AN ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

Country Report Four

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Abbreviations

APC	*Assessment Programme Coordinator*	IDB	*Inter-American Development Bank*
CAP	*Continuous Assessment Programme*	ILO	*International Labour Organization*
CEE	*Common Entrance Examination*	MUSTER	*Multi-Site Teacher Education Research*
CEO	*Chief Education Officer*	NCSE	*National Certificate of Secondary Education*
CXC	*Caribbean Examinations Council*	NEC	*National Examinations Council*
DC	*District Coordinator*	OJT	*On-the-Job Pre-Service Teacher Training Programme*
DES	*Director of Educational Services*		
DFID	*Department for International Development*	PET	*Preparation for Effective Teaching*
ECCE	*Early Childhood Care and Education*	SEA	*Secondary Entrance Assessment*
		SLC	*School Leaving Certificate*
GCE	*General Certificate of Education*	UWI	*The University of the West Indies*
IAE	*Internationally Acceptable English*		

Preface

The Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER)

MUSTER has been a collaborative research project co-ordinated from the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It was developed in partnership with:

• The Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
• The Institute of Education, The National University of Lesotho.
• The Centre for Educational Research and Training, University of Malawi.
• The Faculty of Education, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa.
• The School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine's Campus, Trinidad.

Financial support has been provided over four years by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID).

The Multi-Site Teacher Education Research project (MUSTER) has explored initial teacher education in five countries – Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago. National research teams have collected and analysed data on key dimensions of the training process including the characteristics of those selected for training, the curriculum processes they experience, the perspectives and working practices of those who train teachers, the outcomes of training, the reflections of newly trained teachers in schools, analysis of supply and demand for new teachers, and projections of the resource and cost implications of meeting national targets to universalise primary schooling.

MUSTER has been designed to provide opportunities to build national research and evaluation capacity in teacher education through active engagement with the research process from design, through data collection, to analysis and joint publication. Principal researchers have led teams in each country and have been supported by Sussex faculty and graduate researchers.

This volume is one of a series of Country Reports summarising the findings from each country. The more detailed studies on which these are based have been published in a series of 35 Discussion Papers, which are listed at the end of the report.

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Introduction

This country report is a synthesis of reports of several sub-studies on primary teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago. This research project was a component of the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) Project coordinated by the University of Sussex Institute of Education, United Kingdom. The Sussex initiative was funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) and involved research in five countries, including Trinidad and Tobago. The research for the Trinidad and Tobago component was conducted by a team of academic staff members at the School of Education of the Trinidad campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI).

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island, independent state in the Caribbean, which was formerly a British colony. Although it gained independence from Britain in 1962, some segments of the education system are still characterised by aspects of British colonialism. The system of primary teacher education is one such segment. Prior to this research project, there was little by way of documented research that explored the quality of the primary teacher education offered and this study sought to remedy this situation.

The entire MUSTER Project was organised around four strands: Becoming a teacher, Curriculum, Costs, and Colleges. Each strand was to be investigated through an examination of three arenas, namely, inputs, process, and outputs. Research questions were generated that were to be addressed in each of the cells of the arena x strand matrix. However, as the research progressed, individual countries participating in the project found it necessary to modify this matrix to deal with the realities of the local context. Eventually, the Trinidad and Tobago study took shape with emphases as outlined below:

Strand Emphasis	
Becoming a teacher	• On-the-Job Pre-Service Teacher Training Programme (OJT Programme)
	• Characteristics of beginning teachers' college trainees (post OJT)
	• Trainees' views of themselves and the teaching profession
Curriculum	• The documented and espoused curriculum in the teachers' colleges
	• Trainees' in-college learning experiences
	• Learning to teach: Experiences of teachers' college trainees and newly qualified teachers
Costs	• Costs and financing, and demand for primary teacher education

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Research Objectives

The emphases detailed above gave rise to the following research objectives:

Becoming a teacher

• Who are recruited to be primary teacher trainees in Trinidad and Tobago?
• What do beginning teachers bring with them in terms of professional images, experiences, and expectations?
• What are the implications of these images, experiences, and expectations for the content and organisation of the programmes at the teachers' colleges in the attempt to produce quality teachers for the primary school system?

Curriculum

• What are the stated philosophies underpinning the teachers' college curriculum?
• What is the nature of the teachers' college curriculum?
• How is the delivery of the teachers' college curriculum organised?
• What do teacher educators claim are their intentions with respect to the content, method of delivery, assessment, and outcomes of their teacher training efforts?
• How well do the stated intentions of teacher educators mesh with what is revealed in the curriculum in action?
• What are the provisions for practice within the colleges and the cooperating schools?
• How do trainees make use of their preparation for teaching in the teaching practice sessions in cooperating schools?
• What are the views of the teachers' college supervisors, cooperating teachers, cooperating principals, and trainees on the efficacy of the provisions for practice in teaching?
• What orientation to teacher preparation is evident in the programme of the teachers' colleges?
• What are experienced teachers' perceptions of the value of the present teachers' college programme?
• How are newly trained teachers socialised into the school working culture?
• What happens to the knowledge and skills acquired at teachers' college?

Costs

• How much is spent on the training system in terms of salaries and non-salary recurrent expenditure?
• How much does it cost to produce a trained teacher?

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- What will be the future demand for new primary teachers and how does this compare with the capacity of the college system?
- What opportunities are there to increase efficiency and effectiveness?

Methodology

The project focused primarily on key stakeholders at the two government teachers' training colleges in the country--Valsayn Teachers' College and Corinth Teachers' College. In addition, data were collected from participants in the OJT programme, cooperating teachers and principals in the schools where trainees engaged in the teaching practice, and newly qualified teachers and their respective principals.

Data-gathering strategies were chosen to match the research objectives of the various sub-studies. The strategies utilised included semi-structured, one-on-one interviews; focus group interviews; autobiographies; analysis of data in students' files; classroom (school and college) observations; a survey questionnaire; and content analysis of documents.

Except for the study involving the entering characteristics of trainees, where the entire student body at both colleges was targeted (with a 75% response rate), all the other studies of human subjects involved the use of samples. Studies of in-college classroom observations and observations of trainee teachers on teaching practice in cooperating schools were done with those college tutors (8 or 13%) who were willing to be involved in this way in the research project. Fourteen college tutors (22%) were willing to be interviewed about their views on the college curriculum. About 70 trainees (20%) were observed in the teaching practice sessions. The study of the newly qualified teachers involved a very small sample of eight teachers in five schools and should thus be considered a case study.

Both qualitative and quantitative procedures of analysis were used. The SPSS package was used to perform simple frequency analysis of numerical data. Most of the data, though, were analysed through coding and the search for patterns and themes.

Significant Findings

Becoming a teacher

- The OJT programme extends for 9-10 months and provides untrained, novice teachers with the rudiments of teaching through theoretical classes and an attachment to a mentor teacher in a primary school for about one school year. Graduates from the OJT programme are usually employed as teachers for 2-3 years before they undergo the full teacher preparation programme at the teachers' colleges.

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- Several beginning trainees at the teachers' colleges (but not all) had participated in the OJT programme prior to the beginning of their full training at the colleges.
- Teachers' college trainees and primary school principals regard the OJT programme as an important component of the teacher education system. Trainees value their OJT exposure to lesson planning and classroom management when they begin their teaching practice attachment during the teachers' college programme, and principals value the background experiences of OJT graduates who are assigned to their schools.
- Some trainees have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of mentoring provided on the programme.
- It is generally felt that the OJT programme is under-resourced and under-funded, and there is need to provide opportunity for training of personnel involved in the programme.
- The overall characteristics of the trainees entering the teachers' colleges can be summarised as follows. Trainees:
  - ➢ are mainly female
  - ➢ are mainly in the 21-30 years age group
  - ➢ are mainly single
  - ➢ have taught for 3-4 years prior to entry into the colleges
  - ➢ have taught mainly at government-assisted schools
  - ➢ possess more than 5 CXC/GCE O Level passes
  - ➢ typically have not passed 3 CXC/GCE O Level science subjects
  - ➢ typically do not possess GCE A Level passes
  - ➢ come from homes in which the mothers are mainly house persons; the fathers operate at the lower professional, skilled, and semi-skilled levels; and few of the parents possess post-secondary qualifications.
- Teacher trainees enter their course of study at the colleges with well-defined views of who is a "good teacher," but experience tensions caused by a mismatch between what they perceive a good teacher to be and the realities of the under-resourced classroom settings in which they must work and the low status accorded teachers in the society.
- Trainees enter the teachers' colleges with varying qualifications--nearly all (> 80%) have more than the stipulated 5 CXC/GCE O Level "passes," but some acquired them in one sitting whereas others did not; few (17% during 1995-1998) have passed more than one science subject at CXC/GCE O Level; some (34% during 1995-1998) have passed at least one subject at A Level.

Curriculum

- Teacher trainees and teacher educators are unanimous in the view that the teachers' college curriculum is overcrowded. As currently structured, there isn't enough time in the two-year teachers' college programme to meet the time allocation for each of the subjects as stated in the official college curriculum.

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- Trainees agree that the teaching practice is an important and valued part of the teachers' college experience. Yet, they speak of it as being very stressful and of varying helpfulness because of (i) their consciousness that they were being assessed, even from the first teaching practice session (at least 20% of timetabled time is allocated to assessment-related activities); (ii) their perception that different supervisors provide different levels of guidance and supervision; (iii) the lack of assistance and/or pedagogical guidance from some cooperating teachers and principals to whom they are assigned for practice in the primary schools; (some trainees were, however, high in praise for the assistance received); and (iv) differing levels of competence of cooperating teachers.
- Supervisors (teacher educators) view the provisions for teaching practice as less than ideal, mainly because of the heavy workload they have to carry during teaching practice rounds.
- There is no structured programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers but, rather, an informal system of mentoring and help from other teachers and advice from principals.
- Newly qualified teachers have been found to focus on survival strategies in their post-teachers' college teaching and to replace the recommended strategies they had learnt in college with practical solutions that provide some results.

Costs

- The cost of producing a trained primary school teacher is about US $11,100, which is about three times GNP per capita.
- It has been projected that enrolment in primary schools will decline in the next decade because the cohort of primary school-age children is shrinking. This would mean a reduced demand for primary school teachers if existing pupil-teacher ratios (20:1) are maintained.
- With the projected reduced demand for primary teachers, it may be possible to raise the entry requirements for primary teaching to include passes in one or two A -Level subjects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the project and the general educational climate in Trinidad and Tobago, the following recommendations are made:

1. **The Pre-Service Teacher Training (OJT) programme must be made compulsory for all prospective primary school teachers.**

    - Successful completion of the OJT programme should be a prerequisite for admission to the teachers' colleges.

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- Proper training programmes must be mounted for all personnel involved in the delivery of the OJT programme, namely, principals, tutors, and mentor teachers.
- The curriculum of the OJT programme should be reviewed to ensure that it allows for the development of basic classroom skills and a proper orientation to primary pupils and the context of primary school teaching by trainees.
- The OJT programme must be carefully monitored and proper evaluations must be done periodically.
- The OJT programme must be adequately funded on a timely basis.
- The OJT programme must be provided with adequate administrative staff and proper support systems such as computers for the storage and management of data.
- The OJT programme should serve to identify those participants who have demonstrated, by their attitude to teaching and their level of performance, that they are not suitable for primary school teaching. This process should be facilitated by the administration of suitably designed/modified/selected attitude/aptitude tests.

2. **The identity of teacher trainees must be understood and catered for in the primary teacher education curriculum.**

   - The teacher education curriculum must be modified to include those issues that are based on the identity of the trainee, posing them as problematic and in need of interrogation by trainees.

3. **The teachers' college curriculum must be revised to take into account the identity of trainees (as above), the varying entry qualifications of trainees, and the need to allocate enough time for deep learning to occur.**

   - The teachers' college curriculum must, therefore, be reworked to allow adequate time for deep learning to occur during the programme. It should allow for a focus on the development of competence in key areas of the curriculum (such as literacy and numeracy), while allowing for some exposure to the other areas.
   - The teachers' college curriculum must be organised in a modular fashion to cater for the varying entry qualifications of trainees.

4. **Trainees must be able to develop pedagogical competence in a non-threatening atmosphere.**

   - There must be a clear articulation of the goals of the teaching practice and the part to be played by each of the key stakeholders (trainees, supervisors, cooperating teachers, cooperating principals) in this enterprise. In particular, consideration must be given to assigning a more prominent role to the cooperating teacher in the exercise.

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- Fully equipped teaching laboratories must be created at the teachers' colleges to facilitate the practice of basic teaching skills by trainees.
- There must be training programmes for supervisors, cooperating teachers, and cooperating principals. The School of Education, UWI, could be asked to mount a short course for the training/upgrading of teacher educators in the area of supervision. The teacher educators could, in turn, mount short courses for cooperating principals and teachers.
- Suitably trained cooperating teachers must be paid a stipend for their services and must be given a reduced teaching load when they are functioning in this capacity.
- The teaching practice must be restructured so that formative assessment (complete with trainee reflection on performance) is the dominant assessment mode for most of the programme, with summative assessment being highlighted only towards the end of the programme.
- The time allocated to teaching practice must be revisited, with a longer period of school-based attachment being given serious consideration.

5. **Primary teacher education programmes must be adequately positioned within the structure of the Ministry of Education and must be properly financed.**

- A unit must be established in the Ministry of Education that deals specifically with the affairs of the teachers' colleges.
- Investment expenditure per trainee must be increased to ensure that the colleges provide a suitable teaching/learning environment.
- College administrators must be trained in the effective management of resources.

6. **A structured induction programme for the newly qualified teacher must be mounted in receiving primary schools.**

- Newly qualified teachers must be eased into their jobs as full-fledged teachers through a carefully structured induction programme mounted at the level of the school.

7. **The teachers' colleges must be fully equipped with computers to be used by (a) trainees for research work on the Internet and word processing, and (b) college staff for administrative functions including the management of examination results. The trainees must also be inducted into using the computer as a teaching tool. However, teacher educators must first be trained in the pedagogical uses of computers so that they, in turn, can help to induct trainees.**

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8. **Consideration should be given in the long term to using the skills of college staff to help to improve other aspects of the system.**

    • With fewer teacher trainees in the colleges and/or a shorter training period because of a higher content knowledge level of entrants, college staff may be deployed to function in other areas of the system such as (i) the retraining of teachers who have been in the system for a long time, and (ii) contributing to systematic support and development programmes for newly qualified teachers. The latter should enable support for the use of new pedagogic practices by the newly qualified teachers.

9. **In executing the recommendations outlined in 1-8 above, the ultimate aim should be to produce a totally unified primary teacher education structure, beginning with the OJT programme and continuing sequentially with the teachers' college programme, the UWI Certificate in Education programme, and the UWI Bachelor of Education programme**

10. **In the long term, active consideration should be given to making the B.Ed. degree the preferred entry-level qualification for primary school teaching.**

11. **Finally, it is recommended that a broad-based National Task Force on primary teacher education be established to:**
    (a) review the composition and function of the Board for Teacher Training in order to meet the demands of primary teacher education in the 21st century
    (b) take steps to ensure that the recommendations outlined above are actively considered and implemented as appropriate
    (c) devise structures for the continuous evaluation and upgrading of the primary teacher education system.

Chapter One   1 Background to the Study

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island, independent state in the Caribbean, which was formerly a British colony. Although it gained independence from Britain in 1962, some segments of the education system are still characterised by aspects of British colonialism. The research project reported here focused on one such segment--the system of primary teacher education.

Any attempt to improve the quality of basic education in schools immediately places the preparation of teachers as the point of central focus, since teachers and teaching are accepted as important factors in the success or failure of children. The role of teachers in contributing to the quality of education has been well acknowledged. Joyce and Weil (1972, p. 4) refer to the teacher as the "mid-wife of educational change" who is expected to provide an education that will equip the young to survive and develop to their fullest, and which will provide them with a sense of social responsibility and the ability to make informed choices in a consistently changing complex world. The preparation of teachers must, therefore, be afforded the care, attention, and support needed to ensure that the desired outcomes of the teaching/learning process are achieved.

Teachers have often felt the sting of public upbraiding as, so often, blame for the inadequacies of the system has been focused primarily upon them. But, ensuring the success of teaching requires not just efforts to improve its quality but the recognition that contextual factors may set limits to what can be achieved (Avalos, 1991). The need to shift from the mechanistic, narrowly based skills approaches to an inquiry-oriented and interactive perspective has been acknowledged internationally, but, particularly in developing countries, this shift has been found to be difficult. Avalos (1991) attributes this difficulty to a number of factors. She explains, for example, that the developing world is experiencing a much higher rate of increase in the number of learners, and governments have resorted to cost-effective means of rapidly training the greatest number of teachers. Such a strategy, she claims, is detrimental to any effort to improve teacher education systems. Other factors identified by Avalos as affecting teacher preparation in the developing world relate to the education levels of recruits to the service, the status of teachers, and the conditions of service.

There is little by way of documented research that explores the quality of the primary teacher education programme offered in the developing country of Trinidad and Tobago. It is unclear to what extent (if any) the factors identified by Avalos (1991) as negatively impacting on the quality of teacher education in developing countries are also operating in the Trinidad and Tobago context. This study sought to remedy this situation by investigating the quality of primary teacher education as part of a much larger project organised by the University of Sussex Institute of Education, United Kingdom. The Sussex initiative, the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) Project, was funded by the British Department for International Development (DFID) and involved research in five

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countries, including Trinidad and Tobago. The research for the Trinidad and Tobago component was conducted by a team of academic staff members at the School of Education of the Trinidad campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI).

The entire MUSTER Project was organised around four strands: *Becoming a teacher, Curriculum, Costs, and Colleges*. Each strand was to be investigated through an examination of three arenas, namely, inputs, process, and outputs. Table 1.1 shows a matrix depicting this research design, including research questions that were to be addressed in each of the cells of the matrix. As the research progressed, individual countries participating in the project found it necessary to modify this matrix to deal with the realities of the local context.

This MUSTER country report for Trinidad and Tobago details the research procedures adopted, the findings, and discussions on the findings of the various sub-components of the project as executed in Trinidad and Tobago. Appendix A of the report shows the programme of a symposium held at the Trinidad campus of UWI in January 2002, at which the MUSTER findings were presented to significant stakeholders. A summary of the proceedings of this symposium is presented in Appendix B. The Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago gave the opening address at the symposium and subsequently requested a copy of the MUSTER recommendations. A copy of the covering letter sent with the recommendations to the Minister is shown in Appendix C.

1 Background to the Study

Table 1.1: **An Overall View of Arenas and Strands**

	Arena 1: Inputs	**Arena 2: Process**	**Arena 3: Outputs**
Becoming a teacher	◇ Who becomes a teacher? ◇ What do they bring in terms of images, expectations and experiences? ◇ How are these related to the cultural context?	◇ How are the trainees socialised by the college programme? ◇ How do they experience it? ◇ What are their career intentions?	◇ How have the images, expectations and experiences of the teachers changed and developed during the course?
Curriculum	• How was the college curriculum developed and what influenced it? • According to the documents, what is to be taught, and how? • What knowledge and experience do entrants bring with them, in terms of academic qualifications and previous job record?	• How is the curriculum, including the practical elements, delivered, in terms of pedagogy, assessment, teaching/learning materials, and how far are the stated aims and objectives achieved?	• What are the competences, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, of the graduating NQTs? • What happens in their first years of teaching in terms of utilisation or wash-out of the course?
Costs	◆ Who applies and how are they selected? ◆ What are the sources of funds for the course? ◆ What are the national levels of supply and demand for primary teachers?	◆ What is the annual budget and how is it allocated? ◆ How efficiently are the human and physical resources of the college used? ◆ What benefits have accrued from the costs, and to whom? ◆ To what effect have the resources been used?	◆ How many NQTs graduate, where are they utilised, and how long do they stay in teaching? ◆ What was the overall average cost
College	✱ How did the college develop, and what influenced it? ✱ What are the characteristics of the lecturers, in terms of experience, qualifications, attitudes, beliefs and motivations?	✱ How do the lecturers teach? ✱ What is the college like in terms of culture, management, vision and ethos?	✱ How far do the college graduates fulfill the demands of the primary school system, in terms of 'effective' teaching?

Chapter Two   2 Overview of the Education System

This section provides a detailed overview of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago, with specific focus on the primary and secondary levels. It includes accounts of the overall structure of the system, student selection and enrolment, the qualifications and allocation of teachers, and the financing of the system.

2.1   Structure of the Education System

Within Trinidad and Tobago's education system, the following types of schools can be identified: (a) government schools, which are fully owned and operated by the state; these include primary, junior secondary, composite, senior secondary/comprehensive, and traditional government secondary schools; (b) government-assisted schools, which are managed by a private body (usually a religious denomination) but given financial assistance by the state; these include primary and secondary schools; (c) private schools, which are maintained and operated by private bodies without any assistance from the state; and (d) special schools, which are designed for educating children with special needs, and which provide education mainly at the primary level.

In the recent past, educational provision within this system was as follows:
1. early childhood care and education (ECCE) for the 3-4 age cohort;
2. universal primary education for the 5-11 age cohort. This includes two years of infant classes for children aged 5 and 6, and five years of primary schooling (five Standard levels) for the 7-11 age cohort;
3. post-primary education (two years) for children not gaining access to a secondary school;
4. secondary education for the 12-18 age cohort. This is a complex sector, with educational provision in different types of secondary schools, namely:
    • three-year junior secondary schools (Forms 1-3) for the 12-14 age cohort;
    • two-year senior secondary/senior comprehensive schools (Forms 4 and 5) for the 15-16 age cohort;
    • four-year senior secondary/senior comprehensive schools (Forms 4-5; Lower and Upper Sixth Forms) for the 15-18 age cohort;
    • five-year composite (government), government secondary, government-assisted secondary, and private secondary schools (Forms 1-5) for the 12-16 age cohort;
    • seven-year government and government-assisted schools (Forms 1-6) for the12-18 age cohort.
5. Higher education for the 19+ age group.

With the introduction of universal secondary education in 2000, the post-primary sector is being phased out and more secondary schools are being built, both by the government and religious denominations, to facilitate the placement of all primary school graduates in secondary schools.

2 Overview of the Education System

At the primary level, there are 484 public schools--142 government schools and 342 assisted schools--19 special schools (13 government and 6 private), 54 registered private primary schools, and 47 post-primary centres.

The schools at the secondary level can be further classified in terms of their programme offerings. The Traditional Sector schools--five- and seven-year schools, both government and government-assisted--offer mainly an academic-type programme. This programme is essentially designed to prepare graduates for further education or for employment at the clerical level. The New Sector schools emerged during the 1970s, 1980s, and now in the 2000s, as a result of the government's efforts to expand the secondary school intake and broaden the curriculum. The New Sector consists of a two-tiered system incorporating the three-year junior secondary schools, with transitions into the two-year or four-year senior secondary/senior comprehensive schools. It also encompasses the five-year composite schools and the newest secondary schools. Schools in this sector offer courses in both academic and technical/vocational subjects.

In 2000, there were 129 secondary schools comprising 47 Traditional Sector schools (18 government and 29 assisted) and 82 New Sector schools (73 government and 9 assisted), disaggregated as follows: 19 junior secondary, 2 senior secondary, 9 senior comprehensive, 7 secondary comprehensive, 17 secondary, 12 composite, 5 secondary school centres, 1 high school, 1 college, and 9 assisted). The schools are either full-day schools--generally 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., or shift schools--7:20 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. In 1994/95, there were 13 registered private secondary schools.

2.2   **Selection**

Primary education up to age 12 was made compulsory and free in 1961 and, in the 1970s, access to secondary education was expanded from 22% to 70% of the 11+ age group. Until 2000, education beyond the primary level was not universal, and students were required to sit selection examinations at the end of a cycle of education for selection for publicly subsidized places at the next level.

At the end of primary education, Standard 5 students sat the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) for placement in Form 1 of a secondary school and for tracking, either in the Traditional Sector (considered as the better quality schools), or in the junior secondary or composite schools in the New Sector. This was a very competitive examination, since most students wished to secure a place in the Traditional Sector schools, but the number of such places was severely limited. Those who failed the CEE twice could enter the post-primary grades of the primary school or post-primary centres for a maximum of two years, attend private secondary schools, or drop out of the system. Students who opted to enter the post-primary grades could take the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination.

2 Overview of the Education System

If they passed the SLC, they could be placed in Form 2 of a secondary school. If they failed twice, their formal education in public schools was terminated, but they had the options of non-formal vocational education at youth camps or youth centres, apprenticeship, or attendance at private schools.

With the establishment of universal secondary education in 2000, the CEE has been replaced by the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) Examination, the results of which will determine whether students are placed in schools of their choice or at the discretion of the Ministry of Education. It is intended that this examination will be complemented by a Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP), which is yet to be fully implemented. Because the new system is still in its infancy, it is not yet clear what changes will take place in the progression of students through the system.

At the secondary level, the 14+ Examination at the end of Form 3 was originally intended to screen junior secondary students for places in Form 4 in the New Sector schools. Although it is still administered to junior secondary students, it does not appear to serve any discernible purpose, since these students are assigned to the senior secondary/senior comprehensive schools before their 14+ examination results are available. Students in the composite schools and the Traditional Sector schools do not write the 14+ examination.

The regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Examinations (General and Basic Proficiency Levels), administered at the end of Form 5, certify the completion of five years of secondary schooling and select students for Form 6, where they pursue pre-university studies. Some Form 5 students also take the Cambridge General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level (O Level) Examination. The National Examinations Council (NEC) Examination, also administered at the end of Form 5, screens students in the vocational craft track for admission to technical institutes. The Cambridge GCE Advanced Level (A Level) Examination is administered at the end of the Upper Sixth Form year for selection for university places.

The Ministry of Education is currently examining the feasibility of having a national assessment system that would certify the completion of five years of secondary schooling, and allow for the award of a secondary school completion certificate--the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE). This new system is intended to embody continuous assessment features, and highlight achievement in personal development and in the aesthetics, in addition to achievement in the academic and technical/vocational areas. The proposal is that success at the CXC examinations would contribute credits toward the award of the NCSE.

2 Overview of the Education System

2.3   Enrolment

The pattern of enrolment growth for both primary and secondary sectors is shown in Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1. These show that numbers have been declining at the primary level and have remained fairly stable at the secondary level. The underlying reason for the decline is that the population of school-age children is shrinking. Projections suggest that this trend will continue into the foreseeable future. Table 2.1 also shows the most recent projections. Primary enrolments show consistently larger numbers of males than females. However, in the secondary sector, enrolments are broadly balanced by gender (Table 2.1).

Until 2000, the transition rate into secondary schools had been between 75% and 80%. About 28,000 pupils sat the CEE and about 20,000 were placed in one or other types of secondary school. Beginning in 2000, all pupils sitting the terminal primary school examination are supposed to be placed in a secondary school.

Table 2.1**: Projected School Enrolment, by Level of Education and Gender, 1990-2005**

Level of Education	Gender	Projected School Enrolment			
		1990	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**
Primary	**Total**	194,455	187,983	171,062	162,569
	Male	98,550	95,270	86,694	82,390
	Female	95,905	92,713	84,368	80,179
Secondary	**Total**	98,786	111,503	111,707	101,342
	Male	49,245	55,584	55,686	50,519
	Female	49,541	55,919	56,021	50,823

Source: Central Statistical Office. Estimates based on Census Data.

Figure 2.1**: Enrolment growth at primary and secondary levels.**
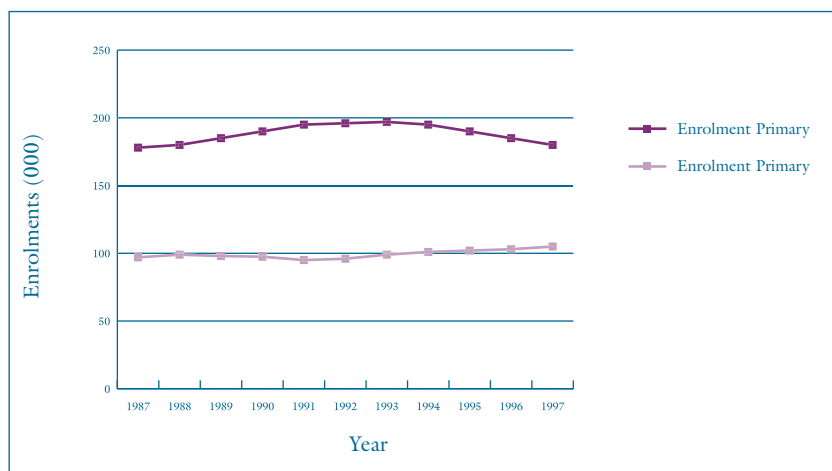
2 Overview of the Education System

2.4   **Teachers**

In Trinidad and Tobago, primary school teachers are generally secondary school graduates who may or may not have been trained at a teachers' college. Table 2.2 provides data on the number of teachers employed in public primary schools in the academic year 1996/97, by classification and gender. Of the 7,311 teachers employed at this level, 5,665 (77.5%) were trained teachers. From a gender perspective, although the ratio of the total number of female teachers to male teachers is 2.8:1, the ratio of female to male vice-principals is only 1.7:1, and that of female principals to male principals is lower yet at 1.1:1. The gender composition of the administration of primary schools does not, therefore, adequately reflect the gender composition of the teaching staff, with female administrators being under-represented.

Table 2.2: **Numbers of Trained and Untrained Teachers in Primary Schools, 1996**

Total			Trained			Untrained		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1,913	5,398	7,311	1,431	4,234	5,665	482	1,164	1,646

The distribution of enrolments and teachers between school types at the primary level for 1996 is shown in Table 2.3 along with data on pupil-teacher ratios, average school size and average number of teachers per school.

Most pupils are in government and Roman Catholic schools. Pupil-teacher ratios are fairly uniform across the school types and averaged 24:1 in 1996. Primary schools generally have 300-400 pupils and an average of 14 teachers.

Table 2.3: **Enrolments by School Type – Primary, 1996**

School Type	Enrolment	Number of Teachers	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Number of Schools	Average School Enrolment	Average Number of Teachers per School
Government	57,914	2,502	23	136	426	18
Roman Catholic	49,814	2,036	24	120	415	17
Anglican Catholic	21,194	884	24	59	359	15
Presbyterian	26,336	1,126	23	72	366	16
Methodist	2,201	97	23	9	245	11
Moravian	587	24	24	2	294	12
Seventh-day Adventist	1,868	76	25	5	374	15
Hindu	18,849	758	25	53	356	14
Muslim	5,811	221	26	15	387	15
Other	1,324	56	24	5	265	11
Average			24		349	14

2 Overview of the Education System

At the secondary level, there are differences in teachers' qualifications among different types of schools. Secondary schools generally have a mix of teachers: some are university graduates with a degree in a certain subject specialty (known as graduate teachers), who may or may not have received pedagogical training; some hold diplomas and certificates from non-university, tertiary institutions, with or without pedagogical training; and others are secondary school graduates who may or may not have been trained in a teachers' college (known as non-graduate teachers). In 1995, 3,148 of the 4,995 secondary school teachers (63.0%) held university degrees; only 2,557 of them (51.2%) were professionally trained. The junior secondary schools had the lowest percentage of graduate teachers (601 out of 1,303, or 46.1%), whereas the older, government-assisted schools had the highest percentage of teachers who were university graduates (767 out of 931, or 82.4%). On the other hand, junior secondary schools had the highest percentage of trained teachers (911 out of 1,303, or 69.9%).

These patterns are due to the ways in which teachers were recruited into the different types of secondary schools in the past. Many junior secondary teachers were once trained primary school teachers who upgraded their academic qualifications through short courses, and gained employment in the higher-paying secondary sector. Some, but not all, went on to acquire university degrees. On the other hand, in the government-assisted secondary schools (and the government secondary schools), the main criterion for employment as a teacher is often the possession of a university degree. Many teachers enter these schools without professional training, and only some take advantage of the opportunity to acquire such training through the post-graduate, in-service Diploma in Education programme at UWI.

2.5   **Financing**

Trinidad and Tobago allocated about 4% of GDP to education in the early 1990s, rising to 4.5% by 1995. This represented about 13% of government expenditure. Primary education accounted for 46% of the budget, secondary 38%, post-secondary including teachers colleges 4% and tertiary 7% (World Bank, 1995, p. 112). At that time, primary recurrent costs per student appear to have been about TT $1,298[1], secondary TT $2,058, vocational and technical TT $3,767, teacher training TT $11,341, and tertiary TT $20,953 (at 1985 prices). Student costs per capita as a percentage of GDP were 10%, 16%, 29%, 98%, and 161% respectively for the different levels. Ninety-five percent of the Ministry of Education's expenditure is recurrent, with salaries accounting for about 70%.

Table 2.4 shows the percentages of the expenditure on education allocated to various sectors during the period 1994-1997. The expenditure on teacher training is relatively low. There have been no major repairs or expansion works on the training colleges over the past five years. Expenditure on primary education is larger than that on secondary education during

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[1] TT $ = US $6.30

2 Overview of the Education System

this period because of the thrust towards improving education at the basic education level over the past few years. Capital expenditure on secondary education has been minimal in the last decade. However, with the recent thrust toward universal secondary education, this situation is changing drastically.

Table 2.4**: Expenditure on Education by Level, 1994-1997 (TT $)**

Year	Total Expenditure	Pre-Primary %	Primary %	Secondary %	Teacher Training %
1994	1,005,922,761	0.2	46.5	30.7	1.7
1995	1,127,957,927	0.2	44.6	32.9	1.9
1996	1,135,158,318	0.4	44.1	29.9	1.8
1997	1,149,513,400	0.8	45.7	30.9	
1998	1,365,567,800	0.7	44.6	25.3	

It is important to note that the costs of primary teacher education include not only direct college costs, but also the salaries of trainee teachers. In 1996, about TT $18 million was allocated to the teacher education salaries budget. Of this about TT $3-4 million flow to lecturers and other support staff. The bulk of the remainder pays the salaries of trainees during the period when they are in full-time training.

Chapter Three   **3 Trainees and the Training Environment**

3.1   **Entry Requirements for the Teaching Service at the Primary Level**

According to a Ministry of Education circular of February 2, 1985, applicants for entry into the teaching service are expected to have at least a secondary-level education, with the attainment of a satisfactory level of achievement in five subjects at the CXC and/or GCE O Level examinations. Further, these five subjects must include English language, mathematics, and a science subject. It is not part of the requirement that these five subjects be obtained at any one sitting of these examinations. It is, therefore, possible to qualify for entry into the service by accumulating these subjects over an extended period of time. These requirements amount to some small advance on what obtained prior to 1985. It was possible, then, to gain entry into the teaching service with a combination of any five--sometimes less--subjects. In 1985, for example, only 51% of trainees at teachers' colleges had secured a pass in mathematics and 62% a pass in a science subject.

3.2   **On-the-Job Training**

Full professional training for teachers at the primary level is conducted in the in-service mode, primarily at the two government teachers' colleges--Valsayn Teachers' College and Corinth Teachers' College--as well as at the privately-operated Caribbean Union College. Typically, trainees entering the teachers' colleges would have taught for 3-4 years before receiving full training at a teachers' college. This means that, over the years, there have been many teachers with no professional training operating in the primary schools prior to enrolment in the teachers' colleges.

Since 1993, a specially designed pre-service teacher training programme has been used as the vehicle for providing some measure of pre-service training for prospective primary school teachers. In 1992, a national symposium on employment generation and job creation had been organised by the government, in an attempt to find solutions to the prevailing high level of unemployment in the country. One of the outcomes of the symposium was the creation of the On-the-Job Training Programme; a national apprenticeship programme designed to provide working experience for young persons in various fields. The Ministry of Education saw the creation of this programme as an opportunity to sensitise young people with CXC/GCE O Level and GCE A Level qualifications about the teaching profession, and to begin to groom them for possible employment in that sphere.

Thus, the On-the-Job Pre-Service Teacher Training Programme (hereafter referred to as the OJT programme) was set up. This programme was originally designed for prospective primary school teachers, but by July 1994, a programme was prepared for prospective secondary school teachers as well. The rationale of this programme was to provide CXC/GCE O Level and GCE A Level graduates with employment and training, with a view, in the long term, to enabling the Ministry to identify trainees with good potential for

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

becoming teachers. It is not very clear from the documents available what the indicators of "good potential" are.

The main, official policy governing recruitment into the OJT programme is that the laws of the International Labour Organization (ILO) governing apprentices should be observed. These laws state that apprentices should not work full-time and should always be supervised by a professional. Another policy adopted in the programme is that all recruits must be registered as teachers with the Ministry of Education. Prospective trainees must have applied for a job as a teacher and scored well on an interview conducted by a team from the Ministry of Education.

Figure 3.1 shows the macro-organisational structure of the OJT programme. The Chief Education Officer (CEO) has overall responsibility for the programme. The responsibility for the execution of the programme lies with the Director of Educational Services (DES) and the officers under his/her charge. All duties of programme personnel are laid out by the Assistant Programme Coordinator's (APC) office, which is responsible for monitoring their performance. The APC organises the formal training sessions, monitors trainees at schools, updates the curriculum, prepares the budget estimates, approves stipend sheets for payment, plans graduation exercises, and liaises with the District Coordinators (DCs). The Dcs are mainly responsible for monitoring trainees' performance at school and during the formal training sessions. Tutors, who are university graduates, are expected to prepare units of work for formal training sessions, deliver the units, and evaluate trainees. Principals of participating schools are responsible for identifying suitable mentor teachers. Together with the mentor teachers, principals are responsible for evaluating trainees' performance on the school attachment. Mentor teachers are expected to first model desirable teaching behaviours and then to allow the trainee to teach under their guidance.

The OJT programme extends over a period of 9-10 months. The primary level programme provides instruction in the Foundations of Education, the Teaching of Reading, and the Teaching of Mathematics in an induction phase during the July-August vacation period. This is followed by placement in primary schools, under the supervision of mentor teachers, at the beginning of the academic year in September. During this second phase, opportunities are provided for teaching experiences in some of the departments of the primary school.

Throughout the second phase, trainees are also required to attend Saturday classes, conducted by tutors, which are designed to meet the ongoing needs of the trainees as they function in the different departments of the schools. A Vacation School, organised by the School of Continuing Studies of UWI during the July-August vacation, provides experiences in the aesthetic areas for trainees. A compulsory computer literacy course was recently added to the curriculum. These classes are scheduled for one day a week from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. during the second term of the school year. The secondary programme has a structure

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

similar to that of the primary programme, but with an emphasis on the nature and educational needs of the adolescent.

Figure 3.1**: Macro-organisational structure of the OJT pre-service teacher training programme.**
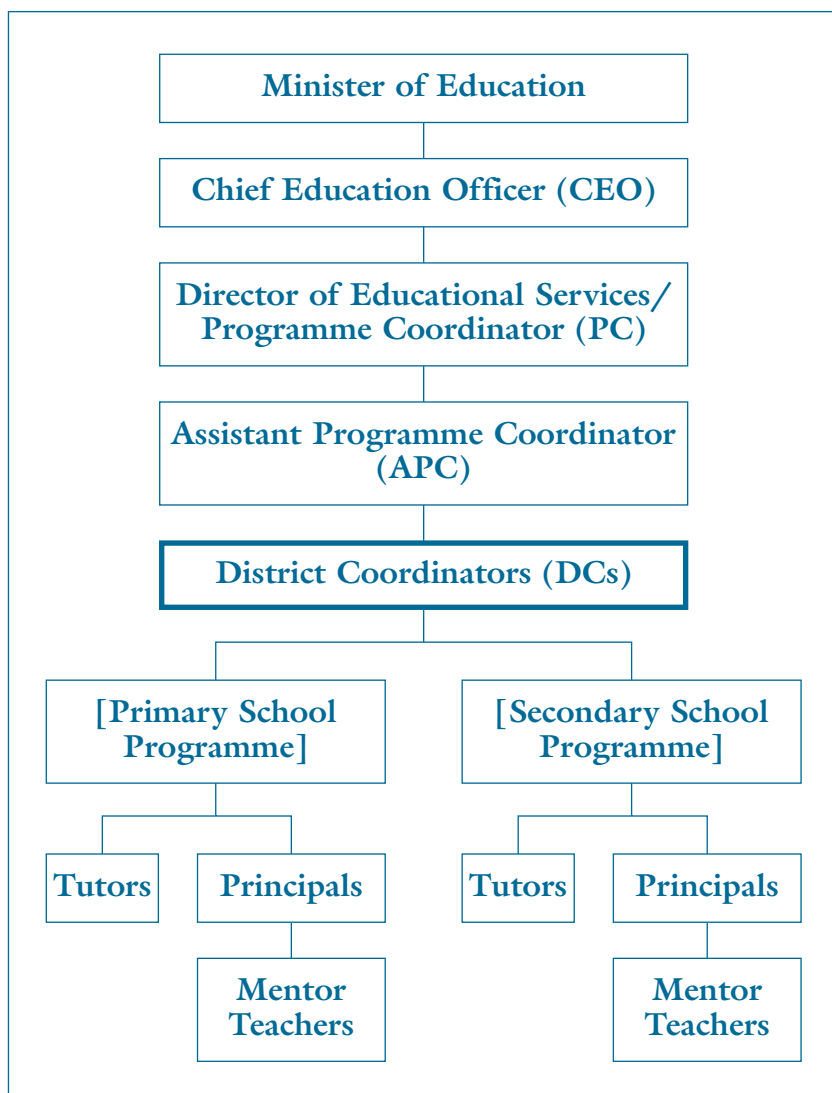
All indications are that the OJT programme is making an impact on the preparedness of young, untrained teachers for the classroom. It is evident, though, that the system is not operating as efficiently as it might, due to lack of proper coordination among its various

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

components. In addition, the inadequate provision of funds to implement the programme and lack of the necessary staff to manage the programme affect the levels of efficiency. It appears that the programme was set up without adequate understandings of what it would require in terms of infrastructure, and staff training and preparation for its efficient and effective functioning.

In spite of these shortcomings, though, OJT graduates admit that the experiences gained in the formal theory sessions and the classroom situation were mainly good. Trainees at the teachers' colleges who are OJT graduates, and who were interviewed, were particularly appreciative of their exposure to lesson planning on the OJT programme. Many explained that they were only able to function on their first teaching practice as teachers' college trainees because of their OJT exposure, since they had received little training in this area in the teachers' college before being sent into the field.

The original aim that the OJT programme should help to identify those young people who have the potential to become good teachers is perhaps not being met. This is so because, alarmingly, there is as yet no official link between the OJT programme and the teachers' college programme. Exposure to the OJT programme is not now a prerequisite for entry into the teachers' colleges, nor does students' performance affect their chances of being accepted for training. Furthermore, individuals who have not been exposed to the OJT programme continue to be appointed as untrained teachers in the schools. If the OJT programme is to serve its original purpose as a filter, the appropriate linkages must be established with the teachers' colleges.

3.3   Selection of Trainees for the Teachers' Colleges

Trainees are selected for the teachers' colleges by the Board of Teacher Training on the basis of seniority in the teaching service, and sent to the colleges on scholarship. This seniority is determined by length of continuous service in the teaching service. They are required to sign a contract on initial entry and, after their two-year tenure at the college, they must serve the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for at least two additional years. Student teachers are employees of the Ministry of Education, which has final authority in almost all matters.

Trainees, on entry to a teachers' college, would have usually had two to four years of teaching experience in a primary school or, as in the case of a small number of students, in a secondary school. These trainees may or may not have been exposed to the OJT programme. This means that some trainees entering the teachers' colleges would have had some pre-service training, while others would have been teaching in the primary schools for two to four years without the benefit of any such pre-service training experience.

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

3.4   **Characteristics of Trainees**

This component of the study sought to determine the entry characteristics of trainees who began their course of study at the two teachers' colleges during the period 1995-1998. The relevant research question was:

• Who are recruited to be primary teacher trainees in Trinidad and Tobago?

The characteristics examined included gender, age, marital status, school-type at which trainee taught prior to entry into the teachers' college, length of service prior to entry, academic qualifications, and home background.

Data were extracted from the student data files at both colleges. There were no data in the files on the home background of trainees, therefore this information was extracted from the questionnaire that was administered to trainees and is only available for the 1998 entering cohort.

The intake of each college each year is roughly 200 trainees, an enrolment figure that is officially set by the Ministry of Education. For the period 1995 -1998, data were extracted from the files for 1,585 trainees--766 from Corinth and 819 from Valsayn.

3.4.1 **Gender**

Of the total group of 1,585 trainees who entered the teachers' colleges during 1995-1998, 1,122 (70.8%) were female and 461 (29.1%) were male. This preponderance of female trainees was evident in both colleges as shown in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.2. Although the overall statistics show a significant gender imbalance, there are some indications that a shift in the gender composition might be beginning to occur. At Corinth, the percentage of male trainees decreased from 1995 to 1997, but then increased in1998. At Valsayn, a decrease in the percentage of males occurred in 1996, but an increase is evident for both 1997 and 1998.

Table 3.1: **Gender Composition of Total Intake at Teachers' Colleges, 1995-1998**

Gender	Corinth		Valsayn		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	226	29.5	235	28.7	461	29.1
Female	538	70.2	584	71.3	1,122	70.8
Missing data	2	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.1
Total	766	100.0	819	100.0	1,585	100.0

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

Figure 3.2: **Gender composition of entering cohort, 1995-1998.**
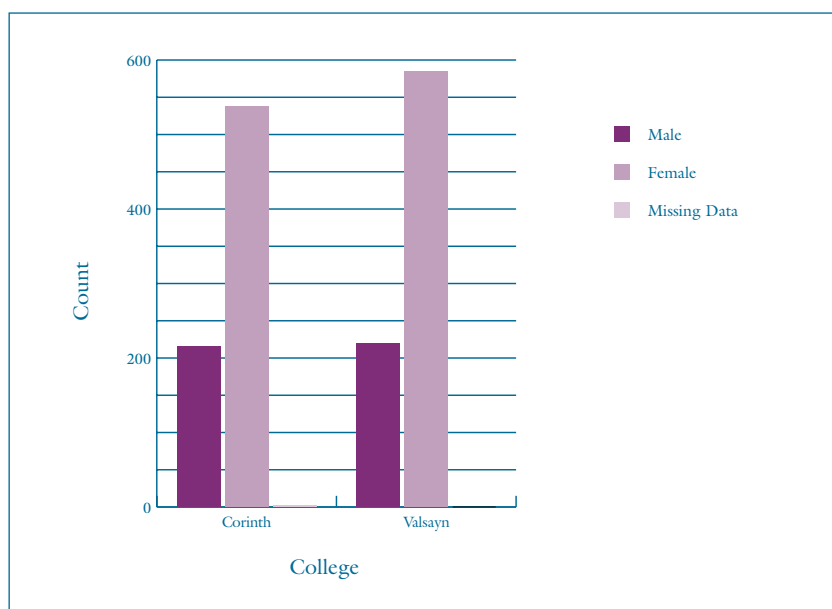
3.4.2 **Age**

Almost no one under the age of 21 years entered the teachers' colleges during 1995-1998. Just over 85% of the trainees entering fell within the age range 21-30 years (see Table 3.2). There was a slight increase in the percentage of entering trainees who were more than 30 years old over this period, suggesting that a few people might be changing careers and entering primary teaching. This trend of an increasing entry age was more marked for Valsayn Teachers' College than for Corinth Teachers' College.

Of the 1,352 entering trainees who fell into the 21-30 years age group during this period, 946 (70.0%) were female. This percentage was roughly the same as the percentage of females in the total entering population during these years.

Table 3.2: **Age Profile of Total Intake at Teachers' Colleges, 1995-1998**

Age (years)	Corinth		Valsayn		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<21	0	0.0	9	1.1	9	0.6
21-30	680	88.8	672	82.0	1,352	85.3
>30	81	10.6	130	15.9	211	13.3
Missing data	5	0.6	8	1.0	13	0.8
Total	**766**	**100.0**	**819**	**100.0**	**1,585**	**100.0**

3 Trainees and the Training Environment

3.4.3 **Marital status**

A total of 1,075 trainees (67.8%) entered the teachers' colleges as single people during the period under consideration. Overall, the number and percentage of single trainees in Valsayn were slightly higher than in Corinth (see Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3).

When the data over the individual years were examined, it was observed that there was a noticeable decrease in the percentage of single trainees in both colleges in 1998 when compared with the previous three years. At Corinth, this percentage changed from roughly 69% in 1995-1997 to 62% in 1998, whereas at Valsayn, the change was from roughly 69% in 1995-1997 to 66% in 1998.

Figure 3.3**: Marital status of entering trainees, 1995-1998.**
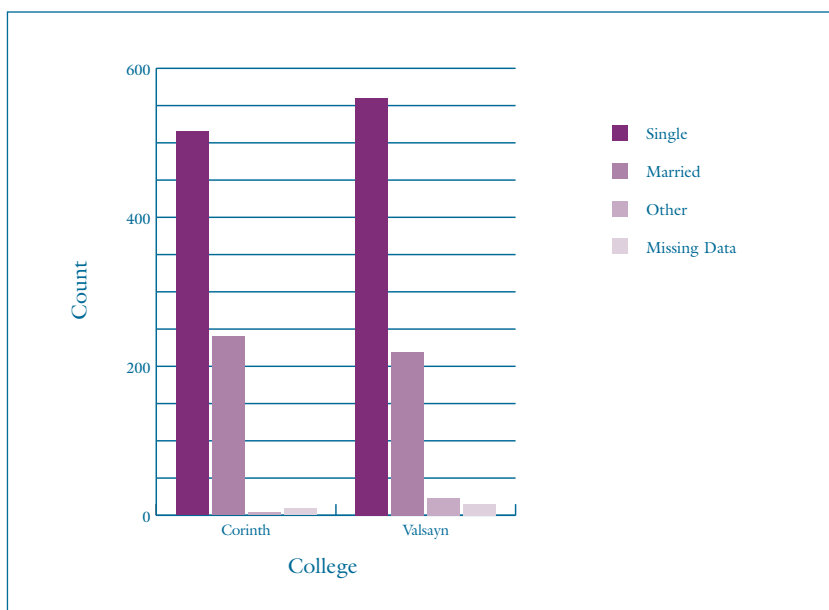
3.4.4 **School type taught at prior to entry to teachers' college**

The majority of entering trainees had previously taught in government-assisted primary schools (see Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4). Of the 766 trainees who entered Corinth during this period, 496 (64.8%) had come from government-assisted primary schools, whereas at Valsayn, 451 of the 819 trainees (55.1%) had come from these schools. The higher percentage at Corinth might be due to the overlap between the geographical location of many government-assisted schools and the catchment area from which Corinth trainees are selected.

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Table 3.3: **Marital Status of Total Intake at Teachers' Colleges, 1995-1998**

Status	Corinth		Valsayn		Total	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Single	513	67.0	562	68.6	1,075	67.8
Married	240	31.3	219	26.7	459	29.0
Separated	0	0.0	12	1.5	12	0.8
Divorced	4	0.5	8	1.0	12	0.8
Common-law union	0	0.0	1	0.1	1	0.1
Missing data	9	1.2	17	2.1	26	1.6
Total	766	100.0	819	100.0	1,585	100.0

The ratio of government-assisted primary schools to government primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago is roughly 2.5:1. Except for Valsayn Teachers' College in 1995, the greater proportion of entering trainees during the period 1995-1998 had previously taught in government-assisted primary schools. Taking the entire entering cohort into consideration, a trend of increasing percentages of entering trainees from government-assisted primary schools was observed over the period, ranging from 48.5% in 1995 to 67.9% in 1998.

Figure 3.4: **Previous school type taught at.**
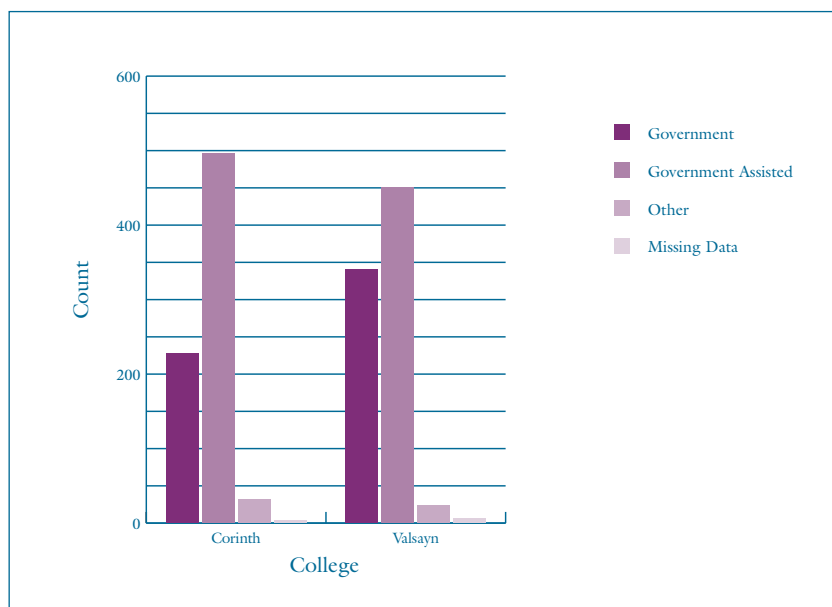
3 Trainees and the Training Environment

Table 3.4: **School Type Taught at Prior to Entry to Teachers' College, 1995-1998**

School type	Corinth		Valsayn		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Government	235	30.7	338	41.3	573	36.2
Government-Assisted	496	64.8	451	55.1	947	59.7
Private	1	0.1	10	1.2	11	0.7
More than one type	31	4.0	14	1.7	45	2.8
Missing data	3	0.4	6	0.7	9	0.6
Total	**766**	**100.0**	**819**	**100.0**	**1,585**	**100.0**

3.4.5 **Service prior to entry to teachers' college**

Of the 1,585 trainees entering teachers' college over this period, 914 (57.7%) had taught for three years and 563 (35.5%) had taught for four years. This yielded a total of 93.2% of the trainees with a 3-4 year period of pre-college teaching experience. (Note that any fraction of a year equal to or greater than 0.5 is counted as 1 year.)

There is a common perception locally that beginning teachers from government-assisted schools gain entry to the teachers' colleges after functioning for a shorter period of time as untrained teachers in the primary school than their counterparts in the government schools. This was tested in the data and the findings are shown in Table 3.5. Whereas 58.0% of the trainees from government-assisted schools (with a higher percentage of trainee intake) entered the teachers' college after 3 years of teaching, 59.3% of the trainees from government schools entered after teaching for this period of time. In a similar vein, 36.7% of trainees from government-assisted schools had taught for four years as compared with 33.7% from government schools. Therefore, there does not seem to be much difference in the speed with which entry to teachers' college is gained from these two school types.

Table 3.5: **Length of Service Prior to Entry x School Type**

Service	Government		Government-Assisted	
	N	%	N	%
3 years	340	59.3	549	58.0
4 years	193	33.7	348	36.7
Other periods	22	3.8	25	2.6
Missing data	18	3.1	25	2.6
Total	573	100.0	947	100.0

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3.4.6 **Academic qualifications**

As shown in Table 3.6, the vast majority of entering trainees had CXC/GCE O Level qualifications in excess of the stipulated minimum requirements of "passes" in five subjects for entry to teachers' colleges. The qualifications of students entering Corinth Teachers' College seemed to be slightly better than those of students entering Valsayn Teachers' College during this period, particularly in 1998.

Table 3.6**: Numbers (Percentages) of Entering Teacher Trainees With More Than 5 CXC/GCE O Level Passes, 1995-1998**

School type	Corinth		Valsayn		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1995	148	87.1	167	82.3	315	84.5
1996	172	84.3	164	77.4	336	80.8
1997	160	83.8	167	81.1	327	82.4
1998	186	92.5	163	82.3	349	87.5

There were no data available at Corinth that would indicate whether or not entering trainees had obtained appropriate qualifications in five CXC/GCE subjects at one sitting of the respective examinations. At Valsayn, some of this data were available but data were missing for about 17.2% of the entering cohort over these years. Nonetheless, overall, only 41.5% of those for whom data were available had secured these qualifications at one sitting during the period 1995-1998.

There is a general perception that primary teachers are weak in science. Secondary school students can take up to three science subjects at any one sitting of CXC/GCE O Level examinations. The statistics indicate that only 274 of the 1,585 trainees studied (17.3%) had passed three science subjects at this level. More than half of the group (55.9%) had passed only one science subject. The most common science subject passed was biology (50.2%), followed by chemistry (37.9%). Physics was passed by 22.1% of the group over the period.

With regard to GCE A Level examinations, 1,043 of the 1,585 entering trainees during this period (65.8%) did not possess any qualifications at this level. Of the remainder, 144 (9.1%) had passed one subject, 247 (15.6%) had passed two subjects, and 136 (8.6%) had passed three subjects. The performance in A Level science subjects was lower than the overall A Level performance: 1,392 (87.8%) had secured no A Level science passes, 83 (5.2%) had secured one pass, 90 (5.7%) had secured two passes, and 6 (0.4%) had secured three passes.

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3.4.7 Home background

No data on the home background of trainees were available from college files. However, such information had been sought in the questionnaire that was issued to the 1998 entering cohort. Therefore, the discussion on the home background of trainees that follows refers solely to the 1998 cohort.

Completed questionnaires were received from 156 of the 201 trainees at Corinth and 143 of the 198 trainees at Valsayn. This represents a 77.6% return rate from Corinth and a 72.2% return rate from Valsayn.

Nearly half of the trainees (49.5%) came from homes in which the mothers were house persons. About 13.7% of the mothers were employed at the lower professional and managerial level, mainly as nurses, teachers, and secretaries. The occupations of the fathers were mainly concentrated in the lower professional and managerial (14.7%), skilled (23.4%), and semi-skilled (12.4%) areas. They included teachers, civil servants, and owners of small enterprises at the lower professional and managerial level; builders, plumbers, and policemen at the skilled level; and factory workers, construction workers, and taxi drivers at the semi-skilled level.

The School Leaving Certificate was the highest qualification held by 35.5% of the fathers and 40.1% of the mothers. CXC/GCE qualifications were held by 16.4% of the fathers and 15.1% of the mothers. Post-secondary qualifications were held by 16.1% of the fathers and 12.0% of the mothers.

3.4.8 Overall characteristics of the entering teacher trainee

The overall characteristics of the entering primary teacher trainees can be summarised as follows. Trainees:

- are mainly female
- are mainly in the 21-30 years age group
- are mainly single
- have taught for 3-4 years prior to entry into the colleges
- have taught mainly at government-assisted schools
- possess more than 5 CXC/GCE O Level passes
- typically have not passed 3 CXC/GCE O Level science subjects
- typically do not possess GCE A Level passes
- come from homes in which the mothers are mainly house persons; the fathers operate at the lower professional, skilled, and semi-skilled levels; and few of the parents possess post-secondary qualifications.

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The profile of trainees seems to be changing as older people and a greater percentage of married people seem to be entering training.

3.5   The Staff at the Teachers' Colleges

Both colleges are headed by a principal and a vice principal. The principal at Corinth Teachers' College is female, while the principal at Valsayn is male. Both principals hold masters' degrees in education. In all, there are 29 members of staff at Corinth (including the administration)--13 male and 16 female. At Valsayn, there are 34 staff members--17 male and 17 female. Eleven of the 29 staff members at Corinth (38%) hold masters' degrees while 20 of the 34 members at Valsayn (59%) are similarly qualified.

3.6   The Teaching/Learning Environment

Both Corinth Teachers' College and Valsayn Teachers' College are located on compounds that are away from the hustle and bustle of daily living. The natural, physical locations are therefore suitable for teaching/learning activities. The physical structures in both colleges are reasonably sound and, at Valsayn in particular, there is more than enough space for classes.

While space may not be a problem, there is a definite problem with other facilities and equipment. Administration, staff, and students all complain that they are expected to function with the minimum of these amenities. Corinth acquired a computer laboratory equipped with 24 computers through the untiring efforts of the principal who sought help from private organisations. Valsayn has also recently acquired some computers. However, there is no provision for information technology staff at either college.

There is little audio-visual equipment at either college and, sometimes, lecturers resort to borrowing AV equipment from students, or bringing their own, for activities such as micro-teaching. Valsayn has been operating with an antiquated public address system that the administration has been seeking to replace; Corinth seems to be a bit better equipped in this area.

The library at Valsayn had been a source of concern for many years but, within recent times, the library collection has been increased to a reasonable level. The library at Corinth is also thought to be functioning at an acceptable level.

Lectures either involve the whole year group of about 200 students (and such sessions are usually held in the Hall) or "small" groups, consisting of one-third of the year group. Elective classes can be quite small, depending on the subject involved.

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The atmosphere in the colleges is generally a pleasant one. On a visit to either of these colleges on a typical day, one is likely to see small groups of students conversing during the break and lunch periods. It is not uncommon to see lecturers conversing with students in an informal manner in the corridors. The principal at Corinth uses the metaphor of "family" to describe the atmosphere that she is trying to create and maintain in the college. Valsayn has recently had a change of administration with some attending teething problems. Overall, the atmosphere in these colleges seems to be suitable for the intended purpose, but the provision of equipment and other amenities seems to be inadequate.

Chapter Four   **4 The Curriculum - Documented and Espoused**

4.1   Introduction

An overview was undertaken of the general curriculum, as documented. In addition, a detailed study was done of specific aspects of the teachers' college curriculum: the Education courses and three of the core primary school courses, namely, mathematics, language arts, and science.

Data on the documented curriculum were gathered through content analysis of the curriculum document. Insights were gained by focusing on the four targeted areas (Education, mathematics, science, and language arts) and drawing on the work of Eraut (1976) for the analysis.

Eraut suggests that the curriculum can be viewed against a five-point diamond frame, with the points of the frame comprising the aims, objectives, content, pedagogy, and assessment procedures. The content analysis thus focused on these "points," and attempts were made to see if there is coherence among them, as should be the case with a well-structured curriculum.

Ideas about the espoused curriculum in education were obtained through the conduct and analysis of in-depth interviews with lecturers from the two colleges who are Heads of the Education Department. Lecturers in the other subject areas targeted were also interviewed. A total of 14 lecturers were interviewed, comprising 4 Education lecturers, 1 language arts lecturer, 2 literary studies lecturers, 2 science lecturers, and 5 mathematics lecturers. These interviews were transcribed and analysed in an effort to identify the intentions and philosophy that these lecturers hold for the courses in which they are involved.

The research questions that guided this aspect of the work were as follows:

The documented curriculum
- What are the stated philosophies underpinning the teachers' college curriculum?
- What is the nature of the teachers' college curriculum?
- How is the delivery of the teachers' college curriculum organised?

The espoused curriculum
- What do teacher educators claim are their intentions with respect to the content, method of delivery, assessment, and outcomes of their teacher training efforts?

4.2   The General Curriculum

The colleges offer a full-time two-year course of study that lasts for 39 weeks each year, and coincides with the primary and secondary school year, beginning in early September and

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ending in early July. All courses at the colleges must be approved by the Board of Teacher Training, and are subject to continuous assessment, both formal and informal. Courses that follow a prescribed syllabus are assessed by a final external examination. On successful completion of the training programme, with passes in all the subjects taken at the final examination, the Teacher's Diploma of the Ministry of Education is awarded.

There is no official date on the curriculum document that is in current use in the teachers' colleges, but popular opinion is that it was published sometime in the period 1995-1996. This current document is a compilation of course outlines which had been in existence for a long time, but which (at least some of them) underwent varying levels of modification when the document was compiled.

4.2.1 General layout and organisation of the programme

At the state teachers' colleges, the programme of study is designed for two years. The curriculum is organised and delivered along lines strongly reminiscent of a secondary school, that is, the day consists of seven 45-minute periods with a 15-minute mid-morning break and a lunch hour. There are no free periods during the day.

The courses offered at the teachers' colleges have been designed by persons identified by the Board of Teacher Training, who may or may not be lecturers at the colleges. The curriculum document is a compilation of course outlines in the various disciplines, which details the specifics of the various courses. Courses are broken down into units and information is provided on the aims, objectives, and content of each unit of work; and teaching methodologies, assessment procedures, and estimated teaching time for each course.

There is no stated overall philosophy of teacher education that governs the document. This has been a matter of concern to college administrators and staff. Proposals concerning policy issues have recently been made by the colleges, and have been submitted to the Board of Teacher Training for consideration.

The curriculum is broadly differentiated into (a) academic studies and (b) teaching practice. Both areas are examined through continuous assessment and a final examination. Course lecturers are allowed to make some input into the final examinations, but persons external to the colleges, who have been appointed by the Board of Teacher Training as external examiners, determine the final form of these examinations.

Academic studies

A basic, compulsory core consists of education or professional studies and subject specialties that are pursued over the two years.

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The *education/professional studies* component consists of three courses--Education I, Education II, and Education III. These courses are described in detail below.

The *subject specialties* and their timetabled contact hours (in brackets) are as follows:

language education (101)   reading (105½)
literary studies (86)   mathematics (150)
social studies (90)   integrated science (105)
family life education (90)   agricultural science (36)
physical education and health education (75)

There is also a *basic, optional core* consisting of music (60 hrs.), art and craft (60 hrs.), dance (18 hrs.), and drama (19½ hrs.). The college decides which two subjects will constitute the options in a given year, and students must select one of the options offered. Finally, there is an *elective* core. Electives are courses offered by the colleges in which student teachers may choose to specialise. Students select one of the electives to be done over the two-year period.

Enrolment in the basic compulsory core, the basic optional core, and the elective core, results in students pursuing 14 subjects at any one time. This, therefore, involves the coverage of a considerable body of content, especially if the student has not had a previous foundation in the area, for example, agricultural science.

Teaching practice

This is structured differently at the two colleges. At Valsayn, the student engages in three block periods of teaching practice in a primary school. The block periods are arranged in three-week (2nd term), four-week (4th term), and five-week (6th term) sessions, to give a total of 12 weeks of teaching practice in primary schools. At both colleges, a weekly session of 1.5 hours is given to Preparation for Effective Teaching (PET), also known as Education III, designed specifically to prepare student teachers for their field experience.

At Corinth, the first-year students engage in teaching practice in the first term for one half-day each week and this is arranged so that there is opportunity for joint preparation with, and observation of, peers. In the second term, trainees are teamed in pairs to prepare units, and for teaching practice. There is no teaching practice in Term 3. Terms 4 and 6 are arranged in block practices as at Valsayn. Thus, the 12-week period of practice is computed differently at the two colleges.

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4.2.2 Overall structure

The overall structure of the programme and the implied inter-connectedness among the various parts are shown in Figure 4.1, which was produced by a college lecturer.

Figure 4.1: A suggested interplay of curriculum components based on an interpretation of current documentation of the Teachers' College curriculum

Teachers' College

Subject/Content Courses

** Elective Courses

* Basic Courses

designed to provide:

Subject matter content

Practice in subject-specific methodology

Practical Teaching (Teaching Practice)

designed to facilitate:
- application of theory & skills in *live* environment of the classroom;
- experiences in a variety of situations: different schools + different levels in the primary school;
- supervision by college lecturers. (Classroom/co operating teacher not involved in supervision exercise)

Preparation for Effective Teaching

Educational/ Foundation Courses

ED I: Sociology & Psychology of Education

ED II: Knowledge, Theories and Principles of Education

ED III:

intended to provide:
- content/knowledge of pedagogy
- simulated practical exposure to various teaching strategies through micro-teaching, modelling, demonstrations, etc.

Key
* - Math., Lang. Studies, Science, Social Studies, Music, P.E., Art & Craft, Agri. Sc., Family Life Ed.
** - Art & Craft, Music, Home Ec., Science, National Heritage, Geog., Agri. Sc., Math., Psych., Special Ed., P.E., Meas. & Eval., Early Child Ed.
↕ Interplay that should occur among the different components of practical teaching

Source: Margaret Cain, March 2000.

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4.3 **Detailed Analysis of the Core Courses**

4.3.1 **Education: The documented curriculum**

The three courses Education I, Education II, and Education III are designed to provide trainees with the basic foundation work in education. These three courses are run concurrently, from the very beginning of the training programme, and are supposed to reinforce each other. Part of the rationale provided for these courses, presented in the form of a question, probably sums up the orientation for these courses. It asks: "Will the classroom teacher be able to analyse real situations in concrete terms, determine its key components, identify problems/constraints/possibilities and propose solutions appropriate to the environment and characteristics of learners?" (Trinidad and Tobago. Board of Teacher Education, undated, p. 33).

The **aims** of these three courses, taken together, seem to suggest that the route to the development of teaching competence by trainees involves: (a) an appropriate introduction to the theories and principles of teaching and learning; (b) exposure to the techniques of planning for instruction, drawing on theories and principles learnt; and (c) practice of these techniques in an in-college setting.

The **content** of Education I is based on aspects of the sociology and psychology of education. These two foundation area strands are presented as separate disciplines. Education I is timetabled for 120 hours.

Education II starts with a consideration of the local context in which teaching takes place. It then locates the teacher within that system and continues by considering specific aspects of teaching. Education II is timetabled for 120 hours.

Education III is designed specifically to develop good pedagogical skills and professional attitudes in trainees. Education III is timetabled for 120 hours and 12 weeks of teaching practice.

The **methodology** prescribed for the presentation of these courses spans a wide range, including lectures/talks, panel/symposium/debates, group work, demonstration/skits/role-play, and field trips.

Several **assessment procedures** are suggested for these three courses. These are presented under five headings:

• Written work (module papers, reports, assignments, group work)
• Oral work (class discussions, class debates, oral presentations, quiz)

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- Paper and pencil tests and examinations (objective type, short answers, essays)
- Performance test
- Projects (case study)

These represent a wide range of assessment procedures that, theoretically, could be used for testing the outcomes as prescribed in the various units.

4.3.2 Education: The espoused curriculum

In-depth interviews were conducted with two Education lecturers at Valsayn (including the Head of Department) and the Head of Department at Corinth. In addition, in interviews with other college lecturers, their views were sought on how the in-college courses prepared students for teaching practice. The discussion that follows is an amalgam of the views expressed on the Education component by all of these lecturers.

The general view is that, whether directly or indirectly, the Education courses to which students are exposed at the colleges are designed to develop trainees into competent practitioners. Education lecturers at both colleges displayed sensitivity to the need to change the curriculum as the teaching/learning context changed. So, for example, one of the Education lecturers at Valsayn outlined that, in the Education I course, units on social development and social stratification replaced those on the family and the socio-economic context of education respectively.

Education lecturers described certain conditions that facilitate the development of competence in teaching in the trainee. These include:

- a thorough knowledge of theories in the psychology and sociology of education, and the ability to apply this knowledge to planning for teaching and the teaching act itself;
- exposure to various teaching strategies through teaching/learning formats such as lectures, small group work, and oral presentations and the use of media such as overhead projectors, video cassettes, and so on;
- modelling of desired teaching behaviours;
- practice in a school environment that is conducive to learning (appropriate space, low noise level, good overall school management);
- an awareness by the trainees of who they are and what their role is, as well as an understanding of the nature of the children in their charge.

These lecturers also outlined factors that hinder the development of teaching competence. These include:

- the difficulty of transferring knowledge about educational theories into actual practice;

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- the unavailability of proper audio-visual equipment and materials for in-college preparation of trainees;
- insufficient time for practising teaching skills;
- lack of clarity about the relative roles of the subject specialists and the lecturers in Education in preparing trainees for teaching practice in the various subject areas;
- the poor attitudes of some trainees;
- arrangements with cooperating teachers that are sometimes less than ideal, for example, untrained teachers acting as cooperating teachers.

One of the major issues arising out of this analysis is the dilemma faced by Education lecturers who believe that a firm grounding in the theoretical foundations is necessary, for example:

> Education. . . provides the students with the theoretical foundation which will inform their practice. It is not only a question of being able to do it or know how it is done, but also why it is done. So if you [the trainee] behave in a particular way, you have some kind of grounding which has informed your behaviour.

However, they also realise that there are sometimes problems in negotiating this theory/practice interface, for example:

> We are not putting into practice what we teach. . . . That transfer is not very easy with them because I think they are not mature enough really to do that. I mean, we [lecturers] study it and sometimes it is very difficult for us to make that transfer and apply it, and they just come in with their minimum qualifications.

The examples given by the Education lecturers of how they try to integrate theory with practice seemed to draw most heavily on the psychology of education. For example, one Education lecturer made the link between Piaget's stages of development and the type of teaching/learning materials appropriate for each stage. Another referred to making use of knowledge about the learner in lesson planning:

> When we get into lesson planning, we go back to the characteristics of the learner. So, given the characteristics of the junior school child--talkative, gregarious, loves to manipulate objects, interested in lots of things in the environment. . . . How are we going to use these characteristics in planning?

Other types of examples of how theory is used to inform practice were not forthcoming. Education lecturers expected trainees to become proficient in various teaching methodologies. Terms such as "student-centred teaching," "inductive approach," "questioning strategies," "lesson introduction," and so on, were used frequently. There

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seemed to be the belief that "general skills" should be taught in the Education courses, but that there are subject-specific skills that must be taught by the subject specialists. However, there doesn't seem to be a high level of coordination between preparation in the Education courses and preparation by subject specialists. One Education lecturer indicated that there was some degree of overlap in the exposure provided by these two groups, while another suggested that it was difficult for the subject specialists to pace their presentations so that they could synchronise with what was being done in the Education courses.

All of the lecturers emphasised the pivotal role that resources play in the teaching/learning enterprise. They were of the view that trainees should be able to make effective use of resources (preferably low-cost resources) in their teaching. They were themselves unhappy with the provision of resources for their own teaching in the college (Each college has an overhead projector and little else by way of AV equipment.).

There were no overt references made to helping trainees to *reflect in action* (Schon, 1983). The concept of *reflecting on action* is embedded in the system of supervised practice with post-conference sessions, which is the organising base for teaching practice at both colleges. Even so, there were no overt references to what trainees would be expected to reflect on in the post-conference sessions.

Lecturers identified drawbacks to the documented curriculum. A major concern was the inadequacy of the time allocated to the programme, if trainees were to receive adequate instruction in all the areas identified as essential. Lecturers indicated that students needed more time to cover the content that was important at each stage. They felt, for example, that unit and lesson planning were not adequately dealt with and internalised before trainees went out into the field. In addition, there were areas that the programme claimed to include in its goals that were never adequately dealt with, because of the rush to cover basic knowledge that students needed to have. Lecturers pointed, for example, to the fact that the notion of teaching the primary school curriculum in a holistic manner was never adequately addressed.

In summary, with respect to the Education courses, a reasonable level of congruence was found between the documented Education curriculum and the espoused curriculum. Nonetheless, areas of unease were identified. These included the role of the subject specialist vis-à-vis the role of the Education lecturers in preparing the trainees to teach; the insufficiency of time available for activities considered to be crucial (such as unit and lesson planning); and the problems in negotiating the practice/theory interface. In addition, lecturers seemed anxious to effect some changes to the documented curriculum (and had in fact begun to do so) in the light of perceived needs in the local context.

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4.3.3 Language Arts: The documented curriculum

The **rationale** for this syllabus states that the main function of the course is to "cater to the professional and personal needs of student teachers who must be developed both as teachers and users of language." The document also states that the syllabus is intended to introduce teachers to the philosophy of whole language, with the intention of enabling them to create diversified approaches to the teaching of language in the primary school curriculum. Another important intention of the syllabus, identified in the document, is to develop in student teachers a level of competence in Internationally Acceptable English (IAE), which would be adequate to allow them to help their own students to become confident and competent in IAE. The stated **goals** of the programme seem congruent with the approach outlined in the rationale.

The **content** of the programme as identified in this document is organised around three units: (1) The Nature of Language, (2) Methods and Principles of Teaching English, and (3) The Nature and Organisation of Practice Teaching.

Each of the units within the Language Education syllabus is further subdivided into topics, which the syllabus describes as "courses," each with its own content and objectives, which are intended to fulfill the goals of the syllabus.

While the syllabus states that Unit I is partly intended to develop student teachers' own communicative repertoires, "with emphasis on building their competence in Internationally Acceptable English," the stated objectives of the course seem to place greater emphasis on their propositional knowledge of facts and theories about language, and about the different language systems existing in Trinidad and Tobago, than on their using it in different contexts so as to increase their competence in the language.

Unit II, "Methods and Principles of Teaching English," demonstrates a somewhat eclectic mixture of philosophies and content. While the syllabus rationale suggests the importance of a whole language approach to language teaching, the documented contents of different topics within this unit seem to emphasise a less integrated, and a more rule- and skill-based approach. The syllabus notes, for instance, that "the mechanical stands side by side with the processual and creative elements of language teaching," where whole language approaches generally tend to subordinate mechanical concerns, to a greater or lesser extent, to issues of process and meaning-making. The stated objectives of the topic "grammar" also seem to focus more on making student teachers aware of different syntactic structures and rules within English Creole and English systems, which must be used when communicating (usage), than on awareness of the integral relationship between structures and communicative contexts. Yet, the overview of course content refers to " the importance of grammar in communication," which suggests a somewhat broader interpretation.

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Unit III focuses on the nature and organisation of practice teaching. A total of 47 hours is allocated for this unit, and the document notes that topics are drawn from the entire language education programme. The unit includes courses on planning integrated Language Arts units for different levels of the school, lesson delivery in various language "skills," and student teachers' reflection on their own teaching practice.

A separate document deals with the "Teaching of Reading," which is taught and assessed separately. The reading education curriculum document conceptualises reading both as a process, which includes meta-cognitive, perceptual, and affective elements, and as a product, which the curriculum document defines as comprehension.

A wide range of **methods** and **media** is proposed for delivery of the Language Education curriculum. These include lectures, large and small group approaches, role-play, and various kinds of mediated instruction, including the use of computer technologies.

The **assessment** procedures for Language Education combine both internal and external assessments. The course work on Reading, as described in that syllabus document, has its own procedures for assessment. This contributes 25% to the students' overall mark on the programme.

The internal assessment counts for a possible 50% of the final mark in Language Education. The assessment of this part of the programme entails both coursework and student performance on internal examinations. Both traditional and alternative assessment approaches like projects and portfolios are used, and peer- and self–evaluation are included. The final examination is weighted at 50%.

4.3.4 **Language Arts: The espoused curriculum**

Unfortunately, only the coordinator of the Language Arts programme from one of the colleges was interviewed.

The coordinator indicated that the lecturers use the syllabus as a guide, but that they make their own plan of how they would teach the course. Each lecturer is free to plan for their delivery of the Language Arts curriculum in their own way.

Although the coordinator indicated that the syllabus is very comprehensive, some ambiguous feelings about the syllabus seemed to emerge in the discussion concerning the whole language or integrated approach to language versus the traditional approach of breaking up the teaching into parts, for example, grammar, spelling, and so on. All of these aspects are touched on in the syllabus, but there seems to be some uncertainty as to how to incorporate these contrasting approaches, and how to get this across to the student teachers.

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The coordinator noted that there was a mismatch between the primary school syllabus and the teachers' college syllabus. In her view, the teachers' college syllabus had evolved whereas the primary school syllabus had not. It should be noted, though, that there is a new thrust toward using a more integrated approach to language teaching in the primary schools, motivated largely by a new Primary Language Arts curriculum which was recently developed, and which is now being implemented.

The old concern about time arose as the coordinator indicated that there is a great deal of detail in the syllabus and major limits in the time allotted to the subject.

Commentary on the Language Arts curriculum

The question of how to deal with the tensions between two opposing philosophies of language teaching appears not to have been reconciled, either in the Language Education document or in the minds of college lecturers. This is an issue that remains unresolved at all levels of the academic community. Part of the problem lies in the different understandings that exist about the nature of the special opportunities and challenges that learning English presents to speakers of English Lexicon Creoles. This may account, in part, for the uncertainty experienced by lecturers in deciding how to organise the content of the college curriculum for delivery.

4.3.5 Science: The documented curriculum

The **rationale** for the science syllabus is to adequately prepare trainees to introduce science at the primary school level. Science is described as the study of the "phenomena of the material universe and their laws," and is concerned with a body of accumulated knowledge as well as "trustworthy methods for discovery of new truth." Trainees are expected to achieve competencies in the processes and skills of science, and to master the teaching/learning strategies that would enable them to develop these same competencies in their pupils.

The **aim** of the course is "to prepare teachers to provide pupils with education in science adequate for everyday living and to equip these pupils to undertake science at the secondary level."

The **objectives** of the course articulate with the rationale as stated. They focus on the competencies and attitudes that trainees need to develop not only as science teachers, but also as lifelong learners.

The **content** is presented in two sections. The general objectives that relate to methodology and philosophy in science education are set out in Section A. Trainees are required to

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examine the nature of science, its relevance in the curriculum, its role in society, and its relationship with technology. The process approach in the teaching of science is highlighted. Trainees are expected to develop competencies in using this approach, as well as in the various assessment strategies for evaluating pupils' learning. Trainees are also expected to draw on the work of modern philosophers and psychologists as they relate to teaching, learning, and other aspects of pedagogy, and to be proficient in all aspects of the planning and delivery of science lessons.

A general outline of the content of the course is presented in Section B. The central concern is that trainees develop positive attitudes to science. The content is based on science that is relevant; that is typical of existing knowledge; that best illustrates the ways that scientists work; and that will promote an appreciation of nature. The content is organised around four areas, namely, matter, energy, organisms and ecosystems, and environment and technology. Each topic area is presented as a module with specific behavioural objectives.

A range of **teaching methodologies** is suggested for the science course at the college, ranging from lectures and hands-on activities to projects and research reports.

The **assessment** procedure is similar to what obtains in the other courses. It combines internal and external assessments, with each component carrying equal weightings. The internal assessments consist of coursework and internal examinations. Part of the coursework includes an assessment of laboratory skills, and trainees are required to keep a practical notebook. The external assessment consists of two papers. Paper 1 consists of multiple-choice items while Paper 2 is divided into three parts: Part A examines methodology; Part B, process/content knowledge; and Part C, enquiry skills. A candidate must meet certain minimum requirements in each of the areas to be awarded a pass.

The course is delivered over two academic years and comprises 105 contact hours.

4.3.6 Science: The espoused curriculum

Two science educators were interviewed, one from each college.

One of these science educators indicated that it was not possible to complete the syllabus in the time allocated. By mutual agreement among science educators at this college, the science content had been adjusted to a more manageable size. Topics were treated in sufficient detail to give trainees the "solid" content base required for teaching the concepts, as well as the confidence to handle students' questions in the classroom. She felt that greater emphasis should be placed on "mastering the techniques of teaching science."

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Although content and methodology were taught separately, there was some overlap since teaching of pedagogic skills had to be done in some context, and she indicated that she was able to merge the two areas when she worked with her students in developing unit and lesson plans. She did not see any conflict in terms of orientation of the college science syllabus and the primary school science syllabus, since she felt that the primary school syllabus did not truly reflect a process approach. Her own philosophical orientation was towards constructivism and she tried to reflect this in her teaching.

The other teacher educator bemoaned the fact that there wasn't enough time to adequately address the methodology of science teaching. She contended that an inordinate amount of time had to be spent in covering the science content included in the syllabus. She was of the view that the syllabus was overloaded with science content, particularly in the area of physics.

This teacher educator had serious misgivings about the use of the process approach that is highlighted both in the primary school science syllabus and the teachers' college science syllabus. She argued that, in the primary schools, science concepts are "marginalised" in the process approach, since the primary syllabus is built around the processes and there is no logical order to the concepts that are taught. She was therefore caught in a dilemma between the conceptual approach to the teaching of science and the process approach in her own teaching at the college. This was so because, while, philosophically, she maintained that the conceptual approach was sounder, she realised that the trainees had to be prepared to deal with the reality of the primary school syllabus and the teachers' college examinations that stress the process approach. It should be noted that a new teachers' college science syllabus has been drafted by a team comprising the teachers' college science educators and the Curriculum Officer of the Ministry of Education. The main aim has been to cut down on the amount of science content in the syllabus. To date, however, this new syllabus has not been given official status.

Commentary on the science curriculum

Both lecturers felt that there were issues in methodology that needed to be addressed. However, there was no consensus on how this should be done. There were also concerns about what content areas, and how much content should be covered in the syllabus. One college has found a temporary solution to the latter problem through an internal agreement. Until the new syllabus is officially introduced, the single factor that constrains how much science is actually taught is time.

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4.3.7 Mathematics: The documented curriculum

The **rationale** for the mathematics syllabus states that the main function of the course is to equip trainees to deliver the primary school mathematics curriculum effectively. Mathematics is described as being a discipline that involves "ideas, processes and reasoning," as well as being a language, a science, a tool, and an art. In the teaching of mathematics, trainees are to help their pupils to construct knowledge, to be creative problem solvers, and to appreciate the relevance of mathematics in society.

The **aim** of the course is: "to train teachers to provide pupils at the primary level with a sound mathematics education adequate for everyday living and future development."

The stated **objectives** for the course match the philosophical orientation to mathematics presented in the rationale. They focus on the mathematics needs of the trainee as well as the primary school child. Thus, the objectives focus on developing competencies and attitudes in the trainee, and preparing the trainee to do the same for the primary school child.

The course **content** is presented as a list of topics that commonly appear in mathematics syllabi, namely, Number theory, Computation, Consumer arithmetic, Measurement, Geometry, Graphical relationships, Statistics and probability, Algebra, Coordinate geometry, Trigonometry, and the Teaching of mathematics.

Each of these 10 topics is presented in a module that consists of general and specific objectives. Most of the objectives are written as performance objectives indicating that the trainee is expected to learn the skill through the actual performance of tasks. Module 10 is different from the others in that it does not deal with content but, rather, with the nature of the discipline and pedagogical issues.

A wide range of **teaching methodologies** is suggested for the presentation of the teachers' college mathematics course.

The **assessment** procedure combines both internal and external assessments in equal proportions. The internal assessment consists of coursework and internal examinations. The external assessment consists of two papers--one on methodology and one on content.

Several **resources** are prescribed for the teaching of this course. They include a camcorder, television set, video cassette recorder, computers and software, as well as several manipulatives specific to the field of mathematics.

The course is timetabled for 150 hours over two years.

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4.3.8 **Mathematics: The espoused curriculum**

Interviews were conducted with five mathematics educators--three at Corinth (focus group setting) and two at Valsayn.

Lecturers from both colleges agreed that the teaching of the mathematics course at the teachers' college was hindered by the weak mathematics background of trainees, and the insufficiency of time allocated to the teaching of the syllabus. The lecturers all saw the need to do remedial work in mathematics content, but lamented the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to do this because of the overloaded college curriculum, and also because many students do not have extra time because of home and family commitments. They agreed, too, that the upshot of all of this is that trainees have a negative attitude towards mathematics.

At one college, the strategy of teaching content through the methodology was advocated and was, in fact, being tried, but it was acknowledged that trainees sometimes have a mental block and expect to be taught content and methodology separately. The lecturers were all of the view that more time should be spent dealing with methodology issues. This was not being done because of the time constraints alluded to earlier.

There were differences in views among the lecturers from the two colleges about whether or not the syllabus is overloaded with mathematics content. Lecturers from one college were of the view that trainees should cover mathematics content that is well beyond that covered on the primary school syllabus. On the other hand, lecturers from the other college felt that a thorough understanding of basic mathematics content was all that is necessary. Lecturers indicated that they try to maintain a match with the primary school mathematics syllabus.

Commentary on the mathematics curriculum

The question, "How much mathematics content is necessary to teach primary mathematics?" is one that has not been settled among the mathematics educators. This apart, they seem to be comfortable with the teachers' college syllabus. However, they have some other concerns. The weak mathematics background and the poor attitude towards mathematics of many trainees are burning issues for them, and they seem to be suggesting that the task of teaching mathematics to the trainees is an uphill struggle.

4.4 **Assessment Procedures**

Data on assessment and certification procedures were obtained through interviews with college lecturers and the (external) Chief Examiner for the teachers' colleges.

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4.4.1 **Assessment of in-college courses**

Assessments are weighted so that 50% is allocated to the course mark, and 50% to the examination. Students must get 50% on each section overall to be considered to have passed most subjects, but for the teaching practice, a student must have scored 60% to be considered to have passed. For some electives, too, the required passing mark is 60%.

The assessment is in two parts and is conducted in two phases. At the end of the first year, there is the assessment of trainees' performances in the one-year courses such as art and craft. It is mandatory that trainees complete this requirement before receiving their diplomas, but it is not necessary that they should pass these courses before moving on to the second year of the programme. Students who have not passed any of these courses at the end of the two-year period are required to write supplemental examinations in them, after they have been assigned to schools at the end of the teachers' college programme.

At the end of the second year, students are assessed on their performance on the two-year courses. Again, this is based on coursework and the final examination. Final examinations are externally assessed. The external examiners are drawn from the education system. They are expected to collaborate with college lecturers, and to meet with students to determine what content was taught during the course of the programme before preparing items for the examination. However, this is not always done, given the constraints of the conditions under which external examiners must work--they are part-time staff such as Curriculum Officers, who have full-time jobs elsewhere.

External examiners set the examination papers, develop the mark scheme, and are expected to supervise the college lecturers who act as assistant examiners in the marking process during the five- to six-day marking session. The external examiners standardise the marking. The college course mark is combined with the final written examination mark to arrive at an overall final mark. Examinations are usually in the form of multiple choice and essay-type questions, and questions are based on content and methodology.

4.4.2 **Limitations of the assessment process**

There are limitations, arising out of the conditions under which external examiners work, that create constraints on the rigour with which the external assessment of students is conducted. The poor remuneration, the fact that external examiners carry out these activities as a part-time occupation, and the high turnover rate mean that it is somewhat difficult to get enough persons who have the necessary competence to carry out the marking exercise efficiently

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At times, the measures necessary to ensure the rigour of the exercise are not carefully observed. For example, examination papers may be handed in too late to permit scrutiny of the papers in order to ensure that the examinations are of a high quality. Also, some external examiners may not go through the necessary process of collaborating with lecturers and students before setting the examination, or may not sit with the lecturers for the entire five-six days over which the marking of final examination scripts is conducted, so as to ensure that the marking process is effectively standardised and moderated.

The absence of a General Supervisor of examination scripts has meant, on occasion, that there have been allegations that some irregularities may exist in the distribution of the scripts. As a result, it is possible that student anonymity may not always be preserved, and lecturers from one college may be marking the scripts of students from that same college with whom they may be familiar.

4.5   Discussion

The documented curriculum for the teachers' colleges in Trinidad and Tobago, while it consists of interrelated aims, objectives, content, and assessment strategies, is deficient in that it does not contain an overarching philosophy for teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago. Yet, it is this document that dictates much of what happens in the teachers' colleges in Trinidad and Tobago.

While lecturers are very familiar with the official syllabus document, they nearly all tend to talk about it with constant reference to the real-life context in which it is implemented. Thus, there is some concern about: (a) whether the process approach in science is suitable for trainees who may have a weak conceptual base in science; (b) the amount of mathematics needed to teach primary mathematics by trainees who have a negative attitude toward mathematics; and (c) the suitability of the whole language approach, as opposed to a direct approach, in the teaching of language arts. Because of these tensions, lecturers sometimes try to do work to cover the extreme situations (e.g., extensive mathematics content), or to cater for both ends of a dipole (e.g., extensive science content **and** process skills), with the result that the courses taught might end up being somewhat lengthy.

In these interviews with lecturers, some dilemmas surfaced. The dilemma of matching the syllabus to the characteristics of the trainees was discussed earlier. Related to this is the dilemma of what are appropriate methodological approaches in the different subject areas, and what constitutes an appropriate mix of content and methodology in the training programme. The apparent overload of the curriculum and difficulties with assessment procedures also surfaced. These dilemmas signal that the teacher education environment is a turbulent one.

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This curriculum document is currently under review by staff of the Ministry of Education and the teachers' colleges. In spite of the fact that there have been some meetings with Ministry of Education officials on these issues, the machinery for effecting change and dealing with needs, problems, and changes in the system seems to be very slow. The coming together of key players at the two state colleges to discuss important issues is heartening, but there remains a serious problem with respect to official consideration and implementation of new plans.

The lack of an appropriate mechanism is even more apparent when one considers that the School of Education at UWI offers further education programmes for teachers at the primary level, with a Teacher's Certificate from a teachers' college being a matriculation requirement. However, there are no official links between the teachers' colleges and the School of Education. There is an urgent need for a Joint Board of Teacher Education, with representation from all institutes involved in teacher education, to determine policy with respect to the preparation and professional development of teachers, as well as teacher education curriculum development. This will ensure that there is articulation and coordination among the teacher education programmes, and that there are appropriate opportunities for the ongoing professional development of teachers. In fact, this was one of the recommendations in the Education Policy Paper (Trinidad and Tobago. National Task Force on Education, 1994). It is also imperative that such a Board table mechanisms for decision making, for implementation of decisions, and for collaboration among the various stakeholders, including the cooperating schools.

One aspect of the lack of coordination in the system that is in need of urgent attention is the relationship (or lack thereof) between the OJT programme and the teachers' college programme. It seems to be a colossal waste of resources to have a pre-training programme that is not linked in any official way to the teachers' college programme. One of the outcomes of this is that trainees enter the teachers' colleges with varying backgrounds in the area of pedagogy, depending on whether or not they had been participants on the OJT programme. In addition, trainees also come with varying backgrounds in the academic areas since some are CXC/O Level graduates while others are A Level graduates. The common basic programme that is pursued by all trainees does not take cognisance of these differences in entry characteristics. The streamlining of the college curriculum to take these differences into account is critical. A few lecturers have suggested that the curriculum can be re-engineered in the form of modules, with trainees gaining exemptions from modules on the basis of their background experiences and qualifications. This approach would necessarily mean that the more advanced modules would have to be structured to make adequate use of trainees' prior knowledge and experiences in the teaching/learning process.

Chapter Five   5 Trainees' In-College Learning Experiences

5.1   Introduction

In the attempt to more fully understand the nature of the interactions among college lecturers' espoused views on the curriculum, their actual delivery of the curriculum, trainees' experience of the curriculum, and other contextual factors, four researchers (independently) observed teaching/learning episodes at the teachers' colleges. In each case, the researcher had secured permission to attend the session from the lecturer beforehand. The researchers functioned simply as observers, taking detailed notes of the events and interactions during the session. In all, six lecturers were observed and interviewed.

The specific research question pursued was:

•   How well do the stated intentions of teacher educators mesh with what is revealed in the curriculum in action?

The following accounts of lessons in the areas of literary studies, science, and mathematics are presented in an effort to portray the enacted and the experienced curriculum. These accounts serve to present some "snapshots" of in-college learning experiences of trainees. Three such snapshots are presented.

5.2   Literary Studies

> I say, if you have to teach this. . . you're not just going to leave it in the world of Shakespeare. You're going to bring it home! Bring it relevant! Find a similar situation to which they are going to relate. And then you are likely to get. . . interactions, the interactions you want in terms of their own responses.

Mr. M. (not his real name) has been a lecturer in Literary Studies, since 1993. He has indicated that he feels the main challenges of teaching Literary Studies to the trainees lie in the range of abilities and previous experience they bring to the subject, and the limited cultural experiences they bring to their teaching generally. He has also noted the difficulties of establishing an adequate level of interaction with these students, given the large groups with which he must deal, and the limits of time within the crowded curriculum. At the same time, he expressed the belief that literature is pivotal to any curriculum, and certainly to the teachers' college curriculum, which, he believes, must prepare the trainees for the complexities of their dealings with the students in the school. He says that he must try to impart to the trainees both the academic content and the human dimension of teaching. "It is no point if you are trying to interact with people's minds," he says, "if you are going to ignore their emotions."

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He is also concerned because, he says, the college curriculum doesn't do enough to promote the holistic development of the teachers. But to get them to profit from the literature experience, he feels that he must get them to *"embrace the literature."* He must get them to see it as relevant to their own lives. It is all these understandings that he says he brings to the teaching of literature.

The course in Literary Studies, as Mr. M. describes it, is divided among three lecturers. One lecturer deals mainly with the methodology for teaching literature. The other two focus on the texts. Mr. M. 's responsibility is to teach the Shakespearian and West Indian texts.

Given his understanding of the challenges of his job, it is not surprising that Mr. M.'s main emphasis in teaching literature is on making the content of the subject relevant to the real-life circumstances of the trainees, and on maintaining interaction and personal contact with them. Yet, his own lectures are conducted in the College Hall to dauntingly large classes. Nearly 200 students were present at the session observed.

His style of delivery is quite idiosyncratic. Theoretical issues are concretised by him through personal narratives, some of them based on his experiences in the wider community, some based on his interactions with trainees at the college itself. Thus, students are able to respond and, even though the class is quite large, there is some level of interaction between individual members of the group and the lecturer. Also, because a number of the narratives relate to events which they know about, even students who are not speaking to the lecturer can be seen nodding and showing other signs of their involvement in the discussion.

For a significant proportion of the time, however, the lesson is conducted not only as a straight lecture, but with a large measure of extremely transmission-oriented techniques. Some students apparently do not have their texts. Others were absent from the previous lecture. Mr. M.'s way of dealing with this situation, and with his understanding of their limited background in literature, is to call notes. He also has students repeat the notes he has called, verbatim. "Let us read that note together," he says, as he refers to a note given at the previous session. After the students read it, he insists that they read it again. Finally he signals the reason why he is insisting that they repeat the note. "I shall ask you again to read it, TOGETHER," he says, for yet another time, and after the third reading, he comments, "You will recognise that I am a little concerned for the people who were not here for that lecture, and to get the notes."

At other times, he explicitly models how to conduct literary analysis. After one discussion on how the author uses language, for example, he says, "Let's move to the last paragraph, because you are learning how to critique the short story, how to read it, and discover it as more than a story." When he elicits comments from some students about another character, he stops and says, "I am inserting that in your notes--your own comments. So those of you

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who read the story and say that you don't know what to say, you are learning commentary."

Thus, the lecture proceeds as a mix of shared exploration of the text and of direct and explicit instruction in what to do, what to note, and how to think in responding to literature. The students seem quite content with this approach, reading aloud together when he asks them to do so, or scribbling notes frantically as he calls them. In spite of this, however, there are some students in the back of the hall who clearly have no text, and who sit staring into space, or whispering to each other sporadically.

There is only one explicit reference during this class as to how literature may be applied to their own teaching. Within the story, there is a reference to a situation where social class differences are shown to influence how characters treat one another. Mr. M. guides the discussion towards the issue of how this attitude is manifest in the trainees' own communities, and in the wider society. He questions, "Is somebody bad because they don't live according to your philosophy?" The group takes this up, and begins to relate examples of discrimination that they have seen, which appear to be based on social or religious differences. At the end of the discussion, he reminds them that, "this is where the literature content will affect our methodology. It should lead us to an examination of our perceptions. How do we feel about the small, smelly child? Are there people who teachers teach more feverishly than others?" It is one of the last issues raised during the session.

At the end of the class, the researcher comments to a student who has appeared engrossed throughout the entire lecture that she seemed quite interested. She says, "He's always like that." As the researcher leaves the Hall, Mr. M. is sitting in the middle of the Hall, talking to a group of students from the sister island of Tobago whom he had supervised during the previous teaching practice. Some are teasing him, and one is confiding her problems with her landlady. Mr. M. listens, and makes sympathetic comments. As he has said, describing his own theory of what it is to be a teacher, it is no point interacting with their minds if you are going to ignore their emotions.

5.3 Science

Ms. J. (not her real name) has taught at both teachers' colleges. She first taught Psychology and Principles of Education, and this experience, to a large extent, has influenced her approaches to the teaching of science. She explains that the trainees come to her with different experiences in science, and some of them lack the necessary content knowledge on which she could adequately build. She claims that they come to her with "lots of misconceptions in the physical sciences" as a result of exposure to what she refers to as "Trini teaching. . . basically teaching from a book." She uses everyday materials in her teaching, and tries to provide situations that will allow the trainees to come to some understandings of science. She feels that she is well positioned to do this since she intuitively understands

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how her trainees are thinking. She herself has had to clarify a number of her own misconceptions. She also feels that there is an "empowerment component" in teaching, since ". . . how we teach is just as important as what we teach. . . can give more meaning to content."

Classes are held in a large science laboratory. Trainees' projects were displayed on counters around the room, and there were charts and teaching aids displayed on the walls. One of the lessons observed was on the topic "Matter," and it was taught to a class of 44 trainees, of whom 15 were male.

Ms. J. begins the lesson by eliciting her trainees' prior knowledge of the topic and having them, in groups of two or three, look for five examples in the room. This introduction takes about eight minutes. She then questions them on the components of matter and how matter is classified. She continues to build on their responses by having them read selected areas from the text. There is further discussion about the nature of the substances identified in the text.

Ms. J. then moves into a group activity, where the trainees, in groups of seven or eight, put substances into the three groups--solids, liquids, and gases. Ms. J. moves from group to group, asking probing questions to have the trainees determine the basis for their classifications. Group responses are then summarised in tabular form on the blackboard. This activity, which lasts for about 15 minutes, is very interactive and generates lively discussion.

Ms. J. continues to develop the concept through the use of concrete examples and questioning strategies. Together, they explore gas/volume relationships (opening a bottle of perfume), make links to atomic structure, and then use marbles in a glass to illustrate the patterns of arrangement of solids, liquids, and gases. Ms. J. makes use of probing questions, such as "In which case are the molecules closest? In which case are they vibrating?" to come to some conclusions on proximity of molecules, amount of movement, amount of energy, and attractive forces in each of the groups. The concept is then reinforced with a fun activity. Trainees are asked to form three large groups and role-play to demonstrate their understandings of the properties of matter. This activity, which lasts for about 20 minutes, allows for some relaxation in the 90-minute lesson.

Ms. J. continues by building further on the concepts already developed. She uses questioning again to elicit trainees' responses on effect of temperature on matter. For example, she asks: "Does physical property change?" This discussion continues for about 8 minutes, and the trainees then move into another group activity. They are required to identify six changes that occur to solids, liquids, and gases due to changes in temperature. They are given clear instructions. Explanations of changes of state must be at the molecular level, and they must also explain each change using the kinetic theory. Ms. J. again moves

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around to each group, asking open-ended questions, answering trainees' questions, and attempting to clarify issues. There is much discussion among trainees themselves and between Ms. J. and the trainees. There is also some disagreement on how the kinetic theory can be used to explain changes of state. Trainees work in their groups for about 15 minutes, and then present their results. The results from each group are summarised and recorded on the blackboard. Some issues are unresolved and will need to be clarified. The session has come to an end, and the main points of the lesson are summarised.

Trainees seemed to be highly motivated. The pace of the lesson allowed trainees sufficient time to internalise the concepts. At the end of each teaching point, the trainees were given some activity that allowed for further clarification of issues through student/student as well as teacher/student interaction. The strategy of summarising at intervals during the lesson helped trainees to process small amounts of information at a time. The role-play also introduced an element of fun and gave trainees an opportunity to relax during the long session. The frequent switch in strategies also prevented boredom; trainees were engaged throughout the entire lesson and were in fact reluctant to leave since there were still some unresolved issues. They obviously needed more time for the last activity, which, for the majority of them, seemed to be the most challenging part of the lesson.

5.4   **Mathematics**

This class was held in a lecture theatre room with about 60 students. As the trainees filter in, there are some light-hearted exchanges between trainees and the lecturer, Mr. P., who is standing behind a large desk at the front of the room.

The lesson is a continuation of work done previously on capacity and volume. Mr. P. begins by putting out several different coloured shapes on his desk. He then asks for a pack of cards from a student and proceeds, through questioning, to develop the concept that one card has area but "no" thickness, but that several cards stacked one on top of the other have measurable thickness. From this point, he proceeds to develop the concept that the volume of the pack of cards would be the area of the base multiplied by the height/thickness, and that a more general formula for volume would be cross-sectional area x height.

Mr. P. then applies this formula to different solids, demonstrating its applicability. In the case of cubes, he builds up a table on the blackboard to show how the formula applies, by using multiple cubes of the same size. He also introduces a few solids to which the formula could not readily apply and terms these "trouble."

At this point, Mr. P. makes suggestions about how the concept of the volume of these regular shapes could be presented to pupils in the primary school classroom. He encourages trainees to let their pupils use the apparatus to work out the volume of increasing numbers

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of cubes, then to challenge them to use the pattern in the results to work out the volume **without** the blocks.

Another mathematics lecturer, Mr. Y., walks into the room at this point and, after the exchange of some pleasantries, is allowed to take over the lesson for about 10 minutes. The students seem unperturbed by this and continue to be attentive. Mr. Y. deals with the relationship between the volume of a cone and the volume of a cylinder with a similar base. Again, through questioning, he gets students to infer the relationship between the volume of the cone and the volume of the cylinder, leading to the generation of the formula for the volume of a cone. Again, reference is made to the primary school pupil, and trainees are encouraged to conduct the experiments with pupils using different sizes of cones and cylinders.

Using similar techniques, Mr. Y. establishes the relationship between the volume of a pyramid and the volume of a prism. The presentation here is more rapid and not as detailed as that for the cone and the cylinder.

Mr. P. takes over, and draws trainees' attention to the everyday experience of cutting a pyramid (wedge) from a watermelon. He links the pyramid to a sphere and establishes the volume of a sphere. Again, the presentation here is fast-paced and not as detailed as the earlier presentations with the cube. He advises trainees that this type of work should only be used in the higher primary school classes and/or for enrichment.

In the final stages of the class, Mr. P. refers to a framework that had been developed in a previous class. There is no expansion on this and the matter is left hanging. Mr. P. then shows the class a bag full of manipulatives/resource materials (matches, pallet sticks, aerosol can covers, etc.) that can be used to make the teaching of mathematics more interactive.

This was a lively presentation by Mr. P. and his colleague, Mr. Y, in which interactive techniques were used. Mr. Y. later lamented the fact that it was necessary to teach the lessons through demonstrations instead of through active hands-on activities performed by the trainees themselves, because of the lack of suitable facilities and equipment.

Throughout the presentation, trainees were generally attentive. The lecturers both interspersed their presentations with teacher-initiated questions. Trainees responded willingly but the responses were nearly always short phrases or sentences. There was only one instance of a trainee-initiated question to which Mr. P. responded by directing the trainee to the relevant portion of the text. Most trainees were observed taking notes throughout and, in a few instances, the lecturer would pause to facilitate note taking.

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The inductive reasoning in the earlier part of the lesson was presented at a slower pace, and in more detail, than in the latter parts of the lesson. Trainees with a weak mathematics background might have experienced no difficulty with the earlier parts of the lesson, but might have found the concept load and the more rapid rate towards the end difficult to handle.

5.5   **Discussion**

The descriptions of these lessons provide some snapshots of what happens in the college classroom. It is to be noted that the researchers were only able to act as observers in the classes of lecturers who volunteered to be a part of the research project. This means, therefore, that one cannot generalise based on the snapshots obtained. However, there are a few features of these snapshots that provide information on some of the experiences of trainees.

It is noteworthy that none of these teaching/learning sessions involved a "straight" lecture. Mr. M's class was closest to this delivery format but, in many ways, was quite different to what one would expect in a normal lecture. His engagement with the discipline and with his students and their real-life experiences was quite striking.

In the science class described above, group work was used. This lecturer was able to put together enough equipment and materials to permit direct hands-on activities by trainees. This lecturer embraces the philosophy that the subject should be taught to the trainee in a manner congruent with the way in which the trainee would teach his/her pupils. In the mathematics class, the lecturer simply made reference to how the subject might be taught to the primary school pupil. However, he did attempt to show how it could be done through demonstrations.

A significant proportion of class time involved trainees in higher-order thinking activities. However, there were no instances where trainees were able to pursue problems that they had thought of--all of the sessions had fixed and finite goals.

One lecturer alluded to the fact that a fair amount of "straight" lecturing occurs in the college. This project was not able to determine how widespread this practice is. However, the practice may be linked to some extent to the way in which the curriculum is organised. The college curriculum represents a heavy load for both students and staff. Students are timetabled for almost all the periods per week, yet it is still impossible to devote the number of hours for each subject that the documents suggest (Lewin et al, 2000). Though the organisation of teaching differs between colleges, students are taught mostly in large groups (between 60-200), except for the elective subjects where numbers can be much smaller. Both the lengthy syllabus and the large class size make it difficult for the tutors to model

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interactive, participatory styles of teaching unless they are particularly resourceful, committed, and creative. Teaching loads work out, on average, to be less than 50% of the total number of periods per week, but this hides a wide variety. In addition, during much of the year, lecturers are visiting schools to supervise students on teaching practice at the same time as running their courses in college. This raises questions of whether the curriculum time for both staff and students could be organised in more effective ways. (See Lewin et al, 2000 for further discussion of this issue.)

The role of the lecturer/teacher educator is also critical. There is the need for more carefully defined and developed structures for training and re-training of teacher educators. It should also be noted that the teacher educators who were involved in this project represent just about 20% of the total staff at the colleges. These teacher educators were willing to be a part of the project, but there were others who were not willing to be so involved. It is therefore unclear whether the types of teaching strategies observed in the college classrooms are common across the full range of teacher educators. It is, therefore, difficult to specify the extent of re-training that might be needed.

6 Trainees' Views of Themselves and the Teaching Profession

Chapter Six

6.1 Introduction

In this component of the project, trainees' views of themselves and the teaching profession were examined. The conceptual framework for this sub-study was intricately linked to the concept of **teacher identity** as explicated in the literature.

Teacher identity has been used in research (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Nias, 1989) to describe how teachers seem to understand themselves as teachers. The importance of this concept for research on teaching is captured by Ball and Goodson (1985), who argue that "the ways in which teachers achieve, maintain, and develop their identity, their sense of self, in and through a career, are of vital significance in understanding the actions and commitments of teachers in their work" (p. 18).

While the term has been loosely used by researchers, there seems to be consensus (Calderhead, 1987; Weber & Mitchell, 1995) that the components of teacher identity may be the **images, experiences**, and **expectations** that teachers have had and continue to have about teaching.

6.1.1 Images

Weber and Mitchell (1995) say that: "images are constructed and interpreted in attempts to make sense of human experience and to communicate that sense to others. Images in turn become part of human experience, and are thus subject to reconstructions and reinterpretations" (p. 21). Images are an important component of one's **biography** and, thus, in the construction of teacher identity (Kelchtermans, 1993). In addition to their personal biographies, Britzman (1986) notes that teachers also bring to their work:

> Their implicit institutional biographies – the cumulative experience of school lives – which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum. All this contributes to well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work and serves as the frame of reference for prospective teachers' self images. (Cited in Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 9)

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) expand on the notion of image:

> By image we mean something within our experience, embodied in us as persons and expressed and enacted in our practices and actions. Situations call forth our images from our narratives of experience, and these images are available to us as guides to further action. An image reaches into the past, gathering up experiential threads meaningfully connected to the present. And it reaches intentionally into the future

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> and creates new meaningfully connected threads as situations are experienced and new situations anticipated from the perspective of the image. Thus, images are part of our past, called forth by situations in which we act in the present, and are guides to our future. Images as they are embedded in us entail emotion, morality and aesthetics. (p. 60).

Therefore, memories of schooling as students, as well as in their own early teaching careers, help trainees to build images about teaching, learning, children, and schooling generally. Images, as Weber and Mitchell (1995) and Connelly and Clandinin (1988) say, are largely conjured from experiences. Teachers would have had experiences of teaching as students in school; during their tenure as untrained teachers, in the case of Trinidad and Tobago; in the time spent at the teachers' college; and as trained teachers. Teachers, then, have accumulated a wealth of images of teaching in their lives to guide the formation of a well-developed teacher identity.

This sense of identity of themselves must, necessarily, have a large **idiosyncratic** component. There is an aspect to the development of a teacher's identity that is essentially unknowable, and has to do with **agency** and personal constructs generated from one's unique biography. Extended **phenomenological interviews** and methods employing **narrative inquiry** are ways of trying to penetrate this aspect of teacher identity. Weber and Mitchell (1995) assert that "images exert their generative power largely through their fundamental role in metaphor" (p. 21), and Dickmeyer (1989) and Munby (1986) indicate that an analysis of **metaphors** that teachers themselves use to describe their thinking about their work can lead to a better understanding of teacher identity.

6.1.2 **Metaphors**

Dickmeyer (1989) describes metaphor as: "a characterisation of a phenomenon in familiar terms. To be effective in promoting understanding of the phenomenon in question, the 'familiar terms' must be graphic, visible, and physical in our scale of the world" (p. 151). Metaphors include images and represent a coherent framework that has been devised to understand certain phenomena in a meaningful way. Thinking about schooling, for example, in terms of **inputs, processes**, and **outputs** helps to conjure up images that speak to notions of efficiency, accountability, and cost effectiveness. In teacher education, when the metaphor of **child-centred pedagogy** is invoked, images that situate the child at the focus of teaching-learning experiences are evoked. Metaphors represent a linguistic shorthand method of describing what is desired through evoking images that transmit the meaning clearly. Bullough (1991) noted that trainee teachers used personally meaningful metaphors for their work such as **teaching as mothering, teacher as husbandman of the young**, and **teacher as devil's advocate**. The reasons for these particular metaphors were rooted in their biographical experience.

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Researchers have commented on the powerful ways in which metaphors can portray complex meanings with economy (Bowers, 1980; Bullough, 1991, Provenzo, McCloskey, Kottkamp, & Cohn, 1989; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Provenzo et al. (1989) say that "metaphor allows the understanding an individual already possesses to contribute to the interpretation of experience for which present understanding and descriptions are inadequate" (p. 555). On the other hand, when, over time, metaphors become ossified, half of the metaphor may be lost and what remains comes to be interpreted as reality rather than image:

> A metaphor is only alive when there is a realization of duality of meaning. When there is no awareness of such duality, when the metaphor comes to be taken literally, so that schools **do** have an output, that man is a mechanism, we are dealing with a dead or hidden metaphor. (Taylor, cited in Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 24)

6.1.3 **Cultural myths**

While personal teaching metaphors may be instructive in helping individual teachers to better understand their practice, metaphors in common use in a society can also be unearthed to help trainees better understand the images they habitually employ in thinking about teaching. Britzman (1986) goes further and suggests that cultural myths occur at the societal and institutional levels, and they may also inform a trainee's perspective on teaching. She describes cultural myths as "a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications and measures for thought and activity, [which] sustain a naturalized view of the reality it seeks to encode" (p. 448). Some of the myths she deconstructs in her article refer to the acceptance of the teacher's control of the classroom, the teacher as knowledge expert, and that teachers are born and not made. According to Britzman, myths about teaching are not necessarily negative or untrue, but "are culturally provided ways of seeing the teacher's world, and guidelines for interpreting the teacher's stance" (p. 452).

An examination of Britzman's myths shows that she alludes to them as images and also phrases them as metaphors, for example, **teacher as controller**. Myths, images, and metaphors are thus closely layered and it may be difficult to unpack them precisely. For the purposes of this analysis, cultural myths are regarded as emanating at the societal and/or institutional level and metaphors are viewed as representations of images generated from experiences.

The importance of this sub-study of trainees' views of themselves and the profession lies in the acceptance of the notion that "it is these personal theories and beliefs, often primarily the result of previous engagement in the processes of learning, of being in classrooms, and of thinking about teaching and teachers, that form the bases for many practices in classrooms" (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991, p. 95). If the student teachers generate their beliefs about "good" teaching from their own experiences, then it is necessary for educators

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to carefully examine these beliefs in order to "begin to understand and thus more directly influence how personal histories help to shape the conclusions that preservice teachers reach as they participate in the formal study of teaching" (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, p. 87).

The specific research questions pursued were:

- What do beginning teachers bring with them in terms of professional images, experiences, and expectations?
- What are the implications of these images, experiences, and expectations for the content and organisation of the programmes at the teachers' colleges in the attempt to produce quality teachers for the primary school system?

6.2 **Methodology**

Two data-collection strategies were employed.

One strategy involved the collection of survey data by means of a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part A elicited basic biographic information; Part B sought detailed information on trainees' education; Part C sought trainees' views of teaching, teacher training, and schools; and Part D was designed to gather information which would lead to an understanding of teacher identity. Part D was the only section with a fully open-ended item format; most other items were in the form of checklists or Likert scales. The entire entering cohort in both colleges in 1998 was targeted in the questionnaire data collection procedure.

The other strategy involved small group work. The sample for this phase consisted of 16 volunteers from the two government teachers' colleges in Trinidad and Tobago--eight from Corinth Teachers' College and eight from Valsayn Teachers' College--who had entered college in 1998. These volunteers were sourced by personnel at the teachers' colleges on the basis of their willingness and their availability to be a part of the study. The sample consisted of seven females and nine males, representing the two major ethnic groupings of people of African descent and East Indian descent in the country.

These 16 trainees first responded to the survey questionnaire described above. Further data were collected from them through autobiographies, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews. Questionnaires were administered during October-November 1998. Autobiographies were written by December 1998. Focus group interviews were conducted in April 1999, and semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were conducted in April 2000. With this long time period over which data were collected, it was hoped that it would be possible to detect any shifts in trainees' views as they experienced the teachers' college curriculum.

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It is to be noted that prolonged interaction with the trainees is necessary to elicit the kind of data that may be useful in constructing a detailed picture of their teacher identity--both in its personal and social dimensions. Analysis of the questionnaire data for the cohort can only give broad themes relating to teacher identity, and these findings may quite likely be skewed towards the social dimensions of the construct rather than its individual, idiosyncratic dimensions.

The 16 volunteers were asked to prepare autobiographies detailing their educational experiences from childhood through secondary school and up to the present time. The intention was to capture some of the trainees' images of teaching, schooling, and teachers through this medium. Focus group interviews, with groups of 3-4 trainees, were conducted to further probe some of the issues that were identified, in the questionnaire responses and in the autobiographies, as being of importance to the sample under study. Further probing was done in the one-on-one, semi-structured interviews one year later. The interviews were all audio-taped and later transcribed.

Quantitative data generated were subjected to statistical analysis using the SPSS program. Qualitative data generated were analysed and coded, and emergent themes were noted. Attempts were made to generate thick descriptions in response to the main research questions.

6.3   Findings – Questionnaire

The entire population of trainees entering both colleges in 1998 was targeted. Completed questionnaires were received from 156 of the 201 trainees at Corinth (77.6%) and 143 of the 198 trainees at Valsayn (72.2%).

The data were analysed for the entire responding group of 299 trainees, and not by college.

6.3.1 Responses to questionnaire items

A summary of the responses for each of eight open-ended items on the questionnaire is presented below.

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Item #1: **What was the best thing about your primary schooling?**

Codes	Frequency
Play/carefree life/friendships	78
Helpful and caring teachers/mutual liking between pupils and teachers/good staff-pupil relationships	62
Extra-curricular activities	20
Good teaching	15
Treats/bazaars/concerts/outings	13
The laying of a good foundation	09
Art & craft & physical education	07
Receiving an "all round" education	07
Passing the Common Entrance Examination	07
No response	20

Some typical responses to this item were:

- Having caring teachers and buying lots of snacks.
- My friends and my Standards 1 and 2 teachers; playtime.
- Taking part in co-curricular activities (singing, socialising with others).
- Playing with and making new friends.
- Going to school and playing games.

The majority of these responses have to do with the affective aspects, with emotions, with positive and caring relationships, and with being engaged in a variety of activities outside of the formal learning setting. Purely academic reasons such as good teaching or passing the CEE did not feature highly. What trainees seemed to cherish most was the quality of interaction they enjoyed, among people they liked, who liked them, and who shared common interests. The fact that the qualities of good teaching and the laying of a good foundation for further academic work occur with low frequency suggests that academic matters are not viewed as being as important as good relationships, fun, and activities that allow pupils to express themselves in a variety of ways.

Trainees' best memories of primary school days seem to be related to instances where the self (Ball & Goodson, 1985) is allowed free expression through games, interaction with friends, participating in extra-curricular activities, and in the classroom with caring teachers.

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Item #2: **What was the worst thing about your primary schooling?**

Codes	Frequency
Corporal punishment/punishment of all kinds/unfair punishment	73
Pressure of work/rote and drill/teacher centredness/not being allowed to go outdoors	57
Teachers who were abusive and uncaring/had favourites/were too strict	43
Few extra-curricular activities/no playing field	16
Failure at Common Entrance Examination /placing low in test/ ridiculed in class for not knowing work	15
Poor amenities (old buildings; bad toilets)	12
No negative experiences	11
No response	38

Some typical responses to this item were:

- I was never given an opportunities [sic] becoming an independent thinker, never allowed proper explanation and always in fear because of poor information.
- Not much attention was devoted to the aesthetic areas, especially the sporting disciplines. Also, pupils were required to carry quite heavy school bags each day.
- The worst thing was skipping the standard 4 class and moving right on to standard 5 for a period of two years, with a teacher who used corporal punishment for everything and on everyone, no matter what.
- Having to answer questions in front of everybody and being punished when it was incorrect.
- Being punished with a fat strap.

Corporal punishment and the pressure of schoolwork were the negative aspects of primary schooling cited most often. Trainees recounted being beaten for not knowing their schoolwork properly, for example, for "not knowing even vocabulary." They seemed to feel that this is a wrong reason for administering corporal punishment. They were also able to cite many instances in which they thought they were punished unfairly. Failure at the CEE, low placement in class tests, and unfair comparisons to other pupils were also highlighted as bad memories of primary schooling. Fear and humiliation seem to characterise much of what was wrong with primary schooling as seen by these trainees.

The experiences associated with their worst memories of primary schooling seem, again, to focus on the self. In this case, however, they focus on threats to self-esteem. The high incidence of punishment, being the victim of uncaring teachers and teachers who cause humiliation, being pressured to toil over a "mountain of books," and having to experience failure in examinations are all experiences that can threaten a person's high estimation of self.

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Item# 3: **We all remember good teachers who have helped us in our own schooling. Describe one good teacher who you remember well and say why you choose him or her.**

Codes	Frequency
Helpful and caring	88
Motivating	50
Made learning fun	31
Caring but stern	22
Dedicated 'above and beyond'	20
Gave good guidance in academics and beyond	16
Motherly	14
No response	27

Some typical responses to this item were:

- . . . was kind, generous, explained well, appreciated us as a class and me as an individual.
- She always encouraged me to reach for the stars in everything that I attempted to do.
- He knew his stuff. He never hesitated to repeat or do over. Lots of fun also. Our experiences were both fun and educational.
- He did not only deal thoroughly with the curriculum but he also helped us with general problems and guided us to face life in the future.
- . . . who was more than just a 'teacher,' but a mother and a confidante. She helped me in times of despair and always motivated or encouraged me to do better and 'hang on' amidst adversities.

Trainees remember teachers who were helpful and caring and who encouraged them in some way, for example, in developing confidence. Qualities such as acting as a mother figure, being dedicated, and making lessons fun are also indicators of teachers who care. Memories of "best teacher" focus on outstanding individuals who contributed much more than academic knowledge to their pupils. Many of the trainees who gave no response to this item had also given no response to the item on the worst thing about schooling. It would seem that for some trainees, primary schooling was not a memorable affair. Again, responses to this item demonstrate the importance trainees attach to having the self affirmed.

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Item # 4: **Teachers need to be trained because. . . .**

Codes	Frequency
They will be more efficient and effective on the job by:	
• having the required knowledge & skills/ learning about new technologies	119
• benefiting from training; it does not come naturally	42
• being aware of differences among pupils	39
• being able to inspire confidence, self esteem in pupils	05
They have a responsibility to fulfill	41
Training tends to change teacher perceptions	15
Training contributes to professionalism	15
No response	60

Some typical responses to this item were:

- They need to know about planning lessons, performing their duties in a professional and responsible manner and to what is expected of a teacher.
- Teachers need to be trained because they are the people who mould the minds of the young. Therefore they need the necessary skills in order to produce future well-developed, adjusted individuals for tomorrow.
- They will have an idea as to what teaching is all about. Some people have the idea that all teachers do is stand in front of a classroom and talk.

The responses to this item were mainly ones that spoke of instrumental outcomes of the training process. Trainees outlined that teachers need specific skills in order to function effectively, and that teacher training is necessary to equip teachers with these skills. It is interesting that trainees made no mention here of the nurturing qualities that they extolled in their descriptions of a good teacher.

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Item #5: **I am doing teacher training because. . . .**

Codes	Frequency
To be an effective and competent teacher	70
To learn better teaching skills and techniques	48
To be an effective teacher/for remuneration/and it is compulsory	40
To be able to deal with a variety of students and their problems	36
It is compulsory	24
Enjoyment/commitment to children	15
For self and professional development	13
A stepping stone in career path	13
To be a professional	11
For remuneration/a stepping stone to a degree or further education	04
No response	10

Some typical responses to this item were:

- I want to know what I'm supposed to be doing in terms of new technology and ideas and I want to know how best to do it.
- Teaching is more or less stable, and a qualification to get a higher salary and to stay in teaching.
- I love children and I like to see them excel. I think I have a lot of patience with them.
- I feel that there is a need for me to develop better methods of teaching in order to effectively reach my charges.
- It is a mandatory exercise as a teacher.

The most prominent reasons given express trainees' view of training as the vehicle through which they would become better teachers, by acquiring appropriate skills and techniques for dealing with children. Some trainees specifically mentioned that these skills and competencies must be learnt, making training essential. It is noteworthy that unambiguous, intrinsic motives such as their love for children and a commitment to helping children develop were cited by few trainees. However, this may well be a limitation of the questionnaire method of collecting such data; appropriate probing in an interview setting of trainees who had volunteered other reasons for undergoing training would have revealed whether or not those trainees were also intrinsically motivated.

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Item #6: **When I leave teachers' college, I hope to. . . .**

Codes	Frequency
Pursue a degree at UWI and move to the secondary system	91
Be an effective teacher	82
Pursue further education courses leading to: principal, guidance counsellors, measurement officers, Ministry of Education personnel	35
Leave teaching--pursue other studies to be more marketable	26
Pursue the Certificate in Education at UWI/courses in ECCE	24
Miscellaneous responses	23
Pursue specialist courses, e.g., ECCE, Special Ed. to open own school	04
Teach for a number of years before moving on	02
No response	12

Some typical responses to this item were:

- To further my studies in early childhood care and education.
- Go on to university to pursue a degree. Eventually leave the classroom and enter other areas in education e.g. research, counselling, admin.
- Attend university and become a secondary school teacher. Primary school teaching is too hard.
- Be able to make a greater impact on the lives of the charges I am given and to make a difference in the school I am sent to.
- One day become a specialized teacher or principal. Later on I hope to occupy a high position in the Ministry of Education and make important education decisions (and receive a more appropriate salary).

The pursuit of further studies is a dominant theme in these responses. This desire is, perhaps, understandable given that these are young people. However, it is noteworthy that many of the trainees are thinking of pursuing further training so that they could move out of the primary school classroom. Many of them wish to enter the secondary school system or to advance in other sectors of the education system such as the specialist areas, for example, ECCE, guidance and counselling, measurement and evaluation, and so on.

It is also noteworthy that some trainees stated quite clearly that they intended to leave teaching altogether as soon as this was possible, to become involved in the creative arts, to acquire a degree and a job unrelated to teaching, or to simply branch off in other directions after fulfilling their contractual teaching obligations to the government.

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Item #7**: Below is a list of problems and challenges facing the teaching profession. Choose 3 problems you believe you will face when you begin teaching. Give reasons for your choice. List the problems in descending order of importance.**

The analysis for this item was done only for the top-ranked response.

Problems and challenges	Frequency
Overcrowded classrooms	134
Poor conditions of work, e.g., unfinished buildings	35
Too many duties to perform	35
No opportunities to advance my career	19
Continuous assessment	17
Children who misbehave	14
Low status in the eyes of the community	11
Miscellaneous responses	16
No response	18

The aspect of primary teaching that trainees think would be most problematic is the overcrowded classroom. They cited a variety of reasons why they thought this would be a problem. The most frequently cited reason was that an overcrowded classroom would restrict the teacher's attempts to use various strategies to reach the learners. They mentioned the futility of using strategies such as group work where space is needed for hands-on activities.

Trainees also cited poor conditions of work, for example, unfinished buildings, as a source of concern. This is another example of an unsuitable teaching milieu.

Another area of concern was the number of duties that they expected they would have to perform. It was felt that, with an overloaded curriculum, they would be hard-pressed to find the time to perform the many other duties that some principals would expect them to perform. In referring to this dilemma, one trainee remarked that a teachers' college graduate was "expected to be God."

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Item #8**: Describe any experiences you have had before entering college, which you think are valuable in becoming a teacher, and say why these experiences are valuable.**

Codes	Frequency
OJT (on-the-job training programme)/mentors as models	42
Making a difference in children's lives/enjoying interaction	33
Teaching in a variety of contexts/levels; teaching different children	30
Changes in personal circumstances, e.g., becoming a mother	21
Interacting with slow learners	18
Specific life experiences	16
Related courses taken	16
Actually teaching a class	9
Other miscellaneous experiences	63
No response	60

The most valuable experience reported was the preservice OJT programme mounted by the Ministry of Education. Trainees reported that this programme played a critical role in expanding their understanding of the nature of teaching. Respondents tended to focus on the technical skills that they acquired on the OJT programme. These responses reinforce the emphasis that trainees place on the acquisition of technical competence. Some trainees valued the fact that they had been able to make a difference in children's lives in their pre-college experiences. Others were influenced by the experience gained in teaching children of varying characteristics at various levels and in different contexts.

6.3.2 **Metaphors of teaching**

Several images and metaphors were evident in the trainees' responses. These images and metaphors can be used as a guide to understanding beginning teacher identity.

Teacher as responsible for everything

From the trainees' accounts, it is evident that the teacher is seen as the central pivot in teaching and learning. Trainees noted that competent teachers must orchestrate and control all the variables involved in their work. For example:

> I want to become the best that I can in all areas, content, knowing the child, parent and the school. I want to make a change, a positive one in our children's lives.

Heavy responsibilities and individual effort are two main themes in this metaphor about teaching. They are also evident in the quotes below:

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> I want to improve my skills and knowledge to become a competent teacher. To be a teacher is a big responsibility because you are [sic] play a part in the lives of future generations.

> I have had a very delinquent student in a Standard 3 class. All the teachers have tried with him but had been unsuccessful. I hope at the end of this training I will be better able to deal with children like that child. He is now a vagrant.

There is an unquestioning acceptance of a wide range of things a good teacher is supposed to do. The trainees do not state what agencies they will enlist in helping their clients. They seem to have fully internalised that teachers go it alone.

Teaching as one's life

The prevailing cultural myth, emphasising the altruism and self-sacrificing virtues involved in teaching, may have prompted some trainees to identify themselves as teachers in terms of the benefits that accrue to others. They have fully accepted the notion of intrinsic rewards associated with the myth. For example:

> I have learnt that children like to emulate their teachers. I have decided to live my life according to "Let character speaks [sic] for itself." Each day make a change for the better.

> I want to cast a lifesaver rather than an anchor to any child God places in my care. I want to be like Miss Narine.

Personal theories about children are implicit here. Memories of primary school and their years of working as untrained teachers in the system may have informed these personal understandings that the trainees have about children. There is the perception underlying these quotations that some children are at risk in the system and are in need of a crusader-- someone to look out for their interests. Teachers are expected to take on this mission as part of their life's work.

Teaching as caring

This is a component of all the metaphors that have been discussed, and appears to be an integral part of the cultural myth about the good teacher. The following quotations exemplify further this notion of the teacher as caregiver:

> I remember two teachers because both of them were like parents to me. I could spend time with them and they would help me during lunch-time with my schoolwork.

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One good teacher I remember was my standard 2 teacher who subsequently was my Standard 5 teacher. She always made me feel important. She showed me that she cared. She was understanding, thoughtful and generous. She made my self confidence rise.

Teacher as expert

This is subsumed under the metaphor of the **teacher as responsible for everything**. Trainees see training as amassing a repertoire of skills, methods, and techniques that would help them to be experts in the classroom. This metaphor invokes the images of an enhanced self-esteem and self-image. It speaks also to the development of the selves of children, because trainees feel that once they have mastered the techniques they would be able to provide a curriculum that the children would enjoy:

I once had a so called 'B' class. I tried different approaches, strategies to get them to learn but to no avail. I thought that I would lose part of my self. It made me stronger and it made me think about psychology and its applications to teaching.

Teachers need to be trained because. . . we can become better teachers. Doing psychology, maths and other subjects teaches you a lot about the child's development, method of teaching, topics, etc.

The myth of the teacher as expert in the transmission of knowledge is not challenged at the teachers' colleges. The teacher's prior beliefs and the college curriculum seem fashioned from the same myth.

6.4   Findings – Small group

The purpose of this small group study was two-fold. First, the study sought to explore, in a more in-depth manner, some of the themes that had emerged from the survey questionnaire data. Secondly, the study sought to explore whether any shifts in trainees' images, experiences, and expectations had occurred over the period of a year, which was the time span between the two sets of interviews.

All of the metaphors identified in the whole group study were discerned in this small group study. The interview format used in this study allowed for greater explication of these metaphors. The findings are presented below.

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6.4.1 Teacher as nurturer

Whereas the metaphor **Teaching as caring** was used to describe the affective qualities of a good teacher as extracted from the survey data, it was necessary to use a more powerful metaphor to describe the qualities discerned in the small group interview data. The metaphor **Teacher as nurturer** is probably a better metaphor to describe the very strong feelings that trainees expressed about the characteristics of the good teacher. There were no dissenting voices on this issue; trainees were unanimous in their view, both at the beginning of training and one year later, that the hallmark of a good teacher is that he/she is caring and is willing (even anxious) to ensure that his/her charges are well taken care of, and are nurtured to attain their fullest potential.

6.4.2 Teacher as expert

The metaphor, **Teacher as expert**, could also be discerned in the data provided by this small group of trainees. In addition to the nurturing traits that the good teacher must possess, trainees believe that teachers must be trained in order to acquire the required pedagogical and other skills. Trainees expressed the view that pre-service training is necessary:

> I believe that sending people straight into teaching from secondary school or whatever, you learn by trial and error, and so you do a lot of damage.

> They need to be trained. You don't know everything. When you go as an AT II [untrained teacher], you are green. You are very green. Sometimes you might want to know why a child is acting in a particular way, not knowing that is how the child has to act. So you need to be trained to get all this knowledge about the children.

6.4.3 Teacher as responsible for everything

Trainees outlined that, because of the many demands made on teachers, teachers had to be able to do **everything**. In so doing, teachers have to make use of skills acquired outside of the formal training context:

> Teaching is demanding everything that I learnt, for instance, I learnt to play guitar before I was a teacher and I have to play; I learnt football; I have learnt swimming, everything. I have used all in my teaching . . . . And everything is demanded; not like a little of your music knowledge, everything is demanded, like in maths, like all your music knowledge, all your sports knowledge, all that you learn in secondary school, all that you learn in college.

> [I am trying to be] a teacher who would care for his or her children--not just care in

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making them do their work, getting all their sums right, or having all their books in order, but actually making them enjoy learning, making them enjoy school, making them enjoy doing something. In school right now, I do not just teach them the academics. I teach them things like crochet and tie-dyeing, things they could do at home, even cutting paper for birthday parties and so on. I do teach them a lot of that just for them to make the little extra money.

As was the case with the whole group study, trainees did not speak about sharing these many responsibilities with others; the implication seemed to be that teachers must be all-rounders and carry the burden alone.

6.4.4 **Teaching as martyrdom**

Linked with the idea of being responsible for everything is the notion that teachers are involved in the business of making sacrifices. Trainees contend that the status of teachers in society is falling, yet, teachers are still expected to be nurturer, expert, and responsible for everything. This necessitates the making of sacrifices by the teacher, especially with regard to status and finances.

According to some trainees, teachers were formerly highly respected members of the community. However, in more recent times, this status has been eroded by the growing materialism of the society, which places more emphasis on money than on education. Nevertheless, in some sectors of the society, particularly the rural areas, there still seems be a great deal of respect for the teaching profession.

Trainees contend that the steady erosion of the status of the profession in the eyes of the community is a consequence of several factors. One of the major factors is the level of remuneration paid to teachers. In fact, they feel that young people who have done relatively well in their academic careers may be actively dissuaded from going into teaching:

The trainees saw primary school teachers, therefore, as making sacrifices in that they take on a job that has a relatively low status, are not regarded as professionals, and do not receive good salaries. At the same time, they are expected to perform a multi-faceted role in the classroom with their pupils.

6.5 **Discussion**

The cultural myth that seems to dominate thinking about teaching in Trinidad and Tobago regards teachers, generally, as engaged in self-sacrificing work that they do because of a love of children and a desire to contribute positively to the country. Teachers have always been accorded some measure of respect because of their apparent willingness to forego the

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rewards that others may desire out of a career, for example, lucrative salaries and higher status. More specifically, the myth sees teaching as something peculiar to the classroom and the teacher as a powerful individual, within the classroom, capable of effecting change through love and selfless dedication. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that the beginning teacher identity is located within this framework about teaching and teachers.

The beginning teacher identity, then, seems to be characterised by tensions. These tensions exist since trainees hold primary teaching in high esteem because of the attributes associated with the cultural myth of a good teacher, yet, many of them wish to leave teaching because it does not provide the extrinsic rewards that other professions do. Many are prepared to move into teaching at the secondary level where the tension might be eased, somewhat, because of higher salaries and, generally, more comfortable working conditions.

A tentative picture of teacher identity is emerging where there are tensions caused by conflicting beliefs and experiences. Provenzo et al. (1989) raise the issue that a crucial component of teacher identity is the tension between the expected or desired and the experienced. Cultural myths and the teachers' college curriculum could be thought of as projecting a **desired** scenario, while the trainees who were exposed to the OJT programme and/or who operated as untrained teachers in the system prior to coming to college **experienced** something, in most cases, that was radically different. Trainees **expect** that in lieu of material rewards, teaching will at least afford them some altruistic and fulfilling experiences. Yet, they know that in the realities of primary school life (e.g., overcrowded classrooms) such **experiences** are few. Thus, what the cultural myths of teaching say about teaching appears not to hold at all times. Even if one is prepared to forego material rewards, there is no guarantee that one can be satisfied by intrinsic rewards.

These insights about the beginning teacher identity do not augur well for the retention of teachers at the primary level or for the education system as a whole. As primary teachers use any means necessary to leave, the primary level will always be receiving new, untrained teachers and newly qualified teachers to swell the ranks of those who will not, or cannot, leave.

The foregoing points to the need for the teachers' college curriculum to act as the medium to invoke change in the beginning teacher's identity. Given the existence of the conflicting images described above, there seems to be the need for the teachers' college curriculum to recognise their existence, and to provide learning experiences where trainees would be encouraged to explore these tensions. One way that the college curriculum can actively engage the myth and, thus, better prepare teachers for the realities of their profession, is to encourage trainees to explore, through philosophy and sociology, ways of interrogating what it means to be a teacher in Trinidad and Tobago today. This will open up the social and political contexts for debate. It will illuminate vexing questions as to why primary schooling

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suffers from such low status and prestige in the system although it is the foundation of education.

The teachers' college curriculum, as the first major training that the beginning teacher will encounter, must initiate consideration of these questions, otherwise the myth will continue unexamined. The myth will promise fulfilment as a teacher and not be able to deliver. Further, as the trainees leave the teachers' colleges as newly qualified teachers, they would need to be exposed to continuing professional development activity if their ability to cope with the tensions is to be sustained. Such activity could be jointly planned and executed by the teachers' colleges and administrative personnel at the primary school sites.

It may also be useful for some consideration to be given to the assumption that primary teacher training prepares trainees for **lifelong** employment in the primary education sector. Whereas this was the norm in the not-too-distant past, the expectations of trainees are changing and this view of primary teacher training is no longer a dominant one. Many trainees clearly indicated that they intend to seek upward mobility, either to "higher" levels of the education system or to more highly regarded professions. Even if trainees are able to deal successfully with the conflicting images of teaching, the possibility still exists that the desire for upward mobility would persist. This scenario also has implications for the teachers' college curriculum. One would need to consider, for example, whether it would be more expedient to provide only **initial** training through the teachers' college curriculum, with further compulsory training provided at points along the teacher's career for those who are committed to remaining in teaching at this level of the system.

Teacher trainees are important stakeholders in the education system. Appropriate planning for the system cannot occur if the characteristics, images, experiences, and expectations of these trainees are not taken into consideration. This study has shown that, in this regard, there is much that needs to be considered if there is to be any hope for improvement in the system.

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Chapter Seven

A.   Experiences of Teacher Trainees

The overall intention of this sub-study was to gain insights into the process of learning to teach by obtaining information on the teaching practice process, observing teaching practice sessions, and documenting and analysing the views of the major stakeholders involved in this process, namely, the trainees, the teachers' college lecturers who supervise the teaching practice, and principals and cooperating teachers in the primary schools to which trainees are attached for field work. Specifically, the study sought to find answers to the following research questions:

- What are the provisions for practice within the colleges and the cooperating schools?
- How do trainees make use of their preparation for teaching practice in the teaching practice sessions in cooperating schools?
- What are the views of the teachers' college supervisors, cooperating teachers, cooperating principals, and trainees on the efficacy of the provisions for practice in teaching?
- What orientation to teacher preparation is evident in the teacher preparation programme of the teachers' colleges?

7.1   General Procedure

Early in the research project, it was discovered that some stakeholders view the teaching practice enterprise as problematic. Therefore, the decision was taken that two teaching practice rounds would be observed and analysed--the session in the second term and the one in the fourth term of the two-year teachers' college programme.

The researchers relied on the goodwill of the teachers' college administration and academic staff for the execution of the work. Consequently, the sample of lecturers (supervisors) for this investigation consisted of those who were willing to have the researchers observe their teaching practice sessions. For the most part, the trainees on the second teaching practice round were different from those on the first round, since the policy is that trainees are rotated among supervisors.

The data-collecting strategies involved analysis of documents, observation of trainees as they taught classes in the schools, observation of post-teaching conferences between trainees and supervisors, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with trainees, supervisors, cooperating teachers, and principals of cooperating schools.

In the analysis of teaching practice field data, use was made of Shulman's (1987) distinctions among the various kinds of knowledge that are important for teaching. Shulman identified

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these as content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational aims and values. The particular Shulman categories used in this analysis were content knowledge, general pedagogic knowledge, and pedagogic content knowledge.

7.2   Arrangements for Teaching Practice

7.2.1 Preparation of trainees

The study focused on the preparation of trainees at the two government teachers' colleges--Valsayn Teachers' College and Corinth Teachers' College.

Valsayn Teachers' College

There is a very structured programme for preparing trainees for practice teaching at Valsayn Teachers' College. The programme is coordinated by one of the staff members who is a lecturer in Education. At Valsayn, this programme (which is called Preparation for Effective Teaching in the syllabus) is referred to as Principles for Effective Teaching (PET). The aims of PET are:

> To prepare student-teachers to develop and demonstrate the pedagogical skill necessary for effective teaching. In addition, it seeks to motivate them to display an attitude of professionalism in their approach to teaching, as well as, to stimulate a desire for improvement of their competence and performance through membership in professional organisations. Moreover, it seeks to imbue in student-teachers an enthusiasm for this dynamic profession, so that graduates will recognise the need to continually upgrade their skills through professional readings, personal research in the classroom and participation in workshops, courses and conferences. (Trinidad and Tobago. Board of Teacher Education, n.d., p. 57)

The programme commences in the first year of the college programme and continues into the second year. The year group is divided into three smaller groups. A staff member is in charge of each of these sub-groups, and is responsible for exposing the students in her group to strategies and techniques that are suitable and useful for teaching at a particular level of the primary school system. The three levels considered in this programme are the infants, the juniors, and the seniors. Trainees spend one term in a group and then switch to another group in the following term. In this way, all trainees are exposed to teaching methodologies for each of the three levels in the primary school.

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PET is timetabled for 120 hours of in-college work (each session being 1.5 hours long) and 12 weeks of teaching practice. The in-college sessions focus on "general preparation" for teaching practice, but there seems to be some overlap between what is done in the PET programme and what is done by subject area specialists in preparing trainees to teach their particular subject. PET tutors also invite subject specialists to be a part of the PET programme from time to time, for example, when the groups are doing micro-teaching in a particular subject.

The level of coordination between preparation in the PET programme and the preparation by subject area specialists does not seem to be satisfactory. The rationale behind preparing trainees for teaching practice through the subject areas (in addition to the PET programme) is that there are specific techniques that are appropriate for the subject areas that may not be available in a general preparatory programme. However, the net result of the different types of preparation seems to be some confusion in the minds of trainees. Some trainees have complained that they are sometimes required to prepare different types of lesson plans for the different areas, based on the preferences of the lecturers concerned.

Teaching practice is conducted in three blocks during the two-year period. The block periods are arranged in three-week (2nd term), four-week (4th term), and five-week (6th term) sessions, to give a total of 12 weeks of teaching practice in primary schools. In preparation for teaching practice, trainees must develop a set of units to be taught to the primary school class to which they have been assigned for the period. Trainees must do background diagnostic work with the class and cooperating teacher before embarking on the preparation of their units. The units (with accompanying lesson plans) must be checked and signed by the subject specialists before the trainee goes into the field on teaching practice.

All lecturers from the college are involved in the supervision of trainees on teaching practice. Typically, a lecturer would be assigned 7-8 trainees distributed in 2-3 schools for a given teaching practice period. Lecturers are expected to visit trainees in their schools, listen to them teach, and generally help them to reflect on their efforts in the attempt to become more proficient. These lecturers also award grades to the trainees at designated points.

The administrators at Valsayn have indicated that they experience some difficulties with the teaching practice exercise. Some of these difficulties are:

- There is no AV equipment available at the college for micro-teaching.
- Trainees do not serve well as "pupils" during micro-teaching exercises in the college.
- Some principals are unwilling to have trainees assigned to their schools for various reasons, with the result that some degree of difficulty is sometimes experienced in finding places for trainees.

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- The Standard 5 (secondary entrance examination) class is never used whenever teaching practice is conducted before those students have taken the examination.
- Trainees do not like to work with the post-primary classes because of their perceived intellectual deficiencies.
- A large number of trainees live in the same geographical areas, and the high demand makes placement in schools difficult in those areas.

Corinth Teachers' College

Trainees are required to fulfil a minimum of 12 weeks of practical teaching during the two years of training. This period is inclusive of the four weeks of final teaching practice. Corinth Teachers' College does not appear to have as structured a PET programme as Valsayn Teachers' College.

During the first term, trainees engage in their **first practice** session. This session extends over three weeks and consists of two half-day teaching sessions, usually Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Different classes are taught on each of these two days. Trainees are divided into groups of six and are placed under the supervision of one lecturer. Some lecturers have responsibility for two such groups, which means that some of them will be out with students on both Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

For this first teaching practice, trainees are exposed to some of the methodological skills (e.g., questioning, set induction, using pupils' prior knowledge) in the PET programme as it is organised at Corinth. Subject area departments also equip trainees with some methodological skills. During the course of the PET programme, each subject area department is given a slot in which to present the methodology for teaching that particular subject area.

Before embarking on the first practice, trainees must seek permission from school principals at least three to four weeks prior to the start of the practice. Following this, the first pair of trainees pay a preliminary visit about two weeks before the start of practice. This visit facilitates their meeting with the principal, the cooperating teacher, and the pupils. During this visit, the trainees gather information about the lesson to be taught and any other information that might be relevant to its delivery. An information sheet is provided by the PET Department for this purpose.

At the college, periods are allotted on the timetable for pre-conferencing. At these sessions, trainees and supervisors critique a first draft of the lesson to be taught by the pair of trainees. Amendments are made and the other trainees take responsibility for other aspects of the planning (e.g., the preparation of resources). An assessment instrument (designed by staff at

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Corinth and used only at Corinth) is discussed since this is what will guide the other trainees in their observation and assessment of specific aspects of their peers' lesson. A teaching roster is made up for the remaining trainees so that each trainee in the group gets a chance to teach a lesson as part of a team of two. Supervisors, as well as subject lecturers, are available for any consultation subsequent to this planning session.

Prior to the actual delivery of the lesson, the trainees who would not be teaching select which aspects of that lesson they would like to observe. These areas are rotated over the three weeks. At the end of each lesson, a post-conferencing session is held either at the school itself or at the college. Trainees are encouraged to share their comments, as objectively as possible, taking care to address both positive and negative issues arising out of the lesson. They are also required to do a self-appraisal of their lessons. At this time as well, either before or after the lesson, the second pair of trainees meet with the facilitating teachers and the classes to gather information for the lessons to be taught.

Around the middle of the second term, trainees embark on their **second** (three-week) **practice**. At this time, the trainees can decide whether they wish to go out singly or in pairs. After schools are selected and permission is sought from the principals, trainees pay a preliminary visit about three to four weeks prior to the beginning of the practice. Approximately 12-17 trainees are assigned to a pair of supervisors. Sessions are not allocated on the timetable for conferencing with students, but meetings are arranged at the convenience of both supervisors and students. Subject lecturers can also make an input in the planning of units. All units must be seen by supervisors before students proceed on practice. This means that each supervisor is expected to be knowledgeable about the entire primary school syllabus. Supervisors are expected to observe at least two lessons together. During this practice, trainees are required to teach five lessons per day. Post-conferencing is conducted at the end of every lesson. Trainees are encouraged to do a self-appraisal of each lesson.

The **third practice** takes place during the fourth term. This can either be a three- or four-week practice where students go out singly. The preparation for this practice is similar to the previous one.

The **final teaching practice** takes place during the sixth term. Here, again, the preparation is similar to the previous practices. Trainees are advised that they are required to teach a minimum of four lessons per day. During the first week of final practice, supervisors hold post-conference sessions with trainees, after which feedback is reduced. Counselling, in particular, forms a major part of this practice since students experience serious stress throughout the evaluation exercise.

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7.3   The Teaching Practice Sites

Primary school buildings in Trinidad and Tobago are not uniform. At one end of the spectrum are those schools that are dilapidated and in need of serious repair work. These schools have little by way of amenities. At the other end of the spectrum are the schools that were built in the recent past with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). These schools have separate rooms for the principal and the staff. They also have room for a science laboratory, although some of the schools have converted these rooms into regular classrooms in order to accommodate more pupils. In spite of these differences, one common feature in nearly all the schools is the open classroom. Typically, one class is separated from another by wooden screens or blackboards. In only few cases are there walls separating the various classrooms. In some schools, only a narrow corridor (and not even a blackboard) separates two classes.

The net result of such poor layout of the physical plant is that the noise level in these schools is quite high, as noise from activity in one class is readily augmented by noise from activity in nearby classes. This is the setting in which trainees are expected to learn their craft.

The school furniture in most schools is also less than desirable. Typically, three or four pupils sit at long, wooden, heavy benches that are a combination of a seat and a desk. These benches are usually packed closely together. This means that there is not much room within which the teacher can move during a lesson. It also means that teachers are limited in the extent to which they can manipulate class furniture to create different learning environments. However, in a few schools, there is enough space to facilitate the rearranging of furniture.

7.4   Teaching Practice – First Round

7.4.1 Procedure

The procedures and foci for the observation of teaching practice sessions were first discussed by all the researchers engaged in the work. Thereafter, researchers operated independently in the field, but the dialogue among researchers continued whenever interesting events were experienced. Three researchers monitored the teaching practice activities of first-year trainees from Valsayn Teachers' College during the period February - March 1999. In all, 43 lessons were observed, involving over 30 trainees and 7 supervisors. Two researchers monitored the practice teaching activities at Corinth. Because of logistical problems, only 12 lessons were observed, involving 8 trainees and 4 supervisors. The lessons covered the full range of subjects offered at the primary level.

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The classes observed were made up of roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. Class sizes ranged from 12-35 pupils.

7.4.2 The climate in the receiving schools

The principal and staff in the primary schools were generally very accommodating to the researchers. Every effort was made to ensure that the researchers were physically comfortable. All trainees were able to teach their classes when the supervisor (and researcher) visited. In some instances, principals adjusted the time of class periods to facilitate the supervision process. In spite of these courtesies, though, some principals had reservations about their continued participation in the practice teaching exercise. The main problem seemed to be related to the logistics of accommodating trainees, sometimes with limited classroom management skills, within an existing school programme. The term "disruption" was used by one principal to describe how he viewed the impact of the trainees' teaching programme in his school.

7.4.3 Trainees' view of their role and function in the teaching practice exercise

Many trainees came to the first teaching practice session with concerns that they had not been adequately prepared. One area of insecurity was the planning of units and lessons. As one trainee said:

> You're preparing units and you don't know what to write. Don't talk about the lesson plans. The lesson plans were the worst because I never wrote a lesson plan and most of the subjects don't really tell you how to.

Others came with doubts about their ability to interact well with their pupils. One cooperating teacher reported of the trainee assigned to her classroom:

> And he was so nervous! He was afraid of taking on Infants Year class. . . . He thought he would never be able to work with them, you know. He say, Miss, I don't know where to start with them.

Nevertheless, most of them seemed to be determined to try their best, in spite of their perceived lack of preparation for the task. One trainee philosophised: "We cannot predict the outcome of these lessons; we can plan for the best and learn from our mistakes."

Trainees were generally interested in doing things to please the supervisor. This is a daunting task since different supervisors are known to have varying expectations of trainees. One trainee described some of the difficulties involved:

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> I was really there fishing around and trying and thinking whether my idea was good, thinking Miss Brown [supervisor] might not like it. Miss Brown is a professional and likes a lot of things, so that had me really scared. I was thinking that I would not be able to come up to par and impress these people who were coming to hear me.

One cooperating teacher supplied corroborating evidence with respect to the differing expectations of supervisors when she explained:

> It is not a constant thing in that everybody wants to see the same thing, so it might be a little puzzling for them [trainees].

Some trainees also expressed awareness that they could be seen as potentially intrusive in the classrooms of cooperating teachers to whom they were assigned. At one school, the trainee teacher said that she was more appreciative of her cooperating teacher's help because she recognised that when she is there, "the teacher has to leave her programme unattended." This understanding was not without foundation, as cooperating teachers in different schools also expressed the belief that the presence of the student teacher meant that the planned programme of work could be kept back, and that, at best, the trainee's contribution would be no more than, as one cooperating teacher expressed it, "the icing on the cake."

7.4.4 Content knowledge of trainees

The range of lessons observed included language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, physical education, and family life education. Most of the student teachers observed demonstrated adequate knowledge of fundamental concepts pertinent to the subject and for the level taught. However, there were some content areas that presented some difficulty. One trainee experienced some difficulty with the concept of a plot (of a story), while another trainee could not explain to her science class why a plastic fork didn't float. Yet another trainee, in a lesson on synonyms, focused on the word "get" for which synonyms were to be chosen. This proved to be quite challenging for the Standard 2 class being taught. One of the trainees talked about "pieces" of a fraction. Another trainee asked her class: "How many parts in a quarter?" This created some confusion and pupils were unable to respond. In some social studies classes, conceptual difficulties were noted with regard to concepts such as "continents," "bodies of water," and "government."

While most trainees displayed an adequate knowledge of content, they were often unable to articulate connections to previous knowledge or other areas of knowledge very readily. Thus, the concept of a quarter was limited to what was possible with the teaching-learning aids accumulated and used in the lesson. Similarly, the activity of making predictions in a science class was limited to what was observable in the pictures presented.

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7.4.5 General pedagogic knowledge

It was evident that trainees had received some instruction with respect to general pedagogic skills, particularly pertaining to the affective domain. Nearly all trainees interacted comfortably with their pupils. Pupils were given words of encouragement for their efforts, and the entire class was often asked to applaud when something was well done. Not all trainees were able to handle incorrect responses from pupils appropriately; while some trainees were careful not to be negative or derogatory when incorrect responses were given, others simply moved on to another pupil without dealing with the pupil who had given the incorrect response. Trainees often did not seem to be able to use incorrect responses as launching pads for enhancing the teaching/learning process.

In nearly all the classes observed, trainees attempted to engage their pupils and reinforce concepts through questioning. Most questions asked were closed questions and there were some instances where the trainee was engaged in the activity "guess what is in the teacher's head," that is, accepting only certain specific responses from pupils as being correct. In some instances, questions were directed to particular pupils, but in other cases, questions were directed to no one in particular. Some trainees recognised their shortcomings in this area, as exemplified by the comment by one trainee: "In future, I would prepare lists of questions to assist me in the process of encouraging predictions."

All trainees used some form of resource materials in their lessons. These materials were provided at the trainees' expense. They provided charts, cut-outs, pictures, simple teacher-made apparatus for teaching science, fraction strips, and so on. Charts created on newsprint were the most common resource used. Resource materials were always in sufficient supply. Some degree of creativity was displayed by some trainees, for example, in the construction of a real-life shoe by one male trainee; this was used as a stimulus to help pupils in an Infant classroom to determine whether the shoe lace could be "long" or "short"--the teaching point of the lesson. There was some degree of enthusiasm about the use of resources in teaching. As one trainee put it (in the vernacular): "When I get resources so, though, eh, I does get so excited, and I want to bring it for them!"

The aspects of general pedagogic practice which seemed to challenge trainees most seemed to be connected to those aspects of classroom experience which are less predictable, and which demand responsiveness to the ongoing dynamics of classroom exchanges. Three vignettes can be used to illustrate this point:

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- Miss D. is stymied when pupils do not respond as she predicted to the material provided for the evaluation of the lesson. The pupils misinterpret the demands of the question posed and she is unable to deal with this. She goes to the cooperating teacher to ask what she should do.

- Miss O., faced with the plastic fork that would not float as she expected, responds with panic: "Oh Lord!" She later recovers and asks the class to think of possible explanations for what happened and to bring these to the next class.

- Mr. D., having been told by the supervisor that he needs to do more to make the concepts "long" and "short" clearer to the pupils, panics. The class ends in disarray with the cooperating teacher having to intervene to keep order.

The attitude to authority varied among the classrooms observed and this had implications for the classroom management process. Pupils in some schools were fairly docile, responding obediently with: "Yes, Miss" or "No, Sir." In other schools, classroom management was a challenge for trainees. One cooperating teacher indicated that a trainee had been moved to tears on one occasion when she experienced difficulty in controlling the class. Some trainees openly admitted that they depended on the presence of the cooperating teacher to maintain order. When activities were varied and interesting, the problem was sometimes minimised.

Whole group, teacher-centred strategies were used by most of the trainees. Even when pupils were put into small groups to work, such activities were allowed to run for relatively short periods of time before the trainee resumed the teacher-centred role. There were a few instances, though, where the trainee set small groups (or individuals) a task and allowed them to work on the task on their own for some time. In such cases, the trainee acted as a facilitator as the pupils worked.

7.4.6 Pedagogic content knowledge

Lack of understanding of how to teach for concept development was a weakness displayed by many trainees. Trainees seemed to experience great difficulty in developing concepts in a manner that would allow for easy acquisition by pupils, while at the same time pacing the lesson appropriately and involving the pupils actively in the learning process.

Sometimes, the lesson was conducted at too fast a pace. For example, the trainee would present one piece of stimulus material after the other without allowing pupils time to internalise the concepts that constituted the teaching point. Typically, in such settings, the pupils were not asked to record anything in their books with the result that, at the end of the class, pupils had little to which to refer for the purposes of review. The flip side to this

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was that trainees might stay so long with one issue that the teaching process halted for a while as some pupils became bored. One trainee, for example, repeated the definition of a word, and had pupils repeat the definition over and over again even though it was clear that pupils had acquired the concept.

Trainees often used aids to teach concepts, especially in mathematics. Sometimes, in spite of the use of these resources, concept development was not achieved, and trainees did not seem to know what else they could do. For example, in one Standard 3 class, the process of deriving the formula for the perimeter of a rectangle proved to be difficult for pupils, even after all the practical work had been done. In her attempt to correct this situation, the trainee simply asked pupils to repeat the formula again and again. In a similar vein, a trainee doing a social studies class experienced some difficulty in getting the pupils to locate positions of places on a map, using lines of latitude and longitude. Her corrective measure was to keep reviewing the steps exactly as she had done before.

Inappropriate strategies were sometimes used for concept development. One female teacher of a first year Infant class tried to get two pupils to act out the story of the lion and the mouse while she read the story from a book. As she read, she inserted her own interpretations of what was happening. The pupils found it difficult to follow this presentation format and some of them became restless. In the end, when the trainee asked the class to tell her what was the first thing that happened in the story, a pupil promptly told her: "Go it over again."

7.4.7 Participation of pupils

The participation of pupils in the lessons observed was generally high. Most of the pupils were engaged on task most of the time, but there were nearly always a few in each class who were inattentive. Some trainees were able to use questioning strategies to involve some of these inattentive pupils in the lesson, but other trainees seemed oblivious to the fact that these pupils were not paying attention. Generally, pupils were treated with dignity by trainees and they responded well to the trainees' initiatives. It was striking that, in a few of the classes observed, there were a couple of pupils (boys mainly) who were sucking their fingers. This occurred, not only at the lower levels, but even at the post-primary level.

Pupils' engagement in the lesson must be differentiated from "time on task." The former requires mental engagement ("minds-on" activity) whereas the latter refers to the involvement in instructional activities ("hands-on"). Pupils were often engaged in "hands-on" activities but, as mentioned previously, the "minds-on" activity necessary for proper concept acquisition was not always obvious.

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At least two cooperating teachers interviewed indicated that pupils came to the classes of these trainee teachers with high expectations of "novelty" elements in the lesson. They would get name tags; there would be dramatic elements in the lesson; gold stars and other rewards would be handed out. "The lesson must be animated," one cooperating teacher suggested, and he commented that, when this does not happen, the pupils:

> find, "something wrong here. This classroom is not interesting enough." Then, ahem, they begin to get a little bit rowdy and so on.

He noted that pupils may respond in this way even when their classes with their regular teachers are mainly "chalk and talk."

Typically, towards the end of a lesson, pupils were asked to do some type of exercise in their "copy books" or on a worksheet. These would then be collected by the trainee (as pupils completed them), who would begin to mark them during the lesson if time permitted. There were few instances where an evaluation of pupils' performance was conducted during the lesson itself; presumably, such feedback was given in subsequent lessons.

7.4.8 The role of the cooperating teacher

Cooperating teachers defined their roles differently and interacted differently with trainees from classroom to classroom. Some saw their role as facilitators, although some defined this role simply as making it possible for trainees to deliver lessons as they had planned them. One cooperating teacher defined her role in this way:

> All I tell them is that we have certain topics that we have covered. I expect my work to be done. I am not going to come out and tell you that it should be done this way.

Others saw themselves as guides and assistants in smoothing over rough spots:

> As a cooperating teacher, I see my role is to assist Joanne [the trainee] by telling her the level of the pupils, their standards, assisting her if she has any problems dealing with the children, just being there if she needs my help, generally.

Most indicated that they would point out flaws in the delivery of the lesson, more or less overtly, for example: "At the end of each lesson, what I would normally do is tell her what I think should have been done."

In one extreme case, a cooperating teacher who felt that a lesson had been inadequately delivered, taught the entire lesson over again, to show the trainee what she felt should have

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been done. Many, however, indicated that they remembered their own insecurities as trainees, and tried to deliver their criticisms in ways that would not make the trainee feel worse. In only one case did a cooperating teacher define his role as being partly a collaborator with the trainee, both in planning individual lessons, and, generally, in managing the whole practice teaching exercise:

> We know it's going to be hectic. You know its going to be a lot of time-consuming work and so on. We know it's going to be a lot of stress on either side, so we try to make it as comfortable as possible.

He added that, both in preparing a lesson and at the end of it, "we could sit down and beat out a topic and we could get a better idea of it."

During actual teaching sessions, the cooperating teachers also displayed different levels of participation. Some cooperating teachers were absent for the teaching practice sessions; some stood around on the fringes of the classroom and, through eye contact and facial expressions, helped to maintain discipline; others played a minor role by handing out materials to pupils when instructed to by the trainee. It also seemed that some cooperating teachers were anxious that the trainee should do a good job since they seemed to be empathising and giving hints from the sidelines.

Not surprisingly, trainees had varying views about the role played by their cooperating teacher. The trainees reported levels of interaction that ranged from no help at all to the display of genuine interest in the trainee's work, and the giving of quality feedback and advice. One trainee who was grateful for the help given by her cooperating teacher described their relationship as follows:

> I teach by myself. At the end she might say, "You should have done this. This would have been more appropriate, but the lesson was quite a good lesson. You need to polish up on this." But, she is very helpful. Even before, she would ask me what I was going to teach today. She would ask me how I was going to teach it. Depending on how much time she has, she would ask me and I would explain to her and she would say, "Okay."

Other trainees were not as fortunate and some were unhappy about the lack of support from the cooperating teacher. One trainee, who depended on the cooperating teacher for the maintenance of order in the classroom, was quite disappointed that she received little help with her lessons from this cooperating teacher:

> When she is not there, I have some trouble controlling some [pupils], not all. Even

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when most of the class would be engaged in what might be for most an interesting task, one or two would give trouble. . . she should be there. Before the lesson, we should discuss it and after the lesson. . . she should give me feedback. Most of the time I don't get any and I think she should tell me whether it was good and where I needed help and stuff like that.

In terms of their role in evaluating individual trainees, some cooperating teachers indicated that, at the outset of the practice teaching exercise, they had made notes, but stopped when they realised that they were not being asked for their notes. In only one school did cooperating teachers indicate that they had been asked by the supervisor of the trainee teachers assigned to that school about how they would evaluate the trainees. The principal of that school said that, since he had been principal that was his first experience of collaboration between supervisors of the college concerned and staff at this practice teaching site:

He [the College supervisor] made us feel our school was not being used, then. Our school was being made part of a bigger, global thing. . . . Before, I never felt like that.

7.4.9 Post-lesson conferencing sessions

The supervising lecturers displayed different approaches to the post-lesson conferencing sessions. All supervisors found something positive to say about the lesson. About half of the supervisors adopted a technical rationality approach in the post-conference, focusing on the elements of the lesson--the objectives, the type of strategies used, the evaluation, and the closure. A lot of time was spent by these lecturers on discussion of the effective use of resources, use of the blackboard, the clarity of charts, and so on. Typically, these discussions would begin with the supervisor asking the trainee to give his/her views of the lesson. After a few short sentences from the trainee, the supervisor would literally take over, pointing out how the lesson could be improved in the areas mentioned above.

This approach by these supervising lecturers fits well with the focus of PET as outlined in the syllabus document and other supplementary materials. It also indicates that these lecturers are faithfully following the official instrument that is supposed to be used for assessing trainees on teaching practice.

Other supervising lecturers, though, had more interactive sessions. They spent more time trying to find out what the particular trainee was trying to do in the lesson, and why he/she felt it was important. In a couple of instances, it seemed that the lecturers concerned had particular orientations (e.g., a leaning towards the use of dramatic episodes in the lesson) and tried to encourage the trainees to adopt these orientations.

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It would be interesting to see if the trainees, in later practice teaching, gradually come to reflect for themselves about the criteria for effective instruction. In this first practice teaching session, trainees seemed to be extremely focused on the supervisor's definition of good practice, and did not seem to be seeing good practice as responsiveness to the context and classroom dynamics.

In one instance, a supervisor also seemed to define his role as being to help trainees to fit into the climate of the school to which they had been assigned for practice teaching. This supervisor had indicated in an interview that, in his vision of the practice teaching process, the student teacher should "become part of the school and really understand what it is to be a teacher in a school."

7.4.10 Summary

The practice teaching exercise is considered by both college staff and trainees to be one of the most important parts of the curriculum delivered to trainee teachers. As one teacher educator put it:

> And teacher training to me, the final important factor is your going out there and being able to teach effectively. If you have 10 distinctions but you cannot teach the Infant class or the Junior class or the Senior class that you are attached to, the principal will want to know what we are doing at Valsayn.

Yet, data from the first teaching practice round suggested that a number of factors detract from the effectiveness of teaching practice in preparing teachers for the real world of the classroom. These limitations of the programme include the following:

1. Insufficient coordination of activities between specialist lecturers and lecturers in the PET programme results in disjunctures in instruction given to trainees, and sometimes causes confusion in the minds of these trainees.

2. The lack of formal communication mechanisms to facilitate a process by which the schools that host the trainees are made an effective part of the training programme. Schools often do not perceive themselves as being made an integral part of the process. This may lead, in some cases, to their level of participation being limited to simply having the trainees in their classrooms. Even in those cases where schools feel actively involved, adequate feedback mechanisms do not exist to provide the colleges with a constant source of reliable information about how the trainees function within host schools.

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3. The actual practice sites--the schools--provide the trainees with widely varying experiences. Not all trainees may have adequate opportunities to practise strategies and skills to which they have been introduced in the programme. Physical conditions range from excellent to poor; cooperating teachers may be involved or detached, helpful or less than helpful. Schools may integrate trainees into their communities to a greater or lesser extent. Hence, trainees may profit more or less from their training experience, based on factors that are extraneous to the curriculum of both colleges' and to their own abilities and understandings.

4. Trainees often come to the practice teaching experience feeling insecure about their ability to plan units and lessons adequately, and many seem to be inadequately prepared to deal with certain pedagogical tasks such as teaching for conceptual understanding, and questioning pupils to encourage higher-order thinking. Some trainees were also unclear about some aspects of subject matter content.

5. The consciousness of trainees that they are being assessed from the first practice teaching session appears to lead them to be highly sensitive to the expectations of their supervisors, whose idiosyncratic understandings of what constitutes "good teaching practice" play a significant role in shaping trainees' strategies and reactions in the classroom. This may, to some extent, diminish their ability to be responsive to the dynamics of the lesson as it progresses, and of the classroom. This is especially likely in situations where supervisors define their own roles primarily as directing trainees and transmitting knowledge, rather than as collaborating with them in constructing meaning about what teaching entails. Hence, a transmission pedagogical model may be given a higher value in the hidden curriculum, even if transactional models (i.e., inquiry and problem-based approaches) and transformational models (i.e., approaches which require trainees to develop their own understandings of how to be responsive to classroom dynamics) are encouraged in the explicit curriculum.

6. The constraints imposed by the timing of practice teaching sessions, and by the time needed by trainees to fulfil the required number of practice sessions, often impose a sense of strain on cooperating teachers who feel that their own work is kept back, and that their (own) students' progress is retarded as a result. This, in turn, affects the willingness of teachers to act as cooperating teachers for this exercise.

In spite of the difficulties and shortcomings identified, however, observation of actual classroom experiences suggests that many trainees, even by the end of the first practice session, demonstrate adequate knowledge of the course content in the various subject areas of the primary school curriculum. Other achievements noted were as follows:

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1. Trainees were able to establish a good rapport with their pupils and interacted comfortably with them. Generally, trainees were also able to establish a certain level of interaction within their classrooms, and to select and practise classroom management strategies to promote such interaction.

2. All trainees seemed very aware of the importance of selecting and developing stimulating resource materials and, in some cases, trainees invested a considerable amount of planning time in accessing and developing such materials.

3. Cooperating teachers sometimes expressed a sense that they learned, or were reminded of, alternative approaches to instruction by watching some of the trainees carrying out the practice teaching exercise; some indicated that they wanted to use these approaches in their own practice in the future.

7.5   Teaching Practice – Second Round

7.5.1 Procedure

Four researchers were engaged in this aspect of the work during the period October-November 1999. In all, teaching practice sessions were observed at 14 schools. Seven of these schools hosted trainee teachers from Corinth Teachers' Training College, while the other seven schools hosted trainees from Valsayn. Eight supervisors were involved in this second round of the research; of these, seven had been involved in the first round. Altogether, 38 trainees were observed--20 from Corinth and 18 from Valsayn. Of the trainees observed during the second round, three, at Corinth, had also been observed during the first round. All the other trainees were being observed for the first time by the researchers. This situation existed because, typically, trainees are seldom assigned to the same supervisor in the second round of teaching practice as in the first round.

The classes observed were similar in composition to those observed in the first round. Class sizes ranged from 15-35 pupils, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls.

The breakdown of the lessons observed was as follows: Language Arts/Literature - 13; Mathematics – 9; Science - 3; Social Studies – 6; Art and Craft – 5; Agricultural Science - 3; Physical Education - 0; Family Life Education – 2.

Nineteen cooperating teachers were interviewed--10 from schools hosting Corinth trainees and the other 9 from schools hosting trainees from Valsayn. Recorded interviews were conducted with 17 trainees--5 at Corinth and 12 at Valsayn. Interviews were also conducted with two principals and one vice principal of schools hosting Corinth trainees, and with

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principals of two schools hosting Valsayn trainees. Post-conferencing sessions were observed, and notes taken on these sessions, at all schools, but only 10 were recorded.

7.5.2 Summary

The following significant features of this second teaching practice round were observed:

- **Changes in trainees' performance over the two rounds**

There was no consistent trend in terms of growth observed between the first and second teaching practice rounds. Seven supervisors did indicate that they saw improvements in the general standard of performance of trainees supervised in the second practice, but one supervisor said she saw no significant shifts in different aspects of trainees' performance and that, in her experience, the real shift came during the last teaching practice. Another supervisor said that there were some trainees who appeared to have regressed, and who actually performed worse during the second round. In the cases where this happened, however, the supervisor attributed their apparent regression to the fact that trainees did not feel comfortable teaching the age groups to which they were assigned for the second teaching practice. This suggestion was borne out by the comments of some of the trainees themselves. In the one case where a researcher saw the same group at both teaching practices, he indicated that the trainees he saw seemed to have improved in their grasp of the concepts central to their subject areas and in their techniques. He noted, too, that their lesson plans seemed better conceptualised, and that they seemed more confident.

- **Trainees' preparation: Content knowledge**

There continued to be some deficiencies in trainees' knowledge of subject content, especially in areas that may not have been emphasised on the curricula of the primary schools from which trainees came to the training college. Areas that are traditionally emphasised on the primary school curriculum are often also those areas where many trainees demonstrated a surer grasp of content knowledge. Some trainees, and one supervisor interviewed, suggested that trainees' level of experience with teaching the content of certain subjects on the primary school syllabus before coming to the teachers' college was a significant factor in determining their grasp of the content at this stage. However, this is not invariably true, as college lecturers in subject areas like mathematics and English, which are emphasized on the primary school curriculum, described significant deficiencies in trainees' grasp of important concepts in these subjects.

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- **Trainees' preparation: General pedagogical skills**

Trainees observed on this round generally demonstrated a significantly greater knowledge of a range of strategies for facilitating learning, including a wider range of student–centred approaches, than was the case with trainees observed during the first teaching practice round. They also showed a greater willingness to use these strategies. At this stage, however, their ability to utilise the strategies effectively was still somewhat uncertain. Trainees also still seem challenged in terms of their ability to respond spontaneously to the dynamics of classroom situations, although many who were interviewed seemed more aware of the sorts of contingencies that might arise, and made some attempt to consult with the cooperating teachers beforehand, where possible, and to plan for such contingencies.

Trainees often said that they did not feel adequately prepared to employ methods and strategies that might be appropriate for meeting the specific developmental needs of pupils at different levels of the primary school. As before, trainees established an excellent rapport with their pupils, and made every effort to bolster their confidence and establish a classroom environment where they felt emotionally secure.

- **Trainees' preparation: Pedagogical content knowledge**

While there was some improvement on the part of the trainees, at least two demonstrated that they were still uncertain about how to deal with concepts and to make them accessible to pupils in some subject areas.

- **Professionalism of trainees**

A decline was observed in the work ethic of some trainee teachers at Valsayn Teachers' College, as compared to those observed during the first teaching practice round. This manifested itself in different ways, including a greater level of unpunctuality, absenteeism, and failure to prepare lessons adequately. Trainees and cooperating teachers also admitted that, for these trainees, there was a clear difference in the type of effort they were willing to expend when observed by their supervisors as compared to what they did when supervisors were absent.

- **Quality of practice sites**

The wide range in quality of the facilities offered at different practice sites continued to play a significant role in determining the types of opportunities offered to trainees to apply the strategies and techniques they were being taught at the teachers' colleges. "Range in quality" subsumes such features as: physical characteristics of the host schools, professional

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expertise and cooperativeness of cooperating teachers, and school cultures which are more or less receptive to innovative teaching approaches. In schools and classrooms observed, however, with only a few exceptions, attempts were made to make the trainees feel welcome and to help them to fit into the culture of the schools.

• **Trainees' perceptions of the teaching practice**

All trainees agreed that the teaching practice was an important and valued part of the teachers' college experience. However, most trainees continued to speak of it as highly stressful and as being of varying helpfulness. This was due mainly to the following features of the experience:

1. Trainees' consciousness that they were being evaluated by their supervisors, which, they said, sometimes constrained them in the risks they were willing to take in trying new things when observed by supervisors.

2. Trainees' perceptions that different supervisors provided different levels of guidance and supervision, even in terms of the number of visits paid to different trainees.

3. The grueling workloads imposed in cases where cooperating teachers were absent, and trainees took full responsibility for their classes, without getting adequate feedback on their practice.

4. The differing levels of cooperation and professional expertise of cooperating teachers, so that there were significant differences in the type of guidance and feedback trainees got in sessions that were not observed by their supervisors. Such sessions necessarily constituted the greater proportion of the teaching practice.

• **Communications between host schools and colleges**

Host schools, and some supervisors, continued to express the hope that the communication lines between the college and the host schools might be improved. Interviews elicited the fact that, although some supervisors tried to make principals and staff aware of what was hoped for from the host schools during the teaching practice sessions, and what was expected of the trainees, this was not always the case. As a result, different principals and cooperating teachers had different understandings of what practices and outcomes might be expected, and regulated their own conduct to the trainees accordingly.

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7.6   **Discussion**

This study has revealed that teaching practice, as currently conceived and executed, is problematic. It is problematic from several angles. There is the question of the kind of primary school teacher that is necessary for the schools in Trinidad and Tobago today. There is the question of the kind of curriculum that will best prepare these teachers. There is also the question of the nature of the teaching practice experience that will best prepare trainees to function in today's schools.

Problems surfaced particularly with respect to the difficulty that trainees experience in negotiating the theory/practice interface. Perhaps trainees need to be given more opportunities to become aware of their beliefs about teaching and its contexts, and to question these beliefs in the light of their new experiences. There is little reference in the teachers' college curriculum document (except in the case of Language Arts) to developing capacities in trainees for reflective action. In the absence of any stated philosophical orientation, there is also no reference point for reflection, although the concept of reflection on action (Schon, 1983) is embedded in the teaching practice as part of the post-lesson conferences. A greater emphasis on reflective action, both reflection on action and reflection in action (Schon, 1983), may help to reduce some of the problems being currently experienced with the theory/practice interface. It may also help to reduce the intensity of complaints from several quarters that the trainees tend to be deficient in the area of methodology.

The arrangements for school attachments for teaching practice also need to be looked at more carefully. It is difficult to understand why closer links do not exist between supervising lecturers, cooperating teachers, and principals of cooperating schools. Neither the college officials nor Ministry of Education staff have been able to organise, on a sustained basis, for the proper articulation of the roles and functions of these various stakeholders, and their interaction in meaningful ways. One would also need to examine the structure of the attachment period in the schools. The current arrangement of three block periods does not seem to be the most efficient one, although trainees did report that they had received some benefits from the exposure. If the trainees' presence in a real classroom is seen as essential for the development of good practice, and given that the nature of the primary school classroom in Trinidad and Tobago is changing rapidly, then a longer school attachment, with properly trained cooperating teachers, would seem to be a more viable option.

Is primary teacher education at the teachers' colleges in Trinidad and Tobago making a difference in the teaching abilities of trainees who undertake the two-year programme? The evidence suggests that trainees do make some gains as they move through the programme. The further question that must be asked, though, is: "At what costs are these gains made?"

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As presently constituted, there seems to be a heavy cost with respect to trainees' physical, mental, and emotional energy, and there is little evidence that these high costs are counterbalanced by superior outcomes. The question of financial cost has not been considered in this study, but indications are that the efficiency of the system can also be queried on this basis. Perhaps the time is right for the re-engineering of the teachers' college curriculum to cater more efficiently for the desired outcomes.

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. In order to standardise teaching practice requirements, roles and responsibilities of the partners must be articulated and clearly communicated. The fragile institutional relationships between the colleges and the receiving schools need to be strengthened. There must be some formalised inter-institutional agreement to guide the nature of the participation. Since the college administrators, the supervising lecturers, and the cooperating schools are all partners in the practice component of teacher training, there must be shared understandings of individual roles and responsibilities. The school attachment in the preparation of teachers is assumed to be a no-cost factor. True partnership, however, is a high-stakes investment where each partner puts into the equation improvement strategies that are meaningful, with each partner sharing the responsibility for making the improvements a reality. There must be the creation of new roles and role relationships that fully acknowledge the roles of the receiving schools and the cooperating teachers. These changes require commitment, time and resources, and new patterns of governance that rest on shared assumptions about teaching.

2. Criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers must be indicated. There must be formal recognition and preparation of cooperating teachers. Cooperating teachers should have professional certification and should be selected based on recommendations from principals and school supervisors. They should be given additional training through workshops/short courses on mentoring and clinical supervision, after which they may be referred to as "expert" or "distinguished" teachers. These "distinguished" teachers will then form a pool from which cooperating teachers may be selected as required.

3. There should be incentives for cooperating teachers. In order to encourage teachers to continue their professional development, "distinguished" teachers should be formally recognised (e.g., by upgrading or certification), and those who serve as cooperating teachers should be given a small stipend. In addition, such school-based responsibility should be considered a criterion for promotion.

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4. The structure of the school attachment must be revisited. Trainee teachers need to spend longer periods in the receiving schools and, so, other options for restructuring the teaching practice should be explored. One option is to have curriculum modules organised in blocks, so that one term is devoted to teaching practice. This would allow all trainees and supervisors to be out in the field at the same time, enhancing the quality of supervision as well as feedback. It is proposed that all the stakeholders come together to work out the best arrangement for the school attachment.

5. Assessment practices must be revisited. The system of grading trainees from the initial teaching practice sessions should be discontinued. The initial period should provide trainees with the necessary support to improve their practice, allowing opportunities for self-assessment through personal reflections, as well as feedback from supervisors and cooperating teachers. There should be clear criteria for assessment, and grading practices should be consistent.

B.   Experiences of Newly Qualified Teachers

7.7   **Background**

Research on beginning teachers and how they experience the process of beginning to teach has focused on the prior beliefs of beginning teachers, the teacher education experience, and the first years of practice (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Most of these studies, however, have focused on pre-service teachers who enter teacher education programmes with no prior classroom experience, and whose first year as newly qualified teachers is their first year in the classroom except for their teaching practice.

In Trinidad and Tobago, this is not usually the case. The recruitment and selection process for primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago requires applicants to possess at least five CXC/GCE O Level passes in at least three subject groups: mathematics, English language, and a science subject. It is not compulsory that recruits be professionally trained before they begin their teaching careers. In many instances, recruits are assigned to schools before having had the benefit of professional teacher training. During the 1990s, therefore, most of the teachers who entered teachers' college in Trinidad and Tobago would have had at least two years experience as assistant teachers at the primary school level. In this study, all the newly qualified teachers had been in the classroom as assistant teachers for at least two years prior to being trained. They may have been given a short induction course, been placed with an experienced teacher, or been involved in the on-the-job training programme before going into the classroom.

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This sub-study looked at the impact on, and the interaction with, the educational system of the newly qualified teachers. The research questions were the following:

- What are experienced teachers' perceptions of the value of the present teachers' college programme?
- How are newly trained teachers socialised into the school working culture?
- What happens to the knowledge and skills acquired at teachers' college?

7.8   Methodology

Newly qualified teachers were identified as those teachers who had graduated from the teachers' colleges in the three previous years. Eight such teachers were interviewed: six females and two males from five schools in the eastern part of the island. The schools were chosen because they were easily accessible and included both denominational and government primary schools. There were two government schools, one Roman Catholic, one Hindu, and one Muslim.

Three principals were interviewed, and data were also obtained from a focus group interview with principals. Classroom observation was also carried out with seven teachers as the eighth teacher did not wish to be observed.

7.9   Experienced Teachers' Perceptions of the Value of the Present Teachers' College Programmes

Based on their assessment of the performance of the newly qualified teachers in their schools, principals had both positive and negative perceptions of the teachers' college programme. Most of the principals had very positive comments about the attitude of the newly qualified teachers to their work, They found them to be enthusiastic, energetic, hard working, and committed, "willing to go the extra mile." As one principal put it:

> The newly qualified teachers seem to want to put everything into what they do. That is my view of the newly qualified teacher. Fresh out of college they have all the ideas, they want to get things done. They want to get a lot of things done overnight.

However, two principals, while they agreed that the majority of the newly qualified teachers were positive in their approach, cited two exceptions to this rule. Both teachers had taught in secondary schools prior to their training and were unhappy with their placement at a primary school. Their dissatisfaction was seen in their lack of enthusiasm and, in one case, frequent absenteeism.

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Apart from their attitude to work, the principals commented favourably on the newly qualified teachers' attitude to, and relationship with, the children in their class. In terms of teaching skills, the principals found that the newly qualified teachers were not as well prepared as they expected. While the new teachers had the potential to be good teachers, they had some problems, which, in the principals' view, pointed to the need for the teachers' college to pay more attention to this area.

The principals felt that the emphasis in the teachers' college programme was on the acquisition of content knowledge to the detriment of methodology. One principal said:

> I always feel that a teachers' college should be a place where people will learn how to teach. The methodology, that is important. I have discerned a marked difference between the work that is done at teachers' college and the work that is done by the curriculum facilitators as they come to the school. And, therefore, I say there needs to be a greater concentration on methodology; how to teach the particular subjects.

Yet, despite the flaws, they recognise, in the newly qualified teachers, the positive impact of what they have learnt in the teachers' college with respect to curriculum delivery. One principal felt that the newly qualified teachers came out with an understanding of the new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and language. She also felt that based on their teaching practice experience, they continued to use charts and manipulatives to make their lessons exciting.

Another principal noted a change in the institution because of the influence of a newly trained teacher who was implementing some of the new methods that he had learnt.

> I have found that his delivery methods are really different, and I mean in a positive way. When we were trying to implement the new language arts syllabus, he was very helpful because he had been exposed to it and there was a change in the institution because of his methods. We were able to change those big heavy benches and have a setting that incorporated a kind of group work. He was instrumental in getting the other teachers to do it as well.

However, this was not the experience of all principals. Another principal lamented the fact that the newly qualified teachers did not maintain the kind of teaching that they displayed on teaching practice:

> What you see when teachers come to teaching practice and what you see when you come out of college is two different things. At college, they will go out of their way a hundred miles to get their charts and everything necessary to gain that extra mark.

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> When they come out of college you don't see that same kind of enthusiasm in terms of their teaching, in terms of their preparation, and in terms of their delivery.

One of the reasons put forward to account for this was the difference between what the newly qualified teachers learn at college and the reality of the classroom situation.

> At times, though, some of the things, applying some of the psychology and some of the methods they get for classroom control, the things they get from training college, it is not applicable to our situation lots of times. . . I get the impression talking to the newly trained teachers that what they learn in college and what they come here and find are entirely different.

Another reason put forward for newly qualified teachers not performing as they did on teaching practice was the fact that most schools were strapped for funds, and could not provide the necessary resources for the teachers to put into practice what they had learnt in teachers' college. As a result, teachers got frustrated and lapsed.

Principals felt that, as a general rule, the newly qualified teachers had the requisite content knowledge to deliver the syllabus. The only deficiencies noted were in the core areas of mathematics and language.

While the sample of principals was small, and their views of the teachers' college programme were based, by and large, on the performance of the individual teachers who came to their school, there was consensus on some issues. They noted some positive outcomes of the training experience, such as a positive attitude to work, a good relationship with the children, and some use of new methods. However, the general feeling was that not enough attention was being paid to methodology and that too much time was spent on content knowledge. They felt that this should not be so, and that the function of a teachers' college is to teach students how to teach.

7.10   The Socialisation of Newly Qualified Teachers into the School Working Culture

The working culture of a school, like any other organisation, may be defined in many different ways. For example, Ouchi (1981) defines working organisational culture as all those symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the values and beliefs of that organisation to its employees. Robbins (1991) defines organisational culture as a common perception held by the organisation's members; a system of shared meanings. Mintzberg (1989), on the other hand, regards organisational culture as a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organisation's members, which produces norms that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups and which determines the way things are done

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in the organisation. The common thread that links all these definitions is the notion that organisational culture has a socialising effect on the members of the organisation through the shared beliefs, myths, norms, ceremonies, tacit assumptions, values, and customs. It is generally accepted, therefore, that socialisation is the manner in which employees are transformed from organisational outsiders to participating and effective group members. This concept is important for schools because the way teachers are assigned and inducted into schools impacts significantly on the type of teacher they become.

The newly trained teachers met a range of socialising forces from principals, teachers, students, and the school environment. The most common strategy used by principals to induct the newly qualified teachers into the working culture of the school was a system of mentoring. As a rule, newly qualified teachers would be attached to a senior teacher who would monitor their teaching, and provide assistance and support when needed. In most cases, the principal also did some monitoring.

Other principals assigned the mentoring role to the heads of departments or the vice principal. None of the principals provided any training or additional support for these mentors to help them carry out this function. Other members of staff, including the principal, who were not specifically assigned to the newly qualified teachers also provided professional, emotional, and material support.

While the majority of the teachers indicated that they received a great deal of support from their colleagues, this was not the case for all of the teachers interviewed. One reported that she got help neither from her colleagues nor from the principal who was afraid of offending the senior teachers:

> Well, support here has not been very good. You do not get the support of the senior staff as you should in terms of taking into consideration. . . I have a Standard 5 class and we have to correct all our compositions ourselves, nobody volunteers. Nobody comes in to help you teach anything. It is just you are thrust into a classroom and you have to deal with it as a younger teacher on staff. So I would not say I have been helped much.

This lack of help from colleagues was attributed by another newly trained teacher to the heavy workload of the primary school teacher. Even one of the principals noted the difficulty in finding time for sitting and talking to the newly qualified teachers to monitor their progress.

The level of material support provided by both principal and colleagues for the newly qualified teachers was less than the emotional and professional support. The evidence from

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both newly trained teachers and principals indicated that, in almost all schools, little or no material resources or teaching aids were provided. Material resources were limited to very basic items such as markers, bristol board and, in rare cases, some books. The more experienced teachers had grown accustomed to providing for themselves most of the material resources and teaching aids needed to enhance their classroom practice. The newly qualified teachers quickly became aware of this situation.

In some instances, the inadequate support, both emotional and material, from the principal and other colleagues contributed to some newly qualified teachers being uncomfortable and experiencing a low sense of efficacy. In a few cases, the newly trained teachers expressed the desire to be transferred to other schools where they felt they might derive greater psychic rewards. One teacher expressed this sentiment in the following manner:

> Eventually, I will like to leave here maybe in a year or two. You don't get the support and I really want to do it, and sometimes you are bursting and you cannot say . . . because people get offended.

The newly qualified teachers are not only inducted into the manner in which the school wants the curriculum delivered, but are also introduced to the school's expectations for the teacher. This is done by making the new teachers aware of the school's policies with respect to certain matters, for example, discipline, dress, and assembly. The principal or head of department usually assumes the responsibility for doing this.

Overall, there was no structured programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers but, rather, an informal system of mentoring and help from other teachers in dealing with specific problems related to the syllabus, methodology, or classroom management. Most principals made themselves available to the new teachers for advice, and held regular meetings with them to monitor their progress and discuss syllabi, schemes of work, and record keeping.

The staff also contributed to the socialisation of the new teacher by sharing information about the way things were done in the school in order to make the new teacher fit in more quickly. Principals also ensured that the new teachers were made aware of the school's policies and expectations.

7.11 The Use Made by Newly Qualified Teachers of the Knowledge and Skills Acquired at the Teachers' College

The newly qualified teachers were asked a variety of questions about their classroom practice in order to elicit from them whether they felt that the teachers' college experience had been

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helpful. They were also asked whether, in their first years of teaching, they drew upon any knowledge and skills they had acquired during their training programme. They were also observed in the classroom. The responses ranged from those who said that their training had not helped them at all, through those who felt that it helped somewhat but not much, to those who felt that it had helped a great deal. The general consensus was that the teachers' college programme was too academic; that the content of some subjects was not relevant to the content taught in the primary school and, most importantly, that they had not been exposed to enough methodology. However, even those who said that their training had not helped much, when asked about specific aspects of their practice, acknowledged the input of the training course.

In the majority of cases, the newly qualified teachers in this study reported varying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the programme offered at the training college, in terms of its relevance and usefulness for the primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, all teachers reported that the foundation subjects (psychology, sociology, and philosophy) were very beneficial. In all instances, participants expressed the view that they were better able to understand their students than before their college experience. They also indicated that they were better equipped to deal, not only with their colleagues on a professional basis but, more pertinently, with many of the learning difficulties of their students. A newly trained teacher, expressing the views of most participants, reported that:

> I feel my role has expanded. Even though I may have been a good friend to the students before, now I am able to see it in a different light. Where you might have dealt with a problem before, now after training, and dealing with the psychology aspect of everything, I feel it brings a new dimension into what I am doing. I am able to deal with students in a more individualistic level. I am getting through to them in that way.

Another teacher indicated a number of areas that helped her to deal with her students more effectively:

> OK, the Ed. classes, psychology and sociology of education, those classes helped as well as my physical education. . . . It helps you understand children, it helps you adjust how you think and behave towards the children.

In spite of their perception that not enough emphasis was given to methodology, teachers gave examples of what they had learnt which was helpful, and these were related to methods, teaching strategies, curriculum delivery, and classroom management. Some teachers focused on specific teaching skills which they had added to their repertoire such as lesson planning, introducing a lesson, questioning, giving examples, developing concepts, and correction

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strategies. Others indicated that they still used resource materials such as charts that they had made at college in their classes.

Specific subject areas were cited where the work done in college influenced how they taught the subject. Several teachers mentioned the approach to reading and writing. Another indicated that she was helped in all areas; in science, the process approach that she was exposed to was what she needed to bring out the processes in the classroom, and in social studies, she has learnt that teaching the subject requires using maps and other apparatus instead of just giving notes. Two teachers cited the area of measurement and evaluation that helped them in assessing the students, as well as in constructing their tests.

With respect to the teaching methods learnt at the training college, the newly qualified teachers varied somewhat in their assessment of the quality and applicability of those methods. On the one hand, most participants felt that their instructional practice had benefited in terms of their ability to prepare and deliver the curriculum. This aspect of the newly qualified teachers' professional competence was corroborated through the observational phase of data collection. Through the classroom observations, it was clear that many areas including curriculum planning, delivery, and assessment were positively impacted by the training methods to which the newly qualified teachers were exposed. Similarly, the manner of their interaction both at the teacher-teacher and the teacher-student levels suggested some measure of internalisation of the skills, concepts, theories, and competencies learnt at the training college.

One constant theme was the difficulty in applying what they had been taught in college to the real-life situation. The newly qualified teachers found that they had to modify what they had learnt in college to cope with the classroom reality. They found that there were constraints of time, resources, and even of parents who did not understand what they were trying to do.

More than one teacher felt that children did not respond to the alternative methods suggested for classroom control and discipline in the college, and reverted to more traditional methods. Another felt that the college lecturers were too removed from the classroom situation:

> I think some of those lecturers need to come and spend some time in a primary school classroom and see what it is really like, and then try to apply what they are telling you and see if it is feasible. Because some of the things are not practical. And a lot of the things they teach you at college, I am not sure if it helps you to be a more effective teacher.

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The issue of college teachers' ability to demonstrate by their own practice that the methods they advocated could work was echoed by more than one teacher.

> What I would like to see being done is the lecturers actually bringing in classes to the school and showing us exactly how to handle the situations, and not just one day, over a period of time. Don't just preach it, show us what could be done.

The relevance of the subject matter content of the academic subjects was also questioned. It was felt that the in-depth treatment of some areas was more relevant to teaching in the secondary school, and that the time spent on these topics could have been devoted instead to the professional component of their training.

The teachers were divided in their assessment of whether the knowledge and skills acquired at the college were helping them in their teaching in the classroom. Of the eight teachers, three were very positive that the knowledge acquired was helping them to teach more effectively, to relate better to their students, and to feel more confident of themselves as teachers. They were also aware that they had changed in the way they dealt with problems; using the knowledge acquired at college to find solutions.

The other five, while acknowledging that some of what they had learnt was helpful, felt that, overall, their teaching had not changed significantly because of the training college experience. One of these teachers felt that she was still doing exactly what she did before going to college. For her, nothing has changed. She felt that she was already a teacher prior to entering college and she feels the same way now. The most that she has gained from college is "the bit of knowledge." This was also the view of another teacher who felt that prior to going to college he already knew what he was doing in the classroom, but that college just put it in more theoretical terms. He also felt that what he had learnt at college was mainly subject matter knowledge that was not relevant to what was taught at primary level.

In general, newly qualified teachers felt that the teachers' college programme did not prepare them adequately for work in the school setting. They were aware of the incongruity between their college experiences, including teaching practice, and the classroom reality. In such a situation, they focused on survival strategies and, in many cases, replaced the recommended strategies they had learnt with practical solutions that provided results. They became more concerned with classroom management and control and, in some cases, reverted to traditional methods of achieving this.

There was a sense among these new teachers that the classroom situation provided the most valuable knowledge about teaching, and that the lessons of experience were privileged over the theoretical knowledge provided by the teachers' college. This resonated with the prior

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beliefs of some of the teachers who seemed to feel that teachers were born not made, and that good teachers improved their techniques by being in the classroom. For such teachers, the college experience was not seen as changing their practice significantly.

7.12 **Discussion**

Despite the perception of the newly qualified teachers that their teaching had not been significantly changed by the college experience, the evidence, both from the interviews and the classroom observations, seemed to indicate that through the professional training received by the newly qualified teachers, overwhelming benefits flowed to the schools. These benefits were demonstrated through the newly trained teachers' concern for proper lesson planning, proper and systematic development of the curriculum, concern for students' varying learning styles and, therefore, the need to focus on different forms of assessment.

This level of consciousness appeared to have been kindled at the training college, even though some teachers did not fully implement all the necessary strategies. For example, many teachers did not take too kindly to having to prepare lesson plans on a daily basis. They were, nevertheless, very conscious of their obligations to plan their lessons, even if those plans were not in a very detailed form. Also, all newly trained teachers were very much aware of the individual differences among students. They were conscious of the necessity to treat each student as an individual, bearing in mind the notion of multiple intelligences and their obligations to develop each student to his/her full potential.

The findings are similar to findings of other research studies on pre-service teachers, which suggest that beginning teachers learn to teach during their first year in the classroom, and that their growth as teachers had little to do with the knowledge given them in their teacher education programme (Hollingsworth, 1993, cited in Wideen et al., 1998).

The findings also suggest that teacher education programmes do little to change the prior beliefs of most teachers, who feel that what is learnt, while it seems feasible, often does not work in the classroom. However, there were teachers within the sample who felt that they had changed and, so, the challenge is to find out which aspects of the teacher education programme make the most difference in the continuing development and the practice of the beginning teacher.

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8 Costs and Financing, and Demand for Primary Teacher Education

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Chapter Eight

8.1   Introduction

Several questions shaped the work on costs and finance and on supply and demand. In this section the key issues discussed are:

- How much is spent on the training system in terms of salaries and non-salary recurrent expenditure?
- How much does it cost to produce a trained teacher?
- What will be the future demand for new primary teachers and how does this compare with the capacity of the college system?
- What opportunities are there to increase efficiency and effectiveness?

8.2   Costs of Training in the Colleges

The recurrent costs of training are primarily made up of the salaries paid to trainees and those paid to lecturers. These are paid directly from the Ministry of Education. Other costs make up a small proportion of total costs.

The monthly salary ranges for graduate teachers, teacher trainers, and principals of the teacher training colleges for the period 1992-1996 were between TT $3,731 and $4,941. In 1997, negotiations for improved salaries and working conditions were marked by "sick-outs" and protests by teachers. A new collective agreement was signed in 1997, which covered salaries and working conditions for the period 1996-1998. Table 8.1 shows the new salaries that are now in effect.

Table 8.1**: Salary Scales for Graduate Teachers and Training College Lecturers[2] (TT $)**

	Min.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Long1	Long2	Long3
1996	4,053	4,208	4,344	4,455	4,565	4,676	4,787	4,910	5,022	5,137	5,263
1997	4,134	4,292	4,431	4,544	4,656	4,770	4,883	5,008	5,123	5,240	5,368
1998	4,258	4,421	4,564	4,680	4,796	4,913	5,029	5,158	5,277	5,397	5,529

In addition to the salaries shown, all untrained teachers were awarded a monthly allowance of $200, all trained teachers were awarded an allowance of $300, and all administrators were awarded $400. A flat cost-of-living allowance of $50 was applied to all teachers on a monthly basis. Thus, average salaries for lecturers in the training colleges were between TT $5,000 and $5,500.

The salary scale for lecturers at the teachers' training colleges is the same as for graduate teachers at the secondary level. This is an anomaly that is of great concern to staff at the

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[2] Salary range increments A-G including three levels of longevity increments.

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teachers' colleges. While the Ministry of Education now demands post-graduate training as a prerequisite for teaching at the teachers' colleges, no such demand is made of secondary school teachers. Yet, the salaries for the two posts are the same. Since 1980, the Teacher Education Committee has recommended improved remuneration for the lecturers at the training colleges, but these recommendations have never been implemented.

The salaries bills for the two training colleges are given in Table 8.2. The bill consists of payment for a total of 62 lecturers on the staff of both colleges, two vice principals, and two principals. Teachers in training are on scholarship and also receive a monthly salary. Those trainees who possess qualifications at the CXC/GCE O Level only (Assistant Teacher II) receive a salary of $2,411 per month. Those trainees who also possess A Level qualifications (Assistant Teacher III) are paid $2,711 per month. No other allowances are paid to trainees.

Table 8.2**: Expenditure on Salaries, Goods and Services, Equipment, and Capital Projects - Teacher Education, 1994-1997**

Year	Salaries	Goods and Services	Minor Equipment	Capital
1994	17,418,772	65,456	15,462	1,459,100
1995	18,800,000	210,000	30,000	1,213,000

Since 1995, teacher training has not been listed as a separate item in the national accounts. The salary budget would have escalated in line with the number of staff on the establishment and the pay awards that have been made. On this basis, by 1998, total salary costs could be estimated as about TT $27.5 million.

Expenditure on goods and services is minimal and averages about TT $100,000 per college. This amount does not seem to have increased since 1995. Data from Valsayn indicate that about 20% of this is allocated to maintenance of equipment, 10% to building maintenance, and 70% to stationery and other office consumables. Small amounts of money are raised to supplement this budget but these seem to amount to less than TT $50,000 per year. Fund-raising is problematic, given the adult student body from all parts of the country and the lack of natural community-based groups with allegiance to the college, as might be the case with a school parent-teacher association. College facilities are sometimes used by community groups for events unconnected with teacher training. It appears that significant charges are not levied for this ad hoc use of facilities. Some corporate sponsorship is received in at least one of the colleges.

College libraries are supported from a separate vote from the Ministry of Education. In the last year, each college received between TT $150,000 - $250,000 for library books and equipment. This has enabled the updating of collections and the purchase of photocopiers and computers. It is surprising that this budget exceeds that available for all other recurrent running costs, including those directly related to learning and teaching material.

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The costs of teaching practice are mainly concerned with travel allowances. TT $0.30 - $0.40 cents per km is paid to tutors from ministry funds, against claims. This might amount to TT $200 per lecturer per practice or TT $600 per year, and is therefore marginal to overall costs.

8.3   Cost per Trainee Estimates

On the basis of these costs, it is possible to arrive at an estimate of the recurrent cost per trainee while they are enrolled in the colleges. Since the staff-student ratios are similar, and non-salary costs are small, there is no significant difference in these costs between the colleges. Overall, it would appear that in 1995, unit costs were about TT $26,700 (TT $19.040 million). In 1998 enrolment was 791, there were 52 lecturers in post (including principals), and about 20 ancillary staff. Based on average salary costs (including the new salary scales), this would give a cost per trainee per year in 1999 of about TT $35,000 (US $5,550). Thus, a trained teacher would cost about TT $70,000 to produce over two years. This is about three times GNP per capita.

8.4   Supply and Demand for Teachers

The Trinidad and Tobago education system has succeeded in providing nearly all its children with access to seven years of primary schooling. The crude transition rate to secondary grades is between 75% and 80%. When repeaters are taken into account, the real transition rate is somewhat less than 70%. Currently, average pupil-teacher ratios are about 23:1 at primary and 20:1 at secondary. Most importantly for future teacher demand, the cohort of primary school-age children is shrinking and attrition rates amongst teachers appear to be low. In the last three years, the decline in the size of the school-age cohort appears to have been between 3% and 4% per annum. Taken together, these factors mean that the demand for new primary teachers is modest and diminishing.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to increasing the transition rate into secondary school grades to 100%. This will result in an increasing demand for secondary teachers, moderated by the declining size of the cohort graduating from primary schools. Since this policy intention has been firmly made, the modelling of teacher requirements has included the assumption that this will be achieved over the next five years.

An enrolment-driven model was used to simulate the Trinidad and Tobago school systems. Primary gross enrolment rates (GER) are currently over 100% due to over-age enrolment. Repetition and dropout is low throughout the system except at the SEA (Standard 5) and CXC (Form 5) levels. Teacher attrition has initially been set between 3% and 4%. Between 1993/4 and 1995/6, the number of primary and secondary school teachers remained almost unchanged. The output of trained primary teachers over this period was about 400

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per year, representing about 5% of the teaching cadre. Since alternative employment opportunities are scarce (especially for primary teachers) it seems unlikely that attrition rates for teachers are greater than these estimates.

The simulation was used to project forward over the next 15 years. Enrolment projections generate the number of pupils in the education system at different levels. Using existing costs per pupil for primary and secondary places, it is then possible to chart the extent to which recurrent costs for the education system will increase as a result of increased enrolment. From the numbers enrolled, it is also possible to project the numbers of new teachers that will be needed for any given value of the pupil-teacher ratio.

Figure 8.1 shows enrolment changes in the baseline model. Primary enrolment declines from its present level of around 170,000 in public schools to about 105,000 in 2013. Secondary enrolments increase as a 100% transition rate into secondary is achieved, and peak at about 120,000 in 2006.

Figure 8.1**: Enrolment projections, 1996-2013.**
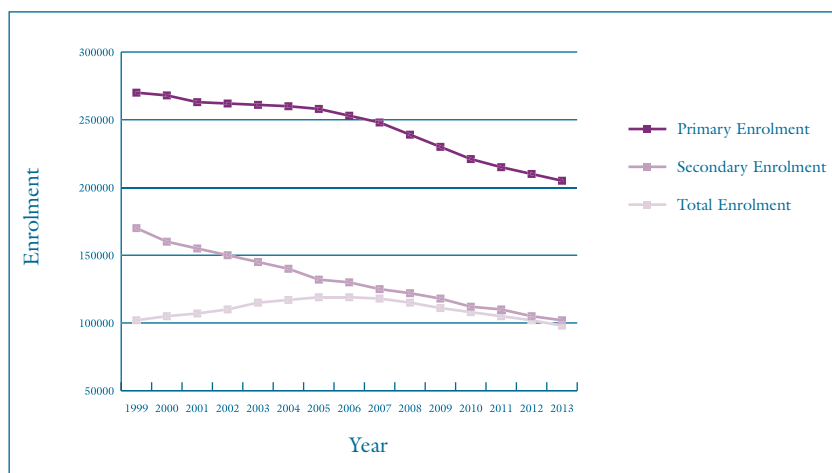
Figure 8.2 indicates how the costs of the school system will change as a result of the expansion of secondary school participation. Overall costs will fall as total enrolment falls. No real increase in budgetary allocation would be needed to sustain the changes incorporated into the baseline model to achieve universal secondary education, if pupil-teacher ratios and costs per student remain at existing levels.

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Figure 8.2**: Recurrent expenditure on primary and secondary as a proportion of current expenditure, 1999-2013**
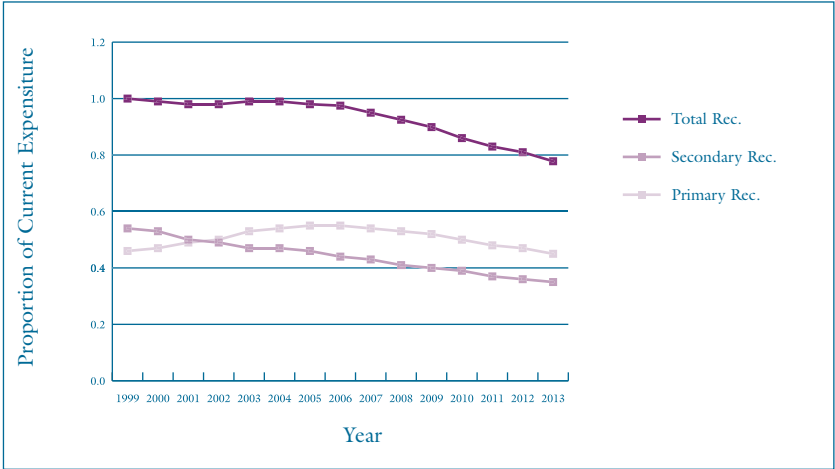
existing pupil-teacher ratios were maintained. The demand for new primary teachers is negative since teacher attrition is less than the rate of contraction in enrolments. Demand for secondary teachers as a result of increased participation peaks at about 400 a year and then falls as the long-term effects of falling school numbers have an impact.

Figure 8.3**: Demand for new teachers, 1996-2013 (A).**
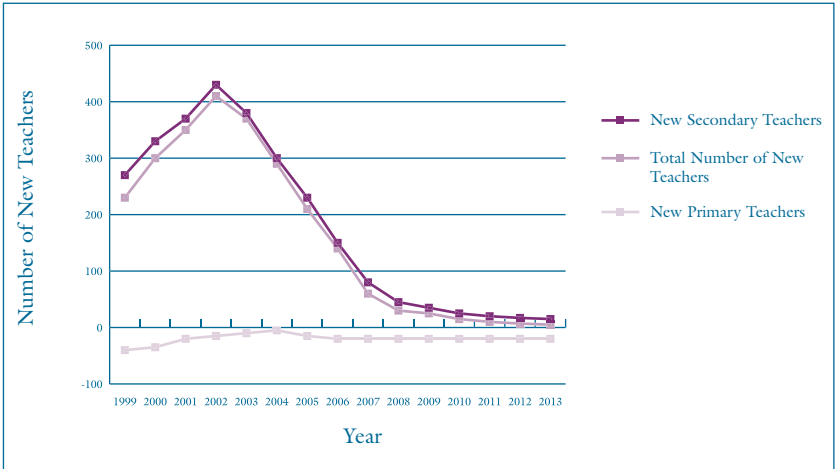
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The conclusion appears to be that new primary teachers are not needed and that initial training should be on a care and maintenance basis with a small output.

However, these projections of teacher demand ignore the need to train those currently untrained in the system. There are over 1,600 untrained teachers in primary schools who will need to become fully qualified. This could be achieved in successive intakes into the existing colleges. This demand needs to be added to the projections made below. If these teachers were retrained over four years, it would create an additional demand of 400 places per year to be added to the figures in the projections. At secondary level, half of all teachers do not possess a professional qualification. These number about 2,400. If these untrained secondary teachers were to receive professional training over six years, this would create an additional demand of 400 trainees per year.

It is also true that if other quality improvements were made in the school system, demand for teachers would change. If repetition rates were reduced through a combination of automatic promotion, elimination of the CEE, and more effective schools, teacher demand would fall as pupils moved through the system faster. If repetition rates were reduced to no more than 2% in each year group, the result would be as shown in Figure 8.4. Here, even fewer teachers are needed and demand for new secondary teachers falls to minimal levels after less than 10 years. (This excludes the training needs of untrained teachers currently in the system).

Figure 8.4. Demand for new teachers, 1996-2013 (B).
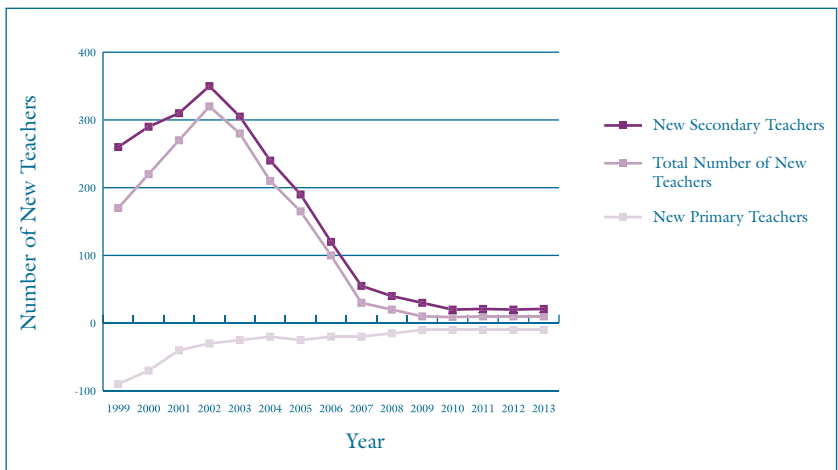
Figure 8.5 shows what the effect would be if the age cohort ceased to shrink at 3% as a result of an increase in the birth rate to replacement levels, that is, a constant size cohort with zero growth.

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In this case, primary teacher demand peaks at nearly 200 a year after 10 years in a system with low repetition. Secondary teacher demand fluctuates as, first, teachers are required to meet the demands of expanded enrolment and, later, the recovery in the birth rate ripples through into secondary enrolments.

Figure 8.5**: Demand for new teachers, 1996-2013 (C).**

Finally, the effect of decreasing the pupil-teacher ratio can be simulated. If secondary pupil-teacher ratios were to fall to 15:1 and primary to 20:1, Figure 8.6 shows the effect on teacher demand.

Demand for primary teachers increases in the first period as pupil-teacher ratios are reduced; demand for secondary teachers is much greater initially for the same reason. Primary demand stabilises at about 200 per year and secondary at about 400 per year.

The cost of the education system with all these developments would be about 15% greater than it is currently. If the size of the age group of school children continued to shrink, costs would be at or below current levels, but the system would be more efficient with lower repetition rates, pupil-teacher ratios would be significantly lower than in 1999, and all children could attend secondary schools.

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Figure 8.6: **Demand for new teachers, 1996-2013 (D).**
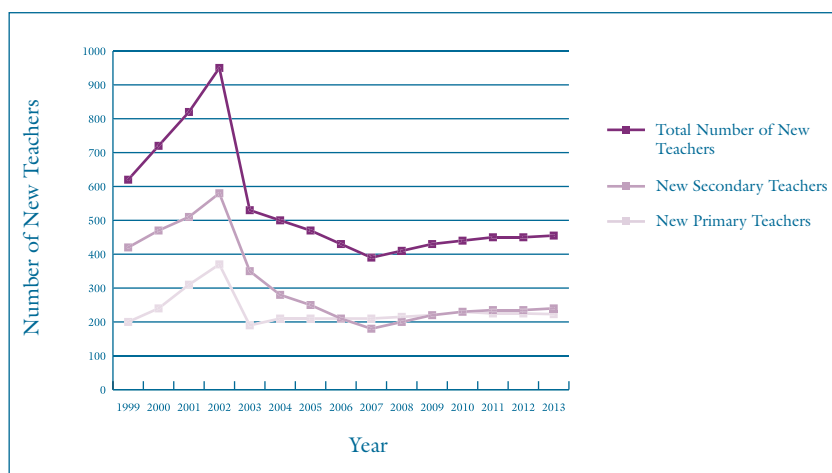
When the additional demand created by the need to train the 1,600 untrained teachers currently in the system is added to these projections, it is clear that the backlog of untrained primary teachers could be eliminated by 2004. From then on, there is a recurrent demand for primary teachers sufficient to support one college intake. If both colleges are to continue to train primary teachers, then there will be a need to re-profile the contribution they make to primary teacher development to include other kinds of support in addition to initial training. Secondary training needs should include the professional training of those currently untrained (say 400 a year for six years). This places annual demand between 800 and 1,000 in the first years, subsequently falling to about 300 per year.

It is not known what proportion of demand for new secondary teachers might be met by primary teachers migrating to the secondary level. Previous expansion of the secondary system did result in a significant number of primary teachers retraining to teach in secondary schools and draw higher salaries. If these numbers are substantial, then this will increase the demand for primary teachers.

The cost of supporting the fluctuations in demand that the model simulates depends on how the colleges are managed. Existing staffing levels sustain annual enrolments of about 400, and it is clear that the colleges have the capacity to train these numbers. If new entrants fall below this level and college staff are retained, then opportunities exist to increase quality and contact time with smaller groups of trainees. If the number of new entrants recruited falls to 200 or so, then more radical options may need consideration.

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8.5   **Discussion**

This analysis of primary teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago draws attention to the main features of the system, provides insights into the way in which teacher education is delivered through the colleges, illustrates what costs are incurred by different elements and identifies their sources, and projects forward likely demand for new primary teachers under different assumptions. The picture that emerges is one in which future demand will be low even if pupil-teacher ratios are allowed to drop to 20:1 in primary schools. Most new teachers will be needed to meet additional enrolments at secondary level as participation is universalised at this level.

Overall educational expenditure is unlikely to be stressed if current pupil-teacher ratios and costs per student are maintained in real terms. Falling pupil numbers create the opportunity to improve the amounts spent per child in schools. They also allow the possibility of increased investment in teacher education at primary level so that quality can be improved, and colleges become centres of excellence in practice and provide support for primary teacher development.

As demand for new primary teachers falls, structural changes may need to be considered. These include revisiting the OJT programme to establish what form it should take with reduced numbers of entrants; considering an extension of the role of the colleges to play a greater part in the support of untrained teachers during their period in schools, and after taking up their first appointments as new teachers; and evaluating the shape and content of the teacher education curriculum.

In the first case (the OJT programme), if demand for training places falls and frees up college lecturers' time, some of this could be allocated to developing a closer relationship with training for OJTs and devising mentoring strategies to nurture the development of untrained teachers prior to training. It is also the case that there is scope for the college staff to contribute to systematic support and development programmes during the first years of working as trained teachers, since no programme currently exists. This should enable support of new pedagogic practices and effective teaching to extend beyond the initial training period in a planned manner.

There is evidence that the current teacher education curriculum is heavily loaded with teaching periods, and contains substantial investments of time in supervised teaching practice. It seems probable that what is currently planned cannot be delivered in the time available with the constraints that apply. It may be that the approach adopted to teaching practice should be modified in the light of the prior experience of work in schools that all trainees possess. If this prior experience were mentored and supported consistently, it might substitute for some of the time currently devoted to teaching practice.

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The performance of the colleges appears compromised by a lack of investment in equipment, furniture, and learning materials[3]. If the salary costs of trainees are excluded, the operating cost per college trainee of appears to be no more than about twice those for secondary students, largely arising from lower student-staff ratios. If colleges are to be high-quality learning institutions, investment in learning resources per trainee will need to be increased.

More radical options could be considered. The costs of primary teacher training appear high because trainees are paid salaries while in full-time training. Secondary training is organised as an in-service activity and therefore does not bear such costs. Some mixture of in-service and full-time training would be cheaper than the existing arrangements. If numbers are smaller, and it is possible to raise entry qualifications as a result to include one or two A Levels, the need for some content upgrading may be lessened. This could make it possible to focus training more on pedagogical competence, and so on, and shorten the time of full-time attendance.

If demand does fall to lower levels, the option of alternate year entry into the colleges could be considered. This would increase cost per trained teacher but would provide opportunities to improve quality and increase the time spent with tutors in small groups. If coupled with more support pre- and post-training, this might well be an option worth considering if it led to much improved quality of new teachers. The length of training could also be increased from two years to three. However, this would increase costs if it were full-time training, and it is not clear what the gains would be in terms of the impact on the skills and competencies of newly qualified teachers.

The financial analysis and levels of future demand identify a window of opportunity for reform. The primary teacher education colleges are national institutions, which need to be supported as centres of excellence and which could and should support examples of best practice in primary schooling. They could also play a broader role in training and support for new teachers pre- and post-training to enhance and reinforce effective teaching methods. With falling enrolments, quality-enhancing reforms could be achieved at no additional cost to current levels of national expenditure. In summary, the analysis suggests giving attention to:

- Revisiting the OJT programme and its costs and benefits, and the role of the colleges and pre- and post-training support to release the potential of the programme.

- Rationalising the teacher education curriculum to allow more time for professional development activity focused on teaching competencies. Changes in the organisation of training could reschedule teaching practice components to recognise prior experience, and limit the amount of time allocated to summative rather than formative assessment.

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[3] The main learning materials used by students are lecturers notes and some text books.

8 Costs and Financing, and Demand for Primary Teacher Education

- Considering alternate year entry coupled with an expanded role for the college staff in primary school development activities. This could include an increased element of part-time release rather than full-time study for trainees, and professional development activities supported by the college staff pre- and post-training.

- Exploring the opportunity to develop first-level training for early childhood teachers in colleges.

- Raising entrance criteria to include A Level if these can be sustained without severely depleting the pool of applicants

- Including a separate budget line for college financing, with elements of programmed budgeting linked to levels of activity and throughput, and appropriate mechanisms to devolve some budgetary responsibility in ways that could provide incentives to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

- Increasing college non-salary recurrent funding on a more realistic basis to provide a richer learning environment, and improving the pay and status of teacher education college lecturers to attract and retain higher calibre staff

Chapter Nine   9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

9.1   Preamble

The Trinidad and Tobago component of the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) Project was a **field-based** research project. It was designed to gather **empirical data** that would generate understandings and explanations of the primary teacher education process that could inform policy formulation.

The project was made up of six sub-studies, namely, The OJT Programme; Characteristics, Images, Experiences and Expectations (of trainees); The Curriculum in the Teachers' Colleges; Teaching Practice Experience of Trainees; Newly Qualified Teachers; and Costs, Financing and Future Policy. The inputs/process/outputs model was used to conduct the research in each of these sub-studies. Specific emphasis was placed on hearing the voices of the major stakeholders, that is, the teacher trainees, primary school personnel and the teacher educators, through the use of qualitative research methods where applicable.

The general recommendations presented below arise out of the findings of the sub-studies as well as deliberations by key stakeholders in a MUSTER symposium held at the University of the West Indies in January 2002, at which the research findings were presented.

9.2   General Recommendations

1.   The Pre-Service Teacher Training (OJT) programme must be made compulsory for all prospective primary school teachers

❏   Trainees and primary school principals regard the OJT programme as an important component of the teacher education system. Trainees value their OJT exposure to lesson planning and classroom management when they begin their teaching practice attachment during the teachers' college programme and principals value the background experiences of OJT graduates who are assigned to their schools.

❏   Some trainees have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of mentoring provided on the programme. Therefore:

  •   Successful completion of the OJT programme should be a prerequisite for admission to the teachers' colleges.
  •   Proper training programmes must be mounted for all personnel involved in the delivery of the OJT programme, viz., principals, tutors and mentor teachers.
  •   The curriculum of the OJT programme should be reviewed to ensure that it allows for the development of basic classroom skills and a proper orientation to primary pupils and the context of primary school teaching by trainees.
  •   The OJT programme must be properly monitored and proper evaluations must be done periodically.

9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

- The OJT programme must be properly funded on a timely basis.
- The OJT programme must be provided with adequate administrative staff and proper support systems such as computers for the storage and management of data.
- The OJT programme should serve to identify those participants who have demonstrated by their attitude to teaching and their level of performance that they are not suitable for primary school teaching. This process should be facilitated by the administration of suitably designed/modified/selected attitude/aptitude tests.

2. **The identity of teacher trainees must be understood and catered for in the primary teacher education curriculum.**

❑ Teacher trainees enter their course of study with well-defined views of who is a "good teacher" but experience tensions caused by a mismatch between what they perceive a good teacher to be and the realities of the under-resourced classroom settings in which they must work and the low status accorded teachers in the society.

❑ Teacher trainees, on graduation, would be expected to enlarge their sphere of operation from a classroom focus to include school and community foci, as are embedded in reform movements such as school improvement planning and school-based management.

- The teacher education curriculum must, therefore, be modified to include these issues that are based on the identity of the trainee, posing them as problematic and in need of interrogation by trainees.

3. **The teachers' college curriculum must be revised to take into account the identity of trainees (as above), the varying entry qualifications of trainees, and the need to allocate enough time for deep learning to occur.**

❑ Teacher trainees and teacher educators are unanimous in the view that the teachers' college curriculum is overcrowded.

❑ As currently structured, there isn't enough time in the two-year teachers' college programme to meet the time allocation for each of the subjects as stated in the official college curriculum.

- The teachers' college curriculum must, therefore, be reworked to allow adequate time for deep learning to occur during the programme. It should allow for a focus on the development of competence in key areas of the curriculum (such as literacy and numeracy), while allowing for some exposure to the other areas.

9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

❑ Trainees enter the teachers' colleges with varying qualifications – nearly all (> 80%) have more than 5 CXC/GCE O-level "passes," but some acquired them in one sitting whereas others did not; few (17% during 1995-1998) have passed more than one science subject at CXC/GCE O-level; some (34% during 1995-1998) have passed at least one subject at A-level.

- The teachers' college curriculum must be organised in a modular fashion to cater for the varying entry qualifications of trainees.

4. **Trainees must be able to develop pedagogical competence in a non-threatening atmosphere.**

❑ Trainees agree that the teaching practice is an important and valued part of the teachers' college experience. Yet, they speak of it as being very stressful and of varying helpfulness because of (i) their consciousness that they were being assessed, even from the first teaching practice session (at least 20% of timetabled time is allocated to assessment-related activities), (ii) their perception that different supervisors provide different levels of guidance and supervision, (iii) the lack of assistance and/or pedagogical guidance from some cooperating teachers and principals to whom they are assigned for practice in the primary schools, (some trainees were, however, high in praise for the assistance received) and (iv) differing levels of competence of cooperating teachers.

❑ Supervisors (teacher educators) view the provisions for teaching practice as less than ideal, mainly because of the heavy workload they have to carry during teaching practice rounds.

- There must be a clear articulation of the goals of the teaching practice and the part to be played by each of the key stakeholders (trainees, supervisors, cooperating teachers, cooperating principals) in this enterprise. In particular, consideration must be given to assigning a more prominent role to the cooperating teacher in the exercise.
- Fully-equipped teaching laboratories must be created at the teachers' colleges to facilitate the practice of basic teaching skills by trainees.
- There must be training programmes for supervisors, cooperating teachers and cooperating principals. The School of Education, UWI, could be asked to mount a short course for the training/upgrading of teacher educators in the area of supervision. The teacher educators could, in turn, mount short courses for cooperating principals and teachers.
- Suitably trained cooperating teachers must be paid a stipend for their services and must be given a reduced teaching load when they are functioning in this capacity.

9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

- The teaching practice must be restructured so that formative assessment (complete with trainee reflection on performance) is the dominant assessment mode for most of the programme, with summative assessment being highlighted only toward the end of the programme.
- The time allocated to teaching practice must be revisited, with a longer period of school-based attachment being given serious consideration.

5. **Primary teacher education programmes must be adequately positioned within the structure of the Ministry of Education and must be properly financed.**

❑ College administrators complain that there is no one section in the Ministry of Education responsible for primary teacher education, with the result that the functioning of the colleges is often compromised.

❑ College administrators complain about the low levels of funding provided for the purchase of equipment, furniture, learning materials, etc

- A unit must be established in the Ministry of Education that deals specifically with the affairs of the teachers' colleges.
- Investment expenditure per trainee must be increased to ensure that the colleges provide a suitable teaching/learning environment
- College administrators must be trained in the effective management of resources.

6. **A structured induction programme for the newly qualified teacher must be mounted in receiving primary schools.**

❑ There is no structured programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers but, rather, an informal system of mentoring and help from other teachers and advice from principals.

❑ Newly qualified teachers have been found to focus on survival strategies in their post-teachers' college teaching and to replace the recommended strategies they had learnt in college with practical solutions that provided some results.

- Newly qualified teachers must be eased into their jobs as full-fledged teachers through a carefully structured induction programme mounted at the level of the school.

9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

7. **The teachers' colleges must be fully equipped with computers for use by trainees for research work on the Internet and word processing, and by college staff for administrative functions including the management of examination results. The trainees must also be inducted into using the computer as a teaching tool. However, teacher educators must first be trained in the pedagogical uses of computers so that they, in turn, can help to induct trainees.**

8. **Consideration should be given in the long term to using the skills of college staff to help to improve other aspects of the system.**

❑ It has been projected that enrolment in primary schools will decline in the next decade because the cohort of primary school-age children is shrinking. This would mean a reduced demand for primary school teachers if existing pupil-teacher ratios (20:1) are maintained.

❑ With the projected reduced demand for primary teachers, it may be possible to raise the entry requirements for primary teaching to include passes in one or two A Level subjects.

- • With fewer teacher trainees in the colleges and/or a shorter training period because of a higher content knowledge level of entrants, college staff may be deployed to function in other areas of the system such as (i) the retraining of teachers who have been in the system for a long time and (ii) contributing to systematic support and development programmes for newly qualified teachers. The latter should enable support for the use of new pedagogic practices by the newly qualified teachers.

9. **In executing the recommendations outlined in 1-8 above, the ultimate aim should be to produce a totally unified primary teacher education structure, beginning with the OJT programme and continuing sequentially with the teachers' college programme, the UWI Certificate in Education programme, and the UWI Bachelor of Education programme**

10. **In the long term, active consideration should be given to making the B.Ed. degree the preferred entry-level qualification for primary school teaching.**

11. **Finally, it is recommended that a broad-based National Task Force on primary teacher education be established to:**

(a) review the composition and function of the Board for Teacher Training in order to meet the demands of primary teacher education in the 21st century

(b) take steps to ensure that the recommendations outlined above are actively considered and implemented as appropriate

(c) devise structures for the continuous evaluation and upgrading of the primary teacher education system.

9 Recommendations from the MUSTER Project

9.3 **Commentary**

It should be noted that many of the recommendations listed above have been made previously in position papers presented by individuals and committees. Among the sources of such recommendations in the past are:

- Education Policy Paper, (1993-2003)/White Paper.
- First Report on an Outline of a Philosophy for the Initial Teacher Training Programme at the Teachers' Colleges and Guidelines for the Preparation of Subject Syllabuses, 1987. Chairperson: Claudia Harvey.
- Report on Teacher Education and Training for the Primary Level, 1980, Teacher Education Committee. Chairperson: C. V. Gocking.
- Various reports submitted by personnel at the Teachers' Training Colleges.

It is the view of the MUSTER Project research team that the empirical data collected in this project validate some of the claims that have been made in position papers in the past. The time is now ripe for action.

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Appendix A: Symposium: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago

Symposium: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago

hosted by

The School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine

on

January 11th and 12th 2002
9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

at the

Learning Resource Centre, UWI
St. Augustine

PROGRAMME

Friday January 11th 2002

9:00 – 9:05 a.m.	Welcome/Chair	Acting Head, School of Education - Mr. Carol Keller
9:05 – 9:15 a.m.	Opening Remarks	Dean, Humanities and Education - Dr. Ian Robertson
9:15 – 9:25 a.m.	Formal Opening	Campus Principal - PVC Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie
9:25 – 9:45 a.m.	Address	Minister of Education - Senator, The Hon. Mrs. Hazel Manning
9:45 – 10:15 a.m.	"Portrait of the System"	Arts in Action, Centre for Creative and Festival Arts
10:15 – 10:45 a.m.		**BREAK**
10:45 – 11:25 a.m.	"Overview and Some Key Findings from the MUSTER PROJECT"	Keynote Speaker – Dr. Janet Stuart, MUSTER Coordinator, University of Sussex, UK

Appendix A: Symposium: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago

11:25 – 12 noon   Critical Issues: Insights from Research on Teacher Education

- Teacher Identity   Dr. Jeniffer Mohammed
- On-the-Job Training   Dr. June George
                        Chair: Ms. Susan Herbert

12 noon – 1:00 p.m.   **LUNCH**

1:00 – 2:20 p.m.   Critical Issues: Insights from Research on Teacher Education

- The Teachers' College Curriculum   Mrs. Joycelyn Rampersad
- The Teaching Practice Experience   Ms. Patricia Worrell
- Newly Qualified Teachers   Mr. Arthur Joseph
                        Chair: Mr. Krishna Seunarinesingh

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.   Roundtable Discussions: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education
                     in Trinidad and Tobago

Rapporteurs:

Curriculum	Mr. Balchan Rampaul
Teaching Practice	Mrs. Susan Otway-Charles
Newly Qualified Teachers	Dr. Vena Jules
Teacher Identity	Mrs. Lynda Quamina-Aiyejina
On-the-Job Training	Mr. Raymond Hackett

Saturday January 12th 2002

9:00 – 9:10 a.m.	Opening Remarks/Chair	Dr. June George
9:10 – 9:40 a.m.	"An International Perspective on Issues in Teacher Education: Insights from the MUSTER PROJECT"	Keynote Speaker Prof. Keith Lewin MUSTER Coordinator, University of Sussex, UK
9:40 – 10:15 a.m.	Reports of Roundtable Discussions on "Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago"	Rapporteurs from each table

Appendix A: Symposium: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago

10:15 – 10:45 a.m.		**BREAK**

10:45 – 11:30 a.m.	"Primary Teacher Education in the Caribbean – The Way Forward"	Keynote Speaker Prof. Errol Miller Director, Institute of Education The University of the West Indies, Mona

Chair: Mr. Carol Keller

11:30 – 1:00 p.m.		**LUNCH**

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Panel Discussion "New Directions for Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago"	Moderator: Dr. Maria Byron

Representatives on Panel:

- Valsayn Teachers' College — Principal
- Corinth Teachers' College — Former Principal
- Teachers' Colleges — Students
- School of Education — Head (Ag.)
- National Parent Teacher Association — Representative
- Ministry of Education — Chief Education Officer
- Primary School Principals' Association — President

2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Close	
	Vote of Thanks	Dr. June George

Appendix B: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Symposium Report

Introduction

On January 11th and 12th, 2002, the team of researchers from the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, who were involved in the Trinidad and Tobago component of the MUSTER Project, hosted a symposium at the Learning Resource Centre of UWI. The symposium was entitled "Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago," and it sought to bring together all the major stakeholders in the primary education sector in Trinidad and Tobago, in order to present them with the findings of the research, and to provide a forum to discuss these findings and other critical issues facing the sector.

Invitations to the symposium were sent out to (a) members of staff of the two major primary teacher training institutions in the country and the teacher education department of a third higher education institution, (b) principals of primary schools, (c) policy makers and administrators from the Ministry of Education and the Education Division of the Tobago House of Assembly, (d) staff and students of the Faculty of Humanities and Education, UWI, and (e) representatives of other major stakeholders such as the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA), the Primary School Principals' Association, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA), and the Boards of Management of denominational schools.

The response to the invitations sent to members of the national stakeholder community was overwhelming, resulting in a packed auditorium of approximately 356 participants for the opening ceremony. Senator, The Hon. Mrs. Hazel Manning, Minister of Education, delivered the Feature Address at the opening ceremony, which was also addressed by the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education, Dr. Ian Robertson, and the Principal of the St. Augustine Campus of UWI, PVC Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie. A dramatized interactive theme presentation on the primary school system by the Arts in Action Group of the Centre for Creative and Festival Arts, UWI, St. Augustine, also formed part of the opening ceremony. This presentation performed the dual function of breaking the ice through its vastly entertaining nature, as well as providing a sobering and realistic portrait of the environment in which the primary school teacher in Trinidad and Tobago is expected to function.

The symposium itself consisted of three keynote addresses, plenary presentations, round-table discussions by small "breakout" groups, and a panel discussion. A copy of the programme is provided as an appendix to this report.

The keynote speakers were Dr. Janet Stuart and Prof. Keith Lewin, the MUSTER Project Coordinators from the University of Sussex, and Prof. Errol Miller, Director of the Institute

Appendix B: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Symposium Report

of Education, UWI, Mona, Jamaica. Dr. Stuart presented an overview and some key findings from the MUSTER Project, while Prof. Lewin provided an international perspective on issues in teacher education, with particular reference to costs and quality. Prof. Miller explored the way forward for primary teacher education in the Caribbean. These addresses provided participants with an international and regional framework for their discussion of the situation in Trinidad and Tobago. Additional Caribbean focus was ensured by the participation of three representatives from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), whose attendance was facilitated by the DFID Caribbean Office.

The presenters at the plenary sessions provided insights into the critical issues identified from the MUSTER research on primary teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago in the areas of Teacher Identity, On-the-Job Training, The Teachers' College Curriculum, The Teaching Practice Experience, and Newly Qualified Teachers. These presentations were, in essence, summaries of the findings articulated in Part I of this Country Report.

This section of the report will attempt to synthesize the response of the participants to these issues as articulated during the round-table discussions in the break-out groups and from the floor during the panel discussion. Contributions to the issues from the keynote speakers will also be woven into the synthesis. In addition to the topics identified above, the participants identified other critical issues that were not the primary focus of the research project. These issues will also be addressed.

Teacher Identity

Discussion

The participants in the roundtable discussion on this topic agreed that ritual and myth are important in constructing society. They therefore understand the role of a myth such as that of the good teacher, which reflects not only teachers' views of their role in society but also the expectations that the society has of the teacher. They do not want to discard the myth but find it unnecessarily constricting. They suggested that a good teacher is the same as a good person, so that if one is not a good person one should not be a teacher. However, there is tension between what it means to be a good teacher and the need to get one's just due. It was agreed that teachers should not see themselves as just any other workers, because teachers are also role models. However, teachers should not provide a model of passive, sacrificial individuals but should model independence and assertiveness, which are the attributes that they want to develop in children. It was therefore felt that "good" should be seen in both oppositional and status quo roles. They stressed that being good does not mean being "goody-goody" and passive, but being radical, critical, questioning, and even rebellious.

Appendix B: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Symposium Report

In this regard, teaching is seen as a prophetic vocation related to the construction of a people, based on a certain vision of themselves and their values. This requires that those who are teachers have certain virtues consistent with the vision and the values that they are seeking to develop. The possession of these virtues does not mean that the good teacher should be the goody-goody teacher, which appears to be the concept of the good teacher that students are getting in the teachers' colleges. Participants felt that there is a need to interrogate this concept, and it was suggested that a review of the history of good teaching would show that it is not just about wholesome values, but also about willingness to take risks and to make sacrifices on behalf of the downtrodden and the dispossessed in order to give them a chance

Arising from this position, it was felt that there is need for the teachers' colleges to develop students who can perform the role of society formation. It was suggested that this was the role of the profession prior to the 19th century when the idea of nurturing as the central role of the profession developed. The participants also saw the need to locate teachers within the changes that are taking place in the society. They felt that the teachers' college curriculum is not helping teachers to come to terms with the context within which they operate. It was argued that, currently, the curriculum is concerned with equipping trainees with a repertoire of teaching skills but it is not helping them to discover who they are. It was therefore felt that it is necessary to work with them in the colleges in order to help them to locate themselves in this new millennium.

Recommendations

1. The colleges should identify ideas that trainees hold on entering the college; they need to look at the components of what the trainees see as the good teacher, and help them to create a new philosophy of what is a good teacher within the context of the society.

2. The colleges should help the trainees to develop a sense of their own philosophy, while ensuring that they understand the need to subscribe to a shared philosophy since teaching is a social profession and, as such, requires certain shared ideas and beliefs.

3. The teachers' college curriculum should incorporate more philosophy and sociology, and promote the habits of reflection and critical thinking.

Appendix B: Critical Issues in Primary Teacher Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Symposium Report

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Discussion

It was noted that, initially, the OJT programme appeared to have emerged as a welfare-type programme, but that it is now oriented towards investment in human capital. Among the important characteristics of the programme identified are: 1) a fairly well thought-out curriculum which includes emphasis on encouraging reflective practice, and linking teaching to such educational aims as promoting political, economic, social, and spiritual development, preservation of the environment, and conflict resolution; 2) a fairly well-qualified staff; and 3) the use of a quota system in the selection of trainees.

With respect to the impact of the OJT programme on the education system, it was felt that the programme has contributed to teacher education by making it easy to identify potentially effective teachers among teachers' college recruits. It was suggested that some of the indicators of potential effectiveness could be garnered from observation of trainees' handling of routine teaching tasks, and their attitudes with respect to such things as commitment to the school, commitment to student learning, commitment to professional development, and teacher efficacy. It was also felt that the OJT programme has contributed to school effectiveness by supplying competent and motivated staff to schools, as evident from the impassioned requests from principals for OJT graduates to fill vacancies in their schools.

Although it was agreed that the OJT programme has been useful in preparing and professionalizing beginning teachers, it was felt that it must now be linked to the national teacher education system, and not be seen only in terms of employment generation. It was noted that since August 2001, the programme has moved on to greater effectiveness and efficiency with respect to curriculum content, personnel selection, funding, and remuneration. However, it was agreed that there is still much left to be accomplished in order to increase the effectiveness of the programme.

Recommendations

1.   The quota system should be discarded.

2.   A separate institution should be created for OJT trainees, with emphasis on hands-on experience, although not at the expense of theory.

3.   More funding should be allocated in order to ensure the viability of the programme.

4.   The curriculum should be restructured.

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5. Tutors, principals, mentor teachers, and school staff should be sensitized to the operations and importance of the programme.

6. More effective monitoring systems should be implemented.

7. The programme should be made compulsory and should be a prerequisite for employment in the teaching profession and entry to teachers' college.

8. OJT trainees should be used as supply teachers to provide replacements when teachers are absent from the classroom.

9. OJT trainees should be placed in schools with receptive environments and good role models.

10. The scope of the programme should be expanded to include an induction process for newly qualified teachers, in addition to its present role as an induction process for untrained teachers.

11. The OJT programme should function as the preliminary year of teacher training for all teacher training programmes in the country, whether at the teachers' colleges, university, or the School of Continuing Studies of UWI.

12. The results of evaluation studies conducted during the OJT should be used to weed out unsuitable candidates for the teaching profession.

Teacher Education Curriculum

Discussion

Participants agreed that there were certain deep-rooted underlying issues that need to be addressed with respect to the college curriculum. One such issue is that the documented curriculum, or the Syllabus of Work for Teachers' Colleges, is mandated/prescribed. It was felt that in order to meet the criteria for the certification of teachers, the colleges appear to concentrate on the delivery of the syllabus, with emphasis on evaluation and assessment. In this context, it is very difficult to make changes to the curriculum. It was noted that a mechanism for making such changes was articulated in the Report on Teacher Education and Training for the Primary Level (Trinidad and Tobago. Teacher Education Committee, 1980). This mechanism involves the establishment of subject committees to make recommendations to the Board of Teacher Training. However, it was reported that all attempts to determine the composition of these committees and whether they have been

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functioning have proven futile.

The problem of curriculum overload generated the most debate at the symposium. It was noted that at any given period of time, students were required to carry about 14 courses. The problem of dealing with this overload was therefore seen as one of the major problems to be dealt with.

Recommendations

1. Link the OJT programme, the teachers' college programme, and the Certificate in Education Programme at UWI into a holistic system, wherein it might be possible to share the current college syllabus among the three component parts.

2. Reorganize the curriculum in a modular format to cater for trainees' individual needs, which would allow for the supplementing of deficiencies and provision of exemptions, depending on the analysis of trainees' strengths and weaknesses.

3. Extend the training college course to three years to ensure effective completion of the current syllabus.

4. Reconceptualize the pedagogical and philosophical bases of the teacher education curriculum.

5. Include a social dimension in the curriculum, for example, personal development and aesthetic education.

6. Consider the implications for the teacher education curriculum of the possibility of having students aged 15-16 in the primary school, occasioned by the introduction of universal secondary education and the examination readiness philosophy of the Secondary Education Assessment (SEA) examination.

7. Engage in curriculum evaluation.

8. Review the content of the teacher education curriculum with respect to the teaching of reading to ensure that primary school teachers are able to effectively carry out this key task.

9. Consider the question of subject specialization in the preparation of primary school teachers.

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Teaching Practice

Discussion

Most of the discussion centred on the problems experienced with the teaching practice sessions. Among the problems identified were:

- The stifling of creativity in the trainees because of the overloaded syllabus. In some cases, this has led to them developing negative coping skills such as recycling lessons and even buying lessons from other students.

- The fact that trainees are assessed from the first teaching practice. This denies them the opportunity to make mistakes without the fear of being penalized. It was pointed out that the weighting of the early teaching practice is lower than the later ones, but participants still felt that other alternatives could be considered.

- The short duration of the teaching practice periods. This limits the time trainees have to adapt or acclimatize.

- The lack of consistency across supervisors with respect to expectations and practices.

- The fact that external examiners do not necessarily come to the final teaching practice of all the trainees, which appeared to be due to the limited expertise available.

Recommendations

1. Establishment of a teaching laboratory within the colleges so that trainees can practice without being assessed.

2. Adoption of a more developmental approach so that not all the skills are assessed from the first teaching practice.

3. Extension of the periods for teaching practice to six-months, which would offer an expanded role for principals and cooperating teachers.

4. Exercising care in the choice of cooperating schools in order to ensure that trainees receive adequate attention and guidance.

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Impact of Training/Newly Qualified Teachers

Discussion

The participants identified four types of factors that hindered NQTs from achieving their goal of helping every child to maximize its potential. These were classified as (a) systemic, (b) interpersonal, (c) both systemic and interpersonal, and (d) personal.

Systemic Factors

1. The post-graduation placement and transfer process is unsatisfactory in that the filling of vacancies appears to be the only objective of the personnel department. There seems to be a lack of sensitivity to the local geography, road network, and to the people being placed.

2. The country is not receiving an adequate return on its investment in scholarships for teacher training.

3. The delayed appointment of NQTs to the post of Teacher I, especially in Tobago, is having an adverse effect on the morale of these beginning teachers.

Interpersonal Factors

4. There is no induction programme in the schools receiving NQTs, aimed at maintaining their motivation, energy, and initiative.

5. There are no programmes in schools aimed at inspiring and infusing continuous learning among staff.

Systemic and Interpersonal Factors

6. Seriously flawed individuals are entering the teaching profession.

Personal Factors

7. Some NQTs do not seem to have an operating standard—a knowledge of what to demand from themselves and their students.

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Recommendations

1. Housing should be provided in cases where NQTs are placed in schools far from their domicile.

2. There should be a period of compulsory service for all those attending teachers' college, in order to ensure that the country receives an adequate return on its investment in scholarships to teacher trainees.

3. Appointments to the post of Teacher I should be made in a timely manner.

4. The written statement of the school's vision and policy, created as part of the School Improvement Programme (SIP), should be given to every NQT.

5. Receiving schools should introduce a support programme for NQTs, based on the culture of the school.

6. Receiving schools should introduce professional development programmes for principals and senior teachers in order to facilitate the development of an environment conducive to the reception of new ideas brought by NQTs.

7. An employee assistance programme (EAP) should be developed, which could either guide unsuitable people out of the profession or try to remedy their faults.

8. The OJT should be used in the way that it was meant to be used, that is, to weed out unsuitable people before they reach the training colleges.

9. Principals should regularly submit honestly completed assessment forms so that proper assessment can be made before further movement is allowed within the profession.

10. Refresher courses should be provided to school staff, both in personal management and job appraisal.

11. NQTs should be exposed to personal development programmes either at the college or as part of the induction process.

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Costs and Financing of Primary Teacher Education

Discussion

The research findings on this issue were provided by Prof. Keith Lewin in his keynote address, and there was no breakout group to discuss this topic. Therefore, all the information available was that provided by Prof. Lewin.

Prof. Lewin identified the following significant indicators of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago:

- universal primary education has been achieved and about 80% gross enrolment had been achieved at the secondary level before the recent adoption of a policy of universal secondary education

- the population of school-aged children is shrinking

- the pupil-teacher ratio is about 23:1

- the teacher attrition rate is within manageable proportions

- the staff-student ratio at the teachers' colleges is about 14:1

- the ratio of all teachers to the annual output of new teachers is 20:1, that is, 5% of teachers are new teachers each year

- approximately 1.8% the country's annual budget is spent on teacher education.

The general picture that emerged is one in which primary school enrolments are declining, mainly because of the shrinking population of school-aged children. This means that the demand for new primary school teachers will also decline. Prof. Lewin suggested that the declining numbers create the opportunity to improve the amounts spent per child in schools. This situation also allows for the possibility of increased investment in teacher education at the primary level so that quality can be improved.

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Other Recommendations

1.   Salaries and Conditions of Service

It was observed that college lecturers, as a group, have been grossly neglected. Recommendations were made for a proper career structure and pay commensurate with a very difficult and demanding task, as well as recognition and preparation as adult educators—they are trainers of professionals. Primary school teachers, as well, need improvements in their working conditions and their level of remuneration. It was felt that teachers deserve a living wage that would enable them, at least at the end of their career, to own their own homes and to be free from debt. After a lifetime of teaching they should be able to retire with an adequate pension. It was argued that the society cannot ask teachers to bring about a transformation of society if the society is not going to pay attention to their working and living conditions. Presently, teachers are being treated as agents of change without their own personal needs being met, and this has to be done.

2.   Professional Development

It was recommended that consideration be given to ways in which teacher educators can be prepared and supported in their role. It was suggested that questions should be asked about the sort of experience they have had and, therefore, the kind of professional development that should be offered to them.

3.   Governance Structures

It was noted that unlike other countries in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago has never given over its teacher training to UWI. The model used in the Eastern and Western Caribbean involves a partnership among the Ministries of Education, the teachers' unions, the teacher training colleges, and UWI, which holds the chairmanship and the secretariat. In the case of the Eastern Caribbean, they have had the Eastern Caribbean Standing Conference on Teacher Education and they are now establishing a Joint Board of Teacher Education, similar to that found in the Western Caribbean [The Joint Board of Teacher Education for the Western Caribbean is the formal mechanism recognized by UWI for dealing with programme, examination, and certification matters related to teacher education. The membership of the Board includes representation from UWI, teachers' colleges, Ministries of Education, teachers' professional associations, and a maximum of three independent members]. It was recommended that this model be given some consideration in the Trinidad and Tobago context.

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It was pointed out that in Trinidad and Tobago, it is almost impossible to identify the policy authority for professional development. It appears to be "everywhere and anywhere." This is much too diffuse and it may be necessary to find ways of making it a little more focused and concentrated. However, it needs to be focused on some very clear objectives for learning and it was felt that this policy authority should include representatives of all the stakeholders present at the symposium.

4.   Recruitment of Teachers

The culture of recruitment in Trinidad and Tobago was described as really one of selection—taking the best of what is available. It was recommend that the recruitment process be reconsidered, and that the question of attitudes of prospective teachers should be dealt with from the very beginning; recruitment suitability should not only be about having the required academic qualifications.

5.   Educational Qualifications

Prof. Errol Miller, one of the Keynote Speakers, threw out a challenge to the participants at the symposium to "think outside the box" with respect to trying to chart a way forward for primary teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Caribbean as a whole. He pointed out that the Caribbean has been training teachers at about the same level for over 150 years. During that time the level of education of the society has greatly increased and the teacher is expected to have a bit more education than the general public. This means that in today's society, in which most people have secondary education and many parents have university degrees, it is necessary to upgrade teachers' level of education so that they can again command a certain degree of respect in the society. He indicated that there is a general movement in the Caribbean to significantly increase the proportion of primary school teachers with degrees and to use the degree programme to address various issues relating to primary education.

6.   Technological Applications

Prof. Miller suggested that in looking at the improvement of primary education itself, it would be necessary to have a new paradigm for the Caribbean in the 21st century. Teachers will have to be trained to a different level and in different ways to address current issues. This will involve the use of modern information and communications technology (ICT), and if teachers are going to use ICT in both instruction and management, their training will need to include it. He outlined a pilot project currently underway in Jamaica that is seeking to link all the teacher training colleges using microwave technology. This link will enhance teacher training as well as facilitate continuing professional education. The UWI, Mona, in

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collaboration with the other two campuses, is also making preparations to offer the M.Ed. degree online.

Prof. Keith Lewin suggested that as more information technology is applied to learning and knowledge generation, the more we should be rethinking the framework within which teacher education takes place. He advised that participants should think about the implications of distance education programmes being offered by competitors outside the region, and think about the paradigms within which they were currently debating the future of teacher education. He warned that these paradigms are changing; the way in which information and knowledge can be delivered, shared, and professional skill acquired might be different in the future than it has been in the past.

Conclusion

In view of all the contributions from the participants in the symposium, the Chief Education Officer identified the need for the Ministry of Education to revisit the White Paper on Education, which currently defines the policy for education reform, with specific reference to what is and isn't applicable; what has and has not been done and why; what should not have been included at all; and what should have been added. This revisiting should see the teacher not as an individual but as a person representing a group of responsibilities in a very dynamic process, and should be geared towards enabling the system to deal with current and evolving needs and careers in the system. She acknowledged that if we think only in terms of what we perceive the teacher to be today, we are going to neglect preparation for all the new and emerging careers that must be considered if the country is to effectively respond to the needs for teaching and learning.

The general consensus of the participants was that the symposium had filled a long-standing desire of many in the profession to bring stakeholders together in a professional manner to debate and dialogue on critical issues facing the primary education sector. It was the heartfelt wish of many that this kind of gathering would be repeated on a continuing basis.

Appendix C: Letter from The University of West Indies

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April 30, 2002

Senator, The Honourable Mrs. Hazel Manning

Minister of Education

Hayes Street

ST. CLAIR

Dear Mrs. Manning,

As requested at your meeting with representatives from the School of Education on April 22, 2002, please find attached a summary of recommendations emanating from the MUSTER Project.

We wish to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the MUSTER Project and other education matters with you and Permanent Secretary Jennifer Sampson, and we look forward to strengthened collaboration with the Ministry of Education as we seek to provide quality education for the nation's youth.

Yours sincerely,

June George, Ph.D.

MUSTER Project Leader and Deputy Dean for Graduate Studies and Research

Cc Dr. Jeanette Morris, Head, School of Education, UWI

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