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

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

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

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### Teacher Professional Development Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TPD program type</th>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>In-service primary and secondary teachers</td>
<td>Familiarize teachers with ICT</td>
<td>Open to all teachers</td>
<td>no incentives, some teachers live on islands without community colleges, available time is only weekends and holidays, few teachers have completed course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 access 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 contributes 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.