
Overview of initial teacher education in the Eastern Caribbean and Guyana

Insufficient use has been made of a regional approach to the development of methodologies and programmes for teacher education. This represents loss of an opportunity to draw on excellent areas in various programmes across the region which have proven successful.

(The future of education in the Caribbean, CARICOM Secretariat, 1993)

Future directions:

- (i) *How to establish and maintain a core of competent and highly motivated educators, marked by the appropriate mix of skills, abilities, attitudes and cultural sensitivities needed for the preparation of a citizenry that must cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century?*
- (ii) *What are the appropriate recruitment and selection strategies that would promote the objective implied in (i) above?*
- (iii) *How to develop environments and institutional cultures in schools and other educational establishments that will nurture the skills, abilities, attitudes and cultural sensitivities referred to in (i) above?*

(The future of education in the Caribbean, CARICOM Secretariat, 1993)

Background

In 1957, at the first regional conference on teacher education held in Trinidad it was revealed that none of the Caribbean territories had as many as half of its primary school teachers trained. The actual state of affairs is presented in Figure 5.

The conference agreed that the governments of the region should be urged to adopt the policy that all children should be taught by teachers who were fully trained. In the 1960s several governments adopted the policy as one of their goals for national education and teacher training colleges were established or expanded and their rolls increased.

Prior to 1957, many facilities for teacher training did not exist in the region as a whole. However, two important facts must be borne in mind. Firstly, the region has a relatively long history of teacher training. Miller (1993) states, 'the training of primary school teachers began in the Commonwealth Caribbean in 1830 and was institutionalised by 1850'. Secondly, small numbers of teachers from countries without training institutions were sent for training elsewhere in the region. In fact, even today, Anguilla and Montserrat (and until quite recently the British Virgin Islands) have no training college.

In the 1980s, Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in the region to

Figure 5 Proportion of trained primary school teachers: 1957

Country	Per cent of teachers trained
Antigua	40
Barbados	25
Dominica	9
Grenada	8
Guyana	17
Jamaica	44
Montserrat	21
St Kitts and Nevis	20
St Lucia	6
St Vincent	6
Trinidad and Tobago	45

Source: Walters (1960) cited in Miller (1993).

achieve the goal of a fully trained primary school teaching force and promptly responded by closing one of its colleges in 1983. Barbados similarly achieved its target in the late 1980s but wisely decided to keep its lone college open and redefine its role. The situation as shown in Figure 6 has, as late as 1990, not been a particularly happy one in some of the other territories in the region.

In the early history of teacher training, individual institutions and later ministries of education, through their boards of teacher training, offered their own credentials. Gradually the recognition dawned that, 'the entire teacher training process needed to be monitored on an ongoing basis and research and development activities had to be linked to the monitoring mechanism' (Miller 1993, 14). Furthermore, the financial and human resource implications for each individual territory led to the conclusion that the best way forward lay in the pooling of resources in the interest of quality, regional standards, cost sharing and effectiveness.

After much discussion and negotiation between the governments and the University of the West Indies (UWI) it was agreed that ministries of education would devolve to the UWI their quality control and development functions in

Figure 6 Proportion of primary school teachers trained: 1984-1990

Country	1984	1990
Antigua and Barbuda	80	74
British Virgin Islands	40	59
Dominica	44	43
Grenada	47	39
Montserrat	48	64
St Kitts and Nevis	72	64
St Lucia	53	61
St Vincent and Grenadines	36	28

Source: Miller (1991).

teacher education. The UWI would be responsible for syllabuses, the conduct of examinations and the awarding of credentials. The governments also agreed to provide the necessary resources for the UWI to undertake the relevant research and development activities necessary for supporting and strengthening teacher education and training in the region.

The Institute of Education was established in 1963 for this purpose. It assumed responsibility for the work of the teachers' colleges which at that time were primarily concerned with the training of primary school teachers but also did some training for teachers in the lower forms of the secondary school. The Institute, focusing on primary training, then joined the Department of Education, which had for a long time been training graduate teachers for the secondary system, to become the School/Faculty of Education. All the countries in the region implemented and still operate the full agreement with the exception of Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. These countries retained their boards of teacher training within the ministry of education and offer their own credentials. The UWI certifies teachers in all other countries.

Current situation

This survey of teacher training activities was carried out in the following ten West Indian/Caribbean countries namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; all countries with teachers' colleges. Figure 7 shows how long there has been a teachers' college in each country.

The existence of teacher training colleges in most of the region postdates the regional conference of 1957 mentioned earlier. Prior to this, of the countries under discussion only Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago had institutions for teacher training. It must be pointed out that the Rawle Teacher Training Institute, which was the first training institution in Barbados, was opened in 1912 and operated until 1945. It must also be noted that although the modern Valsayn Teachers' College in Trinidad and Tobago is only 15 years old, teachers' colleges had been in existence there long before this. It is also interesting to note that the Corinth Teachers' College, closed a few years ago, has just been reopened at the start of the 1994-95 academic year. No statistics on it are included here.

Figure 7 Age of teachers' colleges in the region: 1994

Country	Years of existence
Antigua and Barbuda	36
Barbados	46
British Virgin Islands	1
Dominica	21
Grenada	31
Guyana	66
St Kitts and Nevis	25
St Lucia	15
St Vincent	30
Trinidad and Tobago	15

Staffing and student enrolment

An examination of the staffing in the colleges reveals a number of interesting features. Not surprisingly, given the trend in the Caribbean today for women to out-perform and to outnumber men in many areas, women make up 60 per cent of the staff in the colleges. As would be expected in teacher training institutions, virtually all staff, 182 (98 per cent), are professionally trained. Except for Guyana where 47 of the 56 tutors (83.9 per cent) and St Kitts and Nevis where only 1 out of 9 do not have university degrees, all the colleges are staffed by tutors with at least a first degree. Although these 48 non-graduates represent a full one quarter of the total staff in the colleges of the region, they constitute a specific problem for Guyana. Postgraduate degrees are held by some 85 people (49 per cent) and again women (59 per cent) are in the majority. These figures are given in Figure 8. It is fair to say that on the whole the colleges in the region have a solid core of qualified staff.

The staff in the training institutions are, on the whole, experienced teachers, with ten or more years of teaching. Only an insignificant number have less than five years experience.

Figure 9 gives student enrolments by sex and type of training and shows a preponderance of women among both groups. In the initial training group, in every case except that of Barbados where the course being offered is a special one year technical teacher training course, women outnumber the men, in most cases by more than three to one and in St Lucia by more than six to one. These figures may be noteworthy against the general concern about the marginalisation of the male and the absence of male models for school age boys.

Figure 8 Staff distribution in teachers' colleges by country, qualification and gender

Country	Professional qualification		No first degree		Postgraduate degree		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	ALL
Antigua and Barbuda	3	5	—	—	—	1	3	6	9
Barbados	6	5	—	—	4	3	6	5	11
British Virgin Islands	2	5	—	—	3	6	3	7	10
Dominica	1	8	—	—	1	2	1	8	9
Grenada	6	4	—	—	2	1	6	4	10
Guyana	21	35	17	30	8	12	21	35	56
St Kitts and Nevis	3	6	1	—	2	2	3	6	9
St Lucia	8	14	—	—	3	7	8	14	22
St Vincent	6	6	—	—	3	3	6	6	12
Trinidad and Tobago	17	21	—	—	9	13	17	21	38
Separate M/F totals	73	109	18	30	35	50	74	112	186
Grand totals (M/F)		182		48		85			
Per cent of total staff		97.8		25.8		45.7	39.8	60.2	100

Figure 9 Student enrolment, 1994

Country	Initial training			Further training		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Antigua	11	39	50	–	–	–
Barbados	9	2	11	35	101	136
British Virgin Islands	12	56	68	–	–	–
Dominica	21	34	55	–	–	–
Grenada	21	68	89	–	–	–
Guyana	210	690	900	–	–	–
St Kitts and Nevis	21	44	65	–	–	–
St Lucia	26	171	197	1	31	32
St Vincent	39	111	150	–	–	–
Trinidad and Tobago	No breakdown		660	–	–	–
Total	370	1215	2245	36	132	168

Programmes in the colleges

The training institutions in Barbados and St Lucia have moved beyond initial training programmes. They have both developed their own advanced programmes for the continued education of teachers and have also embarked on the teaching of programmes traditionally done by the University of the West Indies. In Barbados, when the primary teaching force had become a more or less fully trained one, Erdiston College took the initiative to develop programmes to meet the perceived needs of teachers in the system. In addition, in 1993, the government of Barbados decided to switch the funding for two programmes which it had provided for many years, from the UWI to Erdiston College. Erdiston therefore started the Diploma in Education course for the training of graduate teachers in secondary schools, and the Certificate in Educational Management and Supervision, in August 1994.

In St Lucia, in addition to its own advanced Home Economics Diploma, the College has been teaching the Bachelor of Education programme in educational administration for the past three or four years.

With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago which offers its own Diploma in Teaching and Guyana which offers its 'Trained Teachers' Certificate, Nursery, Primary or Secondary, training institutions award the UWI endorsed certificate. Courses are two years except for the Secondary Certificate in Guyana which is three years. The minimum entry requirement is normally four subjects, including English, at the General Proficiency level of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) or equivalent. Trinidad requires five subjects at CXC level and specifies English, mathematics, a natural science subject, a social science subject and one other. Guyana does not indicate a required subject and accepts the College of Preceptor's Certificate Examination Foundation Course as an alternative to the four CXCs.

The likelihood of producing sound, effective teachers in a system that combines what may be regarded as relatively low entry requirements and a two year programme that overloads the curriculum and consequently the student, is now being questioned. But as Louis (1994) points out, even finding candidates with these qualifications who wish to become teachers is a big problem

in some countries in the region. To extend the duration of the programme will have serious implications for governments willing to provide quality education but already experiencing financial difficulties. This issue has to be addressed in innovative and creative ways.

The general goals of teacher education programmes have tended to focus almost entirely on the cognitive and the practical, expressed so as to:

- provide basic teaching skills
- provide effective and efficient teachers
- provide skills and content necessary for teaching at the primary level
- develop understanding of and practise those skills which make for effective teaching
- promote knowledge and experience in organising teaching and evaluation to upgrade content of teachers in core curriculum
- develop skills and knowledge of classroom skills.

Consideration of the effective interpersonal skills and environmental issues was less evident. Two statements on these issues were: 'to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and values necessary for effective teaching' and more precisely 'to encourage teachers to perceive themselves as role models for pupils and to help them develop the self-confidence and other professional skills required to perform in such a capacity'. It would clearly be imprudent to conclude simply from this lack of prominence that these areas are neglected in the training of teachers. It is necessary, however, to stress their significance in the context of today's Caribbean, faced as it is with countless complex social, moral and environmental issues, and to suggest that they must be explicitly stated and treated in the training and retraining of teachers.

Examination of the components of the training programmes in the institutions reveals some common ground. There are three 'models': the Guyana model; the Trinidad model; and the common model used by countries which are linked to the UWI (Cave Hill). These are given in Figure 10.

To the extent that it can be assumed that common nomenclature is indicative of common curricular content and practices, the common ground can easily be seen. On the other hand, social studies, which is required in Guyana and the other countries, is absent from the Trinidad and Tobago context. Nevertheless, it is featured in the curriculum of Trinidad and Tobago's college but appears only as separate options in the UWI model, and does not seem to figure at all in the Guyana model. There is no obvious indication that moral education, values and valuing, environmental education and health education issues are given consideration. Currently, urgent questions need to be asked about the status of the creative arts to which so much lip service is paid across the region and about the colleges' response, and indeed the university's, to the impact of computers and computerisation in the region. These are vital issues globally and regionally.

There would appear to be compelling reasons why educators should seek to share and understand more of what is going on in the field of teacher training and education in their respective areas. The need for agreed standards and quality in teacher training, without seeking to achieve absolute conformity and uniformity, appears greater as the movement of professionals across the region continues to increase. Such sharing and discussion would also be helpful in challenging educators to critically review the curriculum, with a view to ensuring that it reflects and caters to the changing educational and national needs and aspirations of the region.

Figure 10 The three curriculum models

Guyana	Trinidad	Others UWI
Education	Education – principles and practice, sociology/psychology	Education theory
English	Language studies – reading, literature	English language
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Science	Science	Science
Social studies		Social studies
	Creative arts – music, dance/drama physical education, art/craft	
		Individual study (research methods)
Teaching practice	Practicum teaching practice	Teaching practice
		Plus one optional subject from subjects listed under (a) academic and (b) practical

Teaching practice

The vital importance of teaching practice in the training of the teacher was emphasised by all the colleges. It was stressed that no student teacher could be certified without successfully completing this component of the programme. Students who passed the other parts of the course but failed the teaching practice were given the opportunity to repeat it after reviews and additional guidance. The normal duration of teaching practice was between ten and twelve weeks, arranged in three sessions of about four weeks in the first year and two sessions in the second year of three to four weeks each. The two early sessions are concerned more with practice and development while evaluation/assessment is the focus of the final session. Students are normally supervised by the college tutors but teachers assist with this role both formally and informally. The staff of the Faculty of Education at Cave Hill are involved as examiners in the final assessment of teaching practice in those colleges whose certificates have the UWI endorsement.

Classroom observation and micro-teaching have been cited as two preparatory activities for teaching practice. It appears, however, that neither is widespread nor generally well organised. The use of micro-teaching was not mentioned by five of the ten colleges under consideration. Where it is used, it is done for short periods, in normal classroom settings and except for a few cases, seems to be done in an *ad hoc* manner rather than as a structured and

organised activity. Classroom observation is more in evidence, but here too little time is devoted to it. In some colleges it seems to be planned and supervised with proper guidelines provided and class discussion on the visits. In others there are no guidelines and no follow-up.

Concluding statement

This survey of initial teacher training activity in the region shows the progress that has been made in the field and indicates some of the issues that must be dealt with in the future. The region as a whole still has some ground to cover in its effort to provide students with a fully trained teaching body. As the drive in this direction continues, teacher educators, educational leaders, planners and all interested in the promotion of quality education must seek to review curriculum, content and methodologies in the colleges to ensure that they are updated to conform to the rapidly changing social, moral, economic and physical environment. Questions must be asked about the value of different subjects on the curriculum in relation to subjects not now done or done as options given today's changed circumstance. We must consider the implications of the four CXC entry requirement for the curriculum of the colleges and the duration of the programme in relation to what end product we are seeking to produce to meet the challenges of today. Efforts must be made to modernise the approaches to the delivery of teacher training and education in the region so that new models can be devised to deal with our particular circumstances without compromising quality. Indeed our thrust should be for improved quality so that we produce teachers who are fully equipped and confident to meet the complex challenges of modern society.