

## Policy Proposal: Strengthening Local Tertiary Institutions While Ensuring Free Education in Guyana

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines a policy proposal designed to create a balanced approach to free tertiary education in Guyana, emphasizing the importance of strengthening local tertiary institutions. The current funding model, which directs substantial government resources to foreign universities, places local institutions at a competitive disadvantage. This proposal advocates for a paradigm shift aimed at empowering local institutions by enhancing their infrastructure, fostering innovation, and incentivizing academic excellence. Drawing on successful global models from countries such as Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the proposal outlines a framework for developing a robust, sustainable, and competitive higher education system that can meet both national and international standards.

**Keywords-** Tertiary education, higher education policy, local institutions, free education, government funding, academic excellence, Guyana

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Guyana, the government's commitment to providing free tertiary education has inadvertently created a challenge for local institutions. The current funding model allocates significant resources to foreign universities, forcing local universities and colleges to compete against these institutions that offer taxpayer-subsidized education. This competition undermines the financial capacity and competitiveness of local tertiary institutions, leading to a diminished ability to grow and innovate. Furthermore, it weakens the country's capacity to build a self-sufficient educational system capable of fostering national development (Ministry of Education, 2022).

This paper presents a paradigm shift in policy that seeks to address these challenges by creating a balanced approach to tertiary education funding. Moreover, in reallocating government resources to local institutions and fostering a competitive environment driven by academic excellence, this proposal aims to

strengthen the country's education infrastructure. Drawing from international best practices in tertiary education, this proposal provides a roadmap for building a world-class education system that not only meets the needs of Guyanese students but also contributes to the nation's long-term socio-economic growth.

## II. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this policy is to create a balanced system that offers free tertiary education to all eligible Guyanese students, while promoting the development and sustainability of local public and private tertiary institutions. Instead of directing government funds primarily to foreign institutions, this approach advocates for empowering local institutions through targeted investments, market-driven incentives, and rigorous accreditation standards. In elevating the quality and reputation of local institutions, this policy seeks to enable them to compete globally and attract

students based on academic merit, innovation, and institutional accreditation and prestige.

### III. GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

The policy proposal draws upon successful models implemented in several countries. These examples illustrate how governments have successfully balanced free tertiary education with the growth of local institutions, creating a competitive yet equitable education environment.

#### **Barbados:**

Barbados' education policy supports both public and private institutions, allowing them to coexist within a framework that fosters competition. The University of the West Indies (UWI), a publicly funded institution, thrives alongside accredited private institutions, offering students the opportunity to choose between publicly funded education and private alternatives based on their academic needs (University of the West Indies, 2021).

#### **Trinidad and Tobago:**

Trinidad and Tobago's Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) program allows students to attend public or accredited private institutions, creating a competitive yet balanced higher education landscape. This policy ensures that students have access to diverse academic programs while incentivizing institutions to improve their offerings in response to market needs (Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago, 2021).

#### **United States:**

In the United States, higher education operates under the principle of student choice. Government financial aid is made available to students attending both public and private institutions, creating a competitive environment where institutions must continuously improve their programs to attract students. Government aid follows the student, empowering them to select institutions based on academic quality, accreditation, and innovation (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

#### **Canada:**

Canada's financial aid system grants students the flexibility to select institutions based on quality, irrespective of whether the institution is public or private. Local institutions thrive through a competitive process in which students make informed decisions based on institutional performance and alignment with labor market needs (Canadian Ministry of Education, 2021).

#### **United Kingdom and Europe:**

In the United Kingdom and several European countries, government funding supports students attending both public and private institutions. This approach fosters a dynamic and competitive academic environment where institutions are encouraged to align their programs with both student demand and market requirements (UK Department for Education, 2020).

### IV. POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GUYANA

#### **Government-Funded Scholarships with Student Choice:**

The proposed policy introduces a paradigm shift in the allocation of government-funded scholarships. Instead of limiting student choice, scholarships will be awarded in a way that allows students to select the institution that best aligns with their academic and career objectives, whether public or private, local or foreign. By granting students autonomy in choosing their institution, local institutions will be incentivized to improve their academic offerings in order to attract top talent (Ministry of Education, 2022).

#### **Empowering Local Tertiary Institutions:**

A central element of this policy is the strategic investment in local tertiary institutions, particularly the University of Guyana (UG) and accredited private institutions. Targeted government funding will be allocated to improve infrastructure, enhance research capabilities, and support faculty development. This investment will enable local institutions to compete on a global scale and reduce the country's reliance on foreign education providers (University of Guyana, 2022).

#### **Accreditation and Competitive Standards:**

The National Accreditation Council of Guyana (NAC) will continue to serve as the sole certifying body for both public and private institutions. To ensure that local institutions meet international standards, the NAC will enforce rigorous accreditation processes aligned with best practices in global education. Institutions that meet these standards will be eligible for government-funded scholarships, fostering a culture of excellence and accountability (NAC, 2022).

#### **Reducing Reliance on Foreign Providers:**

The current reliance on foreign universities for tertiary education will be reduced by redirecting government funding toward local institutions. While foreign institutions will remain an option for specialized fields, the preference will be to encourage students to pursue their education at local institutions. This paradigm shift will strengthen local educational capacity and ensure that taxpayer funds are invested in building a sustainable, world-class education system within Guyana (Ministry of Education, 2022).

#### **Fostering Innovation and Competitiveness:**

Local institutions will be incentivized to innovate through government-supported grants aimed at enhancing research, curriculum development, and academic programs. This market-driven approach will reward institutions that align their offerings with national and global trends, ensuring continuous improvement and responsiveness to student needs and labor market demands (University of Guyana, 2022).

#### **Aligning Education with National Development Goals:**

To ensure that the tertiary education system supports Guyana's long-term socio-economic

development goals, local institutions will be encouraged to align their academic programs with national economic priorities. Fields such as engineering, education, healthcare, and technology will be prioritized to ensure that graduates possess the skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to the nation's development (Ministry of Finance, 2022).

## V. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The policy proposal aims to deliver several key outcomes that will benefit both students and local tertiary institutions in Guyana:

- **Equitable Access to Education:** All eligible students will have access to free tertiary education, with the freedom to choose from a variety of accredited institutions (Ministry of Education, 2022).
- **Strengthened Local Institutions:** By investing in local institutions, this policy will transform Guyanese universities and colleges into centers of academic excellence (University of Guyana, 2022).
- **Reduced Reliance on Foreign Institutions:** By focusing on local education, the country's reliance on foreign universities will decrease, keeping talent and resources within Guyana (NAC, 2022).
- **Increased Innovation and Quality:** Local institutions will be driven to innovate and continuously improve their academic offerings, ensuring that students receive a world-class education (Ministry of Education, 2022).
- **Alignment with National Development Goals:** Graduates will be equipped with the skills necessary to contribute to Guyana's socio-economic growth, particularly in priority sectors such as technology and healthcare (Ministry of Finance, 2022).

## VI. CONCLUSION

This policy proposal represents a forward-thinking approach to balancing the government's

commitment to free tertiary education with the need to strengthen local institutions. By allowing students to choose their educational paths and incentivizing local institutions to innovate and compete, this policy fosters a dynamic and competitive higher education sector in Guyana. The proposed paradigm shift will reduce the country's reliance on foreign education providers, enabling Guyanese institutions to grow into world-class centers of learning and contribute to national development.

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