
Jamaica: UWI, Mona Campus

Personal development programmes should be an integral part of the training of teachers. Included in these programmes should be components promoting the adoption of healthy life styles and encouraging teachers to be role models for their students and the communities with which they interface.

(The future of education in the Caribbean – CARICOM Secretariat, 1993.)

Background

The Faculty of Education, University of the West Indies, Mona is involved in all aspects of the preparation of teachers in Jamaica. The involvement is through two departments: the Department of Education Studies (DES) and the Teacher Education Development Department (TEDD). The former is responsible for training undergraduate (Certificate in Education and Bachelor of Education) and postgraduate (Diploma in Education) students; the latter supervises and moderates the training of non-graduate teachers in thirteen teacher training institutions in the island and in institutions in the Bahamas and Belize. The departments are jointly responsible for the preparation of postgraduate students for M.A. and Ph.D degrees.

While the above is an adequate description of the formal involvement of the Faculty it does not take account of the fertile outreach activity in which all members are involved. The staffs of schools regard the Faculty of Education as a group of reliable consultants in all aspects of their functioning and rely heavily on lecturers for in-house workshops and seminars and for projects having to do with education.

Programmes

Department of Educational Studies

The Department of Educational Studies is responsible for:

- The Diploma in Education
- The Bachelor of Education
- The Certificate in Education.

The Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed.) is the oldest of the programmes for which the department is responsible. In 1953, when the Faculty, then Department of Education, was created, the mandate was to prepare graduate teachers for the region. That meant offering a one year pre-service teaching diploma to graduates of the University of the West Indies and other universities in the subjects taught in the high schools.

During the seventies the Government of Jamaica funded a parallel course offering a two year in-service diploma to try to increase the number of trained teachers. While this was far more accessible to teachers than the pre-service diploma it was also far more costly to government. Financial considerations caused it to be discontinued after a few years.

The pre-service diploma, the oldest programme in the department, is now the least subscribed. And 'pre-service' has become a misnomer because very few of the subscribers are recent graduates. The diploma attracts teachers who are able to get a year's leave from their jobs to upgrade their skills and/or to qualify to follow a Masters course in education. Only 18 students graduated from the programme in the 1993/94 academic year.

The Certificate in Education, a one year certificate, was at first introduced to upgrade the skills of principals and senior teachers in the region. Administration was the only offering then. Later, certificates in the teaching of school subjects were offered.

It began as a full-time one year programme but in the last ten years has also been offered as an in-service programme by distance using the UWIDITE (University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment – later Enterprise) system.

In 1993 the Cert.Ed. ceased to be offered as a full-time course and became an exclusively part-time programme offered through UWIDITE to Jamaica and the rest of the region. A total of 86 students graduated from the certificate programme in the 1993/94 academic year.

The Bachelor of Education was introduced to facilitate teachers who had been trained in teachers' colleges, had taught for a minimum of five years and wished to follow a degree programme. Initially the degree was in administration and chiefly served principals and senior teachers who wanted to upgrade their qualifications.

Later it was offered in the teaching of secondary subjects, intending to prepare teachers for secondary schools up to the third form (Grade 9) level. This ceiling was set because students were required to follow only two content courses and those were at the first year level in other faculties of the University. The thinking was that teaching above third form would be done by teachers with a Bachelor of Arts or Science and a Diploma in Education.

The Faculty offers a Bachelor's degree in special education jointly with Mico Teachers College and in the teaching of secondary subjects (English and history for now) with the College of the Bahamas (COB). At the end of the 1993/94 academic year 84 students from Jamaica, 13 from Mico and 26 from COB graduated from the programme.

The 1994/95 year saw reorganisation of the B.Ed. to include recruitment of untrained teachers ('A' level graduates) in an effort to recruit recent school leavers with strong content preparation. Further, in order to graduate, each student must now gain a minimum of 18 credits in the subject area of her/his choice. The intention is to supply the secondary school system with teachers competent in content as well as methodology and fill the gap created by the decreasing subscription to the Dip.Ed. programme.

Teacher Education Development Department

The Teacher Education Development Department, through the Joint Board for Teacher Education (JBTE), is responsible for supervising the preparation and examination of teachers in teachers' colleges in the Western Caribbean: Jamaica, Bahamas and Belize. Prior to 1965 these territories each had teacher training boards which granted certificates and diplomas to teachers. In 1965, however, these boards ceded their responsibility to the then Institute Board of Teacher Education, later renamed the Joint Board of Teacher Education.

Members of Faculty in the TEDD supervise all aspects of teacher preparation in the teachers' colleges in the territories concerned. The department's services to 15 teachers' colleges and teacher education departments include staff development programmes, curriculum development and review, the development of learning materials and accreditation of programmes. Members of the department serve as external examiners on both the theoretical and practical aspects of a range of disciplines.

The department supervises the preparation of teachers at the following levels: early childhood; primary; secondary and special education.

In the year ending July 1994, the JBTE examined 4,394 students in Jamaica, 99 in the Bahamas and 145 in Belize.

Issues and concerns

The quality and quantity of teachers being prepared for teaching in the nation's schools at all levels is a growing concern. The Faculty intends to play its part in improving both. The reorganisation of the B.Ed. to include 18 credits of content is a move towards improving 'quality'.

There is also concern for the upgrading of lecturers in the teacher training colleges. This is seen as inevitable if the product of the colleges is to improve. The higher degrees programme in the faculty speaks to this need but the fact that these postgraduate students hold full-time teaching jobs makes it difficult for them to complete any programme in a short time. The Faculty is aggressively seeking financial assistance for such students to allow them to study full-time.

The Education Research Centre which has been stepping up its activity intends to be able

to offer short-term assignments on projects to help students earn while they research and write up their projects or theses.

In collaboration with the University of Alberta Faculty of Education, the Department of Teacher Education offered graduate courses in four areas last summer. The population was teachers' College lecturers in primary education. The offer from the University of Alberta is for five summers during which a number of subject areas will be covered. The fact that these courses are given outside of the teaching months allows the participants to get maximum benefit from them.

With regard to the improved quantity of the courses, distance mode is the immediate answer. The university as a whole is moving towards a dual mode delivery. The Faculty of Education has been involved in distance education for a decade now. The increase in courses will begin in administration. There seem to be more takers waiting in technical provision for distance education.

Under discussion at the faculty level now is a proposal for a B.Ed., partly by distance in term time, partly face to face during the summer. The Jamaica Teachers' Association has long been lobbying for this. The proposed programme is under discussion.

Future directions

Future plans include greatly increased collaboration with the Tertiary Level Institutions (TLIs). Mico and COB, mentioned earlier, are already partners in degree programme courses. The Faculty is discussing with Shortwood Training College a degree in early childhood education. Increasingly the first year at least of degree programmes not only in this faculty but in the university as a whole, will be offered in the TLIs.

The College of Arts, Science and Technology is discussing with the faculty a Dip. Ed. in Business Studies to come on stream in 1995 and has recently initiated a discussion on a joint Masters programme.

Future plans also include closer collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the maintenance of a framework through the Faculty's Education Research Centre (ERC) within which the Faculty can initiate research and can be asked to undertake research on behalf of the government. The situation at the moment is that the ministries contract members of the Faculty on an individual basis. The

Faculty prefers arrangements through the ERC and is getting ready to process the increased numbers.

Some innovative projects

The Faculty continues its work on projects in all aspects of education. The TEDD has historically, as part of its routine, undertaken projects in the region and through the JBTE specifically in the Western Caribbean. Mention should here be made, however, of a few particularly innovative projects within the Faculty as a whole.

The JBTE, with UNDP funding, has over the last three years, attempted to improve mathematics teaching, a particularly weak area in teacher delivery in Jamaica. The project tried to improve the mathematical competence of post-certificate teachers who have consistently failed final year mathematics in the teachers' colleges. The success has been phenomenal.

A project in early childhood education is reaching two neglected elements of society. A project for teenage mothers, now in its third phase, has been extended to include one for young fathers (male responsibility programme).

A member of staff of the DES has over the last two years (on a UWI Research Fellowship) been researching the conditions and processes of literacy acquisition in Jamaica. Her findings are particularly enlightening in an area which has been the cause of great frustration for successive governments of Jamaica – the low rate of functional literacy.

Another member of staff from the DES, (funded by the CIDA/UWI Institutional Strengthening Project) has been looking into concerns of special needs students in the mainstream of the secondary school system.

In addition a staff member of TEDD is leading a team which, jointly with Florida International University, is looking at beginning teachers and the extent to which the psychology and philosophy they learn in teachers' college, informs their performance in the classroom.

Conclusion

The efforts outlined above speak of the concern of the Faculty of Education and its attempts to effect improvements in a system dogged by scarce resources. Some areas, however, are still inadequately provided for. There is a large population of teachers in Jamaica who need and want further education.

One example suffices to illustrate this. The Faculty, co-operating with the Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA) and the Ministry of Education, has since 1987 put on a three week summer session. During the first three summers, the course was in administration aimed at 'administrators, principals and teachers with posts of special responsibility'. From 1991-93 the target group was teachers of mathematics.

There are also a number of areas of need

that are grossly underserved. Children with learning difficulties within the general school population is one example. Two staff members of the DES have been particularly aggressive in their efforts to raise the level of awareness of teachers and parents and to find funding for relevant projects. The TEDD should be particularly congratulated for taking seriously the need for continuing the training of teenage mothers and more recently young fathers.