The Symposium on Boys’ Education held in Georgetown, Guyana on June 28 and 29 2018, brought together almost 200 persons representing a wide cross-section of stakeholders, to discuss the issues being faced by boys in the education system, with a view towards devising strategies for addressing same. The Faculty of Education and Humanities at the University of Guyana, partnered with the Ministry of Education, Commonwealth of Learning, UNICEF and CARICOM to conduct this initiative, which saw wide-ranging participation from various local sectors as well as regional and international researchers and practitioners. The symposium sought to:

- present research and data regarding the realities of boys’ education in Guyana;
- examine best practices from within the Caribbean region and internationally;
- devise strategic approaches for addressing issues confronting boys in the education system;
- draft and publish a communique indicating future directions and required action areas; and
- identify and prioritize areas for follow-up initiatives and research.

Areas of Concern
1. The Symposium arrived at a consensus regarding areas of continuing and growing concern. These included but were not limited to the symposium themes:
Boys’ Under-representation and Underperformance;
- Feminization of Education - the Absent Male Teacher;
- Socialization of Males – Keeping Boys out of Risk;
- School Factors and Pedagogical Choices Impacting Gender;
- Empowerment of Boys

**Advancing Boys’ Education**

The following broad declarations were endorsed:

2. A comprehensive understanding of economic, social and cultural contexts is crucial to solving issues related to boys’ education. Interlocking factors surrounding access to resources, teacher quality, type of curriculum, socio-economic status and geographic location, all contribute to the disparities that currently exist.

3. A pro-active approach to addressing the learning needs of boys must be adopted but not at the expense of girls. Both boys and girls should benefit from the strategies and approaches adopted for the education system.

**Action Areas/Recommendations**

To advance boys’ education and promote education that benefits everyone, the symposium called on education policy makers, planners, providers and researchers to

4. Develop and implement policies that comprehensively address gender in the education system and consider the realities of the potentially marginalized and/or excluded children. Empowerment must go beyond mere participation and provide opportunities for boys and girls to experience greater levels of success in education

5. Devise a multi-sectoral approach that addresses the intersectionality of factors recognized as negatively affecting the performance of boys. Factors such as poverty, variable school-type and teacher quality, the absence of males in the classroom, limited or no access to extra-curricula programmes, lack of guidance and counseling support mechanisms and structural factors related to the economy all mitigate against boys’ education and well-being.

6. Build capacity for gender mainstreaming in education. Specific plans and strategies should address factors such as a balanced curriculum and access to literature that appeals to males; the adoption of appropriate, gender-sensitive strategies; and attention to variables such as teacher expectations and gender identity. Plans should also include gender mainstreaming training for teachers and teacher educators.

7. Encourage greater home-school-community arrangements that address the factors impacting on the socialization of males within the society and foster healthy behaviors and responsible decision making.

8. Implement strategic approaches to attracting more males to teaching and interrogate existing definitions of masculinity and manliness and their implications for the education of boys.
9. Provide a structure and formal opportunities for leadership within the area of boys’ education and socialization of boys

10. The symposium also called on practitioners to reinforce their commitment to boys’ education by:
    a. Attending to gender-specific needs and recognizing the unique needs of male learners;
    b. Developing more engaging/active, boy-friendly pedagogical practices;
    c. Supporting different ‘gendered’ patterns of achievement;
    d. Critically assessing standardized testing and its consequences for student placement;
    e. Promoting the development of skills and opportunities for boys to engage in a wider range of co-curricular activities within the education system;
    f. Adopting approaches that encourage development of a healthy sense of self and respect for others; and
    g. Establishing mechanisms to minimize dropping out and facilitate the re-integration of boys into education once they have dropped out.

Conclusion

Education is an individual and social good. We share the responsibility of working together to ensure that education in Guyana benefits all youth, in particular, those most at risk of being marginalized or excluded. We thank the academics, educators, citizens, church and civil society groups, as well as other sector representatives for their meaningful input and extend our appreciation to the University of Guyana, the Ministry of Education and their partners, the Commonwealth of Learning, UNICEF and CARICOM for organizing and supporting this highly relevant and informative Symposium on Boys’ Education.