
Joint Board of Teacher Education (UWI) in the Bahamas, Belize and Jamaica

Background

Prior to 1965, certification in the teacher's colleges in the Bahamas, Belize and Jamaica was the responsibility of teacher training boards established by ministries of education. In 1965, these ministries passed over the responsibility to the Board of the Institute of Education at the UWI (later to become the Joint Board of Teacher Education). Each territory dismantled its own teacher training board.

Thus, the JBTE is a regional body; its head is the Dean of the Faculty of Education at UWI, Mona, Jamaica, or his or her nominee. Members of the JBTE come from the Teacher Education Development Department (TEDD) of this Faculty, teacher education institutions (mainly the principals), ministries of education and teachers' organisations. The UWI, relevant ministry of education and teacher education institutions are all signatories to the diplomas or certificates awarded.

The JBTE is housed at the Mona Campus of the UWI and the Secretariat carries out the executive and development functions of the Board. The Chairman of the Curriculum Committee and the Examinations/Accreditation Committee, the two standing committees through which the JBTE operates, are both members of TEDD. This department is, therefore, intimately concerned not only with teacher assessment, but with staff development in the teachers' colleges. Staff development and research are regarded as prime responsibilities of the department.

The Bahamas

The education system

The Bahamas is a former British colony, and its educational system is based on the British model. Proximity to the United States of

America, and easy social interchange, have meant, however, that the American influence is strong, especially at the tertiary level. Two parallel systems of schools exist. One system is the private fee paying schools, both primary and five year high schools. Entry to the latter is through examinations set by the schools themselves. These private schools, which are often run by religious bodies, are entirely self-financing. External examinations at the end of high school are the norm. The second is the government school system; students in government primary schools may pass unselectively to three year junior secondary schools. At the end of this period, students may sit the Bahamas Junior Certificate Examination. Passes in five subjects in this examination, including English language, represent the minimum qualifications for entry to teacher training locally. The curriculum in the government schools is directed by the Ministry of Education, which also assumes total financial responsibility for the institutions. Students pay no fees.

Teacher education

A problem for teacher education arises out of the geography of the country. A terrain of small land masses, separated by relatively large stretches of ocean, is inimical to easy and cheap communication. Teachers in the islands outside of New Providence, which are collectively known as the Family Islands, are somewhat isolated from the central administration, although they are visited on a regular basis by ministry officials. The result is a shortage of teachers in these islands, which is often filled by non-Bahamians, many from other Caribbean islands, who are attracted by the relatively high salaries. All teacher education in the Bahamas is carried out at the College of the Bahamas, located in the capital, Nassau.

Programmes

In collaboration with the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE), the College offers teacher certification in three areas:

- Early childhood (Grades infant – 2, ages 4–8)
- Primary (Grades 1–6, ages 6–12)
- Secondary, in specific subjects (Grades 7–12).

The programmes are each three years, full-time. Admission requirements to year 1 of the programmes are five subjects in the Bahamas Junior Certificate or three passes at Cambridge General Certificate (GCE), 'O' level or three passes at the General Proficiency Level 1 or 2, Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Certificate, all including English language. In addition, for students in the early childhood programme, passes must include mathematics; for those opting for the secondary programme, passes in GCE/CXC must include passes in their chosen teaching subjects. Students with an associate or bachelor's degree in appropriate subject areas, may be allowed to complete their programmes in a shorter time.

Practicum

The *Teaching Practice Handbook* of the College of the Bahamas states that at the end of the practicum, students are expected to have:

- developed a refined philosophy of education
- applied theory in a functional and effective manner
- confirmed a value system which will be demonstrated through interactions with students in every class.

Thus the experience is intended to be more than just about the acquisition and practice of pedagogical skills.

Eligibility

In order to register for teaching practice, students must have:

- completed and submitted their research paper
- completed their theory courses (an allowance is made for two courses to be outstanding, provided they have completed an education tutorial type course, which is

designed to be directly relevant to the teaching practice exercise.

Topics covered in this course include: the general model of teaching practice; classroom management; schemes of work, lesson plans and evaluation; assessment by supervisors, moderators, co-operating teachers; classroom observations.

Pre-teaching practice exercises

Teaching practice begins in January each year. In the term preceding this students visit the schools selected for them for one to two hours per week for four weeks, for assimilation, observation and induction. During this time, student teachers are expected to observe their co-operating teachers, familiarise themselves with the organisation of the schools, obtain schemes of work and reference materials needed to develop schemes of work, and collect timetables (which require them to teach 75 per cent of the timetable of the co-operating teacher).

Students are provided by the College with a written outline of the things for which they should be looking during this period, and the information they should have collected by the end of the period (see Appendix 11). Supervisors and co-operating teachers share in this exercise.

In early January, in a seminar session, prospective student teachers have the opportunity to discuss the teaching practice exercise with students of the previous year, college supervisors and a Ministry of Education member of the JBTE external moderation team.

Stages in the practicum

The 12 week practicum may be seen as comprising four 'blocks'.

- Weeks 1-2: Preparation of detailed schemes of work, which outline objectives, content, methods/activities, assessment of lessons to be taught. Such schemes are developed in conjunction with subject tutors, who are responsible for their approval
- Weeks 3-5: Diagnostic evaluation of students. Supervisors visit, advise, and guide on an individual basis; weekly individual and group discussions at the College.
- Weeks 6-10: Summative evaluation of students. Students are observed by their own and other supervisors. Supervisors submit a grade for each student's performance in

Week 8. Cross moderation teams visit students from the fifth week onwards, and a final grade is awarded after dialogue.

- Week 11-12: External moderation of College grades by JBTE organised teams.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and co-operating schools

The College makes its own arrangements with selected co-operating schools, and activities within the schools begin in the semester preceding the practicum. As already pointed out, students make weekly visits to the schools chosen for them, for four weeks, usually during November. Co-operating/class teachers are expected to have student teachers observe their classes, provide them with the necessary information to make up their timetables, and be helpful generally in assisting the prospective teacher to 'get ready.'

In December, the College holds a meeting for all principals, co-operating teachers, supervisors and student-teachers to discuss concerns in the exercise. As outlined in the *Teaching Practice Handbook*, co-operating teachers in essence are expected to:

- assist in the control and management of the class
- allow students to utilise their own ideas in developing instructional and visual aids, and to reorganise the room if desirable and practical
- make a progressive assessment of students' capabilities, gradually giving more scope with the class
- work along with the College in making sure that students receive help when in difficulty and a fair evaluation of their performance; have their plans inspected
- be flexible to new ideas and assist student teachers in planning their instructional programmes, obtaining materials and conducting any field trips.

Principals are asked to:

- integrate student teachers into the staff, and place them with the more experienced teachers and better classes
- avoid putting undue stress on student teachers
- allow students to utilise available materials, and audio-visual equipment
- make periodic visits to students' classroom and assist supervisors in evaluating students' progress, making recommendations as seen fit

- ensure that students are cognizant of school rules and regulations, and are conducting themselves as professionals.

Thus, co-operating teachers and principals are a recognised integral part of the training process.

The Ministry of Education is aware of the College's activities in a general way, but in the main, its contribution lies mainly in student evaluation. Ministry officers are always a part of the team organised by the JBTE for external moderation. Not only is their experience of invaluable help, but this strategy provides on-going feedback to the Ministry on the standards expected by the certifying board. In turn, Ministry officials are able to help to clarify for new student teachers what is expected of them. These officials are made available to new practice teaching students in a meeting before these students begin the exercise.

Appraisal and feedback

Several mechanisms exist for appraisal and feedback during the training period.

1 Supervisors bear the brunt of this component. They are required to:

- make two lesson observation/evaluation visits per week, to submit a written evaluation report after each visit and have discussions with the student as often as is practicable
- meet with their students each Friday at the college for individual/group feedback
- submit a final comprehensive report and a grade to the College for internal moderation.

They are also required to give at least one demonstration lesson for each student during the diagnostic three week period of teaching practice.

2 Student teachers have the benefit of advice from the Chairperson (head) of the Teacher Education Division, and the Teaching Practice Co-ordinator in two arranged meetings. The first takes place during the very early stages of teaching practice, and the second just before student teachers are graded overall.

Students also receive input from supervisors other than their own, when cross-moderation teams visit them.

3 Co-operating teachers and principals assist the supervisor in giving advice and assistance as the day to day need arises, both in lesson content, related matters and in professional behaviour.

4 External moderation teams do not necessarily see every student, since their purpose is to ensure that the college meets the required standards in its grade awards. Their comments are, however, passed on to student teachers in a general way in a symposium held after the teams have had their final meeting with College staff, and finalised grades. For the records, a written report embodying these comments is always prepared by these JBTE teams for the College.

Although student teachers are well provided for in terms of appraisal and feedback during the training period, upon graduation, little support exists. The College itself has no official policy or guidelines concerning this, although some members of the Teacher Education Division on an individual basis, maintain links with students. Some students seek the links.

Ministry of Education officials do provide some support, but this is limited, especially in the Family Islands, where communication is a problem.

Belize

Teacher education in Belize takes place at the Belize Teachers' College (Roman Catholic) and St George's Training College (government). Both these courses pursued a programme modelled on a two year intra-mural programme, followed by a one year probationary period. BTC continued this model, but added another, namely a one year intra-mural programme followed by the one year internship period. Between 1966 and 1969, the latter programme was emphasised in an attempt to address the shortage of trained teachers. As well, a one year intra-mural programme was introduced for junior (lower) secondary teachers. Both these programmes were discontinued in 1970 in favour of the earlier two plus one theme; here the school experience is increased from one to two years. From time to time, in an attempt to increase the proportion of teachers with some training, the College, on the authority of the Ministry of Education, has mounted special programmes, outside the aegis of the Joint Board of Teacher Education

(JBTE), but these are short-lived. For example, in 1990 a sixteen month programme in primary education was mounted, but has since been discontinued.

The present model

This leads to the Certificate with School Experience. Basically, there are three phases to the programme.

- Level 1 (one year): courses plus a practicum of 14 weeks
- Two years of school experience
- Level 2 (one year): courses plus a practicum of three weeks.

Minimum qualifications for entry to Level 1 of the programme are a First Class Teachers' Certificate of Belize or passes in three subjects at CXC general proficiency levels, 1 or 2, including English language or the equivalent in a comparable examination. Additionally, applicants must have a satisfactory score in the entrance examination set by the College.

The practicum

The practicum component of the programme at the College carries approximately 25 per cent of the total instructional and credit hours in the intra-mural programme, more than any other 'subject'. Although it has been intimated that requests are recorded for fewer hours, no suggestion has been made that the practicum should be reduced. Additionally, there is the mandatory two year period of school experience, which may be regarded as an extended practicum. The skills honed during this period are externally assessed for certification towards the end of the Level 2 period.

Preparation for the practicum

Students for the 14 week Level 1 practicum will have completed their course work for the year. Methodology inputs employ role-play, peer teaching, micro-teaching, teaching of actual classes, with follow-up critique as instructional tools. During the first semester, student-teachers make seven observational visits, with a supervisor; discussion seminars are held after the visits. In the second semester, students work with classes one day per week for two to three weeks. This latter provision is experimental, and has yet to be evaluated.

Stages in the practicum

Level 1

At the end of the first intra-mural year, students are required to do a 14 week practicum. In time, this represents the first term of the following school year, and student teachers return to their base schools. The College has little control over their placement.

School experience

The programme requires that students with less than two years classroom experience prior to admission to the College, gain two years of such experience before being allowed to proceed to Level 2 of the programme. Students with two years or more teaching experience, may, at the College's request, be assessed by the JBTE at Level 1. If they gain a grade of B, or better, they may be allowed to proceed directly to Level 2.

In an attempt to accommodate promising students, provisional arrangements are also in place to allow students without pre-college teaching experience to proceed to Level 2, if they gain the B grade on assessment.

Level 2

During May of their final year, students do a four week practicum, when they are externally assessed by the JBTE for certification. For this shorter placement, the College has some choice, and attempts to have student teachers assigned either within Belize City, or as near as is possible, for easy access to the College.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and co-operating teachers

This is mainly in the assessment process. Belize is divided into five geographical districts. Education officers are assigned on a district basis, and these officers are always a part of the teams which assess classroom teaching. Additionally, when they visit schools to which student-teachers are assigned, they assist. Principals should also be helping the students, but this is more in the theory than in the practice, especially in the more rural areas.

Appraisal and feedback

Full-time college supervisors are allocated on a district basis. Students should be visited twice per month during the 14 week Level 1

practicum. The hope is to increase these visits to once weekly, to afford students sustained appraisal and feedback. The terrain, and concomitantly transportation, make it very difficult to achieve these goals. This is unfortunate, since these visits are the main opportunities available to student teachers for advice. Recently, the appointment of selected resource teachers in some schools as supervisors, was found to have a positive influence on student teachers' work in these schools.

No official arrangements are in place for the College to provide support for teachers once they have graduated, but if teachers seek assistance, staff accommodate as best they can. The Ministry of Education maintains, at varied levels of efficiency, district resource centres, where there is a small library. The centres are also available for workshops, and the District Officers may be found there. The Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry supplies curriculum guides for the primary level, and periodically arranges workshops to facilitate their use.

Jamaica

In Jamaica the listed minimum requirements for the teacher education programmes accord approximately 18 per cent of programme time to the practicum. It is interesting to compare this with the Belizean situation where the comparable allocation is approximately 25 per cent in addition to the two year school experience stipulation. Perhaps this reflects two sides of the circular enigma in any teacher education programme: where should the emphasis be, on content or on methodology? The diploma programme now in use in Jamaica succeeded one in which students were required to spend one full year on teaching practice; the call for a revision came out of comments that teachers had not a good enough grasp of content. On the other hand, in Belize, the complaint was about teaching methodology.

In practice, when lesson preparation and supervisor interview time are taken into account, students spend far more time than is recorded on teaching practice.

Stages in the practicum

To meet the requirements of the JBTE, each college must organise the practicum in three stages, namely:

- Year 1: 1 week

- Year 2: 4 weeks
- Year 3: 8 weeks

Timing and general arrangements in these autonomous colleges vary in Years 1 and 2, but some uniformity is imposed on the third year experience by the necessity for the external assessment exercise, and for students to have time to complete other programme assignments. In practice, the principals, by consensus, within the JBTE forum, decide on the dates.

The focus of teaching practice at each stage, is, however, specified in the regulations. In Year 1, students are introduced to the classroom through a week of guided observations early in the year. No actual teaching is done, but evaluatory discussions with supervisors follow the observational visits.

In Year 2, the regulations stipulate that practice teaching should be integrated with the methods courses. This means that team and/or individual teaching in schools extends the peer teaching exercises in the college classrooms. Three colleges actually have practising schools to facilitate these exercises. Sessions are followed by discussion with peers and supervisors.

One model pursued devotes week one of the second year practicum to preparation for the other three weeks; lectures, peer teaching, discussion and sessions on lesson planning are among the experiences provided. Team teaching follows in the remaining three weeks. Three students are attached to one school; each is required to teach one class per day. Follow-up discussions with the supervisor provide feedback and guidance.

In Year 3, students are working very closely on an individual basis with their supervisors. The first week of the final practicum is largely spent in orientation exercises, meeting the staff of the school, getting timetables and the content to be taught over the period. Students are externally assessed by the JBTE in the last two weeks of the period, in late March/April each year, to allow them time for their final written examinations in June.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and co-operating teachers

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education is largely in assessment in the third year. Subject officers are made available to be part of the assessment teams, as a part of their duties;

very often, they assume, with the members of TEDD, team leadership roles in this exercise.

The system of co-operating teachers is not well developed. Teachers in the selected schools 'hand over' their classes to student teachers. Any assistance given varies with the class teacher, the relationship of the school with the college, the attitude of the principal and of the student teachers themselves. No real structured reporting is expected by the college from the class teacher.

Appraisal and feedback

During the first two years, feedback is mainly through class discussions with peers and supervisors/lecturers. In the third year, regular visits by the supervisor allow continuing dialogue. Colleges select the schools used, and try for easy accessibility and proximity to the college to facilitate frequent visits. Supervisors will aim at weekly visits, but this is often not possible, because of other teaching commitments. It is a problem of the Jamaican situation that third year supervisors, are, at the same time, teaching first and second year classes.

After approximately a month of teaching, the college grades the student; the supervisor makes the main judgement, but the JBTE requirement for cross-moderation makes it possible for students to have the benefit of the input from other supervisors.

Support from the Ministry of Education after graduation is mainly in the form of in-service workshops arranged by the curriculum division. Such workshops are not specially structured to help the new graduate, but rather will be planned on an *ad hoc* basis to meet special needs as they arise, for example, to facilitate new emphases decided on by the Ministry. Subject officers are also available for advice in the regional offices of the Ministry.

Teachers may also get help from the members of TEDD; again this is mostly on request, unless that department runs a special series, for example, to assist teachers with the school-based component of various subjects children will need for the CXC examinations, or to infuse environmental education.

The Faculty of Natural Science has also, over the past two years run summer workshops for the Ministry of Education to upgrade teachers' content in science. The subject teachers' associations, for example, those for science, geography/geology and language arts also periodically put on workshops to satisfy particular needs.