

# CHAPTER 1

## Problems and Priorities

### Problems - General and Particular

1. In the Caribbean countries of the Commonwealth can be seen a microcosm of the current problems of youth in societies at various levels of development throughout the world.
2. Because of their history, geographical location and close cultural and economic ties with the more developed countries of North America and Western Europe the Caribbean states are affected by many of the youth problems which have arisen in recent years in these countries. Thus, essential features of the youth situation in the Caribbean are the problems of the affluent society, the educated drop-out, the drug scene, and the fundamental questioning of the structures of established society. At the same time the Caribbean countries are not immune to the endemic problem in other developing countries of educated, unemployable youth. Here, as elsewhere, young people are turning away from customary forms of training for traditional occupations and demand the formal schooling and training which, mistakenly, they believe will enable them to find employment in the modern commercial and industrial sectors of the economy. The problem of unemployed youth may be even more acute in the Caribbean than elsewhere, because the formal school systems are comparatively more highly developed there than in most other developing regions. Nor can the Caribbean countries offer to young people surplus land where they can earn some sort of living when their hopes for employment in the modern sector have been finally dashed.
3. In addition to these problems which it shares with other countries, there are in the Caribbean area complicating factors specific to the locality. These include the effects of the region's

social history, the incidence of high population densities, and an often indefinite cultural identity. The social history of the region has bequeathed two major problems. The first is that of inadequate child-parent relationships resulting from a loose family structure, and the second of antipathy towards farming, and manual work generally. Although a high density of population is not common to all Caribbean countries, it has long been a cause for concern in islands such as Barbados, and has largely influenced the widespread tradition of emigration from the region. Problems derive, too, from the fact that so many Caribbean countries, small in size and population, do not have a strong national cultural identity but share to some degree in various cultures deriving from America, Africa, Europe or Asia. The discovery of a regional or national cultural identity is important to the shaping of a national policy for young people which will inspire in them positive motivation towards goals which are in the national interest. An identity may emerge as the result of effect towards clear national goals, as, for example, in Guyana where young people are trained and equipped for pioneering work in the interior. Such a development is less likely in a country such as Dominica, for, although the basic problem is similar to that of Guyana, the much smaller population makes it impracticable to inspire young people by means of a programme on similar lines to that in Guyana.

#### Problems of special sectors of Caribbean youth

##### a) Young women and girls

4. In many Caribbean countries, young women constitute an unusually high proportion of the resident population, the result in some degree of a greater tendency on the part of the young male population to emigrate in search of employment. As a consequence there is a general trend towards economic and social independence on the part of the women in the population. This may be manifested in a greater interest in and willingness to seek out wage-earning employment or a tendency towards female self-assertion. This frequently takes the form of early child-bearing, and leads to a devaluation of the status of marriage as the key relationship in the family structure. A social pattern whereby families

are built around the mother or grandmother is common, so that often there is no central male figure in the early upbringing of children.

5. Two main problems arise from the evident needs of young girls. In the first place, there is an immediate necessity to provide for young women the means of being self-supporting, especially if they have family responsibilities at an early age. Secondly, in the longer term, educational activities must be provided which will promote new attitudes of greater social responsibility towards early motherhood and the role of marriage. These should include sex education and education in family planning.

#### b) Incomplete families

6. There was special concern over the problems of a particular group of young people who are the product of the situation discussed above, young people from incomplete families. In the special social context of the Caribbean countries, "incomplete families" is a more apt description than the term "broken homes" which is often used. The incomplete family frequently produces immature, insecure and unbalanced young people, prone to delinquency and very often ill-equipped to benefit from existing facilities for employment or training. The lack of economic security in such families results in their being deprived of many of the basic requirements of existence at even a rudimentary level. This deprivation can in turn lead to delinquency. The absence of a father figure, of male authority in the home, has often been pinpointed as a weakness widespread in Caribbean society and a contributory cause of the lack of regard for authority that exists among many young people in the region. The whole situation is exacerbated by the practice whereby children are often left by their natural mothers in the care of an elderly grandparent, usually a grandmother, so resulting in both paternal and maternal deprivation. Female teachers predominate in school, and women in the societies in general, so that adolescents frequently are the product of a social environment heavily dominated by women.

7. Consideration was given to possible action to relieve some of the adverse social side-effects of this situation. The participation of male volunteers in youth programmes at all

levels might help to break down the association between certain types of work and one particular sex and increase the general participation of the male community in social work. This process could in turn be reinforced by increasing genuinely integrated activities for both sexes in youth programmes and educational activities generally, so producing greater mutual respect between the sexes. Lastly, it was suggested that through the schools, particularly through social studies courses, there should be a systematic educational effort to promote an awareness of the meaning of responsible parenthood.

### c) Young people in rural areas

8. The problems of youth in rural areas was examined in the recognition that a distinction between rural and urban groups applied essentially to the larger territories. The problems of rural youth, especially in developing societies, were thought to be in many respects universal. The rural areas present many draw-backs in the eyes of young people. Employment tends to be of the traditional sort, small-scale farming or fishing. In Caribbean circumstances these occupations carry the stigma associated with any type of work both arduous and unremunerative. Cash earning employment possibilities are limited and often seasonal. New jobs in agriculture, which would give a new image to agriculture, are few and are expensive to create. Social and recreational amenities, as well as simple physical amenities, are more limited in the rural areas. At least, this is the popular opinion among the rural youths who have not experienced living conditions in the urban slums. The mass media, particularly the radio, now reach all areas, projecting to young people an image which accentuates the advantages of town life, particularly in social and recreational terms, at the expense of village life. One result has been the migration, over several generations, of the more enterprising young people from the rural areas, so depriving these areas of their potential leaders and contributing to a growing demoralisation and widespread feeling of hopelessness.

9. The seminar agreed that the nature of the employment situation facing young people generally made it essential to re-examine the possibilities of the rural areas, providing more satisfying employment for young people. Any new strategy for the rural areas and the involvement of young people in it needs to be based on a wide ranging set of decisions about land use and

accessibility, credit and loan schemes, training in skills and the promotion of positive attitudes towards the land. The particular formula adopted would vary according to the particular social and economic circumstances of each territory. Nevertheless, the seminar believed that the land could be made to provide much more opportunity for satisfying employment. Governments should develop policies towards this end with greater enthusiasm than in the past when the conviction persisted that rapid industrial development would overcome all employment problems, for youth and others.

#### d) Young people in urban areas

10. In many respects the problems of young people in urban areas pertain particularly to the problems of social and material deprivation already mentioned. They are compounded by the fact that most young people in urban areas are necessarily more exposed to the mass media and its image of success and prosperity, to the daily evidence of inequalities of wealth and employment opportunity, to the influence of inflammatory political ideas, and to the harsh facts of a depressed employment situation.

11. Against this, the urban areas offer, in terms of employment, more opportunity of acceptable openings and more social and recreational facilities, although neither quantitatively nor qualitatively can existing facilities be regarded as providing adequate coverage. The great majority of young people, especially those who might be expected to benefit most from involvement in youth programmes, are not reached by either governmental or voluntary provision. There is an urgent need both for the expansion of existing structures and for experimentation with new initiatives, whether by modifying the operation of present structures or by devising entirely new approaches, seeking to make contact with and involve urban youth to a much greater extent than in the past.

#### e) University Students

12. Students in universities and other post-secondary institutes constitute a further group of young people with special needs and requirements. The university student is better equipped than the school leaver at present to face the facts of the prevailing employment situation, but while the

unemployed graduate is not yet commonly encountered in the region, this possibility is foreseeable in certain instances. Employment at the level expected by the university graduate cannot always be guaranteed to him, and already there is some lowering of job aspirations on the part of young graduates.

13. In certain territories, most conspicuously Barbados, the over-production of educated manpower is a long-established tradition. Employment problems have been resolved in the past by emigration both within the region and beyond. Emigration is still possible and popular, but it may not be able to go on indefinitely. It is also open to question whether comparatively poor countries should continue to spend their limited resources on the education and training of young people who will seek employment elsewhere.

14. Motivational factors weigh heavily upon the argument. A greater sense of regional consciousness and identity, a greater loyalty to an ideology which is properly of the region, might stimulate university graduates to remain within the region and to contribute to its development effort.

15. A further factor relating to the specific situation of university students centres on attitudes, particularly towards the social divisions in Caribbean society which have already been identified as a major problem throughout the region. University students can give a lead, for example, in community service activities directed towards the less fortunate sections of the population or take an active part during their long vacations in development projects requiring manual labour. Such expressions of active involvement with the community might help to bring together a society divided not so much on racial lines, as in the past, but increasingly, and perhaps more dangerously, by social and economic class. At the same time, the involvement of students in development work could help to promote among young people generally a reappraisal of the role of agriculture, or a consciousness that development effort is not necessarily the exclusive preserve of governments. University students, fulfilling their leadership role in their society could stimulate among the peoples of the Commonwealth Caribbean a determination to tackle development problems for themselves. New attitudes might then replace the fatalism and resignation with which many of the less privileged people face the problems of poverty. In this connection, the initiative of students from various campuses of the University of the

West Indies in offering their services voluntarily for development work is a particularly encouraging sign, as is the Governments' willingness to organise the means whereby this voluntary effort could be turned to good effect.

16. Related to this student role of community leadership is the fact that many university students are dissatisfied with the present social order. They want change and are impatient with the slow rate at which it is being achieved. This phenomenon, inevitable and possibly even desirable in any university setting, has gained in intensity because of the background problems of unemployment, the distribution of wealth, and the pattern of ownership of capital in Caribbean countries. It has produced an abundance of intellectual criticism of various aspects of the political, social and economic situation. Yet in only a few instances has criticism been followed by the universities and their their student bodies confronting development problems and social problems directly. A particularly valuable instrument, which would provide the means for channelling intellectual concern to practical ends, would be an organised national or community service programme along the lines that have been experimented with in Ethiopia (Ethiopia University Service) or Tanzania (National Service). This would enable the university graduate to give service either by direct use of the professional skills which he has acquired or in tasks equally beneficial to the community but less immediately related to his course of studies. A further advantage of such a project is that it would help to meet the criticisms of some observers that university students are merely concerned with verbalising.

### Patterns of education and training

17. Youth problems in the Caribbean are many and varied. It follows that the patterns of education and training necessary to deal with some aspects of these problems will be similarly diverse. Programmes will necessarily vary substantially from country to country within the region and, in certain instances, even within individual countries. Broadly, however, the educational needs of young people are catered for in two ways:

- formal classroom work - primary, secondary, technical, college and university courses;
- out-of-school education and training, including pre-vocational training, on-the-job training through

apprenticeship, education for community development, youth centre activities, both vocational and recreational.

18. The seminar emphasised the increasing importance of out-of-school education as both an instrument of development and an effective means of meeting the needs and problems of youth. Out-of-school education can be both a substitute for and a complement to formal education.

#### Determination of priorities

19. Faced with choices over types and strategies of education, between the formal and informal approaches or combinations of both, the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean have difficult decisions to make in determining priorities in the use of limited resources for the education and training of youth. As a result of the gravity of the youth problem in political terms, the continuing difficulty posed by the overall employment situation, the impossibility of creating sufficient acceptable employment opportunities in the reasonably near future for young people emerging from the formal system of schooling, the Caribbean countries have to decide three major issues in educational planning. They must determine:

- (a) the proportion of the nation's total resources, both public and private, that are available for education as a whole. (In determining this figure, expenditure on education, whether formal education or out-of-school education, will be assessed in competition with all other expenditure, for example, on roads, bridges, credit programmes for farming or industry);
- (b) the distribution of this total among the various forms of education, not only between formal and out-of-school education but also, for example, between education for young people and the education of adults;
- (c) the achievement of the most efficient ways of obtaining the highest returns from the different methods used. (The comparative analysis of costs and benefits between various strategies is essential to the formulation of policies which will make the best use of available resources. It is especially important to examine the input side of all educational efforts,

informal and formal, and to learn as much as possible about the productivity of differing inputs by comparing unit costs. Thus a lowering of the unit cost per pupil or youth camper without a lowering in educational standards brings about a rise in efficiency. Similarly, an improvement in the quality of instruction which does not involve a substantial increase in unit cost also represents an economy. Close scrutiny of the cost structure of educational institutions, perhaps using the comparative methods, should reveal opportunities for achieving economies in their operations).

20. In simple numerical terms over half of the population in the Caribbean region is under the age of twenty and a disproportionately high number of the total unemployed falls within the age range 15-20 years. The gravity of the youth problem is such that there is need for definite action immediately. An essential starting point to any discussion of programmes intended to alleviate these problems must be re-allocation of funds available for educational training.

21. The seminar expressed concern about the quality of much of the formal education now available in the Caribbean. Criticism was directed, once again, at academic and literary curricula which, it was argued, can induce unrealistic attitudes towards employment, or fail to provide the new generation with the necessary skills needed by industry or by a modernising agriculture. Out-of-school approaches were seen as a counterbalancing strategy, effective in providing functional skills in appropriate training environments and fostering positive attitudes.

22. When suggesting this, the seminar recognised the existence of an overall limitation in the national resources available for education in all its forms and the consequent need for priorities to be established between school and out-of-school provision, especially if, as appears to be the case, expenditure on schools is already high. The seminar suggested that increased expenditure on out-of-school programmes might have to come in part at least at the expense of formal school programmes. If this is to be justified, then there is a crucial responsibility on the part of those directing out-of-school programmes to minimise unit costs and maximise the educational and training returns. This obligation would require a much more careful scrutiny of projects than has often been given

in the past. For example, in the case of the selective youth camp, the main agency of out-of-school education within the region, it will be necessary to demonstrate, first, that this approach is successful in equipping young people with skills which fit them for employment, and that this approach is more worthwhile in terms of costs than other out-of-school approaches which serve the same purpose.

#### Specific groups of young people and priority needs

23. It is possible to identify within the region's youth certain groups which require particular youth programmes. The seminar, however, was unable to assess the relative priorities which might be accorded to each group. The problems of the various groups of the region's young people include important common factors relating to employment, the search for a national or regional cultural identity, and the means by which young people may play a larger part in making decisions which affect them, particularly decisions about programmes for young people. These problems affect all groups of Caribbean youth, whether university students or "shanty-town" dwellers.

24. While the seminar could not indicate any sector as deserving special priority, some of the problems relating particularly to specific sectors can be isolated. The existence of such special problems indicates the need for flexible planning and implies that these specific factors should be carefully considered when programmes are designed. There was general agreement about the impracticability of all-embracing blue prints for young people. Even the youth camp system, which has been implemented fairly widely throughout the region, should be adapted in its operations to suit the immediate situation in which it is functioning.

#### Expenditure priorities: in-school and out-of-school

25. The view was repeatedly expressed that total expenditure ceilings on education in all its forms must be determined and comparative costs and benefits of various approaches assessed before any clear priority can be recommended for the allocation of resources between formal schooling and out-of-school programmes. But such a decision cannot be made solely in terms of educational or economic effectiveness. In the last resort, a political decision needs to be taken after

taking into account the wishes and prejudices of the people in any given country. For the present, it is apparent that there is a powerful public opinion in favour of formal schooling, regardless of the fact that advancement within the formal school to minimum prescribed levels can no longer bring the rewards that could hitherto be expected.

26. In considering the priorities between formal and informal education, there are additional factors to be taken into account :

- a) The capital and recurrent costs of formal education are high and the returns on this type of investment long delayed: as against this, informal approaches related to employment opportunities can yield quick rewards and if carefully planned, can offer educational opportunity at a comparatively low cost.
- b) In some territories there are insufficient resources available to provide a complete system of formal education; in these circumstances, the more immediate returns from informal education might be more attractive.
- c) In most countries there are insufficient job opportunities in the modern sector and in government service, to which the present formal school structures are geared, to absorb all the young people who are graduating from these systems. Exceptions to this were noted in some of the smaller islands. Out-of-school education and training, by inculcating new attitudes and skills, would encourage a greater self-reliance on the part of young people, a greater potential for developing new employment opportunities and, indeed, an increased ability to take advantage of existing opportunities.

27. This assessment of comparative costs and effectiveness between formal and informal approaches points particularly to the need for a re-examination of the formal school system. The work of the schools might be made more relevant, especially at the upper levels, by the introduction of productive activities to help meet the costs of formal education. As at Knox College in Jamaica for example, new approaches to education and training must be tried out and evaluated. A greater measure of self-instruction, possibly using programmed materials, would allow students more time for productive activities. The resulting savings in costs should enable greater numbers of

pupils to be accepted into the schools. New curricula, too, might be designed to promote in young people the skills and attitudes needed not only for employment within the privileged structure but also for exploiting untapped resources and new employment opportunities.

28. It was recognised that, even if appropriate reforms were carried out, there would still remain a need to provide opportunities outside the formal school system for young people to receive skills training and civic and community education in an educational environment more acceptable to them than that provided by the formal school. Equally, there is an immediate need for programmes to cater in the short term for the increasing numbers of young people who are unemployed and subject to the demoralisation that unemployment brings. To meet these circumstances, out-of-school programmes for young people appear to offer the only immediate hope.

29. It should, however, be borne in mind that programmes for the out-of-school education and training of young people can in certain circumstances be equally as expensive as formal schooling. In the planning and organisation of out-of-school education programmes, costs should be constantly under consideration and systematic attempts made to effect the maximum economy. Possible ways in which this might be done are, first, the involvement of the trainees themselves in the establishment of the training facilities, as in the early days of the Jamaican youth camps and in the newly established Dominica youth camp; secondly, the deliberate use of low-cost building technologies and locally available materials; thirdly, the inclusion of a substantial element of productive work with a revenue-generating capacity within programmes. The training and settlements programme of the Guyana Co-operative Union was singled out as an example of an existing programme within the region which satisfied most of these criteria.

30. In considering the various questions surrounding the determination of priorities between formal and informal, in-school and out-of-school educational approaches, the seminar noted the general tendency of governments to react in a conventional way to the pressures of large-scale unemployment and lack of training opportunity for young people, namely by expanding the formal education structure. Insufficient consideration has been given to the possibilities

of developing effective and diversified out-of-school education and training programmes for young people, particularly in relation to development needs. Those programmes which have developed within the region along these lines have often fallen within the scope of social welfare where the objective has been to absorb the energies of young people out of school through recreational and social facilities. To a lesser degree, also, where there has been an acceptance of the need to establish a working relationship between youth activities and development, ideas have tended to concentrate on the concept of the selective youth camp. The seminar advocated that more priority in the allocation of finance should be given to youth programmes leading to productive training and development-oriented activities and that, within this area of activities, there is a need for more experimentation with differing approaches than has been undertaken so far.