

Part 2

Regional and national education programmes

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Background

Since its inception in 1948, Erdiston College has mainly provided initial training to primary school teachers in Barbados. The institution reached its zenith in the 1970s and early 1980s. During this period there was a marked increase in the amount and types of teacher training conducted. By 1985, however, it became clear that Erdiston College was rapidly approaching the realisation of its original mandate which was to provide a fully trained teaching force for the nation. Measures were therefore instituted to embark on continuing professional education programmes. Programmes were introduced in areas in which there was a critical need for specialist teachers – early childhood education, physical education, remedial education and research and measurement. Initial training was nevertheless still being continued. In 1991, it became obvious that the continuing education programmes which were then being offered on a full-time basis, were too costly, especially in an environment of global economic recession. Furthermore, even though initial training was still being continued on a reduced basis, it was clear that new thinking was needed on the function and *raison d'être* of the College. The crucial period spanned 1991 to early 1993. By the beginning of 1993 the government was faced with three options. These were:

- closure of the College;
- amalgamation of the College with another tertiary level institution; or
- the continuation of the College, but with a new mandate.

In May 1993 therefore, the Cabinet of Barbados made the decision that Erdiston College would have a new mandate. Specifically the Cabinet decision states:

- Erdiston College should be restructured and mandated to deliver pre-service, in-service and continuing education programmes for the professional development of teachers and for other persons interested in education and training;
- the in-service programme currently offered by the in-service section of the Faculty of Education of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, would be provided by the College with effect from August 1, 1994.

It is also necessary to note that during the same period, the Government of Barbados was involved in discussions with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) on a loan to help finance human resources development. The IBRD was especially concerned with the rationalisation of Erdiston College and negotiations took place on this issue.

This new mandate constitutes a departure from the primary focus of training and requires the institution to cater to a much wider clientele. This clientele includes educational administrators, graduate teachers, special education teachers, adult educators and even parents. Moreover, it is clear that there has been a shift in the level of programming to include university level programmes. The new mandate also places greater emphasis on retraining and upgrading to meet emerging system needs and economic development goals.

In the context of its new mission, Erdiston College is seeking to function as the premier teacher training institution in Barbados providing high quality pedagogical training, research and outreach services to teachers, schools and other institutions, local and regional, which are concerned with education and training at all

levels. The College aims to perform these functions through a strong focus on the new and emerging needs of Barbados as a developing nation, which, while seeking to develop the economic well-being and general level of education of its people, must also concentrate on the promotion of a sound value system especially among young people. This mission will be carried out in close collaboration with all education stakeholders and through the application of state of the art technology across all areas of the curriculum.

Programmes

Erdiston College is currently offering three main categories of training programmes. These are:

- initial teacher training
- and continuing professional education
- trainer of trainers programmes (Appendix 5)

An outline of the programmes offered is given below.

- (i) Diploma in Education course which is at the post-degree level for untrained secondary school graduate teachers. It comprises courses in methods and educational foundation. The course is accredited by the University of the West Indies.
- (ii) In-Service Teachers' Certificate course for untrained primary and secondary non-graduate teachers. The course comprises educational foundations, methods and a research project.
- (iii) In-service training programme in adult education for technical-vocational teachers. This programme comprises courses in areas such as programme design; development and evaluation; training methodologies; evaluation techniques; resource material production; use of English; psychology of adult education; informatics; technology and society; and health and safety.
- (iv) Teachers' Advanced Professional Certificate for trained primary and secondary teachers. The programme comprises courses in educational foundation and specialist areas.
- (v) Certificate in Educational Management and Administration for prospective principals, deputy principals and senior teachers. This course is accredited by the UWI. Courses

are in the sociology of Caribbean education; social psychology; research and evaluation; and administration and supervision.

Issues and concerns

1 Return on investment

Training programmes in most areas, not only in teacher education, automatically assume that there will be application of the skill once the programme has been delivered. It is well known that there is no automatic guarantee that such application will take place. This is a priority area which must be accorded full consideration in the future planning and delivery of teacher education. The necessary follow-up systems must be put in place by the Ministry of Education and the College in full partnership to ensure that:

- teachers who have been the beneficiaries of training are assisted and supported in implementing the relevant strategies in their own classrooms;
- teachers exposed to training seek to engage in staff development activities at least at the school level in order to share new knowledge and skills with their counterparts in a training cascade context;
- school principals consider it to be one of their supervisory roles to ensure that the necessary collaboration, dialogue and support is provided to teachers re implementation of new strategies. Training programmes designed to help principals use strategies for empowering teachers and for facilitating change will be necessary in this respect.

2 Unnecessary duplication of efforts

Apart from the Faculty of Education of the University of the West Indies, Erdiston College is currently the only institution in Barbados which has a clear and undisputed mandate for the delivery of teacher education. In the last five to seven years other providers, with no tradition in teacher education, have been attempting to address this mandate outside the stipulations of the agreed 1963 accreditation/licensing arrangements for teacher certification for the Eastern Caribbean. Such a situation

among other things, leads to the duplication of efforts and resources, for example, library resources and human resources such as curriculum specialists. Furthermore, these institutions or agencies fail to accord appropriate attention and importance to accreditation arrangements which are in place. This is likely to have a negative influence on quality and to contribute to a decline in standards.

3 Recruitment of appropriately qualified and experienced teacher educators

Traditionally, teacher education has selected tutorial staff from within the ranks of the educational system. At times, however, the persons recruited, while possessing specialist skills and expertise in a specialist area, may have had no previous exposure to the teaching of adults or programme planning and delivery at the teacher training level. Furthermore, very few are multi-skilled and hence may not be as fully utilised as they could be. Many lack adequate managerial skills. More systematic attention has to be accorded to the preparation of teacher educators in the region and to the development of a cadre of teachers possessing such skills and expertise in specialist areas.

4 Quality control

In higher education institutions, quality control is mainly addressed through credentialising and accreditation procedures. Serious consideration has to be given to procedure for credentials, especially in the two-year in-service programme where a teacher who is awarded a grade 'D' can effectively be considered to have successfully completed the teaching practicum. One of the main objectives of teacher education ought to be to help make the system more professional and to contribute to improved quality in the educational system. It is doubtful as to whether teachers who perform poorly, especially during the practicum, can consistently contribute to the two outcomes just mentioned.

5 Staff upgrading and retraining

A good teacher education programme also aims to bolster the educational system by effectively

responding to system needs and, where possible, to some of the career aspirations of teachers through the delivery of appropriate programmes. Of course, teacher education should also attempt to keep teachers on the cutting edge of new developments in learning and instruction. Such objectives can only be effectively realised if upgrading and retraining of tutorial staff are accorded high priority and are fully and appropriately supported in the context of a wide variety of training options and mechanisms.

6 Availability of resources to support programme delivery

One recurrent problem in teacher education is that educators in this field often fail to employ delivery strategies which correspond to the ones which teachers are exhorted to use. There tends to be too much emphasis on lectures. The new focus on continuing professional education has helped Erdiston College to shift from the lectures and to focus more on workshop type, 'hands-on' practical activities as a regular delivery strategy. However, the necessary materials and resources are not always readily available to support such a change. Time is needed to prepare resources especially those based on new technologies.

7 Difficulty in attracting highly qualified recruits

When compared with other professions, teaching is accorded low priority and as a consequence does not attract highly qualified recruits. Such a situation exerts a negative influence on teacher education. Training time that could valuably be spent on exposure to the skills of the craft has to be spent on remedial programmes especially in mathematics and English. In addition, the quality of the output of many teachers is not commensurate with the level of resources invested at the college level.

8 High start up and maintenance costs in new developmental areas

Information technology in education is perhaps the best example of a programme to illustrate this point. In the first instance, a strong

information technology thrust must occur throughout the region if governments are to capture a share of growth in this lucrative market in areas such as data processing and programming. Furthermore, there is the added imperative that all citizens be computer literate. In this respect teacher education has a significant challenge to which it must quickly respond. Colleges in the region must seek to:

- develop the skills of teachers in the production of original indigenous software for CAI (Computer Aided Instruction) teaching in areas earmarked for development such as remedial education, the education of gifted children, computer graphics and computer-aided design and creative writing;
- prepare a select cadre of teachers possessing programming skills who can in turn help their pupils develop these skills;
- facilitate the sharing of resources and skills among schools;
- generally pioneer the information technology thrust in schools;
- develop the competencies of teachers re the use of CAI/CAL (Computer Aided Learning) packages in a range of curriculum areas;
- promote the computer as an administrative tool in school decision-making and for management purposes.

However, acquisition of the relevant equipment is costly. Moreover, because of the rapid rate at which innovations are taking place in technology, the equipment becomes obsolete in a relatively short period of time. Problems are then experienced while using it to run some of the newer software programmes on the market. In addition, once the equipment has been in use for some time maintenance costs must constantly be addressed. These services are highly specialised and consequently expensive.

Future directions

1 Delivery of a Bachelor in Education programme in collaboration with the University of the West Indies

The majority of the Barbadian teaching force is trained and relatively young. It is imperative that all efforts be made to address the concerns/aspirations of teachers at the same time that quality issues are being addressed. The

Ministry of Education has already signalled its desire to the University for discussions to take place, on a collaborative Bachelor in Education programme between Erdiston College and the University of the West Indies.

2 Focus of values education

Throughout Barbadian society generally, there has been a marked decline in social values. During the next two years the College will be offering a combination of certificate courses and short workshops designed to enhance the competencies of teachers in the area of values education. Principals, secondary and primary teachers will be targeted, as well as those currently pursuing training programmes.

3 Greater emphasis on programmes to help teachers promote social and emotional development and creativity

The performing arts have traditionally been sidelined in the local educational system. As a result, there are gaps in terms of the full development of such skills in children. It is also obvious that the deliberate enhancement of aesthetic appreciation and artistic talent can help to reduce various forms of antisocial and aggressive behaviour in children. In addition, the College will seek to help teachers effect a better balance between emotional, social and cognitive development of pupils by addressing training in other areas such as social learning, learning styles, integration across the curriculum and counselling techniques.

4 Greater use of school-based training delivery modes

This has already started. However it will be expanded to allow teachers who have benefited from retraining and upgrading programmes to mount staff development programmes in their schools for their colleagues. The College will provide training in clinical supervision and it will establish mechanisms to provide the necessary support at school level.

5 Conduct of action-based research

Very little action research takes place in local schools despite the fact that annually a number of school and teacher-initiated projects are

implemented which would lend themselves to such research. The College will seek to encourage such activities by providing technical advice and support.

6 Establishment of a resource centre

Plans are currently underway to establish a resource centre for teachers at Erdiston College. The centre will provide both outreach and training services. More significantly the centre will seek to cater to the professional needs of teachers through activities such as:

- workshops
- production of teaching materials – written, audio-visual and manipulative – for piloting and for classroom use
- demonstration lessons
- the loan of a range of commercially and non-commercially produced resource materials
- provision of support for teachers while on teaching practice
- curriculum materials development
- reproduction of teaching materials.