

CONSORTIUM FOR BELIZE EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION (COBEC)

Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Bi-Annual Meeting

Thursday and Friday, February 5-6, 2009

University of Belize, Belmopan, Belize.

Attendance:

Cherry Steffens	Kennesaw State University
Julio Espana	Kennesaw State University
Angel Cal	University of Belize
Wilma Wright	University of Belize
Thippi Thiagarajan	University of Belize
Fatai Akinkuolie	University of Belize
Deborah McMillan	University of Belize
Jean Perriott	University of Belize
Beth Moore	Viterbo University
Dwight Call	Georgia State University
Adrian Leiva	Muffles Junior College
Tanya Viera	University of South Florida
Neulin Villanueva	St. John's Junior College
Deborah Domingo	St. John's Junior College
Robert Blair	New Mexico State University
Hugo Gonzalez	Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College
Ethel Hernandez	Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College
John Peterson	Western Kentucky University
Sister M.C.lawrence	Ministry of Education (Belize)

Miguel Montero	Corozal Junior College
Jose Mai	Corozal Junior College
Carol Sapp	Georgia College and State University
Breezy Ann Wente	University of Indianapolis
John Kempainen	University of North Florida
Gustavo Ellis	San Pedro Junior College
Neima Gomez	San Pedro Junior College
Winsome Arana	Wesley Junior College
Keith Miser	University of Hawaii at Hilo
Cornell Menking	Western Kentucky University
Bernie Strenecky	Western Kentucky University
Ty Crisman	New York University
Jim McCoy	Murray State University
Susan Ralph	Bainbridge College
Tracy Harrington	Bainbridge College
Eve Aird	Sacred Heart College
Gertrudes Velasquez	Sacred Heart Junior College
Olda Hoare	Sacred Heart Junior College
Robert Devillar	Kennesaw State University
Joel Clarke	Belize Adventist Junior College
Brandon Lewis	Santa Monica College
Lisa Battaglino	Bridgewater State College
Carol Babb	Ministry of Education (Belize)
Ivan Nikolov	Valdosta State University
Brian Gerber	Valdosta State University

Phil Gunter	Valdosta State University
Jane Bennett	University of the West Indies
Nancy Adamson	Galen University
Filiberto Penados	Galen University
Bert Jacobson	Oklahoma State University
Michael Brennan	Hillsborough Community College

1.0 OPENING CEREMONIES

Mrs. Sylvana Woods invited the assembly to stand for the National anthems of the U.S. and Belize. These anthems were led by Dr. Leopold Perriott of the University of Belize and the U.B. choir. This was followed by a prayer by Mr. Ian Sangster, the bursar of U.B.

Dr. Santos Mahung, the President of the University of Belize welcomed the delegates to the conference. He remarked that COBEC is special and unique to Belize and should be prized as such. He further stated that development in Central America and the Caribbean has made COBEC more important to us and our American partners. 'Belize is a microcosm of Central America and the Caribbean region and offers a living laboratory for international studies'. Dr. Mahung referred to the election of the first African American president in the U.S. by noting that we should now talk about 1-20-09, as it will have far reaching effects globally. He invited the American partners to seek mechanisms of collaboration which will be beneficial to them.

Dr. Eve Aird, the Belize co-chair welcomed delegates to the conference. She expressed how proud she was to note the presence of the Minister of Education, the Honourable Patrick Faber. Dr. Aird went on to remind everyone of the theme for the conference: 'Opportunities and Challenges in Teacher Education'.

2.0 KEYNOTE ADDRESS

HONOURABLE PATRICK FABER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION, BELIZE

Minister Faber expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to address the conference.

He defined Challenge as: 'the opportunity to rise to the occasion'. He said he was at the conference to push this along so that eight hundred teachers who have only associates degree will start getting trained. He urged the delegates to act quickly and do things well. He went on to share his vision and that of the administration for education in Belize within the following context:

- The social challenges that face us in Belize will become greater as the global economic challenges increase.
- If we sow well today, we will reap well tomorrow.
- Challenges will enable us to find solutions where none existed before.
- We cannot be human without others. such is the spirit of COBEC.
- What we do in education must respond to current and future challenges.

This vision is grounded on three principles:

1. Education for self
2. Education for strength
3. Education for life.

Goals:

1. Ensuring every child starts school ready to learn-school feeding program, early child hood education, address nutritional needs of children
2. Getting and keeping young people in school for greater learning. Increasing age in school by 2 years to age 16.
3. Improving student achievement and quality assurance. Include system for measuring outcome, setting up an inspectorate, accreditation
4. Provide incentives for teachers to improve education.

The Minister focused on goal no.2 stating that we are not near universal education at the secondary level. 45% of all students of secondary age are enrolled in school. This point to inefficiency in the system which manifests itself in the following ways.

- High drop-out rates
- Teacher: student ratio of 14:1
- Less than half of all fourth formers sit the CXC examinations
- Less than 60% of the students who sit the CXC examinations in English and Mathematics pass these subjects.

Minister Faber stated that Inequity exists at the secondary level and manifests itself in terms of funding, the curriculum to which students have access and the private cost of education. For the poorest, education expenses were very large. Quality and relevance of education at the secondary level must be addressed. If not the social problems will be visiting us in our homes. Finances will be reformed to one which is per capita based.

Tertiary education: the Minister next turned his attention to tertiary level education. He begun by stating that there is a dearth of statistics on tertiary level education in Belize. According to the World Bank figures, 3% of the female and 4% of the male population are enrolled in a tertiary level institution. This gives us a ratio of 2 females to every 1 male. Outcomes from these institutions are limited to the

results of CAPE and Cambridge examinations. Some of the challenges cited for this level of the education system are as follows:

- Low pass rate for the CAPE/Cambridge examinations
- Few students registering for these examinations
- Duplication of programs
- Problems with articulation between Junior Colleges and UB
- Students are enrolled in traditional courses which prepare them for further studies when they are planning to become employed immediately after leaving the Junior Colleges.
- Students are enrolled in business administration courses which do not emphasise entrepreneurship or small business management
- Not enough opportunities provided for people to become life-long learners
- Tertiary level institutions are not emphasizing workforce training
- Access to tertiary level education needs to be increased.
- Work done at this level is not informed by the needs of the work force

The way forward should encompass some of the following:

- Re-establishment of a new student loans program through a revived DFC.
- Knowledge generation and service development
- Partnership between public sector, private sector and education institutions.

The Minister of Education ended the keynote address by calling on all tertiary level institution to make community service a part of their curriculum and expressed his desire to continue the dialogue aimed at improving education in Belize.

3.0 CONTEXT OF BELIZE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BELIZEAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

MR. ALEXANDER BENNETT, U.B.

Mr. Alexander Bennett chronicled the development of education in Belize:

1816: Church -State partnership begun with a school controlled by the Anglicans. This was a fully financed Anglican school in which Character training was greatly emphasized.

Between 1882 and 1900: Four secondary schools were inaugurated: Wesley College, St. Johns College, Anglican Diocesan high school for girls (Later called St. Hilda's), and Anglican Diocesan High school for boys. These schools received no funding from the government.

A department of Education was later followed by a Ministry of Education. Primary school teachers were trained by an apprenticeship system, which would result in the awarding of certificates of various classes. There was no provision for the training of primary school teachers.

Secondary school teachers were first trained by BELCAST.

1967: A National council for education was formed. Each secondary school had its own instructional program.

1962: Belize Technical High school, the first funded Govt. institution was formed.

The first Govt. secondary school was established in Orange Walk.

1969: Govt. experimented with the Junior Secondary School system, with the establishment of BJSS1 and later BJSS2. The Govt. also started getting more involved in the formation of high schools eg Ecumenical high school, and Orange Walk Technical high school.

1940's: Only those whose parents could afford it could send their children to universities abroad. In the 1940's the open scholarship was instituted. High schools provided tertiary level education.

With the opening of UWI, more Belizean students started to be educated there.

BELCAST was formed in the 1960's to meet the needs of students which it was felt that UWI was not doing. The Agricultural school, Nursing school and Teachers Colleges were amalgamated. Later BELCAST was disbanded and UCB was formed .

2000: The official inauguration of UB.

3.2 STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN BELIZE AS IT OPERATES TODAY.

MR. CHRIS AIRD, CEO IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, BELMOPAN

The system operates at five levels: Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, Junior Colleges and Universities.

	DURATION(YEARS)	AGE RANGE	ENROLLMENT(2005-2006)
PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION	2	3-4	3,177
PRIMARY EDUCATION	8	5-12	64,516
SECONDARY EDUCATION	4	13-16	16,696
TERTIARY EDUCATION	2	17-18	(no figures given)
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION	2-4	(no figures)	(no figures given)

CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Management and Planning
- Teacher Education
- Financing and Education
- Policy and Legislation
- High repetition rate
- Problems of accessibility especially for students living in the village.

4.0 PANEL SESSION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN PLANNING AND DELIVERING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN BELIZE.

4.1 PANELLIST: DR. WILMA WRIGHT-DEAN, UB FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND ARTS.

STATISTICS ON STATUS OF TEACHERS: 2007-2008

	NO. OF TEACHERS	NO. OF UNTRAINED TEACHERS	PERCENTAGE OF UNTRAINED TEACHERS
PRIMARY SCHOOLS	2,917	1,669	57.2
SECONDARY SCHOOLS	1,216	372	30.6

RESPONSE TO THE ABOVE:-

- Belizean institutions expanded their services
- Some institutions form coalitions to access resources and share ideas and expertise to deliver programs.

OPPORTUNITIES: MOE SUPPORT

- More scholarships to increase the number of trained teachers
- Certificate program for primary school teachers with associate degree without pedagogical training.
- Ministry personnel assigned to U.B. to assist with the implementation of the associate degree in teaching training through distance education. Of 184 persons asked, 80% expressed interest in distance learning programs.

CHALLENGES

- Tension between program and institutional goals.
- Lack of agreement among institutions regarding the number of credits outlined in the associate program and the general core courses.
- Creating a balance between content and pedagogy
- Paucity of local research.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Faculty needs to be motivated to access resources to pursue a research agenda.
- A culture of scholarship needs to be fostered in Belize.

4.2 PANELLIST: MR. CHRIS AIRD-CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

CHALLENGES:

- High demand for trained teachers at various levels
- Lack of sufficient numbers of expert teacher trainers
- Capacity of the system to enroll required numbers of teachers at a time.
- Difficulty in catering discriminatingly to teacher training needs at Early Childhood, primary and secondary levels
- Limited access for rural teachers
- Capacity to provide teachers with requisite experiences in such necessary fields as literacy, reading, special education, and assessment.
- The training of teachers to effective competency levels of content mastery in various area especially Science, Math.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Collaboration among Junior Colleges, U.B. and the MOE.
- Collaboration between COBEC and ATLIB

4.3 PANELLIST: CECILIA RAMIREZ-SMITH-DIRECTOR TEACHER EDUCATION DISTANCE UNIT

Theme: Formal arrangement does not fit how teachers learn how to teach. Informal influences fit better than formal influences. The salient points from this discourse are as follows:

- Teachers should be life-long learners.
- Continuous professional development has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.
- Newly qualified teachers must not be regarded as finished products.
- Induction period-the first year of teaching-there is insufficient support for teachers.
- Follow-up is needed for workshops that are organized by the MOE.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE TEACHER TRAINING

- Find out how teachers' prior knowledge and experience in teaching affects their performance in the classroom
- Improve mandated induction period for newly qualified teachers

- Establish strong link between teacher preparation programs and effectiveness
- National plan to attract highly qualified persons into the teaching profession

4.4 PANELLIST: DR. ROBERT De VILLAR-CENTRE FOR HISPANIC STUDIES, KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

Themes

1. Thought leadership
2. Building research capacity
3. Articulation across the grades
 - Dichotomous concepts must be rejected and be replaced with symbiotic, mutual, reciprocal concepts.
 - Education does not drive employment and vice versa. We do not want business driving education. Business is motivated by profits.
 - Education now and for the future-lifelong learning is a must as content becomes obsolete
 - Schools are highly resistant to change.

BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY:

This must be an independent enterprise to generate knowledge which may be both general and specific.

Distinct types of research eg. Qualitative and quantitative must be considered.

ROLE OF COBEC -long term

- Targeted faculty exchanges-team approach
- Targeted professional development
- Targeted collaborative and funded research-team approach
- Program, policy and research joint publications

EQUITY

Definition1: Aristotelian-Correction of the law where the law is defective

Definition 2: Occurs when access + participation + benefit are satisfied (rural/urban; low income/high income; male/female; language groups etc.

VISION: NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Culture= f (survival formula+ socialization + enculturation)

- Vision drives development

- Teachers are only formal socialization agents in a nation.
- must understand and appreciate and respect role.
- education and continuous professional development are paramount

4.5 A COMPARISON OF FIELD EXPERIENCES IN BELIZE AND THE U.S.

PANELLISTS: KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND DR. STEVENS

Some of the observations stated are as follows:

- Lack of educational resources in Belize compared to the U.S.
- Need to think outside the box and be more creative
- Segmented teaching of subjects in Belize eg. English is taught separately as phonics, reading, spelling etc whereas these areas are taught in an integrated manner in the US.
- Focus for 4 year old students are very academic they are given home work, whereas it is not so in the US.
- Will be better prepared as they felt pushed to use all of their imagination and skills to teach
- Feel better able to deal with peoples from other cultures who are living in the US
- Vast differences in the availability of technology eg. No smart board, internet or television in the Belizean primary schools.

This session ended with a lively discussion between panelists and the audience as they reflected on some of the points made above.

The session for Thursday was adjourned at 4:20pm

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2009

5.0 REPORT BY OFFICERS:

5.1: SECRETARY'S REPORT

Corrections to the minutes:

- Ivan Nikolov is at Valdosta State University and not at Kennesaw State University
- 6.5: membership SUNY Cortland, instead of 'Sunni Cortland'

Matters arising from the minutes:

- 6.4: Small Grants: the workshop on the supervision of nurses for nursing preceptors is presently going on. There area about 40 nurses attending this workshop.

The minutes were accepted and seconded.

5.2 TREASURER'S REPORT

Belize Treasurer's report: This will be presented at the summer meeting.

The U.S. Treasurer's report: Amount in account (as of 1-3-09) is \$14, 956.36

5.3 MEMBERSHIP

Introduction of Centro Escolar Mexico Junior College by the Acting Dean of the institution. The college is a vocational Junior College with 120 students.

COBEC members need to populate the web site with information about what each institution is doing in Belize. This should be added to the website along with the new logo. The website should be made the focal point for what is going on with COBEC.

5.4 FUTURE COBEC MEETINGS:

The summer conference will be hosted by Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah Georgia. Dwight Call gave a brief summary of what one should expect at the summer meeting. Savannah Georgia is said to be the one of the most beautiful cities in Georgia with good shops and places to eat out. It is a very historical place.

Pre-conference workshop for Belizean delegates- AASU will arrange for the delivery of a topic which is chosen by the Belizean partners. These workshops have been very useful in the past.

The winter conference 2010 will be hosted by SJCJC in the first week of February.

Discussion on the best days for COBEC meetings: Are two full days necessary for these meetings?

Some persons are concerned about the unavailability of free time for meetings between various institutions. It was suggested that Friday afternoons would be a good time to be allocated for this.

It was suggested that in the summer of 2010, the meeting should be held as close to Belize as possible to help to deal with the economics of fares etc.

6.0 COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 STUDY ABROAD COMMITTEE

Study abroad committee report was given by Olda Hoare and Dwight Call. Study-Abroad is to include both Belizean and U.S. students. Tripartite programs involving three institutions will be encouraged as this would attract more funding. Dwight Call will be looking at different financial models for study abroad programs.

6.2 CFACT

College Fair and Counselor Training: Beth Moore and Jose Mai reported on this committee. It has not been very active on the counselor training aspects. Data has been collected to analyse the population that visited the college fair. In the future the committee will ensure that the Ministry of Education is present to discuss scholarship opportunities also the U.S. embassy to talk about visa applications. There was increased attendance at the fair this year.

6.3 CAFE

College administrator/faculty experience CAFE workshop- Report by Adrian Leiva. The Committee has not been as active as it could have been. Plans to remedy this were made at the meeting. Members were encouraged to look at the role of CAFE, the activities that it has been engaged in, and make suggestions for future activities. One should make use of the web site to state how this can be done. Café will put out this information so that it can become more active. UB has taken steps to have two of their administrators spend two weeks in COBEC institutions. The experience is to be reciprocal. Library service is critical and a great need in Belize. How can we make use of online courses in library studies? Bilateral cooperation is good, but the spirit of COBEC is one of collaboration.

7.0 ELECTIONS

7.1 ELECTION OF NEW CO-CHAIRS.

New Co-chairs will be elected this summer. Michael Brennan reviewed the bye-laws pertaining to the duties of the elected officers of COBEC. Each territory will elect a co-chair. Co-chairs serve for a period of two years. The bye laws as well as the minutes of the last meeting are available on the COBEC website. Username for members only section is COBEC. Special membership category will be recommended for persons who have worked with COBEC for a long time but no longer serve with a member institution. This will be further explored at the summer conference meeting.

8.0 COBEC SUB-COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN BELIZE

8.1 CERTIFICATE PROGRAM, PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

STATUS REPORT

Presenter Dr. Wilma Wright

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM MODEL

Dr. Wright presented a pilot model as derived by the group. The following recommendations were made:

- Centralized program
- The program will be 12 months long: two summers and 2 semesters
- Program elements-pedagogy, practice and variable content.
- Belizean tertiary institutions with capacity and expertise will be invited to participate in delivery of program.
- Pilot program assessment
- Formative/summative assessments
- Recruitment of Belize/US COBEC partners on assessment team
- Analyse data, generate interpretations, derive implications and make recommendations
- Reporting-final part will be submitted for review and comments among institutions that have piloted the program and task force members.

Factors to consider: effective implementation of Pilot Program.

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn-Nancy Adamson, seconded by Ivan Nikolov.

It was announced that there would be a Cultural presentation after lunch.

Respectfully submitted by:

Winsome arana

