
Trinidad and Tobago

Continuous upgrading of skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies should become a pattern for the teaching profession. All teachers at all levels should have the opportunity for professional development throughout their teaching career.

(M. O. A. Durojaiye, 1995)

Background

The guiding philosophy for the development of education in Trinidad and Tobago hinges on developing the human resource base in the educational institution, whilst involving the national community, and promoting their participation in the educational effort.

Options to produce these goals have been put in operation, and the Action Plan devised has identified mechanisms, strategies and procedures for the attainment of these goals and objectives within clearly defined time parameters.

The programmes of teacher education outlined below attest to the efforts being made by the Ministry of Education in the pursuance of these goals.

Programmes

To ensure the availability of teachers at all levels of the system, on-going programmes are offered at specialised teacher training institutions including the Faculty of Education, UWI, St Augustine.

Where necessary and feasible, in-service training programmes are conducted for the emergent needs of teachers in the system. The following is an inventory of programmes currently offered.

On-going programmes

- Teachers' Diploma Group for in-service teachers, which lasts two years. At the end of this programme the teachers receive a Teachers' Diploma.
- Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) (Primary), UWI, for trained primary school teachers. The programme is for two years.
- Certificate in Education (Cert.Ed.), UWI, for trained primary school teachers lasting one year. Teachers receive Certificate in Education Science/Maths/Reading.
- Education administration, UWI, for trained primary school teachers (prospective administrators).
- Special course for senior teacher/vice principals/principals lasting six months. The content comprises the Better Schools modules developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The programme is supervised by the Ministry of Education, school supervisors/principals, and teachers' college lecturers.
- On-the-job training (OJT). Pre-service training for recruited assistant teachers for one year.

(See Appendix 8 for details of programmes and Appendix 9 for achievements in teacher education.)

Issues and concerns

1 Recruitment

- Recruitment practices need to reflect a resolve to attract and retain competent and motivated individuals in the teaching service.
- A significant number of applicants for the position of assistant teachers at the primary level, who meet the present basic minimum requirements for entry into the teaching

service, have qualified after several attempts at the CXC General/GCE 'O' Level examinations. This is a clear indication of the general weakness of such applicants.

Similar concerns also exist for the recruitment of quality graduates for the secondary level.

- The recruitment of sufficient teachers in the system for geography, art and craft, music and physical education remains a problem.

2 Co-ordination of teacher education

A well articulated and fully co-ordinated system of teacher education is lacking. This has implications for evolving a thorough plan for teacher training, setting standards for courses and programmes and establishing equivalence amongst courses and programmes.

3 Instructional leadership skills

Development of the instructional leadership skills of principals and vice principals for developing and implementing staff development seminars, workshops and programmes has not been sufficiently addressed.

Sustainability, in terms of cost, is a problem in maintaining the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Education within recent times.

4 Loss of instructional time

The loss of valuable instructional time for students as a result of withdrawal of teachers for workshops in curriculum areas and other professional development programmes has been on the increase.

Within recent times, the demands of properly co-ordinating the school based assessment component of the CXC examinations and the implementation of the NCSE Level One pilot programme have accounted for a significant loss of teaching time.

5 Effects of training

A general concern is that the effect of training through workshops is not adequately reflected in classroom practice. An observable trend is that those who are motivated for example, to practice what was learnt, tend to be progressive and are usually promoted by the system to administrative positions.

6 Inadequate supervision

School supervisors and curriculum advisers have been unable effectively to monitor and assess the delivery of the curriculum. As a result teacher support measures have not been put in place when they were needed.

7 Technology

In a changing technological environment, there is an increasing need to familiarise teachers and managers with up-to-date technology, computers, for example.

Future directions

The initiatives of the Ministry of Education with respect to teacher education are guided by the Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) which recognises that 'the education system depends upon the commitment and performance and the quality of its personnel for the full realisation of its goals and objectives'.

The conditions which must be established if this goal is to be achieved include:

- Mandatory pre-service training before entry, and compulsory in-service training for upgrading, retooling, orientation and re-socialisation on a continuing basis throughout the service life of its members.
- The level of training which must ensure that members come to share systems of beliefs, values, understanding and technologies that will enhance the culture of the educational service.
- Provision of a compensation scheme that not only reflects the intrinsic value of the educator but also helps to establish the status of educators and to attract the best and most suitable persons to the profession.
- The development of a unifying structure in the system that will enhance professional collegiality among educational workers at all levels.
- The establishment and enforcement of a code of ethics that governs behaviour and enhances the status of the educational professional. (The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides a professional counselling service.)

Teacher education and teacher development

The importance of the system of resource management outlined in the policy paper cannot be over-emphasised. It is critical to the achievement and maintenance of an adequately trained teacher core.

The Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) recommends that in the short term or plan period and no later than 1995/96, a well articulated and fully co-ordinated system of teacher education must be developed. It must encompass programmes for the preparation of teacher educators, all in-service and pre-service programmes and courses for the professional development of administrators, teachers, teachers' aides and care givers.

This would facilitate the establishment of:

- standards for courses and programmes, and
- equivalence amongst courses and programmes.

(Extracts from the White Paper)

3.45.1 For the system as a whole, a model for the quick determination of teacher supply and demand requirements should be established. Such a mechanism will allow the Educational Service to plan teacher education programmes with the lead time necessary for the effective implementation of such programmes and for the kind of smooth succession which prevents the loss of valuable instructional time.

3.45.3 A capability should be established within the curriculum division to administer in-service training programmes and where necessary to plan new programmes for emergent needs.

3.45.4 Registration and recruitment practices must reflect a resolve to attract and retain competent and motivated individuals. The current practice of registering teachers on the basis of five CXC/GCE subjects should be terminated forthwith. The present procedure should be considered merely as an application by the individual to become a teacher.

3.34.5 Short, intensive courses should be organised to meet the needs of beginning teachers who have no initial teacher training

and for teachers who re-enter the profession after a long absence.

3.45.6 Continuous training of primary and secondary school teachers should be firmly established through the following programmes:

- Certificate in Education (Special Areas)
- B.Ed. (This should involve three years of study and practice beyond the certificate).
- B.A./B.Sc. Dip.Ed. – a four year conjoint degree through which persons who wish to teach should attain their initial teacher training.

3.45.7 The Teachers' College programme should be reorganised on the basis of modules and units to allow for greater flexibility in organisation and delivery of its four major components. (See Appendix 8.)

3.45.11 The recruitment policies, staff development opportunities, career trajectories and compensation packages for teacher educators must be reviewed and revised so as to attract and retain individuals of the highest quality.

3.45.12 Over the period 1994-1998, priority should be given to the training, through the provision of at least 30 scholarships, (tenable at UWI), of geography teachers for the secondary system.

3.45.13 A 'Joint Board of Teacher Education' with representation from all institutions involved in teacher education should be established. It should have as its remit, the review, articulation and co-ordination of all teacher education programmes.

3.45.16 Teacher education should be rationalised. Teacher education programmes in the non-university sector should be articulated with the Bachelor of Education programmes at UWI. In the non-university further education sub-sector, the feasibility of merging the ECIAF Teacher Training Unit and the Technical/Vocational Teacher Training Unit at the John S. Donaldson Technical Institute, with operations at the Valsayn Teachers' College should be examined. Consideration should be given to the development of a rationalised teacher education organisation with technical and vocational programming as special departments.