

ADDRESS TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
JOHN CUMBERBATCH MEMORIAL LECTURE
HOSTED BY THE BARBADOS UNION OF TEACHERS
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The theme “Quality Teachers for Quality Schools” is an interesting one. It is engaging the attention of Ministries and Departments of Education and educators across the world.

In the International Journal of Research and Studies on Teaching and Teacher Education, Volume 12, No.5, 1996, David Hopkins and David Stern in the article entitled Quality Teachers, Quality Schools stated that:

Teachers are at the heart of educational improvement. Any benefits that accrue to students as a result of educational policies require the enabling action of teachers.

The article went on to list the major teacher qualities as commitment which transcends the classroom, love of children, understanding how to convey particular concepts, skills and information to students. High-quality teachers, according to these authors “participate in teams that plan and teach together, engage in reflection because “good teachers are always

dissatisfied with something so they are constantly on the look out for new ideas.”

Quality schools, on the other hand, exhibit high levels of teacher quality and student achievement. Such schools, the authors continued, are characterised by a vision that their students can succeed, teaching and learning are well organised at the classroom level, management arrangements clarify roles and responsibilities, good informal and formal leadership, staff development.

In another article published in the Journal of Staff Development, Volume 18, 1997, Linda Darling-Hammond presented five recommendations for achieving a quality education for all children:

- (1) Develop and enforce rigorous standards for teacher preparation, initial licensing and professional development.
- (2) Re-invent teacher preparation and professional development by organising teacher education and professional development around standards for students and teachers ... provide a yearlong internship in a professional development school for pre-service teachers.

- (3) Aggressively recruit high-need teachers and provide financial incentives for teaching in areas of shortage.
- (4) Encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skill.
- (5) Select, prepare and retain Principals who understand teaching and learning and who can lead high-performing schools. Such Principals are more likely to facilitate the organisation of schools which encourage teachers and students to be successful.

Very recently Professor Earle Newton and former Principal, Mrs. Dorien Pile, were quoted in daily newspapers asking for teachers to put “heart and soul” back into teaching that students may have a better chance of overall development. Another local former teacher when asked how she would define a quality teacher, without hesitation, replied that teacher quality could not be judged only on classroom performance. A quality teacher must exhibit a model lifestyle, must be involved in the community, have an open mind and be multi-skilled and multi-talented and be able to offer pastoral care to students without prejudice.

These views have been collected from America, England, Australia and right here in Barbados. The word **‘quality’** has a connotation of standards, high standards. You will note this concept permeates all the statements, and that the concepts of quality education and quality teachers are intricately linked.

I will now focus on our local situation and how we can work together to create quality schools and develop more quality teachers. The matter of standards needs to be addressed – standards relating to qualifications and standards relating to teacher attitudes and behaviours. The time is now ripe for teacher educators, teachers’ unions and Ministry to develop standards for teacher preparation and on-going professional development.

The latter will come as a result of the teacher-appraisal pilot when teachers themselves make recommendations about on-going training for all categories of teachers. Teacher Appraisal, as it has been conceptualised in Barbados, is developmental and one of the major collaborative steps undertaken by the unions and the Ministry to enhance teacher performance. We have been at pains to ensure that

teachers have a chance to participate fully in the pilot and provide comments on its future. Teachers are being given the opportunity to design a system which enables them to evaluate themselves and their peers. It is almost entirely school-based. This is a fundamental step in building quality teachers.

Teacher qualifications need to be matched with the roles that teachers now need to play in the modern classroom. Teachers must be exposed to training which will enable them to create classrooms where students can truly develop into critical thinkers, problem-solvers and creative thinkers. Sometimes these skills are treated as though they are separate subject matter so some teachers complain that it is impossible to teach them and complete the syllabus. Training must enable teachers to integrate these skills across subject areas. To see these as appendages to the main curriculum is to misunderstand some of the fundamental characteristics required of our young people for personal and national development.

Those aspiring to be teachers must enter training with the basic qualifications which demonstrate that they have the foundation or core

subjects on which they can build further learning. This means that entry requirements will need to be examined and I believe this should happen sooner rather than later. I note that Dr. Keith Mitchell, in a daily local newspaper, has advised CARICOM leaders “to place greater emphasis on all aspects of Science and Information and Communication Technology in order to stave off some of the challenges globalisation is creating for the Caribbean.” He observed that the number of scientists in the region was dropping at a time when we need them most. He made reference to Grenada farmers who were now producing oils and creams from nutmeg, that island’s main cash crop. But, you see, it is not easy for us to regard farmers as scientists! This challenge will not go away, however, until we produce more persons who can teach the sciences in primary and secondary schools. In order for this to happen, science has to be taught in a more authentic way. This means a move away from text-book-bound lessons. An examination of CXC results reveal the following figures:

Biology 690 students were entered

Chemistry 477 students were entered

Physics 472

Integrated Science 385

These numbers need to be increased. What is more, some difficulties are being experienced in integrating Home Economics and Integrated Science at the junior levels of the secondary curriculum. Geography also needs special attention. Again CXC results indicate that 713 students were entered for CSEC General Proficiency, Geography 357 females, 356 males. Only 16 males and 27 females obtained Grades 1, 70 males and 76 females obtained Grade 2 but 148 males and 129 females obtained Grade 3.

I have mentioned these to point out that quality education has not occurred if the knowledge needs of the society have not been met. For quality teachers to develop they must have the tools of their craft. That is, qualifications to teach the subjects. The gaps I have just mentioned will not enable this country to be on the cutting edge of development in the sciences.

At present, the records show that there are 757 graduate trained teachers and 96 trained teachers at the secondary level. At the primary level 782 are graduate trained and 468 trained. These are impressive figures out of

a total of approximately 2 857 teachers. The concern is whether or not the qualifications match the needs of the system. Surely, as suggested to me recently it is time for policy makers at UWI and other institutions to disseminate information on those careers which require qualifications in Science. There is a myth that such qualifications are needed only for Engineering and Health careers.

But, what about standards relating to attitudes and behaviours of teachers? Teachers must be encouraged to set their own standards and the best persons to spearhead this are their unions. Teacher development programmes are not only concerned with cognitive skills; they must seek to build confidence and constructive assertiveness, team-spirit and empowerment necessary to create the results teachers would like to see. I do not believe that any teacher wants to see his or her students fail. I am convinced, however, that because of certain cultural approaches, teachers and students collide; teachers and teachers openly disagree making it difficult for an effective school culture to develop. The warmth and understanding which were mentioned earlier do not come naturally for persons who feel disconnected from the system. In order to keep high quality teachers in our schools, nurturing must take place. The mental,

psychological and physical health needs of teachers must be addressed. I will challenge unions here to set up health programmes and facilities to encourage teachers to manage stress and share coping strategies. I am very cognisant of the challenges associated with teaching our children. But teacher quality cannot be expected only as a consequence of Ministry's policy initiatives; teachers themselves through their Associations must foster and provide support to one another.

The Education Sector Enhancement Programme (ESEP) or EduTech 2000 was designed with quality teaching and quality learning in mind. In seeking to enhance teaching and learning, we recognised that the upgrade of physical facilities was pivotal to teacher and student performance. Indeed, all refurbished schools under the EduTech programme have staff kitchenettes and other necessary facilities. You can check them out at Christ Church Boys', Westbury, St. Mary's Deacons, Sharon, St. Joseph Primary, Eilerslie Secondary, St. James Secondary, Combermere, Alexandra and others such as St. Bernards, St. Albans. Teachers deserve comfortable physical facilities and at some point we need to design basic physical requirements for schools in the Caribbean.

There are some other arrangements which need to be institutionalised to enable teachers to carry out their duties effectively:

- (1) School-based planning sessions so that discussions about curriculum, discipline and other issues may be properly ventilated. These cannot be done when students are still on school compounds.
- (2) Master teachers need to be identified and remunerated to encourage our best teachers to remain in the classroom and function as mentors.
- (3) Systematic training programmes should be designed for all teachers including compulsory programmes in industrial relations, human resources development within the school system, the role of policy within the educational system, costing for educational resources and educational leadership for various levels. Successful participation would form the pre-requisites for all teachers wishing to become Senior Teachers, Heads of Departments, deputy Principals and Principals. There is enough evidence to show that high-performing schools require high-performing Principals.

- (4) an effective system of transfer of personnel across primary and secondary schools to ensure renewal of the educational system and expose all teachers to varied experiences.

- (5) Interviews for promotion should be conducted by persons knowledgeable about teaching, learning and educational administration. Persons seeking leadership positions in schools should demonstrate competence in management and leadership through practice and not a recited wish list offered at interviews.

Quality teaching and quality education are about value added and the inculcation of values. Each child should be reasonably expected to leave school better informed and more ably skilled than he or she entered school. These are two of the measures of successful teaching and learning and I laud successive governments for ensuring universal access to primary and secondary education in this country of ours. Barbados stands out as a beacon in this region, and others beyond the region are taking notice that it is our public school system that is preferred and sought after.

Governments are also committed to the payment of fees at the tertiary levels. This ensures that there are no barriers to access.

Lest we rest on our laurels, however, we must be aware of emerging trends in certain developed countries such as England and parts of the United States of America where independent schools are believed to be offering the quality education sought after and paid for by middleclass parents who value their children's academic achievements. There are lessons for us here: if our public schools are seen to have declining standards or if too many students graduate with an inadequate number of qualifications to access post-secondary institutions, we will be signing our own death warrant in an era when educational services are becoming liberalised. In the British newspaper, the Observer of 26th May, 2002, Will Hutton reports on the class war which he felt was destroying schools in Britain. His thesis is that as long as changes in the labour market that value intellectual achievement and social graces prevail, those who can best exploit this – the middle class – will respond. Hutton continues to show that most European societies have greater emphasis on high-quality education for the average along with a system of vocational training supported by their business sectors. The recent innovations in Barbadian education

seek to ensure that the system provides this high-quality education for all Barbadian children. In this, we are closer to the European model.

Whatever the detractors of EduTech may feel, its objectives are sound: allowing each child to maximise his or her potential in a system of flexible transfer between the ages of nine and twelve to allow for differentiation in rates of learning, innovative programmes which ensure that through national curricula, all children can be exposed to a core of learning areas which form the basis for further learning regardless of career choice; radical and bold educational initiatives which will see all students being able to obtain the Barbados Diploma of Secondary Education, certifying certain valuable knowledge, skills and participation in extra-curricular activities.

Curriculum 2000 with its emphasis on students' learning outcomes seeks to ensure that quality education remains the cornerstone of social mobility for our people. This has been the post-slavery experience and it has brought us a comparatively peaceful co-existence so far. But who are the guardians of this quality educational system? And what do the guardians do to defend the system against those who seek to undermine it in several ways? For example, the use of English. Surely the mark of an educated

individual is the ability to use language effectively. I was reminded recently that the absence of Rediffusion has resulted in the country losing media models of high standards in English usage. Government cannot spend almost \$200 million annually at the primary and secondary levels on educating 45,000 young people who are unable to be articulate and incapable of communicating at several levels. The concept of community radio is not working because each day if we are bombarded with the banal and trite concerns, language use will also be banal, trite and limited. But this is only one example of the decline!

I wish to end this address by making a frank examination of values in education. School is not only about the cognitive development of children. I am amazed that persons do not know that the revised curricula – all the subject areas, have an integrated system of values. At no time have values been removed from our schools. Never! But we must be aware of how values are “caught”. One does not teach values as part of a separate curriculum. The ethos, the practices of the entire school must be values based. Effective systems of discipline, the management structure, whether persons in the school are treated with dignity or not, zero tolerance for verbal and physical abuse, all these seek to inculcate values. Helping

children to be assertive without being rude, to wait one's turn in the queue, to recognise and develop their own spiritual selves are some of the ways to promote values. Education, quality education must ultimately help each child to ask who am I? And it is education that will lead him on the journey to that answer. Our experience has taught us that the better way to inculcate values is through a good grounding in the humanities. Indeed, that is why Literature is part of the core learning areas at primary and secondary schools and this led us to introduce the PEACE Programme – Personal Empowerment through Arts and Creative Education. Teachers are being taught how to inculcate these values through drama and dance, for example where role-playing scenarios can be done to enable students to 'feel' for example, what it is to be hurt, how to express anger, how to deal with tempting situations, how to manage conflict. Above all else, children are being taught how to deal with ambiguity. I don't understand when persons say they are too young to learn about ambiguity when our schools are full of hurting children; children abused sexually and physically, children come from homes where ambiguity abounds. In the book Children's Rights – Caribbean Realities edited by our own Professor Christine Barrow, reference is made to the high rate of abortions among adolescent girls, children being slapped, kicked, beaten with wire or pieces of wood, body-

slammed and having hot water thrown on them as we totally misrepresent the adage of sparing the rod and spoiling the child. All these children come to us with broken lives as early as five years-old; all types of background which include children from two-parent families where they are also abused and hurting. But the hypocrisy abounds as adults go into denial. But schools, through quality teachers, manage these challenges every day in order to ensure that these children are given a chance to experience some semblance of childhood.

Finally, quality education must seek to engender tolerance. Each individual must be treated with respect and dignity. The types of children I spoke of just now, the raucous, belligerent parent; those who are different from us in race, colour and ethnicity, tolerance for the intellectually slow and deficient all deserve our respect.

One of Monday's local newspapers quoted the Anglican Bishop of Barbados, Dr. John Holder as saying that the world seemed unchanged in relation to moral behaviour since the entry of the church. Human beings have continued to treat each other and treat the world as if they have never heard the message of a young man called Jesus of Nazareth, who offered

this world a glimpse of God that no one else had. We continue to behave as if the message of love and compassion, the message of righteousness and forgiveness have no relevance to the day-to-day business of life.” He chided persons for applying simplistic solutions to life’s complex problems. I see this happening in calls for a return to single-sex schools without an examination of our concepts of masculinity, femininity and socialization issues; I see this happening in our ignoring the downward slide in the behaviour of girls; I see this happening in the continued negative expression of aspects of our culture.

The school, like the church, is called to a very high order. Will Sutton in his article from Britain spoke of the role of the social graces in education; the acting Minister of Education in Singapore is recorded earlier this month as saying that:

“The ultimate measure of success in education is how well or students eventually meet the demands and challenges of the real world. Do they have the qualities to be a good citizen ... the intelligence, drive, team spirit, adaptability, leadership skills and

integrity of the type of person who usually shapes (organisations), who rises to the top.”

The Press perhaps needs to publish our document entitled Curriculum 2000 because if ours had not been published first I would have believed that the acting Minister of Singapore had quoted from it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, control of our students futures are being fought over by conflicting agencies including the pervasive, intrusive media. In the ESEP, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports and its stakeholders have sought to arm our students and teachers with the tools necessary to win that battle. I end where I began – “Teachers are at the heart of educational improvement. Any benefits that accrue to students as a result of educational policies require the enabling action of teachers.”

I salute all Barbadian teaches who provide quality teaching everyday in our schools and who by their examples of courage, faith and tolerance teach our young ones to cope with life. These are the quality teachers who maintain quality schools.