

# The Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services: A Legacy of Excellence and Access to Life-long Learning

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## **ABSTRACT**

A review of the history and evolution of the Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services and the various programmes it has developed to support the work of the College of The Bahamas.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This document examines the concept of education in its broadest sense, and gives particular focus to the idea of continuing education within the Bahamian context of the College of The Bahamas (COB).

The great educator and philosopher, John Dewey, in his work, *Democracy and Education*, postulates that the term education must be reconceived, not as merely a preparation for maturity but as a continuous growth of the mind and a continuous illumination of life. In a sense, the school can give us only the instrumentalities of mental growth; the rest depends upon an absorption and interpretation of experiences. Real education comes after we leave school so there is no reason why it should stop before death. Dewey succinctly encapsulates what lifelong learning ought to be in all civilized

societies, given its importance as an element in the process of continuing education.

What is continuing education? Jefferson (1989) suggests that continuing education may be defined as any kind of learning or teaching that extends or builds upon previous experiences in the same general realm of knowledge. It is a process through which individuals are provided the means to meet their needs for further personal or professional growth. It refers to all activities and efforts by which individuals upgrade their knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies or understanding in areas of specialization.

In The Bahamas, prior to 1974, continuing education developed in an essentially ad hoc fashion in response to perceived needs. The result was that a collection of diverse institutions, both local and foreign, offered programmes in a largely uncoordinated

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fashion. These institutions were located primarily in New Providence and Grand Bahama. In the other Family Islands, however, there was a paucity of opportunities for continuing education. In order to address the aforementioned challenges that existed throughout the archipelago, the Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services (CEES) was given the responsibility of working with the Schools in The College to provide a wide range of extension services at various levels and in various fields, particularly on the Family Islands (Rahming-Nwosa, 2004).

### **CEES, 1970 to 1995**

In the 1970's, veteran adult educator, Arthur Roach, led continuing education at the College of The Bahamas. Programmes centered on the coordination of public education units called Evening Institutes which were located in communities both in New Providence and the Family Islands. During that era, Evening Institutes were the primary source of adult continuing education in The Bahamas.

Despite these facilities, however, there was a great need for more efficient and effective ways of facilitating the entry of adults into COB's degree-level programmes. This posed a challenge because, for various reasons, many adults in The Bahamas had not completed high school and were therefore unable to meet the matriculation requirements of these programmes. Thus, in an effort to examine this pressing need for college preparation for adults in the local community, The College undertook a special research project in 1977. This effort was appropriately called the Transitional Education Research or Trans Ed Programme.

Funded by two research grants from the Ford Foundation, the Trans Ed Programme was designed and implemented by a team of young Bahamian educators at COB, who included Patricia Moutardier, Joan Vanderpool,

Brendamae Cleare, Janice Munnings, Ophelia Cooper and Ellen Romer. Consultants to the project were Joan Goldsmith and Eileen Brown from the Institute of Open Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The first Coordinator of the Trans Ed Programme was the late Dr Keva Bethel.

In 1979-80, under the leadership of the then Coordinator, Joan Vanderpool, the Trans Ed team joined forces with Arthur Roach, the person responsible for Continuing Education at COB, to form the CEES Division at the College of The Bahamas. From 1979 to 1982, Dr Vanderpool served as Acting Director of the Division until Arthur Roach returned from study leave.

The early years of the Continuing Education & Extension Services Division proved eventful as they were filled with innovative change and development. A number of important milestones were attained. Primary among them was the introduction of several offshore tertiary programmes from such institutions as the University of Miami and Florida International University, an initiative coordinated by Dorothy Yearwood. There was also a significant increase in the number of special interest and professional development courses as well as academic upgrading programmes, ably coordinated by Angela Kerr.

In 1984, Inez Peet succeeded Arthur Roach as the Director of the Continuing Education & Extension Services Division. Under her leadership, the Division was renamed the Centre for Continuing Education & Extension Services. The Centre experienced significant growth as personal development, academic and paraprofessional courses and programmes were launched or enhanced. Under Peet, the first Family Island Centre began operation in Exuma with Jennifer Kettell serving as its Coordinator. Inez Peet can also be credited for implementing the distance education mode

of delivery on a national scale at CEES. During 1984-1987, she and Dr Eleanor Thompson spearheaded an Organization of American States project that offered academic upgrading via distance learning to teachers on selected islands, including Eleuthera, Andros and Grand Bahama in The Bahamas.

### **CEES, 1995 to the Present**

Phil Pinder became Director of the Centre for Continuing Education in 1995. He maintained and expanded all of the offerings of the Centre. He also began programmes in Eleuthera and Abaco, and launched an associate degree programme in Exuma. The Centre in Exuma became the first in the Family Islands where students completed studies for such a degree programme. Some 10 Exumians participated in the commencement exercises in June 2000.

In 1998, Christina Rahming-Nwosa succeeded Dr Pinder. Dr Rahming-Nwosa, an educator for more than 25 years, taught in Nigeria and several senior high schools in New Providence before joining the College of The Bahamas in 1987. Under her leadership, the offerings of the Professional Development Department increased to include a significant number of internationally recognized professional certifications, whereas, prior to 1999, there were four national and one internationally recognized certifications. Today there are more than 30 internationally and nationally recognized certifications offered, including Certified Professional Accountant, Certified Professional Secretary, Certified Human Resource Manager and Certified Project manager.

Additionally, the Academic Upgrading Department has grown tremendously since 1999. During the 2000/01 academic year, the Department offered a total of 34 courses. Statistics from 2012/13 indicate that this Department offered more than 121 courses to its clients, and not including credit courses

offered for general interest or courses offered to transient students. Moreover, the Personal Development Department also experienced considerable growth as over the past 15 years its offerings have increased from 10 to over 100 courses and workshops.

In the summer of 1999, in collaboration with Western Connecticut State University, the College launched its first master's degree programme in Health Care Administration. Rahming-Nwosa coordinated the programme that graduated a cohort of 21 students in December 2000.

In June 2000, CEES successfully launched the Jumpstart Programme, which was coordinated by Theora Lowe-Ferguson. The Jumpstart Programme afforded highly motivated and ambitious secondary school students the opportunity to earn college credits during the summer semesters and throughout the regular academic year. During the 2000-2001 academic year the programme was under the aegis of CEES and 91 high school students participated in it.

In Spring 2001, a Family Islands Department was established in CEES. The Family Islands Department comprised Centres in Exuma, Andros and Abaco. Jennifer Kettell headed the Exuma Centre, Rev Dorinda Dean became the Coordinator for the Andros Centre, and the Centre in Abaco was headed by Hugh Cottis. Also in January 2001, Marlene Henry was appointed Assistant Director to head the CEES Centre in Grand Bahama. As a result, CEES in Freeport, Grand Bahama began to actively respond to the education and training needs of the island's adult population.

Between 2002 and 2009 CEES continued to expand its offerings in New Providence, Grand Bahama and several of the other Family Islands, including Eleuthera, Long Island and Inagua. However, due to limited funding, Family Island Coordinators were not appointed and these Family Islands' Centres

were not established.

In June 2009, CEES launched its Career Institute primarily for high school leavers who did not wish to pursue a degree programme at the College of The Bahamas. The Career Institute affords individuals the opportunity to obtain the required knowledge and skills based training that will give them direct entry into the job market.

In August 2009, the Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) recommended that Rahming-Nwosa head a team to explore the feasibility of offering online College preparatory courses to interested students. Rahming-Nwosa worked with an external consultant, a steering committee of industry professionals and faculty of The College and two sub-committees. The sub-committees were headed by Lorraine Bastian-Jones and William Fielding. Also in August, training sessions on how to use such online teaching platforms as Moodle™ and Elluminate™ were offered to CEES's part-time college preparatory instructors. Additional training was also offered on how to write courses using an online format. Subsequent to this, CEES coordinated the training of COB faculty for The College's transition from Blackboard™ to Moodle™. This initiative resulted in significant savings to The College.

In September 2009, two College Prep courses (English 016 and Mathematics 047) were offered using the online format. Students who participated in this first initiative resided on the islands of New Providence, Exuma and Andros. By December 2009, all College Prep courses, except History and Geography, were written in the online format. Geography was written in the online format a year later. Then, during the spring semester of 2010, English 017, Math 048 and Physics 071 were offered online. The Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services can now create, promote and implement educational

opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas using various teaching modalities.

In September 2012 Edward Bethel was appointed Director of Distance Education, Under the leadership of Rahming-Nwosa, who became Associate Vice President of CEES in 2013, the entire CEES team participated in a special project to develop the *Strategic Plan for CEES, 2013-2018*. In order to facilitate the implementation of this Strategic Plan, the administrators of CEES developed a *Pathway/Roadmap for CEES, 2013-2018*.

In November 2013, CEES was restructured to better meet the needs of its clients. The Personal Development Department and the Career Institute were merged with the Professional Development Department to form the Professional and Personal Development and Career Institute. Other Departments include: Academic Upgrading, Distance Education and CEES Grand Bahama.

## **Departments in CEES**

### **Academic Upgrading Department**

The Academic Upgrading Department headed by Altamease Munroe is responsible for the upgrading and academic needs of adults in the community. During the academic year 2000-2001, English, Mathematics, History and Geography College Preparatory courses were offered as well as various programmes which included: Preschool Certification, Front Office Skills, Infant Toddler Certificate, Mature Upgrading and a College Entrance Review Programme (Math and English reviews). In Fall 2001, the College Preparatory Programme was re-introduced and during Fall 2002, a Pre-College Preparatory Programme, namely the Basic Upgrading for Traditional Aged Students (BUTAS) was introduced. In addition, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, a new course called Management and Administration of Infant Toddler Centers

was introduced and a practicum component for the Preschool Certificate programme has since been added. In Fall 2013, a programme called the Pre-requisite to College Preparatory Programme (PCPP) was introduced to replace BUTAS. While the BUTAS programme comprised five courses, namely English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Counselling, the PCPP programme contains only Mathematics and English courses along with a Reading component.

The Academic Upgrading Department continues to grow; hence, the revenue potential for this Department is enormous. It is note-worthy that the department's intake is approximately one million dollars per annum.

#### **Professional Development Department**

The Professional Development Department headed by Lorraine Bastian-Jones is the Bahamas' leading provider for international training and development programmes and professional credentialing. The department caters to individuals seeking careers in ancillary construction (plumbing and electrical), applied management and administration, human resources, leadership, legal education for attorneys and legal aid staff, nursing education, professional public accounting and project management. The department's major thrust is supported by a point value system and each component carries an equal weight of priority. These include: adapting to evolving professional development strategies; celebrating students' achievements; collaborating with students for feed-back on quality; aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment methods with the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) Model; fostering international partnerships to offer internationally-recognized credentials; systematic evaluation of the teaching and learning experience; and engendering an environment of technology-based learning. This value system serves as the foundation for

excellence in operations and maintaining client courtship.

#### **CEES, Northern Bahamas Campus**

In January 2001, Marlene Henry was appointed Assistant Director for CEES at the Northern Bahamas Campus (NBC). She held this position until she retired in December 2013. Marlene Henry was replaced by Denise Sherman in January 2014. Prior to her appointment, there were no dedicated personnel for the Centre and CEES subsisted with Academic Affairs. The Grand Bahama community knew very little, if anything, about CEES and what it offered. The primary objective then was to reacquaint, and in some cases, introduce CEES to the Grand Bahama community. Ms. Henry's efforts were fruitful as they resulted in numerous offerings in professional and personal development as well as academic upgrading. Ms. Henry can be credited with the development of the pre-college preparatory programme BUTAS.

In Fall 2001, major initiatives were made to increase the quantity and diversity of the courses offered; bring CEES registration, billing and collection procedures in line with the mainstream College practices. Over the years CEES has undergone many changes to improve the quality of its product. Programmes such as Industrial Management for the Grand Bahama Ship Yard, and Engineering Skills for the Freeport Container Port, have been designed and or tailored and implemented to meet specific needs of industries on the island.

CEES has greatly impacted the Grand Bahama community. It offers a second chance to traditional students who do not meet the necessary requirements to enter a degree programme and it also provides opportunities to professionals wanting to refresh and or upgrade for job advancement.

#### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the College of The

Bahamas, Centre for Continuing Education and Extension Services has provided access to higher education to a myriad of individuals throughout The Bahamas. It is envisioned that with the expansion of Distance Education,

CEES will be poised to offer courses and programmes not only to individuals in the archipelago but also to the global community.

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