

**The Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers and
Official Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste
Ágio Pereira**

**January 11, 2010
Dili, Timor-Leste**



Government of Timor-Leste launches new National Academic Structure

Monday, January 11, 2010, marks the beginning of a new national academic structure for the education system of Timor-Leste. This week children across the nation will be returning to school as Government reforms pave the way for full implementation of the universal education system, providing all children of school age in Timor-Leste with nine years of compulsory and free education.

To provide better services a comprehensive school mapping was conducted resulting in a restructure of the school system to increase management efficiencies. The Ministry of Education appointed 13 superintendents (1 per district) and 65 school inspectors (one for each sub-district), to ensure that the implementation and adherence to the practices of good management were observed.

The academic school year, which begins in January for the first time, now coincides with both the calendar and fiscal year. The reforms to the academic calendar were deemed necessary to allow for better budget planning in addition to maximizing the geographical and cultural benefits of strategic alliances with the Asia-Pacific region and the Portuguese Speaking countries.

The new structure allows for 223 teaching days within three school terms; term one conducted from January 11 to April 8, term two between May 9 and July 29 and term three between August 23 and November 18.

The higher education system is organized on the traditional semester system (6 month); with the final three month period allowing for other academic or extra-curricular activities, which may include research and social or community activities as required by its academic institutions.

During the scheduled breaks, teachers across Timor-Leste will continue specialized and intensive training aligned with the systematic Bacharelato Training System; established to increase academic qualifications for teachers many of whom were unqualified to teach prior to 2007. In 2008, 3,000 teachers attended intensive training, 9,000 teachers in 2009; 617 teachers have completed their undergraduate program and 36 teachers are currently attending post-graduate programs.

Since 2007 19,370 tables, 14,360 chairs, 600 cabinets, 250 black-boards, 2,500 benches, 16,000 iron writing-desks, and 813,613 books have been distributed for 1,356 primary, secondary and technical schools across the country.

Ministry of Education statistics estimate there are currently **214,745** primary school students (112,795 boys, 101,950 girls), **52,604** junior high school students (26,715 boys, 25,889 girls), **26,908** senior high school students: (13,892 boys, 13,016 girls) and **16,727** students in higher education (10, 033 boys, 6,696 girls).

The creation and adoption of **MoE Organic Law** (January 2008), **Education Policy** (March 2008) and the **Basic Law on Education** (October 2009) established by the Government provided the necessary legal framework for the new education system to be

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implemented.

Secretary of State Ágio Pereira said “Nation building is dependent on education; the goal of the Xanana Gusmão Government was to break the cycle of neglect of our education system which goes hand in hand with breaking the cycle of poverty.’

‘We face many challenges building a new system; educating teachers, increasing the numbers in higher education, implementing mandatory attendance but we are systematically building the foundations and capacity of a well constructed education system based on global standards so each generation now and in the future has the opportunity to become educated, literate citizens.” **ENDS**

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