

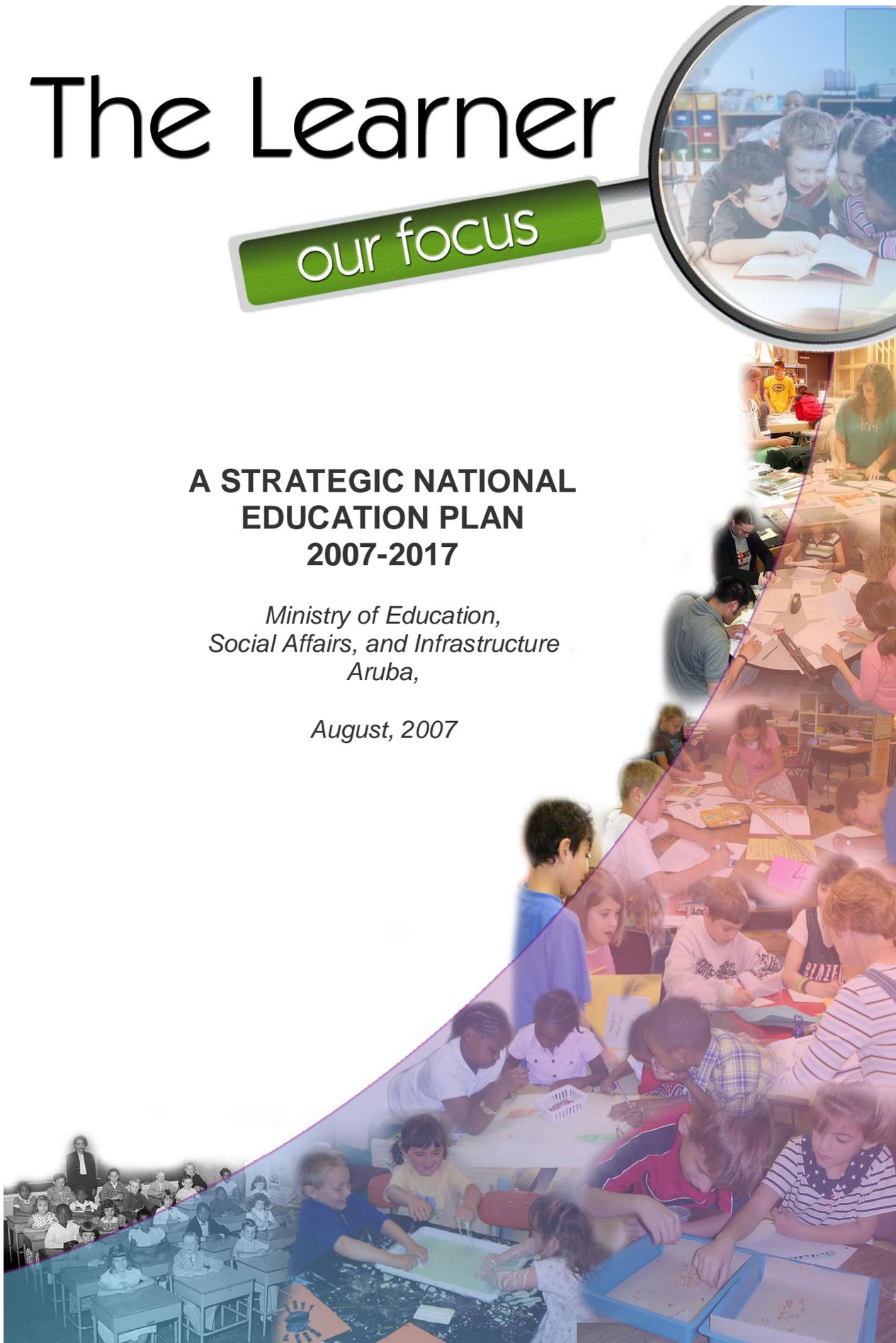
The Learner

our focus

A STRATEGIC NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN 2007-2017

*Ministry of Education,
Social Affairs, and Infrastructure
Aruba,*

August, 2007



The Learner: Our Focus

A STRATEGIC NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN 2007-2017

*Ministry of Education,
Social Affairs, and Infrastructure
Aruba*

August, 2007

Coordinated By: Juliet Chiew, Ph. D.

*"But if you ask what is the good of education in general, the answer is easy:
that education makes good men, and that good men act nobly."
— Plato, Greek philosopher (c. 428-c. 348)*

*"Learning derives from the Indo-European leis, a noun meaning "track" or "furrow." To
"learn" means to enhance capacity through experience gained by following a track or
discipline. Learning always occurs over time and in "real life" contexts, not in classrooms
or training sessions. This type of learning may be difficult to control, but it generates
knowledge that lasts: enhanced capacity for effective action in settings that matter to the
learner."
—Senge et al, 1999, The Dance of Change, p.24*

*"Every step in our journey must begin and end with the learner in mind."
—Unknown*

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| – Brief Background | 5 |
| – A Participatory Strategic Planning Process | 6 |
| – Organization of this plan | 9 |
| | |
| 2. Understanding Where We Are..... | 11 |
| – Educational Reform: A Brief Look Back..... | 11 |
| – Educational Innovation Timeline: A Bird’s Eye View..... | 13 |
| – Present Conditions: Perceptions of the Schooling Experience..... | 18 |
| – Perceptions of System Readiness to Support Innovation..... | 23 |
| – Overall Insights..... | 40 |
| | |
| 3. Focus on Opportunity..... | 49 |
| – Aruba Education 2017: A New Vision..... | 51 |
| – Design Principles: “Specs” for a Re-Invigorated System | 55 |
| – Build on Success: Start Small, Learn and Improve | 64 |
| – Benchmark Educational Innovations: International Examples | 67 |
| | |
| 4. A Roadmap for Aligned Performance..... | 74 |
| – Strategic Goals to Achieve Vision 2017..... | 76 |
| – Implementation Structure | 78 |
| | |
| 6. References..... | 82 |

1. Introduction

“It pays to plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.”

—Unknown

*“When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees.
When planning for life, train and educate people.”*

—Chinese proverb

Brief Background

- 1.1 After more than a decade of traveling on the road of educational innovation, the leadership of the Department of Education identified the need for a national plan that would articulate a unified direction and bring about coherence among the various ongoing innovation efforts. Though there had been a plan for restructuring the educational system since 1988 (SHO-nota), it was no longer reflective of the new realities of the 21st century. A new national educational plan was deemed necessary that would reflect the issues of the time and create a new vision of a desired future.
- 1.2 In late 2005, the newly elected Minister of Education, Social Affairs and Infrastructure, Mrs. Drs. Marisol Lopez-Tromp, supported this identified need by initiating a participatory strategic planning process to create a national education plan—the first of its kind in the history of Aruba's education.
- 1.3 Although there were never any specific diagnostic system-wide measurements used to gather formal feedback on the progress made in the innovation reform efforts over the years, the following consistent challenges did become apparent:
 - ∴ a lack of a unified vision of education;
 - ∴ a prevalence of stovepipe thinking (“eiland denken”) in the educational system;
 - ∴ the fragmented nature of educational projects and reforms;
 - ∴ a lowering of morale in the educational workforce; and
 - ∴ consistently poor results in end-of-year school exams.
- 1.4 With a new Minister at the helm of the educational ship, the time was ripe to take stock of where the journey of educational innovation had taken us and how it needed to continue. Specifically, a ten-year plan was envisioned that would address a number of key concerns:
 - ∴ the need for a clear national direction in education;
 - ∴ improvement of overall student achievement and performance;
 - ∴ alignment of core educational processes to a vision;
 - ∴ alignment of the management of the educational system for quality results;
 - ∴ improvement of team work, collaboration and support; and
 - ∴ increased quality of educational service delivery throughout the system.

- 1.5 In October, 2006 an external private consultant was hired to lead a process that would result in a 10-year strategic plan. The consultant selected was a native of Aruba familiar with the Aruban educational system and context, though currently living abroad. This consultant initiated a 7-month process of strategic planning using a participatory approach. The underlying principle of this approach was to systematically gather information and thinking from a broad cross-section of members of the larger society in order to help bring forth the bigger picture.

A Participatory Strategic Planning Process

- 1.6 A participatory approach helps to promote transparency as well as citizen participation. A participatory approach was favored in order to maximize the following key intended results:

- ∴ Promoting greater transparency among all actors.
- ∴ Allowing for a broad input from the community.
- ∴ Involving active participation in shared thinking, dialoguing, searching for solutions and creating recommendations.
- ∴ Giving a platform for a wide array of perspectives and voices to be heard, thereby reflecting the reality in the community.
- ∴ Providing a vehicle for practicing and gaining experience in collaboration and cooperation across professional and departmental boundaries.
- ∴ Enabling people to learn more about themselves and each other from the process of working together.
- ∴ Creating greater public ownership so that recommended actions stand a greater chance for implementation.

- 1.7 This participatory approach involved three large-scale, multi-day planning conferences in October 2006, November 2006, as well as in April 2007. In the intervening months between the 1st, 2nd and 3rd conference, a large number of focus groups (a total of 16) and taskforces (a total of 15) consisting of a broad cross-section of members of the educational community and the larger society were organized and facilitated by volunteers to provide feedback, information and recommendations for change. No less than 400 individuals were ultimately involved in the overall process of collective thinking, dialogue and generation of recommendations for change.

- 1.8 The participatory approach to strategic planning followed the following 6-stage process:

- I. **Creating a Vision** – on October 12-13, 2006, a process was facilitated whereby participants imagined the ideal graduate exiting from our schooling system and identified the essential traits of this ideal graduate. This process involved over 75 individuals representing government departments, teachers, principals, school boards, students, parents, teacher trainers and trainees, university officials, as well the private and civic sector. The first drafted vision was formulated as: *“a happy global citizen who is a life-long learner.”*
- II. **Inviting Community Feedback on the Vision** – for the next month, 13 teams of volunteer facilitators and recorders from the Dept. of Education, the University of Aruba, the Dept. of Labor, the Dept. of Economic Affairs and the civic sector facilitated focus groups to obtain feedback and suggestions for change from the wider community. This community included students, parents, teachers, the

business community, the tourism sector, civil society, and education mgt. and finance professionals. All were asked to focus on the following 3 key questions:

- ⦿ **Feedback on the vision:** Is this the kind of graduate you would like to see graduate from our educational system?
- ⦿ **Feedback on student's ideal traits:** When you look at this profile of what our ideal student should know and be able to do in order to face the challenges of the 21st century, what is missing?
- ⦿ **Priority for change:** In order to produce this ideal graduate with this profile, what is the most critical thing that needs to happen first?

At the same time, SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats) analysis groups were organized with the 3 large educational innovation projects to draw a picture of the current system's ability to produce this ideal student: PRIPEB, SHA, and EPB/EPI. They were each facilitated by volunteer leaders from the Dept. of Education.

- III. **Focusing on Strategies** — on November, 27-28-29, a process was facilitated in order to identify strategies to reach the newly developed vision. In this process a different group of over 85 individuals representing a wide variety of sectors of government and community were involved. The initial vision statement was revised based on the preceding month of feedback and suggestions for change:

“a responsible, satisfied, global citizen, who is a life-long learner and contributes to the community's quality of life”.

The collective wisdom of the conference participants generated 7 design principles for increasing student achievement and school quality; and 8 strategic drivers for improving the alignment of the management and support structure of the educational system. Design principles can be thought of as the “design specs” (*specifications for design*) for the mindset we want to have and the kind of system we want to build. The following seven design principles for increasing student achievement and school quality were identified:

1. **Student/Child Centeredness.** The focus is on student learning and development, not only the book or the test.
2. **Multiple Strategies for Student Success.** The focus is on maximizing the different learning styles of the student and organizing effective ways of both individual and group learning (small and large).
3. **A Safe and Stimulating Environment.** The focus is on creating both physical and emotional safety in the school and a stimulating learning environment.
4. **Family Involvement.** The focus is on actively engaging parents/guardians to be involved in their children's learning and in the school.
5. **Community Involvement & Partnership.** The focus is on engaging the community to participate, cooperate and support school goals as a partner.
6. **A Quality Learning Community.** The focus is on seeking to learn together and improve on a continuous basis.

7. **The School as a Multi-Functional Facility.** The focus is on using the school building in ways to serve student-centered learning and the community beyond school hours.

Strategic drivers can be thought of as driving the management and support system of education. Alignment of these drivers according to the “design specs” helps to focus improvements in the desired direction. The following eight strategic drivers were identified:

1. Accountability
2. Curriculum
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Educational Law and Policies
5. Data Measurement System
6. Best Practices (Aruba/Internationally)
7. Budget
8. Facilities

IV. **Collective Thinking and Action Planning** – During the months of January through March 2007, 15 different taskforces consisting of topic specific professionals from both the public and private sector as well as representatives from the educational workforce were guided by volunteer facilitators to give substance to the strategies identified. All taskforces used customized workbooks as guidelines in order to focus the dialogue in a series of 3 -4 meetings.

The purpose of the 7 design principle taskforces was to identify key indicators for each design principle and recommend practical action steps for each (see Appendix II).

The purpose of the strategic driver taskforces was to review how well the current practices positioned the system for change in the direction of the 7 design principles (see Chapt. 2). Specifically, each of the strategic driver taskforces assumed the following tasks:

1. **Accountability** – review the current situation and propose a workable accountability model.
2. **Curriculum Audit** – review by level the alignment of curriculum goals, standards, and learner outcomes with the new education vision. For this round of taskforce work, members were facilitated to identify goals.
3. **Roles and Responsibilities** – review the current situation and develop clarity around who does what.
4. **Educational Law and Policies** – review the current landscape of educational laws and policies in terms of their limiting and facilitating conditions on each of the 7 design principles.
5. **Data Measurement System** – review the current educational data collection and analysis system and propose an improved model of EMIS (Educational Management Information System).
6. **Best Practices** (Aruba/Regionally/Internationally) – identify best practices in innovation in Aruba, the region as well as internationally.
7. **Budget** – review the current education budget and propose improvements that are aligned with the 7 design principles.

8. **Facilities** — review the current facilities design and propose improvements that are aligned with the 7 design principles.

- V. **Endorsing Vision and Identifying Goals** — on April, 16-17, yet another group of 100 individuals, the majority of whom were teachers, school principals and professionals from the Education Dept. and teacher training institute (IPA), as well as government and private sector came together for a final planning round. The group underwent a facilitation process (1) to interpret the vision statement in simple and practical terms so that it would be easily understood by all; (2) identify national goals to reach the vision; and (3) share both local and international best practices.

A total of 9 national goals were identified to serve as milestones along the route toward reaching the vision:

1. Broader societal support for education
2. National educational approach
3. Quality of educator workforce
4. Educational language policy
5. National education fund
6. Universal access to education
7. Culture of quality management
8. School responsibility and accountability
9. Infrastructure and facilities

An iterative process was undertaken involving the participants in the conference and taskforce participants as well as the leadership and policy unit of the Dept. of Education to (1) identify the national goals and objectives; and (2) to articulate major actions steps. (See Appendix I for goals, objectives and action plans)

- VI. **Assembling and writing the NOP** — following the 3rd and final planning conference on April, 16-17, the consultant assembled and wrote this national education strategic plan with the support of the research, policy and planning unit of the Department of Education. This plan has additionally benefited from multiple rounds of feedback from key leaders in the Department of Education, the University of Aruba and the educational community.

Organization of this plan

- 1.9 The scope of work requested by the Minister included a delineation of a national direction for education, recommendations for alignment throughout the system, and strategies for reaching the envisioned destination. The aim and intention of the participatory planning process was to create a collectively agreed upon direction with the larger community and a set of strategies that will ultimately help to improve student learning.

- 1.10 This plan is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**
- **Chapter 2: Where We Are** (draws its contents from a review of existing educational policy documents; information gathered from participants in the 1st and 2nd planning conference; feedback from community focus groups; Education Dept. SWOTs; survey results from the Parlamento Hubenil Student Opinion survey; information

gathered from participants in the 3rd and last planning conference; results from the Design Principle and Strategic Driver taskforces; and feedback summary meetings with the facilitators of the Strategic Driver taskforces).

- **Chapter 3: Focus on Opportunities** (draws its contents from the 1st and 2nd planning conference; results from the Design Principle and Strategic Driver taskforces, literature reviews).
- **Chapter 4: Roadmap for Aligned Performance** (draws its contents from the 1st, 2nd and third planning conference; results from the Design Principle taskforces and Strategic Driver taskforces; feedback summary meetings with the facilitators of the Strategic Driver taskforces; and review meetings with the Department of Education leadership and Policy, Research and Planning unit).
- **References**
- **Appendix I: Goals, Objectives, and Action Plans 2007-2017**
- **Appendix II: Design Principles and Strategic Drivers Focus Group Reports**
- **Appendix III: Focus Group Data Summary Report**

2. Understanding Where We Are

“Teachers are wonderful, and there are hundreds of thousands of them who are creative and terrific, but they are operating in a system that is completely out of time. It is a system designed to produce industrial workers.”

— Alvin Toffler

“Education must be oriented not towards the yesterday of child’s development, but towards its tomorrow.”

—Lev Vygotsky

- 2.1 It is of vital importance in any change effort to periodically assess progress against stated goals and desired outcomes. Over the years intense reform has been ongoing across the entire field of education. However, few assessments of ongoing progress have been conducted to see if the innovation is on track or if mid-course corrections are in order. The time is now ripe to take a look at where we are now in the journey of innovation and determine how best to continue into the future.
- 2.2 The information used in this chapter is drawn from the following sources: a review of existing educational policy documents; information gathered from participants in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd planning conference; feedback from community focus groups; Education Dept. SWOTs: survey results from the Parlamento Hubenil Student Opinion survey (which was created with assistance of the Department of Education); results from the Design Principle and Strategic Driver taskforces; and feedback summary meetings with the facilitators of the Strategic Driver taskforces.

Educational Reform: A Brief Look Back

- 2.3 The year 1986 was a turning point in Aruba’s history as a nation with the realization of Status Aparte. This historic moment had great ramifications for the nation as a whole, including the Aruban educational system. Prior to this historic year, Aruba was part of the Netherlands Antilles and its Department of Education was limited to executing policies developed at the regional (Netherlands Antilles) level. Historically, these educational policies largely reflected Dutch policies and priorities. This deeply rooted colonial heritage was underscored by education inspector Tirso Sprockel during the CLAD conference in 1970 in Curaçao when he stated publicly that “...*our education system is a carbon copy of the Dutch system*”.
- 2.4 On the heels of the island’s new political status, the newly restructured Department of Education was given the task to develop its own educational policies and create a system that was more reflective of its own socio-cultural-historical identity. Two years later recommendations were delivered in the form of the SHO-nota (Stuurgroep Herstructurering Onderwijs)—a policy plan intended as a blueprint for Aruba’s educational innovation projects.
- 2.5 The SHO-nota, *Renovacion di esenansa; prioridad pa futuro*, centered on improving the quality and organization of the instructional core: the student, teacher, and curriculum. In addition, 2 plans to reform teacher training and introduce bilingual education were written and bundled with the SHO-nota. These were the WHO-nota

Het Pedagogisch Instituut: Een nieuw instituut voor de scholing van onderwijsgeevenden op Aruba (Teacher training) and Pa un Sistema di esenansa Bilingual na Aruba (Bilingual education).

2.6 The ultimate goal of the SHO policy plan was to achieve better results for students. The time was deemed right to move beyond the traditional Dutch model—reflective of post World War II educational thinking of the 1950’s and 60’s—and ground the new system in the most recent and up-to-date educational thinking of the late 1980s. At the same time, this also represented an expansion of a Dutch, Eurocentric focus to a more regional and international one. The new Aruban educational structure was envisioned to:

- Be more reflective of and responsive to the realities of the Aruban society (*more context- sensitive*);
- Be more dynamic and in line with world-wide trends in education (*education development philosophy, integrated curriculum content, state-of-the-art teaching and assessment methodologies*); and
- Have as its mission to help all students to develop as optimally as possible (*student development focus*).

2.7 The SHO-nota covered not only reform of curriculum content, pedagogic and didactic approaches, but also the structure of the education delivery system (see table 1 below). The intent was to integrate the previously separate 2-year kindergarten and 6-year primary cycle to create an uninterrupted educational cycle from 4 – 12. In the traditional system, selection occurred at age 12 and students were then sorted based on 6th grade tests into academic and vocational tracks. The plan recommended reforming this early selection system into a 2 year transitional phase similar to a middle school concept, called the Foundation Cycle (Ciclo Basico). The intention of the Foundation Cycle was to postpone selection at 12 until the age of 14-15 and provide a common basic curriculum for this age group.

| Traditional (1950-60s model) | Innovation (1980s) |
|---|---|
| <p>6 years primary cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4 -6 years kindergarten – 6 – 12 years <p>4-6 years Secondary cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 12 – 16 MAVO (4 years) – 12 – 17 HAVO (5 years) – 12 – 18 VWO (6 years) <p>4 years Lower Vocational cycle (LBO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 12 – 16 LTS – 12 – 16 ETAO – 12 – 16 Huishoudschool <p>4 years Higher Vocational cycle (LBO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 16– 20 MTS – 16– 20 MAO – 16– 20 Paso Sigur – 16– 20 Hotelvakschool | <p>Kindergarten/primary school integration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4 – 8 years – 8 -12 years <p>Foundation cycle of 2/3 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ciclo Basico 12 -14/15 years <p>Advanced cycle of varying years (ciclo avansa):</p> <p>Professional education :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 14/15 – 16/17 EPB (2 yrs) <p>Secondary education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 14/15 – 16/17 MAVO (2 yrs) – 14/15 – 17/18 HAVO (3 yrs) – 14/15 – 18/19 VWO (4 yrs) <p>4 years Higher Vocational Education (EPI)</p> |

Table 1. Educational Structure Reform Plans

2.8 In all respects, the proposed restructuring efforts represented enormous demands of time, manpower, resources, creativity, motivation, willpower and perseverance. The challenge was not only one of restructuring an antiquated educational system, but also one of creating the new Aruban citizen with her/his own cultural sense of self. In the minds and hearts of the architects of restructuring, a historic process of decolonization and forging of ownership of the educational process had begun. What they did not realize, was how ambitious this plan was and what kind of commitments it would take to fully realize.

Educational Innovation Timeline: A Bird's Eye View

2.9 The table below lists policy planning and implementation efforts since Status Aparte. The timeline shows how education has been rethinking, planning and restructuring its way into the 21st century. Numerous ministerial commissions installed over the years have yielded many policy notes and plans (left hand column), and major educational restructuring efforts have actually seen the light of implementation (right hand column).

| Year | MAJOR INNOVATION POLICY PLANS AND NOTES | POLICY IMPLEMENTATION |
|------|---|---|
| 1986 | STATUS APARTE | |
| 1988 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SHO-nota: Renovacion di esenansa; prioridad pa futuro. 2. WHO-nota: Het Pedagogisch Instituut. Een nieuw instituut voor de scholing van onderwijsgevenden op Aruba 3. Pa un Sistema di esenansa Bilingual na Aruba | |
| 1989 | | IPA: Instituto Pedagogico Arubano |
| 1991 | Naar een LBO nieuwe stijl (een discussienota) | |
| 1993 | LBO (Lager Beroeps Onderwijs) nieuwe stijl nota approved | |
| 1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Project Traimerdia: naschoolse opvang – PRIEPEB Taskforce installed to develop policy plan for restructuring primary education – SHA Taskforce installed to develop policy plan for restructuring secondary education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – EPB Ciclo Basico started with the new curriculum, testing, teaching methodologies, resources, student guidance & counseling, facilities, merging 8 schools into 2. – EPI preparations – Pilot project Trai merdia – Beginnings of exposure, education and preparations — PRIEPEB |
| 1997 | EPI (Enseñansa Profesional Intermediario) Strategic plan 1997 – 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – EPI opens doors (new curriculum & testing, teaching methodologies, resources, student guidance & counseling, facilities, merging 4 schools into 1) |
| 1998 | Beleidsnota: Na Caminda pa Restructuracion di nos Enseñansa Secundario General (Op weg naar de herstructurering van het algemeen voortgezet onderwijs) (SHA) | |
| 1999 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SHA-nota: Na caminda pa restructuracion di nos Enseñansa Secundario General – PRIEPEB nota: Un Bon Enseñansa Basico: Condicion pa un miho futuro plan strategico 1999-2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – EPB: Beroeps cyclus (new curriculum & testing, teaching methodologies, resources, facilities) relevant to labor market needs – Beginnings of exposure, education and preparations — SHA |
| 2000 | | – EPI (full new curriculum implemented, |

| Year | MAJOR INNOVATION POLICY PLANS AND NOTES | POLICY IMPLEMENTATION |
|------|---|--|
| | | leadership/management, and quality training and development) – PRIEPEB (teacher training, capacity building, educational leadership, awareness building, new curriculum development-5 integrated areas) |
| 2001 | – Incorporatie van Niet-Schoolgaande Kinderen in het Arubaans Basis Onderwijs (Intern Advies aan de Directeur van Directie Onderwijs) – PRIEPEB – IPA Beleidsuitgangspunten: 2001-2005 – Meerjarenprogramma 2001-2005 FDA | |
| 2002 | – Notitie inzake het hoger-onderwijsbeleid op Aruba – Habri Porta pa nos Drenta: Proposicion pa modelo di Idioma pa Enseñansa Basico Arubano (nota di discussion) – PRIEPEB | |
| 2003 | – Nota: Volwasseneneducatie op Aruba: ontwikkelingslijnen voor de toekomst approved – Inspectie nota: Toezichtkaders Inspectie Onderwijs | |
| 2004 | – Strategic Plan University of Aruba 2004-2014: A Vision on the Long Term Development of the University of Aruba – Onderwijs op Maat voor Allen met ICT: Eindrapport van de ministeriele commissie Informatie en Communicatie Technologie (ICT) in het onderwijs | SHA: AVO Cyclo Basico (new curriculum & testing, teaching methodologies, resources, student guidance & counseling, facilities) |
| 2005 | Nota Ciclo Avansa: Beleidsvoorstellen voor de bovenbouw van het algemeen voortgezet onderwijs – SHA | |
| 2006 | Meerjarenprogramma 2006-2009 FDA | – SHA: Cyclo Avansa (new curriculum & testing, teaching methodologies, resources, student guidance & counseling, facilities) – PRIEPEB FASCINEA facilitators available for innovation guidance at the school level. |

Table 2. Policy Planning and Implementation Timeline of Educational Innovation

2.10 A milestone in the journey of innovation was reached in 1989 with the creation of a new national teacher training institute, IPA (Instituto Pedagógico Arubano). The IPA offered a renewed program for preparing teachers with new education ideas and teaching strategies. The intent of the new teacher training institute was to supply the teaching force required to lead the innovations at the school level.

2.11 The educational philosophy behind the new way of teaching and forming students was based on the prevailing developmental psychology and education theories of the time, developed by the century's most influential thinkers in education, such as Vygotsky, Bruner, Montessori, de Wey, Freire. Teachers were taught to focus more on the holistic development of each of their students, instead of focusing only on cognitive skills and the

completion of educational methods and curriculum. Teachers were trained in new skills such as: working as a team, developing context-based materials, conducting participative and reflective research, becoming actively involved in community work and developing an international perspective on education. The new teacher training institute also emphasized the development of multilingual and intercultural competencies.

- 2.12 The educational reform process did not start at the foundational level of education, i.e., with kindergarten/primary education, but with vocational education. In addition to man power requirements, the major reason for this was the economic priority at the time and the need to rapidly respond to the changing demands of the local labor market. The early 90s was a period of accelerated economic growth for Aruba, especially in the tourism sector. As such it was necessary to be able to meet the growing labor demand for better qualified vocational graduates. Up until then, vocational education had been geared towards preparing students for an industrial society. The need in the 90s was for graduates who could function in an expanding service economy. Therefore, vocational education was the first educational type to undergo innovation. Renamed EPB (Educacion Profesional Basico) in 1995, the goal was to produce a graduate with basic professional skills through a student-centered education using professional and innovative methods.
- 2.13 Two years later, in 1997, the next level of vocational education, MBO (Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs) followed suit, and opened its doors to vocational students as EPI (Educacion Profesional Intermediario). Its newly formulated mission was to develop professionalism and personality in their graduates.
- 2.14 The year 1995 was an active policy planning year for another major segment of the educational structure, namely primary and secondary education. Two ministerial commissions were installed to formulate plans for restructuring these educational levels: the PRIPEB (Proyecto Inovacion di Enseñansa Preparatorio y Enseñansa Basico) and the SHA (Stuurgroep Herstructurering Algemeen Onderwijs). Four years later, in 1999, the SHA-nota titled "*Na caminda pa restructuracion di nos Enseñansa Secundario General.*" was officially approved. The plan recommended the following new curriculum changes:
- a) a move away from the monopoly of knowledge to the combination and integration of relevant knowledge and skills;
 - b) a renewal in teaching approach (new teaching methods, and evaluation instruments; more active involvement of students in the learning process; guidance of learning and development process); and
 - c) revised selection of content based on life skills, international standards, and a broadening of the curriculum to include topics of social and cultural relevance (Arubanization); and
 - d) the development of learning skills and attitudes.
- 2.15 The IPA designed three major tracks to prepare the teacher workforce (both new and existing) to implement this general secondary reform:
- ∴ Training of new teachers for newly integrated subject matters (Social Science, Natural Science, Personal Development, Cultural & Artistic Ed., and Spiritual Ed.);
 - ∴ In-service-training of existing teachers; and
 - ∴ On-going workshops and in-service meetings for all teachers.
- 2.16 Based on the SHA recommendations, the newly restructured secondary education AVO (Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs) initiated its first phase of implementation in 2004 with the 2-

year foundation cycle (Cyclo Basico) for 12-14 year olds. Two years later, in 2006, the advanced cycle of secondary education (Cyclo Avansa) was initiated. This new AVO aimed to develop active, independent, and critical graduates with a broad-based educational foundation relevant to modern societal demands.

- 2.17 Unlike its forerunners in planning, the PRIEPEB project embarked on a different planning route. Their aim was to mobilize the entire pre-primary and primary education field as well as the wider community to first understand, participate, support and accept educational reform of basic education. This massive mobilization strategy for reform from the ground up culminated 4 years later in the policy plan *“Un Enseñansa Basico; condicion pa un miho futuro plan strategico 1999-2008.”* The core philosophy of PRIEPEB was *“to place the school at the center, view the child as the most important matter, and take development to the maximum.”*
- 2.18 The innovation strategy in Primary Education focused primarily on the involvement and active participation of teachers, parents, principals, school boards, teacher trainers, all the different service units in the Department of Education and the community in general to educate and develop the children together. For the last 5 years newly graduated teachers as well as existing teachers were given training and workshops at the school level to gradually introduce different strategies to implement innovation, such as: classroom management, new teaching methods in reading and math, different learning styles like multiple intelligences, differentiation, independent learning, how to handle students’ social and emotional problems, and student counseling. The aim of this reform at the ground level was to develop the school as a supportive learning community and to build the capacity for continuous improvement and innovation from within. First steps towards creating national learning standards (called *eindtermen*) for kindergarten and primary education are currently being undertaken.
- 2.19 Research evidence in developmental psychology and education identifies language as the major tool for learning. Because of this research-based finding, it was deemed critical for the new curriculum to focus on developing multilingual language skills. Papiamentu, the local language, was seen as a bridge to learning other languages.
- 2.20 Higher education too was not left unaffected by innovation ideas. A 10-year trajectory for development and renewal was outlined in the *“Strategic Plan University of Aruba 2004-2014: A Vision on the Long Term Development of the University of Aruba.”* The formulated goal is *“to educate and train students to become scholars in their fields with good professional perspectives, emphasizing the importance of development of both in-depth competencies and knowledge in their discipline of choice as well as interdisciplinary academic knowledge and leadership competencies”*. The university has undergone several important shifts in the last few years that have grounded the institution in the local Aruban context and realities. Some of these key shifts include moving from:
- an almost exclusive orientation on the Netherlands to a broader international one, including increasingly the surrounding region.
 - an institution that focused almost exclusively on Dutch as the language of communication to a multi-lingual and multi-cultural approach.
 - a predominant focus on individualistic and cognitive/intellectual educational goals to more holistic goals such as civic and ethical education and development.
 - an elitist positioning of the university to one that embraces the community and shares responsibility for national development.
- 2.21 Educational innovation continued its spread beyond formal education. The national census figures of the year 2000 indicated that almost 75% of the Aruban adult workforce had an

educational level no higher than an EPB/MAVO level, i.e., ISCED level 2. Given the changes in the Aruban economy and the increasing focus on human capital investment as a national development strategy, it became critical to consider Adult Education as an alternative vehicle for raising the level of education of the adult population.

2.22 In 2003, a policy plan on adult education, “*Volwasseneneducatie op Aruba: Ontwikkelingslijnen voor de toekomst*”, was officially approved. The goal is to upgrade the population by offering quality adult education programs and certification for entry into the labor market. In 2005, Adult Education was included in the FDA (Aruba Development Fund) program 2006-2009 for funding and has been approved.

2.23 Today, the educational scene in Aruba differs from that of almost 18 years ago:

- Several generations of homegrown teachers now lead our classrooms.
- New curricula have been developed that are more context sensitive and integrated across discrete subjects.
- More new learning materials, both homegrown, as well as from other countries are used.
- More nationally developed exams are used to test student subject knowledge.
- A student care and counseling system exists at all school levels.
- Processes for more school level accountability have been developed and are being implemented, such as:
 - *National learning standards (eindtermen documenten);*
 - *PLT's (Planning, Leerstof, en Toetsing), a planning process for setting learning goals and an action plan for achieving them;*
 - *School activity plans;*
 - *Informational schoolguides for parents;*
 - *Yearly reports of accomplished activities.*
- Previously separated vocational tracks have been merged.
- New facilities (vocational) have been built in new locations.
- In addition to Dutch, Papiamentu is also used as the language of instruction in kindergarten (*Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs 1992, Artikel 6.1 and 6.2.*):
 1. *Als voertaal bij het onderwijs worden de Papiamentse en de Nederlandse taal gebruikt.*
 2. *Bij landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen, worden voorschriften gesteld op grond waarvan de Minister, en ingeval het betreft een bijzondere school op verzoek van het schoolbestuur, een of meer scholen kan aanwijzen waar de voertaal een andere is dan de in het eerste lid voorgeschreven talen.*
- Many educators have been called to participate in thinking and contributing to reform plans in numerous taskforces and commissions.
- And many more have been introduced to new ideas of curriculum content, teaching methodologies and assessment.

2.24 Though it is obvious that the Aruban educational scene has witnessed an avalanche of changes, have they led to improvement? How do stakeholders in the community perceive the innovation's impact on student learning, student achievement, teaching, and the learning environment? The next sections in this chapter attempt to answer these questions from a qualitative perspective to provide the compelling reasons for re-envisioning the future desired and re-invigorating the journey of innovation.

Present Conditions: Perceptions of the Schooling Experience

*“If you want to know your past—look into your present conditions.
If you want to know your future—look into your present actions.”*

—Buddhist Saying

“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.”

—Albert Einstein

- 2.25 During the months of October-November 2006, immediately after the first planning conference, focus groups were held with students, teachers, parents and the community. Their input and feedback provide a picture of the current reality from a wide angle.
- 2.26 In addition, results from a recent opinion survey conducted among 355 secondary school students (ages 12-21) from 7 different schools by Parlamento Hubenil (Aruba Youth Parliament) in 2006 are also included in this section. The similarity in perceptions from different stakeholders in the system at different moments in time provides us with a fairly consistent snapshot of the present conditions.
- 2.27 The following section highlights perceptions on the schooling experience from the points of view of the following 4 major groups of stakeholders: 1) students, 2) teachers, 3) parents, and 4) the community including the civic sector, business and retail, and tourism. Their perceptions signal serious issues concerning school safety (both physical and emotional), unexciting learning experiences (teaching and learning), poor student and teacher motivation, insufficient parent and community participation, and poor translation of innovation ideas into concrete practice.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

- 2.28 Focus groups were held separately with students from primary, secondary, and higher education. Their perceptions in general tended to overlap and have therefore been aggregated to provide a general picture. Their aggregated perceptions of the schooling experience are briefly summarized below:
- 2.29 The perception of students in these focus groups of schools is not positive. The school building and grounds are seen as poorly maintained and in many instances as physically unsafe. Classrooms are seen as rundown, felt as hot and noisy, and in general, experienced as uninteresting and uninspiring learning environments. This poor perception of the physical condition of the school increases as students move from primary education to secondary education. When it rains, 25.8% of secondary school students in the opinion survey held by Parlamento Hubenil indicated that flooding became a problem and another 21% indicated that they would be sent home. When asked about the condition of school equipment (chairs, tables, sports materials, etc.), over half of students in the opinion survey (56%) said it was good. However, almost half (42.6) indicated the opposite with about half of these students indicating that equipment was old, broken, or required a new paint job.
- 2.30 The experience of teaching and learning in school is perceived as boring and demotivating. The following descriptive words paint an unmotivating picture of the teaching process: “saai”, “laf” (boring), and “eentonig” (monotonous). The effect of this kind of school experience is best described by a secondary school student:

“Sinja na manera cu nan ta sinja na Aruba ta LAAF! Ye ora bo ta cansa lihe anto bo no ta bai worry pa sinja mas.”¹

The teacher focus on content contributes to this deadening effect:

“Na MAVO ta puro buki. Mi mes no a tuma MAVO paso door cu e no tin praktik ami lo kierta prefera “prepara” pa locual mi ta bai enfrenta. Ta mas miho pa bo de-monstra, luga di djies tene den cabez.”²

Both primary and secondary students expressed that teachers ought to inform, explain and help them better understand the world around them. They indicated that teacher motivation and attitude in turn affected student achievement and motivation. Students in higher education especially noted the critical need for increased teacher quality and competency. This general student perception at all levels is supported by recent research indicating that teacher quality is the key element to improving student performance:

“... having a series of good teachers can dramatically affect the achievement of any student. In fact, a series of good teachers can erase the deficits associated with poor preparation for school” (Hanushek, 2005, p. 14).

2.31 In the Parlamento Hubenil opinion survey, 46.3% of secondary school students surveyed had the following suggestions for improving teacher-student relationships with better communication rated as top:

- ∴ 34.3% Communicate better with students (*Pa comunica mihor cu estudiante*)
- ∴ 13.3% Have more patience, be more relaxed (*Pa tin mas pasenshi, mas relax*)
- ∴ 13.3% Trust each other when there are problems (*Pa confia otro y pa cu otro ora tin problema*)
- ∴ 8.6% Be kinder (*Pa nan ta mas lief*)
- ∴ 6.7% Understand us when we are going through a difficult time (*Pa comprende nos ora nos ta pasa den un situacion dificil*)
- ∴ 5.7% All teachers must help children and not judge them (*Cu tur docente mester yuda mucha y no huzga*)
- ∴ 5.7% Explain better (*Pa nan splika mas mihor*)

2.32 The primary school students, like the secondary school students, see learning in a much broader context and think beyond the traditional notion of schooling. They see the advantage of what the internet and television has to offer, and because of that they are also clear that they need and want explicit adult guidance. Primary school students said

“via TV y computer nos ta siña tocante hopi cos di loke ta pasa den mundo, pero hopi cos nos no ta comprende. Mester tin hende grandi pa splica nos y na scol esaki por.”³

It is interesting how the young are so clear about the role of the adult in their learning. The late Russian developmental psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, stressed the key role of the teacher in advancing the student’s learning. One of Russia’s merited teachers, Galina

¹ “Learning the way we are taught in Aruba is BORING! You get tired easily and then you don’t care to learn any longer.”

² “At the MAVO it’s all books. I decided not to go to MAVO because there is no practical experience and I prefer to be prepared for real life. It is better to show by example instead of learning by rote.”

³ “Via TV and computer we learn about what is happening in the world, but we don’t understand many things. We need adults to explain things to us and that is possible at school.”

Dolya who delivered the keynote address at the 8th International Congress of Thinking and Education in Aruba recently, writes:

“In developing children's abilities, teachers can guide them towards performing actions or tasks which are just beyond their current capacity. With such guidance, children can perform beyond their own ability - within certain limits. Vygotsky defined these limits as the zone of proximal development, which he described as the "difference between the level of solved tasks that can be performed with adult guidance and help, and the level of independently solved tasks". The most effective teaching is aimed at the higher level of the child's ZPD, the edge of challenge.” (Palmer & Dolya, 2004, 30 July)

- 2.33 The secondary school students understand that learning happens constantly, and that there are different learning processes that come from a wide variety of sources: school, teacher, parents, interaction among friends, family, own experience and reflection, social places, work, online, on the streets, practice, internet, and at home. The school currently fails to tap into these broader sources of learning.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

- 2.34 Focus groups held with 5 different groups of teachers (pre-school, primary, secondary, Colegio Arubano, and higher education) revealed the following perceptions of their school experience:
- 2.35 Teacher perceptions of the school building and grounds concur with those of the students, the parents, and the community. Colegio Arubano teachers especially highlighted their school environment as dilapidated, unattractive, unmotivating, and boring. In addition, schools do not provide physical space for students to be able to study, read, or use the computer. Though 74.3% of secondary school students surveyed in 2006 by Parlamento Hubenil indicated that their school had a library/media room, they also indicated there were insufficient computers or internet availability to do research or homework. Though 85.6% of these students thought it was important that their school have a website with information on the school and class activities, 65.4% indicated there was none at their school. The large school size (2,400 students) also contributed to making this same environment impersonal and unsafe.
- 2.36 The combination of a rigid teaching structure together with a lack of adequate resources and materials to implement innovative teaching and learning strategies were indicated as the sources of the most intense teacher frustration. Especially, at the general secondary education level, the focus is still textbook-centered (*leerstofgericht*) and the teaching methodology remains predominantly chalk and talk (*leraargericht*). Colegio Arubano teachers, specifically felt caught between the demands of the PLT methodology (Planning, Leerstof, Toetsing) on the one hand, and the desire to do project work with students and be creative, on the other. One teacher expressed her experience as: *“I feel like a robot following the PLT. This gives no room for anything extra.”* It is no surprise that under such conditions, neither teaching nor learning can be an enjoyable, meaningful or satisfying experience. Sadly, even some teachers themselves admit that their own classes are boring.
- 2.37 It is no wonder that teachers are perceived as demotivated and therefore uninspiring in the classroom. When secondary students were asked in the 2006 opinion survey if they thought that teachers under stress showed this in their way of teaching, 69.6% answered yes. How was that reflected? Among those who answered yes, 47.8% responded that teachers *“come in a bad mood and dump it on us”* (*nan ta bin cu malbeis y ta baha ariba nos*) and 20.1% wrote *“they yell all the time and have no patience”* (*nan ta zundra cada rato, no tin pasenshi*). Indeed, teachers perceived the urgent need for a much more positive attitude

amongst themselves—a positive attitude towards trying out new teaching methods; towards students; and towards each other professionally.

- 2.38 Teachers in the focus groups pointed out the discrepancy between the theory (the ideal) and the real world, concrete practice. Introducing new ideas for greater student involvement and innovative teaching methods without changing the structure is not only perceived, but experienced as a set-up for failure. Field trips (visits to organizations outside the school), for example, are introduced as a new way of involving students in the real world. However, teachers felt that not enough performance assessment structures are in place to adequately assess the learning that occurs on such a field trip. Assessment is still largely in terms of pencil and paper achievement testing. Therefore, a field trip is reduced to an extra-curricular activity that has no intrinsic didactic value. The 45 min. teaching unit also creates another inhibiting factor to realistically consider field trips as a valid learning experience. On the one hand, one young secondary school teacher highlighted the difficulties involved in eliciting cooperation from other teachers to combine subjects so that a time block of more than 45 min. could be created for field trips. Another young teacher indicated that when she started she enthusiastically implemented real-life project work; however, she realized very soon that she was falling behind on her PLT. As a result, she gave up doing innovative projects in order to satisfy the PLT demands. In addition, permission is required in writing in advance for deviating from the pre-planned school program (rooster afwijking). The hurdles to overcome in order to implement innovative ideas seem not to be worth the effort, with the result that the teacher not only abandons the idea but also ends up losing interest in any further innovation ideas.
- 2.39 There is no more effective way of killing a good idea than by executing it poorly. For example, teachers point out that although the student care system (Leerlingen zorgstructuur) is a great idea, in practice it is ineffective because of a mostly rudimentary set-up and severe understaffing. The paucity in execution undermines and threatens the acceptance of the idea of student care itself. Student project work (Projectmatig werken) is a great idea and kids love it. Yet, the class timetabling (rooster) is restrictive and there are no study areas to give space to this new student learning method. The newly developed PLT system does not provide the necessary space and flexibility to allow project work to take place. The discrepancy between what is promoted as an innovation and the inability to secure the conditions for proper execution provides fertile grounds for skepticism in innovation.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS

- 2.40 Focus groups held with parents in November-December, 2006 yielded the following perceptions of the school:
- 2.41 The physical school environment is perceived as deplorable. Parents lament that teachers teach in deteriorating classrooms tolerating both heat and noise pollution, all of which contribute to creating suboptimal learning environments. Parents noted the size of school as a contributing factor to low levels of emotional safety. Specifically, parents highlighted the impersonal climate of Colegio Playa where kids are lost in the crowd and become just a number. Colegio San Nicolas is a smaller school and experienced as much more personalized with a more student friendly culture in spite of the deplorable physical conditions.
- 2.42 Parents perceive the educational system as child unfriendly. In their eyes, the focus is on fitting the child into the system. When the child does not fit, the child is excluded. At the secondary level, especially at Colegio Arubano, both teacher and student are pressured to meet the test date irrespective of whether the material was actually covered or not (for example, due to teacher absence). Here, the PLT (Planning, Leerstof, Toetsing) becomes

the motivator behind teacher behavior, not student learning. Especially at secondary level, teachers still use “*the chalk and talk method*” and follow the textbook. The result is as one parent put it: “*Kids are so bored!*” They also pointed out experiences with teachers who were not knowledgeable in their subject matter.

- 2.43 Students who display musical or athletic talent and are training at a professional or international level, find themselves struggling to balance a demanding training schedule with rigid school requirements. The students drop further development of their talent in order to abide by the school’s set schedule. There is no option to do both. Perhaps this frustration at the lack of the school’s ability to meet the student’s needs is best expressed by one parent: “*We have a lot of talent in our kids, but they are not supported in developing their talent. School punishes the kids with talent.*”
- 2.44 Parents perceive teachers as largely unmotivated, burdened with large classes (26+ students), and struggling with unmotivated students as well as students with social and emotional issues. Of the 355 secondary school students surveyed in 2006, 65.1% indicated that there was a designated staff member (not a teacher) available at school to talk to if they had a social or emotional problem, while 32.4% did not. Of those who did not, 65.6% felt a need for a person whom they felt they could go to for support at school. Students need someone to relate to and go to at school when they are facing disturbing issues.
- 2.45 The question of language of instruction was identified by parents as a serious issue affecting student achievement. Parents highlighted that some of the teachers’ poor language proficiency in languages, either Dutch, English, Spanish or even Papiamentu, contributed as a weakness to the student’s education. Graduates from the IPA, for example, are viewed as insufficiently proficient in Dutch to be able to teach competently in Dutch at the 6th grade level. Parents interviewed are concerned about the education their children are suffering in school.

THE COMMUNITY’S PERCEPTIONS

- 2.46 Focus groups were also held with community groups from the civic sector, the private business sector and the tourism sector. Their perceptions are summarized as follows:
- 2.47 From the perspective of the business world, the school is currently perceived as an antiquated structure that is out-of-sync with modern times and out-of-touch with the needs of the labor market. There is little alignment between what is taught in schools and what is required to function successfully in society. With the demographic changes characterizing current society, the school is seen as inadequately addressing issues of multi-culturalism, dual working parents, and providing quality education. The school is slow in responding to the changing conditions in society and consequently lagging behind in its ability to cater effectively to its complex student population.
- 2.48 School is seen as a depersonalized place where kids are just a number, especially at the secondary level. Colegio Arubano was perceived as an example of mass production and EPI was seen as focusing on quantity instead of quality. This community of stakeholders expressed concern about the demotivation of both the kids as well as teachers: “*Too many students are dropping out of the system and don’t see the benefit of having a degree.*” This has severe consequences for the quality of our workforce.
- 2.49 From the point of view of business, and especially tourism, there exists an invisible barrier that keeps them out of the educational process at school. Their experiences have led them to believe that their contributions are undervalued and unwelcome by the Department of Education specifically and by extension, the schools.

- 2.50 The tourism industry seems to suffer from a poor image in the world of education. Tourism is perceived as synonymous with servitude and low wage labor. Yet, it is an undeniable reality that the labor demand in the tourism industry will only continue to grow. Tourism remains one of the main pillars of the island's economy, yet is not integrated into the education's curriculum at an early age. Members of the business world, especially tourism, expressed a strong desire to participate in the educational process by making available the collective knowledge and skills in their organizations. Given the unrelenting growth of the local labor market and the increasing complexities of the demographic composition of this small society, public-private partnership was identified as an important strategy to address the current as well as future needs of our modern times. Their concern and call to reach out resonates with an ancient Ashanti proverb that "*It takes a whole village to raise a child.*" This ancient wisdom of the collective responsibility for developing our young is perceived to be even more relevant today.
- 2.60 Innovation occurs not in a vacuum, but is led, organized, funded, and managed within a management and administrative system. This system can either support and facilitate conditions, or slow down or even render ineffective any change initiative. How ready is the current educational management system to play a supportive role in re-energizing the journey of innovation? The next section takes a look at this question.

Perceptions of System Readiness to Support Innovation

"If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong."

— Charles Kettering

- 2.61 During the months of March and April, volunteer taskforces reviewed these identified areas of the prevailing system of education management: educational law and policies, budget, facilities, accountability, roles and responsibilities, and data measurement system. Each taskforce was guided by a volunteer facilitator during 3 to 4 meetings for 2 to 2 ½ hours each. The membership consisted of professionals from both government departments and the private sector who were knowledgeable and experienced with the taskforce topic. Because of the time pressure, there was little room for an in-depth treatment of each of the topic areas; however, because of their collective professional knowledge and/or experience of the management system of public sector they were able to paint a perception of the current system's readiness to support innovation that provides some insight into the current reality. The information in this section draws from several sources: (1) the Taskforce reports as source documents (see *Appendix II for individual Strategic Driver Reports for System Alignment*); (2) the summary feedback meetings with the facilitators of these taskforces; (3) the SWOT analysis focus groups within the Primary Education, General Secondary (AVO) and Professional Education (EPB and EPI) sectors; and (4) relevant literature review.
- 2.62 While teachers have been challenged to innovate how they teach and organize learning, while principals have been challenged to innovate how they manage, and while schools have been expected to do things in new and different ways, the fundamental aspects of the central education bureaucracy have remained essentially the same. While we have asked everybody in the field to innovate, we have not consistently asked the management structure, including school boards, the Inspectorate and the Department of Education to change its administrative and decision-making processes so that they can better facilitate and support the process of innovation at the school level.

- 2.63 How prepared are our current central education administration (Dept. of Education and Inspectorate) and school boards to support, facilitate, and guide the re-energizing of innovation focus on student learning and improvement? To answer this question we must first understand the logic and imperative of a public bureaucracy and why they are inherently resistant to changing their usual way of doing business. In fact, the lesson learned from many change efforts is the importance of understanding the restraining factors⁴ to any innovation in order to revitalize the journey forward:

“The fundamental flaw in most innovators’ strategies is that they focus on their innovation, on what they are trying to do—rather than on understanding how the larger culture, structures, and norms will react to their efforts.”...no progress is sustainable unless innovators learn to understand why the system is pushing back, and how their own attitudes and perceptions (as well as other forces) contribute to the “pushback”. The organizational limiting processes naturally represent the “homeostatic” forces of industrial-age organizations. This is how the system is pushing back.” (Senge, 1999, p. 26)

- 2.64 It is not the intention in this section to go deeply into a discussion of government bureaucracy, but only to highlight some of its salient characteristics in order to understand the natural push-back reflex of the larger system and thus, place the taskforce perceptions in such a context of understanding.

The Education Management System: Pushing Back

- 2.65 Government bureaucracies provide public services to its population which involves administrative tasks which in turn involves forming organizations with rules, regulations and procedures to administer such tasks efficiently and effectively. This bureaucratic model of management emphasizes uniformity and consistency⁵. The Aruban government bureaucracy derives from a European view of public administration based on the “*Napoleonic Code*” where the goal is to conform to regulations, rules, and policy directions from above. What matters is correct adherence to the process, sometimes even at the expense of the quality of the outcome. (Senge, 1994).
- 2.66 Small scale bureaucracies in small states exhibit further constraints peculiar to its size: scarcity of specialized personnel; rigid and inflexible rules; pragmatism; ineffective leadership because of self-doubt, short-sightedness and unwillingness to share authority participatively; low levels of rewards and motivation; adversarial relations between managers

⁴ Research indicates that about 70% of change initiatives fail to fully materialize as planned (Senge, 1999). The reason why seems to lie in two critical areas. First, a collective blind spot in our understanding, and therefore anticipation, prevents us from seeing that change automatically awakens resistance. Following the laws of nature, *all growth results from an interaction between reinforcing growth processes and limiting control processes*. Over time, innovations inevitably bump up against a ceiling of limiting or restraining forces in the system. The strongest resistance has been found to usually reside in the prevailing system of management. Secondly, we tend to underestimate to what extent change initiatives require a shift in our basic mindset. At best, people will not actively support or resist changes. At worst, they will actively work against the change initiative. (Senge, 1999).

⁵ The bureaucratic model was originally intended as an improvement of the previous feudal model of organization based on fixed status and position by birth, not merit and unquestioned authority (Wertheim, year unknown, *Historical Background of Organizational Behavior*). It was an innovative response to organizing and managing material, people, and information over large distances during the Industrial Revolution when large factories had to find a way to control explosive growth of production. In this new way of management, rational rules and regulations replaced trial and error, management was formalized with middle management separating planning from the work floor, and departments were created to specifically deal with separate divisions of work, such as personnel or quality. This new way of managing people and the process of production led to great success in raising productivity. However, at the same time worker morale and motivation suffered, apathy and alienation set in and human degradation became the costs incurred by this kind of total control management.

and subordinates; a lack of appreciation for the qualities of competent generalists; provincialism; paternalism; patronage; and fear and/or distrust of modern technology (Kersell, year unknown, *Mini-Remnants of Three Empires: Governing West Indian Dependencies*).

2.67 Bureaucracies are not innovative or creative by nature. Educational bureaucracies, which are large and complex, especially do not embrace change easily or quickly (Cassidy, 2005). The education system tends towards conservatism because of its built-in structural and cultural mechanisms and processes that lead it towards regular, predictable and thus conserving behaviors. At the school level, programmatic structures such as planning of time, sequence of curriculum, how often, when and how to teach certain content and at the individual level, culturally conditioned expectations of teacher, student, principal, and parent behavior in and around the school combine to make changes in school very complex and challenging. At the central administration level, policy requirements, budget cycles, legal requirements and interpretations thereof, and other bureaucratic control mechanisms act as limiting processes to innovation. (Emerencia, 2007, p. 372). The educational system is thus one that guarantees stability, not innovation and responsiveness to change.

2.68 A perception voiced in different parts of the educational community is that innovation is up against a wall of systemic resistance to change—from teachers, school principals, School Board members, from the Inspectorate, and from different units in the Department of Education itself. Why is that? Studies indicate that most change projects are challenged, not so much by employee resistance but mostly by systemic issues⁶:

- **Failure to make a compelling case for change** and losing the opportunity to convince a critical mass at each level of the organization of the urgency of change and the power of vision.
- **Viewing change mechanistically, rather than organically.** Nothing grows in the absence of limits and constraints: eventually all change efforts run into constraints embedded in the management systems or culture of the organization and fail to reach their potential. It is often forgotten that culture has deep roots that cannot be easily pulled out. (Senge, 1999).
- **Failure to budget enough management time and resources.** Major change can take up to 30 to 50% of a leader's time. Not having a guiding coalition — a large enough and well-placed group committed to the change — means there is not the energy to drive the process. And since seeking help is seen as a sign of weakness, many go it alone, without consultants, coaches, and process experts.
- **Failure to communicate – enough.** Under-communication is a major problem. It is often underestimated how intense the communication must be in order for people to get behind an idea.
- **Talking but not walking.** Leaders and managers shred trust with behavior inconsistent with the change espoused.
- **Failure to measure and celebrate progress.** When assessment and measurement systems are not adjusted to track the success of the initiative, it becomes impossible to celebrate early victories and note the build-up of momentum.
- **Fear and anxiety** limit the ability to be open to listening to others, to exploring new ways.
- **True believers and non-believers.** A siege mentality, we versus them, develops. Resisters become the enemy.
- **Accepting Obstacles.** Employees, even though they embrace the new vision, feel disempowered by obstacles in their paths that management knows about, but doesn't remove.
- People are **reluctant to change their habits**; they may change one thing required by the new policy, but a whole pattern of inter-related habits inconsistent with the change persist.

⁶ Paul Crookall & Harvey Schachter provide a comprehensive review of the literature on change efforts, why they fail and the factors necessary for success, in their research report on “*Changing Management Culture*” produced for the Government of Canada, 2003.

- **Declaring victory too soon**, and neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the organizational culture, will lead to a relapse.
- **Failure to realign.** Failure is often built in when the organization's structure, business systems, technology, core competencies, employee knowledge and skills, and culture are not re-aligned and integrated with the change effort.

Participants in this planning process have mentioned most if not all the above factors in their perception of how educational innovation has been managed.

- 2.69 Because of these factors, resistance also tends to be emotionally charged (Senge, 1999). The skeptical attitude from government department professionals in the taskforces of *we have seen this, done this, and what's new*⁷ were in this vein. Participating in the taskforces was regarded as yet one more exercise in futility. The collective experience of disappointments and disillusionment with real change has bred an atmosphere of cynicism towards innovation and any attempts to plan for change. As a result, everyone returns to their particular function in the bureaucracy and continues to muddle along in their silo, unaware and sometimes uninterested in what the other is doing. This reinforces and supports a stovepipe mentality that is detrimental to creating a climate of trust and cooperation for the benefit of a larger common goal.
- 2.70 Administration in the public sector occurs in a complex and interconnected social, cultural, political or economic context that tends to be permeated with a particular government bureaucracy mindset (Senge et al, 1994). Taskforce participants have referred to this in Dutch as “eilandjes denken”, translated as stovepipe thinking. During the facilitators’ feedback meeting it was observed that the greatest barrier to innovation was this prevailing mind-set of those currently holding and exercising power in the central bureaucracy.
- 2.71 Stovepipe thinking is encouraged when there is a lack of a unifying direction that provides meaning and purpose to the organization. A SWOT analysis conducted with educators and school board members representing the primary, general secondary, and vocational education levels highlighted the key limitation of the education management system as that of lacking leadership and vision. Because of the lack of a clearly articulated aim and commitment to it, everyone goes about their own business engaged in ad-hoc activities. The activities in and of themselves may be very worthy, but in the overall big picture they are an individual attempt within an aimless system. A stovepipe mentality is further reinforced by less than optimal communication between the management of schools (Directie Scholen) and the work floor; and between schools and the Dept. of Education.
- 2.72 This “eilandjes denken” mindset permeates and is also reinforced by the politicized nature of public bureaucracy. Government officials and employees work in an atmosphere of investigation: by auditors, parliament, political parties and factions within, unions, and the news media. They almost cannot make a step practically in their day-to-day administration without receiving some kind of negative reaction in the media. As a result, government officials and employees tend to act out of a defensive mode to avoid controversy. Consequently, information is guarded lest it be used as a political tool. Emphasis is placed on correct process even at the expense of good outcomes; and more “command and control” mechanisms are devised to prevent error. More and more officials and employees resort to legalism⁷ as a way of protecting themselves. This kind of mindset creates an organizational culture on edge, extremely cautious and averse to risk-taking. (Senge, 1999).

⁷ Referring to a rule or regulation has the effect of reducing one's own level of responsibility, avoiding criticism and social tension, and thus creating a sense of personal safety – all that more important in a small community. (Colignatus, 2006, p. 28).

A CULTURE OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY: HOW DO WE FARE?

- 2.73 The imperative for innovation from above without a practical foundation of how-to knowledge and experience plus a bureaucratic system naturally averse to innovation have made for very uncomfortable bedfellows. So it is not surprising, after almost 2 decades of innovation conducted within a framework of a recalcitrant bureaucracy, to find that today's system represents an odd educational hybrid where innovation struggles within a resisting system. The effect of this is the call from not only the professional community, but the wider community for greater responsibility and accountability. A system that produces poor results cannot be allowed to continue to persist. The question that really begs asking is: Where does the responsibility and accountability for student learning and performance properly lie? This planning process provides an opportune occasion to clarify this question, so that we can begin to create the kind of desired culture of quality management and accountability necessary to re-invigorate the journey of innovation and course correct. This section will take a brief look at the key actors in the educational system and their perceived readiness to support innovation in education.
- 2.74 The legal responsibility for safeguarding the quality of education rests with the Minister of Education. The execution of it lies in two places— with the Director of Education and the education inspectors:

“Het toezicht op het voortgezet onderwijs is opgedragen aan de Minister. Het wordt onder zijn bevelen uitgeoefend door de directeur van de Directie Onderwijs en door inspecteurs.”
(Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs, art. 97)⁸

The perceptions from educators as well as the community indicate that a stronger accountability culture in education requires urgent attention. They cite their experience and knowledge that *“no one exercises control over the number of “taakuren” usage, no one applies sanctions, and schools are not held responsible for the education that is delivered in the schools”*. As a result, they perceive that misuse of power is facilitated. Over the many years of educational development in Aruba, they perceive an increasingly politicized culture where patronage (*“vriendjespolitiek”*) and a *“laissez faire”* (*“laat maar waaien”*) mentality has become noticeable.

- 2.75 It is not that accountability doesn't exist—it does. It is, however, a limited model of accountability that is enforced externally through inspecting for compliance to rules and regulations. The accountability model in education is mostly limited to compliance as delineated by statutes and laws, rules and regulations set by the Dept. and Ministry of Education and also School Board Statutes. Educators are accountable to the educational bureaucracy only and not to their peers in the profession or to the community in general. This compliance model of accountability is an externally imposed imperative rather than an internally motivated drive based on achieving professional excellence or a vision of student success⁹.
- 2.76 Feedback from focus groups, taskforces and planning conferences stress a demand for increased accountability that goes beyond conformance to the law. The kind of accountability desired is one that is more results-driven in terms of student learning, what they learn and how that learning is demonstrated. Based on participants' feedback, adults and professionals in the business of education need to be held accountable for the quality of education that is delivered and provided. According to the accountability taskforce,

⁸ A similar text appears in the Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs, article 73 and Landsverordening basisonderwijs, article 84.

⁹ Jo Anne Anderson provides an informative primer on accountability models in education today called “Accountability in Education, Education Policy Series” by UNESCO, 2005.

movements are being made to expand the concept of accountability beyond conformance to rules and regulations. There is already approval to expand the focus of accountability to include guidelines for professional standards and practices as adopted by national and international professional organizations. It is a commendable beginning, but it is not enough.

The Inspectorate of Education (Inspectie)

2.77 Inspectors, in their role of safeguarding quality on behalf of the Minister of Education, inspect largely on compliance with legal rules. However, since 2002, with the emergence of the policy plan “*Toezicht Nota*”, the Education Inspectorate has been expanding their focus to assuring the quality of 4 main areas in education¹⁰:

- A quality of the educational process and assessment;
- B the learning content, process, and conditions;
- C student performance and results; and
- D school organization and policy which includes team development, communication, administration and procedures, and leadership.

In addition to inspecting for compliance with the law, the Inspectorate, as the external quality control arm of the Minister, also has the task of stimulating quality control at the schools; evaluating quality; and reporting on the results. To accomplish these functions, they have developed quality control instruments, such as a self-evaluation tool that schools can use to evaluate their own quality, an observation list for observing the class and they are currently translating quality indicators into more practical examples. Recently, the focus has turned specifically to (1) results, (2) the pedagogic behavior of the teacher (observed using an observation list during classroom visits) and (3) the school climate with a specific emphasis on student safety.

2.78 The perception is that although the development of quality control frameworks (toezicht kaders) is a move in the right direction, the interpretation and effective execution thereof in practice has yet to happen. In practice, education inspectors are perceived as flexing their control muscle through their essentially “functional foremanship” role¹¹. The imperative to control for conformance to a standard approach or to strict compliance to legal requirements appears paramount and this within a context of innovation sows the seeds for conflict. Teachers have voiced their frustrations about the contradictions faced between the pronouncements encouraging innovation in the classroom on the one hand, and the requirements by Inspectie to stick to rules and requirements that tend to curb innovation. For example, teachers who attempt to focus on students’ needs and differentiate (differentiëren) may be told by an inspector that they fail to conform to set hours stipulated for that particular subject on the roster (rooster uren). Conformance to set hours per subject may work if the focus is on whole class instruction, but fails to account for differentiation and may not meet the student’s need for more or less hours on a specific subject. For example, one student may need 10 hours of exposure to language and 2 hours to math and another may need the exact opposite. The teachers feel that the result of this emphasis on conformance has the unfortunate result of frustrating and ultimately demotivating their desire to innovate. Few decide to continue to implement innovative teaching approaches and if they do, do so out of the radar. The well-known adage in the quality movement “*expect what you inspect*” is befitting here. If what you inspect for is conformity then that is what you will get. This misalignment between what is promoted and what is actually inspected causes

¹⁰ These 4 areas comprise the new quality control frameworks (toezichtkaders) with indicators and descriptions for primary, special, secondary and vocational education.

¹¹ The term ‘*functional foremanship*’ refers to the perceived necessity of supervising teachers to ensure a standardized method of operation. The approach is often associated with Frederick Taylor who advocated a strict division of labor and total management control over the labor process. (Li, et al, 1999).

a drag on effective implementation of the promoted educational innovation. Because of this, the Inspectorate tends to be seen as an inhibiting force on innovation rather than a facilitative and supportive force. In addition, this contradiction also creates skepticism that innovation is really wanted and sends out mixed messages.

2.79 How is the Inspectorate to go beyond this “foreman” role to one of stimulating quality, school development and accountability? How can the Inspectorate assure quality in the learning process and assessment that is student focused and how can the Inspectorate stimulate the kind of quality that is internally driven? A more expansive role is indicated in the current laws that refers to the collaborative role that inspectors need to play in supporting teachers to improve education. The key is to dialogue (overleg) with teachers for the purpose of improving education as indicated in Art. 2.2 :

“de inspecteurs trachten door overleg met de leerkrachten de bloei van het onderwijs te bevorderen.”
(Landsbesluit vaststelling instructie inspecteurs onderwijs)

2.80 A shift in mindset from control to guidance and direction through dialogue (overleg) is also more in keeping with developing new practices. It is instructive to look at the example of the Dutch Inspectorate in the Netherlands who are dealing with the same questions on how to inspect the quality of new ways of learning, teaching and managing. Innovation in education has led the Dutch Inspectorate to review their quality framework (waarderingskader) less in terms of compliance to the letter, and more in light of the spirit of the quality framework. The intention of all the quality indicators is not only to be usable, but most of all to be relevant at all schools, not just the traditional ones. This has meant that the translation into concrete practice must vary from school to school. In the Netherlands, the Inspectorate found that schools implementing new learning approaches could not conform to some indicators of didactic practice. Therefore, instead of penalizing a school for innovating, the Dutch Inspectorate is creating additional clarifications to all their quality indicators so that they are also applicable to a school that is implementing innovation. The key is to work with the school so that student learning is safeguarded and the teacher and the school can justify and demonstrate that their chosen didactic and pedagogic strategy delivers positive results.

2.81 The role that the Inspectorate can play in assuring the quality of innovation in the classroom and school becomes even more important as it becomes an autonomous agency on equal footing with the Dept. of Education and now directly responsible to the Minister of Education. The lesson from the Dutch experience is that educational innovation represents a learning process where not only the schools are learning to do things differently, but also the inspection arm is learning to inspect differently. Specifically, it requires that the school learns to understand the quality process and indicators and takes responsibility for guarding its own quality within the educational process and the inspector is flexible in attitude, and works with the school to help it understand the indicators and supports it in achieving its goals. Given the punitive image of the Inspectorate in the education field, it is important to heed the lessons of the Netherlands and take care to examine its role and purpose in innovation. To assure quality and support schools to take more responsibility and accountability for quality internally, inspectors will need to shift from being a foreman to being a quality assurance coach. This means that inspectors need to actively educate school staff in the quality frameworks and indicators, what they look like concretely, and coach them on how to achieve these in the practice (see law art. 2.2 referred to in paragraph 2.86).

2.82 Consequently, the Inspectorate will need to expand their own skill set to include knowledge of innovations that the educational system has elected to pursue in order to ensure

alignment between what is promoted as innovation and what is inspected for as quality.¹² In a learner-centered approach, everybody is a learner. And that also includes the Inspectorate.

The Department of Education

- 2.83 The Department of Education, personified by the Director of Education, is the second execution arm for safeguarding the quality of education on behalf of the Minister of Education. The impetus for innovation came from the Department of Education and the locus of control of innovation resides at this level within the system. While the core of innovation activity – instructional practice – plays itself out in the classroom and in the school, the Dept. of Education leadership has not institutionalized the practice of school visitation as a strategy for monitoring the progress of innovation or school quality. Feedback from the education community is that the Dept. of Education is perceived as far removed from the classroom. Dictates are perceived to come from above without any consultation from those who work on the ground level and thus the perception is that the Dept. of Education operates in an ivory tower and is oblivious to the realities of the classroom. Though the lines of delivery between central administration (Dept. van Onderwijs) and the schools are short, the psychic distance is far. It is probably not too far from the truth to suggest that bureaucratic demands as well as endless meetings keep the top leadership from visiting schools on a regular basis. However, it may also not be too far from the truth either to conjecture that the mindset to visit schools as a way to know the realities of schools first-hand and thereby be able to provide support in a responsive way is not present either.
- 2.84 The legal educational structure, fortunately enough, encourages a much more facilitative, supportive, and collaborative role for the Director of the Department of Education and the inspector than hitherto believed. The following laws for kindergarten and primary education indicate that the Director and the Inspector remain aware of the realities at school through school site visits and attempt to support school improvement through collaboration with school boards and principals and teachers:
1. *De directeur en de inspecteur zorgen door bezoek aan de scholen voortdurend bekend te blijven met de toestand van het kleuteronderwijs.*
 2. *Zij trachten de bloei van het kleuteronderwijs te bevorderen door overleg met de besturen en het personeel van de openbare en bijzondere scholen. (Art. 74 Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs. Also similar text appears in Art. 86 Landsverordening basisonderwijs and Art. 99 Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs)*

The law recognizes the critical role that the Director of Education in conjunction with the Inspector has to promote the quality of education through the communication vehicle of dialogue (overleg) with school boards and school personnel. This shared responsibility by the Director of Education and the Inspectorate for the quality of education ensures that both institutions align policy and inspection; and remain close to the working realities of the classroom and school.

- 2.85 Without direct observation and dialogue with school personnel, including school principals, teachers, and school boards, it is difficult to monitor, track and actually guide and direct the

¹² Much debate is ongoing in the Netherlands on the results of decades of reform and quality. In the Netherlands they are much further ahead in implementing innovation and as a result the role of Inspection has also had its challenges of inspecting something new. Two articles worth noting are: “*De inspectie geïnspecteerd*”, by Robert Sikkes in *Onderwijsblad*, July, 1, 2006 and “*Authentieke toetsing in het primair onderwijs - droom of te realiseren werkelijkheid? Een bijdrage aan de landelijke beleidsdiscussie over externe sturing op kwaliteit*” by KPC Groep, 2003. They point out the challenge that Inspection has to reconsider their inspection framework to include room for schools that are innovating and focus their perspective on asking questions about learning and how this occurs.

progress of innovation. Without this kind of observation, discussion and analysis and learning of what happens and why, it is not possible to improve the school's performance and quality. Recent research on large scale system change reaches the same conclusions as this legal article.¹³ It recommends opening up the schools and the classrooms to direct observation, analysis and criticism as a matter of routine work so that there can be dialogue directly about instruction. Both research and the Aruban laws recognize that the process of learning is a collaborative effort based on professional dialogue amongst school personnel and their boards, the Inspector and the Director of Education. The built-in assumption is that a culture of collaboration, professional respect and communication is the norm with the aim of improving education together.

- 2.86 Information and insights gathered by taskforce provide some indication of the level of support provided to the innovation journey from the Dept. of Education. As the central architect and leader of innovation in our educational system, the Dept. of Education has had to meet an enormous challenge with limited resources. Whilst changes have focused predominantly on the actual instructional process, i.e., curriculum and teaching methods, and to a much lesser extent testing, other critical areas within the Dept. of Education seemed to have remained immune from innovation ideas. Specifically functions like budgeting, data measurement, and the legal framework continue to follow their own bureaucratic imperatives. An immediate organizational assessment of the current functioning of the Dept. of Education with recommendations for aligning functional units with the new education vision 2017 is in order.

Educational Financing: Lack of Transparency

- 2.87 SWOT focus groups among the 3 largest innovation projects as well the budget taskforce participants highlighted the lack of transparency and scarcity of educational expenditure data and information as major obstacles to being able to execute, monitor and achieve educational innovation plans. No one seems to have any insight into how decisions are made to allocate funds to budgets submitted by schools and other educational institutions. Schools that are dependent on a centralized budgeting process struggle yearly to make do with less than what they plan and budget for.
- 2.88 The practice is that schools and other educational institutions create a budget proposal and submit it to the Dept. of Education. The proposed budget then goes through a “*black box*” process—a non-transparent and unilateral decision-making process based on unknown criteria—at the Department of Education, where schools’ budget line items are deleted in order to fit the total available funds for all schools. This adjusted budget then proceeds on to the Ministry of Finance, where there is another “*black box*” process of decision-making removed from the necessities and challenges of the school. What the schools receive at the end of the process in funds never matches their proposal, oftentimes by a very wide margin, and they usually end up instead with a survival budget that serves to cover basic operational expenses, such as electricity, water, small maintenance jobs, and miscellaneous.
- 2.89 The complexities involved in the financial process and the amount of red tape have also emerged as issues that put a strain on operations and limit the level of quality in the education system. Disbursements of allocated and approved funds from the educational budget are centrally administered and managed by the Educational Management and Administration unit of the Department of Education, but actual payment is effectuated through the Ministry of Finance. The experience of schools indicates that the process for receiving allocated funds is best characterized by stagnation, lack of transparency and

¹³ Richard F. Elmore provides a persuasive argument and a new design and practice for thinking of and managing large scale educational system reform based on research of best practices that lead to successful student learning in “*Building a New Structure For School Leadership*”, Harvard University, 2000.

endless waiting. There is obviously a need for a financial budgeting process that engages the schools in developing realistic budgets that serve their needs and can be a measuring tool for school quality and student performance. This is one way to hold the school accountable.

- 2.90 The paucity of funds available for school building maintenance and repair is a visual reminder of the level of priority that education has in our community. To veterans in education it is a reminder of how schools have not recovered from the sudden drop in funding for maintenance and repair since the 1985 Lago Refinery closure 22 years ago. In addition, the current education budget structure allocates about 10% to maintenance. Of the 2005 education budget (about Afls. 181 million guilders), approximately 88% was spent on payroll (teachers, administration and employer's contribution) leaving 10% for material expenses (goods and services including facility maintenance, cleaning, learning materials). Investment in any new projects (technology infrastructure or computers or new learning resources and/or new buildings) is not included in this 10%. The remaining 2% was spent mainly on depreciation and contribution to other expenses. With the backlog build-up in maintenance plus the natural aging and decay of buildings over 2 decades, and a budget insufficient for the degree and level of maintenance and upgrading required today, it is no wonder that many schools look the way they do – dilapidated and rundown. Without much analysis it is clear that schools in the year 2007 do not reflect an optimal learning environment for a 21st century innovation journey.
- 2.91 Though an educational budget usually reflects its labor intensive nature, the 2005 budget in particular is almost entirely absorbed by personnel costs. High levels of labor cost do not necessarily translate into better results for the client. The overall poor student results and performance of 2005 certainly do not reflect this. On the contrary, it throws up a red flag and begs questions of productivity and effectiveness.
- 2.92 The budget taskforce found it significantly important that the 88% expenditure on personnel be examined for internal efficiencies in terms of ratios of teaching to non-teaching staff and ratios and teacher productivity in terms of contact hours and task hours (taakuren). Teachers are required by law to work 40 hours a week, but this is structured so that 45 minutes of the hour is spent in contact with the student and 30 minutes is dedicated for grading and planning. Thus, of the 40 hour work week, teachers must spend 27 contact hours on school premises and 13 hours can be spent off school premises to do grading and planning for classes. An unquestioned habit has become entrenched over the years where teachers leave at 1:00 p.m. and do not return unless there are scheduled meetings. Principals are hesitant to schedule too many meetings for fear of infringing on the teacher's perceived right to end their work day at one. It is also widely known that teachers do moonlighting in the afternoons, tutoring students (sometimes their own) for extra income. Other teachers take on extra taakuren to work at other institutions because of their needed expertise. The fact, however, that the extra taakuren allocated to an educational institution other than their own full-time appointment sometimes equal their 27 contact hours puts into the question the level and quality of their productivity at both institutions. This trend is encouraged by the educational system itself which actively seeks out and hires teachers to work in additional functions such as Trai Merdia, Avond Havo, Mavo etc. It seems to be one of the accepted consequences of smallness of scale.
- 2.93 A student-centered approach, however, requires teachers to work together as a team and so preparation/planning may not necessarily be something that should be conducted away from school premises. Therefore, the unquestioned rule that teachers go home at 1:00 p.m. may need to be revisited if the pursuit of innovation is to be effectively continued. Dealing with this issue will require a great deal of political sensitivity and care.

- 2.94 In addition, the outdated salary bracket (bezoldigingsregeling) also needs to be examined. Different schools with different levels and systems, pay teachers a standard rate with no correlation to performance and scope of responsibility. Poorly performing teachers are compensated equal to teachers who go beyond the call of duty. As a result, the pay structure itself fails to reward excellence and offer opportunities for promotion. Instead it allows for mediocrity to exist structurally and encourages complacency on the job. An appraisal system to evaluate teacher's work performance combined with a new salary matrix system that considers education qualification, experience, and scope of responsibility would be needed to develop a clear link between performance and compensation.
- 2.95 The climate of government financial constraints also tends to put the brakes on the kind of investment expenses that innovation usually incurs. Innovation often requires funding to train and professionalize an educator workforce to deliver better quality, capital investment to re-design and renovate schools and classrooms to be multi-functional, and resources and materials to meet the needs of students in a student-centered approach. The taskforce did not have access to sufficient financial information, but ventured to state that the current budget structure does not leave room to support either innovation or measure an organization's accountability and productivity in any significant way. To support the innovation journey, the current budget structure will require a thorough examination for possible re-allocation or re-design of budget to align with innovation goals.

Education Data for Quality Improvement and Accountability

- 2.96 Without timely data and good, reliable information it is difficult to have a solid base to support the effective and efficient investment of resources, systematically monitor and improve the quality of education, and hold education practitioners accountable for results. The Statistical Unit of the Dept. of Ed. collects data on a yearly basis (well over 200 indicators) but is limited to producing data reports that provide no analysis. In addition, the reliability of the information is questionable. For example, the reliability of the yearly graduation percentages is even internally referred to as "not clean". The budget and the data measurement taskforce members have indicated that education data is not only questionable in terms of reliability but even contradictory at times.
- 2.97 Currently, the education bureaucracy supports multiple, parallel and only at best, very loosely connected systems of data collection and processing systems. The same data is collected separately by (1) Department of Education (including Inspection); (2) Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS); (3) Department of Labor; and (4) Individual schools. Data collected by these individual entities are not shared; operations between them are not coordinated and there is limited if no use of data and information standards. When the purpose and benefit of data collection is insufficiently clear, not analyzed for clearly determined end-users, not done systematically, and the same information requested by multiple agencies, then it places an unnecessary burden on the sources that have to provide the information. Although there is a collaboration protocol between the CBS and the Dept. of Ed. to collaborate in terms of data collection and analysis, it has yet to be operationalized effectively.
- 2.98 The Dept. of Education lacks a structured or automated capacity in-house to analyze and interpret data on a systematic basis to inform policy or educational decision-making — both in the statistical and research unit and in the policy and planning unit. Providing decision-makers with policy choices requires more kinds of data from multiple sources, from multiple levels and from multiple points in time. It requires integrated data on inputs, outputs and processes. It requires data that permits comparative assessments of performance across levels, schools, and sub-groups of students. Given the scarcity of manpower and capacity to collect and analyze data, it would be much more cost-effective and efficient to develop an integrated EMIS system with shared responsibilities and clearly delineated roles for all

institutions and stakeholders involved. Collecting, organizing, integrating and analyzing this data will require more cooperation across divisions, departments and levels within the education system and between the education system and other government ministries and agencies. This will demand that management take a bold initiative to collaborate, coordinate and share data and information.

- 2.99 The perception is widespread both within the education community as well as outside that there is a need for more accountability utilizing systems for developing, monitoring and tracking quality. Neither the Dept. of Education nor the Ministry of Education has a functioning Education Management Information System (EMIS). Although the demand for data and information to support policy choices, decisions, and changes in education seems to be limited, they cannot continue like this into the future. The education department as the executing arm of the Minister of Education will need to improve its data and information systems if it is to have a solid basis for monitoring quality, control and improvement of the education system. An integrated educational management information system¹⁴ represents a system of reliable education data collection, analysis, reporting and use. Such a system provides an information platform to support educational analysis, planning, policy, and decision-making functions of the educational management system. Not only does a functioning EMIS provide valuable information for education policy and planning, it helps to create a culture of data-based decision-making.

Legal Framework: More is Possible than we Think

- 2.100 The educational law and policy taskforce reviewed the existing laws and policies to determine how they supported or limited the implementation of innovation ideas such as student-centered learning environment. Two main findings were reported by this taskforce. First, the sheer volume of existing educational law was too great to lend itself to review in the short time available. What was clear, however, was that many of the laws were antiquated and no longer applicable to current times or needs, and that there were many isolated regulations that have accumulated as responses to needs as they emerged. The density was so thick that one taskforce member qualified this with the statement “*you can’t see the forest for the trees.*”
- 2.101 Perhaps because of the accumulation of laws on top of one another over the years, there is a prevailing perception that many innovations are not possible. While it has become a tradition to think that something is not allowed by law, this is not proven to be so at all. In general, the taskforce concluded that the legal framework provides ample room for implementing innovations in the school and classroom. Therefore, it is our traditional thinking that poses more of a limitation than the actual legal framework. More is possible than we think. The key is to think in terms of possibilities. It is not so much about what is legally allowed or not, but rather about holding each other accountable for results. Innovation within the legal framework is possible. However, taskforce members did recommend a deeper analysis of the legal framework in order to provide innovations with a specific legal basis.

¹⁴ An Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision making, policy-analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system. It is a system of people, technology, models, methods, processes, procedures, rules and regulations that function together to provide education leaders, decision makers and managers at all levels with a comprehensive, integrated set of relevant, reliable, unambiguous, and timely data and information to support them in completion of their responsibilities. (Cassidy, 2005)

The Triangle of Responsibility and Accountability for Student Learning

- 2.102 A SWOT analysis conducted with educators and school board members representing the primary, general secondary, and vocational education levels produced searing self-criticism of the system they themselves manage and run. Management is experienced as top-down and very little is delegated to the rest of the organization. Decision-making processes lack transparency and is bogged down by red tape. Lack of follow-up and follow-through render decisions ineffective. There could be more systematic communication between leadership and the floor. Conflict is dealt with unproductively often escalating quickly to closing off channels of communication. A Dutch teacher in one of the focus groups with many years of experience in Aruba offered this observation as the underlying cause to poorly performing systems:

“We don’t know how to deal with conflict. The minute we don’t agree we close the door and refuse to talk to each other. The basis of all our conflict goes back to our inability as a culture to dialogue and solve problems in an effective manner.”

- 2.103 Inevitably, ineffective communication ends up fostering a climate of mistrust. Studies of well-performing organizations in government bureaucracy actually show that these two factors—communication and trust—are critical to building the organization’s character.¹⁵ There is little confidence in leadership as they are perceived as micro-managing and unable to inspire with vision, purpose and direction. As a result, educational professionals voiced little trust in the management of educational institutions.
- 2.104 The taskforce involved in clarifying key roles and responsibilities in education highlighted the need for the triangle of educational actors—the teacher, the school principal and the school board—to work together as a team, something which is not a part of current reality. Together, these 3 actors are seen to influence the results of the learning process the most. The hierarchical relationship amongst these actors rather than that of a team working for the same outcome, student success, is seen as a critical barrier to resolve as a precondition for successful innovation implementation. The next section takes a look at the perceptions of this triangle of actors responsible for the outcomes of the educational process.

Teaching Workforce: A Crisis of Quality

- 2.105 One of the most determining factors in delivering good quality education is good quality teachers in the classroom. Educational research indicates that the most critical determinants in student performance and achievement are well-qualified teachers in terms of three things: (1) knowledge of their subject matter; (2) repertoire of effective teaching and learning strategies; and (3) knowledge of how children learn, grow and develop. In Aruba, focus group feedback would add a fourth, and that is that teachers must have proficiency in Dutch as a language of instruction. Widespread feedback during the participatory planning process brought to light the questionable quality of teachers from primary all the way up to secondary school levels. Many reasons were cited for this perception of poor quality of the general teacher workforce. Though basic educational

¹⁵ In 1988, the Auditor General of Canada published a study on well-performing public service organizations and looked at the attributes of well-performing public service organizations. Ten years later the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, Ole Ingstrup, PhD, published his report on well-performing organizations and how they exist regardless of their structure or the extent of government. His report focuses on how they perform and what actions influence good performance.

research into teacher effectiveness, student performance and school quality would be in order to provide data and information, general perceptions provide a very good indicator of what requires attention.

- 2.106 **IPA (Aruba Teacher Training Institute).** It is of deep concern that an institution as vital to the quality and sustainability of Aruba's education system as the Aruba Teacher Training Institute is as poorly regarded for its external and internal quality and efficiency. The perception of poor quality covers a range of issues from a perceived lack of professionalism and care among the teaching staff, to a lack of rigor in their curriculum and assessment process, to a lack of student-centered focus on students, to weak leadership and questionable personnel and financial management practices. It seems that IPA students spend a great deal of time being confused and unable to get the necessary guidance to develop their potential. Neither schools nor students' parents seem to be impressed with the quality of graduates. The general perception of poor quality of the IPA should be a cause for grave concern because they are the only institution currently qualified to prepare, certify and deliver Aruba's teacher workforce. For educational innovation to be sustainable over the long run, it is vital that the IPA educational philosophy and practice be in line with a student centered focus, and its organizational culture and management follow clear accountability practices. The perception of poor quality and lack of accountability practices, though not substantiated by any in-depth assessment of the institution, is sufficiently serious to warrant an immediate evaluation of the IPA to assess and recommend needed structural and/or organizational changes to safeguard and guarantee a quality teaching force for the nation.
- 2.107 **Human Resources Policy.** The lack of a human resources policy for teachers and poorly developed systems for holding teachers accountable for performance was often cited as a reason for the declining quality and motivational level of the teaching force in general. There is a salary system (PIMS), but no coherent human resources policy. There are no systems that recognize or award teachers, principals or schools for meritorious performance and excellence. Likewise, there are no systems for taking remedial or disciplinary actions against teachers who are poor performers. Performance evaluations (*functionerings gesprekken*) are scarce; there is a lack of clear job/function descriptions (*functiedifferentiatie and functieomschrijving*); career mobility based on merit or qualifications is non-existent; and an antiquated legal framework (*rechtspositie*) for teachers remains unchanged. In Aruba, teachers are not required to take a set number of hours of continuous professional development in order to maintain their teacher's certification current like other countries such as the US and the Netherlands. Instead, once teachers receive their diploma from IPA, they are a teacher for life. A system that fails to create incentives for teachers to excel and aim for continuous upgrading and professionalization will not set conditions for cultivating an excellent teaching force. The need for a coherent and consistent human resources policy and framework has repeatedly emerged as a way to create more accountability in the education system.
- 2.108 **Continuous Professional Development and Upgrading.** SWOT analyses conducted with the three largest innovation projects highlighted the need for stipulating requirements for the education workforce (teachers and principals) to continuously improve and upgrade their skills and knowledge. The need for investing in our national teaching workforce and school leadership becomes even more critical during innovation as new knowledge, skills and attitudes are inevitably needed. To guarantee that innovation stands a chance, it is critical that teachers are continuously upgraded and receive ongoing on-the-job coaching and support so that they get the opportunity to internalize newly acquired competencies in a timely, contextual and meaningful way.
- 2.109 Teachers will also need structured opportunities for reflection, observation and experimentation so that learning and growth can take place. These can occur through

teacher team collaboration, teacher observations of each other, or through a thoughtful and competent inspector. This will not come easy as feedback from the education community indicates that teachers tend to behave as the “*koning, keizer, admiral, ieder in zijn eigen klaslokaal.*” Given the conclusion of school reform research, however, it is even more important to explore forms of feedback because “[p]rivacy of practice produces isolation [and] isolation is the enemy of improvement” (Elmore, 2000, p. 20). Immediate feedback on teaching is critical as it provides the necessary learning to make corrections in context and improve. Having a structured system of feedback allows the teacher to be a learner in the innovation process.¹⁶ Continuous professional development and upgrading will need to be an important component of an HR framework.

School Principals: Leading Instructional Improvement

2.110 Unfortunately, the crude reality is that many school leaders today are not always fully prepared to meet the challenges posed by innovation. School principals are recruited from the ranks of teachers and have in the course of their teaching careers not had the occasion to acquire the skills and knowledge of leading a school and managing its human resources, let alone the changes that innovation requires. With the additional tasks to lead innovation and manage and motivate teachers who are either wanting to be creative within a tight structure, or unwilling and unable to put the innovations into practice in their classrooms, and complying with bureaucratic administrative demands, it is a lot to ask of school principals who are unequipped to deal with complexity, change and uncertainty. It takes knowledge, skill and the right attitude based on information and know-how to build a continuously improving culture of team learning. Without systematically and continuously investing in the professionalization of our educational leadership it will remain challenging to safeguard the quality of our education in Aruba.

2.111 In addition, school leadership is further weakened through structural conditions and bureaucratic measures beyond their control. First, the legal framework curtails the principal’s degree of exercising effective leadership and management of its teacher force to guarantee quality of delivery service. For instance, the school regulation of public primary and special education (Schoolreglement openbaar basis- en speciaal onderwijs) art. 5, 2. states that the school principal has to provide written notice to the Minister of the teacher’s or other personnel’s misbehavior or absence without good reason:

Indien een onderwijzer of een ander personeelslid zonder geldige reden afwezig is of zich anderszins schuldig maakt aan plichtsverzuim of aan onbehoorlijk gedrag in woord of daad, dient het hoofd van de school daarvan zo spoedig mogelijk schriftelijk kennis te geven aan het bevoegd gezag. (Met het bevoegd gezag wordt hier bedoeld de Minister belast met onderwijs).

2.112 It is not clear what the Minister’s course of action is if such a written notice is received, but this law in effect diminishes the role of the Principal as organizational leader and reduces their power and responsibility to act in the interest of safeguarding a climate of quality performance in the school. It is not clear at this point if principals adhere to this rule, ignore it and take responsibility for disciplining staff for unprofessional behavior anyway, or ignore the issue entirely by not taking any action at all. Either way, this is not conducive to empowering school leadership to take full charge of their school.

¹⁶ Feedback as a valuable, concrete and effective method of allowing teachers to quickly learn and develop new competencies necessary in the innovation process (“*Authentieke toetsing in het primair onderwijs - droom of te realiseren werkelijkheid? Een bijdrage aan de landelijke beleidsdiscussie over externe sturing op kwaliteit*” by KPC Groep, 2003). This is a similar concept to the Japanese Kaizen quality idea of making errors quickly as a learning process in order to improve. The key in this process is do, get feedback and then improve; quickly and repeatedly.

- 2.113 Secondly, school principals have little say in the decision-making process around recruitment, selection and hiring of teachers at their school. School Boards are the employers and are responsible for hiring teachers and paying them with earmarked subsidies from the Government. Given the chronic shortage of teachers, a long standing policy has been to travel to Holland to recruit Dutch teachers. The taskforces have not dealt in any depth with this issue, but what seems to emerge is the perception that Dutch teachers who are recruited in Holland by the school board add another dimension of complexity to the challenges of the school. It is not known what criteria are used to select teachers, but the opportunity should be capitalized on to recruit new Dutch hires who have experience in innovation, child-centered education and new learning. School principals have little idea who is going to be on their team until they arrive. Given the twin challenges of teacher shortage and the imperatives of innovation, this results in increasing the management complexities that the school principal has to deal with. Lack of stability and continuity in the staffing of schools are not conducive to creating a quality school where teachers and students can build personal relationships as a foundation for team work and cooperation. Such built-in structural conditions put a drag on how fast innovation can spread and take hold in the school, unless recruitment of new Dutch hires is done with an eye on selecting teachers who can support innovation because of their experience and knowledge.
- 2.114 In all fairness, when decision-making is removed from the school leadership, when there are no agreements made upfront to be held accountable for clearly defined, articulated, and agreed upon outcomes, and when there is no on-going program for developing leadership and management capacities, all the conditions are in place to encourage poor leadership and lack of accountability. The time is opportune to re-examine the role of the school principal in an innovation process and define clearly what school leadership means and what this looks like in practice. Committing to this exercise with school boards, the Inspectorate and the Dept. of Education is an opportunity to design a framework of expectations and desired outcomes that a school principal can be held accountable for along with training in the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities to be able to comply.

School Boards: Supporting Instructional Leadership

- 2.115 Sharp criticism from the secondary education level SWOT analysis pointed to schools not being held accountable for the education that they deliver—there seem to be no sanctions for poor performance:

“geen sancties, scholen worden niet verantwoordelijk gehouden voor het onderwijs dat zij verzorgen/bieden in de scholen.”¹⁷

This perception raises the question, who is responsible for holding the school accountable? The law is very clear about this:

“Zij (de directeur en de inspecteur) trachten de bloei van het kleuteronderwijs te bevorderen door overleg met de besturen en het personeel van de openbare en bijzondere scholen.” (Art. 74 Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs. This same text appears in Art. 86 Landsverordening basisonderwijs and Art. 99 Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs)

The school board, the school principals and the classroom teachers are the critical operational triangle responsible for ensuring that education improves in its performance—more precisely, that students learn and succeed. The Inspectorate and the Dept. of Education are key partners in a continued dialogue and collaborative process for ensuring that this triangle succeeds in developing students who learn and succeed.

¹⁷ “no sanctions, schools are not held accountable for the education that they provide/offer in the schools.”

- 2.116 Ultimately, school boards are responsible and accountable for the quality of education in their schools by the quality of their management of their schools. School boards run the school buildings and materials; they hire the teachers and the school principals, discipline, sanction and fire them¹⁸; and they are in charge of the financial management of the budget. However, School Boards depend completely on financial resources from the Government to deliver good quality education and training. The accountability taskforce feedback is that the subsidy amount from government is insufficient to cover the ever increasing cost of running schools. In addition, school boards are faced with a number of limitations such as lack of professional capacity and know how and basic tools and instruments to conduct basic human resource functions like evaluation, coaching, and disciplining of personnel. As an employer, school boards also lack a basic human resources policy that provides guidelines for rewards and recognition for good performance or discipline and sanctions for poor performance; or a career path for mobility and growth. To be able to properly manage teachers and school principals is a key prerequisite for motivating the nation's workforce towards increased professionalism and excellence.
- 2.117 The opportunity exists now at the point of re-energizing the innovation journey for school boards too to become learners and see themselves as key partners with teachers and principals in helping all students learn and succeed. The opportunity exists now to re-examine the role and responsibility of the school board in safeguarding quality in our schools. To do this, they themselves will need to become more familiar with student-centered education and commit to serving the needs of the learner and ensure that schools get the professional training and development necessary to be able to know how to meet students' needs. It will also require that they place trust in their personnel and provide them with the room to innovate, to learn and to improve. A promising example of this is the teaming up of the SKOA school board with the Cristo Rey primary school and the IPA School of Tomorrow Project continuation in a small scale project where they have collaborated on creating the space for the school to deepen their experience in innovation (see chapter 3 for further elaboration of this small scale innovation project)

¹⁸ The law indicates that the school board can discipline and fire the rector, director, teachers and other personnel: "1. *Het bevoegd gezag benoemt, schorst en ontslaat de rector, de directeur, de leraren en het overige personeel. De benoeming geschiedt zoveel mogelijk in een volledige betrekking.*" (Art. 39 Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs. A similar text appears in Art. 32 Landsverordening basisonderwijs and in Art. 26 Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs).

Overall Insights

“The conditions under which teachers are asked to engage in new practices bear no relationship whatsoever to the conditions required for learning how to implement complex and new practices with success.”

—Richard F. Elmore, Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

“If the public and policy makers want increased attention to academic quality and performance, the quid pro quo is investing in the knowledge and skill necessary to produce it. If educators want legitimacy, purpose and credibility for their work, the quid pro quo is learning to do their work differently and accepting a new model of accountability.”

—Richard F. Elmore, Professor of Educational Leadership at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

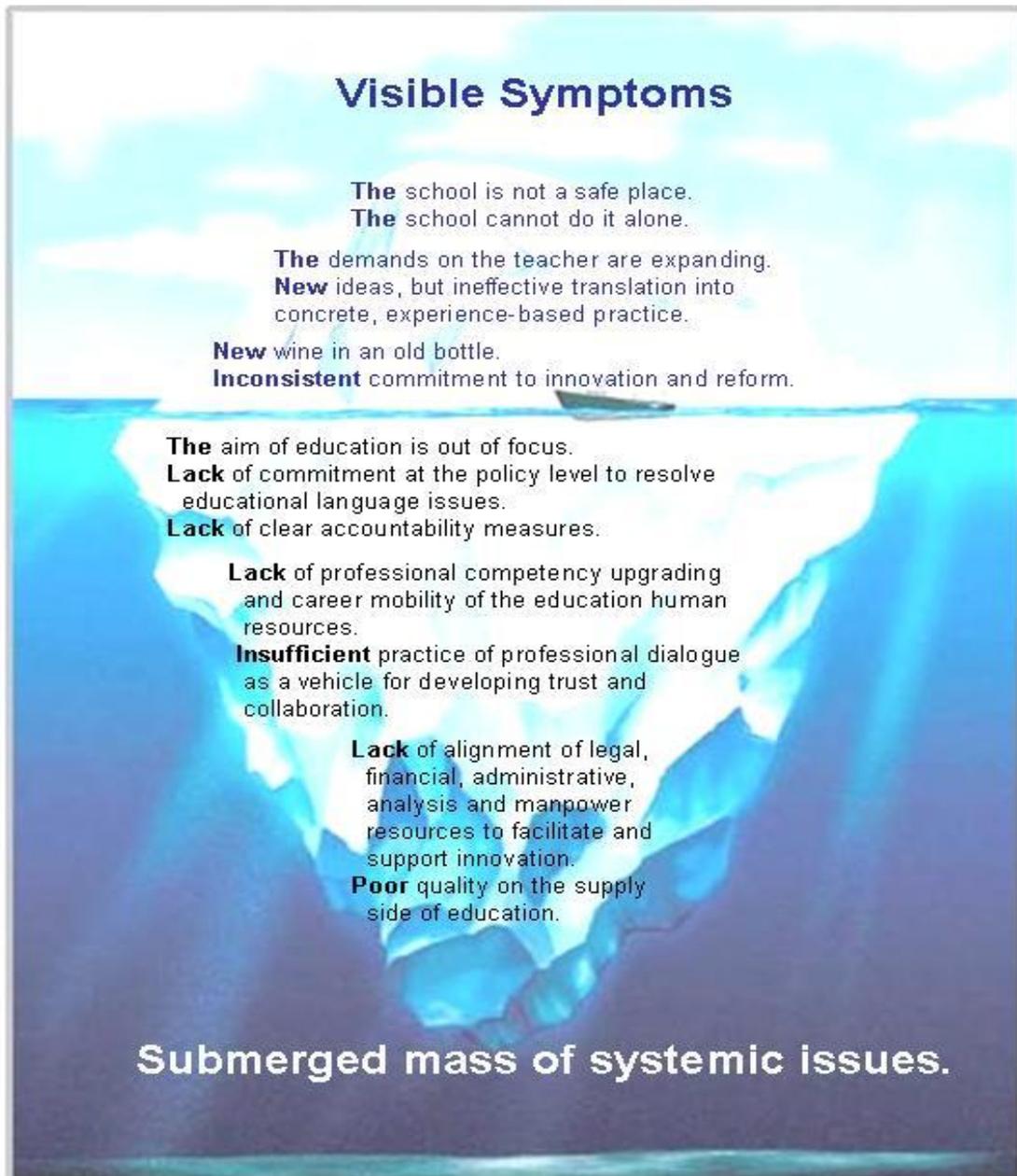
Want to improve schools? Invest in the people who work in them.

—Richard Elmore (2002)

- 2.118 The combined perceptions of stakeholders as well as members of the education community can be summarized by the iceberg metaphor. The tip of the iceberg is what is visible to all. Student, parent, teacher and community perceptions describe what is visible and experienced without an awareness of the causal factors which lie much deeper under the surface. What they see is a rather discouraging picture of the state of affairs in our educational system. The boat of innovation bumps up against what is below the surface and is obstructed by a much larger constraining force of systems issues. Table 3 provides an illustrative summary of perceptions of the current conditions of education which is elaborated below.

TIP OF THE ICEBERG: VISIBLE SYMPTOMS

- 2.119 ***The school is not a safe place.*** Schools seem to have become more unsafe over time, both physically and emotionally. Lack of systematic building maintenance, upkeep and improvement due to budget restrictions have left schools looking dilapidated, neglected and in a state of decay. There are even schools left with health endangering asbestos roofs. Over time, the school has increasingly become a constant target for vandalism and burglary, thereby incurring more building damage and cost.
- 2.120 The emotional climate of schools has also become increasingly unsafe. Especially, the larger schools with over 250 students experience unsafe student habits and behaviors. Focus group participants also report that the large secondary schools are the setting for illegal drugtrafficking by youth drug pushers, violence with gang stand off confrontations, aggressive behavior, and sexual intimidation, especially just before and after schoolhours. Many school staff are not trained in first aid (EHBO) procedures. There is also insufficient first aid resources and material readily available in the school (EHBO material). Student/teacher relationships do not engender emotional safety either. In some schools, confidentiality of student information is violated by student counselors (mentoren). Teachers, students and parents do not complain for fear of retaliation. Teachers lack team spirit—*“everybody works like an island on their own”*. This encourages a culture of stovepipe thinking where none see the big picture any more and have lost sight of the common aim or purpose.



Perceptions of Present Conditions

Table 3. Summary of perceptions of current reality of the educational system.

- 2.121 *The school cannot do it alone.*** Children bring their hopes and dreams, worries and concerns, and unresolved and poorly understood issues to school. It is the place where children, both those from homes where they are supported for school life as well as those from homes where they lack consistent adult care and supervision, come together to undergo the same undifferentiated educational process. Teachers today do not experience a class with students from homogenous backgrounds. The school and their teachers with limited resources and support structures are not capable of effectively handling the varied needs, many times deep emotional needs, of today's students. Parents and the community at large need to become part of the educational process. Schools need support and guidance to provide the best learning environment for their students, not only academically but also in terms of emotional and physical safety.
- 2.122 *The demands on the teacher are expanding.*** The complexity in the student body, the challenges of a modern society, and the innovation demands to be more student-centered puts a heavier burden on the role of the teacher today. The teacher seems to feel besieged by a confluence of pressures that are overwhelming:
- ∴ students whose psycho-emotional issues are beyond their control;
 - ∴ students whose motivational levels are challenging;
 - ∴ more and more students who require more attention because of difficulties at home;
 - ∴ large classes (25+) with widely varying student backgrounds and abilities;
 - ∴ contradictions between the concepts of a new teaching approach (pedagogy and didactics based on student learning and development), the strict requirements of the current curriculum-centered educational system and the lack of concrete, practical examples, on-the-job coaching, support, and guidance;
 - ∴ do more with less (little control over resources available to them to implement innovation);
 - ∴ contradictions between the knowledge of use of modern digital technology and poor, deteriorating work environments in many schools.
- 2.123** Teachers today are required more than ever to do more than just teach their subject; the current make-up of their student body is requiring them more and more to be pedagogues (pedagogen) and help their students become a whole person (participate socially and emotionally in a healthy way). However, they are inadequately prepared, poorly equipped, and insufficiently supported to face the complexity and multiplicity of challenges in today's schools. Teachers need more professional development not only in their subject matter, but in the usage of different teaching strategies, in knowledge of how students learn, and better language proficiency. Teachers also require continuous personal development so that as human beings, they are able to effectively fulfill their new roles as coaches, mentors and facilitators. In this way, a child-centered focus actually requires a deeper development of the teacher as a caring and discerning human being.
- 2.124** The role of the teacher vis-a-vis the student is undeniably shifting. The traditional model of the teacher who transmits knowledge and information in a 1-way direction to a student who passively receives it, fails to engage the students' motivation and responsibility for their own learning. In the shift away from a teacher-centered model, independent learning has been introduced to teachers; however, a lack of sufficient modeling and concrete practices has led many teachers to misinterpret this as less direct teacher guidance of student learning. Because of this unchecked and uncorrected interpretation, independent learning has acquired the unfortunate reputation among teachers, students and parents alike as "*pa bo cuenta*" (loose translation: *figure it out yourself*). With no oversight/corrective

responsibility exercised in the system, this misinterpretation unfortunately becomes the norm and the innovation idea itself becomes discredited.

- 2.125 ***New ideas, but ineffective translation into concrete, experience-based practice.*** Though the new teacher training institute has graduated several generations of teachers and retrained existing teachers in the pedagogy and didactics of student-centered learning, these philosophical underpinnings are still only superficially reflected in today's approach to education. A large reason for this may be very well attributed to the fact that the IPA institute itself is still very much "leerstof" oriented, focusing predominantly on the theories and concepts of developmental teaching and learning. The institute has a large body of professionals who tend to be more theorists than practitioners with extensive first-hand practical, experiential knowledge of the new pedagogies of learning. Student-centered innovation models have taken root most extensively at the kindergarten level, because at this level there is no required "leerstofgericht" system. Although they still have many traditional "leerstofgericht" characteristics, they represent a solid and practical first step towards implementing a student-centered approach to education.
- 2.126 Knowledge of the terminology may exist, but the practical application based on a deep understanding of the nature of knowledge (that it is something that can be constructed), a view of teaching as a way of creating an environment that encourages learning, and knowledge of how people really learn is both inconsistently and insufficiently present in the classroom. The shift away from a teacher- and curriculum-centered, "chalk and talk" teaching methodology method to a student-learning focus is neither uniformly nor widely implemented. The time has come for teachers and schools to learn through doing and watching (from experienced implementers modeling, showing and continuously coaching), not just listening to theory only.
- 2.127 ***New wine in an old bottle.*** Most of the reform has focused on innovating the core processes of education: curriculum, teaching, assessment. However, though new curricula consisting of more context relevant and newer, modern content have been developed for the different educational levels, the focus still seems to be largely on covering the material to meet the test date. Though educational core processes such as curriculum content and structure and instruction/learning methodologies have undergone reform, these are not aligned to its testing procedures. Traditional pen and paper testing of subject material is still predominant and even translated from existing Dutch tests, just replacing context specific items. Performance assessment and authentic assessment have not yet become a substantive part of the innovation to match changes in curriculum.
- 2.128 Though the ideas of reform aimed at promoting independence, critical thinking, and active learning stem from an information and technological era, the structure within which these new ideas must be implemented is still very much anchored in an industrial era that aims primarily to instill uniformity, conformity, and discipline. Children are still fit into a curriculum-focused (albeit more contextualized and localized), graded, conveyor belt system (leerstofjaarklassysteem) dominated by a timetable of discrete 45 minute units per subject (rooster). Though the educational structure now has a Ciclo Basico for ages 12-14/15, this foundational cycle is still tracked along separate vocational and secondary education lines, i.e., Ciclo Basico EPB, and MAVO/HAVO combined. The original idea was to offer a foundational cycle for the ages 12-14/15 with the same curriculum across the board. Today, the EPB curriculum has a more vocational focus whilst the MAVO/HAVO Ciclo Basico curriculum is more academic and theoretical. The first was designed largely by EPB teachers with a vocational focus; the second was designed largely by general secondary education teachers. In the translation of SHO innovation ideas into implementation, the original intent of a common foundational core shifted.

- 2.129 **Inconsistent commitment to innovation and reform.** The skepticism, which tends to accompany innovation ideas, often leads to inconsistent commitment throughout the system. Surface changes are made, but deep changes are left untouched. Although student compositions and make-up as well as student needs have changed, the teaching approach and view of students (as empty vessels to be filled) have largely remained the same. Classes used to be boring 2 decades ago; today they are still experienced as painfully boring.
- 2.130 Inconsistent commitment is also manifested in insufficiently thought out execution. Student care systems were introduced but professional manpower capacity remains insufficient to effectively address the volume of student needs. Though some new computer technology has been introduced, some school buildings do not have sufficient electrical carrying capacity or technical capability on premises to manage the new technology. Nor is technology used as an integrated part of the new methodologies of teaching and learning. As a result, the opportunity to capitalize on the inherent power of technology to enhance and promote the new pedagogies of teaching and learning is largely lost. Instead technology tends to be applied as a modern substitution for the traditional stand and deliver modality of teaching (power point slide presentation instead of blackboard). There, where technology has been introduced, vandalism and theft become another unexpected challenge for the school. Sustainable options for proper maintenance of the technology have also not been properly addressed.
- 2.131 Through innovation, many changes have been introduced; however, the concrete translation from theoretical models into actual, workable practice has proven to be an enormous challenge. In the absence of best practice models, experienced implementers to show the way, on-the-job coaching and guidance, and a lack of structural supports, schools have found it extremely difficult to implement changes at a profound level. New teaching methods may have been introduced, but there is no indication of a solid, clear understanding for their rationale and benefit. In addition, the innovation strategy itself was large-scale and did not consider small try-outs first to gain experience and make necessary adjustments. As a result, skepticism around change efforts have not abated but may even have increased as perceptions of ineffective execution and translation of innovation ideas spread.

SUBMERGED MASS OF SYSTEMIC ISSUES

- 2.132 **The aim of education is out of focus.** Organizations and the education system no less, are subject to all sorts of currents that will take them off course. These currents can be complex and can run deep. Unless an organization knows exactly where it is headed, fully commits resources to this aim, has the capabilities and know-how of how to get there, and holds those responsible accountable for getting there, these currents will take them off course. So too with the innovation journey in Aruba. Along the way, the North Star of where the innovation was headed was lost sight of and compromises were made in response to system push-backs. The result today is an odd hybrid or perhaps better said a misfit that delivers neither the promised results of better student achievement nor provides the major stakeholders with any sense of satisfaction or confidence in this “*in-between*” educational system. Teachers, students, and schools are caught between an innovation paradigm that promotes the ideal of a student-centered approach to education (*leerlinggericht*) and an execution reality that operates within the confines of a textbook focused, teacher centered graded system approach. (*leerstof, leraar gericht leerstofjaarklassysteem*).

- 2.133 **Lack of commitment at the policy level to resolve educational language issues.** In addition to this major dichotomy faced by education today, there is an unresolved matter that complicates the above dilemma even more. That is the lack of an established, agreed upon and uniformly enforced language of instruction policy. This core instructional issue has appeared consistently in all focus groups and taskforce work as a deeply exasperating concern, underscored by the observation that “*taalbeleid is leerbeleid*”¹⁹ and that “*taalzwak betekent slechtere studieresultaten*”²⁰. Highlighted by both the educational and non-educational community, it deserves desperate attention. The current language situation is referred to as a “*free-for-all*”, meaning that many teachers use either Dutch or Papiamentu interchangeably at all educational levels. The arbitrary usage of Papiamentu as a language of instruction in the classrooms at all school levels leads to confusion among teachers, students, and their parents. The argument can be made that teachers revert to Papiamentu to ensure that students understand; however, these good intentions unfortunately do not improve the student’s required understanding of Dutch in order to be successful learners in our schools. Providing instructional programs to improve Dutch proficiency for all students in Aruba and not just the foreign language speakers (*anderstaligen*), such as expanding the successful PRISMA²¹ project, has been voiced as a much more effective alternative. Educational psychology and development research have long indicated that language learning and literacy development are at the heart of the learning process for all students. Critical and creative thinking skills are mediated through language.
- 2.134 **Lack of clear accountability measures.** Concerns exist about the dangers of mediocrity encouraged by a weak if not non-existent accountability culture in the education sector. Teachers are not held accountable for student performance. The pay structure for teachers does not reflect accountability measures — excellence is not rewarded and poor performance or negligent behaviors are allowed to persist without either correction or penalty. A case in point is the IPA Teacher Training Institute where assigned teacher workloads remain unfulfilled yet are fully compensated—this with full awareness of peers and management. School principals are not held accountable by their school boards either for student performance. School boards are not held accountable by the community or the central management (Inspectorate and Dept. of Education) for how their hired staff and schools perform. And neither the Inspectorate nor the Dept. of Education is accountable to those above or below for their policies, actions, and behaviors. The results of a lack of accountability measures across the system is reflected in student results and stakeholder perceptions enumerated in the previous sections of this chapter. For example, grade inflation of primary education graduates was expressed as a serious concern among participants. Parents and educators alike are aware that the value of end-of-school grades varies in value depending on the school. It is known that not all students entering the 1st year of Colegio Arubano are prepared to remain. Some are returned to the MAVO and even to the EPB (data of trend and numbers are not available at this time).
- 2.135 The perception exists that leadership at all levels of the system (central management, school board level, school level) is insufficiently focused on the development, improvement, and success of student learning. Because of this lack of focus, direction and

¹⁹ “language policy is learning policy” (this was feedback from the Vocational Education SWOT analysis group).

²⁰ “a weakness in language (Dutch) translates into poor academic results” (this was feedback from the Vocational Education SWOT analysis group).

²¹ The PRISMA project is a Dutch as a foreign language instructional program that was provided to children whose mother language was other than Dutch. Based on verbal accounts of teachers and parents as well as professionals in the field, this program was deemed highly successful. The irony was that foreign speakers ended up commanding the Dutch language much faster and better than the Aruban children themselves who have had a much longer exposure to Dutch. The program is currently suspended and PRISMA project teachers have been re-assigned to other duties. It is at this time not clear why such a successful program has been terminated.

aim, there is a wide degree of freedom for actors to act without being accountable to their peers and superiors. The Education Inspectorate represents the execution arm of quality control, yet is perceived to be out of step with innovation practices in the classroom. In fact, they are often seen to be at odds with the goals of innovation which in turn ends up creating tension and frustration in the field. The Dept. of Education is the other external arm responsible for quality control, but is perceived as far removed from the concerns of the field and more focused on its own bureaucratic imperatives. Though teachers have been re-trained and re-formed, there is no human resources policy or accountability system that recognizes them for performance and merit. Outstanding teachers as well as poorly performing teachers receive the same pay. Structural conditions that neither reward nor recognize willingness to innovate or high performance do not serve to motivate a workforce. Without a crystal clear focus on what really matters, everyone falls back on default mode and conforms to existing bureaucratic rules, regulations and imperatives. The aim of focusing on student success, rallying all the resources necessary to ensure that all students learn and teachers are supported to help students learn and holding them accountable is insufficiently present.

- 2.136 The lack of accountability robs everyone in the system of the opportunity to learn, correct, and improve their performance. A very simple way of thinking of accountability is “show and tell”, like children love to do. A pre-requisite of “show and tell”, however, is an agreed upon goal, aim, or focus against which the product can be measured. Participants have pointed out rightly that it will require that all actors in the system come together to dialogue professionally, set clear expectations, come to common agreements on goals to achieve, and devise measures to make sure they know what is achieved. Accountability, however, will need to go hand in hand with providing all actors with the right information, tools and skills to be able to competently execute what is expected from them. As Richard F. Elmore states based on research into the effects of reform on classroom practice:

“Accountability must be a reciprocal process. For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation. Likewise, for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increment in performance. This is the principle of “reciprocity of accountability for capacity”. It is the glue that, in the final analysis, will hold accountability systems together” (Elmore, 2000).

- 2.137 **Lack of professional competency upgrading and career mobility of the education human resources.** Professional development is undervalued, and when it’s done, it is haphazard or detached from classrooms. A 1-day professional training is organized in May yearly, but it does not seem to be part of a systematic program of professional development tied directly to the needs of innovation or to remedy issues or challenges that have emerged as a result of innovation practices in the field. Professional development should be focused directly on improving and refining the teaching and learning practice and refining teachers’ knowledge and skills. The feedback from teachers has been repeatedly that they want clearer guidelines, want to be seen as professionals, nurture their knowledge and skills, have possibilities for mobility in their career, and be compensated accordingly for their performance. The lack of investment in competency development and upgrading of the entire educator and administrative workforce poses a serious threat to the quality of education and future workforce of Aruba. Focusing professional development on raising the knowledge and skills in teaching and learning among teachers; and how to guide teaching and learning among the educational leadership and administration must be a human resources priority.
- 2.138 **Insufficient practice of professional dialogue as a vehicle for developing trust and collaboration.** Educational laws stipulate dialogue among professionals (overleg) as the vehicle for key education actors (the Inspectorate, the Dept. of Education, school boards,

school principal and staff) to come together to promote the quality of education. Feedback on the participatory process indicated the value of stakeholders coming together to be heard and to have a structured opportunity to voice concerns and ideas. The importance of communication as a vehicle for developing trust and collaboration for the benefit of a common goal cannot be underestimated. The lack of communication is sorely felt and leads to distrust slowing down decisions and actions. Recent research in new models of educational leadership point out that because education tends to operate in isolation, it is imperative that educational management and professional development activities are specifically designed to connect teachers, principals, professional developers, and administrators with each other and with outside experts around specific problems of practice (Ellmore, 2000).

- 2.139 Though it may seem daunting to open up communication, share information, direction and goals within a politicized and investigative climate such as the current one in government, it is a viable way out. Doing business as usual will only give us the same results, and these results have already been cited in the last 2 sections as undesirable and deplorable. **Taking the risk to be honest about short-comings is a pre-requisite attitude and behavior to beginning to shift the system.** Within a politicized government bureaucracy in a small state like Aruba this is indeed not a small risk. But keeping an open dialogue and communication vertically and horizontally with people both internal and external to the organization on what we want to achieve and how we can accomplish it together seems to be the first step in setting up a culture of accountability²². Ingstrup and Crookall's study on well-performing public organizations reveal dialogue as the major factor in developing and sustaining excellence—taking the pains to communicate up and down, internal and external to the organization—and doing so almost ad nauseum. This practice was the foundation for building trust in well-performing public organizations and is considered today by management gurus as the glue to achieving excellence in any organization²³.
- 2.140 **Lack of alignment of legal, financial, administrative, analysis and manpower resources to facilitate and support innovation.** System push-back occurs when the conventional ways of administration and management limits or poses constraints on innovation processes which by nature call for new and untried ways of doing things. Failure to galvanize critical actors at the administrative and management levels of the need for and educational benefits of innovation have allowed for contradictions to emerge and persist. It is clear that a re-invigoration of the educational journey will need to involve major dialogue among the educational and administrative leadership on how to continue the innovation journey in a way so that students learn and succeed, and teachers have the competencies required to help their students really learn. Organizational assessments of the Inspectorate and the Dept. of Education are in order to recommend re-alignment of critical functions to achieving the newly articulated educational vision (see chapter 3) and goals (see chapter 4).
- 2.141 **Poor quality on the supply side of education.** Because the quality of education has major social and economic implications for the quality of Aruba's workforce and economic productivity, it is imperative that the major institution delivering Aruba's teaching workforce provides a quality teaching force. The general perception of the IPA Teacher Training Institute is that it falls short in supplying the kind of qualified teachers necessary to support innovation. An organizational assessment of the IPA is in order to recommend the best

²² Considered in a landmark study, *The Three Pillars of Public Management* by Ingstrup, Ole & Paul Crookall examine how public service departments and organizations in 14 countries were able to achieve and sustain excellence in organizational performance.

²³ Covey, Stephen M. R. (2006). *The Speed of Trust*. N.Y., N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, Inc. This leadership and management book focuses on the economics trust and its impact on individuals, organizations and society: high trust based on personal character and competencies helps to increase the speed with which decisions can be made and acted upon, lower cost, and improve results in all areas. Distrust ends up being expensive.

structure possible to guarantee that Aruba can count on a qualified educator workforce to achieve its new educational vision (see chapter 3).

ONWARD AND FORWARD ...

- 2.142 Today the journey of the Aruban educational innovation stands at a critical juncture. There can be no turning back the clock. We live in a digital era and our times demand that we prepare our children for an increasingly complex, interconnected and expanding world. Not to clarify our resolve to be laser-focused on the learner and align all our systems to commit to support this focus will mean condemning more generations of children to failure. This is a loss that our families and our community cannot continue to afford. We also have a responsibility to the taxpayers to be accountable for the results of what happens or does not happen in schools. The time has come to re-energize the journey of innovation and re-commit to focusing on the learner and what it takes to really make a learner successful.
- 2.143 The next chapter takes this journey of innovation onward and forward with a newly expressed vision that gives direction and a framework of principles that creates a mindset with which to continue traveling addressing both the tip and the bottom of the iceberg.

3. Focus on Opportunity

“There is a major shift taking place in the world of education—a transition from a quantitative approach to a qualitative one; from a focus on teaching memorizing to teaching thinking; from learning facts to learning life skills.”

—T.L. Holdstock, 1986

“The ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity.”

—Ayn Rand
(Russian born American Writer and Novelist, 1905-1982)

- 3.1 Historically and collectively in the Western world, we are at a point where we have more knowledge and evidence about how to implement student-centered principles and develop alignment with teachers, principals, and central administration. Model practices exist that can be tapped into, learned from, and built on. The best organizations always turn to the market place to see what is out there that can be used to inspire new ideas. Benchmarking and searching for examples with tested and proven successes help to expand knowledge and information so that we avoid reinventing the wheel and can, instead, leapfrog from our current situation into a desired state.
- 3.2 The opportunity lies in realizing that we have tried, in many cases, extremely hard and creatively and not without some success; but that we need to move into a next phase where we need expertise from those who have successful experiences creating learner-centered education systems and practices with proven results. We have arrived at a place where we must realize that we ourselves must learn to be learner-focused in order to deliver learner-focused education. Plainly said, we have been *“talking the talk”*, now we must seek to learn how to collectively *“walk the talk”*. We can only do this if we commit whole-heartedly to focusing on the learner, profoundly understand the philosophical underpinnings of a learner-centered approach to education, align our management system to support this mindset and hold each other accountable, and learn from others who are already doing this successfully.
- 3.3 This chapter introduces the new North Star for education collectively crafted, revised, and refined in the last months of 2006. This new vision provides the focal point for everyone to work together on to reach. The road towards the vision is paved with 7 design principles that represent the specifications as it were, for rethinking, redesigning and managing our education. They are presented with their legal indications as to what extent they are provided for by law. Finally, in this chapter the findings of the Best Practices taskforce, formed in the early part of 2007 to explore and benchmark student-centered educational innovation experiences internationally as well as locally, are reported. The benefit of their explorations is that it allows for learning and offering options for where and whom to go to for guidance. Figure 4 provides an illustrative representation of the new education vision 2017 and the road ahead paved with 7 design principles.

7 Design Principles Road to Aruba Education Vision 2017

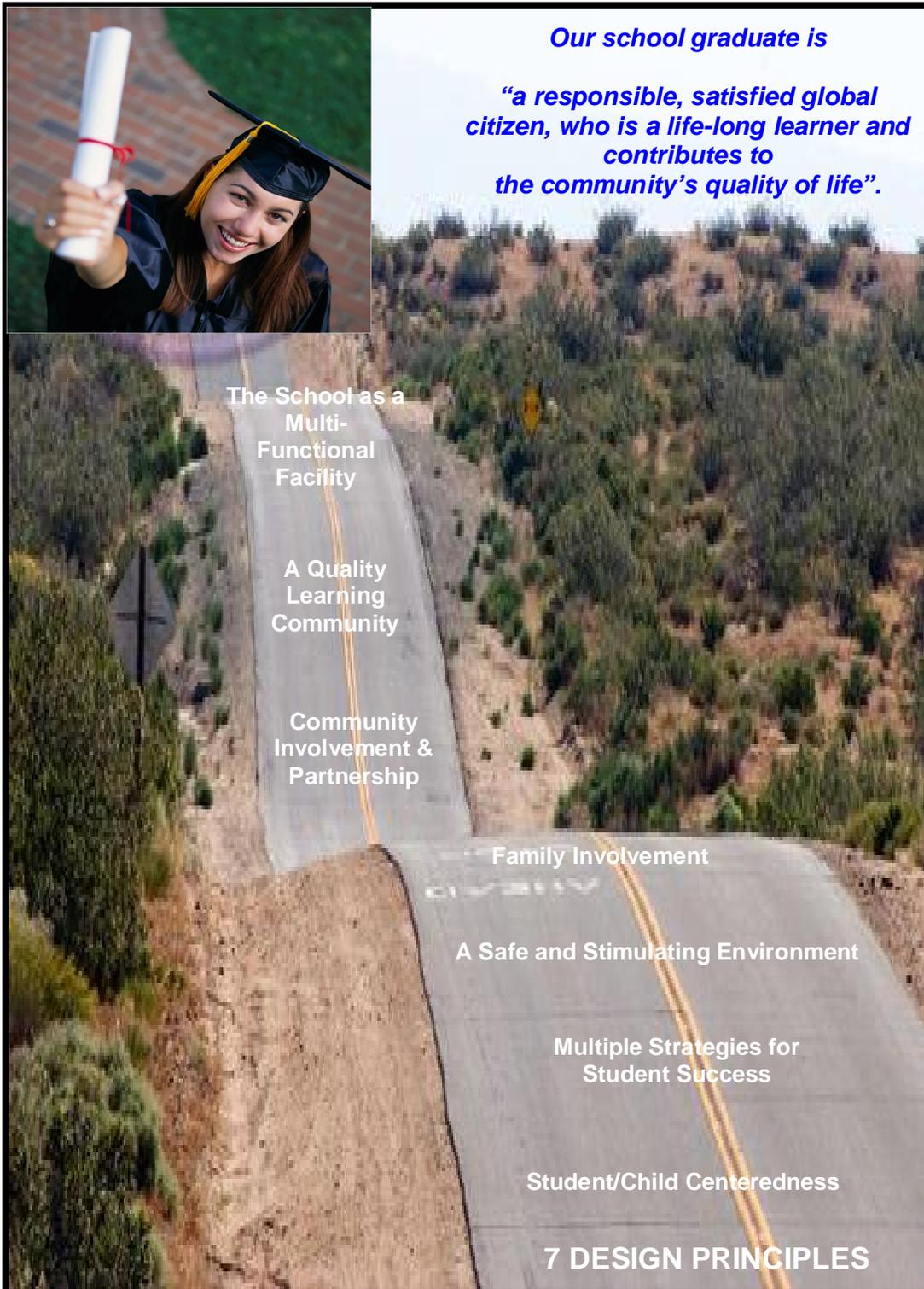


Figure 4. Design Principles for Re-Invigorating the Aruba Education Innovation Journey

Aruba Education 2017: A New Vision

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

—King Solomon, Proverbs 29:18

- 3.4 Articulating and communicating a national vision for education focuses the entire education apparatus into one direction. This vision is the North Star for keeping the education ship on course. The new North Star for the Aruba education ship was crafted by over 200 people in response to this question: *“What do you want our future school graduate to look like 10 years from now?”* Their answer was:

“a responsible, satisfied, global citizen, who is a life-long learner and contributes to the community’s quality of life”.

This is the direction that is articulated and tested again by another 100 or more. This tells us what kind of student we want, what kind of learning we expect, and what kind of contribution we can benefit from in the future.

- 3.5 This vision of a global citizen reflects today’s interconnected, global reality and differs from the over 30-year old vision of creating a good citizen, currently still a legally stated outcome of education as stipulated in the primary education laws originating in the Netherlands Antilles educational perspective (Landsverordening basisonderwijs, een geldende tekst). The new vision of a global citizen, interestingly enough, signals an expanded focus from, almost exclusively, Arubanizing the citizen to one of developing a global citizen. According to the Laws and Policies Taskforce, current laws provide sufficient latitude for the new education 2017 vision to be implemented as interpreted from the following legal text:

Ten behoeve van de bijzondere inrichting van het onderwijs kan de Minister goedkeuren dat wordt afgeweken van de bij of krachtens deze landsverordening gegeven voorschriften. (Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs, art. 14; Landsverordening basisonderwijs, art. 18; and Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs, art. 28)

- 3.6 What the vision means in concrete terms (na placa chiquito) was something another 100 participants in a final national planning conference in April, 2007 were asked to articulate. They spelled out the new vision as follows:

A global citizen

- ∴ is like a cat that falls on her paws no matter where you throw her (old Aruban saying);
- ∴ can communicate well in 4 languages (Papiamento, Dutch, English, Spanish);
- ∴ displays proficiency in technical skills (telephone, computer), as well as academic, social and communication skills;

Ciudadano Global

- E ta manera pushi cu unda bo tire e ta cay riba su pianan.
- E por comunica bon den 4 idioma (Papiamento, Hulandes, Ingles, Spaño)
- E ta domina skilnan tecnico (sa con pa usa computer y telefon), academico, social, y di comunicacion
- E ta bon informa y sa con pa busca informacion
- E tin miras mundial
- E sa y ta compronde loke ta pasa den mundo rond di dje

- ∴ seeks to be informed and knows how to look for information;
- ∴ has a global outlook;
- ∴ knows and understands what is going on around him or her; and
- ∴ shows flexibility in the face of change and is able to adapt to different situations.

A responsible citizen:

- ∴ listens to other points of view, and shows ability to deal with consequences;
- ∴ takes into is able to defend his or her point of view with good information account herself/himself, others, and the environment in every action and behavior; and
- ∴ shows the ability to start and finish work to achieve that which is good for the self as well as for the larger community.

A satisfied citizen:

- ∴ is confident and content with self and her/his environment;
- ∴ feels good about own achievements, in the past, present and future;
- ∴ is content and proud about own abilities, what she/he knows and is at present, and what she/he can achieve in the future;
- ∴ achieves her/his goal, expresses and accepts herself/himself as she/he is and is accepted as is by others.

A life-long learner:

- ∴ has kept the desire to learn more, know more, and keep on progressing.

Contributes to the community's quality of life:

- ∴ gives and helps in the community with all that is good.

3.7 More than anyone in the focus groups, it was the youth who reflected an unusual depth of understanding of this 2017 education vision. Here is how a primary education student described “global”:

“...e mucha mester sa mas over di locual ta pasando den mundo, pa nan sa cu no ta nan so ta na mundo. Y tambe pa nan por duna un tiki di nan mes.”²⁴

²⁴ “... the child must know more about what is happening in the world, so they understand that they are not the only ones in the world. And also so they understand they can give a little of themselves”.

Responsabel

- Ta defende su punto di bista cu bon informacion y ta scucha esun di otro, y sa carga consecucionan
- Den tur locual e ta haci, e ta tene cuenta cu su mes, cu otro y cu naturalesa
- Ta cuminsa y caba cu un trabao pa logra locual cu ta bon pa su mes y pa su comunidad

Satisfecho

- E ta sigur y contento di su mes y di su ambiente
- E ta sinti bon cu su mes pa locual e la logra, e ta logra y lo logra
- E ta contento y orguyoso cu locual e por, locual e sa y ta, y cu locual e por logra
- E ta logra su meta, expresa su mes, acepta su mes manera e ta y ta wordu accepta manera e ta

Ta Siña pa Bida Largo

- E ta keda cu gana di siña mas, pa sa mas, y pa sigui progresa

Contribui na Mehoracion di Calidad di Bida di su Comunidad

- E ta duna y yuda comunidad (tur hende rond di dje) cu tur loke ta bon

This is what a secondary education student wrote on lifelong learning:

“Mundo ta cambia asina lihe y pa bo pertenece na e mundo moderno abo mester keda upgrade bo mes via cursus y tambe concentra riba bo formacion personal.”²⁵

Having an articulated vision for education that the entire education community and their partners can rally behind is the first important step to re-energizing our innovation journey. It provides not only a much needed direction, but a reference point against which we can measure progress and make corrections if we are heading off-course.

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES FOR 2017

- 3.8 The participatory planning process also allowed for a wide community to envision the essential skills, knowledge and attitudes this ideal graduate would need in order to live, work and thrive in 2017. They saw these as critically necessary to be included in today’s curriculum in order to meet the challenges of not only the global reality, but more importantly, the local reality:

Thinking and Learning Skills

- **Global Thinking** – *the graduate is an Olympian thinker, systems thinker; thinks critically, problem solves and creates solutions.*
- **Effective Communication Skills** – *the graduate is a multilingual person who can read, write, speak proficiently in at least four languages, Papiamentu, English, Dutch and Spanish; and observes, listens, and articulates thoughts well.*
- **Ability to Work in a Team** – *the graduate collaborates, demonstrates respect for one another, shares and helps each other, and gives and takes feedback.*
- **Flexibility and creativity** – *the graduate shows openness and responsiveness to new and diverse perspectives and demonstrates originality and inventiveness in work.*
- **Initiative** – *the graduate demonstrates ability to define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight.*

Life Skills

- **Leadership skills** – *the graduate is able to mobilize others to achieve a common goal and is able to use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to serve the benefit of the whole rather than just self-benefit.*
- **Ability to apply knowledge into practice** – *the graduate is able translate knowledge and ideas in practical ways.*
- **Effective and productive work habits** – *the graduate is punctual and reliable, and is able to use time efficiently and manage workload effectively.*
- **Ambition and self-driven** – *the graduate demonstrates initiative to advance professional skill and knowledge levels.*
- **Positive mental attitude and behavior** – *the graduate demonstrates ability to focus on the future, on solutions, and look for the good as well as valuable lessons in any situation.*

²⁵ “The world changes so fast and for you to belong to this modern world, you have to continuously upgrade yourself through courses and also concentrate on your personal development.”

- **Self-confidence and self-motivation**—the graduate demonstrates realistic expectations based on own skills and experience, and puts in the effort and preparation to reach a planned goal.
- **Ability to adapt to change**—the graduate is able to adapt to a variety of roles and responsibilities and meet changing priorities with an ability to tolerate ambiguity.
- **Accountability for own actions**—the graduate makes responsible decisions and creates his/her own solutions to problems.
- **Integrity**—the graduate makes ethically informed judgments and aligns speech with deeds.
- **Social responsibility for civic participation**—the graduate actively offers services for the wellbeing of the (global) community.

ICT Literacy

- **Information and communications technology** — the graduate utilizes the internet as a learning and research tool: knows how to get the right information for study, work, and private use.

Knowledge

- **Global awareness of issues affecting the present and future generations** — the graduate is aware of the world as one interconnected whole and how global issues affect him/her and his/her local community, understands and appreciates intercultural differences between him/her and others; and has a strong national identity.
- **Health, fitness and well-being** — the graduate is capable of making health improving life choices based on exposure to preventive physical and mental health measures, such as healthy diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance and stress reduction and the ability to access health information and services.

3.9 The vision of a life-long learner with these higher order skills of global thinking and working in a team, for example, means that the learner exhibits characteristics of a self-directed learner. This kind of independent learner is far different from the passive learner in the traditional teacher-centered model who is on the receiving end of knowledge and information from the knowledge expert. To achieve this new vision and develop graduates with these kinds of higher order skills will require a re-commitment to a different teaching/learning model that considers knowledge as something other than a commodity that is transmitted from teacher to student.

3.10 Now that we have articulated a national vision, how do we get there? What road do we travel? The next section describes the road paved with 7 design principles for creating both the mindset and conditions necessary to help reach our vision.

Design Principles: “Specs” for a Re-Invigorated System

“Think forward! Concentrate on who you want to be and where you want to go, not on who you were or where you’ve been.”

—Josephson Character Institute, 1942

- 3.11 Based on local knowledge and experience, but also tapping into good or best practices in other parts of the world, a group of 85 participants identified a set of 7 design principles for shaping our thinking about the student, the teacher, the curriculum, the school, the educational management system, the parent and the community. They can be thought of as the “design specs” (*specifications for design, not only physical but also in terms of thinking*) for the kind of renewed outlook and learning environment that will help to travel the path of innovation to our destination, Vision 2017.
- 3.12 In Jan. and Feb., 2007 taskforces on each design principle were formed consisting of professionals from education, private sector and government. Key indicators for each of the 7 design principles were identified and developed into more concrete action steps. Working under severe time constraints, they were able to produce reports that represent a valuable first attempt to collectively think and dialogue together about what these design principles mean in the practical reality and what success would look like. Their reports are included in Appendix II. These taskforce reports were used as source documents for developing objectives and more detailed strategic action plans presented in Appendix I.
- 3.13 An important note is that these 7 design principles were identified not only by educational professionals, but together with a community of non-educators as well. The identified “design specs” are not only considered educationally sound practices, but from the community’s point of view, intuitively sound. The design principles are elaborated below with research supporting evidence indicating their desirability in terms of increasing student success and where possible, indicating the current legal framework permitting its implementation.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1 AND 2: STUDENT CENTEREDNESS AND MULTIPLE LEARNING STRATEGIES

- 3.14 The first design principle states the educational philosophy that puts the student on center stage. Stakeholders highlighted this is as the sorely missing mindset in educational system today. The opportunity exists now to re-focus and set a national direction in terms of what matters most: **student learning**. This can be done by first articulating clearly a national educational philosophy based on a learner-centered focus (*see goal 2a in Appendix I*). The education workforce, teachers, principals, school boards, and all education related administrators need to deeply understand what it means to be learner-centered. Without a vision, people go in different directions. Equally, without a clear mindset, a clear philosophy that gives a foundation, a rationale behind the decisions and the desired behavior, people won’t reach the vision either.
- 3.15 A student focused approach implies that the attention to curriculum content coverage shifts to teachers reaching learning standards (in Dutch: *kerndoelen geven een beschrijving van*

kwaliteiten van leerlingen op het gebied van kennis, inzicht en vaardigheden)²⁶. Learning standards serve as guardrails not only for teachers, but for students, curriculum developers, educators and guidance counselors, education inspectors and others involved in education. Setting learning standards are guided by 2 questions:

- What levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes do we want our students to have acquired and/or developed at different stages of learning? and
- How will we know if we are succeeding?

Answering these questions helps give clarity to what students are expected to know, have as attitude, and demonstrate in terms of skills. To be able to reach the education vision 2017 and develop graduates who demonstrate the new skills, attitudes, and knowledge identified to meet the challenges of the 21st century, will require the development of national learning standards (*see goal 2b in Appendix I*).

- 3.16 We need to use multiple strategies for learning and teaching, so that all student learning styles are addressed, not only those who are linguistically and mathematically gifted. Not all students are good auditory learners; many are visual learners and many more are kinesthetic learners. They learn by doing, by experimenting, by being involved in activities. Design principle 2 involves teachers practicing different ways to ensure that they reach students, so that they learn and continue to learn for life—as said so beautifully in Papiamento “*keda cu e smaak pa keda sinja*.”
- 3.17 The critical role that language plays in developing higher order skills has already been noted earlier in this plan. Ensuring clarity in the educational language policy of the country is a priority to ensure that students have the tools to access higher learning skills like critical and creative thinking.
- 3.18 Studies worldwide suggest that student achievement is the most strongly influenced by the quality of teachers (UNESCO, 2005; School Redesign Network @ Stanford University). Preparation in training and placing more highly qualified teachers to work with students seems to pay off in terms of better student results. Research indicates that a focus on three key areas lead to equipping a teacher with the necessary knowledge, resources, and skills to work with students effectively: (1) their subject matter; (2) the needs of diverse learners; and (3) the learning process. If the teacher is to ensure that all students who learn in different ways or who have different challenges are successful, then being an expert in one’s subject matter alone is not enough. Teachers need to know about child and adolescent development, how they learn differently, their culture and language experiences and how all of these affect how they approach school and learning. Finally, teachers need to know what motivates students to learn, how they learn differently, and the critical role that language plays in learning. People are different and they learn differently. In addition, teachers need to be proficient in the language of instruction, Papiamento and Dutch. When teachers are ill-prepared or insufficiently prepared, student success cannot be an expected outcome.
- 3.19 Focusing on clearly explicating what we mean by a learner-centered focus and multiple teaching strategies to honor student learning differences has major implications for how we prepare our teacher workforce. A workshop or a seminar once or twice a year, without follow-up or guidance, is inadequate preparation for helping teachers expand beyond the “chalk and talk” method. To reach the vision of creating a life-long learner is not possible if we continue to rely solely on a teacher centered or curriculum centered model. For teachers to have access to a wide repertoire of teaching strategies that cater both to effective individual as well as small or large group learning, they need to have

²⁶ Source: “Tussendoelen en leerlijnen als concretisering van kerndoelen”, 2007, <http://tule.slo.nl>.

concrete, practical examples, on-the-job coaching, guidance, and continuous professional development (see goal 3 in Appendix I). Ideally, they also benefit invaluable

| | DESIGN PRINCIPLE | KEY INDICATORS: |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | <p>Student/Child Centeredness The focus is on student learning and development, not only the book or test. This is educational thinking guided by human development priorities, rather than factory, conveyor-belt production and efficiency priorities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interdisciplinary, meaningful curriculum that can be adapted to fit the needs of each child. - Diverse forms of evaluating achievement based on multiple intelligences and national standards of learning. - Comprehensive student/child care programs. - High teacher competency levels (subject knowledge and human development processes). - Students actively engaged in their learning process. |
| 2 | <p>Multiple Strategies for Student Success The focus is on maximizing the different learning styles of the student and organizing effective ways for both individual and group learning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different learning styles are catered to. - Teacher invests in getting to know the student. - Student is able to self-regulate and take control of own learning. - Curriculum is aligned vertically (across years) and horizontally (across subjects). - Curriculum is integrated in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. |
| 3 | <p>A Safe and Stimulating Environment. The focus is on creating both physical and emotional safety in the school.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School is secure, maintained, clean, and safe. - Building is attractive and gives a sense of belonging. - Student feels safe, included and responsible for school activities and climate. - Team spirit among teachers, staff and school leadership. - Relationships are warm and personal. - Up to date equipment and technology present. |
| 4 | <p>Family Involvement. The focus is on inviting parents/guardians to be actively engaged in their children's learning and in the school.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents assist in the classroom - Parents are well-informed about school activities - There is an active parent association (oudercommissie) |
| 5 | <p>Community Involvement & Partnership. The focus is on engaging community to participate, cooperate and support school goals as a partner.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are internships. - There is in-classroom assistance. - Real-life community settings in school. - Assistance in infrastructure. - Financial assistance. - After school day care. |
| 6 | <p>A Quality Learning Community. The focus is on seeking to learn together and improve our schools and the educational management system by using, for example, quality system principles and processes: 1) leadership; 2) information, analysis and planning; 3) human resources; 4) core educational processes; 5) results; and 6) customer satisfaction.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A culture of continuous development is in place. - Infrastructure and facilities are dynamic and future-oriented. - Learning opportunities for all age groups. - A teacher care system exists in all schools. - An educational quality system exists in all schools. |
| 7 | <p>The School as a Multi-Functional Facility. The focus is on using the school building to serve the community beyond school hours.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quiet, temperature regulated classrooms and library with computers. - A free-functioning space for parents, students and teachers. - The school is available for after-school activities. - User-friendly facilities. |

Figure 5. Design Principles and their Key Indicators

from witnessing experienced or master teachers modeling the desired teaching behavior in another setting, perhaps on a fieldtrip to a model school abroad. This is a kind of holistic adult learning experience that is proven to be more effective and memorable than a lecture or presentation. At this moment of writing, the IPA is continuing together with a primary school to develop a small scale innovation project, where the school is focusing on developing a learner-centered approach to education and the IPA is providing a professional development ground for its teacher trainees. This kind of project represents a promising implementation example of these 2 design principles.

- 3.20 Considering and utilizing multiple strategies for student success so that all children can learn has serious implications for how we use staff and organize the class schedule to support a learner-centered approach to learning (see goal 2a in Appendix I). This will mean a consideration of smaller class sizes, teaching blocks longer than 45 minutes and fewer courses (*this is a recommended best practice based on research conducted by the School Redesign Network of Stanford University, California*). Experiences with the success and failure of innovation efforts teach us that small scale innovation projects are valuable for trying out first in order to learn, correct, succeed and then expand the new improved generation.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3: A SAFE AND STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

- 3.21 Design principle 3 directs our focus to conditions in the school that are physically as well as emotionally safe for children and older students. A physical environment is an important factor in a student's sense of care and belonging to his learning environment. The school building and grounds should be well-maintained and well-lit and have good ventilation. Security measures should be carefully selected to balance the need for a safe environment against the need for a comfortable and inviting learning environment. (Voke, 2002, Feb.) This is a necessity, not a luxury.
- 3.22 Recent education research indicates a strong link between physical health and academic success: "Substance abuse, lack of breakfast, the availability of illicit drugs on school property, and a perceived lack of safety at school have particularly strong relationships to students' poorer school performance" (ASCD, 2007, p. 13). Every school has students who can't quite keep up with the pace of the curriculum, and who feel lonely, excluded, and invisible. In many classes, these students may be many more than just 1 or 2. Secondary schools, especially the very large sized ones like EPB and Colegio Arubano Playa harbor illegal youth drug trafficking, promiscuity, and gang standoffs. The extent to which teachers, school principals, school boards, parents and the wider community and central administration are willing to face this reality of youth behavior will determine how safe our schools are for our children. If we are to achieve the vision 2017 of developing citizens who can contribute to the quality of life of their community, we must first work towards safeguarding an emotionally and physically safe learning environment for our students. Model schools provide students and staff with programs to develop skills, attitudes, and behaviors that help create a safe environment, such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, crucial conversations, self-esteem enhancement, and so on. The programs of personal development, for example, provided by EDUCARE to EPB and EPI vocational schools several years ago are still remembered today by the participating staff as immensely valuable in helping them understand and deal with their students better.
- 3.23 Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs highlights that people need to have their basic needs of physical and emotional safety and security satisfied first before they are ready to deal with higher order needs such as the need to achieve, learn, explore, and understand. When students' basic needs are not met, they are more likely to become

less motivated, more alienated, and poorer academic performers (ASCD, 2007). How many of us cannot recall cases of academically successful classmates who fail their academic year because of turmoil at home, for example substance abuse, long-term chronic illness, divorce or a parent's untimely death? When teachers understand and have a connection to the student and their families, they can tend to the student's needs and priorities and provide that environment of safety where the student can be helped to overcome difficulties and still succeed.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

3.24 Parents involved in the planning conferences and focus groups emphasized the importance of the involvement of family in helping students be successful in schools. This emphasis is supported by effective school research as a key factor in creating successful schooling experiences for students (*School Redesign Network @ Stanford University*). To help achieve the vision 2017, schools need the support of the family and home to reinforce what is needed in school to succeed. Schools cannot do it alone. For this to be realized, schools need to reach out and actively build connections with families (*these are detailed more in the Family Involvement Taskforce report in Appendix II*).

3.25 A structural way to create a school-family connection in support of the student and the school is through actively encouraging parent associations. Education laws actually encourage school boards to create the opportunity for parents and guardians to create parent associations at the public schools (*openbare scholen*). This provision in the law does not include the schools subsidized by government. The development of parent associations for all public schools is stated in the following laws.

- Landsverordening basisonderwijs, artikel 37 which states
 1. *Aan elke openbare school voor basisonderwijs is een oudercommissie verbonden.*
 2. *De inrichting, de wijze van verkiezing van de leden en de bevoegdheid van de oudercommissie worden geregeld bij landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen.*
- Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs, artikel 31 (similar text as above)
- Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs, artikel 44 (similar text as above)

3.26 These laws also indicate that parent associations are legally considered an important entity by providing input into ensuring the quality of the content and delivery of education. In this way, schools are legally accountable to the community for the quality of school performance. The laws state more in detail that parent associations have the legal right to provide the highest authority in education, the Minister of Education, with advice:

Bij landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen, worden de onderwerpen aangewezen waarover aan organisaties van ouders, van onderwijzers of van schoolbesturen dan wel aan twee of meer van deze groepen, die zich de behartiging van de belangen van het basisonderwijs ten doel stellen, de gelegenheid wordt gegeven de Minister van advies te dienen. Aan die organisaties wordt deze gelegenheid uitsluitend verleend, indien zij naar het oordeel van de Minister voldoende representatief zijn. (Landsverordening basisonderwijs, artikel 5)

3.27 Laws with similar texts are also provided in Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs, artikel 3 and Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs, artikel 4. The law goes also stipulates the list of topics which parent associations can provide the Minister with advice. It means that the law allows parent associations, and by way of this entity the community, much more input and participation than anyone was previously aware of. A sample listing of

topics at the primary school level alone indicates the wide areas of advice that a parent association can have (Landsverordening adviesprocedure basisonderwijs):

- Art. 5: het aanwijzen van de onderwerpen
- Art. 7, 4: voorschriften omtrent de Papiamentse taal, Engelse taal en Spaanse taal
- Art. 8: de school waarin speciaal onderwijs wordt gegeven
- Art. 9: de voertaal op school
- Art. 11: de inrichting van de school
- Art. 16: de modellen van leerplannen en lesroosters
- Art. 17: over het schoolreglement
- Art. 18: afwijking voor de bijzondere inrichting van het onderwijs
- Art. 19: leeftijd voor toelating tot en verlaten van de school
- Art. 20: over het rapport ten behoeve van toelating tot het voortgezet onderwijs
- Art. 21, 6: in het belang van de gezondheid en de veiligheid van de leerlingen over de bouw en de inrichting van gebouwen waarin basisonderwijs wordt gegeven, alsmede het aantal leerlingen dat in de lokalen mag worden toegelaten. (Landsverordening adviesprocedure basisonderwijs)

3.28 A sample listing of topics at the secondary school level indicated in the “Landsbesluit adviesprocedure voortgezet onderwijs” includes:

- Art. 4: het aanwijzen van de onderwerpen
- Art. 11, 1: onderwijs in andere vakken bij landsbesluit te bepalen
- Art. 18, 3: samenwerking van een gemeenschap van scholen
- Art. 19, 1: indeling dagscholen, avondscholen en dag-avondscholen
- Art. 21: omtrent de inrichting van het voortgezet onderwijs
- Art. 24, 1: voorschriften m.b.t. begin-en einddatum van het schooljaar en het aantal vakantiedagen
- Art. 26: de modellen van leerplannen en lesroosters (Landsbesluit adviesprocedure voortgezet onderwijs)

3.29 The law stipulates a role for parents to play in safeguarding that their children receive an education that allows them to be successful. There is a great value of a well-functioning and educated parent association to partner with the school to ensure that students are successful. It does require though that the value, benefits, and advantages of having an active parent association collaborating with the school to create an optimal learning environment for students are clear so that schoolboards and schools welcome and encourage the presence of a parent association in their schools (*see goal 1b elaboration in Appendix I*). In view of the critical role that a well-functioning and committed parent association can play in the welfare of schools and their students, it is advisable that the current law regarding parent associations is extended to also cover schools subsidized by the government.

3.30 Innovation in the classroom benefits from parent involvement and partnering. Parent involvement is also important because if they understand what a teacher in the classroom is trying to achieve through innovation, they may be able to be more supportive. Experience of schools innovating in Holland (*referred to as “kantelende scholen”*) indicates that innovation involves long periods of uncertainty when things don't look the same and new things are tried out with unexpected results. When parents are involved and informed, the result is that parents invariably end up encouraging the teachers to continue. (Vonderen, June/July 2005). They see the positive effects of the innovation in their children. Therefore, not only can parents support their children's learning success, they can also be supportive of the teacher in the innovation process if they understand what is going on and why.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & PARTNERSHIP

- 3.31 Recent research indicates that there is a strong connection between in-school success and out-of-school context and therefore argues for schools and communities to work together to create the best opportunities for students to reach learner outcomes. Specifically, there is evidence that the combination of good academic preparation in the classroom and “*career or technical learning, work-based learning, and mentoring designed to help the student move toward postsecondary goals not only improves graduation rates, but also helps boost scores in reading, math, and science*” (ASCD High School Reform Proposal, 2007). Just as no child learns to ride a bike by reading a book, or a pilot learns to fly by learning about how a plane is built, students of all ages need to have practical, hands-on experiences to develop both the skills and knowledge to be successful (ASCD, 2007). Especially at the secondary education level, students benefit from opportunities to learn in real-life settings beyond the walls of the classroom. The collaboration of schools and businesses and community organizations in helping our students to grow and exercise their skills in the real world is an invaluable strategy to help them prepare for the world of work (see goal 1c elaboration in Appendix I).

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6: A QUALITY LEARNING COMMUNITY

- 3.32 A quality learning community is one where a culture of continuous development is in place. This means that teachers seek to be well-prepared and to learn continually. Schools that are learning communities build in the time and resources for teachers to plan and develop together their curriculum content and approach, their teaching strategies and assessment jointly. In so doing, teachers of the same grade or subject areas can share materials and assessment and align their work. In this way, teachers learn from each other and share knowledge, methods, and ways of catering to different learning styles. This creates continual learning among teachers, builds expertise in teaching, and creates a unified perspective on teaching practice, all creating a stronger culture of quality in the school.
- 3.33 To do this, teachers need the structured organized time (see goal 2a in Appendix I). For example, in the Beatrix Primary School teachers are required by the school principal to stay after school every Tuesday to reflect on the past week of lessons and plan jointly for the following week. Good practices in industrialized countries in Asia and in Europe allow teachers to spend between 15 and 20 hours of a 40- to 45-hour work week in their classrooms to plan lessons, to meet with students and parents, and to work with other teachers and learn from one another. Teachers spend time together to collaborate on developing curriculum and assessments, observing each other’s classes, and participating in study groups and other professional development activities. (Source: *School Redesign Network @ Stanford University*). This has implications for the actual number of hours that teachers spend on the school premises after school is over at 1 pm.
- 3.34 A quality learning community is above all a community that cares. Schools that organize themselves as communities that foster caring relationships between all members of the school community and treat all members fairly provide motivating learning environments. Students are motivated to learn when they believe that their teachers care about their education and about them personally. (Voke, 2002, Feb.) This aspect of caring relationships has been well documented and is promoted as an innovation practice by the PRIPEB basic education innovation project. The element of care is at the heart of any quality endeavor.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7: THE SCHOOL AS A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL FACILITY

3.35 The last design principle in this framework of 7 is a new view of school. School buildings and grounds are central to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This is recognized in current laws which state that quality of learning is guaranteed when there is adequate design of school buildings and grounds. According to law it is possible to design rules (landsbesluit) referring to the design of school buildings and grounds in the interest of student health and safety and education. Article 30.6 in the Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs states:

“6. Bij landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen, kunnen zowel in het belang van de gezondheid en de veiligheid van de leerlingen als van het onderwijs, voorschriften worden gegeven omtrent de bouw en de inrichting van gebouwen waarin voortgezet onderwijs wordt gegeven, omtrent de inrichting van de bij de school behorende terreinen, alsmede het aantal leerlingen dat in de lokalen mag worden toegelaten.”

A similar text appears for primary education, Landsverordening basisonderwijs article 21.6, and kindergarten education, Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs article 16.6.

3.36 It is difficult to implement easily and effectively a student-centered approach to learning in a 1960's designed classroom with rows of seats directed 1-way towards the chalkboard in front of the classroom. A student-centered approach to education challenges us to rethink this traditional design and use of a school to fit the needs of multiple learning strategies. The most critical ingredients however in this, are to work with *“forethought, teamwork, and a commitment to innovation”* (Gilmore and McLean, Educational Facility Planner).

3.37 Current laws provides the latitude for school buildings to be used as multi-funtional facilities as stated in the following line:

“..... indien en voor zover de Minister heeft goedgekeurd, dat gebouwen, terreinen of roerende zaken worden bestemd voor ander onderwijs, dan wel worden gebruikt voor andere culturele of maatschappelijke doeleinden”. (Landsverordening kleuteronderwijs, artikel 68, Landsverordening basisonderwijs, artikel 77, and Landsverordening voortgezet onderwijs, artikel 90).

Multi-functionality of a school building is considered one of three indicators of design quality. The other 2 are build quality and impact. These 3 elements form the framework for Design Quality Indicator (DQI) for schools used by the British Government for assessing school design (www.cabe.org.uk):

- Functionality covers issues of (1) access to the building; (2) space usage for teaching, school staff work, adequate storage and quality toilets, dining and social areas, and grounds suitable for curriculum needs and those of the wider community; and (3) uses adaptable to changing needs over the years.
- Build quality refers to issues of (1) performance in terms of durability; (2) engineering services related to ventilation and cooling; and (3) quality of construction.
- The design quality indicator of impact assesses issues of (1) the school site in its community context; (2) spaces within the school are enjoyable; (3) form and materials are well detailed; and (4) character and innovation lift the spirit and raise aspiration. (Source: Picturing School Design, Department of Education and Skills, 2005).

This framework represents an interesting benchmark for inspiring how we design new schools and renovate existing ones.

- 3.38 Interestingly, the Netherlands' Ministry of Education has been encouraging school boards for the last 8 years to build and renovate their schools to facilitate the education process as much as possible. For the year 2006, the Ministry offered School Building Prizes for the degree of vision, creativity, and professionalism in developing new concepts which reshape the educational process, related to:

“the “broad school” (a school that houses other facilities such as a nursery, a library or a health centre), multifunctional buildings, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO in the Netherlands) and general upper secondary education (HAVO/VWO), practical education and facilitating new study-work environments. These initiatives are leading to ever more unique and appealing buildings.” (OECD, Directorate for Education, The Netherlands' School Building Prize 2006)

The degree of multi-functionality is one of the criteria for judging along with others like the vision of the school board, the quality of education, the degree of flexibility and accessibility, the quality of materials used, attention to sustainability, the environment and energy use, financing and utilization.

- 3.39 Successful practices in school facility planning include the following elements (Gilmore and McLean, Educational Facility Planner):

- school building design teams consisting of neighbors, parents, teachers, students, architects, engineers and school administrators, civic organizations, centro di barrio leaders, relevant government department representatives to
 - help identify innovative solutions;
 - develop relationships between school, community and social organizations, to think of multi-usage of schools or centro di barrios.
- Consider also the multi-functionality of the school courtyard: trees, benches for gatherings, lighting for evening functions, space for festivals, outdoor eating, outdoor performances, and other community based functions. They also serve to unify the campus as a whole.
- build neighborhood support: this becomes important as they can also keep an eye on schools. Focus groups and taskforces noted how schools unfortunately lent themselves to being easy targets for vandalism, because it remained largely vacant from end of school hours onwards.
- Use multiple stories
- Park cars in roadways when possible
- Build as close to the lot line as feasible
- Locate bus drop off area in existing roadways
- Use abandoned right-of-way, if possible, for play areas or parking
- Create accessible useful community spaces
- Share parking and play fields where possible

- 3.40 Now that a total estimate of Afls. 3-4 million has been allocated to the 2008 education budget for school maintenance and renovation, it is more important than ever to get the school design right for achieving the education vision 2017.

- 3.41 Although a student-centered focus, the use of multiple learning/teaching strategies and using the school as a multi-functional facility, for example, have been central to innovation ideas of the past decade or more, the time has come for the 7 design principles to provide a framework for thinking and creating an environment that has at its focal point the student's learning and the optimal environment for this. However, the concrete, experiential and practical know-how to put all of these principles into actual practice is insufficiently present collectively in our educational system today.

- 3.42 We are at a stage where in order to boost the innovation journey we must seek guidance and assistance from those external sources that are much further along in the journey of developing educational practices that truly center on the learning and development of the student. But before we look to examples beyond the shores of Aruba let us start locally first.

Build on Success: Start Small, Learn and Improve

“Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.”

—Demosthenes, greatest orator of ancient Greece, 384-322

“One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it, you have no certainty until you try.”

—Sophocles, 400 BC

- 3.43 The Best Practices Taskforce cited that to date only certain aspects of a student-centered approach are implemented in kindergarten, primary and ciclo basico. Some examples of schools that are currently implementing a student-centered approach are Colegio Cristo Rey Primary School, Imelda Kindergarten, and Scol Scucha Nos. Elements of a student-centered approach considered to be applicable in Aruba are “participatief onderwijs”, thematic approach using subthemes and the use of “woordenveld”. This section draws from the work produced by the International and Local Best Practices taskforce as well as presentations made during the 3rd and last planning conference in April, 2007. Only a small selection is presented here for illustrative purposes and space considerations; however, a more detailed report on design principles operationalized both locally and internationally is available in Appendix II.

LOCAL EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF 7 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- 3.44 **Scol Scucha Nos:** This special education school demonstrates perhaps the most advanced example of a student-centered approach to education both in terms of its delivery and support structure. Here is a model that deserves researching and showcasing to see how it can be built on for other types of education.
- 3.45 **Scol Scucha Nos** implements a student-centered focus. Each student, besides being taught by his teacher, belongs to a guidance group that tracks his holistic development (social, emotional, cognitive and motor skills). The student is also taught in Papiamentu. Multiple strategies are used to ensure student learning:
- Students make decisions about what they learn based on own interest and compile a portfolio (“dagboek”) of such work on a daily with the support of teacher and parent. The contributions cover all curriculum material.
 - Students are encouraged to create concrete material to support abstract concepts. The teacher team also develops appropriate concrete materials to support lessons.
 - There is intensive integration across subjects to help students understand and be able to create her own final product that demonstrates learning.
 - Computer programs adapted to the learner in the class to support learning.
 - Field trips to expand and enrich classroom learning.

- 3.46 Parent involvement is actively sought and developed:
- Parents are invited to participate and be involved in school projects.
 - Parents are given workshops or talks on general education topics or specific topics on children with hearing problems.
 - Parents are informed through folders, brochure and the internet.
- 3.47 Effort is put into creating a safe and stimulating environment for students:
- The school is designed like a house with rooms in which the student has classes as well as practical experience, such as cooking in the kitchen, garden work, etc.
 - The walls are decorated with the student's work and student materials are kept in such a way that is easily accessible.
 - Parents have specific designated areas where they can meet.
- 3.48 Because of the unique nature of the school, the school has well-developed relationships with the wider community:
- It receives sufficient support internationally (in terms of information) and locally (financial). The school has received sponsorships from different private sector companies.
 - It participates in different workshops to present the school to the public.
 - It gets cooperation from different organizations for field trips and study tours. And Arubus transports their students to school.
 - IPA students intern at the school.
- 3.49 **School Of Tomorrow (School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project):** The 'School of Tomorrow' pilot project at the Pedagogical Institute of Aruba, started in November 2003 with UNESCO funding (US\$ 26,000.=) is focused on creating innovative practices in the classroom supported by technology. The project's vision was to integrate learning technologies in education to help build the foundation for strong, creative and critical thinking Aruban citizens in a globally connected world community. The mission of this project was to research, stimulate and support ways in which learning technologies could enrich the learning and teaching process at all educational levels. The project focus was on finding practical ways in which learning technologies could be integrated into the schooling system as a way to help implement new educational pedagogical paradigms in the every day practice. Hence, technology was primarily seen as a *tool* in the innovation process.
- 3.50 **Main strategy:** At the IPA innovative modules were implemented that introduced IPA students to the potential power of technology to enhance both the teaching and learning process. More than teaching skills, the intent of these "Classrooms of Tomorrow" was to serve as simulation classrooms where teachers (trainees and veteran teachers) could learn and experiment in safe environments with innovative uses of technologies, using among other things thematic stations and multiple intelligences. A project website was established in 2005: www.schooloftomorrowipaaruba.com
- 3.51 In August of 2005 two (ICTO) pilot schools (Colegio Conrado Coronel and Colegio Cristo Rey) were adopted with the intent to research practical ways to integrate ICT into the educational process:
- o *At Colegio Conrado Coronel a part-time coaching model was used with a focus on technology integration in a few 6th grade classes.*
 - o *At Colegio Cristo Rey, a full-time infusion model was implemented with school level focus, whereby the long term innovation reform process of the school ("Na Caminda pa Innovacion di nos Scol; Meerjarenplan Colegio Cristo Rey, 2001) was picked up and intensively guided by the School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project.*
- 3.52 **Some known results of School of Tomorrow:** Although both models (part-time coaching and full-time infusion model) produced positive effects on the learning process of students, the experience also showed that the creative cooperation which developed between the School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project and the Colegio Cristo Rey primary

school led to profound changes in the educational culture of the school. Some of the important changes that took root included: the desire to work together more intensively as a team, increased enthusiasm for the innovation process, being open to learn from one another, daring more to change, helping/coaching each other, asking each other for help, a sense of safety to be able to experiment, the development of proactive and leadership attitudes, and team bonding.

3.53 Colegio Cristo Rey was “adopted” as a *learning lab* for the IPA with the intent to take the next step toward becoming a Professional Development School (PDS), which is a proven system of innovation reform used extensively in the US and the Netherlands (TOM-model). In a PDS-network, a close collaboration and alignment exists between the teacher training institutes or universities and the P – 12 schools and guidance (“*begeleiding*”). This system makes the concept of “*on-the-job-learning*” possible for teacher trainees as well as current teachers. In a PDS construction the focus is on implementing innovative practices.

3.54 Creative Cooperation of School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project and Colegio Cristo Rey as “learning lab”:

- 2006: Colegio Cristo Rey was the lead coordinating school in the KANS project (in cooperation with the School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project) and was honored with €5,600 for its school and a partner school (St. Jan Basisschool) in the Netherlands. St. Jan Basisschool specializes in “*basisontwikkeling*”. Technology was used to connect the two schools.
- 2006: Colegio Cristo Rey in creative cooperation with the School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project won the national innovation price of Aruba for the transdisciplinary project “*World Cup 2006: Time to make friends*”. This project was sponsored by KANS and was part of a larger school-wide theme “*Conoce bo isla*”. (www.schooloftomorrowipaaruba.com/wc2006)
- 2007: Colegio Cristo Rey is once again the lead coordinating school in the KANS project (in cooperation with the School of Tomorrow@IPA pilot project) and is honored a second year of KANS funding amounting to €5,600 per school. In addition to the existing partner school in the Netherlands, another partner school in St. Maarten is allowed to be added with funding. Sister Marie Laurence School specializes in “*ervaringsgericht leren*” (=funderend onderwijs).
- 2007: “Yuwana project” (project to raise the awareness of taking care of Aruba’s natural resources) is ongoing with St. Jan Basisschool and Sister Marie Laurence School in St. Maarten.
- 2007: This project is currently preparing to become part of a larger project, namely “*Learner Centered education at school: a community approach*”. The intention of this project is to continue to move toward creating authentic learner-centered environments at school as well as engaging the larger community in the process of forming the child (the so-called “community” or “brede school” approach). This is being executed in continued close cooperation with the SKOA and IPA.

Benchmark Educational Innovation: International Examples

“Example has more followers than reason.”

— Christian Nevell Bovee, American author and lawyer (1820-1904)

“Swipe from the best, then adapt.”

– Tom Peters

3.55 The Best Practices taskforce that met in the beginning of 2007 was also charged with identifying best practices regionally and internationally that reflected the 7 design principles. Some were found through internet research and others were shared because of personal visits and study tours. When looking for examples of best practices, it was evident that world-wide schools and education systems are moving towards focusing on the child/student and seeking to create an environment that encourages life-long learning. Experiences show that it is not an easy shift and that everyone else is benchmarking as well. This is a time for learning from the examples of others and re-energizing our own journey of educational innovation. The examples provided in this section are model practices that are themselves gaining international attention for their success and receiving visits from school systems everywhere. More are provided in the reports by the Best Practice taskforce in Appendix II.

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF 7 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

3.56 **Team Onderwijs Op Maat (TOM) (customized team education) – Netherlands:** www.teamonderwijs.nl.

TOM is an interesting international example because it is a model for a very carefully phased approach to innovation customizing the speed of change to fit the context, style, level of readiness, and pace of the school.

What is TOM? TOM, initiated and supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, is an integral approach to transformation and innovation that involves all aspects of a school: the use of **staff**, educational **organization**, and setting up a **learning environment**. These are the three pillars on which TOM rests. Furthermore, the so called **process of change** forms the shell surrounding these three pillars. This is the context in which changes take place, involving culture, management, communication and finance.

TOM is a method approved by schools and developed for schools to establish integral development and innovation in and outside the classroom that:

- promotes working in educational teams, with various professionals who share responsibility for a group of pupils, instead of one teacher being responsible for a year group.
- differentiates based on the needs of children when it comes to teaching and learning.
- creates challenging workstations within the school building.
- uses team work according to the principle of acknowledged inequality.

3.57 **What strategy does TOM use?** TOM provides the building stones needed directly from practice. TOM-schools share their experiences and methods, and function as models. They all give substance to the project in their own specific way. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provide the schools with the necessary facilities (extra money, advice and monitoring).

3.58 What are the known results of TOM?

- Every student receives the amount of attention and care s/he needs.

Petrus' Bandenschool in Venray teaches in varying learning groups. Nicol van der Sanden, teacher:

"We adhere to the following principle: large groups where it is possible, small groups where it is required. With a number of subjects we form learning groups with children from the first or second grade, according to their needs. A teacher would then for example teach language skills or arithmetic to a group of forty, while another teaches six children who need special supervision or instruction. The instructions always take up little time. Afterwards, the children will go and work independently throughout the school. An assistant teacher and SPW (Social Pedagogical Work)-trainees supervise them while they work. During that time, the teacher is free to engage in other activities, such as assisting children with concentration problems. Every two weeks, we discuss whether the division into learning groups still holds, or whether some of the children need to go to another learning group. It works perfectly. The biggest gain is that the interests of the child are paramount now.

- A well-motivated team which gives full scope to the abilities of each member, and allows each member to use their talents to the benefit of the school.

St. Catharinaschool in Haastrecht has chosen to go with a new use of functions and formation. Riet Lelyveld-Voets, acting principal:

"We use our team formation differently now. We have one support teacher, an assistant teacher, a paid LIO-employee (Teacher In Training) and two unit leaders. And we are searching for a part-time principal. Since we have switched to TOM we have fewer teachers who share responsibility for a larger group of pupils. Everyone is satisfied with this new use of staff."

- A powerful learning environment is created with sufficient support.

Carolusschool in The Hague actively involves their teachers in training in the organization. Dick Polman, internal supervisor:

"Teachers find working with students fun. They like to coach them. It also unburdens the teacher. Previously a teacher would say: "watch how I handle things and then do I as I do". Now a student comes up to you and says: "I have an assignment, and I want to help find a solution to the problems and think about the developments in this group or school". The result is a completely different way of working: we now learn from each other and with each other."

- An open culture, professional management is fostered with good internal and external communication.

De Rank in Schoonhoven applies the principle of 'coaching leadership'. Theo Segers, coordinating manager:

"As a manager, I try to place responsibility as low in the organization as possible. But I try to do that in a way that still makes principles and teachers feel that they have a backup. If they need me, I am here. Furthermore, I try to trust people and delegate matters to them. The educational team has to feel challenged. The management team needs to direct, of course, but it should not smother."

3.59 **Foundation Based Education (FBE) (Enseñansa di Fundeshi) – Netherlands Antilles:**

What is Foundation Based Education? FBE, a child-centered system based on the notion of knowledge as constructed (**Constructivism**) instead of transmitted, constitutes a total restructuring of the primary level characterized by:

- Integration of kindergarten, primary education, and the first two years of secondary education into one structure of 3 cycles: Cycle 1 for children 4 to 7, Cycle 2 for children 8 to 11, and Cycle 3 for children 12 to 14. (2002 was the first year of implementation).
- An uninterrupted learning track, based on developmental learning theories.
- Application of developmentally appropriate practices, like mixed-age groupings, integrated curriculum, and authentic assessment.
- Flexible progression, including the elimination of a curriculum-based approach, as well as retention.
- Introduction of the native languages of the majority of the population, namely English and Papiamentu.

3.60 In order to ensure uninterrupted development for all children throughout their school career and based on educational effectiveness research results, reformers decided to abolish the 6th-grade school-leaving examination. By the year 2010, this new FBE educational system will have replaced the traditional kindergarten and primary education system.

3.61 Dr. Sandra Stone from the University of Arizona, who is the major consultant for the FBE project, defines a child-centered approach as the teacher's instruction being determined by the child's level of development and his corresponding needs. Instead of "fitting the children to the school" and its predetermined curriculum, the school changes its approach and begins "fitting the school to the children," thereby matching the curriculum to the child's needs and giving every child the opportunity to develop fully (Stone, 2004).

3.62 **What strategy does Foundation Based Education use?** When designing FBE, the Antillean policymakers deliberately wanted to combine all the best practices of innovative schools and assimilate these with the specific needs of the Antillean communities. The Central Government started implementing **FBE** in 2002. To this end, all islands in the Netherlands Antilles established an **Innovations Bureau** (IB) to support the schools in the innovations process.

3.63 In FBE children of different ages and levels are grouped together. Although whole group instruction takes place from time to time, the teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to address all students. Whole group strategies are when all students sit on the floor in a group together, close to the teacher. The teacher leads the discussion, but the students are prompted and questioned. Small group strategies are when the children sit at their desks in small groups or with the teacher. When they are with the teacher they are guided through the learning process. When they sit in groups on their own the teacher is the facilitator and the students become responsible for their own learning. These strategies were developed and taught by **Dr. Sandra Stone** of the National Multiage Institute.

3.64 **What are the known results of Foundation Based Education?** (Stone, 2006)

- Children are becoming independent (mixed-age children (classes for 4- to 6-year-olds, and classes for 5- to 7-year olds) work at centers of their own choosing, independently engaged in open-ended learning experiences instead of tasks or assignments).

- Individual portfolios are used in every classroom and displayed artifacts of each child's growth within the curriculum framework. Narrative report cards are utilized along with the portfolio.
- Strong evidence exists of cross-age learning in the mixed-age groupings.
- The teachers believe in what they are doing.
- Teachers on all the islands note how the new FBE system changed who they were as teachers and how FBE represented a positive change for the children.
- Teachers know how to implement the new system, embrace and understand the theory behind FBE.
- The teachers are excited and energized by the new approach and about what their children can do.
- Teachers are transforming themselves. Just as they are encouraging the children to take risks, they are taking risks and creating and inventing their own ideas based on the child-centered, mixed-age philosophy.
- The teachers are experiencing the freedom to be professional, make decisions and use their own strengths and interests.
- Teachers have developed themes for an integrated curriculum approach, using strategies with learning plans, such as Shared Book, Modeled Writing, and Guided Math, instead of lesson plans, and are documenting growth and development through such authentic assessment tools as conferencing, anecdotal records, and running records.
- The teachers are excited to share the progress children are making in all areas, including social development.

Links: <http://www.bureaunascholing.an/PREF/index.htm>
 Innovation reform in SABA: <http://www.fbe-saba.com/>

3.65 **Big Picture Schools:** <http://www.bigpicture.org/>

What is Big Picture? The Big Picture Company was founded by educators [Dennis Littky](#) and [Elliot Washor](#), both formerly of the renowned Thayer High School in New Hampshire and the [Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University](#). In 1995, they began collaborating with Rhode Island policymakers to design a student-centered high school (The Met), and created The Big Picture Company as the launching pad for what has now become a national education reform movement.

The Big Picture Company has used its design of The Met Center as a model for the development of similar schools across the country with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. And, in 2004, *The Big Picture: Education Is Everyone's Business* by Dennis Littky with Samantha Grabelle, is published by the [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development \(ASCD\)](#). The book was distributed as member benefit to 96,000 ASCD-member educators in the United States and throughout the world. In June of 2005, the book received top honors as the winner of the Association of Educational Publishers' (AEP) Excellence in Educational Publishing 2005 Distinguished Achievement Award.

3.66 **What strategy does Big Picture use?** The Big Picture Company believes that schools must be personalized, educating every student equally, ONE STUDENT AT A TIME. Each student's learning plan should grow out of his or her unique needs, interests, and passions. We believe that the education system must ensure that students and families are active participants in the design and authentic assessment of each child's learning. Schools must be small enough to encourage the development of a community of learners, and to allow for each child to be known well by at least one adult. School staff and leaders must be visionaries and life-long learners. Schools must connect students, and the school, to the community - both by sending students out to learn from mentors in

the real world, and by allowing the school itself to serve as an asset to the local community and its needs. Finally, schools must allow for admission to, and success in, college to be a reality for every student, and work closely with students, families, and colleges throughout – and beyond - the application process.

3.67 What are the known results of Big Picture (Met School example)?

- On average, 75% of Met students go on to college or technical training immediately after graduating from The Met. An additional 5% go to college or technical training at some later time.
- 75% of Met alumni who have gone on to college or technical training are either still there or have earned a degree.

Links:

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.b71d101a2f7c208cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/template.book?bookMgmtId=301ba2948ecaff00VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD>

3.68 Concept Experiential Education (EXE) – Belgium, Netherlands:

www.ervaringsgerichtonderwijs.nl

This is an interesting example of an educational approach that engages the student in the learning process and positively impacting student motivation.

3.69 What is Concept Experiential Education? EXE, developed in Belgium in 1976, is premised on the idea that children like school. Based on 30 years of classroom observations of students and teachers, Professor Ferre Laevers discovered that children develop and learn at their best when they are in a state of both well-being and involvement. To judge the quality of the education process, EXE therefore looks at the level of well-being and involvement of students in the classroom.

3.70 Well-being is defined as a state of satisfaction, enjoyment, and pleasure while being relaxed and flexible, because the situation meets his/her basic needs. As a result the person experiences a level of emotional health. Involvement refers to the quality of the student's activity characterized by concentration and openness to stimuli determined by an exploration drive. Well-being and involvement are visible to the observer and provide the answers to the essential question: *"how is each student doing? Are the efforts we make sufficient to secure the emotional health and real development in all important areas and for each of the students?"* The degree of well-being indicates how much the educational environment succeeds in helping the child/student feel at home, be itself, remain in contact with itself and have its basic needs (physical and emotional) fulfilled. These basic needs are realized in different fields of relationships such as that with 1) the teacher; 2) other children; 3) with the class and school; 4) at home; and 5) in the play- and recreational world. All these relationships can be energizing (for example, there is openness and trust) or energy depleting (for example, there is irritation, suspicion, mistrust, rejection). The state of well-being then becomes the foundation for ensuring active levels of involvement.

3.71 What strategy does Concept Experiential Education use? EXE utilizes 5 teaching methods aimed at increasing the level of well-being and involvement of children/students within the structure of a class program. They include: 1) sharings and forums; 2) contract work; 3) project work; 4) workshops; and 5) free choice. In addition, 30 years of research and teacher experience have indicated many practical strategies that can be undertaken in the classroom (see website).

3.72 What are the known results of Concept Experiential Education? Sister Marie Laurenceschool, a small primary school in St. Maarten is a model example of

implementing EXE since 2000. The Principal and his team have over the years visited schools and conferences in the Netherlands where EXE were explained and modeled. Today about 100 hundred teachers in St. Maarten hold a certificate on “*Oriëntatie op de principes van het E.G.O.*” and there is a foundation “*E.G.O. St. Maarten*” founded by the past and current principals of the Sister Marie Laurenceschool. The school is a pilot school and receives intensive guidance twice yearly by an EXE consultant who guides and consults the school for a year, providing seminars, workshops and on-the-job coaching. The first Dutch Pabo students with an EXE specialization are interning at this school now. The Sister Marie Laurenceschool is also a collaborating school with the School of Tomorrow project through the 2007 KANS funding.

3.73 Some student reactions from the Sister Marie Laurenceschool:

- I learn faster because I can keep on working. I don't need to wait for others to finish.
- You do more things in one day.
- You can now discuss with your neighbor.
- The teacher talks less now.
- I want to keep on working like this when I go to middle school.
- The new approach is better than the old one. The old approach was not good, because if the teacher was explaining something at the blackboard everyone would be talking. Now everyone sits in a circle and it goes really well. Maybe not everyone has the same opinion, because now the teacher can see who is paying attention and who is not.

3.74 Teachers indicate that the students' enthusiasm is infectious. Even though the work is harder and they are tired at the end of the day, they feel a sense of deep satisfaction. They see the positive results and are encouraged by the encouraging feedback from the children's parents. (Source: Nederlandse Antillen: Bovenwinds betrokken, www.ervaringsgerichtonderwijs.nl)

CONCLUSION

3.75 The innovation journey that began in Aruba years ago is the same that many countries have and are still embarking on in an attempt to meet the challenges of the 21st century. All governments endeavoring to participate in the global economy realize that the welfare of their economy is dependent on the quality of their workforce. Whereas docile, compliant, obedient and punctual workers were the main attributes desired for the majority by the economy, today this is no longer the case. Employers both locally and globally require from all their employees that they are creative, responsible, able to cooperate productively in teamwork, communicate effectively, solve problems and come up with innovative solutions. More than ever, employers require that their workers can think, not just follow rules blindly. More than ever, the world requires that we have leaders who can think and envision innovative solutions and not just follow tradition uncritically.

3.76 Education systems the world over are transitioning to a more student-centered approach to learning. It is not experienced as an easy shift largely because of entrenched mental models that hang on to old ways of doing things. But examples such as the TOM model in the Netherlands show that the innovation process can be a measured and gradual process tailored to the unique characteristics of each school. What is required is the desire and willingness to support a renewed focus on learner-centered innovation. A small-scale tryout project with sustained guidance from a partner institution is a promising approach that allows for building positive experiences of both choice and pace at the school level.

- 3.77 We owe it to the current and next generation of workers and employers, leaders and followers to provide an education that enables them to meet the challenges of the 21st century with all the skills, knowledge and attitudes to allow them to function and thrive. Our responsibility in education can be no less.
- 3.78 A commitment to the education vision 2017 requires a commitment to the learner and ensuring that the entire educational system exists to serve learning. We must take the leap into the next phase and adopt the 7 design principles framework as conceptual lenses to re-vitalize and re-energize the educational innovation journey and align all the support to commit to this direction. There are examples and models that we can learn from. The time has come to extend beyond our local shores and actively seek to be inspired and to learn from those who are trying and are successful. To do this, all of us must accept to be learners, and in so doing exemplify what it is to be life-long learners ourselves.
- 3.79 The next chapter presents a roadmap that bridges the gap between current perceptions (ch. 2) and the new education vision and translates the 7 design principles into actionable goals and objectives.

4. A Roadmap for Aligned Performance

"Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare."

—Japanese proverb

"The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is today."

—Chinese Proverb

- 4.1 A roadmap for change is vital, built around finding the gap between where you are and where you want to be. Chapter 2 provided a review of the current reality as perceived and reported by a wide angle of the community and the educational leadership and field. Chapter 3 presented a new vision and opportunities that this brings forth in order to energize the journey of educational innovation. This chapter on goals, objectives, and action plans provides the roadmap for traveling from where we are to reach the new education vision 2017 (see figure 5). These goals and objectives are the signposts against which we can measure ourselves to assess how close are getting to the vision.
- 4.2 Strategic goals are big picture goals that provide us with an overarching reason for our efforts and mark the signposts of achievement along the way to reaching the vision 2017. They can be short-range (within 1 year), medium-range (within 4 years), and long-range (within 5 years or 10 years). Objectives provide the next level of specificity, breaking down the goal into more detail. The more specific and realistic the goals and objectives are, the better they lend themselves for translation into action planning and implementation.
- 4.3 Nine strategic goal areas have been identified collectively in this participatory planning process to help bridge where we are (see chap. 2) to where we want to be (see chap. 3). The goals focus on improvements in these areas:
- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Broader societal support for education | 6. Universal access to education |
| 2. National educational approach | 7. Culture of quality management |
| 3. Quality of educator workforce | 8. School autonomy |
| 4. Educational language policy | 9. Infrastructure and facilities |
| 5. National education fund | |
- 4.3 Action plans for each of the 9 goals and their objectives are elaborated separately in Appendix I. The objectives and major actions are derived from action plans created by the 15 individual taskforces during the period from Jan. – March, 2007 and calibrated with the Dept. of Education leadership through repeated cycles of dialogue and review. The source material of 15 individual plans have been grouped and compiled into 6 section plans that are included in a separate appendix II.
- 4.4 This chapter presents the framework of educational goals and ends with a recommendation for an implementation structure for executing this strategic plan.

NOP Road Map to Education Vision 2017

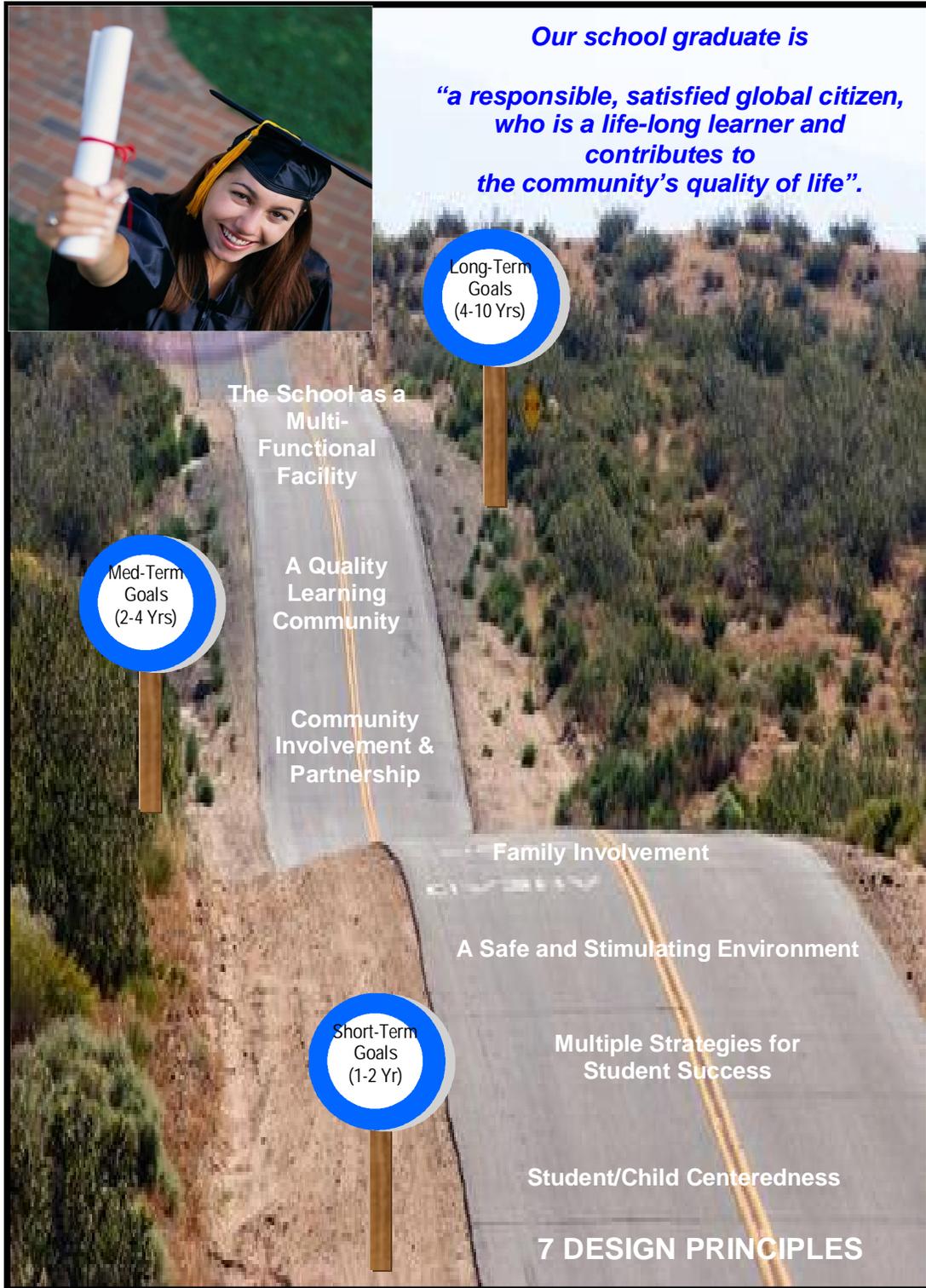


Figure 4. NOP Road Map for Re-Invigorating the Educational Journey

STRATEGIC GOALS TO ACHIEVE VISION 2017

| Short-Term Goals (within 1 year) | Med-Term Goals (within 4 yrs) | Long-Term Goals (within 5 to 10 yrs) |
|--|--|---|
| Broader Societal Support for Education | | |
| <p>Cast the vision 1a. Communicate and educate to build support and commitment for the education vision 2017.</p> | | |
| | <p>Develop the community's sense of responsibility for education 1b. Cultivate greater awareness of the family, neighborhood and collective community's responsibility to support and partner with schools for the benefit of children and youth.</p> | |
| <p>Partner with private sector 1c. Develop a partnership between education and the private/civic sector.</p> | | |
| | <p>Develop interdepartmental collaboration 1d. Develop and strengthen departmental collaboration between all governmental departments to share a common understanding and commitment to education.</p> | |
| <p>National Educational Approach</p> <p>Articulate national educational philosophy 2a. Develop, articulate, and communicate a national educational philosophy that serves as the foundation for a learner-centered teaching/ learning process and supportive management structure.</p> <p>Develop national standards of learning 2b. Develop national standards of learning and align national pre-school, kindergarten, and primary, secondary and vocational school curriculum in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Learner centered focus and strategies; ii. Existing learning areas; iii. New learning areas (see Chap. 3): Thinking and learning skills; Life skills; ICT literacy skills; 2017 knowledge. | | |

| Short-Term Goals (within 1 year) | Med-Term Goals (within 4 yrs) | Long-Term Goals (within 5 to 10 yrs) |
|---|--|---|
| Quality of Educator Workforce 3. Intensify efforts to professionalize the entire educational field, including teachers, principals, and schoolboard members. | | |
| Educational language Policy 4. Stipulate an educational language policy for each educational level. | | |
| Culture of Quality and Innovation Management 5a. Develop a culture of quality and innovation management that is learner-centered among the leadership and management of education. 5b. Utilize an innovation management process based on small scale projects planning and implementation. | | |
| National Education Fund 6. Create a national education fund (onderwijs fonds) to tap into alternative funding resources in order to provide additional funds for supporting student-centered innovation. | | |
| | Universal Access to Education 7. Provide and expand access to life-long education for all, from pre-school to adult education. | |
| | School Responsibility and Accountability 8. Examine possibilities and most appropriate process for providing schools with the support, guidance, and opportunity to take on more responsibility and accountability for educational programming, finance, and management. | |
| Infrastructure and Facilities 9a. Finalize current long-term infrastructure plan to improve school infrastructure and facilities guided by the 7 design principles. | | |
| | 9b. Update all existing schools in terms of maintenance and improvement. | |
| | | 9c. Introduce and implement plan for a renewed school infrastructure and facilities that meet criteria of functionality, build quality, and impact. |

Implementation Structure

“The best strategic plans in the world are not likely to be successful if they are not effectively communicated to those who must implement them: the employees.”

—Graziadio Business Report, 2003

“ Leaders who excel at execution immerse themselves in the substance of execution and even some of the key details. They use their knowledge of the operation to constantly probe and question. They bring weaknesses to light and rally their people to correct them.”

—Larry Bossidy, ex-chairman and CEO of Honeywell and Ram Charan

“Trust is a critical component in managing change and executing strategy, both so necessary to driving bottom-line results. The dilemma for managers at all levels is that just when we need more trust in our organizations to achieve our goals, we are experiencing a loss of trust.”

—Eileen Kraus, Chairman, Fleet Bank

4.5 The best implementation structures are highly participatory, intensely communicative, grass-roots oriented, focused on specific measurable goals with clear deadlines, and tap into successful good or best practices both locally and internationally. A structure that allows for maximum participation of all actors from the top to the bottom gets everyone in the system involved. Top down dissemination allows for the information to spread. Not every single stakeholder can be included in the planning process, not even a participatory one, but communications can go to everyone. Only when people know where they are going, what the benefits are, what they have to do to get there, and what support they are going to get to do so, does a plan stand a chance of being successfully implemented. For every actor in the educational system to be able to give their support, they need to know and understand what the NOP (Nationaal Onderwijs Plan) is about: what the vision is, the direction, the goals and the strategies. Better understanding will help build energy and commitment and allow for better decision making that supports the 2017 educational vision. Seriously committing to effective communication planning will enhance both implementation and the probability of reaching goals and objectives (See goal 1a). Down up feedback provides information to leaders about effectiveness of the implementation process.

4.6 Highly participatory structures that encourage dialogue such as for example taskforces, committees, team activities, all kinds of face to face meetings, and people oriented activities such as rallies and the like capture a wide net people and thereby create greater support for the plan. One of the key factors in the history of plans that succeed or fail is that of poorly or not communicating the plan enough. Biologists speak of a law that “*nature abhors a vacuum*”. The same holds true for the nature of human beings and information. Where there is a vacuum of information, people will fill it with their own information colored by their own assumptions, fears, or preconceived ideas. This needs to be avoided. People, especially the implementers in the system need to be informed and be engaged in sufficient dialogue to ensure understanding so that they can stand behind the goals of the plan.

4.7 Grass-roots, bottom-up implementation means allowing small scale innovation projects to grow into pockets of excellence in the system thereby cultivating the experience of success. Success grows success and is an irresistible force for adoption by a more cautious and watchful majority. Systematic communication of small wins from these

small scale innovation projects to a wide audience builds confidence in innovation. Goals and objectives need to be specific and measurable with deadlines tracked by a monitoring and tracking system, for example by a Balanced Score Card. The goals in this action plan also represent multi-level initiatives that help optimize the possibility of execution. Finally, because everyone in the world is on the same journey of innovating an industrial model of education, we need to seek out successful practices, both locally and internationally, and learn from them.

4.8 Achieving the vision and goals also requires considerable management and coordination. It is therefore critical to consider an implementation structure, for instance, in the form of a NOP Implementation Bureau in charge of managing both a communications strategy and an implementation strategy within the first 60 days of the NOP approval in order to widely communicate a serious level of commitment to realizing the NOP. A brief sketch of a possible implementation structure is presented that incorporates the above factors of (1) participation, (2) communication, (3) grass-roots orientation; and (4) goal orientation and measurement. This implementation structure attempts to avoid creating another bureaucratic layer so that it can move swiftly.

NOP IMPLEMENTATION BURO

4.9 The implementation effort of the NOP is not a small scale effort. It will require full-time attention and concentration if the NOP is to be implemented, monitored and tracked. In order to prevent this plan from following the path of many other plans in the past that end up collecting dust on a shelf, a crucial first step is to set up an implementation structure. The purpose of this implementation structure is to ensure that the plan is communicated widely and executed swiftly. The structure should not be another bureaucratic layer in the educational system, but a small unit reporting directly to the Minister and with sufficient authority to hold all actors in the education system accountable for delineated actions in the strategic plan. All actors include the Dept. of Education, the Inspectorate, the IPA, the school boards, and openbare scholen (government schools).

4.10 This unit could be a NOP Implementation Bureau (NOPIB). The NOPIB would report directly to the Minister of Education and be accountable for executing the plan in a timely and effective manner. This NOPIB Bureau should stand on its own with its own budget and not be subsumed under either the Department or Ministry of Education budgets. The NOPIB should relate to other agencies with “samenwerkingsprotocollen” to establish the agreed upon working relations that would protect it from political maneuverings. The physical location of the NOPIB should be housed in a place of neutrality and easily accessible to all actors in education. The University of Aruba would be a suitable location for this reason.

4.11 The NOPIB would benefit from being monitored and guided by an intersectoral and community-based NOP implementation council (raad van advies) with oversight and advisory responsibilities. In this way, there is not only a built-in accountability to Government, but also to the wider community of Aruba. The advisory council should include Minister appointed membership from the Ministry of Education, Social Affairs, and Infrastructure, the Dept. of Education, schoolboards, SIMAR, the civic sector, the judicial sector, the business sector, and the tourism sector. The role of the council would be to oversee and monitor plan implementation, advise, and in general play a creative role in supporting the execution of the plan in a timely and effective manner. This council should be chaired preferably by an individual from the private sector selected for his/her successful execution and implementation track record, creative and out-of-the-box thinking, and understanding of the human element in the change

process. Membership of this council should as much as possible be individuals experienced in planning, managing and executing a change process successfully.

4.12 The NOPIB's responsibility should include the following key activities:

- Establish a working partnership with an external entity (university or school) experienced in successful implementation of student-centered education systems and practices in order to leapfrog and move swiftly to accomplish goals. (A promising example to explore relationships with is the TOM model in the Netherlands, see ch. 3 for further details).
- Identify schools and principal/teacher teams that are ready to take the next leap in innovation and are open to being a small-scale innovation project.
- Prioritize the goals and set up a schedule and timeline for implementation.
- Set up where necessary and relevant implementation teams who will execute action plans.
- Coordinate and oversee the activities of possible implementation teams.
- Design metrics to measure the success of meeting stated goals. Assign responsibility for collecting, analyzing and reporting progress. Consider for example a Balanced Score Card measuring and tracking progress tool that can be customized for education; this is currently available locally through a local consultant, Mario Croes.
- Monthly report to the implementation oversight and advisory council on progress made in implementing the strategic plan.
- Quarterly report to the Minister of Education on the progress made in implementing the strategic plan.

4.13 The NOPIB should be a small unit staffed by 2 professionals. One of these should be a professional who is experienced in the world of educational negotiations both locally, regionally and internationally. The other should be a professional experienced in project implementation design, planning, and execution. Both require good organizational skills (process management, time management, etc.) and leadership abilities (communication and relationship skills, ability to sell the vision, passion to get the job done, and desire to serve the greater good). Both should have within this community a reputation for trustworthiness and professionalism, and wholeheartedly support the education vision 2017. and wholeheartedly support the education vision 2017. Other members of the NOPIB unit should be assigned to the team on an as-needed project basis and should be forged through collaborative relationships (samenwerkings protocollen) with other institutions both inside and outside of education.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

4.14 To execute this strategic plan, one of the first things recommended is to design a communications strategy that will develop buy-in from the whole community and build the commitment to executing it (See goal 1a and major action steps in Appendix I). It is critically important that everyone in Aruba, but especially the implementers in education and related departments, understand the direction of the NOP and the strategies. The communications strategy will need to address ways to create a broad base of support so that implementation is possible because then we have large segments of the community understanding what we want to achieve and how.

4.15 It is recommended that the communications strategy planning, design, and execution be outsourced. The outsourced party should be coordinated by the NOP

Implementation Bureau in close cooperation with the PR department of the Dept. of Education.

4.16 The goal of the communications strategy is to create the understanding that it is together that we can achieve the education vision 2017 and that it is to everybody's benefit to come together cooperatively and communicatively to work for the success of every child in our community. The communications strategy will need to consider the following elements:

- **Purpose of communication:** *determine communication goals*, such as creating awareness, or buy-in, or commitment, or informational, etc.
- **Group segments:** *plan what groups to communicate to*, such as internal (field of education: all the implementors of the plan) and external (the wider non-education population)
- **Content of the communication:** *plan the message*, such as big picture of vision 2017, ideal graduate outcomes, national educational goals and objectives, concepts from the design principles; as well as actionable information (*what should I do, who needs to do what, and when does what need to done?*). It is more effective to select key parts of the plan, rather than the whole document.
- **Format of the communication:** *plan how to communicate what message*, such as use of language (na placa chiquito), visual images that reinforce the vision and goals.
- **Channels of communication:** *plan what media to use*, such as print media, broadcast media, powerpoint presentations, interactive sessions (workshops), email, website, press conference, etc. Communication studies have found that face-to-face meetings are the most effective. Recent marketing research indicate that the use of Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen in delivering the message create tipping points for innovations to spread (Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, 2002). They are able to translate concepts, ideas, and information into something the rest of the careful majority can understand. These 3 types of people when carefully selected, help to translate information in understandable language and spread it:
 - **Connectors** know a lot of people. They are like data banks. The closer an idea or a product comes to a Connector, the more power and opportunity it has. They are the social glue: they spread it.
 - **Mavens** are socially motivated, wanting to educate and to help. They are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know.
 - **Salesmen** persuade us when we are unconvinced of what we are hearing.
- **Evaluation of communication strategy:** *plan measures and indicators to determine effectiveness of communication*, such as tracking to website (Ministry can set up a NOP website), receiving positive feedback from the community (and fewer complaints), improved morale and positivism schools, etc.

CONCLUSION

4.17 The strategic planning process may be concluded with the writing of this plan, but the real work begins with installing the implementation structure. Implementation requires commitment from all to carry it out. They can only do that if they believe in the vision as a worthwhile result, if they passionately desire this result, and if they have the competencies and capacities to achieve it. The first has to do with value, the second

with motivation, and the third with competencies and training. If we conceive of the NOP as valuable and important, and we are motivated because we believe wholeheartedly that this is needed, there will be enough commitment to develop and train the capacities and competencies to achieve the education 2017 goals and vision.

Bibliography and References

- Alexander, Tom, Hostens, Gaby, and Tuijnman, Albert. (2001). Educational Policy Reform in the Netherlands Antilles. OECD.
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2007). *The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action*. New York, NY: ASCD.
- BPR Online Learning Center. (2003). *Top reasons for change resistance - 288 companies reporting*. www.prosci.com
- CABE. (2005). *Picturing School Design*. London, UK: Commission of Architecture and for the Built Environment.
- Cassidy, Tom. (2005, January). *Education Management Information System (EMIS) Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Lessons and Challenges*. IDB.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *On Motivating People to Learn*. Edutopia online, www.gleef.org.
- Colignatus, Thomas. (2006). *The Political Economy of the Netherlands Antilles and the Future of the Caribbean*. Leiden, Netherlands: Samuel van Houten Genootschap.
- Covey, Stephen M. R. (2006). *The Speed of Trust*. N.Y., N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
- Cranston, Neil C. (year unknown). *Game, Set And Match: Bureaucracy 1, Schools 0: Time To Change The Rules?* Australia: Queensland University of Technology, Centre for Innovation in Education.
- Crookall, Paul & Schachter, Harvey. *Changing Management Culture : Research Report*. (2003). Toronto, Canada: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.
- Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Factory-Model Schools*. Stanford University, The School Redesign Network (<http://www.schoolredesign.net>)
- Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Ten Features of Effective Design*. Stanford University, The School Redesign Network (<http://www.schoolredesign.net>)
- Darling-Hammond, Linda. *Factory-Model Schools*. Stanford University, The School Redesign Network (<http://www.schoolredesign.net>)
- Data Summary Parlamento Hubenil. (2006, October). Oranjestad, Aruba. Dept. of Education: Research and Statistics Unit.
- Din, Feng S. and Wheatley and F. Wayne. (2007). *A Literature Review of the Student-Centered Teaching Approach: National Implications*. National Forum Of Teacher Education Journal, Volume 17, Number 3.
- Dolya, Galina and Palmer, Sue (2003). *Lev Vygotsky*. TES Primary Forum. <http://www.tes.co.uk>
- Elmore, Richard F. (2000, Winter). *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*. The Albert Shank Institute.
- Emerencia, Lydia. (2007). *Learning and Creating Together: Situated, Collaborative Knowledge Creation as Developmental and Innovative Practice in Education*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Universiteit Utrecht, Netherlands.
- Gilmore, Don and McLean, Don. (not available). *Successful School Design for Small Urban Sites*. Educational Facility Planner, Volume 39, Issue 3.

- Gladwell, Malcolm. (). *The Tipping Point*.
- Hanushek, Eric A. (2005). *Economic Outcomes And School Quality Monograph*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- [Ingstrup, Ole & Paul Crookall](#). (1998). *The Three Pillars of Public Management*. Toronto, Canada: McGill-Queens' University Press.
- Ingstrup, Ole. (1999, May 17). *Well performing organization*. Three Pillars Conference, Nova Scotia.
- Kersell, John E. (year unknown). *MINI-REMNANTS Of THREE EMPIRES: Governing West Indian Dependencies*. Off website.
- Kouzes, J. and Posner, B. (1996, May). *Envisioning your Future: Imagining Ideal Scenarios*. Futurist, Voume 30, p.14.
- KPC Group. (2003, July). *Authentieke Toetsing In Het Primair Onderwijs - Droom Of Te Realiseren Werkelijkheid?*
- Palmer, Sue and Dolya, Galina. (2004, July). *Freedom Of Thought*. www.tes.co.uk
- Palmer, Sue. (2004, June 11). *Finding Vygotsky*. TES Editorial, TSL Education Ltd. <http://www.tes.co.uk>
- Phidd, Richard. (Year Unknown). *The Profession of Government & Theories of Bureaucracy in the 20th Century*. CSL Leadership Review. www.csl.uoguelph.ca
- Rogers, Everett M. (1962). *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Schuler, A.J. (2003). *Overcoming Resistance to Change: Top Ten Reasons for Change Resistance*. www.SchulerSolutions.com
- Senge, Peter, et al. (1999). *The Dance Of Change: A Fifth Discipline Resource*. New York, New York: Doubleday.
- Senge, Peter, et al. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies And Tools For Building A Learning Organization*. New York, New York: Doubleday.
- Sikkes, Robert. (2006, July 1). *De inspectie geïnspecteerd*. Onderwijsblad.
- Stein, Sandra J. and Gewirtzman, Liz. (2003). *Principal Training On The Ground: Ensuring Highly Qualified Leadership*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Stone, Sandra J. and Delfina, Richard. (2006). *Netherlands Antilles: A Bold Journey*. Childhood Education, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3614/is_200601/ai_n17174794/pg_1
- Thamraksa, Chutima. (2003, December). *Student-Centered Learning: Demystifying The Myth*. SLLT, Volume 12, Pp.59-70.
- The Netherlands' School Building Prize 2006*. OECD: Directorate for Education
- Vonderen, José van. (2005, June/July). *Verantwoording Mag Innovatie Niet In De Weg Zitten*. Schoolmanagers, Volume 7.
- Wai Shing Li, Wai Ming Yu, Tak Shing Lam & Ping Kwan Fok. (1999). *The Lack Of Action Research: The Case For Hong Kong*. Educational Action Research, Volume 7, No. 1.
- Wertheim, Edward G. (year unknown). *Historical Background of Organizational Behavior*. Boston, MA: College of Business Administration, Northeastern University.