Foundation

Proposals on Key Issues Pertaining to the Education Sector

It starts at home: Empowering Parents to Empower the Future

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P R E A M B L E

This report was developed by the ILMA Foundation in response to the communique issued by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource, which invited all stakeholders to contribute views and proposals ahead of the national education forum, *les Assises de l'Éducation*, to be held on 15, 16, and 17 April 2025. The Ministry's call specifically sought input on key issues within the education sector, including curriculum reform, pedagogical approaches, home-school partnerships, extra-curricular development, inclusivity, foundational literacy and numeracy, career guidance, special education needs, discipline and violence prevention, teacher training, and the integration of technology and values-based education.

In alignment with this call, the ILMA Foundation has prepared this submission with the aim of contributing meaningful, research-informed proposals to strengthen education in Mauritius. The Foundation remains firmly committed to promoting equitable and inclusive education for all, grounded in both national values and global best practices. Due to the late notice and limited access to local educational data, this report relies primarily on secondary sources and comparative international research to formulate evidence-based recommendations.

The absence of a national framework for data collection, monitoring, and educational research presents a critical barrier to progress. Therefore, one of the core recommendations herein is the establishment of a comprehensive, nationwide education data infrastructure. Without accurate, timely data, policy-making remains reactive and limited in scope.

Moreover, while this forum is a valuable platform for dialogue, sustained change cannot be achieved through discussion alone. True education reform requires systemic implementation and community alignment. Because education is a national matter, the active participation and informed consent of parents are non-negotiable. Parents must be informed, engaged, and involved—not sidelined or politicized—if reform is to succeed and endure. This report proposes frameworks and recommendations with that principle at its core: that real reform begins not just in classrooms or ministries, but in homes, families, and communities.

C O N T R I B U T O R S

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ABSTRACT

This report presents comprehensive recommendations to strengthen the education system in Mauritius across multiple domains: parenting impact, pedagogical innovation, homeschooling frameworks, teacher professional development, and age-appropriate sexual education. It is grounded in comparative international research and tailored to Mauritius's cultural and social landscape. Among the key proposals are: embedding parenting education into national policy, expanding inclusive and emotionally intelligent pedagogies, formalizing homeschooling regulation with resource support, enhancing teacher training and well-being, and introducing sexual education progressively—beginning with foundational health and safety concepts in early grades, and advancing to more complex topics at later stages. Emphasis is placed on values-sensitive, scientific content where possible, and on fostering partnerships with families and community leaders to ensure societal alignment.

Crucially, the report underscores that parents are the cornerstone of any meaningful and sustainable educational reform. Without their informed engagement, consistent support, and shared responsibility, even the most well-designed reforms risk limited impact. Studies across diverse contexts—from the UK to Singapore and South Africa—consistently find that strong home-school collaboration significantly enhances student motivation, learning outcomes, and social behavior (Epstein, 2001; Jeynes, 2012). Therefore, in Mauritius, reforms must prioritize building parental capacity alongside institutional transformation to ensure long-term success. Parents are not only stakeholders—they are partners in shaping the nation's future.

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INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the foundation for national development, social cohesion, and the empowerment of future generations. In Mauritius, as in many countries, the education system stands at a critical juncture where traditional practices must evolve to meet the challenges of a dynamic and interconnected world. The complexity of today's educational landscape demands thoughtful, inclusive, and forward-looking reforms that consider not only academic performance but also emotional well-being, equity, innovation, and global competitiveness.
This report by the ILMA Foundation is a comprehensive response to the Ministry of Education and Human Resource's invitation for proposals ahead of *les Assises de l'Éducation* (15–17 April 2025). It seeks to address key challenges in the education sector while offering strategic, evidence-based recommendations tailored to the Mauritian context. Our approach is rooted in the belief that education must be holistic, values-based, and community-driven—integrating academic excellence with character formation, emotional intelligence, and responsible citizenship.

Drawing upon international case studies, peer-reviewed research, and policy innovations from regions such as the UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Africa, and the United States, this report aims to inspire bold yet contextually appropriate action. Our proposals are framed with a strong emphasis on cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and long-term sustainability.
The report explores a range of interlinked themes and challenges: the impact of parenting on youth development; the need to modernize curricula through project-based and inclusive pedagogies; the importance of regulating and supporting homeschooling; the critical role of teacher training and psychological well-being; and the necessity of providing scientifically accurate, age-appropriate sex education. Each recommendation is supported by real-world case studies and reflects international best practices adapted to local realities.

One of the central conclusions of this report is that sustainable educational reform cannot be achieved without the meaningful involvement of parents and community leaders. The current lack of a national data framework also hinders evidence-based policy-making, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms across schools. Recommendations include the creation of a National Digital Learning Resource Centre, school-based psychological services, inclusive education infrastructure, and a Continuous Professional Development framework for teachers. For a thematic breakdown of the proposals and global comparisons, please refer to **Appendix 1**.

While the Ministry's initiative to gather input through national consultations is commendable, it is important to note that the current methodology appears heavily driven by perceptions and qualitative feedback. To build a truly transformative and future-ready education system, Mauritius must ground its reforms in robust, data-driven decision-making. This means developing a national framework for data collection that includes wide-reaching, methodologically sound surveys of parents, teachers, and students. We must go beyond

anecdotal evidence to understand the specific needs, concerns, and realities faced by stakeholders across the country. Furthermore, there is a need for comprehensive comparative analysis—not only to identify successful international education models, but also to learn from those that failed and why. In addition to educational reforms, legislative modernization is essential, especially regarding child protection in the digital age. As internet access expands rapidly among youth, updated laws and policies must address online safety, data privacy, and digital literacy to safeguard children's well-being. In short, lasting reform will require more than ideas—it will require evidence, accountability, and a clear legal framework that supports both innovation and child rights in a fast-evolving educational landscape.

Ultimately, the goal is not only to identify what works abroad but to envision what will work best for Mauritius—now and for generations to come. This document is offered as a tool for policymakers, educators, parents, and civil society to build an education system that reflects the nation's values while preparing its youth for the demands of the 21st century.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES AND ENVISIONING THE SOLUTIONS

1. IMPACT OF PARENTING ON CHILD OUTCOMES

Effective parenting is a cornerstone of child development and academic success. When parents are actively involved, supportive, and aware of their children's needs and behavior, children tend to perform better in school, exhibit healthier emotional well-being, and avoid risky behaviors. Conversely, irresponsible parenting—characterized by lack of supervision, overexposure to technology, weak emotional support, and minimal involvement in a child's education—has been linked to adverse outcomes such as poor academic performance, substance abuse, and emotional distress (Hoeve et al., 2009; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Mauritius faces significant challenges in parenting in the digital age. A substantial rise in internet penetration has not been matched with adequate parental supervision. Surveys show that fewer than 10% of parents monitor their children's online activity (Halley Movement, 2007), and nearly 60% of adolescents report that their parents do not understand or track how they spend their free time (GSHS, 2017). This gap is evident in risky behaviors such as early sexual activity and substance use among teenagers. Although civil society and government initiatives have been launched—including Safe Surfing campaigns and online safety guidelines—there remains an urgent need for structured parent education programs.

In the **UK**, strong parental involvement correlates with improved academic and behavioral outcomes. Yet, digital threats persist, with over half of children exposed to pornography before age 13 and one in five experiencing cyberbullying (SWGfL Press Office, 2025). The UK's response includes legislation (e.g. the Online Safety Act, 2023), school-based digital literacy, and national awareness campaigns. Emphasis is placed on both parental controls and open parent-child communication.

The **United States** underscores the dangers of low parental supervision, especially during after-school hours. Unsupervised adolescents report higher rates of substance use, delinquency, and mental health issues (Roark, 2019; DenHoed, 2021). Programs like the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) and legislative measures such as parental consent for minor social media accounts aim to address these risks. NGOs also offer resources to increase parental digital literacy.

Scandinavian countries blend trust-based parenting with national digital safety education. Though autonomy is emphasized, Nordic children still face digital risks due to limited parental controls. Governments in Sweden, Norway, and Finland have updated curricula to include digital citizenship and media literacy (Radio, 2016; Anon., 2025). Campaigns support parents through guides and open discussions, although experts note the need for more active engagement.

In **Singapore**, proactive steps are taken to bridge the digital awareness gap. Government toolkits, workshops, and family service campaigns help parents guide their children's online habits. Community programs such as the "First Device Campaign" encourage responsible media use from an early age. Co-viewing and joint digital activities are promoted to build trust and awareness (Anon., 2025b).

Malaysia has incorporated digital parenting into broader family training programs like Semarak Kasih, supported by UNICEF. National campaigns (CyberSAFE, Klik Dengan Bijak) raise awareness, while school PTAs provide sessions on parenting and online safety. Despite these efforts, digital supervision and emotional guidance remain inconsistent, making expanded parental training a priority (Choong, 2019).

Across all contexts, the evidence is clear: effective parenting—both in emotional presence and digital oversight—is vital for healthy child development. Countries that invest in educating parents through school collaborations, media campaigns, legal frameworks, and community programs consistently report better youth outcomes. Mauritius can learn from these models to implement culturally relevant, scalable solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement Parent Education Programs

Develop accessible, multilingual workshops and digital courses on positive parenting, digital literacy, and emotional support. These programs should train parents on internet safety, identifying red flags such as cyberbullying or isolation, and fostering open communication with their children. Malaysia’s collaboration with UNICEF serves as a model for curriculum development and outreach (UNICEF Malaysia, 2020).

2. Strengthen School-Family Partnerships

Foster a culture of cooperation between schools and families through PTAs, regular progress updates, and parental engagement events. Evidence from the UK, Finland, and Singapore shows such partnerships lead to better academic performance and improved emotional health among students (King, 2019; MOE Singapore, 2023).

3. Expand After-School and Counseling Programs

Introduce after-school clubs, mentoring, tutoring, and structured recreational programs to keep students engaged during high-risk hours. Simultaneously, ensure that every school has access to trained counselors and partnerships with NGOs for early intervention and family outreach. The U.S. model demonstrates that supervised after-school engagement reduces delinquency and supports academic development (DenHoed, 2021).

4. Leverage Technology for Parental Control and Engagement

Develop a national digital parenting toolkit and support infrastructure to educate families on using parental control tools. Following Singapore's lead, Mauritius can provide centralized resources and partner with telecom providers to enable free or subsidized filtering and monitoring tools. Alerts and app-based updates can help parents monitor online activity responsibly (Anon., 2025b).

5. Legal and Policy Safeguards

Strengthen legal protections for children online and mandate institutional support for parental involvement. These might include age verification requirements for adult content, safe public Wi-Fi policies, and obligations for schools to involve parents in education planning. The UK's digital safety legislation and Scandinavian parental inclusion policies serve as viable references (UK Parliament, 2023).

6. Public Awareness and Cultural Change

Launch national campaigns to promote the importance of active parenting. Highlight statistics and real-life testimonials to emphasize the risks of inattention and the power of engagement. Campaigns should aim to normalize proactive parenting, similar to how public health campaigns normalized vaccination and hygiene (UNICEF, 2021).

7. Support Networks for Parents and Children

Encourage the formation of peer support groups and hotlines. Examples from Malaysia and the UK include moderated WhatsApp communities and dedicated helplines offering professional guidance. These platforms help parents handle modern parenting challenges and connect them to mental health and family services early on (Cooper et al., 2024).

2. PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS

Creating an effective curriculum and applying sound pedagogical methods requires a holistic and inclusive strategy. The foundation of a good curriculum lies in clearly defined educational goals that align with national benchmarks while preparing students for future challenges. These goals should emphasize skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. To ensure relevance and effectiveness, curriculum development must involve key stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community leaders.

Incorporating interdisciplinary themes and value-based education is essential for nurturing ethical awareness and holistic understanding. Active learning strategies such as project-based and inquiry-based learning should be prioritized, supported by modern educational technologies that enhance student engagement and ensure learning accessibility. Teaching should also be adaptable to cater to a wide range of learning preferences and abilities, thereby fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

On the issue of student differentiation, the practice should not translate into segregating learners into 'elite' and 'underperforming' categories. Research suggests that mixed-ability groupings are more beneficial as they encourage collaborative learning and reduce the stigma attached to academic labels. Such inclusive grouping supports peer learning, emotional development, and equitable access to quality education. Differentiation should instead focus on personalized instruction within integrated classrooms, accommodating the diverse intellectual and emotional needs of all learners without limiting their potential through rigid academic tracking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Project-Based Learning (PBL) Reform

- Integrate PBL progressively into the national curriculum, starting at upper primary levels (Condliffe et al., 2017).
- Provide specialized teacher training and mentorship to build capacity.
- Develop a national PBL framework linked to sustainability themes and cross-curricular skills.
- Encourage school-community collaboration to enable real-world project learning.
- Redesign assessment rubrics to measure problem-solving and collaboration (Lucas Education Research, 2019).
- Ensure leadership support for whole-school adoption.

2. Inclusive Education Reform

- Mandate in-service training on inclusive strategies for all educators (UNESCO, 2020).
- Increase specialist resource teachers and form district inclusion teams.
- Upgrade school infrastructure for accessibility (ramps, sensory rooms, etc.).
- Establish an Inclusive Education Monitoring Unit to track progress.

- Promote family and community engagement to build inclusive school cultures (Carew et al., 2020).

3. Technology Integration in Classrooms

- Adopt a pedagogy-first approach in implementing educational technology (OECD, 2015).
- Publish a national EdTech guide for teachers on interactive and adaptive tools.
- Create a Digital Learning Resource Centre with local-language content.
- Improve infrastructure, including internet access and device support.
- Reward schools achieving learning improvements through EdTech (Bebell & O'Dwyer, 2010).

4. Emotional Intelligence and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Include emotional intelligence in pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Roll out a structured SEL curriculum with age-specific learning outcomes (CASEL, 2020).
- Apply SEL practices throughout the school (peer mentoring, restorative discipline).
- Use tools to track SEL effects on behavior, mental health, and academic results.
- Partner with NGOs for culturally relevant, evidence-based SEL content (Durlak et al., 2011).

3. HOMESCHOOLING FRAMEWORK

Homeschooling—the practice of educating children at home or outside formal school settings—has expanded significantly over the past decade, driven by rising parental demand, greater flexibility, and the acceleration of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, many countries have established legal and institutional mechanisms to recognize and support homeschooling as a legitimate educational alternative. This section explores how nations like the UK, US, Singapore, Malaysia, and those in Scandinavia implement and monitor home-based education, including the use of support systems such as digital platforms, regional hubs, and shared lab facilities.

Comparative Overview of Global Homeschooling Models and Frameworks

The table below summarizes the international approaches to homeschooling:

Country	Legal Framework	Support Structures	Quality Assurance	Special Subjects	Reference
United Kingdom (UK)	Homeschooling legal with limited oversight; no mandatory	Local authority contact points, informal co-	Parental responsibility; proposals for more	Co-ops, private tutors, science clubs,	House of Commons Library (2023); Department for Education (UK)

	registration or monitoring yet.	ops, exam centers, community use.	oversight exist.	some access to school resources.	
United States (US)	Legal in all 50 states; regulation varies from none to high.	Widespread co-ops, online platforms, tutoring centers, charter support.	Voluntary tests, umbrella schools, college prep exams.	Lab intensives, co-op labs, community colleges.	National Home Education Research Institute; HSLDA
Singapore	Strictly regulated; requires MOE exemption and PSLE testing.	Small community, tutoring centers, national curriculum adherence.	MOE mandates PSLE with 33rd percentile pass benchmark.	Tuition centers, Science Centre labs, national e-learning resources.	MOE Singapore; HSLDA Singapore
Malaysia	Primary schooling compulsory; exemption required but rare.	Homeschool centers, informal co-ops, Facebook groups.	External exams (IGCSE, GED); community-based support.	Co-op labs, science centers, maker spaces.	SchoolAdvisor.my; HSLDA Malaysia
Finland	Legal and supported under municipal oversight.	Monitoring teachers, open curriculum access.	Portfolio reviews, informal assessments by supervising teacher.	Limited, but often reintegrated into formal schooling at upper levels.	Suomen Kotikouluyhdistys; Finnish Education Board
Sweden	Essentially illegal since 2010 except rare exceptions.	None; strict government enforcement.	N/A due to prohibition.	N/A	Swedish Education Act (2010); HSLDA Reports

Norway	Legal with biannual monitoring by municipalities.	Support groups, curriculum guidance, access to some school activities.	Progress evaluations twice a year.	Some access to labs via local schools or clubs.	NHUF Norway; HSLDA Norway

Table 1: Overview of Global Homeschooling models

Key Observations from Global Homeschooling Models:

- Homeschooling is legally recognized in several countries, though the level of oversight and regulatory requirements varies significantly.
- Successful models often include access to community co-ops, virtual learning tools, and regular assessments to ensure educational outcomes.
- Practical or science-based subjects are typically supported through structured access to laboratories, community partnerships, or scheduled intensives.
- The presence of a clear legal framework and robust quality assurance mechanisms is essential to uphold educational standards.
- Parent preparedness is crucial—effective homeschooling systems invest in parental training, ongoing support, and resource development to enable high-quality instruction at home.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Establish a Legal Framework for Homeschooling**
   Mauritius should develop legislation to formally recognize homeschooling. This includes mandatory registration of homeschooling families, submission of individualized educational plans, and annual or biannual assessments to ensure learning outcomes are being met, following the models in the UK and Norway (House of Commons Library, 2023).

2. **Develop Regional Resource Hubs**
   To address resource gaps, regional hubs should be established to provide access to science labs, libraries, digital learning stations, and guidance from facilitators or retired educators. Similar systems exist in Malaysia and Singapore, offering structured support and community integration.

3. **Enable Flexible Use of Public School Infrastructure**
   Public school facilities should be made available to homeschooled students for limited use—such as science labs, sports grounds, and libraries—outside regular school hours. This mirrors successful practices from various U.S. states (National Home Education Research Institute, 2021).

4. **Align Curriculum and Expand Digital Access**
   A national homeschooling curriculum guide should be developed to define core competencies and allow flexibility. E-learning platforms, open-access content, and multimedia resources aligned with national examinations must be made widely available (MOE Singapore, 2022).

5. **Train and Certify Parents**
   Parents should undergo structured training on pedagogy, digital tools, and child development to ensure quality homeschooling. Finland's model, where municipalities provide guidance through supervising teachers, serves as a strong reference (Finnish Education Board, 2022).

6. **Implement Structured Assessment and Quality Assurance**
   Introduce portfolio reviews, regular evaluations, and optional participation in national exams. This supports continuous learning without punitive measures, as seen in Finland and Norway.
7. **Support STEM and Lab-Based Subjects**
   Partnerships with universities or technical institutes should be facilitated for lab-based learning. Virtual experiments and scheduled lab access should also be promoted, similar to U.S. homeschool co-op practices (HSLDA, 2023).

8. **Create a Homeschooling Registry and Support Network**
   A centralized registry can track student progress, identify training needs, and link families to local support networks, similar to Malaysia's community groups.

9. **Promote Hybrid Education Models**
   Mauritius can adopt hybrid models combining home-based learning with part-time school attendance or online accredited courses, inspired by systems in the UK and US.

10. **Ensure Inclusive Education for All Learners**
    Students with special needs should receive support through access to special educators, assistive technologies, and inclusive community initiatives, drawing from inclusive practices in South Africa and Kenya.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Teacher Development

Teacher quality plays a crucial role in shaping student success, and well-structured staff development systems are key to achieving this (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This comparative analysis explores how Mauritius and selected countries – including African nations, the UK, the US, Singapore, Malaysia, and Scandinavian countries – support teacher development and well-being in primary and secondary education. The analysis focuses on

professional development models, psychological support for educators, and the role of school counselors, and provides insights into how these efforts impact teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

Training Needs and Challenges in Teaching Methods

Teachers worldwide face ongoing needs in adapting to modern, student-centered pedagogies and integrating technology. In Mauritius, there are persistent training gaps in methods like project-based learning and inclusive teaching. Teachers often lack adequate exposure to differentiated instruction or competency-based assessment practices. In several African countries, centralized and theoretical CPD frameworks limit classroom-level transformation. By contrast, Scandinavian countries emphasize pedagogical renewal through high-quality teacher education and in-service reflection-based training. The UK and US struggle with inconsistent pre-service preparation, often relying on varied and locally-led in-service CPD. Singapore and Malaysia, meanwhile, have made systematic efforts to align teacher training with evolving curricula, digital tools, and assessment reforms to promote higher-order thinking (European Commission, 2018; UNESCO, 2022).

Psychological Support and Teacher Well-Being

Teacher well-being is increasingly recognized as central to professional effectiveness and retention (Owen et al., 2021). In Mauritius, structured psychological support is limited. The School Care Counselling Desk (SCCD) program trains teachers to provide basic support to students, but there is no dedicated support for teachers themselves. Mental health initiatives remain nascent. In African countries, the post-pandemic period has seen growing awareness of teacher mental health challenges. Efforts include UNESCO-supported mental health training and country-specific wellness initiatives (UNESCO, 2022). Scandinavian countries embed teacher well-being into their broader social welfare systems, ensuring access to occupational health services and manageable workloads (Owen et al., 2021). The UK has developed specific well-being charters and helplines, such as the Education Support service. In the US, Employee Assistance Programs and district-level wellness initiatives offer varying degrees of mental health services to educators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Singapore maintains a comprehensive support system, including well-being surveys, counseling services, and school-based Wellness Ambassadors (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020). Malaysia is developing its response, with teacher wellness programs gradually becoming part of education reform (Zhang et al., 2018).

Role of School Counselors in Staff and Student Support Systems

School counselors play an essential role in supporting student welfare and, indirectly, teacher workload and well-being (Zhang et al., 2018). In Mauritius, the SCCD model relies on trained teachers to provide basic counseling, though full-time professional counselors are scarce. In African countries, counselor roles are often filled by designated teachers with minimal training. Full-time professional counselors are limited, though efforts are underway to

establish more structured support services (UNESCO, 2022). Scandinavian schools employ multidisciplinary student support teams that include counselors, psychologists, and social workers (Owen et al., 2021). The UK and US have professional school counselors focused on student mental health, career guidance, and academic planning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Singapore has implemented full-time school counselors in nearly all secondary and many primary schools. Malaysia also maintains school counselors in most secondary schools (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

Impacts on Teacher Effectiveness and Student Learning

Global evidence shows that sustained staff development improves educational outcomes. Continuous CPD leads to enhanced subject knowledge, refined classroom strategies, and greater confidence in using learner-centered techniques. In environments where CPD is tied to teacher evaluation and incentives, such as Singapore and select US states, student achievement rises markedly (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Schools that employ trained school counselors tend to report fewer behavioral issues, more positive class climates, and higher attendance rates. Moreover, when teacher mental health is supported, absenteeism and burnout decrease—leading to better student-teacher relationships and consistency in instruction. Finland's model of empowering educators and offering peer-driven CPD is associated with high trust, professional autonomy, and exceptional student performance. In Mauritius, systematic investment in these areas could significantly improve educational equity, inclusion, and long-term outcomes.

Models of Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

Region	CPD Structure & Frequency	Common Methods	Focus of Training Content
Mauritius	No fixed hours nationally; regular workshops by MIE; emerging PLCs	Seminars, short courses; emerging PLCs	Pedagogical skills, ICT integration, curriculum updates
Africa (sel.)	Formal frameworks (e.g., Ethiopia: 60 hrs/year; Rwanda: 80 min/week)	Central workshops, coaching, clusters	Basic pedagogy, inclusion, curriculum reforms
Scandinavia	~3–5 days/year; mostly voluntary and self-directed	Study groups, planning, optional courses	Curriculum innovation, special education, teacher-led
UK	5 INSET days/year; induction for new teachers	Workshops, mentoring, NPQs	Evidence-based practices, curriculum changes
USA	15–30 hrs/year depending on state requirements	Workshops, coaching, online modules	Common Core, classroom management, tech use

Singapore	100 hrs/year mandated and funded	NIE courses, peer mentoring, seminars	Inquiry-based learning, leadership, digital integration
Malaysia	30 hrs/year mandatory CPD	In-house workshops, SISC+ mentoring	English, STEM, ICT integration, HOTS

Table 2: Comparison of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) models across regions

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mauritius can boost the quality of education by giving more attention to teacher growth and support. Taking inspiration from models like Singapore and Finland (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020; Owen et al., 2021), four key areas for reform are outlined below to create a more effective and motivated teaching workforce.

1. **Create a National CPD System for Teachers**
   Mauritius should build a structured Continuous Professional Development (CPD) system that requires teachers in both public and private schools to attend regular training. These could include short courses, peer sessions, and online modules overseen by the Mauritius Institute of Education. Key topics should include inclusive teaching, classroom management, and digital learning strategies.

2. **Support Teachers' Mental Health and Well-being**
   Schools need to do more to care for teachers' mental health. This includes regular well-being check-ins, access to counseling, and training in stress management and emotional intelligence. A national policy should be developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and local experts to make this support accessible and relevant (Owen et al., 2021).

3. **Boost the Role of School Counselors**
   More trained school counselors are needed—especially in secondary schools—to support both students and teachers. These counselors can help identify stress early and improve communication between families and schools. Their training and job roles should be clearly defined to ensure consistent services across schools (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020).
4. **Use Data to Guide Teacher Support Policies**
   The Ministry should track teacher training, wellness, and performance data to better shape future policies. Regular feedback and well-being surveys can help identify what's working and where improvements are needed. A small task force could be set up to monitor trends and suggest updates to programs every year.

By focusing on these areas, Mauritius can build a strong teaching force that is supported, prepared, and able to deliver quality education. This holistic approach helps teachers stay

motivated, improves learning in classrooms, and brings Mauritius closer to international best practices.

5. COMBATTING DRUG USE IN SCHOOLS

Drug use among school-aged youth in Mauritius is a growing concern with far-reaching implications for student health, academic performance, and future societal productivity. Instead of relying solely on punitive responses, a multi-pronged, preventive strategy is necessary—one that fosters emotional resilience, social connection, and constructive outlets for self-expression. Drawing from global best practices and adapting them to local realities, Mauritius has the opportunity to transform this challenge into a catalyst for inclusive reform. Here are some of the key approaches to tackling this challenge:

1. Strengthening Arts and Cultural Education

- Integrate performing, visual, and literary arts into the national curriculum to support creativity, communication skills, and emotional intelligence.
- Expand the National Arts Fund to support community-based creative programs that engage at-risk youth.
- Partner with local artists and institutions for after-school workshops, festivals, and mentorship programs.
- Leverage arts as therapeutic tools—particularly in schools with vulnerable populations—to help students cope with trauma, peer pressure, and emotional distress.

2. Promoting Sports and Physical Education

- Establish regional sports academies with clear pathways toward national teams and athletic scholarships.
- Incorporate sports science and health education into the curriculum to encourage healthy habits and raise awareness on drug risks.
- Broaden access to structured inter-school competitions to keep youth engaged during vulnerable after-school hours.
- Launch peer mentorship programs, pairing younger students with trained older athletes to model discipline, leadership, and focus.

3. Anti-Bullying Frameworks

- Develop and implement a National Anti-Bullying Framework focused on prevention, early detection, and intervention.
- Train teachers and school leaders in emotional intelligence, trauma-informed practice, and conflict resolution.
- Introduce Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into the classroom to strengthen resilience and reduce the risk factors associated with drug use.

- Enable safe, anonymous reporting mechanisms and student climate surveys to detect early signs of bullying and distress.

4. Parental Engagement and Support

- Launch nationwide awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of parental involvement in digital supervision, emotional availability, and healthy boundaries.
- Integrate parenting workshops into PTA activities and community centers, focusing on communication, monitoring, and child mental health.
- Promote collaboration between parents and educators in school-based drug prevention strategies—especially during key transitional phases such as early adolescence.
- Provide toolkits and support networks (e.g., online groups, helplines) to help parents detect and respond to behavioral red flags.

Conclusion

These recommendations reflect an evidence-based, preventive framework that extends beyond classroom walls. International examples—from Singapore's co-curricular clubs to the UK's integrated PSHE model—demonstrate that long-term reductions in youth drug use require early engagement, community involvement, and supportive structures rooted in positive youth development. In Mauritius, addressing drug use will also depend on cultural sensitivity, ongoing monitoring, and a whole-of-society approach. Ultimately, empowering families, schools, and communities will be essential in shaping a healthier, more resilient generation.

6. SEXUAL EDUCATION REFORM

Sex education models in schools vary widely across countries, from Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) introduced in early grades to abstinence-focused programs that delay sexual content until later adolescence. This section of the report compares the approaches of Mauritius, the UK, the US, Singapore, Malaysia, several African nations, and the UAE (Dubai) regarding:

- The age of introduction of sex education (and whether it includes CSE or abstinence-only content).
- The curriculum content, particularly topics like gender identity, sexual orientation, and basic biology.
- The emphasis on neutral/scientific information vs. ideological content (e.g. secular, religious, or values-driven approaches).
- Societal outcomes associated with these models – including juvenile behavior, teen pregnancy rates, adolescent sexual activity, youth criminality (such as sexual offenses), mental health, and educational performance.

The analysis uses real data and evaluations where possible. Key findings are summarized in tables for clarity. Finally, recommendations are presented for a suitable model in Mauritius – emphasizing a delayed introduction (around age 15–16, or Form 4 and above), exclusion of early comprehensive sex topics in primary school, and ensuring content that is ideologically neutral and scientifically accurate.

Sex Education Models

Country/Region	Sex Ed Model & Start Age	Gender Identity?	Ideological vs. Neutral Content
Mauritius	EAS program from Grades 7–9; primary: basic science only	Not included; Catholic-origin content	Religious values-driven (Catholic basis); abstinence focus (Human Rights Watch, 2022)
UK	Mandatory RSE from primary (~10–11); expanded in secondary	Yes, age-appropriate	Secular, rights-based, neutral (Hadley, 2016)
US	Varies by state; many adopt CSE in middle/high school	Mixed; depends on state	Split: scientific in CSE states, ideological in abstinence-only regions (KFF, 2018)
Singapore	Primary 5 onward (~11+); national curriculum	Mentioned factually; within law	Secular but value-laden (heteronormative); abstinence plus (MOE Singapore, 2025)
Malaysia	Health Ed in primary/secondary, limited real implementation	No	Conservative, religious, abstinence-focused (FRHAM, 2019)
Sub-Saharan Africa	Some countries pilot CSE in upper primary; many have none	No or removed under pressure	Mostly ideological or absent; conservative norms (Reuters, 2019)
UAE	Minimal sex ed; some basic safety topics emerging	No	Highly conservative, values-based; protective (The National, 2017)

Table 3. Sexuality Education Policies and Content by Country

Societal Outcomes of Sex Education Approaches

Country	Teen Pregnancy (15–19)	Teen Sexual Activity & Health	Mental Health/Behavior
Mauritius	~23 per 1,000 (UN avg)	Some unprotected activity; limited education	Rising concern; stigma persists (Human Rights Watch, 2022)
UK	~10 per 1,000; -51% over 15 years	Delayed sex; better contraception use	Reduced bullying, greater inclusion (Hadley, 2016)
US	13.6 per 1,000; huge decline	CSE = safer behavior; abstinence-only = higher risks	LGBTQ-inclusive ed linked to mental health gains (KFF, 2018)
Singapore	~2 per 1,000; very low	Low activity; strong abstinence norms	Low youth sex crime; moderate stress levels (MOE Singapore, 2025)
Malaysia	~13 per 1,000; rising issues	Poor condom use; high teen HIV rates	Mental health concerns; baby abandonment cases (FRHAM, 2019)
SSA	44–175 per 1,000	High activity; poor sex ed & access	Stigma, early marriage, unsafe abortions (UNICEF, 2021)
UAE	Near 0; rare pregnancies	Rare reported activity; data unclear	Lack of education = vulnerability to abuse (The National, 2017)

Table 3. Societal Outcomes Among Youth

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from global comparisons and Mauritius's social landscape, the following streamlined approach to sexual education is recommended:

i. Age-Appropriate Introduction of Sexual Education

Primary-level education should focus on foundational health and social awareness, such as body autonomy, anatomy, hygiene, and emotional development, without delving into explicit sexual topics. Research supports this phased approach, noting that primary-level students are not cognitively or emotionally prepared to handle complex issues like contraception or sexual orientation (Ambaw et al., 2012). Introducing such topics too early can lead to confusion or emotional distress, particularly in conservative societies. Delaying comprehensive sexual education to Form 4 (~15 years old) ensures the content aligns with adolescent development and provides a relevant context as students begin to encounter real-life situations related to relationships, sexuality, and decision-making. This strategy respects parental concerns while still fulfilling educational goals (Fentahun et al., 2012).

ii. Exclude Controversial Topics in Primary Curriculum

Mauritius should keep the primary curriculum free from sensitive topics such as gender identity and detailed sexual behavior. Instead, schools should promote age-appropriate life skills through subjects like Life Skills Education and Science. These can include topics such as self-esteem, understanding friendship and emotions, puberty education, and personal safety (e.g., saying "no" to inappropriate contact). By avoiding controversial issues at a young age, schools help maintain a stable educational environment and avoid potential conflicts with parental beliefs (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This also allows the Ministry of Education time to engage with stakeholders to plan for more advanced content in secondary years, thereby ensuring a more harmonious implementation.

iii. Ensure Ideological Neutrality and Scientific Accuracy

Sexual education must be rooted in fact, not doctrine. The current EAS program should be revised to focus solely on medically and scientifically accurate information (Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet, 2012). This includes clear, unbiased instruction on human anatomy, reproduction, contraception, STIs, and legal rights and responsibilities related to sexual health. Content should avoid promoting any religious or activist viewpoints and instead emphasize public health, personal well-being, and respect for others.

iv. Promote Abstinence-Plus Philosophy

Mauritius's sex education should promote abstinence as the preferred choice for school-aged youth, aligning with national cultural and religious values. However, this message must be complemented by factual instruction on safe practices for those who choose to engage in sexual activity. The abstinence-plus model equips students with comprehensive knowledge that empowers them to make informed decisions. Evidence shows that this dual approach can delay the onset of sexual activity while also increasing the use of protection among sexually active teens (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2018).

v. Introducing Orientation Topics Factually in Later Years

Discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity should not be introduced before Form 4. When addressed, these topics should be presented in a factual, balanced, and respectful manner. The aim is not to promote any particular lifestyle but to inform students about human diversity and foster respect for all individuals. A brief module on diversity and anti-bullying and discuss the importance of treating everyone with dignity (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2025).

vi. Strengthen Biology Content

The curriculum should be updated with current scientific understanding and reviewed regularly for accuracy. Students must learn correct facts about human reproduction, menstruation, conception, contraception methods and their limitations, and prevention of STIs including HIV. Inaccuracies or myths commonly found in outdated or overly moralistic

materials should be corrected. Introducing guest speakers such as healthcare professionals could support teachers in delivering accurate, trustworthy content (Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet, 2012).

vii. Include Consent and Life Skills

Teaching consent, healthy relationships, and decision-making is essential. These concepts are not ideological but foundational to personal safety and interpersonal respect. Lessons should include the right to say no, understanding emotional boundaries, and navigating peer pressure. These skills can significantly reduce the risk of coercion, harassment, and teen relationship abuse. Evidence shows that students who receive education on consent and social-emotional learning are better equipped to handle interpersonal conflict and are less likely to engage in or tolerate violence (UNICEF, 2021).

viii. Involve Parents and Community Stakeholders

Transparency is key. Curriculum plans should be openly shared to gain community support, dispel myths, and ease concerns (Hadley, 2016). Often, opposition to CSE comes from fear of the unknown. By transparently sharing the planned curriculum and underlining its neutral, biological nature, the Ministry can gain trust. Additionally, having endorsements from health professionals or religious figures who understand the importance of accurate knowledge can help frame the initiative as protecting youth, not corrupting them.

ix. Monitor Impact and Remain Adaptive

Track outcomes such as teen pregnancies and sexual behavior via anonymous surveys. If any negative trends appear, the curriculum can be tweaked. International evidence is on the side of this balanced approach: likely Mauritius will see improved outcomes (MOH Singapore, 2023). Mauritius can also contribute to social science by documenting its approach – being a multicultural society, its success could serve as a model for other countries with similar sensitivities.

7. MONITORING MECHANISM AND EVALUATION IN RESHAPING EDUCATION

While *les Assises de l'Éducation* offer a valuable platform for dialogue, reforming education based solely on perception and anecdotal input risks overlooking the deeper, systemic patterns that shape student and teacher outcomes. This is where Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) becomes indispensable. A robust M&E framework allows policymakers to move beyond assumptions, using concrete data to identify what truly works—and what doesn't. With the right tools, Mauritius can apply data science to map behavioral trends, analyze long-term program impact, and forecast the evolving needs of learners and educators. M&E empowers the Ministry to base decisions on measurable evidence rather than sentiment, ensuring that reforms are grounded in accuracy and accountability. Furthermore, data-driven approaches can spotlight disparities across regions, detect gaps in digital access, and optimize the targeting of interventions. In short, without a national system for tracking educational

performance, student well-being, and parental engagement, reform efforts may remain well-meaning but ineffective. Embedding evaluation mechanisms within all proposed initiatives will help Mauritius build an agile, inclusive, and future-ready education system—one that evolves in real time to meet the nation's aspirations.

PROPOSED MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS

- Develop a Centralized Monitoring System: Establish a web-based platform to track and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of educational programs, facilitating timely interventions and data-driven policy adjustments.
- Mandate school-level reporting on engagement initiatives with parents (e.g. attendance at parenting workshops, feedback on PTA sessions) and assess their correlation with student performance and behavior.
- Conduct annual anonymous student surveys in collaboration with schools to monitor trends in emotional well-being, internet exposure, bullying, and parental engagement.
- Regular Assessments of Student Behavior: Introduce systematic evaluations of student behavior and learning patterns to identify trends, address issues proactively, and tailor interventions to enhance student engagement and outcomes.
- Create national databases to track parenting programs, child development outcomes, and internet safety indicators (e.g. screen time, parental control adoption rates, incidents of cyberbullying).
- Track CPD participation for parents and teachers in digital literacy, child psychology, and online safety through a centralized platform (e.g. a Ministry of Education dashboard).
- Implement baseline and follow-up assessments for interventions (e.g. Safe Surfing, parenting workshops, digital literacy training), allowing measurable outcome comparison.
- Partner with universities or research institutions to independently evaluate intervention outcomes and publish reports guiding policy refinement.
- Disaggregate M&E data by region, school type, and demographic to ensure equity and inclusion in outcomes.

ABOUT ILMA FOUNDATION

ILMA Foundation is a foundation registered under the laws of Mauritius (the "Foundation").

The Foundation is a charitable foundation.

The Purpose and Object of the Foundation is to:

i. alleviate poverty,

ii. advance in education,

iii. assist in the development of religion,

iv. preserve of the environment,

v. protect the fundamental human rights in Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean and in Africa.

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APPENDIX 1 – THE FULL REPORT

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IMPACT OF PARENTING ON CHILD OUTCOMES

Irresponsible or disengaged parenting – characterized by overexposure of children to the internet, lack of supervision, poor digital boundaries, and weak emotional or educational guidance – can significantly undermine a child's academic achievement, emotional well-being, and social development. Global research consistently shows that active parental involvement and support are powerful predictors of positive outcomes, whereas lack of engagement correlates with negative behaviors. For example, a meta-analysis found that among family risk factors, lack of parental supervision and parental rejection were among the strongest predictors of youth delinquency and problem behavior (Hoeve et al., 2009). Likewise, extensive studies in education report that parental involvement has a "powerful impact" on children's academic attainment and adjustment, influencing grades, behavior, and lifelong learning attitudes (Desforges and Alberto Abouchaar, 2003). Conversely, children who grow up with little parental support or guidance often face greater risks: higher likelihood of depression and health problems in later life (Romm, Metzger and Turiano, 2021), greater propensity for substance abuse and risky behavior (Roark, 2019), and vulnerability to online harms. UNICEF estimates that *one in three* internet users worldwide is a child, yet far too little is done to protect them from digital risks (UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office et al., 2020). In this section, we examine evidence from Mauritius, the UK, the United States, Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland), Singapore, Malaysia, and other contexts to understand how inadequate parenting affects children's academic, emotional, and social outcomes. We also highlight real-world programs addressing these issues and propose policy recommendations, with a focus on Mauritius and similar contexts.

MAURITIUS: CHALLENGES OF PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Mauritius has seen a dramatic rise in internet access among youth, bringing both opportunities and risks. Between 2000 and 2019, internet usage in Mauritius grew by 824%, reaching roughly 70% population penetration (Rambaree et al., 2020) – meaning most school-aged children are now online. However, parental supervision has not always kept pace. A local survey found that less than 10% of Mauritian parents monitored the websites their children visited (Halley Movement, 2007), exposing many unsupervised minors to the full dangers of the web. The government acknowledged these threats as early as 2009, forming a National Committee on Child Online Safety and adopting an Action Plan to combat online child abuse (Halley Movement, 2007). Despite such efforts, challenges remain. A 2017 school health survey revealed only 39–43% of teenagers felt their parents understood their problems or knew how they spent free time, indicating that less than half of youths receive consistent parental attention and guidance (Global School-based Student Health Survey, 2017). This gap in engagement is reflected in risk behaviors: about 20% of Mauritian students aged 13–17 have already had sexual intercourse, and among those who are sexually active, 60% had their first encounter before age 14 (Global School-based Student Health Survey, 2017). – often a

sign of inadequate supervision or sex education at home. Similarly, significant proportions of teens report early alcohol use and bullying experiences.

Such outcomes underscore how *weak parental oversight* can leave Mauritian children vulnerable – whether to online harms (exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, or predatory contact) or offline issues (early sexual activity, substance use, and violence). In response, civil society has been active: the Halley Movement (a Mauritian child welfare NGO) launched an Internet Child Safety Foundation (ICSF) and a nationwide "Safe Surfing" campaign to educate families about online risks (Halley Movement, 2007). These programs encourage parents to set rules, use filters, and discuss internet safety openly with their children. The government, in partnership with NGOs, has also published practical guidelines on Child Online Protection to help parents manage kids' screen time and content exposure(CERT-MU, Mauritian Computer Emergency Response Team, and National Computer Board, 2013). Despite these initiatives, experts note that awareness is still uneven. Stronger parent education programs – covering digital literacy, positive parenting, and communication – are needed to ensure that Mauritian children receive the guidance and emotional support necessary for healthy development both online and offline.

UNITED KINGDOM: PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND CHILD OUTCOMES

The UK's experience highlights the profound impact of parental engagement (or lack thereof) on children's success and safety. Decades of research in Britain have shown that when parents take an active interest in their child's education – by providing a supportive home learning environment, monitoring progress, and communicating with schools – children of all backgrounds tend to perform better academically. Government reports have affirmed that pupils benefit significantly from their parents' support, which boosts both academic achievement and social adjustment. Conversely, insufficient parental involvement is linked with lower academic performance and more behavioral problems in school. A UK review of education studies concluded plainly: *"parental involvement in children's education has a powerful impact on their attainment and adjustment."* (Desforges and Alberto Abouchaar, 2003).

In the digital sphere, British children face many of the same risks as their peers globally, and outcomes often hinge on parental supervision. Surveys show British parents are highly concerned about online dangers – exposure to pornography is ranked as the top worry for UK parents, above even mental health concerns (SWGfL Press Office, n.d.). These fears are not unfounded: on average UK children now first encounter online pornography at just 13 years old, and nearly one-quarter of children have seen pornographic content by age 11 (Anon., 2023). Shockingly, about 10% of UK kids have been exposed by age 9, and a large majority (79%) of youth have come across violent or degrading sexual content online before turning 18 (Anon., 2023b). Such premature exposure can distort healthy development, contributing to unhealthy attitudes or early sexual behavior. Over half of UK children aged 11–13 have already

seen pornography in some form (Bbfc, 2019), often because content filters or supervision were lacking. Cyberbullying is another prevalent issue: about 1 in 5 British adolescents (19%) experienced online bullying in the past year (Justice, 2024a), and nearly 1 in 10 received unsolicited sexual messages – yet many victims never inform an adult. Risky online interactions are common too: 35% of 10–15 year-olds in England/Wales accepted friend requests from strangers, and roughly 4% even met in person with someone they first met online (Justice, 2024b), a behavior that can lead to exploitation if parents are unaware.

To tackle these challenges, the UK has developed robust interventions at multiple levels. Digital literacy and safety education have been integrated into school curricula, and organizations like the UK Safer Internet Centre (a partnership of NGOs) conduct nationwide awareness campaigns each year. British parents are encouraged to use technical tools – 42% of parents report using network-level parental controls and setting "house rules" for internet use – though experts emphasize this should be combined with open conversations rather than pure surveillance (SWGfL Press Office, 2025). Several UK charities (e.g. NSPCC and Barnardo's) offer resources to help parents discuss topics like online pornography, cyberbullying, and mental health with their children in an age-appropriate way. At the policy level, the government has moved to protect kids through legislation: the Online Safety Act (passed in 2023) will require websites to implement strict age verification to prevent children from accessing pornography (Anon., 2023). Ofcom (the UK internet regulator) is issuing guidance to ensure these measures are effective, aiming to drastically reduce youths' exposure to harmful content. The UK's multi-pronged approach – combining parental education, school programs, and legal regulations – recognizes that engaged and informed parenting is critical to improving children's academic outcomes and shielding them from online and offline dangers.

UNITED STATES: CONSEQUENCES OF LOW SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

In the United States, studies have long documented the fallout from inadequate parental supervision and weak family support. A landmark meta-analysis of longitudinal studies concluded that *inadequate parenting* (marked by low monitoring, poor communication, and parental rejection) is strongly associated with youth delinquency across diverse populations (Hoeve et al., 2009). Specifically, teens with lax supervision are far more likely to engage in criminal or risky behaviors – a finding reflected in real-world patterns. Juvenile justice data show that violent crime and misbehavior by youths spike in the after-school hours when many "latchkey" kids are unsupervised. Between 3 and 6 p.m., juvenile violent crime rates triple, and youths are significantly more prone to experiment with alcohol, tobacco and drugs (DenHoed, 2021). One large U.S. survey of 8th graders found that latchkey children (who spend 11+ hours a week without adult care) were over twice as likely to use alcohol and 2.1 times more likely to smoke cigarettes compared to peers supervised after school. Notably, this elevated risk cut across all socioeconomic and ethnic groups – underscoring that *lack of parental presence* itself was the decisive factor (Roark, 2019). Besides substance use,

unsupervised adolescents are also more likely to become victims of crime or peer violence. In fact, studies indicate children left alone regularly report higher rates of anxiety, depression, and academic difficulties, as they lack the stabilizing influence of engaged adults (DenHoed, 2021).

Emotional and educational neglect also take a toll. American children who do not receive adequate emotional support at home – for instance, those who feel their parents are indifferent or unresponsive – show higher incidence of behavioral problems and low school engagement. Psychological research following individuals into adulthood found that a lack of parental emotional support in childhood predicts greater depression and even chronic health issues later in life (Romm, Metzger and Turiano, 2021). Academically, U.S. students whose parents seldom show interest in their schooling tend to earn lower grades and have higher dropout rates. By contrast, parental involvement (e.g. checking homework, attending school events) has been linked with better grades and attitudes regardless of family income, echoing findings in other countries.

To address these issues, a variety of programs in the U.S. aim to educate and empower parents. Many school districts and nonprofits offer *parent training workshops* on topics like effective communication, setting boundaries, and positive discipline. For example, the evidence-based "Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)" has been implemented in several states to coach parents on managing behavior and supporting children's emotional needs. In the digital realm, NGOs such as Common Sense Media and the Family Online Safety Institute produce guides and campaigns to improve parents' digital literacy – teaching guardians about privacy settings, parental control tools, and how to talk with kids about online content. Recognizing the dangers of unfettered social media access, some U.S. policymakers have also stepped in with legislation: in 2023, Utah passed a law requiring parental consent for minors to create social media accounts and giving parents full access to their children's posts. Several other states (Arkansas, Texas, New Jersey, etc.) are considering similar laws to ensure parents actively oversee underage social media use. Additionally, there is renewed investment in after-school programs and youth clubs (e.g. Boys & Girls Clubs, community centers) to provide supervised, constructive activities during the critical after-school window. By expanding these safety nets and emphasizing the importance of parental engagement, the U.S. is seeking to mitigate the academic setbacks, mental health issues, and risky behaviors that often stem from parental neglect.

SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES: BALANCING FREEDOM AND GUIDANCE

The Scandinavian nations (such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland) are often noted for their progressive social policies and high-performing education systems. In these countries, parenting norms tend to emphasize children's autonomy and open communication, which can yield benefits but also requires vigilance. Parental involvement is widely acknowledged as vital for healthy development in the Nordics – for example, Finnish educational research shows

that children with supportive home learning environments and involved parents have higher motivation and achievement (Salonen, 2024). Moreover, strong emotional support from parents has been linked to better well-being and even slightly higher PISA test scores in adolescents (Thévenon, 2024). Thus, even in egalitarian Scandinavia, *parents matter*: those who provide both warmth and consistent boundaries tend to see positive outcomes in their children's academics and social adjustment.

However, the pervasive digitization of Scandinavian society presents parenting challenges similar to elsewhere. Nordic children are among the earliest to get online and use smartphones, and internet access is nearly universal. In Sweden, for instance, over 95% of youths use the internet daily, and many start in early childhood. The prevalent approach to online safety in these countries relies more on trust and dialogue than on technical restrictions. A survey in Sweden found that the most common parental strategy to protect children online was simply talking about internet risks (reported by 28% of parents) – relatively low, but higher than those using strict filters or monitoring software (Anon., 2022). This suggests that a considerable portion of parents may be hands-off, assuming children can self-regulate or learn from school. While open discussion is certainly beneficial (and preferable to no guidance at all), experts caution that insufficient oversight can still leave Scandinavian kids exposed to harms like cyberbullying, explicit content, or online predators. Indeed, Swedish reports have noted that youth sometimes lack awareness of privacy or engage in risky behaviors online when parental involvement is minimal (Anon., 2022).

The Nordic governments have proactively addressed these concerns primarily through education and national policy. Digital literacy and citizenship are embedded in school curricula: Sweden updated its national curriculum to strengthen teaching on media literacy, internet safety, and critical evaluation of online information starting from primary grades (Anon., 2025). Finland and Norway have similar programs that ensure children learn about safe internet use, cyber ethics, and how to handle upsetting content as part of their formal education. Additionally, the Scandinavian countries participate in the EU's Safer Internet initiative; for example, Sweden's National Media Council operates as a Safer Internet Centre, producing guides for parents and hosting awareness campaigns. These often include free resources like "Kids Online: A Parent's Guide" (highlighting tips from Swedish child rights and internet safety organizations) (Radio, 2016). Another notable effort is the emphasis on sex education and open family communication in the Nordics – schools and health services encourage parents to discuss sexual development and relationships frankly with children, which has been linked to Scandinavia's low rates of teen pregnancy and high levels of reported well-being among teens. While generally Scandinavian parents are highly supportive in terms of love and acceptance, the key challenge remains ensuring that they also impose appropriate limits in the digital realm. Ongoing initiatives in these countries strive to find the right balance between giving children freedom to explore and ensuring adults stay engaged enough to guide, protect, and mentor them.

SINGAPORE: A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO DIGITAL PARENTING

Singapore is a technologically advanced society with high student achievement, but the ubiquity of devices and internet access has prompted concern about parenting in the digital age. Singaporean youths are avid internet users – a recent national survey showed 47% of children aged 10–18 play online games daily (often for 2+ hours per session), and many access social media or video platforms regularly. The government of Singapore recognizes that *parental engagement is critical* to ensure this connectivity doesn't harm children's development. Yet surveys suggest a gap between recommended practices and reality: only half of Singaporean parents could accurately estimate the time their child spends gaming or online, and merely 31% of parents were fully aware of whom their child interacts with online. In fact, 1 in 4 parents admitted they were "not at all aware" of who their child gamed with on the internet. This low awareness is worrisome given that over a third of youths in the survey reported sometimes playing with strangers, and 14% had engaged with strangers outside of the game environment – behaviors which carry risks of online grooming or scams if unchecked. Moreover, among teens (13–18) in Singapore, 17% have experienced cyberbullying during in-game chats, but nearly half did not take any action or tell anyone about it. These findings illustrate that even in a highly educated society, many parents struggle to keep pace with their children's online lives, potentially leading to unchecked exposure to bullying, inappropriate content, or other risks (Anon., 2025b).

In response, Singapore has launched robust programs to educate and empower parents in digital supervision and communication. The Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) and Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) rolled out an Online Safety Toolkit for Parents in 2023, in partnership with major tech companies. This comprehensive toolkit provides easy step-by-step guidance on using parental controls, privacy settings, and content filters across popular platforms, as well as tips for talking to children about online issues. Singapore's Media Literacy Council (MLC), a multi-sector body, also produces accessible resources to equip parents with knowledge and tools to keep kids safe online. Starting in 2024, the government began phasing in new *"bite-sized"* educational materials organized by a child's age and digital milestones (for example, getting their first smartphone or social media account). These resources – available on the Digital for Life online portal and via school and family service channels – cover topics like managing screen time, building healthy online habits, and recognizing cyberbullying or grooming attempts (Anon., 2025b).

Beyond digital literacy, Singapore's approach includes community-based initiatives to strengthen parent-child engagement. TOUCH Community Services runs a "First Device Campaign," which coaches parents on how to guide a child when they receive their first internet-capable device (setting rules, modeling good behavior, etc.). Social enterprises like Cyberlite Books host quarterly cyber-safety talks for parents of primary and secondary students, reinforcing messages about balanced screen use and vigilance against online threats (Anon., 2025b). These efforts are often tied into wider government campaigns such as Safer

Internet Day and the national "Digital Wellness" movement. Importantly, Singapore hasn't focused solely on restrictions; it also encourages parent-child communication and joint media use. Parents are advised to co-view content, play digital games together with younger kids, and use each online encounter as an opportunity to impart values. Early evaluations indicate that Singapore's proactive, educational strategy is improving parental awareness. By actively involving parents – through toolkits, workshops, and school-parent collaborations – Singapore aims to create a digitally literate guardian cohort capable of shepherding children toward the beneficial aspects of the internet while minimizing exposure to harm.

MALAYSIA: STRENGTHENING PARENTING FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

Malaysia faces challenges similar to its Southeast Asian neighbor when it comes to irresponsible parenting and child outcomes, but it has started taking concrete steps to address them. As internet and smartphone use have surged in Malaysia, many children are online from a young age. Yet a Family Well-Being Index survey (IKK 2016) conducted by Malaysia's National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) revealed that the domain of "Family and Communication Technology" scored only 6.38 out of 10 – the *second-lowest* among well-being indicators. This finding pointed to shortcomings in how Malaysian parents manage digital technology in the home, suggesting low awareness and limited engagement in guiding children's internet use. Parents often provide kids with devices early but may not set rules or discuss online risks, leaving children to navigate cyberspace with little guidance. The consequences have become evident in rising reports of cyberbullying in schools, exposure to pornography, and even cases of youths falling victim to online scams or lured by predators via social media. In the offline context, lack of parental supervision and emotional support has been linked to behavioral problems among Malaysian youths – including truancy, involvement in fights, and early experimentation with smoking or drugs.

Recognizing these concerns, Malaysian authorities and international partners have launched initiatives to educate parents and bolster their involvement. In 2019, LPPKN and UNICEF jointly organized a *Digital Parenting and Child Online Protection Forum* in Kuala Lumpur, bringing together government agencies, experts, and parents to discuss better strategies for digital-age parenting. The UNICEF representative at the event stressed that *"childhood has changed – children are online, all the time and everywhere… Parents are the most important people in determining a child's early experience of the internet"*. One outcome of this forum was the development of a new Digital Parenting module for Malaysia's existing parent training programs (specifically, integrating into the national Semarak Kasih Parenting Programme). This module, crafted with expert input (including global specialists in violence prevention and digital literacy), provides practical training to parents on topics like setting screen time limits, using parental control software, identifying signs of cyberbullying or grooming, and having empathetic conversations about online content. By embedding the module in the Semarak Kasih programme – which is delivered through clinics and community centers – Malaysia aims to reach a broad base of parents across socio-economic strata (Choong, 2019).

In addition to these training efforts, Malaysia has pursued public awareness campaigns. The government's Cybersecurity Malaysia agency runs the "CyberSAFE" initiative (Cyber Security Awareness For Everyone) and the Communications Ministry promotes "Klik Dengan Bijak" ("Click Wisely"), both of which disseminate tips to parents and children for safer internet use through media and school outreach. Malaysian schools increasingly involve parents through PTAs, holding informational sessions on child online protection and positive parenting. NGOs and tech companies are also active; for example, telecommunication firms have partnered with UNICEF to spread messages about supervising children's internet use and encouraging healthy digital habits. On the broader parenting front, Malaysia continues to address issues of emotional neglect and discipline. Parenting courses offered by LPPKN emphasize *positive parenting techniques* – teaching parents how to provide warmth and support while also setting clear expectations. By improving parents' digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and supervision skills, Malaysia is working to ensure that children grow up academically motivated, emotionally secure, and socially responsible. These efforts, though in progress, represent important steps toward mitigating the adverse outcomes linked to past parental inattention or lack of guidance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAURITIUS

Across the examined countries, several clear themes emerge. Children thrive when parents are informed, attentive, and engaged, whereas lack of parental oversight or support can lead to poor academic performance, emotional distress, and exposure to various dangers (from cyberbullying and pornography to drug use and violence). For Mauritius – and other societies facing these challenges – the following policy and program recommendations are suggested, drawing on best practices from the UK, US, Scandinavia, Singapore, Malaysia and global frameworks:

I. **Implement Parent Education Programs:** Introduce nationwide parenting workshops or courses focusing on *digital literacy, supervision techniques, and emotional support skills*. Governments can partner with experts and organizations (as Malaysia did with UNICEF) to develop curricula that teach parents how to set effective digital boundaries, recognize signs of trouble (e.g. cyberbullying or depression), and communicate openly. These programs should be accessible in community centers, schools, and online, and ideally offered in multiple languages. Regular sessions on "parenting in the digital age" can empower less tech-savvy parents to keep their children safe online. Likewise, modules on positive parenting and child psychology can help caregivers provide the guidance and affection children need for healthy development.

II. **Strengthen School-Family Partnerships:** Schools should actively engage parents in both academic and pastoral aspects of their children's lives. For example, schools can send *personalized updates* to parents about their child's progress and internet use at school – a practice shown to improve outcomes when used in the UK (King, 2019). Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) can host seminars on topics like study support at home, adolescent mental health, and online safety. By involving parents in workshops

or even fun activities with students, schools reinforce the message that education is a shared responsibility. Evidence from high-performing systems (like Finland and Singapore) suggests that when parents and schools work hand-in-hand, children's academic achievement and well-being improve markedly.

III. **Expand After-School and Counseling Programs:** As seen in the US, one effective way to mitigate risks from lack of supervision is to provide structured, adult-supervised environments during high-risk periods. Policymakers in Mauritius could invest in after-school programs (sports, arts, tutoring, clubs) that keep students engaged from 3–6 p.m., offering them enrichment and mentorship. These programs not only improve academic skills but also reduce opportunities for delinquency or exposure to harm during "danger zone" hours (DenHoed, 2021). In parallel, ensure schools have counseling services or partnerships with NGOs so that children facing emotional or behavioral problems (possibly due to family issues) can receive support. Proactive counseling and family outreach can help address problems like truancy, bullying, or early sexual activity at their root, involving parents in solutions rather than casting blame.

IV. **Leverage Technology for Parental Control and Engagement:** Governments and telecom providers should facilitate easy adoption of parental control tools. For instance, Mauritius could emulate Singapore's approach by creating a one-stop "Digital Parenting" toolkit or portal that guides parents on using content filters, privacy settings, and screen time management on all major devices and apps (Anon., 2025b). Internet service providers might offer free parental control software or routers with family-friendly settings preconfigured. Moreover, SMS or app-based alerts could be used to keep parents informed (with the child's knowledge) about potentially risky activities – for example, if a child's device attempts to access age-inappropriate sites. Importantly, training must accompany tools: parents need to know *how* to use these technologies effectively and appropriately. Governments can also encourage local tech companies to innovate solutions (e.g. child-safe search engines, monitoring apps respecting privacy) and provide them at low cost to families.

V. **Legal and Policy Safeguards:** On the policy front, consider strengthening laws and guidelines that protect children and involve parents. This might include requiring cybercafés or public Wi-Fi spots to filter adult content, mandating online platforms to implement age verification (as the UK is doing for pornography sites (Anon., 2023), and ensuring explicit penalties for those who exploit minors online. While enforcement can be challenging, having a legal framework underscores the societal commitment to child protection. Additionally, policies can formalize parental engagement in education – for example, requiring schools to develop parent involvement plans, or instituting parental leave provisions that allow working parents to attend important school or counseling meetings. In the realm of social services, authorities should ensure that parenting support (including for at-risk families) is part of any national child welfare strategy.

VI. **Public Awareness and Cultural Change:** Launch multi-media awareness campaigns to shift social norms around parenting. Government ministries, in collaboration with NGOs and media, can run TV, radio, and social media campaigns highlighting the importance of parental supervision and affection. Real-life stories or testimonials could be used to show how responsible parenting makes a difference in children's lives (for example, a teen describing how parental guidance helped them avoid online trouble, or a successful student crediting their parents' involvement). Campaigns should also inform parents of the specific dangers of not being involved – e.g. *"Did you know? 1 in 10 young teens have encountered strangers online and 1 in 3 have seen adult content – talk to your child about their internet use."* Providing statistics relevant to Mauritius (such as the low percentage of parents monitoring internet use or youth risk behaviors from surveys) will make the message salient. Over time, the goal is to make active parenting (both offline and online) an expected norm, much like immunizing children or sending them to school.

VII. **Support Networks for Parents and Children:** Encourage the formation of parent support groups and hotlines. Sometimes parents feel overwhelmed or ignorant about issues like drugs or online slang their kids use. Peer support groups (even WhatsApp or Facebook communities moderated by professionals) can allow parents to share tips and concerns. For example, Malaysia's use of WhatsApp support groups for parents in its digital parenting trial could be replicated (Cooper et al., 2024). Similarly, helplines or chat services can be set up for parents seeking advice (and for children seeking help about family problems). Ensuring that mental health and family services are destigmatized and readily available will help address problems early – for instance, a parent struggling to manage a defiant teenager could get counseling before matters worsen.

In conclusion, reversing the effects of irresponsible parenting requires a concerted effort that combines education, community support, and smart policy. The experiences of countries from the UK to Singapore demonstrate that when parents are given the right knowledge and tools – and when they understand the stakes – they can dramatically improve their children's outcomes. Mauritius can draw on these lessons to foster a culture of engaged parenting: one where children benefit from the guidance of digitally literate, emotionally supportive adults, and where they are thus safer, happier, and better equipped to excel in school and life. By investing in parents today, Mauritius and similar societies will be investing in the next generation's success and well-being.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND POLICIES

Creating an efficient curriculum and implementing effective pedagogical approaches involves a multifaceted strategy tailored to meet diverse educational goals and the specific needs of students. An effective curriculum should begin with clearly defined educational objectives that align with both national standards and the competencies required for future societal needs, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. These goals can be best achieved through active stakeholder involvement, including teachers, parents, and community members, to ensure the curriculum resonates with diverse needs.
Interdisciplinary themes should be integrated to enhance holistic understanding, and value-based education should be embedded to promote ethical development. Pedagogical approaches should encourage active learning through methods like project-based and inquiry-based learning, supported by modern technologies to increase engagement and accessibility. It's important to adapt teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles and abilities, ensuring inclusivity.

Regarding the differentiation of students by ability, effective pedagogical practice does not necessarily mean segregating students into 'elite' and 'poor performers'. While it's important to recognize varying abilities and tailor instruction accordingly, education experts often advocate for mixed-ability grouping to foster a more inclusive learning environment. This encourages peer learning, where students can learn from each other, and helps to avoid stigmatization based on abilities. Grouping students solely based on IQ or academic performance can lead to educational tracking, which might limit opportunities for some students and does not necessarily cater to the diverse intellectual and emotional needs of each child.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL)

Project-Based Learning is a student-centered pedagogy that involves a dynamic classroom approach in which students acquire a deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. In Mauritius, a Whole-School Sustainability Project involving 30 primary schools allowed students, teachers, and parents to collaboratively address local environmental issues. While this localized PBL model fostered real-world engagement, evaluators noted fragmented implementation and insufficient teacher alignment (SpringerLink, 2024).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa's Department of Basic Education implemented the E^3 (Ecubed) project training Grade 4 teachers in Limpopo Province to integrate PBL into Life Skills curricula. A 2024 study reported improved outcomes and entrepreneurial mindsets, though resource gaps remained (ASSAf Journals, 2024).

In the United States, PBL has been studied extensively. The Knowledge in Action program showed that students in PBL-based AP courses scored 8 percentage points higher on AP exams than those in traditional courses, with equitable gains across demographics (APCentral.CollegeBoard.org, 2024). Models like High Tech High have also shown long-term benefits in student collaboration, engagement, and college readiness.
In the UK, results from a Year 7 cross-subject PBL trial (EEF, 2016) showed no significant improvement in literacy and hinted at challenges for disadvantaged students. However, schools like School 21 in London have successfully used PBL to boost oracy and project management skills.

In Singapore and Malaysia, PBL is embedded in national curricula. Singapore's Applied Learning Programmes encourage real-world STEM applications. Malaysian rural school pilots showed gains in creativity and engagement, though teacher preparedness was again a key challenge (Rahim et al., 2018).

PBL PROPOSAL FOR MAURITIUS

- Integrate PBL into the National Curriculum with phased pilot programs starting at upper primary levels.
- Provide specialized teacher training on PBL design and facilitation, with ongoing mentorship and collaboration networks.
- Develop a national PBL framework aligned with sustainability themes and cross-curricular goals.
- Encourage schools to establish local partnerships for community-focused projects and make use of assessment rubrics that capture critical thinking and collaboration skills.
- Promote leadership support and whole-school commitment to ensure projects are integrated, not fragmented.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education seeks to accommodate all learners regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. In Mauritius, the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education policy (2017 onward) established the Special Education Needs Authority and emphasized integrating SEN students into mainstream schools (Ministry of Education, 2020). Early outcomes include more children with disabilities being admitted into regular primary schools and individualized support plans, though challenges remain around resources and teacher preparation. Professional development efforts, often in collaboration with NGOs and UNESCO, are helping to build educator capacity.

In broader Africa, Kenya implemented a holistic inclusive education program for girls with disabilities, resulting in measurable academic gains in language and numeracy after one year (Carew et al., 2020). Rwanda restructured 52 special schools into resource centers to support

mainstream schools, leading to increased enrollment of SEN students and improved learning outcomes (World Bank, 2023). South African teachers in inclusive classrooms reported adopting more innovative teaching methods that benefited all students (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019).

In the United States, inclusive education is backed by federal law (IDEA). Longitudinal studies show that students with disabilities perform better in inclusive classrooms than in segregated settings, especially in reading and math (Kurth & Gross, 2015). Typically developing students in inclusive classrooms often gain empathy and social skills, with no negative academic impact (Frontiers.org, 2022).

In the UK, inclusive education is legally mandated. Research shows neutral to positive effects on non-SEN pupils and enhanced outcomes for SEN students in areas like literacy and behavior. One London case saw a drop in behavioral incidents and a rise in school-wide pass rates after transitioning to inclusive practices (All Means All, 2019).

Singapore and Malaysia are advancing inclusion through policy and pilot initiatives. Singapore's shift toward mainstreaming students with mild learning needs led to higher attendance and engagement. Malaysia's pilot classrooms with itinerant special educators showed improved academic and social development for SEN students (UNESCO, 2018).
These case studies illustrate that inclusion, when systematically supported, benefits both SEN and non-SEN learners.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROPOSAL FOR MAURITIUS

- Institutionalize mandatory in-service training for all educators on inclusive education strategies, using a blended model of online and in-person modules.
- Increase the number of specialist resource teachers and establish inclusion support teams at zonal or district levels.
- Upgrade school infrastructure to accommodate diverse needs (e.g., ramps, accessible toilets, sensory rooms).
- Launch an Inclusive Education Monitoring Unit within the Ministry to oversee implementation and collect outcome data.
- Facilitate parent and community involvement to foster inclusive school culture and reduce stigma.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Mauritius has pursued classroom technology integration as part of its drive for a "world-class education." A notable case was the government's initiative to provide tablet computers to students. The first attempt (2014) distributed tablets to all Grade 10 secondary students, aiming to enhance O-Level exam performance. However, an evaluation found limited

academic benefit due to lack of training, low device quality, and classroom management issues. The initiative was discontinued in 2015 (Ramtohul, 2019).

A second phase began in 2018 targeting Grades 1 and 2 with better planning. Though teachers were enthusiastic, a 2019 case study found that effective tablet use was still hindered by poor Wi-Fi and limited content in French/Creole. While students showed increased engagement, literacy and numeracy gains remained limited due to these on-the-ground issues (Ramtohul, 2019).

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, similar patterns emerged. Kenya's Digital Literacy Programme expanded access to tablets, yet early test score improvements were modest without corresponding teacher training. In contrast, computer-assisted learning (CAL) projects in South Africa, Malawi, and Angola—paired with teacher support—showed clear gains in math and reading (Prinsloo et al., 2019; Masinya et al., 2021).

In the U.S., technology integration has had positive impacts on writing, inquiry-based science learning, and foundational skills when paired with blended models and data-informed teaching (Bebell & O'Dwyer, 2010). Rocketship Education, for example, uses adaptive learning software in low-income schools to raise test scores.

In the UK, tools like Maths Whizz and interactive whiteboards yielded modest but meaningful gains. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that schools with pre-existing digital infrastructure coped better. Singapore and Malaysia show that strong tech frameworks (e.g., Singapore's ICT Masterplans and Malaysia's Fab Labs) drive engagement, though training and implementation quality remain critical.

These global cases show that EdTech improves learning only when supported by teacher readiness, localized content, and integration into curriculum—not just through device distribution.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION PROPOSAL FOR MAURITIUS

- Adopt a "pedagogy-first" approach where EdTech is designed around curricular goals and student needs.
- Develop a national EdTech integration guide for teachers, focused on interactive tools, lesson planning, and adaptive learning platforms.
- Establish a Digital Learning Resource Centre to curate content in local languages and ensure cultural relevance.
- Provide reliable infrastructure, including high-speed internet, maintenance services, and solar-powered devices where necessary.
- Incentivize schools that demonstrate effective tech integration through data-informed learning improvements.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) PROGRAMS

Mauritius has increasingly recognized the importance of educating the "whole child" by integrating emotional and social learning elements into the curriculum. The Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education reform emphasizes values education and life skills. For instance, many primary schools conduct weekly Value Education classes, focusing on empathy, respect, and self-awareness. Anecdotal evidence suggests that students are showing improved team spirit and conflict resolution. Teacher training workshops on socio-emotional well-being are being rolled out in collaboration with the Mauritius Institute of Education to help educators implement SEL through everyday classroom practices (e.g., circle time, mindfulness activities) (MIE, 2023).

Across Africa, SEL is often used to foster resilience in post-conflict or trauma-exposed communities. Sierra Leone's literacy-SEL initiative saw lower aggression and better attendance among students. South African schools integrating SEL in township areas reported better peer relationships and reduced bullying. Bangladesh's Lions Quest program demonstrated both behavioral and academic improvements through a cluster-RCT.

In the U.S., programs like PATHS, Second Step, and RULER have undergone rigorous evaluations. Studies show that SEL leads to higher reading and math scores, fewer behavioral problems, and improved school climates. Long-term outcomes include lower dropout rates and enhanced emotional health. The Second Step program, in particular, showed notable improvements in GPA and attendance (Smith et al., 2018).

The UK's SEL journey includes the SEAL initiative and newer targeted programs like Zippy's Friends and the UK Resilience Programme. While broader programs showed mixed academic results, targeted initiatives consistently improved student well-being and social skills. A Birmingham school's mindfulness program reduced playground conflicts by 30%.

Singapore and Malaysia have incorporated SEL through Character and Citizenship Education and school-based programs. In Singapore, reflection journals and group discussions promote emotional literacy. Malaysia's Projek CARE trained teachers to implement SEL, leading to better student-teacher rapport and fewer discipline cases.

These global cases underscore that structured SEL implementation fosters not only academic engagement but also student resilience, empathy, and leadership—attributes critical for 21st-century success.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SEL PROPOSAL FOR MAURITIUS

- Embed emotional intelligence training into both pre-service teacher education and ongoing professional development.
- Develop and implement a structured SEL curriculum across grades, with clear learning outcomes and age-appropriate activities.
- Incorporate SEL into school-wide practices such as conflict resolution protocols, peer mentoring, and restorative discipline.
- Design monitoring tools for schools to assess SEL impact on student behavior, well-being, and engagement.
- Collaborate with NGOs and regional partners to co-develop culturally resonant SEL content and interventions.

In conclusion, each of these pedagogical approaches has proven outcomes and challenges that offer Mauritius a unique opportunity to adopt and adapt innovative education strategies. With structured policy support, teacher empowerment, and community engagement, these models can significantly improve the quality and inclusivity of education across the island.

HOMESCHOOLING MODELS

Homeschooling – the practice of educating children at home or outside formal schools – has grown worldwide in the past decade, spurred in part by increasing parental choice and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many countries have developed legal frameworks and support systems to integrate homeschooling as a valid educational pathway. This section examines homeschooling models in the UK, US, Singapore, Malaysia, and Scandinavia, focusing on how they implement and regulate home education, what support structures exist (e.g. online platforms, community co-ops, access to labs), and strategies to ensure quality and socialization.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Homeschooling is legal in several countries with varying degrees of oversight and support.
- Effective models integrate community co-ops, technology platforms, and periodic assessments.
- Special subjects like science are handled via access to labs in co-ops, local institutions, or periodic intensives.
- Strong legal frameworks and quality assurance protocols are critical to success.
- Parental education, training, and support systems must be developed in parallel.

COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL HOMESCHOOLING MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS

The table below summarizes the international approaches to homeschooling:

Country	Legal Framework	Support Structures	Quality Assurance	Special Subjects	Reference
United Kingdom (UK)	Homeschooling legal with limited oversight; no mandatory registration or monitoring yet.	Local authority contact points, informal co-ops, exam centers, community use.	Parental responsibility; proposals for more oversight exist.	Co-ops, private tutors, science clubs, some access to school resources.	House of Commons Library (2023); Department for Education (UK)
United States (US)	Legal in all 50 states; regulation varies from none to high.	Widespread co-ops, online platforms, tutoring centers, charter support.	Voluntary tests, umbrella schools, college prep exams.	Lab intensives, co-op labs, community colleges.	National Home Education Research Institute; HSLDA
Singapore	Strictly regulated; requires MOE exemption and PSLE testing.	Small community, tutoring centers, national curriculum adherence.	MOE mandates PSLE with 33rd percentile pass benchmark.	Tuition centers, Science Centre labs, national e-learning resources.	MOE Singapore; HSLDA Singapore
Malaysia	Primary schooling compulsory; exemption required but rare.	Homeschool centers, informal co-ops, Facebook groups.	External exams (IGCSE, GED); community-based support.	Co-op labs, science centers, maker spaces.	SchoolAdvisor.my; HSLDA Malaysia
Finland	Legal and supported	Monitoring teachers,	Portfolio reviews,	Limited, but often	Suomen Kotikouluyhdisty

	under municipal oversight.	open curriculum access.	informal assessments by supervising teacher.	reintegrated into formal schooling at upper levels.	s; Finnish Education Board
Sweden	Essentially illegal since 2010 except rare exceptions.	None; strict government enforcement.	N/A due to prohibition.	N/A	Swedish Education Act (2010); HSLDA Reports
Norway	Legal with biannual monitoring by municipalities.	Support groups, curriculum guidance, access to some school activities.	Progress evaluations twice a year.	Some access to labs via local schools or clubs.	NHUF Norway; HSLDA Norway

Table 1: Overview of Global Homeschooling models

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOMESCHOOLING IN MAURITIUS

i. Establishing a Legal Framework for Homeschooling

Mauritius currently lacks a formal legal structure to support or regulate homeschooling. To ensure educational quality and protect children's rights, the Ministry of Education should develop legislation explicitly recognizing homeschooling as an alternative to conventional schooling. This legal framework should require:

- Mandatory registration of homeschooling families with local educational authorities.
- Submission of individualized educational plans.
- Annual or biannual assessments to ensure learning outcomes are met.

The UK serves as a valuable model, where homeschooling is legal but monitored at the discretion of local authorities (House of Commons Library, 2023). Norway also offers biannual evaluations by municipalities to assess student progress.

ii. Development of Regional Resource Hubs

Homeschooling often faces challenges related to access to resources, especially for subjects requiring specialized equipment such as science. Mauritius should establish regional resource centers to support homeschooling families. These hubs could include:

- Science labs with scheduled access for experiments and hands-on learning.
- Libraries and digital learning stations.
- Trained facilitators or retired educators to guide learning sessions.

Malaysia and Singapore offer models where informal learning centers or community hubs provide structured support for home-educated students. Singapore, for example, allows homeschooled students to access science labs through partnerships with institutions like the Science Centre.

iii. Flexible Use of School Infrastructure

To make efficient use of public resources and reduce costs, the Ministry could allow limited, scheduled access to public school facilities for homeschooled students. For example:

- Use of school science laboratories on weekends or afternoons.
- Access to sports facilities or libraries.
- Inclusion in selected extracurricular activities or clubs.

This model is in use in various U.S. states, where homeschooled students can participate in band, lab intensives, or language courses in public schools (National Home Education Research Institute).

iv. Curriculum Alignment and Digital Resources

To ensure homeschooled students are not academically disadvantaged, a national curriculum guide adapted for homeschooling should be developed. This should include:

- Curriculum flexibility with core competencies clearly defined.
- Access to e-learning platforms, MOODLE-type systems, or Ministry-curated YouTube lessons.
- Open-access textbooks and multimedia content aligned with national examinations.

Singapore mandates PSLE exams for homeschooled students and offers access to digital materials aligned with the national curriculum (MOE Singapore).

v. Training and Certification for Parents

Effective homeschooling requires parents to act as educators. Mauritius should provide training programs for parents, possibly in collaboration with teacher training institutions. These could cover:

- Basics of pedagogy and child development.
- Use of digital learning tools.
- Planning and assessing learning outcomes.

In Finland, municipalities often assign a supervising teacher to homeschoolers, who also offers guidance to parents (Finnish Education Board). Training will help ensure that parents are prepared and capable of delivering high-quality education at home.

vi. Structured Assessment and Quality Assurance

Homeschoolers should be regularly assessed to ensure learning is taking place. These assessments should be flexible but standardized, such as:

- Portfolio reviews conducted by certified teachers.
- Biannual evaluations.
- Optional participation in national exams for benchmark comparison.

Finland and Norway provide regular, supportive assessments without punitive measures. This model balances quality assurance with respect for educational freedom.

vii. Inclusion of Special Subjects and Lab-Based Disciplines

For science, technology, and other lab-based subjects, the Ministry should facilitate:

- Partnerships with universities or technical institutes to host lab sessions.
- Virtual simulations and remote experiments via platforms like PhET Interactive Simulations.
- Rotational access to existing school labs.

This has been effective in the US, where homeschool co-ops and partnerships with community colleges are common (HSLDA).

viii. Creating a Homeschooling Registry and Support Network

A centralized database or registry of homeschooling families will facilitate policy implementation and support. This registry can:

- Track student progression.
- Identify training needs for parents.
- Connect families to local co-ops or resource centers.

Support networks such as parent associations and WhatsApp groups in Malaysia have successfully built strong communities around homeschooling. Mauritius could formalize such structures.

ix. Promoting Hybrid Education Models

Hybrid models, where students learn both at home and through formal institutions, can bridge the gap between homeschooling and conventional schooling. These models could include:

- Attending school part-time (e.g., for science or art).
- Using community learning centers for certain subjects.
- Joining accredited online high school courses.

The United States and parts of the UK support hybrid schooling as a flexible learning solution that adapts to student and family needs.

x. Encouraging Inclusive Education within Homeschooling

Inclusive education principles should be extended to the homeschooling system. Students with special needs must be provided with:

- Access to special educators through the Ministry or NGOs.
- Assistive technologies and learning tools.
- Opportunities to participate in community-based inclusive programs.

Mauritius can look to South Africa's inclusive education policy and Kenya's home-based programs for children with disabilities as effective examples.

To conclude homeschooling, when properly supported, can become a viable and inclusive alternative to traditional schooling in Mauritius. These recommendations, drawn from international best practices, seek to balance freedom, structure, and equity. Implementing such a model will require collaboration between government, educators, and families, as well as careful legal and infrastructural planning.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Teacher quality plays a crucial role in shaping student success, and well-structured staff development systems are key to achieving this (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This comparative analysis explores how Mauritius and selected countries – including African nations, the UK, the US, Singapore, Malaysia, and Scandinavian countries – support teacher development and well-being in primary and secondary education. The analysis focuses on professional development models, psychological support for educators, and the role of school counselors, and provides insights into how these efforts impact teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

TRAINING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHING METHODS

Teachers worldwide face ongoing needs in adapting to modern, student-centered pedagogies and integrating technology. In Mauritius, there are persistent training gaps in methods like project-based learning and inclusive teaching. Teachers often lack adequate exposure to differentiated instruction or competency-based assessment practices. In several African countries, centralized and theoretical CPD frameworks limit classroom-level transformation. By contrast, Scandinavian countries emphasize pedagogical renewal through high-quality teacher education and in-service reflection-based training. The UK and US struggle with inconsistent pre-service preparation, often relying on varied and locally-led in-service CPD. Singapore and Malaysia, meanwhile, have made systematic efforts to align teacher training with evolving curricula, digital tools, and assessment reforms to promote higher-order thinking (European Commission, 2018; UNESCO, 2022).

MODELS OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

Region	CPD Structure & Frequency	Common Methods	Focus of Training Content
Mauritius	No fixed hours nationally; regular workshops by MIE; emerging PLCs	Seminars, short courses; emerging PLCs	Pedagogical skills, ICT integration, curriculum updates
Africa (sel.)	Formal frameworks (e.g., Ethiopia: 60 hrs/year; Rwanda: 80 min/week)	Central workshops, coaching, clusters	Basic pedagogy, inclusion, curriculum reforms
Scandinavia	~3–5 days/year; mostly voluntary and self-directed	Study groups, planning, optional courses	Curriculum innovation, special education, teacher-led
UK	5 INSET days/year; induction for new teachers	Workshops, mentoring, NPQs	Evidence-based practices, curriculum changes
USA	15–30 hrs/year depending on state requirements	Workshops, coaching, online modules	Common Core, classroom management, tech use
Singapore	100 hrs/year mandated and funded	NIE courses, peer mentoring, seminars	Inquiry-based learning, leadership, digital integration
Malaysia	30 hrs/year mandatory CPD	In-house workshops, SISC+ mentoring	English, STEM, ICT integration, HOTS

Table 2: Comparison of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) models across regions

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND TEACHER WELL-BEING

Teacher well-being is increasingly recognized as central to professional effectiveness and retention (Owen et al., 2021). In Mauritius, structured psychological support is limited. The School Care Counselling Desk (SCCD) program trains teachers to provide basic support to students, but there is no dedicated support for teachers themselves. Mental health initiatives remain nascent.

In African countries, the post-pandemic period has seen growing awareness of teacher mental health challenges. Efforts include UNESCO-supported mental health training and country-specific wellness initiatives (UNESCO, 2022).

Scandinavian countries embed teacher well-being into their broader social welfare systems, ensuring access to occupational health services and manageable workloads (Owen et al., 2021).

The UK has developed specific well-being charters and helplines, such as the Education Support service. In the US, Employee Assistance Programs and district-level wellness initiatives offer varying degrees of mental health services to educators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Singapore maintains a comprehensive support system, including well-being surveys, counseling services, and school-based Wellness Ambassadors (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020). Malaysia is developing its response, with teacher wellness programs gradually becoming part of education reform (Zhang et al., 2018).

ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN STAFF AND STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

School counselors play an essential role in supporting student welfare and, indirectly, teacher workload and well-being (Zhang et al., 2018). In Mauritius, the SCCD model relies on trained teachers to provide basic counseling, though full-time professional counselors are scarce.
In African countries, counselor roles are often filled by designated teachers with minimal training. Full-time professional counselors are limited, though efforts are underway to establish more structured support services (UNESCO, 2022).

Scandinavian schools employ multidisciplinary student support teams that include counselors, psychologists, and social workers (Owen et al., 2021). The UK and US have professional school counselors focused on student mental health, career guidance, and academic planning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Singapore has implemented full-time school counselors in nearly all secondary and many primary schools. Malaysia also maintains school counselors in most secondary schools (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

IMPACTS ON TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING

Global evidence shows that sustained staff development improves educational outcomes. Continuous CPD leads to enhanced subject knowledge, refined classroom strategies, and greater confidence in using learner-centered techniques. In environments where CPD is tied to teacher evaluation and incentives, such as Singapore and select US states, student achievement rises markedly (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Schools that employ trained school counselors tend to report fewer behavioral issues, more positive class climates, and higher attendance rates. Moreover, when teacher mental health is supported, absenteeism and burnout decrease—leading to better student-teacher relationships and consistency in instruction. Finland's model of empowering educators and offering peer-driven CPD is associated with high trust, professional autonomy, and exceptional student performance. In

Mauritius, systematic investment in these areas could significantly improve educational equity, inclusion, and long-term outcomes.

PROPOSAL FOR MAURITIUS: STRENGTHENING STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

i. Establish a National Teacher CPD Framework

Mauritius should establish a structured, nationwide CPD framework mandating a minimum number of annual training hours for all public and private school teachers. This framework should include accredited short courses, peer learning groups, and digital learning modules, overseen by the Mauritius Institute of Education and zonal inspectors. Core content areas should include inclusive education strategies, differentiated instruction, digital pedagogy, and classroom management.

ii. Integrate Psychological Support and Well-Being Programs for Teachers

A national mental health policy for educators should be developed, with school-based mental health coordinators in all zones. Annual psychological check-ins, confidential access to trained counselors, and professional development on stress management and emotional intelligence should be instituted. These services should be designed in consultation with the Ministry of Health and local psychologists to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability.

iii. Strengthen the Role of School Counselors and Psychosocial Support in Schools

Mauritius should gradually phase in the deployment of trained, full-time school counselors in all secondary and larger primary schools. These professionals should be empowered to collaborate with teachers and parents, delivering both student services and supporting teacher well-being. Partnerships with teacher training institutions can help scale up the training pipeline for counselors. Regulations should formally define their scope, qualifications, and responsibilities.

iv. Leverage Impact Data to Refine Policies (Continuous Improvement)

The Ministry of Education should create a national database to track teacher CPD participation, feedback, and the measurable effects on classroom practices and student learning outcomes. Schools should conduct regular surveys on teacher well-being and perceived support. A national task force could be established to analyze trends and recommend annual adjustments to CPD content, counselor deployment, and wellness initiatives based on real-world data.

To conclude, staff development and support are pillars of a strong education system. Mauritius, like many countries, has laid foundations in CPD and school-based welfare programs but can benefit from deeper structural investment and coordination. The international comparisons presented highlight effective practices that can be tailored to the local context.

Systems like Singapore and Finland demonstrate that consistent, well-supported teacher development combined with access to counseling and wellness frameworks create a high-performing and resilient teaching workforce (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2020; Owen et al., 2021). By integrating such strategies, Mauritius can enhance teacher capacity, improve student outcomes, and build a sustainable, future-ready education sector.

COMBATING DRUG USE IN SCHOOLS THROUGH CULTURAL, ATHLETIC, AND SOCIAL REFORM

The rise in drug use among school-aged children in Mauritius presents an alarming challenge for the nation's education system. Tackling this issue requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach that goes beyond punitive responses. This reworked strategy focuses on leveraging arts and cultural education, sports development, and anti-bullying initiatives to reduce drug use and build more resilient learners.

REFORMING ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION: CREATING PURPOSE AND BELONGING

Arts and cultural education can play a pivotal role in preventing drug use by fostering a sense of identity, community, and self-worth. When students are actively engaged in creative expression, they are more likely to feel empowered and connected, reducing vulnerability to substance abuse. Studies show that engagement in the arts enhances emotional regulation, resilience, and social inclusion.

PROMOTING SPORTS EDUCATION AND ATHLETIC CAREERS: CHANNELING ENERGY POSITIVELY

Physical activity and structured sports programs offer youth an effective outlet for stress relief, discipline, and goal-setting. International evidence indicates that students involved in regular physical training are significantly less likely to engage in substance abuse. For Mauritius, investing in sports is both a preventative and developmental strategy.

COMBATING BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: BUILDING SAFER SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

Bullying is often linked to emotional trauma, social isolation, and subsequent high-risk behavior, including drug use. Schools that foster emotionally safe environments see a marked reduction in negative coping strategies like substance abuse.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

United Kingdom: UK schools address drug prevention via mandatory PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education, integrating substance abuse awareness with mental health, arts engagement, and anti-bullying programs. Successes have been linked to multi-agency approaches and early intervention.

United States: The U.S. uses programs like D.A.R.E. and Red Ribbon Week, though research favors more integrated strategies involving sports, SEL, and after-school arts programs. Evidence-based models (e.g., LifeSkills Training) show significant reduction in youth substance use.

Singapore: Combines strict legal enforcement with school-based prevention through co-curricular activities (CCAs). High participation in arts and sports clubs acts as a buffer against deviant behavior. Parental engagement is also emphasized.

Malaysia: Implements National Anti-Drug Agency outreach programs in schools, combining cultural and moral education. However, implementation varies, and greater school-level capacity-building is needed.

Africa (South Africa, Kenya): Interventions include arts therapy and peer-led sports for youth in vulnerable communities. South Africa's Life Orientation curriculum tackles drug risks, but challenges include teacher training and resource constraints.
Global Trends: UNESCO and UNODC recommend holistic approaches using arts, physical activity, social-emotional learning, and strong anti-bullying frameworks as core tools in substance abuse prevention.

To conclude reducing drug use in Mauritian schools requires more than traditional disciplinary methods. It demands a preventative, student-centered strategy that integrates emotional, creative, and physical development. By strengthening arts education, broadening access to sports, and creating safe social environments through anti-bullying frameworks, Mauritius can meaningfully address drug use and nurture healthier, more engaged youth.
However, none of these strategies will succeed in isolation. The role of parents in shaping children's habits, values, and resilience cannot be overstated. Evidence consistently shows that poor parental supervision, lack of emotional availability, and unrestricted access to technology contribute significantly to drug experimentation and other risky behaviors. Where parental engagement is strong, educational and behavioral outcomes improve drastically. Thus, empowering parents is not just complementary—it is essential.
These reforms will not only support at-risk learners but will enhance the educational environment for all students—laying the foundation for a safer, more productive future.

COMBATING DRUG USE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAURITIUS

- **Arts and Culture:**
    - Integrate performing, visual, and literary arts into the core school curriculum.
    - Expand the National Arts Fund to support creative initiatives targeting at-risk youth.

- Partner with local artists and institutions for student workshops and mentorship.
- Use arts programs as therapeutic tools to address emotional distress.

- **Sports and Physical Education:**
  - Establish sports academies with clear pathways to professional careers.
  - Include sports science and health education in the curriculum, linking it to drug awareness.
  - Broaden access to inter-school competitions and athletic scholarships.
  - Launch mentorship programs connecting younger students with older, trained athletes.
- **Anti-Bullying Measures:**
  - Create a National Anti-Bullying Framework with early intervention and peer mediation strategies.
  - Train teachers in emotional intelligence and conflict resolution.
  - Implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs to build student resilience.
  - Enable anonymous reporting systems and student climate surveys for early issue detection.
- **Parental Engagement and Support:**
  - Strengthen parental training programs on digital supervision, emotional presence, and boundary-setting.
  - Launch nationwide campaigns to increase parental involvement in education.
  - Integrate parenting sessions into school PTA structures and community centers.
  - Promote collaboration between educators and parents on substance abuse awareness, especially for early adolescence.
  - Encourage home environments that emphasize discipline, empathy, and monitoring to reduce exposure to drug-related risks.

SEXUAL EDUCATION IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM (MODELS AND SOCIETAL OUTCOMES)

Sex education models in schools vary widely across countries, from Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) introduced in early grades to abstinence-focused programs that delay sexual content until later adolescence. This section of the report compares the approaches of Mauritius, the UK, the US, Singapore, Malaysia, several African nations, and the UAE (Dubai) regarding:

- The age of introduction of sex education (and whether it includes CSE or abstinence-only content).
- The curriculum content, particularly topics like gender identity, sexual orientation, and basic biology.
- The emphasis on neutral/scientific information vs. ideological content (e.g. secular, religious, or values-driven approaches).
- Societal outcomes associated with these models – including juvenile behavior, teen pregnancy rates, adolescent sexual activity, youth criminality (such as sexual offenses), mental health, and educational performance.

The analysis uses real data and evaluations where possible. Key findings are summarized in tables for clarity. Finally, recommendations are presented for a suitable model in Mauritius – emphasizing a delayed introduction (around age 15–16, or Form 4 and above), exclusion of early comprehensive sex topics in primary school, and ensuring content that is ideologically neutral and scientifically accurate.

SEX EDUCATION MODELS

Country/Region	Sex Ed Model & Start Age	Gender Identity?	Ideological vs. Neutral Content
Mauritius	EAS program from Grades 7–9; primary: basic science only	Not included; Catholic-origin content	Religious values-driven (Catholic basis); abstinence focus (Human Rights Watch, 2022)
UK	Mandatory RSE from primary (~10–11); expanded in secondary	Yes, age-appropriate	Secular, rights-based, neutral (Hadley, 2016)
US	Varies by state; many adopt CSE in middle/high school	Mixed; depends on state	Split: scientific in CSE states, ideological in abstinence-only regions (KFF, 2018)
Singapore	Primary 5 onward (~11+); national curriculum	Mentioned factually; within law	Secular but value-laden (heteronormative);

			abstinence plus (MOE Singapore, 2025)
Malaysia	Health Ed in primary/secondary, limited real implementation	No	Conservative, religious, abstinence-focused (FRHAM, 2019)
Sub-Saharan Africa	Some countries pilot CSE in upper primary; many have none	No or removed under pressure	Mostly ideological or absent; conservative norms (Reuters, 2019)
UAE	Minimal sex ed; some basic safety topics emerging	No	Highly conservative, values-based; protective (The National, 2017)

Table 3. Sexuality Education Policies and Content by Country

SOCIETAL OUTCOMES OF SEX EDUCATION APPROACHES

Country	Teen Pregnancy (15–19)	Teen Sexual Activity & Health	Mental Health/Behavior
Mauritius	~23 per 1,000 (UN avg)	Some unprotected activity; limited education	Rising concern; stigma persists (Human Rights Watch, 2022)
UK	~10 per 1,000; -51% over 15 years	Delayed sex; better contraception use	Reduced bullying, greater inclusion (Hadley, 2016)
US	13.6 per 1,000; huge decline	CSE = safer behavior; abstinence-only = higher risks	LGBTQ-inclusive ed linked to mental health gains (KFF, 2018)
Singapore	~2 per 1,000; very low	Low activity; strong abstinence norms	Low youth sex crime; moderate stress levels (MOE Singapore, 2025)
Malaysia	~13 per 1,000; rising issues	Poor condom use; high teen HIV rates	Mental health concerns; baby abandonment cases (FRHAM, 2019)
SSA	44–175 per 1,000	High activity; poor sex ed & access	Stigma, early marriage, unsafe abortions (UNICEF, 2021)
UAE	Near 0; rare pregnancies	Rare reported activity; data unclear	Lack of education = vulnerability to abuse (The National, 2017)

Table 3. Societal Outcomes Among Youth

IMPACT OF GENDER IDENTITY CONTENT IN EARLY EDUCATION VS. ITS ABSENCE

One focal point of this comparison is whether introducing gender identity content in early education has notable societal effects. The evidence suggests that where such content is introduced in a developmentally appropriate way (usually late primary or early secondary), it does not harm children or spur negative behaviors. For instance, England's inclusion of discussions about different sexual orientations in secondary RSE coincided with continued declines in teen pregnancies and did not lead to any increase in sexual activity among youth (Anon., 2018). In the US, studies show that inclusive sex education is linked to lower bullying and better mental health outcomes for sexual minority youth (Proulx et al., 2019), with no adverse effect on their straight peers. This indicates that neutral, factual discussion of these topics can foster a safer school environment.

By contrast, countries that have not introduced identity topics at all (whether due to legal prohibition or cultural norms) tend to see a persistence of stigma and misinformation. For example, in many African and Middle Eastern contexts, the void in formal education about sexual orientation means myths and prejudices remain unchallenged. It's notable that excluding sexual education topics has not led to "better" sexual health outcomes – if anything, those countries often have worse outcomes on metrics like teen pregnancy or HIV, although that is largely due to lack of comprehensive education and services generally. In summary, the exclusion of sexual education content in early education appears more tied to cultural ideology than to health benefits, whereas moderate inclusion of such content (at an age-appropriate time) can have social benefits like reduced bullying and enhanced feelings of inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAURITIUS

Drawing from global comparisons and Mauritius's social landscape, the following streamlined approach to sexual education is recommended:

i. Age-Appropriate Introduction of Sexual Education

Primary-level education should focus on foundational health and social awareness, such as body autonomy, anatomy, hygiene, and emotional development, without delving into explicit sexual topics. Research supports this phased approach, noting that primary-level students are not cognitively or emotionally prepared to handle complex issues like contraception or sexual orientation (Ambaw et al., 2012). Introducing such topics too early can lead to confusion or emotional distress, particularly in conservative societies. Delaying CSE to Form 4 (~15 years old) ensures the content aligns with adolescent development and provides a relevant context as students begin to encounter real-life situations related to relationships, sexuality, and decision-making. This strategy respects parental concerns while still fulfilling educational goals (Fentahun et al., 2012).

ii. Exclude Controversial Topics in Primary Curriculum

Mauritius should keep the primary curriculum free from sensitive topics such as gender identity and detailed sexual behavior. Instead, schools should promote age-appropriate life skills through subjects like Life Skills Education and Science. These can include topics such as self-esteem, understanding friendship and emotions, puberty education, and personal safety (e.g., saying "no" to inappropriate contact). By avoiding controversial issues at a young age, schools help maintain a stable educational environment and avoid potential conflicts with parental beliefs (Human Rights Watch, 2022). This also allows the Ministry of Education time to engage with stakeholders to plan for more advanced content in secondary years, thereby ensuring a more harmonious implementation.

iii. Ensure Ideological Neutrality and Scientific Accuracy

Sexual education must be rooted in fact, not doctrine. The current EAS program should be revised to focus solely on medically and scientifically accurate information (Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet, 2012). This includes clear, unbiased instruction on human anatomy, reproduction, contraception, STIs, and legal rights and responsibilities related to sexual health. Content should avoid promoting any religious or activist viewpoints and instead emphasize public health, personal well-being, and respect for others.

iv. Promote Abstinence-Plus Philosophy

Mauritius's sex education should promote abstinence as the preferred choice for school-aged youth, aligning with national cultural and religious values. However, this message must be complemented by factual instruction on safe practices for those who choose to engage in sexual activity. The abstinence-plus model equips students with comprehensive knowledge that empowers them to make informed decisions. Evidence shows that this dual approach can delay the onset of sexual activity while also increasing the use of protection among sexually active teens (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2018).

v. Introducing Orientation Topics Factually in Later Years

Discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity should not be introduced before Form 4. When addressed, these topics should be presented in a factual, balanced, and respectful manner. The aim is not to promote any particular lifestyle but to inform students about human diversity and foster respect for all individuals. A brief module on diversity and anti-bullying and discuss the importance of treating everyone with dignity (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2025).

vi. Strengthen Biology Content

The curriculum should be updated with current scientific understanding and reviewed regularly for accuracy. Students must learn correct facts about human reproduction, menstruation, conception, contraception methods and their limitations, and prevention of STIs including HIV. Inaccuracies or myths commonly found in outdated or overly moralistic

materials should be corrected. Introducing guest speakers such as healthcare professionals could support teachers in delivering accurate, trustworthy content (Lindberg and Maddow-Zimet, 2012).

vii. Include Consent and Life Skills

Teaching consent, healthy relationships, and decision-making is essential. These concepts are not ideological but foundational to personal safety and interpersonal respect. Lessons should include the right to say no, understanding emotional boundaries, and navigating peer pressure. These skills can significantly reduce the risk of coercion, harassment, and teen relationship abuse. Evidence shows that students who receive education on consent and social-emotional learning are better equipped to handle interpersonal conflict and are less likely to engage in or tolerate violence (UNICEF, 2021).

viii. Involve Parents and Community Stakeholders

Transparency is key. Curriculum plans should be openly shared to gain community support, dispel myths, and ease concerns (Hadley, 2016). Often, opposition to CSE comes from fear of the unknown. By transparently sharing the planned curriculum and underlining its neutral, biological nature, the Ministry can gain trust. Additionally, having endorsements from health professionals or religious figures who understand the importance of accurate knowledge can help frame the initiative as protecting youth, not corrupting them.

ix. Monitor Impact and Remain Adaptive

Track outcomes such as teen pregnancies and sexual behavior via anonymous surveys. If any negative trends appear, the curriculum can be tweaked. International evidence is on the side of this balanced approach: likely Mauritius will see improved outcomes (MOH Singapore, 2023). Mauritius can also contribute to social science by documenting its approach – being a multicultural society, its success could serve as a model for other countries with similar sensitivities.

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