

Chapter Four

Community based early childhood education and financing

‘The later it is given, the more difficult and lengthy, and hence the more costly, the treatment and the less hopeful the prognosis. So in the event we may well be paying the most for the least effective intervention simply because prevention is not only better but cheaper than cure.’

(Mia Kellmer Pringle, The Needs of Children, 1996, p. 155)

This chapter reflects on the financial bases of early childhood education centres in Saint Lucia. It builds on the fact that the financing of non-statutory early childhood education centres is precarious and inadequate. Further, the chapter reconsiders the role of parents as the main, yet problematic, contributors. It notes that parental contributions are unlikely to furnish the standards of provision hoped for in the 21st century. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how this shortfall might be met: through community fund-raising, through the work of the national association and through the efforts of Government. Overall, this chapter reflects on the role of the community and the nation - rather than just the parents - in support of community based early childhood education.

LABCEC’s changing financial base

LABCEC has always been able to meet its financial commitments since its inception in 1983. From around 1986 LABCEC raised the balance of its income from funding agencies as well as from private individuals and photocopying. There was only a small percentage of individual donations in the first instance. In 1992, for example, LABCEC had only three sources of income - local fund-raising which included in that year private donors from Laborie (12%), parents fees (30%) and grants from funding agencies (58%). By 1998, however, LABCEC received funding from the Pitons Foundation (19%), other funding agencies (35%), parents fees (16%), private donors (11%), a local bank (3%), and other miscellaneous fund-raising such as raffles and photocopying services (16%).

The gradual decrease in the percentage of parents fees was due principally to the rise of the ratio of adults per children and the resulting increase in salaries. In 2000, as noted above, LABCEC is working hard on increasing the percentage of individual donations from individuals from Guadeloupe and Martinique in the French West Indies. Donations from Martinique and Guadeloupe are going up while funding from the Pitons Foundation has been reduced in 2000 to five percent. These donations from the French West Indies have the advantage of being recurrent unlike that of the funding agencies which are short term.

The precarious nature of fund-raising at a general level

To understand the nature of the financial bases of childhood education centres in general, it is useful to examine the annual budgets of three centres, namely:

- Madeleine Monchery, a centre in a rural area in Jetrine, Saltibus
- Sure Start, a privately owned, urban school with a community Board in the north of the island
- The Laborie community education centre (LABCEC).

ANNUAL BUDGETS OF THREE CENTRES

IN 2000 (E.C. dollars)

(One pound sterling = 4.431 East Caribbean (E.C.) dollars)

INCOME

Item	M. Monchery (30 children)	SURE START (55 children)	LABCEC (50 children)
1. Parent fees	\$8,100.00 (65%)	\$95,100.00 (92%)	\$20,500.00 (24%)
2. Other Fund-raising	\$4,350.00 (35%)	\$8,240.00 (8%)	\$64,031.00 (78%)
TOTAL	\$12,450.00	\$103,340.00	\$84,531.00

EXPENDITURE

Item	M. Monchery	SURE START	LABCEC
1. Personnel	\$9,900.00	\$70,800.00	\$55,230.00
2. Food Programme	-	\$13,200.00	\$10,000.00
3. Rent	\$2,400.00	\$30,000.00	-
4. Telephone	-	\$1,440.00	\$1,200.00
5. Electricity	\$300.00	\$2,640.00	\$2,500.00
6. Toys	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
7. Stamps	-	\$300.00	-
8. Premises	\$500.00	\$600.00	\$2,000.00
9. Office Supplies	-	\$1,000.00	-
10. Water	\$400.00	\$1,560.00	\$1,500.00
11. Insurance	\$495.00	\$3,900.00	\$2,511.00
12. Audit	-	-	\$2,000.00
13. Travel	-	-	\$3,500.00
14. Contingencies	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$3,090.00
TOTAL	\$14,995.00	\$127,440.00	\$84,531.00
Mean per child per year	\$499.83	\$2,317.09	\$1,690.62

The Madeleine Monchery is a small rural centre where the parents can afford to pay only thirty dollars E.C. per month and where they are unwilling and unable to pay for a food programme. The Sure Start Centre is an urban centre where parents pay \$575.00 per term including a food programme. The LABCEC Centre is a rural centre where parents pay approximately fifty dollars E.C. per month and where there is also a food programme. In the

first centre, expenditure exceeds income by \$2,545.00 or 20%. At Sure Start, expenditure exceeds income by 24,100 (19%) while income and expenditure at LABCEC are balanced.

These centres serve as examples or models, to use this word carefully, of the type of centres existing in Saint Lucia. For most of the centres, like at Madeleine Monchery, parents can meet the cost of food at their own homes. The few high cost urban centres, like at Sure Start, would have no shortfall if adequate buildings could be furnished and maintained by Government. LABCEC is also important as a model. It serves as a model for centres in which there are poor children who presently do not attend any centre and for whom high-quality centres are needed.

Balancing the books at LABCEC involves much juggling and a fear that the juggled balls can fall at any moment. This funding is even more diverse since there are different funding agencies involved. The benefit of diversity, however, is that a wide cross section of the local and related foreign community is given information about quality early childhood education and is mobilized around the communities' children. Links are also built among communities and people.

However, with such a diverse range of funding, there are disadvantages. One such disadvantage is that, in the past, raising such funds has depended at LABCEC on one person, me. My skills in fund-raising and my knowledge of French have been indispensable to balancing the books. However, few communities have such resources - human or technical. LABCEC has partly confronted this issue by seeking to regularise donations - in the form of annual pledges. Nevertheless, the difficulties of fund-raising for LABCEC are so extensive that financing for centres for the poor and low-income such as at LABCEC is a high risk endeavour. It requires, for instance, consideration of Government as the funder of the last resort.

The precarious nature of fund-raising for each centre becomes even more so on a national level when the actual amount of children who attend pre-schools, or who do not attend pre-schools and may need to do so, is taken into consideration. Figures from the Saint Lucian Government suggest that the provision of three to five years old child care was in 1999:

Non-Statutory centres	4,379 children registered (61%)
Statutory centres	720 (10%)
Children who do not attend pre-school	2,031 (29%)
Total	7,130

(Figures obtained from Government Statistical Department, the Day Care Coordinator of the Ministry of Community Development and the Draft National Policy, Saint Lucia, May 2000).

Parents as the main contributors

With the one exception of LABCEC, the largest part of fund-raising for non-statutory centres comes from parents fees. From the above tables it should be clear the income needed by centres in order to operate within the parameters of quality. Taking the mean of the three centres used as examples above, it would emerge that the cost of education per child in Saint Lucia is approximately E.C. 1,689.00 per year. The Governmental statistical department estimated that in 1999, there were 7,130 children between three to five (Statistical Department, 2000). Quality

care using the evidence from the three centres above requires an annual investment of approximately 12 million E.C. dollars.

Of this amount, how much can parents afford to pay? Together with Ramona David, chairperson of NAECE, I visited 30 of the 106 centres on the island of Saint Lucia in 1997. We established their fees, combined them, extrapolated these figures to the national population and estimated that at that time, \$5,000,000.00 was being paid by the parents of Saint Lucia for early childhood education and care principally between the ages of three to five years old. Since the 1999 estimate by the Government Ministry of Education notes that there are 4,379 children registered in non-statutory, fee paying, pre-schools, this means that parents pay on average \$1,141.00 per year per child. The balance of funding for quality is, thus, approximately seven million per year as parents are paying approximately five million of the total of twelve million. So, how can the financial shortfall be met?

Community Fund-Raising

In the consideration of the issue of this financing at a general level, there are three possible areas for exploration of funding from the community. One is management of the larger long term funding agencies. Another is funding from local public institutions. Still another is management of donations from private individuals.

As an example, I will use a community based education centre in which I have no longer any systematic involvement but which I have helped to develop. I introduced the administrator of BANCEC, Alicise Alexander, to the founders of the Pitons Foundation in 1997 which promised and gave long term funding. After two years of helping, I left Alicise to her own devices. Without my help, she has been able to upkeep the funding promised and to double it. BANCEC was thus able to manage one larger long term funding agency.

Also, I encouraged Alicise to write to the local Credit Union, Laborie's local bank and assisted her with drafting a letter. She was able to secure a long term annual subvention from this institution. So funding from a local public institution was secured by BANCEC. Madeleine Monchery in the community of Getrine has made similar strides in terms of private donor funding from the Pitons Foundation and from the local credit union. The other question of management of donations from private individuals, though reduced, still remains to be realised by these two centres.

Centres also solicit and receive funds from private donors. LABCEC, BANCEC and SOUCEC have proven this can be done. In 1996, BANCEC raised 21% of its budget through funding from private donors while SOUCEC raised 35%. In that same year, LABCEC with a population of 1,300 people was able to realize \$7,616.65 E.C. (or 10% of its budget) in this fashion. It has now been proven that an administrator can handle this programme. In 1996, I was responsible for the LABCEC private donor programme. By November of 1996 I had raised 1,600.00. In 1997 Justina Ernest from SOUCEC was responsible for the programme. By November of 1997 she had raised 3,200.00 for LABCEC and 3,600.00 for SOUCEC. This is double what I was able to raise in the same period and reflected positively on Justina. However, it should be noted that when it came to the more difficult donors Justina was not able to collect. At this point, I had to start my efforts again and was able to collect most of the balance. Thus, administrators could reduce the number of donors targeted and only work with those who are most open to donating and becoming active stakeholders in the centre. The question in 2000 is

now convincing administrators that such fund-raising is possible and training them in the minimum requirements for its successful conduct.

It would seem then that coordinating the diversity of LABCEC sources may be dependent on one individual. In terms of the other community based centres, a centre director can increase income by reducing the diverse sources and concentrating on building up the relationship and accounting systems with targeted sources. As has been demonstrated above, some of this shortfall can come from community fund-raising. LABCEC cannot yet be used as a model for this because of the level of the expertise needed. Yet, some ideas for replication can be made available through publications and workshops for example. This started in January 2000. Examples from other pre-schools, such as BANCEC and Madeleine Monchery can be used. As can be seen, if we take the mean from other fund-raising from the centres at Madeleine Monchery and Sure Start, and multiply this by the non-statutory 106 centres in operation in 2000, community fund-raising may be able to raise approximately \$667,270.00 recurrent income. This represents five percent of the total amount of twelve million needed for developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

Yet, there are some drawbacks to the sustained funding of community based institutions. Community administrators have not been responsive to fundraising from individual private donors from their community or neighbouring communities. To be fair, they have tried it and experienced extreme difficulties in getting the cash from these individuals. In 2000, they do not have the option of getting donations from Martinique and Guadeloupe, like LABCEC. Their lack of knowledge of the French language proves a barrier. These centres are, consequently, more heavily dependent on other interventions, such as Government or non-Governmental assistance, to fill up the shortfall.

The contribution of a national association

A national non-Governmental association can make up a little of this shortfall. Such an association can, for instance, contribute in the area of toys and books as well as through building construction and building repairs. Yet, this contribution, as demonstrated through the financial contribution of the national association of early childhood educators, is unlikely to exceed more than four or five percent of the cost of the sector in financial terms.

The extent to which a national non-Governmental organisation can help can partly be deduced really from the annual incomes and expenditures of NAECE. In the year ending 1998, Price Waterhouse Coopers firm reported in its audit that NAECE's revenue had been 173,564.00 E.C. while its expenditures had been 195,044.00 E.C. In addition, during this year NAECE was able to secure direct grants from funding agencies to the centres of a total of 154,885.18 E.C. for this same year. Thus, in its highest income between 1996 and 2000, NAECE secured a total of 328,449.18 E.C. This represents just around 2.7 percent of the total cost of developmentally appropriate early childhood education in Saint Lucia. It is possible that through collaboration with other non-Governmental organisations, such as the National Youth Council and the Crisis Centre, for example, this amount could reach four or five percent. However, it is highly unlikely to exceed this amount.

On the other hand, through advocacy and mobilization, the contribution of a non-Governmental association may be vital in helping to raise more of this shortfall that it can actually raise by itself and, thus, ensuring the practice of developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

Government's contribution

As noted above, community fund-raising is likely to realise five percent of the cost of developmentally appropriate early childhood education. A non-Governmental organisation can secure at most five percent of the total cost of the sector. Parents' fees can realise about forty percent of the cost depending on support given to the sector by other sources. The contribution of Government to the achievement of developmentally appropriate early childhood education in Saint Lucia, thus, becomes crucial up to the level of 50 percent.

In terms of getting Government to increase its financial commitment, it may be difficult but not impossible in the short term. In fact, from the inception of this sector in 1985 to 2000, Government has given increases. Even allowing for inflation, this represents a net increase.

Ministry of Education's financial support to Early Childhood Education

Year	Amount given per year	Percentage Increase
1985-1986	\$64,797.00 E.C.	
1992-1993	\$168,204.00 E.C.	159%
1999	\$357,689.00 E.C.	112%

Ministry of Community Development's financial support to Early Childhood Education

Year	Amount given per year	Percentage Increase
1992-1993	\$489,257.00 E.C.	
1999	\$1,157,280.00 E.C.	136%

Estimates of Saint Lucia and Draft National Policy, May 2000, pp. 29 and 33.

In fact, in 1999, the Ministry of Education gave approximately 30 percent of the parents contribution of five million E.C. dollars per year to the non-statutory centres. However, the Ministry of Community Development's contribution goes only to its 18 centres which are Government owned or statutory with a total enrolment of 1,325 children. This contribution represents approximately \$873.00 per year per child when by our estimate the need of the non-statutory centres is, as noted above, 1,689 per year per child. However parents contributions to the Government Day Cares bring the total estimated amount spent by them per year per child close to \$1,143.00.

The 106 private centres with a total enrolment of 4,379 children receive only the funding of the Ministry of Education which amounts to approximately three percent of the total required by the early childhood education sector (Draft National Policy, May 2000, p. 27) . When the amount spent on the 720 children between the ages of three and five at the statutory centres is added to the amount spent on the children at the non-statutory centres, it will be seen that Government is contributing eight percent of the cost of the twelve million needed for developmentally appropriate early childhood education. Yet, Government's practical considerations should be borne in mind. In a developing country where Government's contribution to education is already 25% of the total

budget, where is it going to get more to support an inadequately supported early childhood education system?

In 2000, a minimum of half of the needs of the sector can be met by parents and other sources. It is only with Government intervention that parents contribution can be raised. The estimate is that Government has to contribute a minimum of 50% of the total costs of the private part of this sector. As noted above, it is only contributing approximately eight percent. Thus, bearing the above figures in mind, it is evident that the financial intervention of Government is a necessity, not a luxury, if the financial needs of the early childhood education sector are to be met.

Conclusion

Expenditure on early childhood education and care which is at the roots of the education system is far more financially cost effective to the nation than not doing so. As Mia Kellmer Pringle said 'prevention is not only better but cheaper than cure' (Pringle, 1986, p. 155). And by early childhood education and care is meant also the parents as teachers programme for children from birth to three years as well as small daycare programmes for working mothers who have no facilities for child care for their children.

For the developmentally appropriate care and education of these children, it is estimated that, taking account of the experiences of LABCEC and NAECE, a national system of quality CBCECs for Saint Lucia requires twelve million per year. 40% of this is already raised by the parents, five percent can be raised by the centres themselves through donations and other fund-raising efforts and another five percent by the national association of early childhood educators. This leaves a shortfall of 50%.

The burden of quality education and care is that the financial provision of ECE is insufficient in Saint Lucia. Thus, this chapter is about aspirations and shortfall. How the shortfall is to be made up in the future could be seen as the responsibility of Government as in all countries in the world where there is widespread and developmentally appropriate provision of early childhood education. Yet, an improvement in the Saint Lucian economy, which can be partly realised through investment in education from the start, is one other possibility. In the meantime, the work of LABCEC and NAECE offers part of the solutions to the general problem.

Thus, ends the discussion of the financial sustainability of community based early childhood education centres. I will now focus on the main investors in early childhood education in Saint Lucia - the parents and their children.