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Meeting on Removal of Language Barriers
Belize City, Belize
4-7 April 1978

TEACHER-TRAINING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHING

Prepared by

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Principal
Mausica Teachers' College
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Teaching Practice in Secondary Schools

1. Teaching Practice conducted in secondary schools across the nation will have to become institutionalized in our education system.
   Student teachers electing a foreign language, will now have opportunities to practice-teach the language under guidance from Teachers College staff and with the assistance of co-operating modern language teachers in the schools.
   Co-operating teachers should be selected for their proven competence in the teaching of modern languages. They should be duly compensated for their part in the co-operative training of future teachers of modern languages.

2. "The possibility of introducing a foreign language in the course" 9/, i.e. the primary school course as indicated in the introduction to the New Primary School syllabus, will be facilitated by the structural expansion of the Teachers' College Programme.
   Student teachers intending to teach at the Primary level may be able to elect Spanish at Teachers' College nonetheless, and get opportunities to teach it to beginners during their full-time studentship at college.
   They will be assisted in learning how to integrate Spanish-teaching into the general curriculum of the Primary school.

Other Necessary Changes and Arrangements

(a) Staffing Arrangements

To facilitate foreign modern language teaching at the Teachers' Colleges and at the secondary schools provision for continuous on-the-job training, guidance and supervision of foreign language teaching is necessary.

The creation of posts of Heads of Departments becomes urgent.

The appointment of Heads of Subjects also becomes necessary. So too, the appointment of co-ordinators of subjects.

With such an organizational structure, varied and improved methodology is facilitated. Team teaching of foreign languages can be attempted. Review of approaches can be effected regularly.

The tragedy of classes being deprived of a teacher in Modern Languages for prolonged periods of time should be removed by staffing that is liberal and thus organized.

(b) The Workload of the Modern Language Teacher at the Junior Secondary Level

Student teachers intending to teach at the Junior Secondary level should be prepared by training to teach two (2) subjects instead of one as obtains now.

Teachers prepared, able and required to teach two subjects will make deployment of staff easier and more beneficial to the teaching task in the schools.

There is a greater and better chance of integrative teaching when each teacher teaches two subjects, rather than one subject.

The students are likely to get a better deal all round from teachers who teach more than one subject in terms of use of time, transfer of training sympathetic understanding.

Student teachers intending to teach a Foreign Language at the Junior Secondary School may be advised to choose:

i. one Foreign Language - French or Spanish, plus English; or
ii. one Foreign Language and Social Studies.

Common combinations among Junior Secondary School teachers may well be:

French and English	English and Hindi
Spanish and English	Music and Hindi
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(c) It would not be advisable for Junior Secondary School teachers to attempt to teach two (2) foreign languages as a rule. Exceptions there will be. Teaching two modern languages is not only a strenuous task, but teaching two modern languages could well isolate the language teachers from the rest of the staff unnecessarily.

(d) The promotion of French right through the Senior Secondary level of Education

One corrollary and consequence of requiring Junior Secondary School teachers to train in more than one subject, would be the re-instatement of French as an Elective Subject at Teachers' Colleges, the introduction of French at the Junior Secondary School and the continuation of French at the Senior Comprehensive School. 10/

(e) The question of Hindi and Arabic as languages which the Teachers' Colleges should consider as Electives is a significant one.

In the history of teacher training in Trinidad and Tobago, the teaching of Hindi holds an honoured place. The matter deserves at least professional attention and examination in the whole context of the development of Foreign-Language Teaching. The experience of the Canadian Missions now the Presbyterian Board of Education in this regard is worth close examination.

(f) Teachers' Centres

The creation and servicing of Teacher centres to cater for a comprehensive range of teachers and tutors in our education system and for our education system should be explored both as an integrative and an educational measure. Teachers' centres may be general purpose or specialist, e.g. centres for Modern Language teachers, would be specialist centres.

(g) Teacher exchanges and Inter-changes should be in operation. Official support of these measures is necessary for the development of effective teacher-training in foreign languages. Our teachers on exchange to territories should be among the best we can find if we are to effectively break down barriers to communication.

(h) Systematic strategies for discovering and supporting co-operating teachers in the promotion of practical teaching in the secondary schools is a crucial link in the training of teachers of foreign languages.

(i) Remedial teaching in foreign languages ought to be considered. Given the staffing and the organization into departments, subject heads, terms of teachers, co-ordinators, it should be possible to deal with problems, on the job, within the Department, to prevent them from assuming crisis proportions, as is the case with Spanish at the Senior Comprehensive Schools.

Other Socio-Cultural Strategies for the development of Foreign-Language Teaching for adolescents and adults in particular.

Outward-bound Approaches:

i. The approach of "an ocean to ourselves" and "Caribbean Campus afloat" is particularly suited to the learning and teaching of the languages spoken in the Caribbean area. Language-learning and teaching can be combined with holiday cruising, work on the sea, travel and sojourn in various territories, over a sufficiently long period, e.g. two weeks to a month, two or three months.

ii. Intra-national and international twinning of schools, and institutions engaged in foreign-language teaching will no doubt increase social and linguistic competence among and between teachers and students of modern languages.

iii. At the tertiary level - e.g. at the Teachers' Colleges and at the University the transfer of an entire group of students plus tutors connected with their courses to a similar institution in a country overseas, is a bold, progressive and productive strategy. The transfer could be a mutual transfer. Students and tutors stand to benefit in this way. Students will receive tuition both from their regular tutors as well as supplementary tuition from native professionals. A similar project was undertaken at the University of the West Indies by Dr. Errol Hill with a group of students of Drama from Dartmouth University, U.S.A. The project was time to synchronize with the Phagwah, Carnival, Hosein celebrations in Trinidad and with the students own course work.

iv. Cultural missions and the removal of language barriers
Greater attention needs to be paid in Trinidad and Tobago to the preparation of persons going on cultural missions in the Caribbean area and further afield. A necessary part of their preparation should deal with social and cultural orientation suited to the receiving country, orientation that should help them to be worthy ambassadors for their country and conscious and active agents in the breaking down of barriers.

v. The use of native speakers in the language-teaching programme is to be encouraged at the tertiary level in particular, and in out-of-school teaching situations at the secondary level.

vi. The mass media - radio, newspapers, commercial television, can play a positive role in breaking down barriers to communication. By the selection of material they offer to the public, by the cultural colouring they give to their presentations. Announcers and commentators in Trinidad and Tobago do not seem to realize that as a group of workers they need to adhere to a certain standard in linguistic matters. Pronunciation and intonation seem to be a matter of personal preference or indifference. It could be very difficult for a non-speaker of English to derive systematic benefit from many of our broadcasts. Greater professionalism must be insisted upon in this area.

vii. The cinema and the theatre
Commercial televisioning, the cinema and the theatre are sources of recreation for a large sector of our population that their effectiveness in creating and in removing barriers to communication should be considered.

viii. A closer look at the School Year
For the development of modern language-teaching within the school system and by socio-cultural strategies, a close examination of the Trinidad and Tobago school year is necessary. Are the vacation periods in tune with the cultural and educational rhythm of life in Trinidad and Tobago? Are the vacations and public holidays dictated by the needs of the school population? Is there need to stagger our vacations the better to synchronize them with our Caribbean neighbours? Are we making good use of the vacations in socio-educational terms, in academic terms, in economic terms, in recreational terms? Is the University dictating the placing of the long vacation? Is the claims of escaping to North America and Europe during the "summer" still dictating our long vacation period? In my view it is not impossible to re-organize the school year to derive greater benefits from it for our nation.

The National Institute of Language

As far as teacher-training goes, the National Institute as I see it should play a co-ordinating role between Teacher Training College programmes in modern languages, University programmes in modern languages and general programmes and specialized programmes.

Its role in gathering and disseminating information on modern Language Enterprises should be a significant one.

In my view Promoting and co-ordinating research in modern language enterprises is another significant function of the Institute.

The training of modern language tutors is another function which the Institute may be able to effect by tutors, I mean persons engaged in learning and teaching modern language outside the formal school system, e.g. business forms, hoteliers, journalists, interpreters, translators, authors.

Training for modern language technicians in the care and maintenance of mechanical media should be a noble function of the institute.

Teacher Educators and Foreign-Language Teaching

Availability and Training

The vast majority of teacher educators in Trinidad and Tobago work within the teachers colleges.

As far as foreign language-teaching goes, there are two (2) Curriculum Supervisors, based at Head Office of the Ministry of Education.

Their activities with teachers in the secondary schools especially the Junior Secondary Schools, their role as external examiners for Elective Spanish in the Teachers' Colleges, and their role in curriculum development and supervision throughout the education system place them in the category of Teacher Educators.

There are teacher educators based at the School of Education of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Some are engaged in work with Foreign-Language Teachers in our secondary schools and Language Teachers at the Teachers' Colleges.

Within the secondary schools are a number of former Teacher Educators who turned to secondary school where conditions of service seemed more attractive and/or rewarding.

A very big question concerns the recruitment, training and re-training of teacher-educators for foreign-language teaching since without teacher-educators of quality in sufficient numbers, the development of foreign-language teaching will undoubtedly be impeded.

An initial survey is needed of the numbers and availability of full-time modern language teachers in the schools and Teachers' Colleges in Trinidad and Tobago:

a) actually engaged in teaching foreign languages;
b) engaged in other teaching tasks and in other subject areas; and
c) other professional qualifications, seem to be very much needed.

CONCLUSION

I have devoted little time and attention to teaching aids, apparatus, hardware and software, and the like.

This is not because I do not consider them important and necessary. They are, and more of them are needed.

However, it is necessary always to make it clear that such material aids will not work miracles of themselves. The human element matters most.

Every teacher-training programme for the improvement of foreign-language teaching needs to make the point emphatically and dramatically that the teachers' attitudes and dispositions to systematic work is crucial to successful language-teaching.

The message needs to be proclaimed that successful language-learning and teaching is built on systematic disciplined work, and on application. The process need not be painful nor boring, it can be highly enjoyable and satisfying. Planning, preparation, follow-up, evaluation, systematic work are necessary.

If these qualities and values are not stressed in our education system, the task of promoting language learning is bound to be made more difficult.

The promotion of language-teaching and learning must be seen as learning which improves the quality of life and of living, in the first place; and in the second place, language-learning and teaching have beneficial consequences for raising the standard of living in the country.

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