Inventory and report on teacher education materials and programmes in the Commonwealth Caribbean

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The English-Speaking Caribbean: General Information

The English-speaking Caribbean countries share a common history of British colonial rule, resulting in similar educational systems with common institutions. They, with other countries, form the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The CARICOM Heads of Government recently agreed on a common human resource development strategy that set targets for achievements for different levels of the regional educational systems (CARICOM Secretariat, 1997). Earlier policy agreements also set in train steps towards the free movement of skills across the region, thus requiring the transferability of qualifications.

The Caribbean has been users of distance education from at least the mid twentieth century and providers of distance education for almost three decades. The University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) are among key agencies involved in the delivery and facilitation of distance education in the region.

The Current Status of Teacher Education Provisions

Currently, teacher education and training is an area of great concern in the educational community in the Caribbean region. There are many unqualified and under-trained teachers in the region, and although local teacher training institutions are operating at full capacity, the backlog continues to exist and in some cases increase. Caribbean Chief Education Officers at a COL sponsored meeting agreed to collaborate in offering teacher education by distance. That decision gave rise to this project: Facilitation of Teacher Education in the English-speaking Caribbean by Distance Modes.

Summary Results of the Project

Using common instruments and document analysis, country researchers pursued the project aims of establishing inventories of teacher education and training programmes and of distance education materials available for teacher education and training, and identifying gaps in provisions in Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, OECS/St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Country reports and a regional report were produced.
The regional report presents the following:

1. An inventory of teacher education and training programmes offered in the region.
2. Related distance materials available in the six countries.
3. Identification of programme needs that could be met through distance education delivery methods.
4. Identification of other needs to be met for successful delivery of distance programmes.

All the countries had a mix of trained and untrained teachers (some being university graduates) in the school system, with approximately one third of the teachers across the different levels requiring academic upgrading and/or professional training. Distance education methodologies using largely print, face-to-face and/or audioteleconferencing for providing in-service education and training of teachers results in savings to governments. It also allows the teachers to remain in their communities and on the job while upgrading themselves.

Many countries elect to develop their own materials rather than use materials existing in other countries. However production of the print materials has frequently been delayed as, despite training, the effort required to write them was often more than some of the persons working part-time were able or prepared to expend. In some cases, independent efforts are being made in similar programme areas, such as mathematics, social studies, English, child development and science. Collaboration would maximise the use of available financial and human resources and enable standardisation of the courses to facilitate transferability. An example of collaboration and sharing which seems to have been successful is the use in Guyana of materials produced by the Belize Teachers’ Training College and materials produced by the Organisation for Cooperation in Overseas Development (OCOD). There are materials for the upgrading of teachers to the entry level for initial teacher training.

Programme needs were identified as follows:

*Training personnel for early childhood education*

Three countries identified needs in this area and no distance teaching materials were identified. Given the target group (usually community based early childhood caregivers) and the strong community supports needed for these programmes, distance delivery may not suggest itself as the most appropriate means.

*Teacher education for the primary level*

Four of the six countries identified need for training teachers at this level. Of these, three (Belize, Guyana, Jamaica) indicated the need to bring teachers up to college entry requirement for initial teacher training. Concern about the readiness of this latter group to undertake self-directed learning based on print was expressed and it was felt that they might need more face-to-face methods. All four countries identified the need to equip primary teachers with the Bachelor of Education degree.

There is potentially a pool of some 6,000 primary teachers to be trained in sub-region surveyed. Of these about a third need to be upgraded to college entry level and need initial teacher training.

There are distance materials available for the full spectrum of professional and subject areas for training teachers for the primary level.

*Teacher education for the secondary level*
Five of the six countries surveyed identified programme needs for training teachers for the secondary level. In some cases a distinction was made between the training of graduate teachers and non-graduate teachers for the secondary level. If one assumes that teachers will learn the content for the subjects they must teach from their own academic training (A' levels or university or the equivalent), then the training needs at this level would largely be in pedagogy or the professional areas in education.

There are some 7,000 teachers to be trained at this level but the figures were not disaggregated by subject level. Given performances at CXC and the articulated goals of CARICOM governments in their agreed human resource development strategy English, mathematics, science and foreign language teaching would seem to be areas of priority.

When cross-matched with the information on materials, three sets are potentially available to be drawn on. Firstly, there are those from the OECS geared particularly for non-graduate secondary teachers of English, mathematics, science and social studies with the accompanying guide for those who are delivering the programme. Secondly, there are materials under development by the UWI Distance Education Centre and School of Education in the foundation areas as well as in mathematics and social studies. Apparently these materials are so prepared that they can be used for both the primary and secondary levels. Thirdly, materials are planned in the ROSE programme of Jamaica in language arts, mathematics and science and social studies. This suggests therefore that a lot of ground work has been done at the secondary level, but that any decision to mount distance education programmes at this level would need to be accompanied by intense and extensive materials development.

**Teacher education in the technical vocational field**

Two countries identified needs in this area but the size of the target groups was not identified. Materials for this area are already under development.

**Preparation for administration, leadership and support services**

Only one country explicitly identified the need for the training of school principals. However, if one focuses on the frequent calls for improvement in the quality of education, then the need for improved school management and support services would exist in all the countries and would continue to exist as there is a turn over in the system.

The survey indicates that there are materials available in Barbados, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago that can be examined for use in a regional programme on administration and leadership.

With respect to the support services, four areas were identified: guidance and counselling (three countries); health and family life (two countries); materials production (two countries); and information technology (four countries), both for use in instruction and in management. If a focus is to be placed on distance delivery, then the need for training in the use of information technology and materials production would increase.

There are distance materials being developed in guidance and counselling at the UWI, but there is no evidence of distance education materials in information technology or health and family life education available in the region, although there are materials available for face-to-face delivery in the second area.

**Training of trainers and provision of on-going continuing education**

Three countries explicitly identified needs in the area of teacher education and training trainers. One country identified the need for continuing education for primary school teachers. However, if needs identified at other levels are to be met effectively, then it may be deduced that there will be on-going emergent needs in these areas in all the countries. No
materials have been identified, but one is aware that external providers do offer some services locally.

There is a varying level of infrastructure throughout the countries, ranging from rural areas without electricity and telephone service to urban areas with teleconference, audio and video tape facilities and computer labs or individual computer ownership. The need for adequate infrastructure provision for ongoing distance education is highlighted, as without this projects falter when developmental funding is withdrawn. The integration of other media besides print, such as audio and videotapes, computer and television in the distance education courses is encouraged. Regional centres and library facilities are also recommended in several reports.

**Recommendations**

The report recommends that:

1. In order to maximise the use of scarce resources, a collaborative approach be taken among the different agencies responsible for teacher training (e.g. Ministries of Education, universities, and teacher training colleges).
2. The collaborating agencies agree on the likely areas to be pursued for regional distance or mixed mode delivery before any further identification and analysis of materials regionally or internationally. This will allow for the follow-up search to be targeted to those areas intended for development and delivery.
3. To be cost effective and have a reasonable chance of success, decision makers examine the potential of offering regional distance or mixed mode teacher training programmes for levels of the education system where the target group is large, some materials are already available or under development, and where there is already official commitment in some of the countries. This suggests the following areas for programming in order of priority:
   i. initial training of primary teachers
   ii. preparing teachers for entry to teachers’ college
   iii. training of secondary teachers.
4. Other programming needs spanning all levels of the system be addressed urgently using distance methodologies. These are:
   i. training of educational managers and leaders
   ii. short-term professional and personal development courses for all teachers and other educators, possibly making use of teleconference capabilities that may not require very highly developed print materials.
   iii. training of various educational personnel (both at the system and school level) in the use of educational technology in instruction and management.
   iv. training programmes involving expertise in the region to expand the critical mass of distance educators, including managers, writers, editors, curriculum developers, subject tutors and student counsellors.
5. Once the areas of need to be pursued are identified and agreed on, then a two pronged approach be used:
i. the issue of rights and conditions of use be determined for any material identified.

ii. subject specialists analyse materials already in use, in development or planned with a view to advising on adoption/adaptation/upgrading etc. for regional use.

6. Only where adequate materials have not yet been developed or planned in the region, the feasibility of adopting or adapting materials from external sources be explored.

7. Efforts be made to incorporate media other than print, especially computer based technologies, where suitable. Initiatives in infrastructural development make this possible and the information explosion makes it mandatory.

8. A special effort be made in attracting and developing expertise in educational technology, especially in the selection, use and maintenance of relevant technologies, in particular computer-aided instruction.

9. Library services, including electronic libraries where feasible, for distance education teacher trainees and other students, be implemented or upgraded.

10. External support be sought to assist in:
   i. the identification, acquisition and adaptation of materials from institutions both outside and within the region.
   ii. contracting full-time engagement of expertise in the preparation of materials for identified teacher education programmes.
   iii. the renewal or expansion of infrastructure where necessary (e.g. computer labs, audio or videoconference facilities, printeries).
   iv. the establishment or strengthening of distance education support systems.

11. Management of these initiatives utilise distance methodologies, such as existing teleconference networks and electronic mail.

12. The information contained in the tables and appendices of this report be included in, or established as, a searchable data base and made accessible to policy makers and practitioners in the region and elsewhere.