

Summary

Montserrat, a small island protectorate of the United Kingdom, has been ravaged by volcanic eruptions since 1995, resulting in significant out-migration as well as economic challenges. Although development of ICT policy in education has been stalled, three of four primary schools have acquired computer labs and software via *ad hoc* means. With support from the MOE, the Montserrat Secondary School has acquired two computer labs, which are used to support the use of office-productivity tools by students at all levels and to prepare students for the CXC ICT exam. All teachers have participated in TPD focused on development of basic ICT skills. Both tertiary institutions also offer instruction in basic ICT. The government supports public access computing



through an information kiosk, a library-based ICT program, and other means.

Basic Data

Category	Date	Value
Population	2006	~5,000*
Per capita GDP (PPP)	2002	\$3,400
Economy, composition	2006	Public sector construction, tourism, agriculture, rum, textiles, electronic appliances
Literacy, total population 15 and over	1970	97
Literacy rate (women)	1970	97
Gross enrollment ratio, primary	—	NA
Gross enrollment ratio, primary (girls)	—	NA
Gross enrollment ratio, secondary	2002/3	103.4
Gross enrollment ratio, secondary (girls)	—	NA
Number of nursery schools	2006	3
Number of primary schools	2006	4
Number of secondary schools	2006	1
Language of instruction	—	English

* The *World Factbook*, which provides population data included in this study, lists the 2006 population of Montserrat as 9,439. The *World Factbook* also states that over half of the population expatriated by the Soufriere Hills eruption has returned to the island. Montserratian respondents, however, suggest that both the total population and the numbers of returnees are overstated.

Sources: World Factbook, UNESCO, Min. of Education and Labor

Relevant Policies

Document	Status	Date	Key points and objectives
Draft policy on ICT in education	Draft	1998 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ICT is a priority for the education system ■ All secondary students should develop ICT skills ■ Each secondary student should be timetabled into ICT-focused learning

Source: Min. of Education and Labor

In coordination with the Government of Montserrat, DFID and the EDF plan a substantial increase in support for ICT in education in 2007–2008.

Although Montserrat is a British protectorate, per-capita GDP is among the lowest in the Caribbean. In its 2005/2006 fiscal year, DFID provided £12.5 million.

Introduction

One of the Leeward Islands, Montserrat is both very small (102 sq. km.) and lightly populated (~5,000). The island was devastated by eruptions of the Soufriere Hills Volcano from 1995 until the most recent eruption in 2003, which resulted in out-migration of over 60 percent of the population. (A significant proportion of expatriates have returned.) These eruptions also led to the closing of schools, displacement of students, and the construction of temporary school facilities in the northern, inhabitable region of the island. Following the eruptions, most of the businesses in Montserrat relocated to the city of Brades.

Historically, C & W has been the only telecommunications provider licensed to operate in Montserrat. Sector liberalization is in process and is intended to increase competition, drive down costs to consumers, and stimulate Internet use.

Policy and planning

A 1998 drafting of an ICT policy in education was interrupted by the volcanic eruptions and forced relocation of the island's inhabitants. The 1998 draft will be reviewed and revised prior to adoption.

As a result of DFID-supported technical assistance, an ICT audit of schools was conducted. Results of this audit will inform the types of technical assistance afforded the Montserrat Secondary School over the next several years.

Other donors supporting ICT in education in Montserrat include Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, CARICOM, and the Seventh Day Adventist church (which donated two computers to Montserrat Secondary School).

ICT Resources in Schools

School type	Number	Median enrollment	ICT profile
Nursery schools	3	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two schools have one computer for use by teachers ■ Computers are connected to the Internet
Primary schools	4	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two schools have computer labs ■ One school has a small computer area ■ One school does not have computers ■ Three schools have Internet connections
Secondary school	1	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two computer labs ■ Instruction in basic computing, Internet searching, and other topics ■ Preparation for CXC or CSEC IT exams

Source: Min. of Education and Labor

ICT in primary and secondary Schools

Primary schools

Notwithstanding the absence of an ICT policy and project plan, three primary schools in Montserrat have acquired computer labs and ADSL Internet connections through the MOE and local donors. The computers are of various brands, configurations and capacities, with refurbished computers comprising a significant portion of computers in one school.

In some primary schools, students in grades 5 and 6 have been introduced to computers—the extent of hands-on experience is unclear. Plans include efforts to increase the use of ICT among primary students.

Two of Montserrat's three nursery schools have one computer with ADSL Internet connection.

Secondary school

The Montserrat Secondary School currently has two computer labs with ADSL Internet connections. All students in the school are introduced to ICT as a subject. In the upper levels, students prepare to write the CXC and CSEC IT exams. The pass rate for Montserratian students taking these exams has been over 90 percent to date.

Teacher professional development

All 28 secondary teachers and 37 primary and pre-primary teachers have received in-service TPD in basic computer skills. Although professional development does not address ICT integration, many teachers use ICT for research and lesson-preparation, for presentations, and to support teaching and learning in other ways.

Since 1998, teachers in the education system have received some training in basic computer skills and general ICT. Staff turnover, however, has been such that current teachers will require further TPD.

Distance education and other media

The MOE also broadcasts radio and television programming to students in classes. Programming supports intramural competitions in language arts, math, science, and other subjects.

The UWI School of Continuing Studies (UWI SCS) offers some degree programs via UWIDEC

Tertiary education

Tertiary institutions include the Montserrat Community College and the UWI SCS. The community college offers an advanced-level program, which includes Information Technology as a subject. This program enables students to write CXC and CAPE examinations in IT.

Both the community college and UWI SCS offer new-user and exam-preparation courses on ICT on a part-time basis.

Nonformal and community education

The Government of Montserrat supports community access to ICT in several ways. The government maintains a free Internet kiosk, outside the Government Information Services Unit in Brades, with additional computers available in the Brades public library, the only public library on the island.

CARICOM has also funded a creation of a video-conferencing center that is open to the public.

EMIS

There is no significant effort at EMIS implementation at this time in Montserrat as a result of high projected cost.

All government systems, however, are networked to Government Headquarters.

Barriers and challenges

- **Technical support:** At present one technician serves the schools. The Government Information Systems Unit provides technical support, maintenance and repairs to all government ICT systems, including those in schools.
- **Lack of support for teachers in schools:** Teachers are trained in the use of ICT. However,

no provisions are made for TPD for technology integration, or teacher networking and collaboration.

- **Sustainability:** At present, recurrent costs of ICT are funded through DFID and the EU.

- **Lack of tertiary programs:** Although UWI Montserrat offers certificate programs, there are no degree-based programs in computer science or engineering available in Montserrat.

Research for this report was conducted by Mary Burns.