

Background

Teacher education in Guyana is fully institutionalised. Some 114 years ago an Act to establish and regulate an institution for the training of teachers for primary schools made it law 'that a college shall be established at which both male and female persons may be properly trained to become efficient teachers for primary schools'. The establishment of such an institution did not, however, follow promptly this Act of 1877.

Records reveal that for almost half a century teacher education and the establishment of a local training institution were characterised by a series of 'trial and error' procedures. However, in 1928 an institution known as the Teachers' Training Centre (TTC) was established. Fourteen years later, in 1942, the institution was named Government Training College (GTC). Some 34 years later, in 1976, the College was renamed the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE).

The main thrust for teacher education was the initial training of teachers to service the school system mainly at the primary level. Beginning in 1928 with an intake of 30 students biennially, the then TTC progressively grew. By 1978 the CPCE intake was 300 students annually. In 1994, the intake is 900 students. Now, an integrated CPCE fulfils a more progressive and demanding mandate, that of training teachers to service the school system at nursery, primary and secondary levels.

Diversity in teacher programmes

While CPCE provided initial training of teachers to service the primary level, many other demands were made. There was the demand to train the large backlog of qualified but untrained teachers serving the school system. There was the demand for initial training of

teachers to adequately service the school system at the secondary level. Subsequently came the national policy for the training of teachers to service the newly institutionalised nursery programme. In response came the following teacher education institutions and programmes under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

1 In-Service Teacher Training Programme (ITTP)

In 1963 the ITTP was instituted mainly to train the large backlog of qualified and, in many cases, mature teachers serving the school system. Several ITTP centres were established across Guyana. Today, only two ITTP centres remain in operation – the Linden and New Amsterdam Centres.

2 The Lilian Dewar College of Education (LDCE)

In 1968 this first secondary training programme was established. Its mandate was to provide undergraduate training for teachers to make them capable of teaching the first three forms of junior secondary, multilateral and community high schools as well as the upper level of primary schools with secondary departments.

3 The Nursery In-Service Teacher Training Programme (NITTP)

With the democratisation of education in 1976 through the national policy of free education for all from nursery to university came the institutionalisation of the Nursery Education Programme. In 1980 came the in-service training of teachers to service the school system at the nursery level.

New CPCE and LDCE buildings

There was a need for appropriate accommodation for teacher training. Through the government's developmental thrust came the construction of the CPCE block of buildings in the early 1970s. Thus in January 1974, GTC moved from its Georgetown buildings into the new imposing buildings of the Turkeyen Campus. By 1983 the Lilian Dewar College of Education was housed in its new building also on the Turkeyen Campus. Consequently, all teacher education activities under the aegis of the Ministry of Education emanated from the Turkeyen Campus. The out-lying centres of the ITTP continued to operate in Linden, New Amsterdam and Anna Regina.

Problems and approaches

During the early 1970s it was observed that teacher education was bedevilled by numerous problems which affected the quality of experience offered to the teacher trainee. There were problems relating to the academic competence of teacher trainees, the length of training and the continuous problem of identifying suitably equipped personnel to function effectively as teacher educators committed to nation building.

The Mon Repos Conference

A conference of teacher educators held in 1972 at the Guyana School of Agriculture, Mon Repos, Guyana, gave much direction to teacher education. Opportunity was afforded for professionals, research fellows, teacher educators, teachers and Central Ministry of Education personnel to critically examine and analyse the state of teacher education, in terms of problems and relevance.

It was noted that, except on an informal basis, there had been few attempts in the preceding years to bring together all teacher educators as a group to discuss the philosophy and objectives of teacher education in Guyana. The conference was pertinent to the articulation of new directions in teacher education.

The conference theme was 'to rethink teacher education programmes along national perspectives and to establish directions for teacher education and the organisation of such programmes within the framework of educational policy'.

Pooling of resources

Participants pooled their experiences and wisdom in the field in which they were engaged and were supported by the conviction that only through such a joint effort could a total reconstruction of programmes be proposed.

Then the institutions engaged in the training of teachers for the school system of Guyana met the CPCE, ITTP, LDCE and the University of Guyana (UG). The University of Guyana, through its Faculty of Education, trained university graduates leading to the Diploma in Education instituted in 1967 and 1972 and mounted a Certificate in Education programme for experienced trained non-graduate teachers. Arising from that conference were two volumes with directions and support for teacher education.

Growth and development in teacher education

There have been many growth points in teacher education since the Mon Repos conference. Among these were the following:

- orientation and training of prospective teacher educators
- recruitment of teacher educators to satisfy staff needs within the then teacher education and training institutions and the Ministry of Education
- the institutionalisation of a meeting of heads and deputies of the teacher training institutions
- collaboration among the training institutions
- use of tutorial skills across teacher training institutions
- experimentation with different modalities for teaching practice
- revision of curricular materials used in teacher training institutions
- involvement of teacher educators for the teacher's college in curriculum development activities
- use of curriculum workers, ministry officials and university personnel in the final assessment of teaching practice
- staff development programmes for college staff
- focus on both pre-service and in-service strategies for formal teacher education and training
- involvement of college staff in the development of syllabuses for the newly established

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- involvement of college staff in marking CXC scripts.

It was quite evident then that four discrete teacher training institutions under the aegis of the Ministry of Education were mandated and involved in training teachers for the school system.

Rationalisation of teacher education

New issues came to the fore. How cost effective was it to finance four discrete institutions involved in similar activities? How cost effective was it still to mount the secondary programme when numbers were decreasing? It was time for rationalisation of teacher education. This was quite easy since all formal teacher education and training activities were executed from the Turkeyen Campus.

In 1985 complete integration of the four discrete programmes was effected. All formal teacher education and training programmes including those at the outlying centres, Linden and New Amsterdam, came under one centralised administrative body, with one principal being the chief administrative officer. The name Cyril Potter College of Education has been retained.

Programmes

Cyril Potter College of Education operates both pre-service and in-service modes of teacher education. Programmes offered at the Georgetown Campus are pre-service based. Those at the outlying centres are in-service based. (The teachers teach in classrooms and attend evening lecture sessions.) This on-the-job training affords the teachers opportunity to transfer theory from the lecture sessions into their classrooms almost immediately. College tutors visit to supervise teachers' classroom behaviours.

Programme offerings include:

- Pre and in-service nursery programmes of two year duration for nursery teachers
- Pre and in-service primary programmes of two year duration for primary teachers
- In-service secondary (academic) programme for teachers who specialise in one or two academic subjects which they will teach in Forms 1-3 of the secondary school
- Pre-service secondary (pre-vocational) programme for teachers who specialise in pre-

vocational subjects in Forms 1-3 of the secondary schools. From its inception in 1968 until 1988 the secondary courses were of a three year duration. From 1988 to 1993 the secondary programme was of two years duration. However, from the 1994 intake the programme has reverted to its three year duration

- A foundation programme of one year duration, designed to upgrade the knowledge and skills of under-qualified and untrained teachers to make them eligible for formal teacher training
- A hinterland and deep riverain foundation programme via distance education. This programme basically serves the same purpose as that mentioned above, but is especially offered to hinterland and deep riverain teachers who would not normally gain access to teacher education.

Teaching and tutorial components

The college curriculum comprises four major components:

- Curriculum and enrichment studies
- Educational and professional studies
- Teaching practice
- Community service

The components are further sub-divided into the instructional, supervisory and evaluative activities offered by the various departments/programmes viz. education, enrichment studies, language, mathematics, science, social studies, nursery, secondary and pre-vocational programmes, teaching practice and examinations.

Organisation and administration of the institution

The chief administrative officer is the principal who is supported by three vice principals, sixteen senior lecturers, each managing a department, an administrator, who is responsible for the support services and ancillary staff, a senior accounts clerk, a registry supervisor, a matron, resident tutors and librarian. The day-to-day administrative activities are generally managed by the vice principal (administration).

The academic and professional activities are organised through the operations of teaching and tutorial components managed by the vice principal (curriculum and instruction). The vice principal (development) supervises the outly-

ing centres, Linden and New Amsterdam, whose day-to-day activities are managed by the heads of centre. This vice principal also co-ordinates the activities of the regional foundation programmes.

Issues and concerns

Over the past three years enrolment has increased astronomically: 588 in 1992-1993; 750 in 1993-1994, and 900 in 1994-1995. What has attracted these increases and more so, the much better qualified entrants? Is this a new trend? Will it be sustained? During the past ten years many major concerns have been raised about trends, practices and support systems in teacher education. These include the following:

- low intake for a number of years for all the programmes
- entry levels of recruits into the College
- low level of content acquired by teachers
- College having to mount upgrading/foundation courses in an effort to recruit the large numbers for training
- the duration of the training period for all students, especially since the entry levels had to be lowered in order to recruit reasonably large numbers into the College
- appropriateness of teaching practice models employed to supervise the secondary teacher trainees adequately
- deployment of tutors to supervise block periods of primary teaching practice
- appropriateness and adequacy of training of teacher trainees in industrial arts education
- adequate supervision of industrial arts teacher trainees
- shortage of staff for industrial arts programme
- serious staff shortages to man all programmes mounted by the College
- conditions of service for college staff
- lucrative remuneration of college staff to attract the best personnel in teacher training
- conflict of interests experienced by college staff who seek other employment because of pressing economic demands on their families
- high and heavy dependency upon part-time staff to service the professional programme
- conflict of interests resulting from constant requests for college staff to serve on other Ministry of Education programmes
- dwindling numbers of recruits for the nursery as well as the secondary programmes
- the cost-effectiveness of the secondary programme if it continues under the college administration
- absence of structured follow-up supervision of recent graduates from the College
- lack of structured networking between the College, the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD), the Central Ministry, the University of Guyana and the regional education system
- closer collaboration between CPCE, the agent for formal training of teachers, and NCERD, agent for the development of curricula materials for schools and also non-formal in-service education for large numbers of teachers, trained, and untrained across Guyana
- need for a more structured approach to teacher education and training to embrace pre-service – induction – in-service continuum
- need to use distance teaching to upgrade the teaching skills of untrained teachers in remote, riverain and hinterland regions
- need to use distance teaching to train teachers in the hinterland and deep riverain regions
- need to continue training and upgrading of college staff
- need to expand the in-service teacher training programmes to cater for the on-the-job training of large numbers of qualified teachers resident in the far flung coastal regions
- need to forge greater links between formal and non-formal education
- need to open up teacher education to cater for the non-formal education system.

Concerns have been voiced about the quality of the products of the College. The College has raised an alarm about the low level of qualifications of new recruits. Solutions are sought to these problems and concerns. An examination of the literature on teacher education would reveal the constant need for teacher educators, professionals, university personnel, ministry officials and school personnel to meet, identify and analyse problems and outline new directions for teacher education.

Hall (1985) noted that the national concern for the qualification and training of teachers had been consistently expressed by the state and federal policy makers, practitioners and media. He stressed, 'a series of special commissions and task forces have implied the way teachers are trained is inadequate and have

proposed an array of remedies'. Another critic, Hunt (1986), posited that it was quite easy to criticise teacher education. He said even those who knew about teacher education could identify weaknesses and propose change, but he declared, 'there is a major difference between criticising present practice and acting to improve future practice. By moving beyond reflective analysis, we can use this unprecedented window of opportunity to improve teacher education across the professional continuum, and, therefore, enhance teaching.'

Another observer, Lashley (1985), commented on the following areas in relation to teacher education, viz. collaboration, curriculum, modelling enquiry, induction and field experience. He issued the following recommendations and warnings:

- Professional collaboration must become a more dominant model for professional practice.
- A more coherent curriculum structure needs to be created for teacher education.
- Teacher educators must be capable of modelling the skills requisite for professional practice. To effect the modelling, many teacher educators will have to revise courses, re-examine their own teaching behaviours, and reassess the efficiency of instructional practice.
- More systematic inquiry is needed regarding the power of professional practice. Research by the teacher education research and development centres will help but may not be sufficient.
- Institutions must create, along with school districts, a better bridge between preparation and practice.

Bridging the pre-service – in-service gap will necessitate new paradigms and new working relationships.

By creating a pre-service – induction – in-service continuum, the teacher education process can be viewed as ongoing and evolutionary, not static and fractionalised.

Field experiences should be limited and specific.

- Every time a prospective teacher walks into a classroom, he/she should be gathering 'focused' data on the teaching process, or working purposefully with the children.

A third observation made was that teaching, teacher education and research on teacher education are interconnected. Improving pre-service teacher education without a concurrent

improvement in the status and work conditions of in-service teachers will lead to little change in teacher quality and quantity. The two are inseparably connected.

In the Guyanese context the time is ripe for change in teacher education. But this change must be informed by national policy statements. No one or two groups of teacher educators will be able to change teacher education; it is going to take all groups – CPCE, NCERD, regional education personnel, school personalities, researchers, university personnel and Ministry of Education officials and community-based interest groups – all pulling together with the same purpose.

In view of the concerns and issues raised and some observations made from the literature on teacher education, it seems necessary to examine the nature of pre-service and in-service strategies for teacher education.

The UNESCO/CARNEID volume on in-service teacher education referred to pre-service teacher education as the initial formal education of teachers before employment. Full-time teacher education programmes are excluded from the term in-service although some of the participants may be on leave from the job in the teaching service. In the Guyana context this description of pre-service teacher education is quite appropriate. Formal initial teacher education and training done by the Cyril Potter College of Education, Turkeyen Campus, is full-time.

On the other hand, in-service teacher education as described by the UNESCO/CARNEID volume, is an instrument or tool, like education itself. Caribbean states have used this tool to serve a number of different ends. Caribbean experiences would seem to suggest that the in-service tool is both flexible and sturdy and can be used to serve a multiplicity of ends. As has been the experience in Guyana, in-service teacher education can be used with varying degree of success to:

- orient unqualified teachers to their pedagogic tasks
- provide formal teacher training leading to certification as obtains at the in-service teacher training programme, Linden and New Amsterdam
- upgrade qualified teachers to higher level qualifications, for example, in preparation for administrative roles
- support changes, innovations and planned improvements in curriculum development and implementation as is done at the

National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD).

Non-formal in-service strategies are currently employed in teacher education in Guyana. These may include, as described by the UNESCO/CARNEID volume:

- the orientation of qualified and trained personnel to service non-formal programmes
- the orientation of unqualified and new teachers to their teaching responsibilities
- the introduction of teachers to new curricula as practised by the NCERD
- the elimination of weaknesses in the understanding of specific content as practised by the subject committees monitored by NCERD in collaboration with regional education officials.

In 1985, Ministry of Education developed, implemented and conducted a hinterland teacher foundation programme. This was intended to upgrade the content and skills of a number of underqualified and untrained hinterland teachers serving in schools in those deep riverain and remote hinterland areas. Subsequently 55 teachers entered the Cyril Potter College of Education to pursue the professional training course leading to a Trained Teacher's Certificate. The non-formal in-service strategy was successfully employed to upgrade the content and skills of those hinterland teachers.

Currently, a second foundation programme for hinterland and deep riverain teachers is in progress. This time it is via distance education – print and periodic face-to-face contact.

Future directions

New approaches and programmes are necessary to satisfy the many needs of the school and community. So too new approaches and programmes are necessary to enhance teacher education to better equip the teacher trainees to meet the demands of the school system and the community in which the teacher functions.

The following needs have been identified:

- A mechanism for closer linkages and collaboration within and among teacher education agencies: Faculty of Education, University of Guyana; the National Centre for Education

Resource Development; the Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, regional education departments.

- A clearing house for ideas, concerns, issues and projections in teacher education.
- Expansion of in-service teacher education programmes to meet the wide-ranging needs of teachers, both trained and untrained.
- Alternative techniques/approaches to the delivery of teacher education for teachers on the coast as well as in the hinterland and deep riverain locations.
- Special programmes – special education, business education.
- Follow-up supervision for recently trained teachers.
- Expansion in training facilities for technical and vocational education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- Organise a conference on teacher education. (The last was held in 1976 in Guyana)
- Institute a Council/Board of Teacher Education which operates in an advisory/co-ordinating capacity for in-service and pre-service teacher education offered by Cyril Potter College of Education, In-Service Teacher Training Programme, Faculty of Education, University of Guyana, and the National Centre for Education Resource Development.
- Give greater commitment to and participate in the local chapter of the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI).
- Institute other in-service teacher training programmes in the far flung distant coastal regions.
- Introduce a modular approach to teacher education for greater flexibility in the delivery of teacher education.
- Produce distance teaching modules for use in teacher education for hinterland and deep riverain teachers.
- Institute distance education techniques to facilitate delivery of teacher education programmes to teachers in the more inaccessible regions.
- Intensify computer assisted learning for college tutors and teacher trainees.