at factors which also impact demand. Although it is recommended that Guyana continue to focus on its ESP objectives, it should also focus in increasing the scope of issues it targets, so that it is able to address a wide variety of institutional and socio-economic problems. Furthermore, increased investment in both primary and secondary sectors of education, in addition to increased investments in Level B,C,D schools specifically, are needed to increase the capacities of the sector.

Based on the conclusions in Section I, it appears that increasing the number of compulsory years of schooling may also assist the problem in Guyana. As explained, the Factories Act, the Employment of Young Persons Act, in addition to the Children Act of Guyana, make it permissible for secondary school aged youth to engage in the labour force. Therefore students, who see no yield on their investment in education, seek employment opportunities when they are legally able to do so. Increasing the number of years children are required to be in school will make it mandatory for students to continue/complete their secondary education rather than to forgo it in pursuit of employment opportunities.

Although these recommendations may assist Guyana in increasing secondary school completion rates, the fact remains that Guyana's current macroeconomic instability in addition to the lack of employment opportunities for highly skilled and educated labour, will continue to contribute to the problem of secondary school dropouts. As the conclusions indicate, these two factors contribute largely to issues within the realm of education and consequently cause students to dismiss their secondary education.

This fact further complicates the "solution" to Guyana's dropout rates, as a CCT may be successful in increasing completion, and the ESP may be successful in increasing the quality of education, but if students are still going to receive no yield on their investment, then the entire purpose of the incentive based solution is nullified, as education will still be perceived as serving no real purpose. If students are only going to be limited to jobs in fields that require little or no education, then they are going to continue to pursue income-generating activities over their secondary education. This is why it is essential that the Government of Guyana continue to focus its efforts on achieving its current NDS objectives, and increase its productive base and employment opportunities; while also ensuring that its future generation equips itself with the skills needed to embrace the economic, social and cultural changes that occur through modernization.

Issues regarding secondary school enrolment and completion are not unique to Guyana. Many developing and developed nations alike, face issues similar to the ones outlined in Section I. Although these factors will vary contextually, the findings and recommendations made in this Thesis may be applicable to other developing countries. As

more and more developing nations prepare to integrate themselves into the global market place it is essential that they build a workforce that has the capacity to develop and sustain the economic growth. As developing nations embark on the path of modernization, it becomes increasingly important that they provide their citizens with the benefits of education by ensuring that they have access to it.

Many developing nations face a situation similar to Guyana's, where education is accessible, however it is not demanded. This may be due to circumstances similar to Guyana's or it may be due to a whole range of other issues. Nonetheless, in countries where demand for service is limited, incentive based programs may be beneficial in increasing service utilization. Furthermore, since poverty is a problem that afflicts developing nations disproportionately, a CCT could also address issues of poverty that limit demand for secondary education in these countries.

However it is important to note, that although a CCT appears to the "magic bullet" to increasing educational indicators in developing countries, it may not be suitable in all contexts. CCT's address financial barriers to education and provide an incentive for service utilization. However, if there are social and cultural norms acting as barriers to education, or if access was the issue, then a CCT would not be a relevant solution. As evidenced through this thesis, there are a multitude of factors contributing to issues in developing nations educational sectors. This is why it is essential that developing nations adopt educational policies that target a wide range of issues, rather than focus solely on inputs in to educational sector. They need work to strengthen cooperation between the

labour market and educational sector to ensure that students yield a return on their educational investments.

The objective of this thesis was to determine what factors caused a decline in secondary school retention and completion rates in Guyana. As this thesis has demonstrated, a wide variety of socio-economic and institutional issues contribute to a decline in secondary school retention. These factors cause a decline in demand or access for education, and create a disincentive for secondary school aged students in Guyana. Based on my findings I have come to the conclusion that an incentive based solution such as a CCT may assist Guyana in ameliorating the situation. Although a CCT may boost demand for secondary education, and increase retention and completion rates, it faces structural limitations which will not address any issues dealing with the quality of education. Therefore, the ESP in conjunction to a CCT program for education should help Guyana address the many of the core issues contributing to a decline in secondary school completion rates. With continued growth and progress a CCT program in conjunction to its ESP 2008-2013 should help Guyana acquire the human capital needed to propel its development forward.

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