

Progress Report on the Project: *Purpose and Promise: A History of the Evolution of Higher Education in The Bahamas, with particular Reference to the History of The College of The Bahamas*

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INTRODUCTION

On June 30, 2009, I signed an Agreement with The College of The Bahamas to undertake a Project aimed at conducting research and writing on the history of post-secondary education in The Bahamas, with particular reference to the history of the College of The Bahamas. In order to facilitate this undertaking, The College appointed me as Scholar-in-Residence from August 1, 2009 to September 30, 2011, on the understanding that I would undertake research and write a book on the subject described.

The report that follows documents the activities that I have undertaken to date in fulfilling my commitments in relation to this project and a sample of preliminary findings emerging from the research so far conducted.

Research conducted

The methods and activities employed in carrying out the research have derived in large measure from the basic premise upon which I conceived the project. This was that the establishment of The College of The Bahamas in 1974, with the intent, form and scope of

responsibilities identified for it, represented not only an important purposeful event but also, even more profoundly perhaps, a quantum leap in a process of educational development in The Bahamas that had spanned many generations. The establishment of The College just one year after Independence symbolized in addition a new level of confidence in the potential of the Bahamian people as a whole. To be sure, until the second half of the 20th century, educational development had progressed very slowly—some might even say reluctantly—and in fits and starts, reflecting vividly the “boom and bust” nature of the Bahamian economy and social experience, as well as the particular imperatives at work in the society at any given point in time.

Informing my approach to all these issues has been a desire to try to identify and understand more clearly (I should also say more dispassionately) the thinking and forces that lay behind the nature and pace of progress in Bahamian education in general prior to the establishment of The College as well as those

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that have influenced the process of development within that institution itself. I was interested, also, to discover to what extent the perspectives of policy-makers and individuals and groups from different strata in society concurred or differed and which seemed in the end to carry most weight.

I therefore undertook, first, to try to trace significant antecedents to those core areas of work that were to be addressed by The College: academic education beyond the secondary level as preparation either for students' transfer to full degree studies at institutions abroad or their entry into the world of work; the education and training of teachers (primarily for public schools); studies of relevance to the rapidly expanding public and private sectors in the new nation - in business disciplines, other professional and paraprofessional studies as well as technical and vocational studies; opportunities for adult and continuing education.

In this pursuit, I continued an extensive literature search, begun some time earlier, and mined the information contained in a range of books, theses and dissertations, official documents, (such as Acts of Parliament, minutes of meetings of government bodies, annual reports, commissioned reports, and special papers of relevance to the subject).

Particularly helpful in this regard was the review of newspaper sources that not only provided more detailed accounts of official events and social activities, thus giving insight into the way of life of the various segments of the society, but also into the thinking of the time. This latter was particularly reflected in newspaper reports of the proceedings of the House of Assembly, in editorial commentary on those deliberations and other important social issues, in accounts of public meetings and addresses delivered at these and other community events (such as school speech days and prize-giving

ceremonies, political rallies, official openings of new facilities, etc.) and in letters and comments submitted by members of the wider community. Especially revealing in this regard were the widely differing perspectives on events that were reflected in the various journals.

I next sought to review the official documents of The College of The Bahamas, particularly those of the early years of its existence. Surprisingly, this proved initially a frustrating task, as many of these were not immediately available in The College itself.² Those I was subsequently able to discover elsewhere have reflected that many of the issues that plagued institutions in the past had not completely disappeared even in this exciting new endeavour. Less than adequate funding, overly restrictive bureaucratic procedures and processes and external control that impinged heavily upon the autonomous functioning of the institution continued to be a feature of the College's reality for some time to come.

My personal collections of speeches, working papers and diaries proved helpful in fixing the chronology of significant landmarks in the evolution of The College during those first decades, and in revealing my personal reactions to specific occurrences.

The interviews undertaken to date have provided particularly valuable details on a range of the issues that have emerged thus far. Many more of these are planned for the future.

² There is a clear recommendation emerging from this experience, which I have no doubt is already being addressed. That is, the importance of formally archiving all official College documents, preferably now in digital format. For safety's sake, it may be advisable to have them lodged not only in COB'S official archives in the Council Office and in the new library, but also in the Public Records Office in the Department of Archives under whatever restrictions are appropriate.

Sources consulted

1. Books

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Ronald Turner. *A Study of Education in The Bahamas*, (unpublished Master's Thesis, Colorado State University, 1968).

3. Official documents

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College of The Bahamas Acts: 1974, 1995.

Board of Education Minutes: completed Review of Board Minutes begun before August 2009, to re-emphasize developments and fill in relevant gaps. Main period covered in this exercise: 1940-1963.

Reports: Revisited as necessary: the Houghton Report, 1958, the Leys Report, 1968 and the Maraj Report, 1974, *National Task Force on Education Final Report*, 1994. Reviewed: J. W. Gailer, *Report on*

the Development of Technical Education in the Bahamas, 1967, and his follow-up Report on the same topic, 1968. Reviewed: M. K. Bacchus, *A Suggested Policy for Higher Education in The Bahamas with special reference to the development of the College of The Bahamas*, 1976.

Special Papers: *The Quarterly Mission Papers*, 1928-1931. (Quarterly reports of the Anglican Diocese in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands to the Nassau Mission in London).

UNESCO Papers: Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948; World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action, October 9, 1998.

College of The Bahamas Documents: Sundry papers and minutes of the College Council from 1975–1991³ and available Annual Reports; the *Final Report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Governance*, 2007.

4. Newspapers

The Royal Gazette and Bahama Advertiser: January-May 1805.

Bahamas Argus: January-December; 1835.

The Nassau Guardian and Colonial Advertiser: January-December 1849; January-December 1854; January-

December 1925; January-December 1958; January-December 1960.

The Tribune: January-December 1925; January-December 1926; January-December 1930; January-December 1935; January-December 1946; January-December 1949; January-December 1951; January-December 1953; January-April 1954; January-December 1955; January-December 1956; January-December 1957; January-December 1958; January-August 1961; January-March 1966; December 1972-July 1973.

The Nassau Herald: January-December 1955; January-December 1956; January-December 1957; January-December 1958; January-December 1959; January-December 1960; January-December 1961; January-December 1962.

5. Selected speeches

Speeches delivered by Keva Bethel at commencement exercises, Baccalaureate services and other COB events, as well as presentations at conferences and community functions.

6. Sundry Papers, Articles etc.

History of Education in England, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:
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A Philosophy of the Idea of Christian Liberal Arts Education: Why Is It Important? W. Lamar Stockton, Dallas Baptist University Friday Symposium, September 24, 2004.

7. Interviews

Dame Ivy Dumont
His Excellency the Hon. A.D. Hanna
The Hon. Godfrey Kelly
Dr. John Knowles
Dr. Roger Brown
Dr. Eleanor Thompson
Mrs. Inez Peet
Mrs. Joyce Thompson

³ There has been considerable difficulty in locating within The College itself official documents for the early periods of the institution's existence.

Recently, however, while undertaking the task of sorting and packing up the papers of the Rt. Rev. Michael H. Eldon, I have been able to locate among them a treasure trove of documents from his period as Chairman. This process is by no means complete as yet, but I am optimistic that by the time I have been able to go through his whole collection, I shall have been able to put together a fairly complete set of Council agendas, papers and minutes for the period 1975–1995. At the end of this project, this will be made available to The College for converting to an appropriate digital format for future archiving.

Writing

As the volume of information emerging from the activities described above has mounted, I have wrestled with how this might best be organized to create a coherent narrative when the actual writing process is undertaken in earnest. I have tentatively decided to try a thematic approach, using as a framework the threads identified earlier, as main aspects of The College's mission: i.e., academic education; teacher education; technical and vocational studies; business studies; other professional studies; adult and continuing education. When dealing specifically with the analysis of the College's journey over the decades, further dimensions, such as organizational, governance, financial, physical and, particularly, human resource elements, will be added. Though these will be alluded to in reference to earlier (or other contemporary) institutions as appropriate, they will be discussed in greater depth to reflect their impact upon the ways in which the institution has evolved throughout the course of its existence.

I have made two written summaries of material covered to date: one, a chronological summary of events, derived from various sources consulted, and the beginning of a thematic sorting of information gained. As thoughts on any particular aspect of the project occur, I have tried to write a paragraph or so about them, so that they are not lost. A more sustained narrative will be begun when relevant research is more fully complete.

Some preliminary findings

Recurring trends emerge as one traces the development of public education in The Bahamas. Predictably, the most obvious one is that of the chronic under-funding of the system that persisted until the last third of the 20th century and to some extent since then, despite the huge increases in provision allocated, and the declared and proven commitment on the part of successive

governments to make education its priority for public funding.⁴ Many worthwhile schemes proposed by the Board of Education in earlier years had to be abandoned because the Legislature refused to provide adequate funding, and in times of retrenchment it was often education budgets that were reduced most severely. One can only conclude, as it has often been asserted, that education for the masses of the people was not seen as a priority.

Historically, also, there was a tendency to rely heavily on sources external to the government itself for the provision of educational services (even at basic levels). In the earlier periods, missionary societies were approached to provide and administer schools, with some financial assistance from the Government. In smaller Out Island communities, moreover, even as late as the first third of the 20th century, the establishment and staffing of schools were quite often the responsibility of residents themselves, again with grant assistance from the government. These were known as grant-in-aid schools and, in the Out Islands particularly, were seen to be a relatively inexpensive way for the Government to provide schools in remote settlements. The quality of some of these schools, however, tended to be even less strong than the admittedly weak Board schools.

For a long time, as will emerge in the account of findings that follows, the provision of education beyond primary school was largely left either to private sources or, again, to the churches. By the 20th century, as the demands

⁴ The reality seems to be that the enormity of the challenges entailed in the provision of adequate and equal educational or other services in an archipelagic nation such as ours may never fully be overcome unless it becomes more possible for individual islands (and perhaps also, individual institutions within them) to attain greater self-sufficiency.

of an expanding and more complex society made tertiary education or specialized studies necessary, the Board frequently relied on awards provided by overseas entities (such as the Colonial Office or the British Council, for example) to fund advanced training for teachers and other employees of the Civil Service. Only in the post-World War II era do we find evidence of more sustained commitment from the public purse (however limited) for such support.

It should be noted that, for a long time in The Bahamas (indeed well into the 20th century) “higher” education was conceived of as post-basic education, i.e. secondary education, and so it is from that point that the COB antecedents have had to be traced, if the significance of the level and scope of work of The College is to be fully appreciated. It has been interesting to note that, from the early 1800’s, a variety of efforts had been made to provide secondary schooling, though mainly for benefit of the elite or well-to-do middle class until the successful establishment of the Government High School in 1925. After one short-lived attempt at a public high school at the beginning of the 19th century, all other efforts were made through private subscription or with the support of the churches.

The significance of these initiatives, however, is that they do reflect the existence in the Bahamian society of an appreciation in the society of the value of higher education, for varying reasons, no doubt, depending on the groups entailed. It is very likely, for example, that the establishment of the Government High School was in no small measure born out of the persistent and increasingly vocal demands of the quite significant number of black and coloured members in the House of Assembly, as well as members of the public who stressed the need for greater educational opportunity for the non-white members of society so as to better their chances in life. All

of these now found an avenue of expression not only in the legislature, but also in the pages of the Tribune.⁵

Some examples of early attempts at providing higher education are the following:

1804: a *High School in New Providence* was established by Act of Parliament and funded by the government. This followed basically a traditional classical curriculum, but bookkeeping (i.e., “merchant accounts”) was also taught. The School did not open until 1806 and lasted only for five years, being forced to close for lack of funds. No other publicly funded secondary school appeared until the establishment of the Government High School in 1925.

1835: *King’s College School* was established by Resolution of the “School Education Society,” to be formed, as far as local conditions permitted, on the model of the school bearing the same name in London. It was to be founded on a principle of shares, initially to be limited to 100, at a value of £10 each. The school became a reality, and did indeed gain the patronage of the King. Despite

⁵ There is a most intriguing full-page advertisement placed by the “Ballot-Box Party” in the May 27, 1925 issue of *The Tribune* that bears this out. It calls upon “those Citizens who have over their signature expressed themselves in favour of The Ballot Box, and those who signed the Petition for the Ballot Box to the late House during its last session, ... as in honour bound to support and vote, in this present General Election of members for the Honourable House of Assembly, for those candidates who were members of the last house and who supported the Ballot Box Petition so far as it went, and who there is good reason to believe will be returned.” It also promises to support “and give all their influence, and support and votes for” new candidates and ex-members of the House who area known to be in favour of the aims of the Party, whose planks included – in addition to the Ballot Box system of election, a reasonable ‘literary’ (sic) test for FUTURE ELECTORS; Higher Education, and a competitive examination for entrance to the Civil Service of the Colony. (my emphasis).

this auspicious beginning however, by 1849 the school was obliged to close due to its persistent financial woes.

1854: *The Grammar School* was founded as a replacement for the King's College School. Again, its curriculum was traditionally classical in nature. After ten years, it too, had to close for lack of funds.

1865: *The Nassau Grammar School* was established by the new Bishop of the Anglican Diocese, Addington Venables, who was determined to ensure the sustained influence of the Church of England in education in the colony. This school continued to function until 1922, when it too had to close because of funding difficulties. It had basically followed a traditional curriculum, its expressed purpose being that boys, on graduating from the school, should be able to "matriculate automatically into a British university or succeed in entrance examinations required by one or more of the professions" (Sands, 2007, p. 76). In addition to its staying power, a significant feature of that school was that it admitted boys of colour.

1871: *Bahama Collegiate* (Nassau) was a Methodist school, and was the forerunner of *Queen's College* that was established in 1890. Both of these schools were essentially for white students only, though *Queen's College* from quite early in the 20th century admitted a few coloured children whose parents could afford to pay the fees charged. Despite its struggles with funding, *Queen's College* has endured to this day, largely because, after his arrival in 1925 as Headmaster, the Rev. R. P. Dyer was able to persuade the government to provide grant-in-aid to the school.

1886: the Anglican Church established *St. Hilda's School for Girls*. It was basically an all-white high school, though a few light-skinned coloured girls of respected Anglican

families were allowed to attend.⁶ This school prepared students to take the School Certificate Examination. It lasted until 1931, not only because of the financial challenges it faced, that were exacerbated by the repeated damage the school sustained in successive hurricanes of the late 1920's, but also because the order of Sisters who ran it withdrew from The Bahamas.

1925: the publicly funded *Government High School* was established initially to be a training school for teachers (it was originally referred to as "the Training School") and was intended to provide a higher level of academic preparation for teachers destined to work in Board of Education schools and to prepare them to sit the Cambridge School Certificate Examination, the preferred qualification for Head Teachers in Board schools of the day. It was noted in the *Nassau Guardian* of April 11, 1925, however, that pupils other than prospective teachers would be admitted "on the payment of a reasonable fee." Initially conceived as a school to which student teachers who completed the course of study available at the Central School could proceed, (usually at the age of 14+), if they performed successfully in the entrance examination. The school soon began to admit younger pupils (11+) to its four-year course, if they were successful in the competitive entrance examination. The school charged fees (10 Guineas a year) although a number of scholarships for New Providence and Out Island students were awarded, primarily for persons destined to become Board teachers.

The school eventually abandoned its identity as a teacher training institution, focusing more fully on its academic mission. It became a direct antecedent of The College of The Bahamas when, in 1958, it formally

⁶ It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for the different postures adopted in the two Anglican Schools of the day. Was there possibly a gender issue at work?

introduced classes to prepare students for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (and later the University of London General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examinations). This new programme had become necessary since entrance requirements for U.K. universities had been raised following the influx of ex-servicemen applying for university places after World War II. Prior to this, students could be accepted to university based on performance in School Certificate Examinations or on passing the London Matriculation Examination. The sixth-form programme, of course, was absorbed into the COB structure when the new institution was established and was offered at the institution until the 1980's.

In the 20th century the churches played a progressively more prominent role in the provision of secondary (and later also post-secondary) education. As most of them did not discriminate on the basis of colour, they provided the wider Bahamian population with a welcome additional source of higher-level education to that provided by the Government High School, whose capacity was for a long time very limited.

Teacher Education

Much of the effort to provide higher (i.e. post-basic) levels of education in the public arena was driven by the need to produce better-educated teachers for government run schools. Although in many ways teacher "training" in the 19th and even into the 20th century continued to be a form of apprenticeship experience—especially in the Out Islands where the monitorial system was firmly entrenched—the *Central School* that had originally been founded in 1816 as a school for white children (essentially controlled by the Anglican church), was mandated under the Education Act of 1821 to be organized on the Madras system and to provide trained teachers for other schools (Bain, 1959).

It offered a relatively strong curriculum up to about middle school level, some guidance in teaching methods and collaborated with the Board's primary schools to provide practical teaching experience. The school remained co-educational until the *Girls' Model School* was established under the 1847 Education Act.⁷

Concern about the quality of teachers available led a member of the Board of Education to present a Resolution in 1888, questioning the adequacy of the system of teacher training and advising the establishment of a school "of higher grade" for both boys and girls. The proposed Resolution was defeated. Perhaps the most telling (and honest?) reason advanced was that teachers with higher qualifications would require higher remuneration (Board of Education Minutes, October 1888).

As a compromise, the Inspector of Schools suggested that a trained teacher be recruited to supervise the Central School and provide more effective training of student teachers. This advice was heeded and by 1891 a Supervisor and Training Master had been appointed. In February 1892, a special meeting of the Board was held to discuss and approve the establishment of a Normal School to be known as the *Normal Training Institute for Teachers* whose purpose was to provide "a systematic course of instruction and training for those desirous of entering the service of the Board of Education as Certificated Teachers." The age of the prospective student

⁷ After that time the school became known as the Boys' Central School and remained that way until the Government High School was created in 1925. The school also provided a sound foundational education for young men who went on to make significant contributions to the public service and the wider community. Although it was reorganized as a mixed school after 1925, it continued to be known as the Boys' Central School. Under the further reorganization of the education system in 1930, it was integrated into the system as the Western Senior School (Peggs, 1947).

teachers envisaged (18-25) and the content of the curriculum recommended set this proposed institution firmly in the realm of “post-secondary” education. The students’ previous education did not match that designation, however. The Central School was to serve as a practice school for the Institute.

By early 1894, the viability of the Institute was questioned, based on the poor results in the examinations and the unpromising quality of new candidates applying for admission. The Board initially decided to allow the Institute to continue until the end of the year but, by July 1894, the Principal’s services were dispensed with and the Board resolved to close the institution.

In the period that followed, until the opening of the *Government High School*, the training of teachers was carried out as it had been before at the Central School and the Girls’ Model School. As the role of the Government High School as a training institution evolved in the 1930’s, training efforts were carried out largely through summer courses, introduced in 1930, and “continuation” classes, i.e., classes offered in the evenings.

In 1948, a Training Mistress for the Bahamas was selected by the Colonial Office and appointed by the Board of Education. Later that year she began a series of training broadcasts for teachers and in 1949 school broadcasts were added. These provided demonstration classes with pupils from local primary schools being brought to the station in Oakes Field for the purpose.

A dedicated teacher training institution was finally added to the training process when the *Teachers’ Training College* opened in Oakes Field. Housed in grossly inadequate facilities (one of the former military buildings that had been turned over to the Bahamian government after World War II), and plagued by staffing difficulties, the college nevertheless produced a number of outstanding Bahamian educators

(including the previous Governor-General of The Bahamas, Dame Ivy Dumont). This college lasted only seven years, however, primarily because of leadership and staffing problems, and in 1957 the college closed “temporarily.” The official argument advanced was that, for what it was costing to run the college, 20 students per year could be sent to Britain for training there. There was a public outcry, though, as it was clearly understood that the number of students who would qualify for admission to British training colleges would be very small and there was already a considerable shortage of teachers in the system. Nevertheless, the plan was followed and successive small groups of teacher education students (drawn both from existing personnel in the schools as well as high school graduates) were sent to Great Britain for training. A strong recommendation for reopening a local college was made in the report submitted to the Government in 1958 by an educational specialist sent from the Colonial Office to review the status of Bahamian education. The report, known as the Houghton Report, excoriated the state of the Bahamian schools that he claimed was “so bad that every citizen, rich and poor, black and white ought to be ashamed of it” (Houghton, 1958).

In September 1961, 28 candidates enrolled for training at the *Bahamas Teachers’ College*, in temporary accommodation while the purpose-built college facility into which it later moved was being planned and constructed. Considerable controversy accompanied the appointment of a Principal for the College, with protest being made by members of the Bahamas Union of Teachers who strongly supported their President, Mr. Carlton Francis, for the post. They vehemently opposed the Board’s decision to recruit someone new from Britain. House members of the recently formed Progressive Liberal Party raised questions in the Legislature

regarding this appointment and others. The Board did not back down from its decision, however, and the College continued to be headed by a British Principal until the appointment of Patrick Bethel, a white Bahamian from Abaco, a number of years later.

The Bahamas Teachers' College functioned under the close direction of the Ministry of Education until 1974, when it became one of the institutions that were brought together to constitute the new *College of The Bahamas*. When the Bahamas became a contributing member of the University of the West Indies in 1964, the teacher education programmes offered by Bahamas Teachers' College came under the supervision of the University of the West Indies Joint Board of Teacher Education, and Teaching Certificates were issued by that body, a practice that continued at COB for the first 20 plus years of its existence.

In 1968, a second teacher training institution, the *San Salvador Teachers' College*, was established on San Salvador itself. This residential institution was specifically designed to train teachers for Out Island schools. The College was closed in 1975, because of the expense of operating it, and its students were brought into The College of The Bahamas along with those of the Teachers' College in Nassau, to form the Education division of the new institution.

In the private arena, in 1957 a group of Dominican nuns established *Aquinas College* in the Palmdale area of New Providence. This institution was originally envisaged as a teacher training college, designed primarily for training teachers for the Catholic schools, but offering day and evening classes to the wider public as well. The institution did not fare well in that role and was later converted to a high school, offering a broad curriculum that included classes in commercial subjects

and the arts. One of the former instructors of the college, Sister Mary Elizabeth Regan, joined the faculty of The College of The Bahamas, as a member of the Education Division.

Technical and Vocational Studies

Historically, technical or vocational skills were largely developed through formal or informal apprenticeship arrangements or through attendance at private classes offered by skilled persons in the community. Quite early on, however, in the School Acts of the 18th century, there were references to the teaching of such subjects as navigation, and merchant accounts – knowledge directly relevant to the needs of the times.

Other initiatives were later taken to add elements of “practical” training into school offerings and, during the 19th century, sewing was taught for girls, and in 1895 there was a proposal that cooking be added. Information on agriculture was to be provided at boys' schools, “by means of reading lessons” and the Governor volunteered to prepare a course on the subject. (Board of Education Minutes, December 1895). Newspaper advertisements also suggest that courses of a practical nature were taught at the Central School.

An institution for the “training and reclamation of juvenile offenders under 16 years of age” and an adjoining similar one for girls, was proposed by the Government in 1896. The proposal suggested a curriculum of a more “necessary, practical and valuable kind than that offered in the regular schools.” The Board was not enthused at this idea, however, since members felt that there were still many places in the colony where there was not yet any provision for education and the diversion of scarce resources for such a purpose would be unfair. (Board of Education Minutes, October 1896).

A recognition of the importance of some form of industrial training persisted into the

following year, when the Executive Council recommended that certain schools be identified in which “some industrial education shall be permitted in the timetables and shall be compulsory for all children of suitable age.” In 1906, the Board minutes record a scheme for the teaching of agriculture, with the assistance of the Board of Agriculture. Students could visit at the Botanical Station where the curator would teach them practical aspects of the subject.

Considerable interest in the development of technical/vocational education became evident during the 1930’s and in 1935 the Board of Education made a commitment to a policy “in the direction of vocational education in their schools” (Peggs, 1947). It should be recalled that the needs of the society were becoming more sophisticated, as public utilities departments were requiring workers with more skills, and a developing tourist trade demanded more trained personnel to support it.

Relationships were forged with Tuskegee Institute and Board teachers were trained during the summers in practical and vocational disciplines. In 1931, the then Colonial Secretary (later Governor), Charles Dundas encouraged the founding of the *Dundas Civic Centre* as a training school for domestics and potential hotel workers. His wife embraced this project and she worked actively on its behalf. It was wholly funded by public subscription until 1933 when it received a grant of £200 towards its upkeep. This amount was later raised to £500 per year.

The institution was successful in preparing and placing in employment hundreds of domestic and hotel workers over the years of its existence. By 1940, for example, it is claimed that more than 1,000 men and women had been trained, few of whom had found difficulty in gaining employment (Peggs,

1947).⁸

With the return of prosperity in the late 1930’s, the Board decided to tackle vocational education in earnest. The House authorized funds to provide vocational training for children under 18. The Education Act was amended to reflect this aim, a building was erected in 1939, a consultant was secured from Tuskegee, a Head Master was selected, estimates provided and the Legislature was requested to provide more funds. The House, however, declined to provide enough money for the scheme the Board had adopted and the matter languished for several years. Peggs (1947) relates that, when discussions were resumed, plans were modified to provide instruction “to as high a standard as may be practicable without the installation of expensive equipment or elaborate apparatus.”

Some considerably more modest courses were developed (mainly in building trades and agriculture), and for crafts and trades, apprenticeships were once again negotiated with government departments and private firms. No further progress was achieved until 1943, when it was recommended to seek another consultant, some “competent person” to advise the Board on the possibility of opening a vocational school. Mr. George Mahn, from the Northern Vocational School in Ontario, visited the Bahamas and made recommendations.

After reading the report and being impressed by his recommendations, the Board recommended that he be appointed Principal of the proposed school. The House declined to accept the recommendations: members felt the scheme was too ambitious and the expenses

⁸ The Centre continued to operate successfully as a private entity, but with increased support from the government £1000 per annum by the 1961-1962 budget period). The hope was expressed by the Board of Education in 1963 that it could be incorporated into the Technical Institute (Board of Education Minutes, November 1963).

involved were too great. A committee struck to consider the matter recommended an experimental introduction of vocational education on a small scale by expanding the curriculum of the existing high school. The Board was incensed as the high school did not fall under its control and the kind of directions being given by the Legislature to them (a) completely overrode policies agreed upon by the Board, and (b) contradicted the powers that The Legislature itself had conferred upon the Board (Peggs, 1947). Issues of the authority to make decisions were at work even at that level!

It was clear that there was a dire need for a professional Director of Education to manage the system, whose growing complexities demanded operational knowledge and dedicated attention to implementation of goals. The first Director of Education was appointed in 1946.

By 1947, there was agreement on the proposal to establish a *Technical School* for boys aged 11-14 to be located in Oakes Field. It was to provide theoretical and practical instruction. A science master was appointed to oversee the work of the school.

By 1956, the Head of the Technical School recommended that the school in Oakes Field be expanded and developed to train craftsmen and higher level technically skilled persons who would be capable of taking City and Guild or Cambridge School Certificate Examinations. There was strong support among Board members for the concept. (Board of Education Minutes, March 1956). Two months later, it was reported that the Executive Council had (again!) rejected the Board's requests for funding to give effect to the Technical School proposals, but had agreed to raise the Head's salary.

The nature and purposes of the School became an issue later in the year when the technical aspect of the school seemed to be

taking second place to the academic programme, which was focused on preparing students to pass School Certificate Examinations. This became even more of an issue when, after the closure of the Teacher Training College, second year students were transferred to the Technical School to prepare for the School Certificate exams.

By 1961, however, it was agreed that the School Certificate class at the "Tech" would be transferred to the Government High School and the School itself would be upgraded to a *Technical Institute*, offering programmes leading to accepted technical credentials and ensuring flexible access to persons already employed, via part-time or evening study and/or day-release classes. Commercial studies leading to recognized commercial credentials were also to be added.⁹ In 1968, the *Nassau Technical Centre* was established in Oakes Field to alleviate overcrowding in the higher grades of the senior schools and to offer full-time vocational training in areas not previously offered in Bahamas and including Hotel Training. In the 1970-71 academic year the Technical Institute and the Technical Centre were combined to form the Nassau Technical College. The name of the institution was subsequently changed to the *C. R. Walker Technical College* and all departments (except for the Hotel Training Department) were relocated from Oakes Field to a purpose-built facility in Soldier Road.

In 1974, under the College of The Bahamas Act, C.R. Walker became a part of COB, forming the base of three of the teaching

⁹ It should be noted that in 1953 the Government High School had added post-school certificate classes in secretarial and business disciplines, leading to examinations of the Royal Society of Arts. Considerable success had been achieved in those areas. When the school moved into new premises in 1960, the commercial courses were fully integrated into the regular high school curriculum.

divisions: Applied Science, Business and Administrative Studies and Technical and Vocational Studies.

The above thumbnail account is but a limited sample of findings and only touches the surface of the significance of the institutions described. In the fuller writing, greater analysis of underlying issues will be undertaken.

Additional activities I have undertaken

- Being available for interviews with graduate and undergraduate students from COB and elsewhere.
- Serving as a guest lecturer for a COB class.
- Providing professional advice on educational matters to sundry community persons.

Concluding comment

My work on this project has been exhilarating to say the least and I thank the President, the College Council and all concerned for giving me this rare opportunity. There is still considerable research to be done, but this is now primarily to continue the study and analysis of COB documents, media commentary on COB's happenings over the years and to conduct interviews. As I shall be dealing with very familiar territory I hope that the process will go more quickly so that I can move into the writing phase as early as possible in the next calendar year. This is turning out to be a fairly massive but, I think, genuinely valuable undertaking—certainly for me and, I hope, for The College. I realize more than ever how many assumptions (and presumptions) we bring to our view of where we are and from where we have come. I trust that this work may contribute to minimizing the influence of some of these.

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