

Turks and Caicos Islands

Summary

Although the Turks and Caicos Islands remain a British overseas territory, the central government is the sole major funder of ICT projects in schools. Government primary and secondary schools provide access to ICT to students, although that access is limited. Major challenges to greater use and increased effectiveness of ICT in both primary and secondary schools include maintenance and teacher capacity.

The Turks and Caicos Islands are an archipelago consisting of six islands. The capital, Grand Turk Island, and the island of Providenciales have relatively stable economies with adequate growth. Principle sectors are tourism, offshore financial services, and fishing. Other islands are not economically self-sustaining and are at lesser stages, overall, of development.



Policy and planning

Approved in April 2005, the current education policy directly addresses the use of ICT in education.

Basic Data

Category	Date	Value
Population	2006	32,200
Per capita GDP (PPP)	2006	\$16,054
Economy, composition	2006	Tourism, financial services, fishing
Literacy, total population 15 and over	1970	99
Literacy rate (girls)	1970	98
Net enrollment ratio, primary	2002	73.5
Net enrollment ratio, primary (girls)	2002	72.7
Net enrollment ratio, secondary	2002	79.1
Net enrollment ratio, secondary (girls)	2002	79.9
Number of primary schools	2006	31
Number of secondary schools	2006	8
Language of instruction	—	English

Sources: World Factbook, UNESCO, Min. of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture

Relevant Policies

Document	Status	Date	Key points
Current Education Policy	Adopted	April 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate computer-assisted reading software into instruction at all schools
Development Plan of 1998–2004	Adopted	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a more skilled islander through development of capacity in ICT Provide ICT training to at least one teacher in each school Introduce computer-assisted learning in all schools Install computer hardware and software in all schools
Education Plan of 2006–2010	Completed	November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes the need for greater use of ICT in schools and training of teachers in this area.

Source: MOE

In primary schools, the policy identifies ongoing integration of computer-aided reading programs as a key goal. The Education Plan of 2006–2010 builds off the prior plan of 1999–2004, which lists as objectives: training of at least one teacher per school in computer literacy; the introduction of computer-assisted learning in all primary schools; and, the installation of computer hardware and software.

ICT in primary and secondary schools

Public primary and secondary schools offer students access to computers and the Internet, although the numbers of available computers are low relative to enrollment. A primary-level ICT curriculum

encompasses both basic computer skills (i.e., productivity software) and intermediate skills (i.e., communication, research, graphics). The main purpose of the primary curriculum is to help students prepare for the secondary-level CXC ICT exam.

Private primary schools serving expatriates from Haiti and other economically challenged countries in the region generally do not offer ICT access to students. These schools serve a large proportion of the school-age population, presenting challenges both in terms of equity and in terms of “mainstreaming” disadvantaged students.

Inadequate technical capacity—notably in the area of EMIS—highlight the ways in which the organizational structure of the MOE limits the ability to address barriers ranging from the technical to the

ICT Resources in Schools

School type	Number	Gross enrollment*	ICT profile
Primary schools, government (in 2006/7)	10	1,998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 computers per schools average, in 2002 160 computers total, with Internet, as of 2006** Planned introduction of Destination Reading program in all govt. schools; cost is \$120,000 in 2006/7
Primary schools, private	21	1,770	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64 computers, total 40 of 64 computers at three schools
Secondary schools, government	4	1,436 (in 2006/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52 computers per school, ADSL Internet access
Secondary schools, private	4	409	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58 computers total 32 of 58 computers at one school

* The Turks and Caicos Islands include six inhabited islands. School populations vary from island to island sufficiently that an average figure for enrollment is a meaningless distortion.

** In this instance as well, a median figure would be distorting. Salt Cay’s one government school has eight students and an estimated two computers (4:1 student-computer ratio). A school on Providenciales has a 430-student enrollment and 26 computers (16:1 student-computer ratio).

Source: MOE

pedagogical. A Computer Unit is responsible for support of all Ministry technology initiatives. However, the Computer Unit is technology-focused, and does not have pedagogical or school-operational expertise.

Funding for education in Turks and Caicos Islands is currently limited to inputs from the central government; no donor-funded ICT projects have taken place.

In primary schools, students in grades 4 through 6 are required to complete ICT curricula. These curricula emphasize not only use of office productivity tools, but also the use of information, communication skills, and graphics tools.

Although a few private schools serve middle- or upper-class catchments, the remainder of the more than 21 private primary schools serve expatriate communities from the Dominican Republic and Haiti that are disadvantaged both by language (e.g., Spanish and French) and income. These schools rarely offer functioning computers or Internet connectivity, even though ADSL connectivity is available free of charge by arrangement with C & W. If the government is successful in implementing the proposed computer-assisted reading program, Destination Reading, in government schools, students in the private primary schools will not benefit. Estimated cost of introducing Destination Reading is US\$120,000, which includes both software licensing and costs of additional hardware.

Both public and private primary and secondary schools in the smaller, outlying islands perform at lower levels than their peers on Grand Turk and Providenciales Islands, possibly because there is less incentive for and less daily emphasis on academic success. In relation to ICT, students on the smaller

islands will have more limited access to ICT outside of schools—whether at home, in libraries, or at cybercafés. (With specific reference to cybercafés, parents in outlying islands may see less benefit to paying for use of computers or the Internet.)

Secondary schools

The primary curriculum prepares students for a secondary ICT curriculum offered in forms 4 and 5. The secondary curriculum conforms to the CXC syllabus and prepares students for the CXC IT exam. In the 2005/2006 school year, out of approximately 254 Form 5 students attending government schools, 138 participated in the CXC IT exam. Of these, 87 received passing scores. Students sat for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) or International General Certificate of Education (IGCSE) exams) at one private school, with 19 of the school's 20 fifth-form students participating and 13 of 19 passing.

Teacher professional development

Because TCI teachers do not elect to participate in the community-college-based ICT certificate program, awareness and capacity among faculty island-wide is minimal. This situation also reflects the fact that private sector marketing and support for ICT use among the public is a relatively recent phenomenon. The primary and secondary IT curricula are typically taught by expatriate teachers who have received appropriate certificates or degrees off-island.

There are no current plans that address integration of ICT into other areas of the curriculum. Barriers include the overall lack of awareness among the

Teacher Professional Development Programs				
TPD program type	Target population	Objectives	Scale	Barriers
Community College	In-service primary and secondary teachers	Familiarize teachers with ICT	Open to all teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No incentives ■ Some teachers live on islands without community colleges; available time is only weekends and holidays ■ Few teachers have completed course

Source: MOE

public and among teachers, and—according to one respondent—lack of basic skills among students and possible lack of subject mastery among teachers.

Relevant (e.g., Caribbean) evaluation results demonstrating impact of ICT used to help students build basic skills and support teachers' development of subject mastery would be useful as a means of demonstrating applicability of ICT to current challenges in the education system.

Tertiary education

The TCI community college offers several programs that address ICT, ranging from certificates in computer applications, database management, and autoCAD to Associate Degrees in Electrical Engineering. In addition, use of CAD/CAM (Computer-aided design/Computer-aided manufacturing) software is addressed in technical-drawing classes.

There has been discussion within the government of extending access to the community college using ICT. Access to the community college, located on Grand Turk Island with a branch on Providenciales, may be problematic for residents of North Caicos, South Caicos, Middle Caicos, and Salt Cay islands. Students on these smaller, outlying islands must relocate to attend the community college.

EMIS

Steps have been taken to implement EMIS across the Turks and Caicos Islands schools: computers have been purchased; software was developed locally and has been installed in a few schools. However, network infrastructure problems have stalled the project. Adequate school-wide implementation would require a systemwide LAN, whether wireless or wired. In addition, development of a central database that can be accessed by all users at all times has proved problematic.

EMIS implementation requires the extension of technical support beyond the current boundaries of the Ministry's administrative structure to the level of the schools themselves.

Non-formal and community ICT education

The Department of Social Development operates two community centers addressing the needs of out-of-school youth. However, these centers presently do not provide access to ICT.

Barriers and challenges

- **Uneven economic development among islands:** Disparities in economic development among islands contribute to differences in the quality of education, with poorer students, schools and communities at a disadvantage, and to unequal access to ICT.
- **Large proportion of students in private schools:** Approximately 45 percent of primary students and 22 percent of secondary students attend primary schools. The majority of these schools offer much lower levels of ICT access than do government schools. Students entering secondary schools from private primary schools will lag students attending government schools in terms of ICT skills. Students attending private secondary schools will likely remain disadvantaged in this regard. In both instances, a large cohort of the student population lacks equal opportunity to prepare for and pass the CXC IT exam.
- **Teachers lack ICT skills and incentives to participate in TPD:** As mentioned, the island topography of the Turks and Caicos Islands creates barriers to teacher access to community-college ICT courses. Motivation, however, is a problem for many teachers regardless of their location: the current TPD program does not establish incentives for teachers' participation in ICT-focused TPD.
- **Technology unit of MOE lacks capacity and mandate:** As currently structured, the technology unit within the MOE is neither mandated nor resourced to address schools' needs for maintenance, training, curriculum, and other components supporting effective ICT use.