

**PROPOSALS**  
**for**  
**CATVET'S CONTRIBUTION TO A**  
**10-YEAR EDUCATIONAL PLAN FOR**  
**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

For Task Force 30/6/92

205:24

# DRAFT

## PROPOSALS FOR CATVET'S CONTRIBUTION TO A 10-YEAR EDUCATIONAL PLAN FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Developed by CATVET'S sub-committee to formulate draft proposals  
for the New Education Plan

### Background:

Meetings were held on 9 May, 20 May, 10 June and 17 June 1992.  
Participants: Ms M. Slater, Mr A. Bowen, Mr R. Bachoo,  
Mr M. Francis, Mr K. Windsor and Mr D. Subran (Chairman)

### Statement of beliefs

The Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of the Caribbean Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training recognises each citizen as being educable within the formal system of education, and rejects any notion of innate ability of a determinist character. This association recognises education as a profession, built on a substantial body of knowledge. We view training as being integral to education. Both education and training, can assist in meeting the needs of the economy, bringing enrichment to the lives of the people and at improving the quality of life in this society.

These beliefs influence the submissions which follow. Our comments, though focussing on technical and vocational education and training TVET, will not be limited to this area, since we note, and welcome new trends, which tend to blur traditional boundaries between academic and TVET studies.

### Format

The new education plan should have a graphical representation of the entire educational system, including the technical institutes, NIHERST, and the TVET system.

*For Task Force*

## Curriculum

Curriculum development must go beyond the listing of topics, and must be based on real needs of the individual and society, taking into account geographical concerns, present and near future developments, and the characteristics of the learners. Curriculum implementation should be accompanied by intensive and professional clinical and developmental supervision, to ensure that weaknesses are being remedied and constraints at the site are overcome.

In TVET we have observed basic weaknesses in the curricula, they are irrelevant, out-of-date, and devoid of any consideration for the characteristics of the learners. Furthermore the identical offerings are made across the country ignoring local needs. We have relied on imported instructional materials, which are culturally confusing to the learner. Very often two experts from one aspect of the craft, write the entire programme. Furthermore there is an almost complete absence of curriculum supervision in a developmental and clinical sense.

First level maintenance should be an integral part of the TVET curricula.

A major weakness in delivery is in the treatment of related subjects, graduate teachers often admit inability to apply concepts to practical activities. Specially trained teachers should be assigned to TVET departments to deal with these subjects.

In order to improve this situation, we suggest that steps be taken to secure well trained professionals in the area of curriculum studies, and to update those practitioners who fall below acceptable levels of competence.

We advise that the criteria for the position of curriculum officers should be based on qualifications in the educational area of curriculum, and not only on qualifications in the discipline.

In the case of mathematics we believe that a blend of new and traditional mathematics should be taught from primary school.

The curriculum at all levels must be aimed at addressing racial issues, and activities must be designed to develop understanding about the different cultural and ethnic communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Activities must be selected to allow the curriculum to develop a sense of nationhood and civic responsibility.

The curriculum in the primary schools should be modified to reflect the development of a new system of primary education giving pupils a higher quality and more rounded education at this foundation level.

Post-primary education should aim at providing a capability for late entry into the secondary schools, and must also provide basic life skills.

#### Management

A National Training Commission should be established and statutorily constituted to oversee and advance TVET concerns.

All schools and technical institutions should prepare strategic plans articulating their missions, goals and strategies for goal achievement and evaluation within the context of a particular location.

We recognise the burden placed on the shoulders of the principals of Senior Comprehensive schools because of the very wide span of control. Consideration should be given to having a dual administrative structure, one for academic and one for tech/voc, each with principal and vice principal.

Each school and technical institute should have a Board of

management that will monitor, facilitate and evaluate. In the Senior Comprehensive schools this board should comprise principals, vice principals, PTA representative, two student representatives (tech/voc and academic) the Building Supervisor, and a member of the community.

### Examinations and certification NEC

This agency has sunk drastically to new depths of ineptitude over the last six years. The examinations contravene several known principles of testing and assessment, and the pathetic lack of professional expertise is not only embarrassing, but inflicts substantial damage to the morale of our youth each year.

To begin, the real Council, as originally envisaged by the policy makers, should be appointed, and the present Examinations Committee, which now performs the role of the non-existent council should operate only within their terms of reference. The Council to be appointed, should have representatives from a range of vested interests, ie TTUTA, CATVET, APETT.

The NEC should have clear avenues for appeal, especially in a situation where for many years, the Examinations Committee and the Chief Examiner were accountable only to themselves.

The NEC, as a "national" agency should change its philosophy of exclusion, to one of accommodation, and the regulations should be modified to recognise past institutions (eg Junior Technical Institute), to accept private candidates, and to understand that in this age of information and electronics one does not have to attend a formal class to receive TVET, but that self learning is now not only possible, but very efficient. The NEC as a national institution must be able to assess and certify all these learners, irrespective of where they received their training.

Students who have already passed a NEC examination should be

allowed to repeat to improve their grades. Single subject examinations in shorthand should be offered at 50 wpm and 80 wpm.

The NEC must set up a skill testing unit (this may be mobile) and must access a cadre skilled and accredited testers in the different crafts, to provide accreditation to developing craftsmen. This may become a substantial source of revenue.

A credit system should be established in order to give relative weighting to the different TVET qualifications which exist.

A full-time professional staff, versed and well qualified in the field of Educational measurement and evaluation should be appointed immediately. If this cannot be done, it may be better to revert to overseas testing agencies, since the present structure is incapacitated by an absence of expertise in the educational area of measurement and evaluation.

A full scale inquiry needs to be conducted into the operations of the NEC and the reliability and validity of the examinations conducted over the past six years.

The "Fourteen plus" examination must be re-examined and reviewed in terms of validity. eg Does the exam in Technical Drawing have anything to do with drawing ability. or ability to interpret drawings?

### Indiscipline in schools

The root causes may be embedded in low aspirations for student success, a custodial, rather than achievement oriented school climate, and most of all, the decline of the home as an important source of guidance for the young.

One way of tackling indiscipline is to make parents or guardians legally responsible for the unlawful behaviour of their charges. Appropriate programmes of training should be conducted for Deans

and Principals to develop understanding about the adolescent and to develop strategies to prevent or reduce indiscipline. These may include increasing the level of democracy in schools, sharing responsibility with students, visiting homes, expanding opportunities for extra-curricular activities, creating a school climate of purpose and achievement, and most of all, improving the chances for students' success.

CATVET has noted with alarm, an increase in the level of criminal activity among young school leavers which will have negative impact on the future of this country. Traditional institutions for the socialisation of our younger generations have lost their impact. The family, in particular no longer performs the important guidance function, and the nuclear family is losing out. Today's children face emotional upheaval over divorce, the visiting or absentee father, migrated parents, peer pressure, home conflict and substance abuse. In increasing numbers teachers are facing latch-key children and teen parents who have not encountered a referent set of values either in the home, the wider society, or from media exposure. We in CATVET believe that the educational system must recognise these new challenges, and devise strategies and curricula to help students to develop a sense of values that are consistent with the democratic principles and moral conduct. In addition the time has come for something tangible to be done about family life education. We remind the planners that the greatest teaching device in schools is the role modelling impact of the teacher, and something must be done to keep this above reproach.

### Dealing with Technology and TVET

The astounding impact of technological development has serious implications for national development and the future ability of our youth to master the environment for human betterment.

We advise that all our young people must be offered technology education, with the aims of making them technologically literate

and capable of problem-solving, using the tools and processes of technology, and available raw materials. Computer literacy with an emphasis on applications, must be an important area in this programme. The ill-fated Computer Literacy programme that was piloted in 1983, should be reviewed and implemented with adequate supervision. Schools may be given the challenge to procure computers for themselves. We advise that this should be done at the level of the primary and secondary school. At the primary school it may be offered in conjunction with the existing science offering. At the secondary level technology should be a core subject, and also integrated into the traditional subjects. Specialised occupational courses should be offered after completion of the technology education courses, perhaps in the 6th form. Craft courses should adopt a multi-skilled approach, aiming at entry level skills in related fields. Effective strategies must be introduced to improve work ethics, this will include giving students a feeling of self worth by letting them work on socially useful projects. We believe that there may still be a need for vocational schools.

We advise that another look be taken at the so called "pre-technician" courses in the Comprehensive schools with a view of rationalising them within the TVET framework.

### Teacher training

The teacher training curriculum and structure should be reviewed in the light of the needs of national development in a technological age, taking national development to mean the improvement of the quality of life for all.

Technology education, (inclusive of problem-solving and computer literacy) guidance, learning to learn, remedial teaching, should all be part of the curriculum. Training should be completed successfully before acceptance into teaching. Genuine upgrading and retraining courses should be offered by the training units to

keep teachers and administrators abreast of developments and capable of responding to new needs. Refresher and upgrading courses should be mandatory for all teachers. Teachers should be encouraged to proceed to further studies in education, and those who do so, should be refunded their costs upon successful completion of their studies. A formula should be introduced to pay teachers for improving their professional qualifications in fields related to their work. The Department of School Supervision and teacher training institutions should maintain close liaison in order to exchange observations about priorities in teaching practice. The facilities at the Technical Teacher Training Department are inadequate and needs to be upgraded if teachers are to be properly trained. The time is long overdue for status and recognition to be given to the teacher educators or lecturers, with opportunities for updating their knowledge and skills.

#### Recruitment

Plans should be initiated for teachers to be recruited only after successful completion of intensive full time teacher training. In the mean time, it should be mandatory for graduate teachers to complete the Diploma in Education programme. All teaching appointments should be provisional for five years. Practicing teachers who fail to meet teacher training requirements after three years of entry into such programmes should be dismissed.

#### Preparation of principals

Plans should be initiated within the shortest possible time, to grant principalship of schools only to those who are in possession of a degree in education, majoring in educational administration. The steps must be taken now to make such offerings available, part time and full time. Care should be taken to see that those involved in the training of principals are qualified in educational administration. We frown at the assumption that any school supervisor, regardless of training, will be competent to conduct programmes of training for administrators. The performance of

principals rely a great deal on their supervisors, thus supervisors should also be well qualified. Principals should be held responsible for establishing a positive school learning climate. We note with concern that some principals are over-burdened with diverse positions in the school. For example, in addition to his full time job as principal, some principals hold administrative positions with YTEPP, Programme of Continuing Education and Training for Adults, The School of Continuing Studies, and so on. This is unacceptable, especially when unemployment is a serious problem in our society. Surely others could be trained and allocated these positions. Successor training should be offered to prepare those desirous of becoming principals.

#### Performance evaluation and staff reporting

This should be done with the aim of improving performance. The traditional Confidential form should be rejected since it was not designed to assess teaching performance, and a new instrument developed. Appraisals should take place during an appraisal interview, where candid discussions can take place, and the individual can be made aware of his strengths and weaknesses. Consistent with progressive management strategies, subordinate appraisals of principals must be introduced, to give the principals the benefit of the observations of the staff.

#### Promotion

The philosophy underlying promotions in the Ministry of Education, particularly at the higher levels, needs to be reviewed. The suggestion of a closed shop keeps arising and time after time one asks why certain positions are never publicly advertised. If there is such a situation, then all our proposals and high hopes for education will come to nought, because the implementors will not be the best that this country has produced. Very often there are those who have pursued further studies in education, at public expense, and they remain to wither in oblivion, without their skills being accessed, not even to the extent of being invited to

serve on a committee. Can we afford this waste? There is need for an up-to-date data base to be used by the Ministry of Education to access these experts as the need arises.

### Operations

Policy decisions in the Ministry of Education often betray a lack of expertise and ignorance of the latest research findings. There is a great need to establish links between the Faculty of Education and the Ministry of Education in order to link research to policy. The Ministry must always be aware of the areas being researched for higher degrees and should take steps to utilise the findings and expertise of researchers.

### Supervision

Supervisors should be appointed, not as a reward for long and faithful service, or because one's turn has come, but because one has been trained in fields related to educational supervision, and is clear about the role of a modern school supervisor. This role should be more developmental and clinical, than inspection oriented. Such persons should be highly competent in modern methods of instruction, and in diagnosing students' performance. It is extremely disastrous to appoint someone who has only a minimum of teacher training to such positions. There should be close liaison between supervisors and teacher training institutions.

### Improving the quality of education

Schools were built to prepare our younger generations for living in society, and not merely to keep them off the streets. This preparation requires as a minimum, mastery of certain basic skills. The system fails when students leave without these skills, then some measure of accountability must be introduced. So far the schools have defended themselves by questioning the kind of students that they receive, CATVET rejects this view since we concur with Benjamin Bloom that 25% of a population can cope with

secondary education. In order to improve the quality of education we suggest the following:

1. That principals be prepared and be willing to perform first level supervision.
2. That national norms be established and checked at regular intervals in the school life of a student.
3. That remedial work be part of the ongoing programme, aimed at dealing with specific weaknesses in the individual, rather than keeping that individual to repeat an entire form.
4. That efforts be made to increase the proportion of instructional time, and reduce waste. The practice of sending 5th formers home in late April or early May robs them of almost a full term.
5. Supervisors should analyse examination results to identify weak areas, then mount programmes to overcome these weaknesses wherever they are found.
6. Examination statistics by school should be published in the newspapers.
7. Every effort must be made to elicit the assistance of parents. Instruments for direct communication with parents must be devised.
8. Principals must take the initiative in creating a school learning climate of purpose and achievement.

#### Security

Principals must develop meaningful links with the community to help in curbing acts of vandalism. Plant however, is not all. CATVET is very concerned about the hordes of young idlers who throng the areas near secondary schools to corrupt and mislead students, especially young females. Some effective measures must be introduced to deal with this growing problem.

#### Entrepreneurship education

CATVET is disappointed with the progress so far in introducing entrepreneurship education in schools. We advise that this

### Common Entrance

The Common Entrance system should be gradually phased out and selection should be based on yearly promotional examinations including a credit system.

### GOALS OF EDUCATION

CATVET (T&T Chapter) believes that the goals of education should emerge from major human issues which influence our lives, and offer the following for consideration.

#### MAJOR HUMAN ISSUES

The proposed human issues from which the goals of education will be derived are as follows: Health, Citizenship, Competence, Economic Independence, Creativity and Family Life. The goals of education proposed, consist of helping each student to:

#### HEALTH GOALS

- A. Develop physical fitness and good health.
- B. Develop knowledge about health concepts essential to the maintenance of good health.
- C. Develop some skill in sports and other forms of recreation which will promote lifelong employment of physical exercise.
- D. Build competence in recognising and preventing environmental health problems.
- E. Develop survival skills for relevant to the conditions in Trinidad and Tobago. (In the water, on the roads, etc)

#### PERSONAL COMPETENCE

- A. Develop and effectively apply fundamental skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, problem solving and critical analysis.
- B. Develop and awareness about technology and competence in the processes of technology.
- C. Develop skill in the logical processes of search, analysis, evaluation and problem solving.
- D. Develop competence and motivation for continuing self

evaluation, self instruction and adaptation to a changing environment.

- E. Develop a capability for lifelong education, training and retraining.
- F. Develop a capability for safe and effective functioning in a technological environment.
- G. Acquire an appreciation for the value of education.

#### ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

- A. Develop a spirit and a capability for entrepreneurship.
- B. Develop generic and multiple skills to enhance adaptability in a dynamic work environment.
- C. Develop positive work ethics and a commitment to quality.
- D. Develop competence in the application of fundamental economic skills.
- E. Develop knowledge of opportunities for successful participation in the nation's economic system.
- F. Acquire managerial skills that will facilitate upward mobility in the nation's economic system.

#### CITIZENSHIP

- A. Develop a capability for efficient and effective functioning in the socio-political environment.
- B. Develop knowledge about comparative political and economic systems with emphasis on democratic institutions.
- C. Develop an awareness about the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.
- D. Develop esteem for the customs, cultures and beliefs of a wide variety of social/ethnic communities.
- E. Develop values related to personal, ethical, or religious beliefs and to the common welfare of society.
- F. Acquire a sense of consideration for fellow human beings.
- G. Develop concern for the environment and a commitment for the wise use of resources.
- H. Develop critical consumer awareness.

- I. Develop an appreciation for the elderly.

CREATIVITY

- A. Develop an awareness and appreciation for the creative expressions of past and present citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.
- B. Develop an appreciation for originality.
- C. Develop skill in the creative use of leisure time.
- D. Develop a capability for artistic expression.
- E. Develop knowledge of art, music, literary and drama forms and their place in the cultural heritage.

HOME AND FAMILY

- A. Develop an appreciation of the family as a social institution.
- B. Develop an understanding of their roles, and the roles of other members of a family, together with a knowledge of the requirements for successful participation in family living.
- C. Develop ability to meet the demands of home-making. (budgeting, cooking, caring for infants and for the aged)

Respectfully presented by:

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David Lubman  
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Chairman

Dated: