EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION NETWORKS IN THE CARIBBEAN THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL STATES

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This paper attempts to review the role played by educational information networks operating in Latin America. It also discusses the work of the Caribbean Network of Educational Innovation for Development (CARNEID) and its importance for small states in the English-speaking Caribbean, and by extension some issues in education which are of concern to the librarian.

Introduction

Developing countries, and especially small states, are increasingly recognizing that information is an indispensable commodity which is necessary for their social and economic development. The degree to which they have access to this vital commodity, notably for decision making, has major implications not only for the rate of their development, but also for their survival. These countries are also becoming more conscious of the importance of the effective dissemination and exchange of information at regional and international levels. It is a challenge for education to prepare a population to participate in this information thrust.

In this paper the term "information network" is used in accordance with the following definition of the National Agency for the Development of Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres: "a system of interconnected points, agencies, organizations or institutions which can distribute or interchange resources, energy or information" (International Bureau of Education, 1986, p.81). In respect of the Caribbean, networking

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among libraries and documentation units must, therefore, be considered as a key factor in providing timely access to information required by the region.

Small States

Characteristics

When applied to the Caribbean region, the term "small states" embraces considerable disparities of population, area, economic development, culture, and language. By comparison with the countries of South America, Caribbean states are small both in area and population. At one end of the scale there is Cuba with its population of 10,582,000 (42,804 sq. miles or 110,861 sq. km.) and Jamaica with 2,513,000 people (4,244 sq. miles or 10,991 sq.km.). At the other end, we might cite St. Kitts and Nevis with a population of 43,000 on 103 square miles (269 sq. km.), and Anguilla with 10,000 people on barely 35 square miles (91 sq. km.). For our present purposes, the term small states within the Caribbean exclusively refers to the eight territories comprising the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Small states all have several distinguishing characteristics, an important one being their relative lack of affluence, a factor which pervades every segment of their society. This is a major barrier to their growth and development and, particularly, to their educational progress. But while scale is certainly a significant factor in the context of educational provision, it is difficult to generalize since the relationship between geographic, demographic and economic dimensions is particular to each state, providing a unique context for its educational provision.

The Role of Education

Consumed by an urge to accelerate the pace of their economic growth and human development, the small states of the Caribbean have recognized that education can be the principal strategy for achieving their objectives. Even with grossly inadequate financial resources, education is accorded a prominent place in planning, and significant priority within their relatively limited budgets. In fact, education is considered an investment given the role it is expected to play in their economic development. At another level, these small states are under pressure to
accelerate their pace of development. They are required to negotiate with institutions, organizations and countries which are all technologically advanced. They must be aware of current trends and global issues. This points to their critical need for access to information.

Recognizing the value of information in the transformation of societies, the General Information Programme of Unesco has for a number of years been providing important guidelines to facilitate Member States in the development of national information systems, and the strengthening of their information infrastructure. Information specialists in a number of countries have observed that, in many instances, information services are not as developed as they could be, and where they exist they are often underutilized. One of the reasons for the latter situation is that users are not always fully aware of their own information needs and are even less aware how to fill them. Information is generally taken for granted like the air one breathes; one expresses concern about it only when one’s more obvious needs are not met. In spite of this problem of information insensitivity, developments have been taking place aimed at providing access to information at a global level within certain subject areas. In this regard, the UNISIST programme which was started in 1972, aimed at the establishment of a flexible world network of information in science and technology. Similar progress in the Social Sciences and Education, although initiated, was slower in developing.

The Problem of Educational Development

The problems of the general development of the educational system in small states are of concern to us all. While a broadly based programme of educational development and training is desirable, this could become a problem in such states. Promotional opportunities in small states are limited by the size of the systems and this contributes to the loss of personnel from the systems. Consequently, small states tend to have a higher unit cost in providing education. It is also recognized that the smaller the state the less likely it is to offer services in specialized areas of teaching, and this can lead to several forms of dependency.

Caribbean educators have tended to work with borrowed paradigms from outside. The challenge for them is to develop innovative and creative responses within their system based on established principles rather than on intuitive impromptu responses. More recently, many Caribbean
educators have responded to the urgent pressure for educational development by initiating a number of measures, that are both imaginative and innovative. Unfortunately, because of the absence of information dissemination, many of these initiatives are duplicated without adequate assessment of their usefulness. Miller, travelling through the Caribbean observing educational development, noted an absence of knowledge among educators of what other territories were doing. One natural consequence of such a situation is the unnecessary duplication of some projects, and expenditure incurred which could have been avoided if there was an effective mechanism in place to facilitate an exchange of ideas and relevant information in the region. Another consequence is that it leads to isolation in respect of some activities taking place in education within the region. (Miller, 1987)

**International Bureau of Education (IBE)**

One of the first steps in international cooperation relating to education was taken in 1929 at the intergovernmental conference which resulted in the formation of the IBE based in Geneva. The founding of Unesco in 1946 reinforced the need for the provision of an exchange of educational materials among countries. It was not until 1977, however, at the 36th International Conference on Education that some real progress was realized with the passing of conference Recommendation #71 which made provision for:

1. the establishment of guidelines for the development of educational information networks at the national, regional and international levels;

2. underlining the principles of cooperation and networking;

3. the IBE to assume the responsibility under the Unesco umbrella for the promotion of an International Network for Educational Documentation (INED). (Furtado, 1983, p. 82)

Following the early Unesco initiative in educational documentation in the Caribbean region, many countries had, by 1950, created documentation centres attached to their Ministries of Education, and between 1956 and
1971, several seminars and meetings were organized in support of developing regional networks.

To promote the activities of the IBE, and to improve its exchange of documentation with educational institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, IBE sent staff to locations in Argentina and Venezuela. The attendance of Barbados at regional meetings and its consequent inclusion on the IBE's itinerary in 1971 are important, but more notable was the absence of Trinidad and Tobago from this development. IBE invited Member States and Associated States to participate in an international network for the dissemination of educational information in 1980. Seventeen Caribbean countries attended, including Barbados, Cuba, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica. Trinidad and Tobago was again conspicuous by its absence.

Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (ORELAC)

ORELAC was instrumental in supporting the IBE's role in the development of national documentation and information centres in the region through its own advisory services. It coordinated its activities with IBE and worked closely with it to ensure that a continuous active link was maintained in the region. It has been distributing IBE publications such as IBEDOC Information Newsletter, and the Unesco/IBE Thesaurus in Spanish as part of that exercise. It has also been working in collaboration with the International Educational Reporting Service (IERS) since 1975. ORELAC's aim has been to provide policy makers and administrators, especially in developing countries, with information on educational innovations in order to assist them in their thrust in educational change and development.

Red Latinoamericana de Documentation en Educacion (REDUC)

The 14 countries comprising this network, experienced several difficulties. Reports on studies in education could hardly be obtained because of the virtually non-existent dissemination systems. Secondly, there were few researchers producing original work in the region and most of the material was being generated outside of it. As a result of the
inadequate access to the results of research, planners, administrators and personnel experienced great difficulty and resorted to improvisation and uninformed duplication.

Educational Research and Development Centre (CIDE)

In 1972, CIDE (Santiago) began to publish abstract bulletins covering important studies in education in Latin America. This initiative led to more awareness, rapid access to these documents and greater support for REDUC, which was eventually restructured and funded by IDRC. REDUC is now fully expanded and has a dynamic system for the dissemination of information in education in Latin America. Once the network developed, there was an increase in the number of post-graduate level specialists undertaking research in education, and an increase in the number of programmes promoting field studies. Stricter documentation of information gave rise to steady growth in output of reports on research and experiments in education (Brahm & Gutierrez, 1983).

Educational Documentation and Information Centre

Cuba has developed a very effective network, in which education is part of a broader national system for science and technology information, known as the Educational Documentation and Information Centre. Based in Havana, it has a programme for gathering, processing, and disseminating information through the production of catalogues, directories and the national bibliography. Among its many achievements is its collaboration with IBE in preparing a Thesaurus of Descriptors for indexing education documents in Spanish. It maintains a series of centres throughout the country which are attached to teachers'colleges and technical institutions in the provinces and municipal authorities (Fernig, 1980, p. 73).

A study conducted in Japan in 1975 showed that there were 230 established agencies responsible for some aspect of educational information, and that their publications were organized into as many as 120 subject categories. A plan for the Japan Education Information Centre has since been adopted, its mandate being "to collect and process the information on education both at home and abroad, and to provide in a
more affective way information services for those who are engaged in education and the people at large."

CARNEID

Background

During the 19th Session of UNESCO's General Conference, the Director-General was given a mandate by Member States to explore the possibility of creating a mechanism for the establishment of an educational information network in Latin America and the Caribbean. The series of preparatory meetings which ensued indicated support by Caribbean countries for the establishment of such a network. At a meeting in Suriname in 1979, a list of recommendations was formulated and presented to the Director-General regarding the nature, mechanism and programmes for CARNEID. The report of that meeting resulted in the appointment of a Co-ordinator in June 1981. A series of consultations and decisions resulted in:

- visits to all 17 countries in the Caribbean referred to earlier
- preparation of promotional material in English, Spanish and French about CARNEID
- the nomination by governments of national co-ordinators for CARNEID. Trinidad and Tobago was unrepresented. (Carneid, 1984, p. 55).
- preparation and distribution to national co-ordinators of an instrument to facilitate the collection and sharing of information consultative meetings with national co-ordinators on the concept, mechanisms and modalities of CARNEID
- the convocation of a Task Force to identify and develop innovative activities in each of the 4 programme areas of CARNEID
- a meeting to develop an evaluative framework for CARNEID
Network Approach

The following components constitute the institutional framework for CARNEID:

(a) A co-ordinating Centre based in Barbados;
(b) Regional Consultation Meetings to establish objectives, set guidelines, and to review progress;
(c) National Co-ordinating Groups headed by National Co-ordinators to provide the essential machinery at the national level;
(d) An associated Centre (governmental or non-governmental) within a state

The First Consultative Meeting which was held in Barbados May 24-29, 1982 was organized by the UNESCO Secretariat and the Barbados National Commission for UNESCO. It had as its terms of reference:

(a) to consider for adoption documents detailing the structural organization of CARNEID
(b) to develop cooperatively and to agree on programme areas and activities of primary concern for the period 1982/83
(c) to agree on mechanisms of information exchange
(d) to consider and adopt a framework, procedures and indicators for the evaluation of CARNEID (Carneid Coordinating Centre, 1982, p. 8-9)

It must be noted that the role of the National Co-ordinator is vital to the effective functioning of the regional system, particularly in the case of the larger and economically stronger states. Consistent with its apparent policy of non-participation in this regional programme, Trinidad and Tobago was the only Caribbean country which did not appoint a National Co-ordinator.

It is interesting to note that similar cooperative networks in other geographical regions already exist and that, notwithstanding a few variations in structures and operation, they all have one specific element in common, that is, the creation of linkages between people, institutions and programmes, with the objective of improving efficiency and responding effectively to the needs of the educational system through the
cooperative exchange of ideas, expertise and experience. These networks are also concerned with providing mutual support, and promoting learning and training through principles of sharing in non-conventional ways.

The existing cooperative network structures referred to are as follows:

(i) **APIED** (Asian Programme for Educational Innovation and Development)
(ii) **NEIDA** (Network for Educational Innovation in Africa)
(iii) **CODIESSE** (Cooperation in Research and Development for Educational Innovation in South Eastern Europe)
(iv) **EPIDAS** (Programme of Educational Innovation for Development in Arab States)

It is within this framework that CARNEID emerged, accepting responsibility for the identification and for the support of the implementation of programmed activities which reflect national and regional needs.

**Programme Areas**

CARNEID has established its priorities in four broad areas, but additionally, it has also recognized other areas in which innovative approaches to solving educational problems play an important role; these include educational publishing, teacher training, and the school curriculum. To establish the foundation for its work in this area, four educators, Zellynne Jennings, Dennis Craig, Arthur Richardson and Joseph Halliday received Nessim Habif Awards in 1988/89 to undertake the projects listed:

(1) **Education and Work**: CARNEID has recruited expertise within the Caribbean. To this end, Dr. Zellynne Jennings completed a study on "Linking Education with production in the school systems of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries."

(2) **Education and Culture**: Culture is recognized as a pre-requisite for social and economic progress. It is argued that it is an essential component of the total development of the individual and, by extension, the community. Since cultural heritage and
experiences directly influence learning patterns, the programme sought to ensure that this is reflected in its content. CARNEID's support for the introduction of Creole as a medium of instruction in teaching, emphasises the importance of education in promoting cultural sensibility and identity. CARNEID has also been responsible for encouraging Caribbean countries to develop Culture Kits in order to stimulate the use of culture materials in schools, and to promote the exchange of such information among countries in the region.

(3) **Education and Community Development:** A CARNEID Task Force visited Jamaica in 1981 where it identified, in its programme, the use of school facilities and the promotion of the spirit of community development. An equally important task identified was the encouragement of adults in developing a sense of responsibility with respect to the care and upkeep of school property.

(4) **Educational Planning and Management:** This programme was set in train with the commissioning of a study undertaken by Prof. Dennis Craig on "Management strategies for affecting educational change simultaneously in all schools at a given level."

**Additional Areas of Interests**

**Teacher Training**

In addressing the interests of the region in teacher training, Dr. Arthur Richardson produced a study entitled: "Teacher training needs as perceived by elementary and secondary school teachers, school principals, teachers' training college staff and officials of the Ministry of Education in seven Eastern Caribbean territories."

**Secondary School Curriculum**

This subject was addressed through the promotion of a study undertaken by Joseph Halliday, "An investigation of the extent to which the curricula of secondary schools prepare the young for the working world in St. Kitts and Antigua."
Educational Publishing

In 1989, the CARICOM/CARNEID Educational Publishing Project (CCEPP) took steps to support the establishment of a regional mechanism for streamlining and improving educational publishing in the Caribbean. In this regard, a seminar was held in Port of Spain on guidelines for the production of educational materials for primary schools.

It is not expected that every territory will participate in all CARNEID sponsored activities, but that each country would identify an activity of relevance to its interests, in which to participate. Such participation should advance the work of each country in terms of planning and development.

Funding

CARNEID is not a funding agency but functions as a facilitator. Member States are expected to contribute financially to its work. One of the key agencies through which this is done is the UNDP Country Programme (IPF) which is formulated by the Ministry of Planning and Development or some Ministry other than the Ministry of Education. It is generally felt that many of the successful projects involving small states have been reflected in the degree of educational innovation embarked upon in a given state, working within the approved areas of the CARNEID programme. The impact of CARNEID is also evidenced by its role in attracting funding for small states from international agencies, minimizing the difficulties usually involved, especially in the case of cooperative projects. Traditionally, however, the more economically developed countries have tended to deal with national funding agencies of individual states on a bilateral basis rather than through regional agencies. Many of the projects undertaken in these states are contracted to institutions and individuals, in the donor countries rather than to regional institutions, which would have been one way of developing regional expertise, strengthening the infrastructure, and developing confidence in locally trained personnel, such as is implicit in the concept of Technical Cooperation in Developing Countries (TCDC). One immediately thinks of the British Development Division in the Caribbean (BDDC) and some of the projects undertaken so far:
(a) Primary mathematics, language arts, teacher training in the British Dependencies: Turks & Caicos Islands, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat
(b) Generation of development plans which is expected to have a long term impact on educational systems in the region
(c) Curriculum and course design for the Grenada National College (Amalgamation of 8 existing institutions).
(d) The Eastern Caribbean Multi-Island Educational Development Project, one of the most exciting projects undertaken in recent times, and which is of particular interest to the seven LDCs.

When finances are extremely limited and national resources are scarce, as is the situation in most small states, the benefits to be derived from extending or upgrading the teacher education programme have to be balanced against other educational or national requirements, such as the training of more teachers to alleviate the high pupil: teacher ratio; training more specialists, the initiation of new programmes such as special education, the refurbishing of school buildings, and increasing teacher’s salaries. With resources becoming scarcer, and the steady increase in population, the issues are becoming more challenging as the year 2000 approaches.

Science & Technology

Small states must be more sensitive to the value of science and technology in the educational development thrust. It is universally recognized that the volume, level, type and degree of coverage achieved in the dissemination of scientific information is an important indicator in ascertaining a country's level of development. In this regard, the experience arising from the Antigua/Barbuda 2nd Regional Science Fair, 1989 is of some significance. It stands out as a fascinating experiment which stimulated a Round Table Discussion on the topic: "Out of School activities in Science for Young People." Mr. Eustace Hill, the Coordinator of the programme, is also editor of the Magazine Science in Action. In its inaugural issue, he made a vitriolic attack on the low level of attention given to science and technology in the school system, and the equally poor provision for printed resources in both school and public libraries (Carneid Newsletter, 1989).
Information Exchange

Since a major focus of IBE's work centred on gathering and disseminating information on innovative activities through an international network mechanism, CARNEID found the following activities relevant to its own functions:

- The promotion of the exchange of information between networks
- The linking of national and regional networks with the international community through the publication of Awareness Lists, Case Studies, Quarterly Newsletters, etc.

Two publications, the CARNEID Newsletter and CARNEID Document Distribution Series (CDDP), have been useful instruments for informing educational planners, teachers, administrators, and regional institutions about innovative educational activities currently undertaken at both the regional and national levels. Recently The Caribbean Educational Annual and Caribbean Education News have been published, reinforcing its commitment to the free flow of educational information throughout the region.

Given these common areas of interest, collaboration between CARNEID and IBE readily developed, and in recognition of the benefits to be derived from such an association, CARNEID has also encouraged its Associated Centres to correspond with IBE. The IBE sponsored training of information personnel, which was accelerated within the region, as well as the loan of technical personnel, in some measure, quickened the pace of development in this area. CARNEID is increasingly employing the technical skills now available in the Caribbean.

Control and Flow of Information

There are problems in the Caribbean region with respect to the flow of information in all subject areas. These are directly related to the lack of control of publications at the national level, a factor which is crucial to the effectiveness of any networking or cooperative system for the dissemination of information at both the national and regional levels. Despite the fact that most of these problems have been examined by
Douglas (1982), and Primus and Stephenson (1991), they still exist; there is no central body in any of the English-speaking Caribbean states which can provide a comprehensive list of all materials published by government or quasi-government agencies. Non-government publishing ventures have tended to follow the same pattern. Additionally, these non-government or private sources publish very limited numbers of the items they produce, and these quickly become unavailable.

Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory state of the information environment, there must be some recognition of the initiatives taken by a few organizations to facilitate access to information within subject areas. Reference was made earlier to the UNISIST Programme which influenced the development and the coordination of a number of databases in Member States. In the Caribbean, the developments which emerged were CARISPLAN (1977), CARSTIN (1985), CAGRIS (1985), CARINDEX (1985), CARIS (1986), and CARSIC (1987). Of these CARINDEX, is currently the only database providing a limited abstracting and indexing service which attempts to cover educational documentation. It is interesting to note, according to John (1992), that in the OECS documentation system INFONET (1987), coverage of education was not a priority subject area "in keeping with the aspirations of the sub-region" (p. 5). These programmes are laudable ventures which have gained some degree of success in identifying some of the material produced in the Caribbean. Their effectiveness, however, is determined by the degree of control of publications existing at the national level within participating countries in the Network. Great difficulty was experienced in securing coverage of a sufficiently high percentage of materials produced in the various territories. This difficulty is reflected in the limitations or deficiencies in the scope of these networks, and the attendant constraints on access to the information residing in particular territories.

In 1982, Unesco funded an exploratory training workshop in Barbados on Referral Centres. Henry (1989) noted that these Referral Centres constitute an integral part of a regional information system but that they have not yet attained the level of development which is of any significance to the region. She concluded: "to be most effective these services all need to be drawn together and coordinated into one cohesive system, The Caribbean Information System. As yet there is no evidence of this cohesion taking place" (p. 47). It is felt, however, that the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), with its
umbrella information structure, has the potential for developing into the type of effective information system envisaged.

Given the objectives of CARNEID and the existence of documentation which could meaningfully influence and strengthen the formulation of educational policies in the region, the importance of collection and dissemination strategies in this field become quite apparent, if the full value of a network is to be realized. Nicholson (1978) indicates that the number of tertiary level teacher training institutions in the Eastern Caribbean increased from two—Erdiston Teachers' Training College, Barbados and the Leeward Islands Teacher Training College, Antigua—to five by 1964, with the opening of colleges in Grenada (1962), St. Lucia (1963), and St.Vincent (1964). St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla opened its teachers' college in 1969 with Dominica following in 1973, bringing the total number to seven. The research activities of the Faculties of Education at Cave Hill, Mona, St. Augustine, and the University of Guyana, as well as the Teacher Training Colleges located in these territories have all produced a body of work spanning some three decades, which must be relevant to educational development in the region. In addition to the documentation derived from these institutions, mention must also be made of the number of commissioned studies, reports and unpublished research done in the region, many of which can be identified, but cannot, in most instances, be located because of the problems of inadequate bibliographical control. On the issue of the control of research literature generally, one possibility suggested by Jarvis (1977), was that a clearinghouse be created as a coordinating body for all research undertaken in the region.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), and Havelock (1973) considered the process of dissemination of information in education as a vital step in designing models for all networking programmes. Havelock's models for networks were designed after he had undertaken a comprehensive survey of school districts in the United States, in order to determine what practitioners felt about the dissemination of information by various networks and also about the diffusion of knowledge from research findings which have been disseminated. Attention is directed to the successful creation of the Small Islands Information Network (SIIN), a global network located at the Institute of Island Studies, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The objective is to mitigate problems of remoteness and isolation and to enhance the capacity of small island states to cope
effectively with contemporary issues. Expansion of this project is to include a bibliography of materials relevant to small islands.

An important area in which CARNEID’s interest could be directed is in the development of a computerized database of information on the Caribbean states using the SIIN model with appropriate modification. Such a structure could accommodate CARNEID’s programme for the generation and dissemination of educational development plans, and other much needed materials which would be of tremendous value in guiding effective planning of services to the Caribbean, as it relates manpower needs, social development, and population trends. To this could be added documentation on CXC modules relating to the curriculum, assessment instruments, technical and vocational education, the use of Creole in instruction, problems of book development, educational publishing and distance education.

Distance Education

In the context of today’s technological development, and given the extremely high costs of delivering education programmes, access to distance education programmes would enhance CARNEID’s work in the region. Distance education is described as: "those teaching methods in which, because of the physical separateness of learners and teachers, the interactive as well as the preparatory phase of teaching is conducted through print, mechanical or electronic devices" (Holmberg, 1981, p. 11). It is a teaching strategy which could be supported by some of CARNEID’s work in the Caribbean as it has already been working quite effectively in various countries around the world. Some primary benefits identified are as follows:

(i) the widening of the educational opportunities for persons who cannot get to a school or the university, or might be unwilling or unable to become full-time students;

(ii) the bridging of the problem of spatial, national and even cultural isolation.
The problems presented are:

(i) The absence of feedback and discussions. Some critics describe this method of instruction as cold, dispiriting, lonely. There is the added problem of interpreting texts and so on;

(ii) The need for funds and the preparation of teaching materials which must be properly written and edited.

Solutions proposed are:

(i) The development of group learning support/cooperative learning programmes;

(ii) Speedier response time between student/tutor, and the exploring of satellite technology;

(iii) The cooperative production of texts in standard subject areas.

Some time ago, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), supported Botswana and Lesotho in their distance education project in which the Universities of Malaysia, Australia and Canada wrote courses jointly for the Botswana and Lesotho programme.

It is the tangible use derived from the information disseminated which determines the effectiveness of CARNEID. As a sub-regional structure, continued development of CARNEID would provide a solid base for a Caribbean educational network.

Major Project

At the 1979 Conference of Ministers of Education held in Mexico, a decision was taken to approach member states "to continue to promote the exchange of experience and information, with a view to facing, together, the present-day challenges of education" (Lopez, 1983, p. 107). The ministers recognized that a need existed to strengthen and to improve existing national and sub-regional structures for better dissemination of educational information in Latin America and the Caribbean. Accordingly, in 1981, the General Conference of Unesco,
approved the Major Project on Education. The three objectives it identified and approved were as follows:

- to ensure that by 1999 at the latest, all children of school age are receiving schooling and are provided with a minimum of 8-10 years general education;

- to eradicate illiteracy before the end of the century and to develop and extend educational services for adults;

- to improve the quality and efficiency of educational systems by carrying out the necessary reforms.

The Major Project is, fundamentally, the expression of the political will of governments of the region; it is not a programme but rather a framework within which each participating country is to develop a plan of work to achieve the specified objectives. It has been planned as an exercise in cooperation between the countries concerned in which information is to play a key role. CARNEID is to some extent committed to work towards those goals provided that such activities have the approval of the Consultative Meeting.

Conclusion

The following steps are necessary to improve the management of educational information in the Caribbean:

(a) An intense programme of training in user education needs to be developed to make the population both information literate and information conscious;

(b) Attitudinal change in the use of information to improve the human resource potential necessary to advance Caribbean societies. Unless users know how to find relevant information available to them, then the information machinery falls short of its main goal;

(c) Development of educational data bases in all territories;
(d) Thesaurus of Descriptors in education for the English-speaking Caribbean in order to enhance database development;

(e) The systematic documentation of completed research and research in progress in education throughout the Caribbean.

A great need exists in the Caribbean for a new and effective approach to the development of its information infrastructure. Improvement in the collection and dissemination of information will not only underpin social and economic development, but serve as a catalyst in all developmental endeavours throughout the society. The changes in information management must be linked to the perceived goals in education reform envisaged by all as the 21st century rapidly approaches.

References


