National Tertiary Education Conference, Belize

September 7th & 8th 2006

Belize Biltmore Plaza

Background

In November of 2005, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, as the result of discussions emanating from the review of the University of Belize's Five-Year Strategic Plan, proposed, on behalf of Board, the convening of a National Tertiary Education Conference. The aim of the Conference would have as its thrust the submission of recommendations that would guide Policy Development at the National level, thereby providing a blueprint for the Tertiary Education Sector in meeting the human capacity needs of Belize in the 21st Century.

A small planning committee was tasked by the Minister of Education, the Honourable Francis Fonseca, to spearhead the effort. This group was made up of representatives from key sectors of the community - the Ministry of Education, the University of Belize, the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions of Belize, the Business Community and Non-Governmental Organizations.

The areas that were identified by the Planning Committee as key Tertiary Education Target Areas for the Conference were:
- ❖ Accreditation,
- ❖ Financing,
- ❖ Good Governance and Performance Management, and
- ❖ Rationalization of Programmes.

The goal was to address these issues, not as individual Tertiary Institutions, but as a tertiary system that would provide the inputs that, through Policy, would facilitate our tertiary sector in:
- ❖ Becoming academically competitive, nationally and internationally, through the setting of standards of excellence that would be promoted at every level of the system.
- ❖ Addressing the needs and problems of the country and its citizens through offering programmes that are relevant, of high quality and responsive to needs of citizens and employers;
- ❖ Increasing its accessibility to as many Belizeans as possible, individual and corporate, through effective financing.
- ❖ Establishing and maintaining a well-articulated and transparent system for accountability.

To provide the foundation for the discussions at the Conference proper, a Technical and Research Committee was established to engage in pre-conference preparation through literature research and consultation with a wide variety of key stakeholders throughout

the Belizean Community through small focus groups. This Committee was also tasked with the responsibility of identifying and engaging National experts to make presentations at the Conference in the four key target areas. In addition, four International experts were identified and engaged by the Planning Committee to make complementary presentations from more global perspectives.

As a first step in the process of preparation for the Conference, the Planning Committee, in December of 2005 met, prepared a schedule and led a series of visits to all the major District Towns, where consultations were held. A wide cross section of stakeholders was engaged in these consultations and issues critical to Tertiary Education nationally, and those that addressed the needs of individual regions of the country, were discussed. These issues, recommendations and concerns are documented in the Conference Proceedings.

In the six weeks leading up to the two days of the Conference, held on the 7th and 8th of September, 2006 two major initiatives were launched aimed at sensitizing the public – A series of Talk Shows on the Major Radio Stations by panels made up of a wide cross section of interests, and weekly contribution of articles published in the Major Newspapers addressing the key areas targeted for the Conference as well as some general tertiary education concerns..

The Keynote speaker for the Conference was the Prime Minister of Belize, with remarks made by the Minister of Education. There were one hundred and seventy-two (172) participants. The participants were comprised of seventy six percent (76%) from the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions, thirteen percent (13%) from the Private Sector and the remaining eleven percent (11%) from various governmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society, professional organizations and private citizens.

The results of the Conference have been compiled in Proceedings which consists of all pre-conference activities, presentations by National and International presenters, recommendations from the Focus Groups at the conference in the four key areas addressed, evaluations from participants and "gaps" identified post-conference by the Research and Technical Committee. Recommendations and highlights from the two days of discussions were reflective of common themes and issues expressed during the many pre-conference consultations.

The Conference proceedings will be submitted, shortly, to the Minister of Education, with a recommendation for next steps in the process. This will include a recommendation to task an Oversight Committee with the responsibility to monitor the work, by National Experts, that will result in the development of a Draft National Tertiary Education Policy. The submission of this Committee will also have relevance for and will inform National Development. The target date set for the completion of these outputs is June of 2007.

Below is a Summary Report documenting issues, concerns and recommendations emanating from the conference proper and associated activities.

The following is a modified Report, extracted from the Proceedings compiled as a result of eleven months of planning and activities associated with the National Tertiary

Education Conference which was held at the Belize Biltmore Plaza on the 7th and 8th of September 2006. The Conference was facilitated by a Planning Committee and a Technical and Research Committee. The Report consists of the following:

- A brief **Overview** from each of the Chairs of the four sub-committees of the Technical and Research Committee. The area addressed by each sub-committee was one of the following:. 1) *Accreditation*   2) *Financing*, 3) *Governance and Performance Measurement* and 4) *Rationalization of Programmes*.
- A *Summary, in Tabular Form*, of information crystallized from all Pre-conference and Conference proper discussion and debate, with recommendations/actions and comments. These were presented at Plenary at the end of Day 2 of the Conference
- *Information Gaps* identified for each of the four areas, and
- **General Recommendations** for next steps.

Accreditation (by Dr. Angel Cal)

Overview

The Committee worked with the purpose of conducting research on accreditation with the aim of informing policy and regulatory recommendations for the operationalization of a national accreditation system for Belize. To achieve this aim the Committee agreed to conduct research (both national and international) and to write and present three papers for the Conference: on legislation governing accreditation systems in Latin America and the Caribbean identifying concepts, principles, good practices and models to compare them to those implicit in Belize's National Accreditation Council Act of 2004 (NAC); a paper on the tertiary level education landscape in relation to accreditation standards and recommendations for meeting them and a third paper on the context, demand, and sustainability of national accreditation with suggestions for an NAC that promotes and ensures (1) Belize's interests in the region, (2) autonomy and accountability within the tertiary sector, and (3) development of the higher education in Belize. To support the research on papers the Committee conducted extensive interviews with quality assurance stakeholders, namely tertiary level institutions including their senior administrators, faculty, students, relevant officers from the Ministries of Education and National Development, representatives from the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Belize Business Bureau, the Belize Tourism Association and one of the banking houses of Belize, all seven professional associations of Belize, the Belize National Teachers' Union, the Council of Churches, the United Democratic Party and Civil Society.

Accreditation - Summary

No.	Issues/Problem	Recommended Solutions/Actions	Comments
1.	National legal framework needs to be operationalized	The Ministry of Education should take steps to implement the NAC Act	An Act has been passed but no activity implemented to date
2.	The NAC Act is perceived to have a great deal of influence. The NAC has several unclear points	i. The NAC Act can be amended to be perceived as less government control ii. A clear, coherent philosophy statement should be developed/shared iii. The NAC needs to work in the regional context	

3.	Schools don't have quality assurance systems (institutional framework) in place (lack of resources to employ/deploy staff to functions)		Schools need the wherewithal to have their quality assurance system
4.	Some faculty members are not qualified in their areas of instruction (professional development)	Make it mandatory (school & accrediting body) for faculty members to have the minimum qualification to teach	
5.	Graduates don't have practical experience in their majors	Include internship/practicum as part of requirements for (practical) programs	
6.	Graduates are not competent in communication skills	Set and test for minimum competencies through quality assurance unit of institutions or other institutional mechanisms	
7.	Accountable (faculty)	Quality Assurance Units established at each school and empowered to function effectively	Instructors need to deliver what is in the syllabi
8.	Relevancy of Program (content)	Programs need to meet the needs of the respective community and country	
9.	Public education of accreditation (awareness) (formation, summative, empowering)	Each school should educate its stakeholders on quality issues. The Ministry of Education should also do same.	This effort will help to attract students to schools and further acceptance of cost of education
10.	Workload (are there systems in place)	Each school should establish faculty workload	
11.	Strengthen of capacity of Ministry to interact with stakeholders	The Ministry should have qualified individuals to monitor, evaluate and advise schools in quality issues	
12.	Guidelines/manual of standards	Each school should have explicit and written standards	
13.	Incoming students preparation for further studies		

14.	Cost/financing	The Ministry of Education should provide funding along with schools to ensure adequate resources are available to establish and maintain quality in schools	A cost is associated with ensuring quality
15.	Assessment of what is on the ground regarding accreditation/ Quality Assurance	A comprehensive study should be done to determine what processes are in place for quality assurance in schools	The Ministry of Education or the NAC should take the lead

Accreditation - Recommendations

1. Appoint pro-tem technical team to advise Ministry on implementing NAC including budget
2. Implement NAC Act
3. National Education policy draft
4. Public awareness campaign about quality assurance
5. Needs assessment reference quality assurance
6. Define higher education institution's, COBEC and other partner's role in promoting quality assurance in schools
7. Training Council, Council Committee, Stakeholders in quality assurance
8. Identify and train external peers
9. Establish standards and procedures
10. Pilot two or three programs
11. Establish regional links and relationships and become part of accreditation network.
12. Post-conference session should take account of all accreditation materials gathered in research and consultations conducted.
13. Conduct comparative analysis of relevant legislations relating to quality assurance and accreditation

Accreditation - Information Gaps

1. Research suggests that there are a number of assumptions underlying the NAC, and that interpretation depends on who is consulted
    i. Council is autonomous
    ii. Purposes of accreditation
    iii. Role of NAC regionally and nationally
    iv. Summative or formative accreditation
    v. Rationalization of tertiary education sector may/may not be one purpose of the NAC
    vi. Higher education policy will be developed

vii. Technical committee to NAC will have substantial expertise in higher education and accreditation
viii. Technical committee to NAC will be established prior to implementation
ix. Courses = Courses of Study, not specific classes
x. NAC to provide training in accreditation
xi. GOB to fund Quality Officers for tertiary level institutions
xii. GOB will provide for release time for faculty and administrators involved in accreditation
xiii. GOB will fund self-study and peer review
xiv. There will be incentives for institutions and persons who carry out the work of accreditation
xv. Terms of reference and operational guidelines will be developed to clarify assumptions

NAC should be a part of a long-term strategic development plan for tertiary level education.

2. Research conducted does not include response from faculty or governing boards of tertiary level institutions

3. "Value" as used in NAC legislation not defined

4. Demand for accreditation differs based on who is consulted, different audiences have different expectations and needs

5. No philosophy statement to guide or focus national accreditation

6. Belize not fully engaged in the development of the regional accreditation mechanism
    i. relevance and feasibility of regional mechanism not secure
    ii. cost—benefit not secure
    iii. potential for gaps and duplications between regional and national systems
    iv. accreditation mechanism has to be relevant to Belize

7. Students not generally included at decision making level

8. Possible duplication/conflicts with established professional licensing requirements and legislation (multiple layers of accreditation can serve as a check and balance)

9. Lack of tertiary level expertise at Ministry of Education (speaks to need for an Office of Higher Education OR a Higher Education Council or both)

10. Lack of connectivity between national development and tertiary education

11. Develop National Higher Ed Policy and ratify *draft* Rules and Regulations for the Administration of Tertiary Education

12. Professional upgrading and development for higher education community

   a. Board of Directors, Executive Director, External Reviewers, Technical Committees and staff of NAC
   b. Administrators, faculty and staff (including Student Services) of institutions

13. Institutional Quality Assurance Officers and Quality Improvement Plans for each institution (nurturing a Quality Culture)

14. Perceived potential for ministerial control of NAC
   i. Composition/appointment of the Council
   ii. Secretariat at Ministry

15. Who/how to fund institutional development needed for accreditation
   a. Augmentation of teaching and learning media
   b. Improvement of physical infrastructure of our institutions

16. Output oriented assessment may be more appropriate than input oriented assessment

17. Challenges of accrediting in Caribbean and Latin America may prove impossible

18. Distance learning poses unique and substantial challenges

19. Majority of Belizean students who matriculate/migrate go to U.S. not to Caribbean or Latin America. Interests of the majority would be best served if institutions accredit within U.S. system

20. Lack of sufficient peer-reviewers in country for effective external review

Financing (by Dr. Philip Castillo)

Overview

Under the Financing subtopic of the NTEC, the aim was to present papers that covered four (4) broad themes that had been earlier identified. These themes were self-sustainability, financial aid to students, issues regarding GOB's subsidy and seeking to develop a culture of philanthropy. These themes were themselves very broad and had several sub themes.

Presenters benefited to varying degrees from a series of district consultations that had been held prior to the conference to, inter alia, glean the perspectives from a wider cross section of stakeholders, their views of how tertiary education in Belize ought to be financed. While these district consultations provided the opportunity for a divergent views to be aired, some consensus that emerged focused on the need for education to be affordable and that access by poor/disadvantaged persons ought to be ensured, the need for creative forms of income generation by educational institutions, continued Government support by more so, better targeting of government expenditures and assistance from the Private Sector & alumni.

At the NTEC conference, ten (10) major recommendations were cited under the topic of Financing. The logical framework matrix that featured enumerated these recommendations also explored recommended solutions and subsequent plans of actions.

To conclude, perhaps the main issue not addressed either in the district consultations or at the NTEC conference under the issues of financing is the feasibility if the UB's existing multi-campus model. UB is an amalgamation of five (5) different institutions with different campus. Since the amalgamation, UB has continued its spread and now houses campuses as far south as Punta Gorda and even on the offshore cayes. And while these multi locations present opportunities for bringing education closer to stakeholders, the most obvious challenge is the maintenance and operational cost, or FINANCING.

Financing - Summary

No.	Issue/Problem	Recommended Solution	Action
1.	Level of Government's funding is insufficient	• Increase in Government's funding of tertiary education to achieve a tertiary participation rate of a minimum of twenty percent by 2010	• Percentage of Government's budget for tertiary education is increased to match the regional average in 2007-2008 budget.
2.	Inefficient use of Government's funding	• Remove duplication of programs • Revamping existing financial aid system • Examine the cost efficiency of our present tertiary institutions • Moratorium on establishing new tertiary institutions • Consider establishing a two plus two relationship between feeder institutions and the National University • Limit Government's funding to private institutions	• Establish specialized centers of tertiary education as an evolution of the present system of Junior Colleges • Comprehensive and transparent Financial Aid System

3.	Very low levels of private sector contributions to tertiary education	• Development of a culture of philanthropy, collaboration and partnerships with the private sector supported by appropriate incentives, that facilitates increased financial contributions to tertiary institutions on a sustainable basis •	• Offer tax incentives to private sectors • Adoption of appropriate tax policy to encourage private sector contribution for tertiary education e.g. earmark a percentage • Adoption of appropriate regulatory policy to encourage private sector contribution for tertiary education via endowment funds, etc. • Twenty five percent of petroleum fund to go towards tertiary education • Encourage an environment of giving by various professional associations and other entities • Acquire/train adequate personnel to establish Business development offices
4.	Lack of fundraising plans for individual tertiary institutions	• Development of business development offices/center for different institutions • Need more entrepreneurial approach to generating funds • Establish links and contacts with alumni	• Acquire/train adequate personnel to establish Business development offices or build capacity of already existing financial offices
5.	Very low levels of general public and alumni contributions to tertiary education	• Institutions need to engage in activities that will create a philanthropic culture • Students need to contribute/invest in a fair share of the cost of their education based on their financial ability to pay	• Improve the quality of life and student experience by promoting more co-curricular activities such as sports, scholarly debates, and invited guest speakers • Have a better communication system with alumni • Link fee structure to true cost of operations

6.	Lack/Inadequate reporting by tertiary institutions (financial annual report)	• Produce and publicize reports	• Make them available through the Internet and other media.

7.	Lack of a comprehensive and transparent financial aid system for tertiary students	• Development and implementation of appropriate financial assistance that facilitate a better alignment between the private benefits of tertiary education and the financing of this education, while ensuring that no eligible student is excluded based upon his/her current financial status.
		• Ensure equal access to tertiary education for all qualified Belizeans based on customized assistance packages made of;
		    Family contributions
		    Private scholarships
		    Institutional scholarships
		    Grants
		    Work scholarships
		    Protected Loans
			• Establish an autonomous financial aid agency as a new statutory body
			• Convert current tuition scholarships into a national grant scheme
			• Increase the number of work scholarships
			• Establish a protected, low interest loan program

8.	Limited funding available for research	• Develop mechanisms for funding research, particularly research that is linked to the processes of development and enhancing national and regional competitiveness.	• Collaborate with private sector to identify national development and research needs • Establish mechanism to foster research for development and financial gain via consultancy units, etc.
9.	Limited income sources	• Enhancement of the productivity and efficiency of tertiary institutions to reduce the costs of tertiary education, and improve the quality of output from these institutions.	• Better utilization of resources both human and physical to be marketed for income generation • Attract more foreign students
10.	Inefficient use of resources by tertiary institutions	• Enhancement of the productivity and efficiency of tertiary institutions to reduce the costs of tertiary education, and improve the quality of output from these institutions.	Better utilization of resources both human and physical for the reduction of cost

Financing - Information Gaps

In the months preceding the Conference, a tentative list of areas/topics/gaps were identified that would have provided a broad overview of financing matters related to higher education. This list, which also had inputs from the district consultations, is detailed under four (4) broad subtopics of Self-sustainability, Issues re GOB Subsidy, Financial Aid and a Culture of Philanthropy.

(1) Self-Sustainability
- Identifying the true cost of tertiary education
- Tuition & Fees structure
- **Feasibility of multi-campus model**
- Research/Consultancies
- Income Diversifying Schemes – Education bonds/sale of assets etc.

(2) Issues re GOB Subsidy
- Funding Formula – GOB to provide a fixed percentage of its annual budget
- Tax Incentives for contributing to Education

(3) Financial Aid
- Feasibility of a Student Loan scheme
- Work Scholarships

(4) Culture of Philanthropy, Collaboration & Partnerships
- Alumni Support
- Grants & Endowment Funds

Based on the papers presented and the discussions and subsequent recommendations, a most glaring omission was the absence of any discussion on the feasibility of the University of Belize's existing multi-campus model. Arguably, this topic/issue could have been subsumed under Self-Sustainability issues since the number and location of its campuses impacts on the University's operational costs and its self-sustainability. This was not done, however, and given the extreme importance of this issue and its impact on the viability of UB, its omission is to be regarded as a major gap identified in the conference proceedings on financing.

Governance/Performance Measurement (by Dr. Herman Byrd)

The papers presented to this group addressed the topic of Good Governance squarely, provided critical and thought-provoking assessments of the state of affairs in Belizean higher education in regard to good governance, performance measurement and accountability, and proposed pragmatic approaches for improving governance and performance measurement.

Main Results

Day 2 was especially productive and stimulating. Both presenters and participants were actively engaged in identifying major issues and problems, recommending solutions/actions, and providing comments on those issues and solutions. Among other things, the session on Day 2 concluded, inter alia, the following:

- There is a need to ensure that access to higher education is reflective of the demographics of the country (gender, urban/rural divide, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, etc.). There was major concern about the low percentage of male students at all levels of the education system, but particularly at the tertiary level. Factors that affect access require further research;
- In order for higher education institutions to provide quality service to the Belizean society and prepare students to participate in the economic development of the country, there is a need for interfacing with the other educational sectors and with the society at large;
- Good governance in higher education is essentially shared governance and the institutionalizing of mechanisms (e.g., faculty and staff associations and committees) to enhance the participation of faculty in decision making are two major ways to unlock the potential of faculty and staff to fully contribute to the development of their institutions;
- A system of performance measures and accountability is needed within institutions to ensure that services and curriculum are of the highest quality nationally and regionally;
- The development of a research culture that encourages individual faculty research and institutional research to facilitate evidence-based decision making must be a priority in Belizean higher education, however, institutions will need to decide how best to respond to this challenge;
- Belize has neither a higher education policy nor a national education policy. Perhaps, the time has come to develop such policies; and
- Remarks from consultations and the conference indicate that lecturers at the tertiary level believe that there is an urgent need to establish systems for hiring, promotion, and tenure.

Governance/Performance Measurement - Summary

No.	Issues/Problems	Recommended Solutions/Actions	Comments
1.	There is a need to ensure that access to higher education is reflective of the demographics of the country (gender, urban/rural divide, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, etc.). There was major concern about the low percentage of male students at all levels of the education system, but particularly at the tertiary. Factors that affect access require further research.	• Aggressively recruit men to teacher education programs; provide incentives and support to them – cultivate a different mentality • Demographic representation of faculty and students in recruitment • More deliberations on marginalization of males in other forums • Continuous study and research to examine underlying these issues • More flexibility with regards to school hours in order to maximize access to education • Establish more hybrid or online classes • Infrastructure/mechanisms must be put in place to facilitate inputs (students) who may not meet entry requirements or have the necessary pre-requisites (develop bridging programs)	• Need for more male role models • Need to assist/support women in leadership positions • Citizenry need to be aware of subliminal messages (esp. via media) – i.e. they ought to be value-based • Mechanisms (a system of performance measures & accountability) must be put in place to ensure that the services and curriculum are on the highest quality • Standards should not be lowered – they should be maintained • Access and standards can co-exist
2.	In order for higher education institutions to provide quality service to the Belizean society and prepare students to participate in the economic development of the country, there is a need for interfacing with the other educational sectors and with the society at large.	• Interfacing with the different school levels for continuity i.e. academic programs • Interfacing with society to be responsive to its needs; to discuss the current issues impacting society (e.g. attitudes, values (sustainable development, ethics, and human rights), morals, etc.	
3.	Good governance in higher education is essentially shared governance and the institutionalizing of mechanisms (e.g., faculty and staff associations and	• Involve faculty and students in decision making processes (e.g. faculty and student representatives on board of trustees, faculty association/faculty senate representatives, ad hoc and standing committees responsible for decision making processes, etc.) • Members of Boards (when elected or	• Infuse core values into the curriculum • Incorporate service learning into curriculum • Performance 17 measurements need to be in place • There is no point in

7. *NEXT STEPS*.
- Pursue further research and discussions as indicated above;
- *KEY*: Entrust findings from the sub-committees and the plenary to a commission or task force (made of a cross-section of key stakeholders) to map out a way forward post-conference.

Governance and Performance Measurement - Information Gaps

- Demographic factors that affect access, males at risk at the tertiary level, and the alignment of tertiary programs with national development needs and priorities; and
- Entrust the findings from the sub-committees and the plenary to a commission or task force (made up of a cross-section of key stakeholders) to map out a way forward post-conference.

Rationalization of Programs (By Dr. Colin Young)

The rationalization of programmes focus group was the largest of the four sub-groups. This presented a number of challenges that among other constraints, slowed progress in arriving at consensus due to the varied interests and objectives of those present. As a result, concrete recommendations were not forthcoming. Nonetheless, the group was able to identify critical areas that need urgent attention.

Main Results

One of the presentations advanced 37 needs/concerns regarding rationalization of programmes in Belize. These needs were grounded in three broad categories that included programme development, teaching and learning effectiveness and long-term planning. The activity of the sub-group on Day 2 of the Conference was limited to prioritizing these needs in order of importance and applicability. The following are the results from this group:

Programme Development

Priority #1. There is a general need to assess the content of programmes for their relevance. Particular mention is made of the primary education, nursing, and pharmacy programmes. Issues that need particular attention include the breadth and depth of programmes, commonalities/duplication of programmes and increased input of the relevant community stakeholders, professional organizations, private sector and other relevant interests.

Priority #2 The University of Belize and other Universities in Belize, ATLIB, as well as COBEC and UWI regionally, should concentrate on the offering of programmes at the baccalaureate level and beyond, and the junior colleges should concentrate on the offering of programmes at the Associate Degree level. The transition to university level should be as seamless as possible for students.

Priority #3. More input from the wider community and trelevant stakeholders is needed for ensuring programme relevance.

Priority #4. Programmes low in demand but high on the list of national development priorities, need to be promoted through incentives like scholarships and guranteed employment after programme completion.

Teaching and Learning Effectiveness

Priority #1. The following graduate deficiencies need to be addressed: lack of communication and presentation skills; lack of preparation to be managers; lack of ethics and values such as commitment, responsibility and honesty; lack of initiative and innovation; lack of investigative abilities; lack of interview skills; lack of problem-solving skills; lack of telephone skills; difficulty in meeting deadlines and difficulty working with others in the workplace.

Priority #2. The quantity and quality of instructors in various fields need improvement. There is also ongoing professional development for faculty.

Priority #3. The poor quality of teachers at the primary and secondary school levels contributes to learning gaps at the tertiary level. More and more students are taking longer than two years to complete associate degrees.

Priority #4. There is a general need to improve students' competence in English and Spanish.

Long-Term Planning
Priority #1. A sound quality assurance system and culture needs to be established.

Priority #2. Consider sound articulation agreements within and among institutions in Belize.

Priority #3. Determine approaches that can be used to deal with dropouts and maintain healthy retention rates.

Priority #4. Establish clearly defined criteria for the establishment and shutting down of schools.

		Rationalization of Programmes - Summary	
No.	**Programme Development Issues/Challenges**	**Recommended Solution**	**Action**
1.	Need to assess programmes for their relevance, particularly primary education, nursing and pharmacy programmes	• Use internal research units, like that used Galen and SJCJC to develop survey instruments to assess programme relevance for the tertiary sector. • A consultancy bid should be prepared to undertake this initiative.	• Should include MoE input • Direction must tie in with national goals; • Ministry of National Development should lead with MoE input • Committee should include ATLIB and industry stakeholders; consider e.g. Tax incentives.
2.	The University of Belize and other Universities in Belize, ATLIB, as well as COBEC and UWI regionally, should concentrate on the offering of programmes at the baccalaureate Degree level and beyond, and the junior colleges should concentrate on the offering of programmes at Associate Degree level. The transition to university level should be as seamless as possible for students.	• Identify programmes being duplicated at UB ad at the Junior Colleges as a start, to the process of rationalization of programmes. • Determine the feasibility of maintaining programmes at the University based on needs assessments. Explore anomalies such as Math 101 being offered at both Associates and Bachelor Degree levels. • Four-year Bachelor Degree programmes… the role of external bodies in planning the associate segment of the BA/BS needs to be reassessed. • Determine national needs: Currently 25% of National Budget allocated to Education (70% is committed to salaries). There will not be an immediate increase in allocation. Unnecessary inclusion of unsustainable cources is of concern to MoE. • UB Belmopan should focus on Research and Bachelor Programmes; • UB Toledo should focus on AA . • ATLIB institutions feed into UB from other districts • UB's Bz. City Campuses to operate as a Community College; • Explore Integrated Science Programmes at Jr. Colleges; challenge created for students who subsequently choose to enroll in Pure/Natural Sciences; • Review UB Associate Programm in Education and compare with similar programme offered by Jr. Colleges which feed into UB for the Bachelor Programmes in Education	• Require standardization of core courses between Junior Colleges and Universites • Establish a National Higher Education Council – This needs to be expedited by MoE. • Assessment by MoE of its disbursement of scholarships – Establish transparent process for applications provide appropriate criteria for awards; • Provide students with time-frame for scholarship awards before scholarships are awarded; prioritize areas in which scholarships will be awarded. • Ensure seamless transfer from Jr. College to University by advising students early on appropriate course-selection; • Students need to be aware that change in Programmes result in extended time to graduate; • Conduct a needs assessment and SWOT analysis of Jr. Colleges to determine Offerings, demand for programmes offered; capacity; standards etc.

Rationalization of Programmes - Information Gaps

A number of gaps were identified prior to the Conference concerning rationalization of programs in Belize. These included but were not limited to:

1. The haphazard nature by which tertiary institutions rationalize their programs;
2. Lack of coordination and cooperation among tertiary institutions with respect to rationalizations of programs;
3. Lack of articulation agreements among tertiary intuitions to facilitate the easy transfer of students within the sector;
4. Apparent duplications in programs among institutions;
5. Lack of relevant programs needed for particular geographical and cultural areas;
6. Lack of clear understanding of rationalization and its benefits to the tertiary sector;
7. Disagreement over the role of the Junior Colleges in the tertiary sector;
8. The lack of standardization in content among programs within the sector;
9. The inability of some institutions to adequately offer particular programs due to lack of trained staff and equipment.

During the conference, a number of gaps were identified that included many of the gaps identified above. The following gaps were the most important:

1. The lack of a national development strategy that is based on demographic research to guide the rationalization of programs and also the sector to respond to the development needs of the country and the private sector;
2. The absence of long-term planning based on development needs;
3. The widening gaps between males and females within the tertiary sector' Currently, the ration of females to males in the tertiary sector is 3:1; concerted efforts must be given to this situation.
4. Lack of standardization in course content across programs within the sector;
5. The lack of involvement of private sector in developing relevant programs that would meet their needs and expectations of graduates from within the sector;
6. The lack of adequate preparation of students entering the tertiary system from district high-schools and junior colleges;
7. The lack of sufficient graduates in math and science and information technology.
8. The lack of sufficient incentives (e.g., scholarship) for students to pursue careers in math and science
9. Lack of research at the University of Belize that should be conducting applied research to respond to and identify development needs and priorities;
10. The lack of consensus on a model for operationalizing rationalization within Belize; the paper by Mrs. Longsworth should be carefully examined to address this gap.

Recommendations

The discussion and debate at the Conference highlighted many of the issues, concerns and recommendations emanating from the district consultations and consultations with professional organizations, students, teachers, administrators and parents. The conference also facilitated the sharing of more global and national perspectives based on empirical data. The immediate next step is to address the identified information gaps which will add to and strengthen the recommendations made to date.

Once these gaps have been addressed the next step will be the consolidation of all the information gathered, in a structured framework that will facilitate the formulation of a Draft Policy as well as in the preparation of a Plan of Action for the tertiary education sector. This process should be guided by a group composed of representatives from the Ministries of Education, National Development, Finance, the Association of Tertiary Level Institutions of Belize (ATLIB), and the University of Belize with support from those members who had served on the Technical and Research Committee, as well as through input from other available resource persons.

Prior to the development of the Policy, a comprehensive set of recommendations will be presented, in a one-day meeting, to a representative sample of stakeholders, before policy statements are undertaken; at the completion of the Draft Policy and prior to its external validation, key stakeholders will again be consulted.

It is recommended that a team of experts in Belize, with policy formulation expertise, be contracted to prepare the recommendations, the Draft Policy document and the Plan of Action for the Tertiary Education Sector in Belize. The policy will be subject to external validation through technical assistance from our international partners.

The Final Draft will be submitted to the Minister of Education for his review and necessary action.

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Corinth Morter-Lewis Ph.D.
Chair
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