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SPECIAL ISSUE
Universal Secondary Education:
Ensuring Quality Education for All

Quality Secondary Education for All:
An Introduction

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With the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All initiative, many of the developing countries across the globe are striving towards universal primary education. But in the Caribbean, universal primary education has been achieved for several decades now and attention has been turned to universal secondary education (USE). Indeed by the latter half of the twentieth century, many of the countries in the region had achieved USE. For example Kitts / Nevis (late 60s), Barbados (late 70s), The Bahamas and the British Dependencies of Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands (late 80s) and Trinidad and Tobago (2000) all had USE by the year 2000. Within the first years of the twenty-first century, other countries in the region have implemented USE (Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2005 and St. Lucia in 2006), while others (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, and Jamaica) are moving towards that goal.

The advancements towards USE in all the countries in the region are laudable and indeed no small feat. However, achieving USE does not come without challenges, and the "newcomers" to USE can certainly learn from the countries that have walked the road on which they are now travelling. Furthermore, those countries that have already had Use for an extended period can certainly benefit from examining the quality of the service they are providing for their young citizens. This special edition of the journal is intended to open a conversation about USE: past and present, and prospects for the future.

Under the theme "Universal Secondary Education: Ensuring Quality Education for All", this edition contains seven articles that explore different aspects of USE and related factors. The writers are all individuals who have been in the field of education for many years and who have had experience in various areas of the field. There is Errol Miller, noted for his ability to think out-of-the-box and creativity, who takes a philosophical and historical look at USE in the region and offers some food for thought in relation to the way forwards for USE in the region; Benita Thompson, who uses the case of Barbados to explore classroom disruptive behaviours and their relationship to USE; Coreen J. Leacock, who discusses the impact of USE on what is offered in schools and issues that should be explored to ensure that there is quality education for all students; Stafford A. Griffith, who discusses what the regional examination body is doing to facilitate USE and to provide certification for students with

different levels of ability and in different circumstances; Veronica Marks, who shares the experiences of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as it set out on the journey of USE; Winston K. King, who draws on his vast experience to present some views on the curriculum in the context of USE; and S. Joel Warrican, who shows what the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education is doing and proposes to do to help schools to meet the challenges of literacy development in the context of USE.

It is hoped that these articles will not only highlight the strides made towards the achievement of USE in all the countries of the Caribbean, but will also provide an opening for educators and other shareholders and stakeholders in education to join the conversation. This conversation should not only be a celebration of the accomplishments of the Caribbean in relation to USE nor the lamenting of the challenges associated with these accomplishments. It should also provide a platform on which innovative solutions to the challenges are presented and creative ideas for providing and maintaining quality education for all the children in the region are explored. All with a vested interest in achieving this goal are invited to participate.

Universal Secondary Education and Society in the Commonwealth Caribbean

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Abstract

This paper presents three general philosophical perspectives of secondary education and explores the specific philosophies that influence secondary education in the Caribbean. The author traces the historical development of secondary education in the region and brings us to the introduction and expansion of universal secondary education. He argues for a unifying philosophical perspective on secondary education for the Commonwealth Caribbean that would contribute to the competitiveness of the region in the global economy. Finally, the author offers suggestions as to how universal secondary education could be implemented on a regional level.

Keywords: universal secondary education, philosophies of education, Commonwealth Caribbean

Introduction

Universal secondary education (USE) has been high on the agenda of Governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean for the past decade. Indeed, the Montego Bay Declaration of the Heads of Government of CARICOM set 2005 as the date by which all CARICOM countries should provide school places for all students of secondary school age. In this regard, the Commonwealth Caribbean is pursuing a policy that is growing in acceptance across the world (Cohen et al., 2005). This paper attempts to examine some of the major issues related to USE within the context of Commonwealth Caribbean society.

Philosophies of Secondary Education

Concepts that have been used in implementing universal secondary education, internationally, have been rooted in the philosophy upon which secondary education systems have been built in the various countries. Given the fact that Commonwealth Caribbean countries have largely adopted and adapted policies from metropolitan countries, an appropriate starting point of any discussion of USE is a brief review of the philosophies that have guided the evolution of secondary education as it has been provided around the world.

Secondary Education as a Level of Education

The original philosophy of secondary education is that of being a level of education. This philosophy is based on two basic premises. First, that secondary education is that stage of education undertaken after mastery of the fundamentals of primary education, particularly mastery of literacy and numeracy; and second, that the purpose of secondary education is to prepare students for further education. The first premise defines the prerequisites for entry into secondary education. The second defines its goal and by deduction its standards and its content. This philosophy of secondary education highlights its intermediary status in the education system and its dependent relationships on both primary and tertiary education. From the perspective of this philosophy, non-mastery of the prerequisites of primary education excludes students from the secondary level. On the other hand, the standards and content of secondary education evolve and change with the evolution of tertiary education.

Embedded just below the surface of these two basic premises of this philosophy of secondary education is the notion that not every child has the ability or the capacity to advance to secondary education. Historically, primary education was deemed terminal to those who were judged to be without the ability to advance to higher education. Consequently, secondary education was for the elite who were deemed capable of going on to higher education. This conception of secondary schooling transfer from primary to secondary school was predicated on the basis of the achievement as measured by some form of performance testing. Originally, all secondary schools would set their own entry examinations, but in more recent times, systems following the British model opted for the famous, or infamous, common entrance or 11 plus examination, which selected the students for secondary schools.

Secondary school systems based on this philosophy, developed principally in Western Europe, have been marked by the following:
- Transfer from primary schooling based on academic achievement,
- Different types of schools offering types of secondary education,
- A clear distinction between academic and technical and vocational education, with the academic stream leading to university and the technical and vocational stream principally geared to the world of work.

In essence, this philosophy of secondary education is exclusive and categorical and is strongly related to the class structures of the societies. This philosophy of secondary education was spawned in Western Europe from which it has spread to other parts of the world largely through the colonial relationships between Western European countries and countries in the other continents of the world.

Secondary Education as Preparation for the World of Work

The second philosophy of secondary education is that of education beyond the primary level but which is directed to preparation for work in different occupations. In a sense, this philosophy shares some common features with the philosophy previously described. It requires mastery of the fundamentals of primary education. It is education beyond the primary level. However, at its inception the goal was preparation for the world of work and

not higher education. This philosophy emerged over time as craft guilds gave way to schools in the training of apprentices. A good example of this transition was the German Berufschule which admitted apprentices, thus allowing them to combine formal education with training on the job. Trade schools, as they were called, became the precursors of technical and vocational secondary schools.

The industrial revolution demanded training in skills that were outside of the so-called academic curriculum. It also demanded that persons trained in these skills be literate and numerate. Hence it demanded education and training beyond the primary level, but in technical and vocational areas that were not included in the classical curriculum of grammar schools as they were called in Britain or the lycee in France or the gymnasium in Germany.

There are four important characteristics of this philosophy of secondary education that must be noted. These are:
- It is practical skills oriented and geared to the world of work
- It is work oriented and therefore considered to be terminal education for a large segment of its students, although some are expected to continue to higher education
- It is second choice secondary education geared largely to those who have not sufficiently excelled at the primary level to be selected for the more academic curriculum offered in grammar schools
- It is a level of education after the primary level parallel to the academic stream of education.

Secondary Education as Education for a Stage of Human Development

A third philosophy of secondary education is that it is education for a stage of human development. As such, secondary education, which is education for an intermediary stage in human development: adolescence. Hence, secondary schooling should begin for students of about 12 years olds and ends at about 18 years old. The role of secondary schooling is to provide for the holistic needs of students at this stage of human development: physical, intellectual, social, emotional and cultural. It is also to produce citizens with wholesome values irrespective of their intellectual capacities or level of educational achievement.
Within this philosophy of secondary education, transfer from primary to secondary education is assumed to be automatic for all students, based on the age of students. There are no performance criteria that are required. All students should progress from primary to secondary education just as all children become adolescents. Indeed, transfer from elementary to secondary school is an institutional marker of the transition from childhood to adolescence.

In this philosophy, secondary education is offered in one type of school, the public or common or comprehensive school. These secondary schools are by and large located in the neighbourhoods in which students live. The curriculum in the early grades of the secondary school is common to all students who are exposed to virtually all subjects. The curriculum of the later grades of the secondary school usually includes a common core which includes at a minimum the official language and mathematics and electives chosen from among

foreign languages, sciences, history, geography, social studies, technical subjects, vocational subjects, the visual and performing arts and physical education. The school caters to students of varying abilities, aptitudes and interests.

From this perspective, secondary education is the right of all students and must cater for students of different capabilities, levels of attainment, aptitudes and rates of development within the same institutional framework. This view of secondary education is inclusive and adopts as its modus operandi universal design education, which manifests flexibility in designing instruction appropriate to the varying needs of students in the societies in which they are located. This philosophy of secondary education is largely American in origin.

The main pitfall of this approach is that by not requiring the attainment of standards as the basis of promotion from one grade to the next or from primary to secondary school, performance and merit as the bases of progress are either undermined or compromised. Further, illiterate students are automatically transferred from primary to secondary school.

It should be noted that these three philosophies of secondary education are in the main philosophies of the providers of secondary education. In the majority of countries of the world, the State has been the major provider, with religious groups and private entrepreneurs being adjunct providers. It should not be assumed that the participants in secondary education, students and their parents, necessarily share the philosophy of the providers. Complications arise where the providers offer secondary education based on one philosophy and implement secondary education policies based on that philosophy, and where the participants demand or participate in secondary education based on another philosophy or vice versa. Numerous permutations and combinations of fit and cross-purpose between supply and demand for secondary education are possible with different practical outcomes. The point is that like all other levels of education, secondary education requires investment by both the providers and the participants. Both actual and opportunity costs are involved.

A Brief Sketch of Caribbean Secondary Education

Formal secondary education in the Commonwealth Caribbean dates back to the mid 19th century. However, several secondary schools in the Commonwealth Caribbean began to operate as educational institutions long before 1850. For example, schools such as Combermere, Queen's College, Foundation, Harrison College, and Lodge in Barbados and Wolmers, Mannings and Rusea in Jamaica have operated continuously as schools for more than 250 years (Miller, 1990; Newton and Sandiford, 1995). The explanation for this seeming inconsistency is that these schools were founded as elementary schools, but were later transformed into secondary schools in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is important to note that most secondary schools that were founded before the 1850s were operated by religious bodies and charitable trusts. Indeed, up until the 1950s very few secondary schools in the Commonwealth Caribbean were founded and operated by Governments. Governments' history as a major provider of secondary education through the building and operation of secondary schools began in the 1950s and 1960s. Invariably, these

Government built secondary schools were part of loan funds from various donor institutions such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank and marked the period when Governments' policies were to significantly expand access to secondary education.

Between the 1850s and the 1950s secondary education in the sub-region was restricted to less than three per cent of the school age population and was accessed also entirely by the middle and upper classes. Adult suffrage and representative government in the 1940s and 1950s resulted in significant expansion of secondary education as the people elected their political representatives with mandates for fundamental change for the colonial past. Merit replaced parents' ability to pay as the criterion for entry into public secondary schools. Merit was determined by performance in Common Entrance Examinations which were instituted across the region.

When Governments entered directly and fully into the secondary sector in the 1950s and 1960s, with the exception of Guyana, they came to an accommodation with the religious bodies and charitable trusts to incorporate the secondary schools that those bodies had founded into the public secondary system. In Trinidad and Tobago, this accommodation came to be known as the Concordat. Government paid the recurrent cost of operating the schools although the religious bodies or charitable trusts continued to retain ownership. Essentially, Governments assumed the responsibility for operating secondary schools with the caveat that access to these schools would be open to all who qualified to attend.

Probably the most fundamental aspect of Governments' direct involvement with secondary education was the formal integration of public elementary schools with the secondary schools that had been founded by the religious bodies and charitable trusts. When the secondary school system was established in the latter half of the 19th century, their students came almost entirely from private preparatory schools. In the last decade of the 19th century, Governments took over the elementary school system from religious denominations and introduced free elementary education. In each country the Government established a few scholarships that allowed a very limited number of elementary school students to attend secondary school. This number gradually increased over the first half of the twentieth century. With the introduction of Common Entrance Examinations in the 1960s and 1970s Governments also introduced free secondary education. Hence, public elementary education became fully integrated with public secondary education and the main barriers that had constrained children from poor homes from gaining access to secondary education were removed.

While Governments did build a few secondary schools, or bought a few from private individuals or religious bodies that could no longer afford to operate them, Governments main efforts to increase the number of secondary schools came through loan programmes beginning in the 1960s. The schools built by Governments departed from the pattern that had operated for the previous 100 plus years. Beginning with the World Bank programmes, Governments built Junior Secondary Schools providing lower secondary education in Grades 7 to 9. The plan was for students who attended Junior Secondary or High Schools to go into Senior Secondary or High Schools to complete their secondary education. Only Trinidad and Tobago was able to fully implement the plan. The Junior and Senior Secondary or High

Schools offered an alternative form of secondary education to that offered in traditional high schools.

The three defining features of this alternative form of secondary education could be summarised as follows:
  • Students entering Junior Secondary or High Schools were drawn from the pool of students who did not gain places into the traditional high schools through the Common Entrance Examinations
  • Junior Secondary or High Schools were linked to particular primary schools, which became their feeder schools
  • The Junior and Senior Secondary of High School System had a distinct vocational bias, especially in the curriculum of the Senior Secondary or High School.

By the 1980s, three characteristic features of Commonwealth Caribbean secondary education resulted from this history. First, the most sought after and prestigious secondary schools were those founded and operated by religious bodies and charitable trusts that traced their beginning as secondary schools to the 19th and first half of the twentieth century. For ease of reference, these can be labelled the traditional high schools. Second was the Junior/Senior Secondary School system which offered education to students who had not passed the common entrance examination. In addition, the curriculum of these schools had strong elements of pre-vocational and vocational education. This type of secondary education was seen as an option for students who did not have the ability to benefit from traditional secondary education. Third, the private secondary schools system became the option for children who did not gain a place in the traditional high schools, but whose parents did not accept the Junior/Senior Secondary School system and could afford to pay for secondary education offered in private schools along the lines of the traditional high schools.

Philosophies Guiding Caribbean Secondary Education

Traditional High Schools in the Commonwealth Caribbean were patterned on the Western European philosophy of secondary education as a level of education, that is, the step up the education ladder above elementary education. The Junior/Senior Secondary School system introduced in the 1960s and 1970s was premised on Comprehensive, Common School with a philosophy as education for a stage of human development, but it also had elements of technical vocational education. However, it was implemented in the context of education for those who had failed the Common Entrance Examination and, therefore, perceived to be less able intellectually. Hence, while the three philosophies became embedded in Commonwealth Caribbean secondary education in some form, they were embedded in circumstances in which secondary education as a level of education was generally perceived to be superior to secondary education as a stage of human development or preparation for the world of work.

There is, however, one impact that the expansion of secondary education generally and the introduction of technical and Junior/Secondary or High Schools had on traditional high schools. That impact was the diversification of the curriculum of traditional high schools. Up to the 1950s the curriculum of traditional high schools was largely restricted to the classics,

foreign languages, humanities and sciences. By the 1960s, traditional high schools began to diversify their curriculum to include subjects such as Woodwork, Metalwork, Technical Drawing and Home Economics. Benavot (2006) points to the fact that this has become the trend in secondary education across the world.

The Status of the Implementation of Use in the Caribbean

Within the Caribbean context, USE is defined as students obtaining at least five years of secondary education beyond Grade 6, that is, students receiving education up to Grade 11. Essentially, the Caribbean follows the British model of secondary education with the terminal examination for secondary education coming at the end of Grade 11. In other words, USE is defined to include both lower and upper secondary education.

The first Commonwealth Caribbean country to implement USE was St. Kitts and Nevis, which did so in 1966. Barbados followed in the late 1970s. The Bahamas and the British Dependencies of Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands followed in the mid to late 1980s. Trinidad and Tobago implemented USE in 2000. In this first decade of the 21 century, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines implemented USE in September 2005 and St. Lucia followed in September 2006. Antigua and Barbuda admits into secondary schools all students who pass the Common Entrance at Grade 6 and an examination at end of Grade 9.

If USE is defined in terms of providing school places for all students of secondary school age in schools designated to be secondary schools, then thirteen of the 18 Commonwealth Caribbean countries have achieved USE. If USE is defined in terms of providing school places in secondary schools for all students who have mastered the fundamentals of the primary curriculum then fourteen countries have achieved USE. Antigua and Barbuda offers secondary education to all students who have mastered the primary curriculum. The four countries that have not yet achieved USE by whatever definition used are: Belize, Grenada, Guyana and Jamaica. If mastery of the primary curriculum is used to define USE, then these four countries are within reach of achieving USE. These four countries provide secondary education to more than fifty per cent of the population that are of secondary school age. These four countries are further away from achieving USE if the latter is defined in terms of all students of secondary school age.

Grenada's plan was to implement USE fully in September 2007. However, due to various reasons this goal is yet to be achieved. It is anticipated though, that with the steady increase in the number of children who are offered places in the secondary schools over the last few years, this target will soon be met. In the case of the other three countries, education is provided to all students up to Grade 9. It could, therefore, be said that in the four countries not providing universal secondary education to Grade 11, all students are provided with universal lower secondary education. However, this is a moot point since many of the students continue to Grade 9 in the same schools in which they received their primary education. Further, the curriculum offered in these schools in Grade 7 to 9 does not always follow the common curriculum offered in secondary schools and even if it does, neither the provision of teachers or facilities are comparable to those in secondary schools.

This controversy as to whether students enrolled in schools in Grades 7-9 are receiving lower secondary education goes back to the differences in conceptualisation of secondary education in the three philosophies outlined previously, and the legacy of the history of British form of education that has been followed in the Commonwealth Caribbean. From the inception of schooling in the Caribbean in the 17th century, elementary education ended at age 14/15 years. This is long before there was the concept of grades and primary education being defined as education provided in Grades 1 to 6, benchmarked in age as between 6 to 12 years. Elementary schools existed and operated in the region for more than 250 years before this definition of primary education became operational in the 1960s. With the introduction junior secondary/high schools when elementary schools, mostly in urban areas, were transformed into primary schools as their 12, 13 and 14 year olds were transferred to junior secondary/high schools.

The root of the controversy grew from the fact that the grading system was introduced in those schools that remained as elementary schools. These schools now had students in primary education in Grades 1 to 6 and students who had failed the common entrance remained in the elementary school in Grades 7 to 9. The name elementary school was dropped. In Jamaica these were named All Age schools; in St. Lucia and other countries of the OECS they were designated: Combined Schools. Because students in Grades 7 to 9 were not engaged in secondary education in some countries, Grades 7 to 9 was designed as the Senior Primary Division. In more recent times, Jamaica, for example, introduced a limited amount of subject teaching in some All Age schools and renamed these schools Primary and Junior High Schools.

Given the different philosophies of secondary education, some comment is appropriate with respect to the approaches adopted when CARICOM countries began to implement universal secondary education. St. Kitts and Nevis was not only the first Caribbean country to implement universal secondary education, when they did so in 1968, but they also switched philosophy at the same time. Hence, St Kitts and Nevis introduced comprehensive secondary education at the same time as it was introducing universal secondary education. In the capital, Basseterre, it built both a Junior Secondary and a Senior Secondary School to offer lower and upper secondary education while in the rest of the country the curriculum of traditional high schools was diversified to offer the entire range of subjects that students could choose at the secondary level. However, within a decade of its implementation, the Basseterre Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools were transformed into single cycle secondary schools because of some of the social problems that became associated with the two cycle pattern of secondary education.

Barbados followed St. Kitts Nevis and began to implement USE in 1976 by providing secondary school places to all students who 'passed' the Common Entrance Examination. Students who did not achieve the 'pass mark' were retained in Senior Schools and could be admitted to secondary schools at a later date if they achieved the required standard. As the numbers of students of secondary school age in the population declined in the 1990s, Barbados switched its philosophy of USE from all students who had mastered the primary school curriculum, to providing places in secondary school to all students of secondary school

age. Indeed, a special secondary school was built to provide education to students who were deemed to be incapable of following the regular secondary curriculum.

The other Commonwealth Caribbean countries that have implemented universal secondary education have all done so in a more gradual manner than St. Kitts and Nevis, and Barbados. Apart from implementing USE in a more gradual manner, the twelve countries have also taken somewhat different paths. St. Lucia introduced Junior Secondary Schools into the secondary system in the 1970s. However, by the mid 1980s, St. Lucia began to convert Junior Secondary Schools into single cycle high schools, patterned on the traditional high schools. USE was gradually achieved by building more single cycle secondary schools.

Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Montserrat, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines all arrived at universal secondary education by following a different path. They achieved USE by gradually increasing access to single cycle secondary schools. The new and more recent high schools were built by Governments to increase access to secondary education. In the case of Dominica, Grades 7 to 9 in the elementary schools were converted to Junior Secondary Divisions of those schools which then were renamed Primary and Junior Secondary Schools. Hence, lower secondary education was offered within the context of what were previously elementary schools. At the end of Grade 9, students in the Junior Secondary Divisions sat an examination which allowed them entry to high schools if they performed at the required level. The point is that Dominica introduced lower secondary education, but not in a separate institution.

The Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago arrived at the implementation of USE at different times but followed the same path, which is different from the three paths described previously. Both countries added two cycle secondary education to the single cycle system that previously existed. Hence, the public system of universal secondary education now consists of both traditional high schools and junior and senior secondary high schools.

In reviewing the implementation of USE to date in the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, two observations appear to be in order. First, with the exception of St. Kitts and Nevis, the implementation of USE was facilitated by declining school populations of secondary school age. Live births in Caribbean countries reached a peak in the late 1960s and 1970s. By the end of the 1980s there were more students leaving primary schools in Grade 6 than entering them in Grade 1. As this demographic shift worked its way through the population with expansion of the existing secondary system, countries have been able to offer a school place to all students of secondary school age.

Second, the smaller countries of the sub-region with some small variations have achieved USE by offering secondary education through single cycle institutions of the same type, which have diversified their curriculum to be more comprehensive in scope than was characteristic of traditional high schools. In other words, these countries have offered USE in a single type of secondary school which offered both lower and upper secondary education in the same institution. On the other hand, the two most affluent Caribbean countries (Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago) have achieved universal secondary education with different types of secondary schools and separate institutions for lower and upper secondary education.

From the foregoing discussion of USE, it is evident that the Commonwealth Caribbean began to implement USE long before USE came to the fore as a central policy question globally. Indeed, at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, the Commonwealth Caribbean argued strongly for secondary education to be included as part of basic education and, therefore, part of the EFA mandate. Further, it is apparent that the Commonwealth Caribbean is not far from achieving USE as a sub-region, no matter how it is defined. As such, the Commonwealth Caribbean is not far shy of achieving so-called developed or industrialized world standards for USE. Finally, the substantial expansion of access to secondary education in the Commonwealth Caribbean has been achieved over the last 50 years, largely as a result of policies implemented under full internal self-government of the dependencies and political independence on the part of others.

The Way Forward for the Caribbean

Commonwealth Caribbean countries have a long history of education and of secondary education. For more than 150 years Commonwealth Caribbean countries had organised secondary education on the philosophy of secondary education being as a level of education beyond the primary level. In more recent times, several countries have superimposed on this philosophy the other philosophies of secondary education as education for preparation for the world of work as well as for a stage of human development. The co-mingling of these philosophies of secondary education without any attempt to resolve their contradiction has led to a lack of conceptual clarity and several contradictory arrangements and expectations. At the root of this dilemma is the common practice within the Commonwealth Caribbean of adopting, adapting and implementing ideas of education from elsewhere and only infrequently critically reviewing their effectiveness in achieving the stated goals.

The position taken here is that it is necessary and almost obligatory for Commonwealth Caribbean countries to take a hard critical look at the bases upon which they have expanded access to secondary education and implemented universal secondary education. Almost all major educational reforms in the last 50 years have included in their objectives equitable access, equality of opportunity and social justice. The stated intentions have to rectify and reverse the inequalities and injustices that have marked the colonial histories of these societies. The question is which policies and reforms have actually delivered on their promises. For example, a strong case can be made that the so-called older secondary schools, often labelled the elite secondary schools, have done more to facilitate upward social mobility on the part of the social segments that have been historically marginalised than the newer secondary schools. Indeed, most of the countries of the sub-region have abandoned the 'junior secondary – senior secondary' model promoted by the international development assistance agencies in the 1960s and 1970s, and have patterned their institutional arrangements for secondary education on the five-year secondary school. Indeed, the two countries of the sub-region, Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago, which have retained the junior secondary, senior secondary model, are the countries that because of their economic strength, were able to fully implement the reform premised on this institutional arrangement.

In addition, the position taken here is that the Commonwealth Caribbean must abandon the practice of adopting and adapting ideas for secondary education developed elsewhere and instead critically analyse its existing situation and, from first principles, devise the ideas that will inform continued reform of education, particularly the continued implementation of USE. In this regard, the remainder of the paper attempts to sketch the broad contours of the further development of USE in the sub-region.

Towards A Commonwealth Caribbean Philosophy of Universal Secondary Education

Commonwealth Caribbean countries should consider adopting a philosophy of USE based on two basic premises; first, that secondary education is a level of education beyond mastery of the fundamentals of primary education, second, that five or six, years of secondary education is the right of all persons resident in the society age 11 years or older, that have mastered the fundamentals of primary education.

There are several bases upon which the first premise can be justified and supported. To begin with this concept of secondary education is definable in educational terms and has clear meaning within the education system and, therefore, is understandable to professionals, parents and pupils. This is the case because it is generally agreed that the end result of primary education is to produce students who are literate in the official language of their society, numerate and who possess some basic understanding of their physical and social environments. To say that secondary education is that level of education beyond mastery of the primary stage at least defines its starting point as the end point of the first stage of the education system.

On the other hand, the concept of secondary education for the adolescent stage of human development is fraught with conceptual difficulty because its central axiom is about a stage of human development that is socially and culturally constructed and therefore has different meanings and manifestations in different cultures and societies (Bradley, 1999; Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1928). What is appropriate education for this stage of human development becomes so culturally relative and societally specific that it poses substantial problems in determining the content of education that is appropriate to this stage of human development, and therefore, raises the question, what exactly is secondary education within this conceptual framework?

The point that must not be missed is that secondary education conceived as a level of education beyond the primary stage does not in any way preclude talking about the stage of human development of the students to whom it is delivered, nor does it exclude adjustments and adaptations to the culture and society in which it is delivered. In other words, secondary education conceived as a level of education beyond the primary stage can be configured appropriately for children, adolescents and adults in different cultures and societies. While secondary education as a level of education can readily accommodate the basic premise of secondary education as education for a stage of human development the converse is not true.

Then again, secondary education as a level of education beyond mastery of primary education is widely held and understood within Caribbean societies given its long history and practice on this basis within the region. Given the fact that voluntary participation is vital to the achievement of USE, it is important for the philosophy on which it is premised to be readily understood and readily accepted. It should be noted that in those countries that have gone ahead with placing students that have not mastered the fundamentals of primary education in secondary schools, there has been significant difficulty in convincing many education professionals, parents and the general public of the wisdom of such an approach.

Before proceeding to justify the second premise, it is necessary to elaborate on the content of this premise. By declaring that five or six years of secondary education is a right, this premise is asserting that the State has an obligation to provide five or six years of secondary free of cost to those to whom the obligation is due. By saying it is the right of all persons resident in a country that are 11 years or older, this premise is asserting that the obligation of the State is owed to that universe of persons that are reaching the age of 11 years and also to those who have passed the age of 11 years and are resident in the country, but who have not received five or six years of secondary schooling. In other words, the premises include in its definition of 'all', adults as well as adolescents and citizens and non-citizens, once they are resident in the country, who have mastered the fundamentals of primary education, but have not had five or six years of secondary schooling. Finally, the premise asserts that this obligation is based on merit and achievement. The achievement of mastery of the primary level of education by the individual, obligates the State to provide that individual with the opportunity of continuing education at the secondary level when he or she reaches the age of 11 years or at any later age. In other words, the provision of secondary education is a social contract between the individual and the State. Once and whenever individuals perform their part of the contract, the State is obliged to meet its obligation.

The reason for making 11 years as the threshold for the establishment of the right to secondary education is by no means asserting that there may not be some students who master the primary curriculum before that age. Indeed, the Caribbean has long allowed entry into secondary school before age 11 years. However, such arrangements are not binding on either the State or parents or schools but are permitted on a case by case basis related to the particular circumstances and the specific student. The right is set at age 11 years because on a normative basis students are engaged in primary education up to that age.

The justification for this second premise is that if the State defines secondary education in terms of being that level of education that follows mastery of the primary level then fairness demands that all persons who achieve this mastery should be provided with access to this further level of education. Further, equity demands that, whenever this right is accorded to students of school age, it should also be accorded to all those who previously attained this mastery of the primary level but who were not provided with access to this further level of education when they reached the age now specified. Equity would also demand that this right be accorded to persons who achieved this mastery of the primary level, after they had passed the age of 11 years. Justice and human rights require that the State affords this right to all persons that it allows to reside within its borders. This is of particular significance

in circumstances in which CARICOM has established a single market and economy which allows the free movement of people between countries within the CARICOM community.

There are at least three sets of practical circumstances that demonstrate the necessity for specifications set out above. First, in almost all Caribbean populations there are adults, or even some adolescents, who mastered the primary curriculum but for reasons of school supply at that particular time were not able to benefit from secondary education. Second, all Commonwealth Caribbean countries now operate school systems that provide students with education until age 15 or 16 years. Students mastering the primary curriculum after age 11 years should have the right to proceed to secondary education. Third, while it is generally accepted that the obligation of the State to provide its population with primary education ends at somewhere between 15 and 16 years, there may be individuals, whether on their own or with other assistance, master the primary curriculum at some later age. At that point, they too would become eligible for State provided secondary education. This approach would give new meaning to 'education for all'.

The case could be made to the fact that the history of education could be written in terms of the re-definition of 'all'. The Athenians first declared education to be the right of all free men of the City of Athens. This excluded free men of other cities, women and slaves (Miller, 2003). Even major education reform has involved a revised definition of 'all' so that it becomes more inclusive by including groups that were previously excluded. The most inclusive definition of 'all' in education is the World Declaration of Education for All, which includes all children of the world without exception. However, this is restricted to primary education. The philosophy of universal secondary education proposed for Commonwealth Caribbean countries has the potential to become the most inclusive definition of secondary education for all.

The New Philosophy and CARICOM Competitiveness in the Global Economy

Adopting a philosophy of USE which includes the adult population in Commonwealth Caribbean is not a matter of philosophical nicety, but a matter of greater practical necessity and urgency. The reasons for this can be enumerated briefly as follows:

- Commonwealth Caribbean economies are not only going through the transition to service type economies that are quite widespread, but their traditional trading partners, particularly in Europe are phasing out preferential agreements related to several mainstay agricultural products like sugar and bananas, which have been large employers of labour in the sub-region. The implication of the loss of trade preferences are substantial. Commonwealth Caribbean economies must become more competitive in traditional areas as well as to identify and move into new areas where the region may have some advantages.
- It is the current labour force, particularly workers of prime age within this labour force, upon which Commonwealth Caribbean economies must now rely to become the 'first responders' to the challenges of becoming more competitive. However, in most countries of the sub-region, large numbers of such persons missed out on secondary education largely because of school supply shortages which existed

at the time at which they were of school age. Strategies to improve and increase economic competitiveness in almost all Commonwealth Caribbean countries should include the provision of general secondary education as well as specific technical/vocational training related to particular industries, to members of the existing labour forces.

- While the provision of school places for all students of secondary school age who have mastered the primary curriculum is an essential means of consolidating any effort of increased competitiveness within the global market place, Commonwealth Caribbean countries cannot rely on school leavers as the primary strategy of meeting the educational levels they must achieve in order to maximise opportunities that may be available to Caribbean economies.

In addition to the above, adopting and implementing a policy of universal secondary education that applied to all members of the society without exclusionary clauses and restrictions related to age could set in place the circumstances that could assist in determining whether the previous philosophy and strategy of providing opportunities for educational advancements only to the young, is part of the genesis of societal dislocations that have had widespread implications for family and community life. Put another way, providing opportunities for social and economic advancement not only to children but simultaneously to their parents may result in different relationships within families and communities as well as across generations.

The Institutional Arrangement and Modalities of Delivery

Universal secondary education based on the philosophy outlined above would require adjustments to the institutional arrangements and modalities by which secondary education is now delivered by states of Commonwealth Caribbean. Briefly the following could be considered:

- The continued operation of secondary schools that accept students at 11 plus years who have mastered the primary curriculum.
- Designating particular secondary schools to admit students at any age up to say 15 years and allowing those students to continue in school until age 20 or 21 years. The schools would be allowed to admit or be allotted sufficient students each year such that these students could be organised in classes related to their age group. This, indeed, was successful practice in some Caribbean countries before secondary education was rather rigidly defined by age in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Purchasing places in community colleges for adults to commence and continue their secondary education. While some community colleges across the region now offer secondary education programmes, they are invariably programmes of continuing education which assumes that students had previously received some secondary education or had failed the CSEC examinations. The proposal here is that some secondary programmes in community colleges could commence at Grade 7 where they admit adults who had recently or previously only achieved mastery of the primary curriculum.
- There are several secondary schools that offer secondary education through evening programmes. Invariably, these are privately financed. Where the circumstances of their lives only allow some adults or adolescents to access

secondary education through this modality, and if they fall within the definition of which the State has obligations, then the State should bear the tuition cost of their participation in such programmes.

- The creation of distance teaching and on-line programmes of secondary education which would offer access to secondary education to those adolescents and adults whose circumstances do not allow them to attend face-to-face programmes or who opt to receive it through this modality. Given the advances that have been made in information and communication technology, one or two high quality on-line programmes could be organised on a sub-regional basis.

There can be no question that what is involved will require generations to be implemented. The long-term nature of the enterprise to be undertaken cannot be in question. Probably the starting point is the acceptance of a CARICOM philosophy of USE. From that beginning, the reform of the existing institutional framework, the introduction of new modalities and designs, development and institutionalisation of instruments and mechanisms to measure mastery of primary education could follow over time.

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Universal Secondary Education in the OECS: Some Views on the Curriculum

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Abstract

Various international initiatives in education, followed by the development of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Reform Strategy (1991) led to initiatives in Universal Secondary Education (USE) in the countries of the sub-region.

As expected, approaches have differed from country to country. However, the common purposes have been to provide access, modified curriculum and trained teachers for the education of all children at secondary education level.

Several obstacles have been identified, for example improper planning and ineffective implementation in all aspects, with the possible exception of access.

There needs, therefore to be more monitoring, evaluation and support of various types to make the reform effective and sustainable. Every effort must be made to sustain the reform for the benefit of all children in the sub-region.

Keywords: Universal Education, secondary education, curriculum, curriculum development, educational change

Introduction

The International Initiatives

The World Declaration on Education for all (Jomtien, 1990) begins by assessing progress in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights assertion some 40+ years before: 'everyone has a right to education'. The assessment does not present a very healthy picture.

The Declaration recognizes and reiterates the importance of the imperative of the fundamental right for all people to basic education, and further the role of the latter in 'strengthening of higher levels of education and of scientific and technological literacy and capacity and thus to self-reliant development'.

The substance of the 10 Articles that are drawn up by the Declaration bear some further scrutiny, since the road map for 21st century education is very clearly outlined. For example, Article I #4 suggests that:

'Basic education is more than an end in itself. It is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development on which countries may build, systematically, further levels and types of education'.

Article II recommends that there must be more than recommitment to extant basic education.

'What is needed is an "expanded vision" that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best current practices'.

Perhaps, the most relevant recommendation as it relates to curriculum offerings is in Article IV - Focussing on Learning. It accepts the notion that although expanded opportunities for education will most likely lead to national and individual development: 'The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements'.

The OECS Initiative

The Declaration, although outlining this road map cautions that 'The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time'. There is an important message here which must be always at the forefront as each country in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) sets a pathway to Universal Secondary Education (USE).

The move towards reform in education at all levels of the OECS emerged from a Ministers of Education at their Fourth Annual meeting, October 1990. The decision was made to establish 'a sub-regional strategy for the reform of education in the OECS'. Out of this decision came the Education Reform Working Group in March 1991. One must also bear in mind that in 1990 the Caricom Secretariat established an Advisory Task Force on Education 'with a mandate to develop reform strategies over a three year period' (Foundations for the Future (FFF) 1991, p. 3).

Out of a series of consultations the OECS Working Group produced the incisive document 'Foundation for the Future: The OECS Education Reform Strategies' (1991). This document contains 65 strategies for reform.

It is interesting to note that one of the main set of strategies speaks about 'Reforming Secondary Education'. Among the objectives of these strategies are:

- To expand the provision of secondary education in the sub-region
- To reconceptualise its nature, form and content
- To improve its quality.

The strategies, quite correctly, outline the philosophy of secondary education and schooling. This is important for curriculum planning, since such planning should be built firmly on a philosophy - on why you are educating in the first place. One should not undertake reform and refinement just for the sake of change. There should be some explicit indication of why such reform is necessary in the overall direction of what kind of individual you hope to develop, and why.

The philosophy recognizes the importance of secondary education, both as a terminal stage and even more importantly, as an 'intermediary education'.

'Accordingly secondary education must be of a general nature in a wide range of fields while facilitating the initial stages of specialization based on individual aptitude, achievement, interests and aspirations' (p. 192).

With such purposes in mind, the Strategies 20 - 26 provide specifics on curriculum structure and content; partial change in the structure of school offerings - semesterisation, modular programmes, flexible programmes in integration, assessment and promotion, improvement in training of principals and teachers, strengthening of support services.

For the purpose of this paper, the focus is on the suggestions for curriculum structure and content. The Strategies (in particular Strategy 21 - **Re-Conceptualise the Programme in Secondary Education)**. The recommendation outlines the overall plan:

(a) **General education that would emphasize and promote:**
  - i.   problem solving
  - ii.   creativity and imagination
  - iii.   independent judgment
  - iv.   generic technical skills
  - v.   inter-personal skills

(b) **A Common Curriculum in the first three years.**
   The subjects of the Common Curriculum would be English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Integrated Technology, Social Studies, Foreign Languages, Physical Education, Religious and Moral Education and the Creative and Performing Arts.

(c) **Introduction of broad specialization in the last two years.**
   While specialization would be introduced in the sense that students would be allowed to choose the subjects to make up their programme, the guidelines for choice should promote combinations of subjects of different types. There should be a requirement that all students should study English and at least one foreign language.

(d) The concentration of individual schools on particular areas of specialization, since no one school could offer all the programmes.

The areas of specialization of individual schools would need to be rationalized so that all programmes are offered in the sub-region, if not in each country. Clearly then, these initiatives – one international, one regional, point towards the why, what and how of curriculum offerings in education at all levels.

Towards Universal Secondary Education in the OECS

There is little doubt that the background outlined above has influenced the move, some would say the rush, towards USE in the OECS. It is an attractive rallying cry for politicians. Countries have interpreted the thrust in various ways.

Some would argue that since Jomtien and Foundations for the Future there have been several intervening years, and there is a possibility that some persons must have forgotten the genesis of the ideas. Others may argue that the agreed deadlines, having been neglected for so long, were rapidly approaching. Whatever the reason, one cannot resist the temptation to think that such a laudable goal has been approached with some apparent haste. This seems particularly true from the point of view of providing adequate curricula and other necessities for effective implementation.

Actually Hinds (2007) in what may be considered a very important intervention says:

> physical access, though very important must be accompanied by a number of mechanisms based on the recognition of the role of the curriculum, teachers, more recent ideas of psychology of learning and learning support structures (p. 6).

Hinds reminds of recommendations made in more recent times than Jomtien and FFF by referring to the Pillars of Partnership and Progress (PPP). This Miller, Thomas and Jules (2000) document assesses the progress of implementation of FFF, and reiterates some of the latter's recommendations. Strategies 32 - 35 are particular worthy of note.

Strategy 32:
Restructure the school system to provide or maintain the provision of universal secondary education up to the age of 16 years; all students transferred to secondary education should be guaranteed five years of secondary schooling from the time of their transfer;

Strategy 33:
Re-conceptualize the nature, form and content of secondary education. For example: continue to reinforce general education that emphasizes and promotes problem solving, creativity and imagination, independent judgment, generic technical skills, interpersonal skills and self-understanding.

Strategy 34:
Encourage innovation in schools re-grouping for instruction, modularization and internal assessment and promotion strategies.

Strategy 35:
Improve the quality of secondary education by establishing formal training for secondary school principals and teachers, strengthening foreign language teaching, and supporting the use of creative and performing arts and information and communications technology.

Certain questions remain. After all these recommendations, and all these promises, what has happened in their implementation? Having gained access, what kind of curriculum offerings are most suitable for what must be a very wide range of student needs and abilities?
The following review of why, how and what of the curriculum aspects of USE in two of the countries is intended to give an indication of where each is, and the likely attainment of the varied goals.

Dominica

The Caribbean Net News announced on September 6, 2005 that the Government was about to introduce USE.
That article quotes Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education as saying that for the first time all students have gained entry to the secondary schools. Not only was there enough room for all students, but, according to the Permanent Secretary, constant review would be in place to remedy any deficiencies.

The article also quotes the Prime Minister as saying the following:

> 'In this globalised world when people will be coming to Dominica freely to apply for jobs, we have to make sure that the Dominican people are educated and skilled to take on the market place'.

Finally, the article suggests that, the Prime Minister's next goal is to have one university graduate in every Dominican home. Clearly, the Prime Minister speaks of a quality foundation needed not only for the job market, but also building towards tertiary education.

The Discussion Paper prepared possibly by the Ministry of Education, despite acknowledging the critical nature of funding for such a venture, nevertheless underscores that 'Secondary education is now being recognised as the cornerstone of educational systems in the 21st century'.

The Discussion Paper highlights the following areas of focus among others, for a USE Action Plan:

National Curriculum

- Development, implementation and monitoring of national curriculum
- Develop curricula in modern languages and performing arts

Teacher Education

- Developing programmes and/or working with the Dominica State College to deal with backlog of untrained teacher (sic) in the system.
- Enhancing teaching skills in response to new curricula
- Providing opportunities and support for teachers to pursue TRAINING...'

Other areas of focus include: Literacy and Numeracy programmes; assessment system; student support services; education management; 'education financing; construction and rehabilitation of school plants'.

A Background Paper prepared by Stephenson Hyacinth, Chief Education Officer, is much more pointed towards the curriculum imperatives of USE:

> 'The introduction of USE has raised awareness of teachers and officials of the Ministry of Education to the need to constantly review and modify teaching methodology. There are a few principals and teachers who hold the belief that only a few students can succeed' (p.4).

Hyacinth acknowledges the 90% standardized success rate set as a target for students in the system, and other initiatives to eliminate underachievement.

Hyacinth, in making an address to Principals on the establishment of USE, extolls the virtues of the move thus:

> 'The change from classrooms in which talk and chalk is the dominant method of teaching to child-centred classrooms in which students are expected not just to sit and memorize facts but to organize information in new ways, develop problem solving skills, think critically and creatively, pose questions, find out things for themselves and be involved meaningfully in the learning process'.

> 'There is the recognition that the curriculum must be holistic and encourage integration of knowledge and problem solving across traditional subject boundaries'.

> 'Research and the experience and good practices of capable and diligent classroom teachers have also increased our understanding of how children learn'.

'We understand the need for organizing pedagogy to cater for multiple intelligence and different learning styles. And this is critical'.

Andrew (2003) makes some very interesting comments on USE in the Dominican context. While generally favourably disposed to the movement, he points out certain areas where one should be cautious. He suggests that 'there are certain misconceptions about USE and the strategy (gradually expanding access) adopted by government in its implementation'. He emphasizes that:

> 'USE is not simply an "increase in enrolment" to the neglect of all else. This is a fallacy as efforts are being continuously made to upgrade the quality of the teaching force and to increase the quality and quantity of inputs to schools for the teaching/learning process' (p. 24).

There is one aspect of USE, which Andrew's statistics unveil, that is somewhat daunting. It relates to the increase numbers of students repeating in first forms.

> 'From the start of USE in 1995 to 2001/02 the number of repeaters in first form jumped from 68 to 333 and for the whole secondary cycle from 287 to 844 students'.

This is an aspect to which we will return later in the paper.
Andrew explains the increase in this area of underachievement in five ways:
1.   Inadequate preparation of students in the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy
2.   Poor teaching and learning methods, techniques, pedagogy
3.   Untrained teachers
4.   Insufficient number of graduates
5.   Curriculum too narrowly focussed on academics in early years and too CXC centred in latter years (p. 25).

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

An article in the Caribbean Net News reports the celebrations which marked the accomplishment of 'universal secondary education' in 2005. The celebrations included addresses from the Prime Minister and other ministers, and a cultural performance.

The article reports a very interesting comment allegedly made by the leader of the opposition on a subsequent occasion:

> 'I am concerned about the number of persons who have been pushed into the system, who do not have the necessary background to continue in that system unless you have a lot of remedial work'.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, no doubt recognizing the relatively low level of literacy and numeracy among some of those who entered the secondary school system, made attempts to put mechanisms in place for remediation and support. One such attempt at remediation is the Academic Mentoring Programme (2006) which 'is designed to support low and under achieving English Language students in secondary schools' (Teachers' Manual, p. 4).

The Foreword to the Teachers' Manual sounds an important warning that:

> 'As the secondary education net widens to capture all students who meet the transfer age requirement of 11+ to 12+ years, the number of low-achieving students entering secondary schools will increase. This will have implications for the delivery of quality and equitable education at this level' (p. 3).

Chief Education Officer, Mrs. Susan Dougan in an address entitled 'Universal Access to Secondary Education' (March, 2007), outlines very clearly the philosophy of education in her country. They are listed below.

• Every child has the right to a good education;
• Education is fundamental to the development of SVG;
• No child left behind;
• Need to create and sustain democracy in our educational system;
• Equal opportunity/access to quality education;
• Education for living and production.

She intimates that several factors have pushed the country towards USE, especially certain challenges facing the economy - globalization, Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) outward movement of skilled labour, loss of preferential access to banana markets.

Dougan, in making her case, also gives the tremendous increase of students entering first form from 2001 - 2006 (some 151%). In any circumstances this is a huge achievement in five years.

Figure 1
Enrolment of Students in Secondary Schools - Form 1 - 5
(Source: Ministry of Education)

Year	No. Entered (Form 1)	No. Enrolled
2001 - 2002	1, 562	*7,873
2002 - 2003	1, 757	7,909
2003 - 2004	2,300	8,409
2004 - 2005	2,800	9,391
2005 - 2006	3,928	11,336

*Figure 1 - represents 40% of age cohort nationally who ought to be in Secondary school

In the CEO's very comprehensive treatment of USE she also details the 'Policy Environment' in which the new development is expected to thrive. Among these factors she lists the upgrading of legislative and regulatory framework, promoting by age with remediation, accelerating the flow through the system, reviewing and reforming the curriculum 'to establish learning outcomes and assessment procedures, establishing manageable class sizes, ensuring that all students receive 7 years of primary education, 'strengthening curriculum delivery by providing appropriate training of teachers', 'introducing student profiling', 'training principals to become instructional leaders'. This is a very imposing list of planned activities which must clearly require huge sums of money.

The CEO concludes by listing what is being done in physical access, training plans, and the various other interventions both planned and ongoing.

How much has Curriculum Featured in the Establishment of USE in the OECS?

It is relatively early days in this thrust towards USE, and any critique of the process needs more research and assessment. However, there are clear indications that the curriculum aspect seems not to have the merit it deserves.

Hinds (2007) argues that USE is part of 'the framework, of equality of opportunity in education, and this consists of three main components; access, quality, reward (p. 9).' This classification forms a good framework through which an assessment of the USE programme might proceed.

There is little doubt that although the component of access is not complete in all countries, they have attempted to put in place the legislative and regulatory instruments. By and large, space has been made available either through 'temporary' accommodation or by transforming other buildings into secondary facilities. For example in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the former Multipurpose Centres have been upgraded to provide additional secondary spaces. Ramps and other physical amenities for the challenged students have been provided in many cases.

There is a body of opinion which believes that USE is too heavily skewed towards physical access. Clearly, this is most easily seen. A ramp here, a classroom or two there could be easily identified as being signs that all students are now in secondary schools. Policy makers have to boast about such visible signs. The other side of providing physical access is that it is usually expensive. To a sub-region which is financially strapped this could present an obstacle. Every effort needs to be made to provide facilities which are comfortable and conducive to learning.

So the physical access is taken care of, and the hundreds and thousands of mixed ability students are in place. What should we teach them is the next question. Remember that there would be high fliers, average students and low achievers all together in the secondary system.

This brings us to the aspect of curriculum offerings, and quality curriculum offerings at that. It is inconceivable that one set of curriculum materials, one teaching strategy, one method of assessment will provide adequate exposure for all, including those with literacy and numeracy challenges, and those with physical challenges. What happens to the student who cannot cope? Do we ask him or her to repeat as is done in some countries? Or do we provide remediation as is touted as the solution in other countries? Both of these possible solutions have serious economic, sociological and psychological ramifications.

The point about the high cost of USE has already been made when looking at access. It is also critical when looking at providing quality curriculum experiences for all students. Most countries have been wrestling with this challenge with varying degrees of success. Overall however, the feeling is that some countries this is uphill an impossible battle.

Then there are the sociological and psychological dimensions to the likely failure of those who are not fully prepared for secondary education. No doubt it could lead to a feeling of disappointment, and the expectation of advancement blunted by a system which never seems to understand the needs and aspirations of each student. The promise of bread must never be fulfilled by provision of stone (Figueroa, 1971). No student should live with the perennial feeling of being an underachiever.

It is not only in USE that curriculum planning and implementation are taken for granted. They are treated as being not too essential at all levels of education. The grand ideas about curriculum in some of the excerpts examined in the early part of this paper, seem to remain on paper, and find no life, no enactment in the classroom setting. Laudable pronouncements by policy makers are not always followed by concrete and visible action.

Here is the picture which is painted by some practitioners who work in the USE system on a daily basis. All students whether they achieved 5 percent or 95 percent on the Common Entrance Examination enter the secondary system. Some lack the appropriate reading, writing and numeracy skills, others have mastered all these and more. All these students, their parents, and the community have some level of expectation. They are then exposed to curriculum offerings designed for students in all secondary schools. The curriculum offerings are taught by untrained teachers who lack the ability to provide differentiated instruction. In a short time these teachers 'assess' those who will achieve and those who will not, and the labelling and stigmatization begins. Students gain promotion to make room for those being enrolled in the next year. This promotion may be done despite the deficiencies which may or may not have been diagnosed. Remediation is either skeletal at best, or not available at all. The cycle goes on.

Then one day there is the realization that CXC examinations are approaching. This is terribly important because the school's status is at stake. Certain questions are now being posed: Which students will write the examinations? What is the likely future for those who in the wisdom of the school, are not up to standard? What opportunities are there for lifelong learning in the underachievers' future? What opportunities are there for lifelong learning in the overachievers' future? There is a feeling that answers to the last three questions have

not yet been conceptualized or planned. These questions lead us into the third component of Hinds' (2007) definition of 'equality of opportunity in education' - reward.

Perhaps it is too early to assess progress on this component. However, there are some initiatives that have been implemented. For example there is the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) which should provide certification for students involved in TVET. This certificate will be awarded by CXC. There is also the development by CXC of a certificate which would recognize students who for one reason or another have not or cannot succeed in their CSEC examinations. This certificate will surely be useful to such a student not only from the point of view of enhancing self-esteem, but possibly in the search for employment.

Some Possible Curriculum Structures and Programmes for Overcoming Apparent Challenges in Universal Secondary Education

Most writers on USE have emphasized the need for structured and sustained remedial education programmes. These programmes should improve proficiency in literacy and numeracy, but not only these two areas. Science and technology education needs immediate attention and serious development in order that we may survive in a globalized world. There are also other disciplines and subjects which are inadequately handled. These may be the result of the enormity of the task that teachers and administrators of the new USE face.

Besides remediation which many countries have been attempting to provide, there are certain modalities and structures which may be beneficial. These include: (1) using an integrated curriculum; (2) consciously planning to cater to diversity in the classroom; (3) implementing alternative curricula; (4) using an integrated curriculum infusing a constructivist philosophy into curricula and (5) incorporating cooperative learning.

Using an Integrated Curriculum

Hinds (2007) suggests that the present position on remediation may not be entirely useful, 'without additional support' (p. 13). He argues that maybe there is 'the need to chart a way of dealing with perceived student learning inadequacies before they become deep-rooted in the primary school system' (p. 13). Hinds also submits that 'alternative combinations of teacher allocation and subject groupings' for new entrants, may overcome the obvious trauma which transition to secondary school normally causes. He sees 'the grouping of curriculum areas and teachers' as having two possible advantages:

> 'There will be greater practical integration of knowledge, leading to the formation of more holistic conceptual knowledge on the part of students; the second result will be that students will become more acquainted with a fewer teachers with a (sic) fewer teachers with whom they may be able to form closer bonds, reducing the development of alienation' (p. 14).

There is a very strong case for integration at the lower secondary level which is built on reasons other than those above.   Relan and Kimpston (1991) see the necessity for subject/ discipline specialization as a direct result of the advent of the industrial revolution, but argue that that age has long gone. They postulate that 'students are patently unmotivated with academics, and have failed to embody a holistic view of the world.' (p. 31). The argument for integration they make is buttressed by ideas such as the need for providing solutions to dynamic societal problems; the ever increasing changes in society; the exponential growth of knowledge; presentation of a unified view of learning. They conclude that:

> 'With such integration, the acquisition of vital learning skills would be enhanced; and content will be more relevant to students, making them independent, proactive learners'.

It seems that these arguments coincide with the purposes of USE enunciated by the framers of the USE programme in the OECS.

If it is accepted that curriculum integration is valuable, then examining approaches for achieving such integration is worthwhile. Drake & Burns (2004) have developed a Table which compares three different approaches to curriculum integration. This gives a road map which a teacher may use to decide on which is most suitable to his or her situation.

These three approaches are:

1. Multidisciplinary approach for which standards of the disciplines are organised around a theme

2. Interdisciplinary approach where interdisciplinary skills and concepts are embedded in disciplinary standards

3. Transdisciplinary approach which has real-life context and student questions as the organising centre (Drakes & Burns, 2004, p. 17).

For each approach, the writers also explore areas such as how knowledge is conceptualized, the role of individual disciplines, the role of the teacher (facilitator vs. specialist) and assessment.

Another approach to integration was proposed by Drake (1998) in which she suggests a curriculum integration along a continuum from 'Traditional to Transdisciplinary'. Between the two extremes are: Fusion, within one subject, Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary'.

Consciously Planning to Cater to Diversity in the Classroom

Another useful strategy for instruction in USE classroom is to appreciate the diversity present in each classroom, and striving to design an inclusive classroom. Gregory and Chapman (2002) list a set of factors which force us to constantly change classrooms. Some of these challenging situations they list as:

- 'targeted expectations set by districts, states and nations'

- 'High expectations for all students; no longer can we leave children behind and just "spray and pray" for success'.

- Multicultural diversity: 'limited communication skills or competencies in English and different levels of multiple intelligence'.

- 'New cognitive research on human learning'.

- 'Rapid societal and technological change: political and economic revolutions that influence what and how learning takes place' (p. xi).

These ideas mirror in a most uncanny way some of the purposes, philosophy and policy embedded in the USE reform. Gregory and Chapman (2002) recommend a set of tools and strategies for creating an inclusive classroom for diverse learners.

These are presented under six headings:
1.   Climate (safe, nurturing, stimulating, collaborative);
2.   Knowing the learner (e.g. learning styles, multiple intelligences);
3.   Assessing the learner (using formal and informal means);
4.   Adjustable assignments (different configurations including alone, in pairs and in small groups);
5.   Instructional strategies (e.g. cooperative learning groups);
6.   Curriculum approaches (e.g. centres, projects, problem-based).

Implementing Alternative Curricula

Suggestions of developing an alternative curriculum sometimes attract very negative feelings. However, there is research which indicates that the strategy is very useful for opening minds.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on June 16, 2003 reported research which shows that the alternative curriculum produces improvements in some students.
> 'A three-year experiment with the RSA (Royal Society for Encouragement of Arts) "Opening Minds" curriculum is claimed to have shown improved student performance across all national curriculum areas'.

The project director reports that there was the 'merging' of English, business and foreign languages. It was also discovered that 'students were more confident, better at team-work, better motivated and better behaved. Those who had been identified as "problem students" by their primary schools were showing big improvements in secondary schools'.

Hinds (2007, p.17) also examines the possibility of using authentic learning in USE. 'One view of authentic learning advocates the structuring of learning activities to mirror activities in the real world - a version of the situated learning idea'.

Braund & Reiss (2006) postulate that a more authentic science curriculum, including out-of-school learning, as a way of stemming the progressive decline in attitudes towards science in the secondary school. The authors build their thesis on the decline in number of students taking science, both at secondary and tertiary levels.

'For some time, science educators expressed concerns that current provisions in schools (especially at age 14 - 16 years) is often too boring, irrelevant, and outdated; designed only to educate a minority of future scientists, rather than equipping the majority with the scientific understanding, reasoning, and literacy they require to engage as citizens in the twenty-first century' (p. 1373 - 1374).

The authors see the contribution of out-of-school activities to authentic learning, in order to improve learning of science:

1.   Improved development and integration of concepts
2.   Extended and authentic practical work
3.   Access to rare materials and to "big" science
4.   Attitudes to school science: stimulating further learning
5.   Social outcomes collaborative work and responsibility for learning.

These contributions, although found in science learning, are transferable to education generally. Clearly, they will facilitate learning in USE, especially where some students would prefer not to be in a boring school.

Infusing a Constructivist Philosophy into Curricula

No examination of effective curriculum and instruction in the 21st century would be complete without looking at constructivism.

Slavin (1994) defines constructivism as:

'a view of cognitive development as a process in which children actively build systems of meaning and understanding of reality through their experiences and interactions. In this view, children actively construct knowledge by continually assimilating and accommodating new information' (p. 43).

Brooks, Driver and Johnson (1989) are quite emphatic that 'what is learned in any new situation depends as much on the new ideas the learner brings to the situations as on the learning situation itself; learning is a result of an interaction, between new situations and present knowledge' (p. 76).

Brooks and Brooks (1993) outline the following characteristics in instruction which 'encourage active construction of meaning':

- They free students from the dreariness of fact-driven curriculum and allow them to focus on large ideas.
- They place in students' hands the exhilarating power to follow trails of interest, to make connections, to reformulate ideas, and to reach unique conclusions.
- They share with students the important message that the world is a complex place in which multiple perspectives exist and truth is often a matter of interpretation.
- They acknowledge that learning, and the processes of assessing learning, are, at best, elusive and messy endeavours that are not easily managed. (p. 22).

These authors set out 5 guiding principles of constructivism
- Posing problems of emerging relevance to students
- Structuring learning around primary concepts: the quest for essence
- Seeking and valuing students' points of view
- Adapting curriculum to address students' suppositions
- Assessing student learning in the context of teaching

Trowbridge and Bybee (1990) have developed the 5 - E cycle for constructivist teaching/ learning. This cycle consists of:

1.	Engagement:	initial introduction to the instructional task designed to capture attention, stimulate interest and establish links between past and present knowledge.
2.	Exploration:	Students are provided with a common base of experience within the current concepts, processes, skills may be identified and developed.
3.	Explanation:	Students demonstrate their conceptual understanding, process skills or behaviours. The teacher may introduce a conceptor skill at this phase.
4.	Elaboration:	Students' conceptual understanding is challenged and extended through new experiences, the students develop a longer and broader understanding, more information and adequate skills.

5.   Evaluation: Students' assess their understanding and abilities and teachers evaluate student process towards achieving the educational objectives.

Planning for each phase involves determining what students and teachers will do, as well as the nature of the learning activities, as well as how learning will occur.

Incorporating Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning groups are beneficial to USE both to bring about learning and to facilitate social interdependence.

> 'Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups that allows students to work together to maximize their own and each other's learning' (Johnson, Johnson and Holubec 1994, p. 3).

These authors recommend that for cooperation to work well, there are 5 essential components - positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, group processing. A brief description of the contribution each component makes to the success of cooperative learning is given below   (Figure 2).

The Need for Teacher and Principal Development to Improve Implementation Prospects in USE

As is the case in implementation of any other innovation or reform, teacher education and development is critical. So also is the enhancement of management and supervisory skills. Some OECS countries have made commendable attempts at providing such experiences but the enormity of the challenges faced in USE require much more, and over longer periods of time.

Figure 2
Essential Components of Cooperative Learning
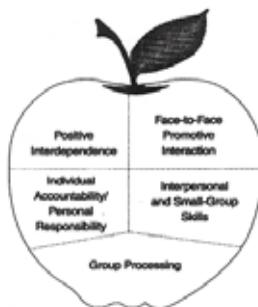
Component	Brief Description
Positive interdependence	The group members understand that none of them succeeds unless they all do

Promotive interaction	The group members promote each other's success by sharing resources, helping, encouraging, supporting each other's efforts as they work together.
Individual accountability	The group members must be personally accountable for their share of the work and must understand that this will be taken into account when the group's efforts are being assessed.
Interpersonal and small group skills	The group members must be deliberately instructed in social skills for example communication and conflict resolution.
Group processing	The group members must be able to discuss their progress as well as maintain effective working relationships as they move towards achieving their goals.

All reports on the progress of USE indicate the absolute necessity for such enrichment activities.

Miller, Thomas and Jules (2000), in an assessment of implementation of FFF, report that the training programmes for secondary school principals and secondary school teachers were fully implemented on only a few countries:

> 'Component 23 (i) suggested establishing training programmes for secondary school principals. Dominica had plans in place. British Virgin Islands, Dominica and Montserrat had taken limited action... St. Kitts and Nevis reported that they had fully implemented this component' (p. 27).

> 'Component 23 (ii) suggested establishing comprehensive training programmes for secondary school teachers ... Anguilla, BVI and Dominica reported taking limited action. Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines reported taking substantial action while St. Kitts and Nevis reported that they had fully implemented this component'.

The UNESCO/CARICOM Teacher Education (p. 27) Study, 1989, quoted by Hinds (2007) summarizes the need for teacher development thus:

> 'Universal secondary education should not be interpreted simply to mean a place in a secondary school for every child who has attained the appropriate age. It should mean quality education provided by suitably qualified teachers to every child of secondary school age, regardless of ability, means, race or creed' (p. 16).

The Study concludes that 'the goal will not be achieved if teachers are not trained to function with ease in different situations and with different types of learners' (p.16).

The Dominica Discussion Paper mentioned earlier, notes the importance of teacher education 'to deal with back log of untrained teacher (sic) in the system'. A Ministry of Education Report (n.d.) entitled 'Quality of Education and the Key Role of Teachers', acknowledges that" 'we also understand that to achieve quality in education it is important to improve the working conditions of teachers, ... and improve their competency in curriculum delivery'.

Andrew (2003) also points to the criticisms of USE by parents, teachers, Ministry of Education personnel and other government agencies, on the grounds of the apparent lack of quality. He suggested that the way forward lies 'through improving the status and skills of teachers' (p. 33). He advises that the following among others, are necessary for the professional development (p. 36):

- Establish a national co-ordinating unit - a Joint Board of Teacher Education - to oversee teachers' professional development.

- Develop a cadre of well-trained, professionally developed teachers and school administrators.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines' CEO also emphasizes the need for effective teacher development to undergird USE. Her ideas have been examined earlier.

How Well is USE Working in the OECS?

There is a dearth of information based on empirical data outlining the progress or otherwise of the reform. Anecdotal reports are, however, extremely plentiful. This is a sad indictment on a reform that is receiving huge financial inputs, and very wide media coverage. The problem is that, like many other such programmes, there is a reluctance, indeed a fear, of assessment and evaluation.

The importance of effective monitoring and evaluation cannot be overemphasized. One wonders why the processes are so rare in Caribbean educational and curriculum reforms. Perhaps a few words from those who have been involved in reform over the last 25 years would help to substantiate the importance of these processes.

Nicholls (1983) articulates very well the importance of implementation and evaluation.

> 'Before and during the process of implementation evidence needs to be collected to enable teachers to make a judgement about the extent of the improvement, if any. It is unlikely that an innovation of any complexity will be all good or all bad... Evaluation can provide evidence on which to make judgements about the use of these resources' (p. 78).

Curriculum and programme evaluation are important for a variety of reasons. With curriculum activity comes the demand that the results of actions be identified, communicated and addressed where necessary. Consumers want evidence as to the effectiveness of programmes.

'Assessment of the materials, content and teaching methods used, as well as the cost of new programmes and whether they are effective, are required ... Evaluation data allow for revising, comparing, maintaining or discontinuing the programme'. (OECS/UWI/DFIDC Primary Teachers Educational Project: Module 6: Professional Upgrading of Trained Teachers - Issues in Curriculum Innovations).

Conclusion and the Way Forward

There is no doubt that the thrust for Universal Secondary Education in the OECS is a laudable goal. Not to aim for this would leave the sub-region behind the rest of the world. However, it cannot be entirely fashioned on access only. This would result in wastage of resources, frustration for students, parents, teachers and the community. Perhaps even more disastrous to its implementation is if it appears that policy makers are only posturing -- all form and little substance.

The provision of a quality education undergirded by sound philosophy, effective materials, well-qualified teachers and administrators are absolutely essential. Also critical are the types of rewards, both external and internal, since they help in raising motivation to succeed, enhancing self-esteem, and produce the wherewithal to become productive citizens in today's world. Every modern nation, in keeping with the fundamental right to education, cannot aim for anything less.

Judging from the outline and analysis given in this paper, it is quite clear that what are aims and objectives of USE. Let it be abundantly clear that there is tremendous wastage of human talent which USE, if properly conceptualized and effectively delivered, should eliminate. In the absence of these considerations of planning and implementation many critical questions about sustainability arise.

All countries involved in the initiation of USE must look critically at what goes on in the curriculum as presently conceived. Failure to do this will lead to frustration and discontent in the students, parents and community as a whole.

There is need to monitor the programmes, assess the results and evaluate the reform. Only then would everyone be sure about effectiveness, and be in a position to modify and refine to make this important initiative more effective.

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The Caribbean Examinations Council: Leading and Facilitating Transformation in Secondary Education

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Abstract

The article discusses ways in which the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) contributed to the transformation of the Caribbean secondary education system. The contribution of the CXC to the efforts made in the region to move towards universal secondary education is highlighted. The article notes the ways in which the Council helped to assure both the relevance and the quality of secondary education in the region even as it helped to broaden access. It also discusses the broadening of opportunities by the Council for secondary school graduates to pursue tertiary education.

Keywords: Caribbean Examinations Council; educational; transformation; universal secondary education

Introduction

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) was established to support a new direction in education that reflected a Caribbean ethos. Up to the 1960s, the secondary education system in the region was dominated by a curriculum based on outcomes defined in examinations of British boards. The CXC was instrumental in bringing about a transformation in the secondary education system that links the curriculum of secondary schools to outcomes defined in regional examinations. As part of the process, the CXC has facilitated the broadening of access to quality secondary education relevant to the needs of the Caribbean and, in so doing, has made a significant contribution to the movement in the region towards universal secondary education.

The *Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Examinations Council* became effective in April 1972. The Council now has 16 Participating Territories: Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In addition, the Council currently offers examination services to the Dutch-speaking territories of Suriname, Saba and St. Maarten (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1974; 1978).

Broadening Access

From its inception, the CXC was concerned about addressing the needs of a larger proportion of secondary school candidates than the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O' Level) examinations it sought to replace. The CXC sought to move away from an exclusionary approach to education to an inclusionary approach (Griffith, 1999). It sought to assist the region in moving towards the provision of quality secondary education for all by developing courses of study and related examinations which defined knowledge and skills that students completing secondary school should have.

In seeking to optimise its responsiveness to the needs of a larger proportion of secondary school students, the Council included in its offerings, not only the traditional academic or science and humanities subjects, but also a range of technical and vocational subjects. These offerings now include 34 subjects clustered in the areas of Agriculture, Business Education, Home Economics, Humanities, Industrial Technology, Information Technology, Modern Languages, Science and Mathematics, and Visual and Performing Arts (see CXC, 2007).

An important consideration in catering to the needs of a wider proportion of secondary school students was the offer of the CSEC examinations under three different schemes - General Proficiency, Basic Proficiency and Technical Proficiency. Together, these three Proficiencies were designed to provide greater flexibility for students in defining a programme of study at the upper secondary level in keeping with their interests and abilities. The typical CXC candidate was expected to offer a combination of subjects under two or three schemes.

The Council explained that all three schemes are intended primarily for candidates who have completed five years of secondary education. According to the Council, a General Proficiency syllabus and examination requires "a sufficient breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding to allow candidates who respond well to undertake study of the specific subject of examination beyond the fifth year of secondary school" (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1991, p. 5).

The General Proficiency, which came to be accepted as the gold standard of secondary school achievement in the region, is the primary scheme under which subjects are offered by the Council. In the May-June 2007 examination, 31 subjects were offered under this scheme (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

In seeking to distinguish the Basic Proficiency from the General Proficiency, the Council explained that a Basic Proficiency syllabus and examination caters to the needs of candidates who may not subsequently pursue further studies in areas related to the subject. The Basic Proficiency was designed to make cognitive demands on candidates that were different from those made by the General Proficiency (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1991). In other words, the Basic Proficiency, like the General Proficiency, requires the completion of five years of secondary education. It appears, however, that the intention was to have a scheme that was less demanding than the General Proficiency, but this was not explicitly stated. During the initial years of the CSEC examinations, most subjects were offered at the Basic Proficiency as an alternative to General Proficiency. However, the response of stakeholders

to the Basic Proficiency was less enthusiastic than the CXC had anticipated and, as a result of the declining demand for the Basic Proficiency, the Council was forced to undertake a gradual phasing out of this scheme. In the May-June 2007 examination, only three subjects were offered under that scheme - English A, Mathematics and Social Studies (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

According to the Council, a Technical Proficiency syllabus and examination caters to "those candidates who require a greater practical orientation and preparation for further technical studies or pro-technician training than offered in a subject in the same area at General Proficiency" (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1991, p.6). Given the special purpose of Technical Proficiency, only a few subjects have been developed under this scheme and the small number - four subjects - offered in the May-June 2007 examination (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007) is representative of the number of subjects generally offered, annually, under the scheme over the last few years.

The Technical Proficiency scheme has a more practical orientation compared with the General and Basic Proficiency schemes which have a more academic orientation. This scheme had a better response from stakeholders. This may be attributed to the practical work-related technical skills that it sought to develop in response to the demands of the job market in the region.

The introduction of three schemes under a single examination was a bold initiative to cater to a wider proportion of the secondary school population. Such a radical departure from the O' Levels was perhaps overambitious and the marketing effort that was needed to educate the wider public and critical stakeholders about the three schemes being offered under a single examination, intended for the same cohort of students, seems to have been inadequate. Moreover, the magnitude of classroom reform that was needed to allow students to be prepared for a mix of Proficiencies may not have been given adequate attention.

In addition, it was challenging for the stakeholders in the region to distinguish between the Basic Proficiency and the General Proficiency, in particular. The Council stringently avoided making any statement which would suggest that the two schemes targeted different levels of achievement in a subject and, instead, sought to present the Basic Proficiency as making cognitive demands that were different from those made by the General Proficiency. This may have confused rather than clarified the distinction between the two Proficiencies.

Hindsight suggests that it would have been better to present the Basic Proficiency as a scheme that made a different level of demand from that of the General Proficiency. The linking of these two schemes through at least a common paper or common set of examination questions might also have been avoided. This would have allowed for a clearer distinction between the Basic Proficiency and the General Proficiency schemes.

The level of obfuscation of the difference between the two schemes must have contributed to the Basic Proficiency being ignored by stakeholders in favour of the better defined, gold standard of achievement - the General Proficiency. Under the circumstances, it was necessary

to address the general lack of interest in the Basic Proficiency, reflected in small and declining candidate entries in the vast majority of the CXC offerings under that scheme.

Beyond Basic Proficiency: A Response to Universal Secondary Education

Perhaps the impetus for action in response to the concerns about the Basic Proficiency scheme came from the deliberations of the Ministers of Education of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) about a programme and certification that would address the needs of all secondary school students. In a meeting of May 1996, the Standing Committee of Ministers of Education urged that, in light of the continuing decline of entries for examinations offered under the Basic Proficiency scheme, the CXC should review the scheme and its capacity to serve the clientele for which it was designed. The Standing Committee further noted that a number of territories proposed to develop National School-Leaving examinations and recommended that the Council should undertake research to assist the territories in the following ways:

(i) identifying the needs to be addressed for the cohort leaving secondary school without any certification; and

(ii) ensuring the validity of any examination and certification that would be offered to that cohort (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1998).

In response, the Council undertook a comprehensive study of the Basic Proficiency which, *inter alia*, sought to:

(i) review the objectives and content of the CXC Basic Proficiency examination and assess its usefulness as measures of students' performance in secondary schools and as adequate qualifications for employment; and

(ii) determine the assessment needs of secondary school students that still needed to be addressed in the Caribbean Community countries (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1998).

The pertinent findings of this study, based on a sampling of the perspectives of teachers, students, high school graduates, parents and employers, may be summarized as follows:

(i) the lack of information among parents and employers about Basic Proficiency has had a damaging effect on the status of the examination;

(ii) nearly two-thirds of parents surveyed knew little or nothing about Basic Proficiency and were not aware of the differences and similarities between the Basic Proficiency and General Proficiency schemes; however 87 percent of them stated that they would not recommend Basic Proficiency as an acceptable option for their children;

(iii) as many as 90 percent of employers admitted to rejecting Basic Proficiency qualifications, primarily because of the lack of information about the merits of the examination;

(iv) the relationship between Basic and General Proficiency was not clear to stakeholders and Basic Proficiency was often regarded as a diluted version of the General Proficiency;

(v) employers were of the view that CXC should seek to develop an examination which responded to the attitudes, values, behaviours and language skills needed for the work force; and

(vi) a significant proportion of students felt that the Council should dispense with Basic Proficiency altogether (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1998).

It was evident that the Basic Proficiency had lost its value as a creditable examination. It was equally evident that employers, in particular, would like another programme and certification that responded to the attitudes, values, behaviours and language skills needed for the work force.

Even as the Basic Proficiency study was being undertaken, the 1997 CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government established the target of achieving universal secondary education by 2005 and the enrolment of 15 percent of the post-secondary cohort in tertiary education programmes by that time (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 1997). The targeted achievement of universal secondary presented a significant challenge to the region. As Bernard (2004) aptly puts it:

> Several challenges arise out of this development, the starkest being that of addressing a far wider range of abilities at secondary level than was the case when a limited number of places were allocated on merit…. A parallel challenge is that of developing alternative curricular options and providing credentialing of skills for the full range of abilities, interests and aptitudes (p. 107).

In grappling with ways of responding to the curriculum and assessment challenges of universal secondary education, the countries in the region continued to rely on the CXC for leadership in defining a programme of study and examinations that would complement its CSEC General Proficiency and Technical Proficiency offerings and meet the needs of secondary education for all. This led the CXC to develop the recently introduced Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC).

The development of the CCSLC responded to the dual and related need for an alternative to the Basic Proficiency and for a programme and certification that support the universal secondary education thrust of the region. The CCSLC was therefore another initiative of the CXC to respond to the educational transformation needs of the region. It was evident that not all students would be able to complete, within their five-year period of secondary education,

courses of study and examinations for the two CSEC schemes of General Proficiency and Technical Proficiency which were highly valued by stakeholders in the region. However, all secondary school students needed to acquire certain essential knowledge and skills that would prepare them for life after secondary school and provide them with appropriate certification of their accomplishments. The CCSLC was designed to provide secondary students with the competencies that would serve as a foundation for more advanced studies, the world of work and life as a citizen of the region (Caribbean Examinations Council, n.d.).

The implementation of the CCSLC marks a new level of collaboration between the Council and its member countries. Whereas other certification is conferred solely by the CXC, the CCSLC certification is jointly conferred by the CXC and the local Ministry of Education of participating countries.

In order to satisfy the requirements for the certificate, all students must satisfactorily complete, within a three year period, two core subjects, English and Mathematics, and three electives. These electives are permitted from a wide range of subject offerings that include:

(i)   CXC subjects developed specifically for the CCSLC programme;

(ii) CSEC Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Business Studies subjects;

(iii) CSEC Creative and Expressive Arts subjects;

(iv) TVET regional Level I programmes;

(v)   TVET and other programmes certified by other boards; and

(vi) Locally developed enrichment programmes (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

It should be noted that for the CSEC offerings mentioned at (ii) and (iii) above, a Grade IV or higher is required. In other words, students are given credit for a grade that is one grade lower than that generally accepted as a satisfactory level of attainment for a student pursuing a CSEC certification. The CCSLC is relatively new and has only had its first examination in May-June 2007. It may be too early to make a proper assessment of the future of this examination. However, based on the responses of students to a survey conducted by this researcher with a sample of students in Jamaica, it is clear that the CCSLC is viewed by them in a positive light. It is anticipated that the CCSLC will do as well as the CSEC General Proficiency. The CCSLC was designed to articulate with the CSEC, but the provision made in the certification for credit to be given for a CSEC Grade IV (usually excluded in considering satisfactory performance in a CSEC examination) suggests that it is being cast at a level below that of CSEC and may, in fact, be viewed as a pre-CSEC programme of study and examination.

However, in light of the experience with the Basic Proficiency, the need for an extensive and effective public education and marketing programme for the CCSLC is essential for the success of this new offering. The preponderance of the findings of the aforementioned study of the Basic Proficiency conducted by the CXC pointed to the lack of adequate information by stakeholders as an important reason for the demise of that CSEC offering (Caribbean Examinations Council, 1998). It seems that the Council has taken these findings into account and has undertaken an extensive marketing and promotion exercise for the CCSLC that has so far involved:

(i)   official launch of the examination in several territories;

(ii) meetings with stakeholders, including policymakers, education officials, teachers and other educators, employers, parents and students;

(iii) participation in media interviews and call-in programmes; and

(iii) wide distribution of flyers and posters as well as published articles on the examination (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

It appears that the stage is well set for a successful CCSLC that avoids the limitations noted for the Basic Proficiency and that responds well to the provision of a programme and certification for universal secondary education.

Providing Access to the Out-of-School Population

Apart from catering to the in-school population, the CXC seeks to broaden access to secondary education by offering its examinations to out-of-school or private candidates. Special provisions are made, where necessary, for private candidates to take an alternative paper to the School Based Assessment that is required in all but a few CXC subjects.

Most CSEC subjects are available to private candidates. The CXC will need to provide early opportunities for the CCSLC to be accessed by the out-of-school population as well. This is particularly important, given the usefulness of that programme and examination for the improvement of general education, for potential advancement in the work force and for accessing opportunities for further education and training.

By offering its examinations to out-of-school candidates, the CXC provides the opportunity for a wider population of Caribbean citizens to pursue courses of study leading to the satisfactory completion of secondary education. Candidates are able to undertake self-study, obtain part-time tuition or pursue various forms of distance learning, and obtain secondary school qualifications that provide them with benefits that parallel those obtained by students enrolled at a full-time institution.

In addition to the May/June sitting of the CSEC examinations, the Council offers a January sitting in a limited number of subjects. In January 2007, the CXC offered 12 CSEC subjects

(Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007). The January sitting is intended to provide opportunities for an early re-sitting of the examinations by those candidates who, for a variety of reasons, may wish to repeat the examination to seek a better grade. It also provides another opportunity for private candidates to take the CXC examinations. It may be too early to expect that a January sitting of the new CCSLC would have been initiated. However, a January sitting of this examination would enhance the efforts of the Council to extend the opportunity to a larger number of candidates to pursue and complete a secondary programme and certification that provides skills for life, the job market and entry into programmes of further education and training.

Improving Relevance

Relevance of the secondary education provided to students is an important complement to the broadening of access to secondary education. One of the principal purposes of establishing the CXC was to replace the examinations of overseas examination boards with indigenous secondary school examinations of more relevance to the needs of the Caribbean (Griffith, 1981). In developing syllabuses for its examinations, the CXC followed procedures that were designed to ensure that the courses of study they comprise were relevant to the needs and circumstances of Caribbean students and to the social and economic development needs of the region.

Every CXC subject has a detailed syllabus. This syllabus provides guidance to teachers and students for the related course of study and examinations. It tells what the rationale is for offering the subject, provides the general aims of the syllabus, gives the general objectives and the specific objectives that students must satisfy, outlines the content to be covered and explains the evaluation procedures. In most cases, the syllabus also provides special notes for the further guidance of the teacher (see Griffith, 2001, for further elaboration).

The CXC syllabus development process is initiated with an assessment of the demand for the subject, following a request from one or more participating countries or special interest groups for an examination in the subject. If the results of the assessment suggest that there is sufficient demand for the subject, the CXC appoints a Panel of specialists to undertake the development of an appropriate syllabus.

A subject Panel is made up of five to six specialists drawn from various CXC Participating Territories. The Panel comprises teachers who are qualified to teach the subject at the secondary level, specialists drawn from the tertiary institutions of the region, including universities, and practitioners in the field. In developing a subject syllabus, the Panel receives technical guidance from a curriculum development specialist from the CXC Syllabus Development Unit and an assessment specialist from the CXC Measurement and Evaluation Division.

Territorial spread is an important consideration in selecting members of the Panel to develop a syllabus. The right complement of knowledge, skills and experience must, therefore, be found in conjunction with satisfactory territorial representation. The territorial representation is important to ensure that the peculiarities of the countries served by the Council are taken

into account in developing the syllabus. The inclusion of practitioners who are working in the field covered by the syllabus is particularly important for subjects that target the development of employable skills. These include technical and business subjects.

A syllabus may take up to two years to develop, depending on the complexity of the issues to be addressed. The process is well documented by Griffith (2002) and Stephens (2004). In her article on *Formative Approaches to Constructing Syllabuses for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations,* Stephens emphasises the consultative and iterative processes involved in the development of a CXC syllabus.

The development of a syllabus normally involves an initial submission of recommendations to the Sub-Committee of the School Examinations Committee (SUBSEC) that is responsible for overseeing the syllabus development and maintenance work of the CXC. The Sub-Committee comprises representatives of Ministries of Education in the region, some of whom are practising teachers, and representatives of universities of the region. The Chairman of the Council presides over these meetings and the Registrar, Pro-Registrar and Heads of Technical Divisions of the CXC participate in the deliberations. The initial submission to the Sub-Committee includes the name of the subject, the justification for its development, an outline of what is proposed, and the views of teachers and other specialists on the proposals.

If the submissions are accepted, the work of the Panel continues with the development of drafts of the proposed syllabus. Each draft is reviewed by teachers, other subject specialists and relevant employers in the countries served by CXC. The review comments are used by the Panel to refine the drafts and to prepare progress reports for submission to the CXC Sub-Committee.

In the course of its work, the Panel collects and submits, for the consideration of the Sub-Committee, information on the preparedness of the institutions that plan to enter students for the examinations and makes recommendations about the minimum resource requirements that should be met by institutions wishing to prepare students for the examinations. This information is conveyed to the Participating Territories through their representatives on the various committees of the CXC and, more directly, to Ministries of Education through correspondence from the CXC Secretariat. These measures assist in assuring and sustaining the relevance of the CXC syllabuses and examinations to the needs of Caribbean students and to the social and economic development needs of the region even as the Council creates opportunities for wider access to secondary education.

Assuring Quality

Quality is the hallmark of good education. In expanding access to secondary education, the matter of quality cannot be overlooked. Through its CSEC syllabuses, the Council establishes what is expected of students who have satisfactorily completed five years of secondary education with specialised study in the related subjects. The syllabuses of the CCSLC, likewise, establish the skills and competencies that all secondary school leavers should have, irrespective of whether or not they are able to proceed to the CSEC programme within the time available to them in school.

Not only does CXC help, through its syllabuses, to define the expected outcomes of secondary education, it also makes a number of interventions aimed at assuring quality in the education provided in secondary schools in the region. These interventions include teacher training and the development of teacher and student resource materials.

Teacher training is important for the provision of quality education. In emphasizing this point, the World Bank noted that:

> "Improving quality will require countries to deal with a number of issues. First, special attention will have to be paid to the process of teaching and learning. Given the impact that classroom teachers can have on students' attainment… an education policy that highlights the importance of quality teaching – where teachers have the opportunity to regularly upgrade their skills in order to maintain mastery of the subject matter – is likely to bear fruit" (World Bank, 1999, p. 8).

Further, the findings of several studies indicate that quality learning of students is associated with the opportunities available to teachers to participate in content specific pedagogy linked to the new curriculum that they are learning to teach (Brown, Smith & Stein, 1995; Cohen & Hill, 2000; Rickford, 2001; Wiley & Yoon, 1995).

Once a new syllabus has been developed or a comprehensive revision of an existing syllabus undertaken, the CXC organizes workshops to prepare teachers to deal with new or unfamiliar content and to use appropriate pedagogy. Workshops are also routinely held to help teachers treat with areas of difficulty in teaching a syllabus.

Training workshops are undertaken in collaboration with Ministries of Education in the region. Most CXC training programmes utilise specialists with three different kinds of expertise to focus on three interrelated issues: appropriate pedagogy, mastery of subject matter, and awareness and use of proper assessment procedures. These issues are addressed by a team that is invariably made up of a CXC curriculum specialist from the CXC Syllabus Unit, a measurement specialist from the CXC Measurement and Evaluation Division and a subject matter specialist from the subject Panel that helped to develop the syllabus. The Council places high premium on these teacher training workshops for assuring the quality of student preparation in the programmes of study they pursue leading to the related examinations.

The CXC workshops are conducted primarily as regional or Sub-regional activities that involve a number of countries. Occasional territorial workshops are also conducted to respond to specific territorial concerns. Ministries of Education of the CXC Participating Territories are generally expected to conduct their own territorial workshops, using teachers who were trained in the CXC workshops, thus enabling other teachers to benefit from the training provided directly by the Council.

In the CXC teacher training workshops, special attention is given to the requirements of School Based Assessment. The term School Based Assessment has been described as a process where "students as candidates undertake specified assignments during the course of the school year,

under the guidance of the teacher" (Broomes, 1997). School Based Assessment is, therefore, work undertaken by a candidate as part of an examination. However, this work is undertaken as course work under the guidance of the teacher. Such School Based Assessment invariably takes on the characteristics of continuous assessment. This form of assessment is undertaken over a significant part of the period of concentrated work associated with the syllabus for a CSEC or CCSLC subject.

In CXC workshops, teachers are guided to use authentic teaching and assessment in School Based Assessment. They are encouraged to guide students in undertaking projects and tasks that require them to apply what they know and to demonstrate the competencies needed for success in the real world. The objective is to link the classroom experience to the real world requirements. This helps to improve the validity of the learning experience of students and improves the quality of the education provided for the world in which they will live and work.

Apart from workshops, teachers are trained to develop additional skills through their involvement in the marking exercises conducted in July and February for the May/June and January sittings of the CXC examinations. Annually, over 3,000 teachers drawn from countries participating in the CXC examinations, serve as Examiners and Assistant Examiners who mark the CXC papers. They acquire expertise in the development and use of rubrics to guide the marking of student responses. The knowledge, skills and insights that they gain from the marking exercise are often used to train other teachers through professional sessions in their own schools or through national workshops or subject association workshops. Clearly, the training provided by the CXC has a cascading effect in the region.

In addition, the Council undertakes the development of teacher and student resource materials with assistance from regional specialists. Resource persons who prepare these materials are drawn from among members of CXC subject Panels and Examining Committees and work under the guidance of staff of the CXC Syllabus Development Unit. Materials are developed primarily in areas where it may prove challenging for teachers to access resources needed to teach specific areas of a syllabus or where teachers need more extensive pedagogical guidance in teaching a particular area of a syllabus. The materials are made available to schools, teachers and students, as appropriate, at modest cost.

The teacher training activities and the provision of materials are both intended to ensure that students can develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills defined in the CXC syllabuses as essential for quality secondary education in the subject area. The benefits of the CXC inputs into teacher training and materials development have been evident in improvements in student achievement. A review of the student achievement data for selected schools and the participation (or non-participation) of their teachers in CXC workshops, suggest that those schools whose teachers benefit from CXC workshops tend to do better than those that did not. A similar observation is made with respect to the achievement of students when the resource materials developed by CXC are used (Griffith, 2002).

Facilitating Transition from Secondary to Post-Secondary Education

While the principal focus of the CXC has so far been on assisting in the transformation of secondary education, the role it has played in expanding access to post-secondary education is worth noting. The contribution to the transformation of the secondary education system, itself, is providing opportunities for a larger proportion of the secondary school cohort to access post-secondary education and training.

Even as the region, with the help of the Council, had been transforming its secondary education programmes and certification to be more responsive to the needs of Caribbean citizens and countries, it was recognized that a parallel effort was required at the immediate post-secondary level. For several years after the start of the process of transforming the secondary education system through programmes and certification offered in the region, the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A' Level) examinations remained the dominant post-secondary offerings for those who had completed their secondary education and would like to obtain the higher matriculation qualifications required for entry into certain university programmes in the region. It was evident that the continuation of these examinations was incongruous with the reforms that had already been made throughout the region to Caribbeanise all levels of the education system, that is, at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Their replacement was essential to the completion of the transformation of the external examination system that CXC had started with the replacement of the O' Level examinations.

The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) was designed to replace the GCE A' Level examinations. In designing this replacement, CXC maintained the perspective of catering to a wider proportion of the population that had earlier guided its development of the CSEC programme and examinations. CAPE was, therefore, designed as a post-secondary offering that catered to wider interests among those who would like to proceed to post-secondary education and training. It currently offers opportunities for students to pursue programmes of study and certification in the areas of Business Education, Home Economics, Humanities, Industrial Technology, Information Technology, Modern Languages, Science and Mathematics, and Visual Arts.

CAPE offerings are defined in terms of subjects Units, each of which would normally require a year of preparation leading to an examination. Where a subject consists of two Units, a student may, in most instances, opt to take Unit 1 or Unit 2 in the first year and proceed to the second Unit in the next year or in a later year. The CAPE programme allows for both breadth and depth of study. A student pursuing CAPE is able to select a mix of Units of subjects that matches his or her interests and abilities. The scheme provides students with wide options for selecting courses of study to upgrade their knowledge and skills for a particular vocation, or for satisfying the prerequisites for entering into certain university programmes. For the May-June 2007 examinations, the Council offered 25 subjects comprising 47 Units (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

Students completing CAPE courses of study in relevant subjects and Units are often eligible for course exemptions in university programmes. Several schools that once offered programmes up to the CSEC level only, are now providing opportunities for students to remain for one or two more years to pursue a CAPE programme. An increasing number of private candidates are also taking CAPE subjects.

In recognition of the fact that many students may undertake a two-year CAPE programme of study after completing a CSEC programme of study and the need to offer certification that reflected the credits accumulated over the two years, the CXC introduced an Associate Degree based on CAPE credits. The Associate Degree is based on a clustering of the post-secondary CAPE offerings that provide a coherent programme equivalent to a two-year course of study. Students are allowed to accumulate the required credits for the Degree over a period of up to five years.

The Associate Degree is offered in nine areas – Business Studies, Computer Science, Environmental Science, General Studies, Humanities, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Natural Sciences and Technical Studies. The award of the Associate Degree is based on the successful completion of a minimum of seven CAPE Units, which must include Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies (two single-Unit subjects), a number of specialised subjects related to the area of the award and one or more optional subjects. The Associate Degree in Mathematics, for example requires the following:

(i) Caribbean Studies (a 1-Unit subject);
(ii) Communication Studies (a 1-Unit subject);
(iii) Pure Mathematics Unit 1;
(iv) Pure Mathematics Unit 2;
(v) Applied Mathematics (a 1-Unit subject);
(vi) Statistical Analysis (a 1-Unit subject); and
(vii) one other Unit chosen from the offerings in Physics, Computer Science, Information Technology or Chemistry (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2005).

A total of 2,368 candidates were eligible to receive the Associate Degree in 2007, the third year of the award (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2007).

It was anticipated that students completing the Associate Degree would, inter alia, be able to obtain levels of exemptions from related Bachelors Degree programmes offered at universities in the region. Such exemptions, it was hoped, would significantly reduce the time for completion of a Bachelors degree in a related field. Although some progress has been made in securing exemptions, it is evident that more needs to be done to ensure articulation between the CXC Associate Degree and the Bachelors Degree offered by universities in the region. It is necessary to formalise an understanding with these universities that would allow for a seamless movement from the CXC Associate Degree to their Bachelors Degrees so that students may optimise the benefit derived from the credits completed under the Associate Degree.

The CAPE and Associate Degree offerings of the CXC are improving access to post-secondary education for graduates of the secondary education programme. In this regard, CXC has not only built a bridge for secondary school graduates to access tertiary education but, in the process, has also been responding to the critical regional objective established by Heads of Government to increase the proportion of secondary school graduates who gain access to tertiary education (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 1997).

Conclusion

The CXC has made a significant contribution to the expansion of access to secondary education in the region through the CSEC offerings. It has supported the efforts of countries in the region to provide universal secondary education by making adjustments to its offerings to cater, through the CCSLC programme and certification, for the development of knowledge and skills that all secondary school leavers need for life, further education and work in the region. In broadening access to secondary education, the CXC has played the important role of ensuring that programmes and certification provided to secondary school students are of acceptable quality and are relevant to the individual needs of students as well the development needs of the region.

Moreover, through the CAPE and Associate Degree, the CXC has provided an avenue for secondary school graduates to have easier access to tertiary education. This is likely to encourage an increasing proportion of persons in the region to complete a level of secondary education that will enable them to access the more specialised education and training available through these two post-secondary options. There can be no doubt, therefore, that CXC is leading and facilitating the transformation of secondary education in the region.

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Universal Access to Secondary Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

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Abstract

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines universal secondary education (USE), instituted by 2005, was one of the major pillars of the education revolution intended to propel social and economic advancement. Grounded in the philosophy that education was central to the development of human capital, it was recognized that increased access to secondary education would address the issue of equality of opportunity and support the national goal of a university graduate in every household by 2020. A phased model of implementation was adopted. However, policy implementation required extensive support in critical areas such as physical infrastructural development, curriculum review and development, pedagogy, teacher training and the provision of resources. Implementation was fraught with challenges and the impact necessitated alternative interventions. At the same time, the process underscored the need for a holistic approach to unprecedented reform efforts if quality education is the desired goal.

Keywords: education revolution, policy, philosophy, implementation model, grouping, quality, interventions

Introduction

Commencing in the early 1990s and continuing into the first decade of the twenty-first century, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, like other countries in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), implemented several educational initiatives. Those initiatives which spanned curriculum changes to increased teacher training were, in part, instituted under the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP). The initiatives under that project were legitimized by the OECS framework for the harmonisation of educational systems in the sub-region documented in the works "Foundation for the Future" (Miller et al., 1991) and "Pillars for Partnership and Progress" (Miller et al., 2000).

Beyond the collaborative OECS sub-regional efforts, countries within the sub-grouping also embarked on other national educational interventions. Collectively, those efforts, both national and sub-regional, have all contributed to the advancement of education and improvements in the education sector. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, like the other OECS countries,

education is a social objective which is intimately intertwined with the philosophy of human resource development for poverty alleviation and economic progress. At the same time, there is also awareness that the type of education provided by the regional governments, both quantitatively and qualitatively, is determined by the economies of the respective countries.

Educational reform within the sub-region is also guided by agreements at the wider Caribbean Community (CARICOM) level and by international conventions. The characteristics of the ideal Caribbean citizen adopted by the CARICOM Heads of Governments (Jules et al., 2000) established the standards for the desired Caribbean citizen. Internationally, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (2000), the Education for All initiatives led by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the work of UNESCO generally, all direct and shape the focus and content of education globally.

Against the backdrop of poverty alleviation, human resource development, social and economic advancement, and a firm grounding in the existing frameworks and conventions for educational reform, St. Vincent and the Grenadines moved to accelerate educational reform efforts from 2001. The ongoing changes introduced from 2001 constitute what is referred to nationally as the education revolution.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, one of the most significant policy changes following the changing of the guard in the political landscape in 2001 was the introduction of universal secondary education (USE) by 2005. This paper examines the model used, the attendant interventions, the support structures and the ongoing challenges encountered.

Policy

The introduction of USE was a politically driven policy by the governing administration that gave priority to education. The government, grounded in the philosophy of the development of human capital for social and economic progress, saw the need to move beyond the Education for All (EFA) goal of universal primary education by 2015. In the Vincentian context, it was felt that a more relevant and developmental national goal would be universal secondary education. Furthermore, it was recognized that increased access at the secondary level would ensure the likelihood of achieving the national goal of a university graduate in every household by 2020 and contribute towards the development of a modern post-colonial economy.

The government's policy of USE was supported by the report titled *"A Caribbean Education Strategy"* (Jules et al., 2000) which identified access to secondary education as a deficiency within the education sector. Increased access to secondary education was linked to employment and regarded as the foundation for expanding and diversifying education at the tertiary level. Jules, Miller and Armstrong (2000) noted that, most governments needed "to continue to focus on achieving the goal of universal secondary level education" (p. xi). Those authors also observed that increased access should be viewed as a component of a comprehensive reform effort requiring serious attention to the design of physical infrastructure, curriculum expansion and student support services.

The document, "Pillars for Partnership and Progress" (Miller et al., 2000) also presented seven strategies (strategies 32 to 38) to guide the provision of secondary education in the OECS. Essentially, those strategies emphasized universal secondary education to age sixteen; a revised common curriculum for the first three years of secondary education; the use of innovative pedagogical and assessment strategies; the strengthening of foreign language education; emphasis on technology education and the creative and performing arts; improved student support services; establishing greater articulation with the primary and tertiary levels of education; and, providing training for principals and teachers.

All the educational frameworks and conventions outlined in the various documents adopted by the governments within the sub-region pointed to certain basic principles documented in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Central to the principles in that document were the right to education and equality of opportunity for all children. Therefore, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines USE was, on one level, also a means of addressing the issue of equality of opportunity.

Philosophy

The introduction of USE in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was grounded essentially on the philosophy of equity and equality of opportunity for all children across socio-economic boundaries. Beyond the basic tenets of equity and equality of opportunity, USE, it was anticipated, would reduce the gap between the privileged and those socially and economically disadvantaged. However, for the policy to be successfully implemented, other critical interrelated areas such as physical infrastructural development, pedagogy, curriculum review and development, student support services, the training of teachers, the provision of resources, and certification had to be addressed.

A Ministry of Education document titled *"Universal Access to Secondary Education"* (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2005b) proposed the following objectives with regard to USE: the provision of equal opportunities for all children; improving the quality of instruction and educational leadership through training; improving student achievement through a sustained literacy programme; the involvement of all stakeholders in education at the institutional level; and, the expansion and improvement of the student support services programme. Those objectives and, in addition, a review of the secondary schools' curriculum were the major interventions identified to facilitate USE. However, as the phased process progressed and the volume of work required to support USE became obvious, the approach to implementation was found wanting.

Implementation Model

Prior to the implementation of USE in 2005, the government adopted the policy of a phased increase in the number of students entering secondary schools from academic year 2002 - 2003. That approach was facilitated by the government's secondary schools' expansion programme. The demographic changes are captured in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the performance of students by gender on the Common Entrance Examination for the years 2002 to 2007 and Table 2 gives the secondary enrolment for the period 2002 to 2006.

Table 1
Student Performance by Gender on the Common Entrance Examination
2002 – 2007

Year	Male	Female	Total	% Pass Male	% Pass Female	Overall % Pass
2002	1302	1391	2693	31.11	37.89	34.60
2003	1235	1437	2672	40.56	45.99	43.48
2004	1253	1483	2735	31.62	41.40	36.92
2005	1810	1586	3396	25.02	45.58	34.62
2006	1376	1302	2678	35.00	47.50	41.30
2007	1341	1324	2665	49.96	70.31	60.07

Source: Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The data presented in Table 1 show that female students performed better than males over the period 2002 to 2007 with 2005 and 2007 recording significant differences. There was a significant increase in the overall pass rate for 2007 over 2006. Table 2 shows that there was a steady increase in enrolment at the secondary level from 2002 to 2006. Similarly, there was a steady increase in new entrants to Form I for the period 2002 to 2005 with 2005, the year of full implementation of USE, recording the greatest number of new entrants.

Table 2
Secondary Enrolment 2002 – 2006

Year	Male	Female	Total	*New Entrants
2002	3446	4463	7909	1802
2003	3992	4637	8629	1965
2004	4124	5267	9391	2281
2005	4973	5682	10,665	3167
2006	813	6044	11,857	2656

*Form I Entrants
Source: Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The policy for placement in secondary schools was, and still remains, tied to student performance on the Common Entrance Examination. With the introduction of USE, all Grade Six students were to write the Common Entrance Examination and were to be placed in secondary schools. As a basis for placement, prior to writing the Common Entrance Examination, students were asked to indicate six institutions (in order of preference) that they wished to attend.

However, choice of institution had its limitations. The top performers were still placed, on merit, in the two traditionally prestigious schools (one for boys, the other for girls) to fill all available places first, except where top performers chose to attend another school. Then, next in line to be allocated students on merit was a new co-educational urban public secondary institution. The end product was that most sub-urban and rural public secondary schools had entrants assigned who were either at the centre or lower end of the continuum of students meeting the benchmark and those who fell below the benchmark. Geographical location was not a major criterion in the assignment of students except, of course, for those who did not meet the benchmark.

With the introduction of USE, the policy for assigning new entrants to secondary schools raised several questions. Firstly, there was the question of the democratization of the process (Hinds, 2006). Where students were asked to list schools in order of preference, then not even placed in their first or second choice institution, equity and equality, the very tenets of USE were both undermined. Secondly, there was also the question of whether the practice of ranking schools should be made obsolete once USE had been introduced. Thirdly, many students were put at a financial disadvantage, depending on their placement and the cost of transportation incurred. Finally, all schools did not have the same standard or level of

resources (physical, human, equipment, material); hence, there were limitations to curricular choices for some students.

The students entering secondary institutions were to pursue a curriculum in the following core subjects: English, mathematics, science, social studies, a foreign language, and health and family life education. Those were to be complemented by other "enrichment subjects" such as the creative and performing arts, physical education, design and technology, and information technology (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2005).

The phased implementation of USE pointed the government and the Ministry of Education to the many difficulties associated with the process. The following were identified as characteristic of the phased process: inadequacy of the resources provided to meet the needs of the increased intake; an increase in the diversity of abilities and levels of maturity among students; low levels of performance by students who did not meet the benchmark, particularly in literacy and mathematics, and especially among males; a mismatch between the existing curriculum and students' needs; the risk of further marginalization of disadvantaged students; and, further fragmentation of existing curricula (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2005b).

Grouping of New Entrants

The increase in numbers, the diversity in students' abilities and the varying levels of language proficiency in the first forms of the secondary institutions prompted the employment of creative strategies. One frequently used strategy was the separation of the first form cohort into bands by ability. That strategy was employed mainly to achieve homogeneous grouping for instruction. While there were obvious advantages of homogeneous grouping, some teachers observed that psychological and emotional effects manifested themselves in low self-esteem, low morale, a general lack of motivation, and disciplinary problems which were usually more pronounced in lower level bands (Hinds, 2006).

As entrants were placed into bands, it was inevitable that accompanying adjustments had to be made to the time-table. One principal explained that, as students were placed into bands, the curriculum was adjusted to ensure that the lower performing students had more time allocated to remediation. Another strategy employed by that principal was to initiate a cadre of trained persons through a human resource development model to address remediation. One resource person with expertise in remediation was contracted to train young recruits (on the Youth Empowerment Service programme) to facilitate the school's remediation programme.

In another institution, the principal adopted a combination of separation in bands by ability and randomization to group first form entrants. Additionally, there was some measure of differentiation in curriculum offerings to students with literacy challenges and difficulties in mathematics to allow for increased time allocation to English and mathematics instruction.

Physical Expansion

To facilitate the secondary school expansion programme, the government embarked on extensive physical infrastructural development to construct new classroom buildings, refurbish and expand existing institutions, construct new institutions and convert some existing primary institutions into secondary institutions. The expansion of secondary education began in 2002. Buildings were constructed to provide additional classrooms in at least four institutions to accommodate the initial increase of five hundred students (in the phased process) who did not meet the Common Entrance Examination benchmark.

The period leading up to 2005, and beyond, saw the continued expansion of existing institutions and the conversion of at least four primary institutions into secondary institutions. Throughout, there were difficulties associated with meeting completion deadlines and one institution was forced to introduce a shift system when construction work fell behind in 2007. Since 2003, it has been a struggle to provide not only physical space for the new entrants, but also to maximize the use of available space and provide resources to facilitate the diverse needs of students.

The conversion of some primary institutions saw not only the loss of social and cultural artifacts and data, but also the displacement of students. The affected students were forced to find alternative school places in neighbouring communities or further afield. In the absence of research, the psychological, emotional and social impact of those events may never be represented.

Quality and Universal Secondary Education

The implementation of USE has focused attention on quality, including quality assurance. There is always the tendency for quality to be affected once quantity is extended without equivalency in the provision of resources and appropriate supportive mechanisms. At the institutional level, quality is concerned mainly with the instructional process, effective teaching, standards and accountability. The variables related to the instructional process are programme offerings, pedagogical approaches and the availability and use of resources. The diversity in abilities and needs of entrants (occasioned by USE) required careful planning, preparatory changes and expansion in curriculum offerings to respond adequately to quality standards.

Curricular changes for the lower forms of secondary institutions mandated by the Ministry of Education were limited to identifying and specifying the core curriculum areas and the addition of four co-curricular subject areas referred to as enrichment subjects. However, there were no dedicated, accompanying monitoring mechanisms and implementation of the prescribed curriculum was left solely to the institutional heads. Consequently, there were varying degrees of implementation across secondary schools. Some principals have incorporated the prescribed changes, while others have either persisted with the existing curriculum or configured it to suit their particular contexts. Therefore, quality standards vary across secondary institutions.

The ability of the teacher to function effectively in the classroom is critical to student performance and the success of any change effort. In addition to commitment and self efficacy, effective classroom pedagogy is dependent on the use of effective instructional strategies; effective management strategies; and, the use of effective classroom design strategies (Marzano, 2007). Hargreaves (1994) delineates the pivotal role of the teacher in the change process thus:

> The restructuring of schools, the composition of national…curricula, the development of bench-mark assessments – all these things are of little value if they do not take the teacher into account. Teachers don't merely deliver the curriculum. They develop, define it and interpret it too. It is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shape the kind of learning that young people get (p. ix).

The diversity in abilities and needs occasioned by USE placed new demands on teachers for quality instruction. Many teachers did not anticipate the number of entrants with low levels of proficiency in literacy and mathematics, the varying emotional and social needs, and the attendant disciplinary matters. Consequently, many teachers have had difficulty achieving the desired level of performance given the magnitude of the demands.

Table 3 tells the story of the literacy levels of Grade Six students on the National Reading Test, a component of the Common Entrance Examination since 2005. The table shows that for new entrants in 2005 a total of 76% of the students was reading below the Grade Six level. In 2006 and 2007, the figures showed some improvement with 53% and 41%, respectively, reading below the Grade Six level. Despite the appreciable improvement, there were still far too many students reading below the Grade Six level, giving an indication of the challenges confronting teachers and the need for interventions, beginning preferably at the primary level.

The changes and challenges introduced by USE required an accompanying re-conceptualization of teaching and learning. Teachers needed time and support to modify their repertoire of pedagogical strategies and adjust their philosophy of teaching in relation to the theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985), learning styles (Silver & Hanson, 1998) and brain research (Wolfe, 2001) in order to respond to the challenges in the classroom. At the same time, it was anticipated that teachers would explore the connections among the various theories to determine how they could best be utilized in fusion to improve performance. For example, Silver, Strong and Perini (2000) observe that multiple intelligences theory responds to the limitations of learning styles theory and the obverse is true of learning styles theory. Generally, teachers were not prepared for the unprecedented changes.

In the midst of diversity in the changing classrooms, the major challenge for teachers was not only to improve achievement results, but also to engage all students in deep, powerful high-performance learning for understanding (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000) that would empower

them to participate effectively in today's society. At the same time, within the regional context, there was the added responsibility of producing ideal Caribbean citizens. The ideal Caribbean citizen, in addition to the requisite knowledge, skills, values and attitudes identified must be able to think critically, problem solve and construct knowledge. Learning to learn was, therefore, an essential skill to be developed.

Table 3
Reading Levels of Grade 6 Students, 2005 – 2007

Reading Levels	2005		2006		2007	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Grade 6 or above	672	24	1222	47	1549	59
Grade 5	223	8	163	6	93	3
Grade 4	184	6	239	9	132	5
Grade 3	356	12	212	8	205	8
Grade 2	364	13	158	6	185	7
Grade 1	294	10	241	9	199	7
Below Grade 1	766	27	395	15	280	11

Source: Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Many teachers charged with the implementation of USE have continually identified disciplinary problems as a growing challenge. One of the major causes of disciplinary problems among students is a lack of motivation to attend school. A lack of motivation is generally manifested in reluctance by students to invest in their education. Sagor (2003; 2008) notes that motivation is grounded in a rational decision that people make about whether or not they will participate in an activity. There are several psychological factors associated with motivation, for example competence, belonging, usefulness and potency. Unless these psychological factors are addressed in the classroom, motivation may not increase because "students are motivated by their internalized feelings about what they believe will happen in the classroom" (Sagor, 2008, p.4). It follows, then, that classroom management (Cummings,

2000) and the teacher's ability to address disciplinary problems to minimize the loss of instructional time will determine, to some extent, the level of achievement and success of USE.

Another dimension of quality in education is assessment. Assessment, if done well, can assist teachers in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, and give accurate representation of student achievement. Feedback on student performance is a critical measure of accountability. In assessment, accountability occurs in the classroom and schools are accountable to diverse stakeholders. While test scores are used predominantly as a measure of institutional performance they, on their own, do not constitute an accurate assessment of students' performance. The changes in the countenance of classrooms occasioned by USE necessitated a more authentic approach to assessment. However, even with the diversity in the classrooms, teacher constructed paper-and-pencil tests have remained the dominant approach to assessment.

In relation to the dominant approach to assessment used (paper-and-pencil tests), Mc Tighe and O'Connor (2005) and Levine (cited in Scherer, 2006) observe that teachers need to use multiple forms of assessment to give accurate representation of student achievement. Similarly, Reeves (2004; 2006) contends that schools should employ student-centered or holistic accountability. Assessment, in this approach, includes not only academic achievement scores, but also a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators that tell the story behind the numbers. In short, student-centered accountability focuses on the progress of individual students. With the introduction of USE, the current approach to assessment falls well short of providing an accurate representation of the achievements of all students.

Interventions

To facilitate the implementation of USE, the Ministry of Education introduced several interventions. Those interventions included consultations, professional development for principals and teachers, a bridging programme for students who did not meet the benchmark set by the Common Entrance Examination, and a lower secondary examination. Prior to full implementation, the Ministry of Education held consultations with parents to provide information on USE and their role in the process. Since full implementation, no follow-up consultations (similar to pre-implementation) have been held with parents by the Ministry of Education.

Initially, professional development took the form of workshops for principals and teachers of the first and second forms at the secondary level. However, the short-term training that preceded full implementation was inadequate for the new challenges that lay ahead. Since the introduction of USE, other short-term and long-term training opportunities have been provided for teachers of the lower secondary and primary levels. The training programme on learning difficulties for selected primary teachers, currently near completion, should have preceded the introduction of USE.

Support for new entrants into secondary institutions was provided initially through what was referred to as the 'bridging programme'. That programme was essentially a remedial three-week summer programme in literacy and mathematics for new entrants who needed upgrading. The long-term policy was to offer the 'bridging programme' for all new entrants and to continuing students identified for ongoing support. While some institutions have continued to offer the programme or send students to a zonal location, others have discontinued the programme. The 'bridging programme' was seen as an expansion of the student support services which prior to USE was limited to counselling services.

Another important observation about the 'bridging programme' was the absence of specific curriculum guidelines for programme delivery. The teachers engaged were expected to prepare their own programme for delivery. Consequently, there were differences in the outcomes pursued and the quantity and quality of the content delivered.

In order to provide students with an opportunity for certification, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Caribbean Examinations Council, has introduced a lower secondary examination. The Caribbean Certificate for Lower Secondary Competence (CCLSC) is a third form level examination. While the examination is billed as an opportunity for students to at least obtain a secondary school certificate, its currency is yet to be determined.

In order to address the literacy difficulties being encountered by students across secondary institutions, the Ministry of Education introduced the learning support programme in September 2007. Several retired educators were contracted as tutors to provide literacy remediation for first form students needing support. A teacher in each secondary institution was identified to serve as the school's learning support coordinator to work along with the tutors who were contracted by the Ministry of Education. Except where geographical location and student numbers influenced placement, each tutor was assigned two institutions. Five hundred and fifty-four (554) students across the twenty-six (26) secondary institutions were enrolled in the programme in September 2007.

Observations

The introduction of USE has demonstrated, in a very practical way, that policy implementation in one part of an educational system has consequences for other components of the system. While the introduction of USE had strong political support and the policy was sound philosophically, planning for implementation and instituting the change saw the surfacing of many unanticipated challenges.

The success of any innovation depends to a great extent on the support mechanisms instituted, their effectiveness and the level of resources provided. The transformation of some primary institutions into secondary institutions and the construction of new buildings required proper planning and monitoring to ensure that proposed completion dates were met. However, completion dates were not always synchronized with the commencement of the new school year or term, and presented difficulties for some institutional managers. Similarly, enrolment projections for some institutions were underestimated resulting in the need to find alternative physical accommodation for students at short notice.

The professional development of principals and teachers to meet the new and diverse demands occasioned by USE was inadequate and lagged behind policy implementation. The general approach was reactive rather than proactive supporting the long standing observation that generally changes in teacher preparation have lagged behind reform efforts in schooling (Goodlad, 1990; Tisher & Wideen, 1990). Similarly, support services and monitoring mechanisms were inadequate. For several teachers involved, frustration has set in and in some institutions morale is generally low. One possible impact of the current situation if it is not addressed urgently could well be a demoralized profession resulting in teaching becoming a less attractive career choice.

While there have been both short-term and long-term interventions for professional development, with greater articulation among the various strands the efforts would have been more holistic and the impact greater. Sustainability of the efforts was also an area of weakness that impacted on achievement. The new social realities of teaching (Liberman and Miller, 1999; 2000) require a shift from individualism to professional community; from teaching at the centre to learning at the centre; from technical work to inquiry; control to accountability; managed work to leadership; from classroom concerns to whole school concerns; and, from a weak knowledge base to a stronger, broader one. For teachers to have achieved that paradigm shift and change in mindscape, they needed to be provided with the time to meet and opportunities for sustained professional development. In this regard, Marks (2007), having evaluated the implementation of Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project, observed that sustained opportunities for teachers to meet and share experiences facilitated the success of many interventions.

Although there were curricular changes for the lower secondary level, there was a noticeable absence of technical and vocational subjects. Even with the introduction of USE that brought increased diversity and wider interests, the curricular changes were minimal and the Ministry of Education virtually persisted with the 'one size fits all' approach perpetuating the mismatch between students' needs and the curriculum offered. Therefore, there is need for the Ministry of Education to revisit the curriculum and, beyond the curriculum, explore the possibility of zonal comprehensive secondary institutions. On the other hand, data on the reading levels of Grade Six students and the challenges in mathematics all point to the need for interventions at the primary level which should include sustained teacher development.

One of the perennial deficiencies of the educational system is the failure to document and conduct research on educational reforms and interventions. With the implementation of USE, the process, the achievements and weaknesses should be investigated and documented to inform policy development. In particular, it will be worthwhile investigating the impact of separation by bands, including whether there were opportunities for lateral movement across bands and ultimately to write the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination set by the Caribbean Examinations Council. It will be worthwhile, also, to examine the attrition rate and the achievements of students who did not meet the Common Entrance Examination benchmark after both three and five years of secondary education.

There is no doubt that the policy of USE is progressive and a step in the right direction. While the Ministry of Education must be credited for its efforts, more could have been achieved with greater preparatory work, planning for implementation, sustained teacher development, the piloting of dedicated zonal comprehensive secondary institutions, and the establishment of effective support and monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, greater cohesion of interventions and a holistic approach would have enhanced dividends, as Hargreaves (1994) observes:

In education, as in other walks of life, things go together. It is the interrelationship of changes that leads them to a particular coherence; that gives them one particular thrust rather than another. Meaningful and realistic analysis of educational change … requires us to relate part to whole – the individual reform to the purpose and context of its development. And it requires us to look at the interrelationships between the different parts in the context of the whole (p.18).

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Literacy Development and the Role of the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education

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Abstract

This article discusses the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) as an agency that is ideally positioned to implement and support regional educational initiatives. It presents the promotion of literacy development among adolescents as an example of what is possible. With the advancement of universal secondary education, the levels of competency in literacy among secondary school students are more varied and teachers are faced with the challenge of providing effective instruction for all students. This article discusses how the JBTE can contribute to the development and support of all secondary teachers as they seek to improve the literacy skills of their charges and ensure that they benefit fully from the opportunity to pursue secondary education.

Keywords: Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education; literacy development; teacher development; universal secondary education.

Introduction

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, leaders of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) joined with other regional and world leaders to adopt the UN Millennium Declaration. By subscribing to this historic declaration, the sub-region, like the rest of the region and the world acknowledged a commitment to a global partnership to achieve eight important goals which have come to be known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals provide countries around the world with a framework for development and quantifiable time-bound targets by which progress can be measured (World Education Forum, 2000).

The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is the first MDG, and there is no doubt that it is inextricably linked to educating a country's citizens. The importance of education as a means towards poverty reduction is reflected in the fact that the second MDG relates to the provision of universal primary education in countries with high levels of poverty. It should however be noted that in the OECS and the other English speaking Caribbean countries, unlike many of the other developing countries, universal primary education has been in place as early as the 1960s. With this accomplishment, it thus seems prudent to focus more on the

quality of education offered at this level by the sub-region as well as to move to the next level and beyond, that is, to universal secondary education (USE).

In fact, the governments of the OECS accepted the recommendation that was made in the document Pillars for Partnership and Progress (PPP) (Miller et al., 2000), commissioned by the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) that, among other things, improving the quality of education and the pursuit of universal secondary education by the year 2010 was the way forward for these countries. In support of using education in the fight against poverty, the PPP states:

> Notwithstanding the relatively extensive provision of educational opportunities by OECS member states, there is evidence of inequity in provisions that needs to be addressed. Evidence from emerging research suggests that factors such as hunger, inadequate access to school texts, domestic conditions etc. have a strong impact on student learning and achievement. If education is to help eradicate poverty, attention must be paid to this situation and appropriate poverty mitigation measures ought to be put in place (Miller et al. 2000: 9).

To achieve this goal of poverty eradication through education, it is imperative that the education authorities of the sub-region ensure that what is being offered is of a high enough standard as to benefit all students in the first instance and the nations in the long run. However, meeting this goal is not without its challenges. For example, education systems throughout the region must find ways of ensuring that the students who enter secondary schools with varying degrees of knowledge and competencies exit the system with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to contribute to their further development and the development of their countries. This would suggest that at the preceding levels (pre-primary and primary) the foundation is laid in preparation for challenges of secondary education. In fact, the PPP recommends that "the time of transfer of students from primary to secondary education should be conditional upon their satisfying functional standards of literacy and numeracy and the achievement of minimum standards of achievement in science and social studies" (Miller et al. 2000: 29).

This recommendation of students meeting basic standards seems however to be ignored by OECS governments as they embark on the path of USE. The model of USE that the governments seem to be adopting is that at the end of Grade 6, all students regardless of performance on national tests such as the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), and regardless of their knowledge base are transferred to secondary school. As a result, many of the students who are now entering secondary school appear to be well below the level that is expected at that stage of their education. But governments need to consciously develop a philosophy about the purpose of secondary education and its relationship to the growth of their citizens. Thus for example, if they believe that secondary education is a stage of human development, should they not also give consideration to the notion of mastery of the previous level (primary education) before moving to the next level?

Deliberation on, and policymaking in relation to such issues should contribute to the decrease of instances where students who seem to be weak in the skills of reading and writing, which are necessary for academic success at the secondary level, move on to this stage. For example, in 2005 when St Vincent and the Grenadines embarked on universal secondary education and the cohort of students entering secondary school was assessed, it was found that 60 % of them were reading at least two years below their grade level (Ministry of Education, St. Vincent and the Grenadines). The implication here is that a large percentage of those students who entered school during that year will struggle, and without special attention will fail, or worse, will drop out of school having achieved very little.

The assessments, as done by St Vincent and the Grenadines, provide vital diagnostic data on students. This data is much richer than that gathered from the traditional CEE. For those countries relying solely on the CEE results (and there are some), the data would not be enough to give a true picture of the students' reading abilities. With the diagnostic assessment as done in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, not only is information gathered on the students' reading level, but also on their various areas of strengths and weaknesses. If such an exercise is handled well, the data gathered should accompany the students on transfer to secondary school. The school, with help from literacy professionals, would then formulate plans to address the specific needs of each student. Without this systematic use of the data gathered from the assessment, it is unlikely that the individual needs of the students would be addressed, especially those who traditionally would not have made it into secondary school.

It must be acknowledged though that this approach to assessment, though extremely valuable to teachers, is time consuming to carry out. This is perhaps a factor that contributed to the decision taken by St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2008 to discontinue it and introduce the Salford Sentence Reading Test. This test is less time consuming but yields only a score that represents the students reading level. It therefore lacks the rich information that teachers can use to plan instruction that would best address the students' needs. The shortcomings of the Salford Sentence Reading test were eventually recognised by the education authorities, and in 2009, they reverted to the previous mode of assessment.

With a large non-traditional intake, secondary schools are now forced to cater to students who for example are disruptive, who are anti-social and whose academic performance, especially in the critical area of literacy, is significantly below grade level. While the indications are that the students will need assistance in all areas of academic endeavour, it seems crucial that reading and writing be given priority since these are the primary means of classroom communication. In fact, reading and writing facilitate learning across all content areas since students acquire knowledge and understanding of subject matter through reading and demonstrate their grasp of this knowledge primarily through writing.

Educators are therefore now forced to respond to the needs of these students who are lacking in basic academic skills. Traditionally, secondary teachers would not be required to teach students basic skills of reading and writing **(learning to read and write),** and in fact have the attitude that teaching such skills is not their responsibility. Sadly too is that many of these teachers do not accept under their purview even the teaching of advanced reading and writing

skills that should normally be done at the secondary level, that is, **reading and writing to learn** (Leacock & Warrican, 2006). This attitude seems however to be linked to the fact that many of these secondary school teachers are unaware of strategies (related to reading and writing to learn) to which they can expose their students in an effort to facilitate independent learning (Leacock & Warrican, 2006; Warrican, 2006; Warrican & Leacock, 2007). Thus, with the deficiencies that some of the students bring with them on entering secondary school, these teachers are now faced with a two-fold task (for which they are generally unprepared) of teaching basic reading and writing skills as well as the much more advanced skills of reading and writing to learn independently (for which they are also generally unprepared).

The recognition that teachers are generally not prepared to address the needs of these struggling students suggests that some potent action must be taken urgently that will help them to rise to the challenge. The magnitude of this task is such that it cannot be left to individual schools. It requires a systemic and systematic approach, preferably on a regional rather than a national scale. The fact is that as small states, the individual countries lack the capacity to mount the kind of training initiative and support that the teachers need. However, pooling of resources, and adopting a regional approach significantly increases their capacity to do so. There are many advantages to operating on a regional scale. Chief among them are:

• **Effective utilization of limited resources.** For example, individual countries may not be able to find within its own population enough people with the expertise to plan and deliver the quality of response that is required. Further, material-wise, while individual countries may have access to limited resources, if a regional approach is adopted, these individual countries would then have available to them a larger pool.

• **Avoidance of duplication of efforts.** As mentioned before, the individual countries of the region face the challenge of limited resources. If each one is working individually towards a goal, the situation may arise where these limited resources are all working towards the solution to the same problem on their own. This duplication of effort by an already limited workforce could mean that other areas that need addressing might be neglected. If there is a joint effort, rather than each country individually working on the same goal, each can work towards different goals and share among themselves.

• **Historical record.** It has been asserted that when it comes to large scale educational change, the record of education authorities worldwide has been dismal (Fullan, 2001). When it is considered that the countries about which Fullan make his observation are among those with many resources on which to draw, the implications for the Caribbean countries are clear. Large scale change in these small states requires resources that can often only be accessed from governmental coffers. Thus, there is always an element of politics associated. However, Fullan also points out that politically-driven innovations are often hastily implemented and hence are likely to enjoy only limited success, if any at all (Fullan 2000). With a regional body at the helm of such an innovation, there is likely to be less of a perception that the project is a politically-driven one, and hence there should be less pressure on individual governments to produce results. This would go some ways to ensure that more of the much needed time that innovations require for success is available.

One existing agency established for the facilitating of regional collaboration is the Eastern Caribbean Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE). This paper focuses on the challenges associated with students entering secondary schools in the Eastern Caribbean who are struggling with literacy. It presents the Eastern Caribbean JBTE as an agency that can help secondary schools to meet the literacy needs of these challenged students.

The Eastern Caribbean JBTE: Rising to the Challenge of Use

The Eastern Caribbean JBTE is a partnership involving the University of the West Indies's School of Education at the Cave Hill Campus, Barbados and the following agencies in the OECS and Barbados: Ministries of Education (MOE), Teacher Training Institutions, teachers unions and associations. One of its major mandates is to provide initial training for teachers in the Eastern Caribbean countries through the various teachers colleges across the sub-region. The JBTE's mandate does not restrict its activities to initial teacher preparation, but extends to the provision of other teacher development opportunities such as short courses and intense workshops for specific areas of need; and retraining activities to facilitate innovations and upgrading of skills. In addition, the JBTE also serves the sub-region by providing technical assistance to the various governments. All of these activities are aimed at improving teacher quality with the ultimate goal of ensuring that what is being offered in the classroom is of a standard high enough to maximize student learning.

There is a well established link between teacher quality and student performance (Good & Brophy 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Teacher quality, captured through factors such as pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, exposure to teacher preparation programmes and degrees and teacher certification have all been found to have a relationship of varying degrees with student performance. Importantly, apart from improving quality through pre-service /initial training, in-service professional development education has also been found to make a difference to teacher quality, especially when a new curriculum is introduced.

With the introduction of USE in the various Eastern Caribbean countries, the issue of teacher quality seems to require even more attention from the JBTE. As mentioned earlier, secondary school teachers are now faced with, among others, the challenge of instructing students who are sometimes well below par in relation to their expected grade level. Since a system of automatic transfer from primary to secondary school seems to be the adopted model of USE, many of these students lack the basic academic skills recommended by the OERU in the PPP. If the teachers are to meet the diverse needs of these students, then it seems necessary for the Eastern Caribbean JBTE to develop and institute a special plan of training that will provide teachers with the skills and qualities that should allow them to make a significant difference in the classroom. This plan must however be supported by curricula tailored to address the needs of students. The JBTE must convince the governments that a "one-size fit all" curriculum model is an inadequate approach of confronting the student diversity that comes with USE. To illustrate how diversity among the student population can be accommodated, consider the example of literacy. This is an area about which all of the countries in the Eastern

Caribbean are concerned. Since the adoption of the United Nations MDGs in 2000, and the agreement to participate in the United Nation Literacy Decade (2003 to 2012), countries of the sub-region have been showing greater recognition that literacy is not just a privilege but a right, instrumental in the eradication of conditions such as poverty, inequity and injustice. Thus, it is recognized that all students, whatever their socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender or academic ability, should have the opportunity to become fully literate. As such, the curriculum, if it is going to be effective, must consider the diversity of the student body which it is expected to serve.

Education for all: An Appropriate Literacy Curriculum

A major task of the JBTE is to assist the various countries to design a literacy curriculum that does in fact reflect the notion, not just of education for all, but quality education for all. Traditionally in the region, secondary schools tended to offer curricula that are highly academic, and that presume that the students in the classroom have achieved a certain level of literacy. As a result, there is no provision for students who may be experiencing difficulties, or for students who may need to develop additional skills in order to make fine academic progress. However, with universal secondary education in place, the "one-size fits all" curriculum that exists in most systems in the region must be revised. Thus, rather than literacy instruction being incidental (done at the will of individual teachers in individual schools), there is the need for an intentional literacy curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all students who are pursuing secondary education. Such a curriculum should include certain essential features.

First, a quality literacy curriculum for secondary schools should take into account the fact that not all students entering this level will have mastered the basic reading skills during their primary education phase. Hence, this programme should make provisions for these students to expand their developmental reading skills, thus helping them to learn to read. It is important to note however, that these students would be grappling with skills normally taught at much lower grades (in primary school) and for which instructional materials are usually pitched for much younger children. To use this material with secondary aged children might diminish their self esteem and lead to embarrassment and some level of resistance on the part of some of the students (Warrican, 2005). Bearing this in mind then, a literacy curriculum aimed at developing basic reading skills among secondary students should consider that recipients of the programme are adolescents and hence age-appropriate instructional material and approaches should be identified.

Second, a literacy curriculum for all at the secondary level should make provision to help students to access and process information from texts, as well as respond in writing to such texts (Vacca & Vacca, 2004). In other words, students should receive instruction in reading and writing to learn from their content area textbooks and other materials. This component of literacy is usually associated with higher grades, among students who can read and write with some level of competence. However, traditionally, little formal instruction in this area is provided. A literacy curriculum for all must make such provision for all students. Thus, not only should plans be included for competent readers to acquire these advance reading and

writing skills, but appropriate instructional activities must also be identified for the struggling readers who, apart from reading and writing to learn, are often also grappling with learning to read and write. The fact is that, struggling or not, all secondary students are expected to learn content from the various subject areas and, because of the volume of material, it is often not possible for teachers to cover it all in class. Hence, secondary students are often expected to do some independent work. This feature of the literacy curriculum should provide students with skills such as organising, processing and interpreting information from various types of texts from across the content areas, thus increasing the likelihood of them becoming independent learners.

Third, and related to the previous point, a quality literacy curriculum should help the students to extend their reading and writing to the point where they can critically evaluate information. Such a curriculum should help students to become more than 'surface' readers. Its aim should be to arm them with the skills that will allow them to critically analyse and evaluate text and make decisions about what should be accepted, what should be questioned, and what should be dismissed (Xu, 2007; Siu-Runyan, 2007; Comber, 2001). This form of literacy is especially important in this age of the Internet where students have access to all kinds of information from various sources, both legitimate and dubious. They should be able to recognise that language may be used to persuade and to mask intentions, and ultimately, they themselves should be able to apply those subtleties to their own writing. The curriculum should help the students to both recognise and use language as a powerful medium for communication of ideas, beliefs and intentions, both implicitly and explicitly.

A fourth important area that a literacy curriculum should address is that of reading for pleasure. A major concern of teachers and parents is the fact that many teenagers seem to be apathetic about reading for pleasure. This apathy seems, for varying reasons, to apply not only to students who are struggling with reading, but also those who are good readers. Among the many possible reasons cited for this apparent lack of interest in reading is the fact that there are many competing leisure activities with greater appeal to teenagers (Hall & Coles, 1999; Moffitt & Wartella, 1992). It is also felt that quite often it is not that they are not interested in reading, but that the available reading material for adolescents, both in school and at home, is of little interest to them (Clary, 1999; Gilles, 1989). For the struggling readers, even when they show an interest, the material available to them is often beyond their reading level (Warrican, 2006b).

Regardless of the cause, reversing this apparent disinterest in reading among adolescents must be a major goal of educators. Reading for pleasure comes with many benefits, and as such should be emphasized in a quality literacy curriculum. It is a means of exposing students to the communicative power of language. Not only does it provide the students with an avenue for entertaining themselves, but it also helps them to develop an awareness of different styles that can influence their own writing (Krashen, 1993). This can have positive carry over effects on their writing in other subject areas, and in other out-of-school activities.

Of equal importance is writing for pleasure. This provides students with an avenue for creative self-expression. They can write about their feelings, their experiences, their aspirations

and any other topics of interest to them. They can write to inform, as well as to entertain. They can write for personal reasons or to share with others. Indeed, from experiences in classrooms, it is evident that most of the adolescents who are struggling do have interesting stories to tell, but are often constrained by their limited literacy skills. Thus, initially, the teachers would have to help these students to share their stories in print. Often, seeing their thoughts and experiences recorded in print and read by others helps to build self-esteem and self-confidence in students who are otherwise struggling in school. A literacy programme for these students should take into account the value of reading and writing for pleasure and provide many opportunities for students to engage in these activities, initially guided by their teachers, but with a view to being able to do so independently.

One of the concerns worldwide with regard to literacy is gender differences. Research (Parry, 2000) indicates that in the Caribbean it is the male students who are most in need of special attention. Hence, a quality literacy curriculum for the region should include special provisions for male students. Indications are that generally, it is these students who are more likely not to complete the prescribed course of secondary education. Often, their difficulties stem from frustration, born of their inability to read and write well enough to be successful at academics. This situation is likely to become even more acute with the advent of universal secondary education, where male students who would not, under former circumstances, enter secondary school, are now required to do so. If these boys are to experience any measure of success, then an appropriate literacy programme needs to be designed for them.

It must be noted that there are existing literacy programmes that contain all the elements mentioned above. Though such programmes may be inherently worthwhile, they may not be appropriate for secondary schools in the region since they may lack relevance to the Caribbean context. A quality literacy curriculum for these students, no matter what their ability, must for example take into consideration their language context, where Standard English (and in some cases, any form of English) is not their first language, but whose educational experiences are provided in English (Craig, 1999; Simmons-McDonald, 2001). Becoming literate in English requires a programme of instruction that is sensitive to the regional needs, that is, a curriculum that is relevant.

The JBTE is in an excellent position to design a curriculum that encompasses the vital feature mentioned above, but that is still flexible enough that each country can adapt it to suit their individual contexts. With its collective expertise, this organisation is well poised to provide on a regional scale what individual countries may be hard pressed to do because of shortage of resources such as experts in the field. Apart from the expertise to design a quality literacy curriculum, the JBTE also has the capacity to put measures in place to ensure that the designed programme is implemented effectively and efficiently.

Implementing a Literacy Programme in Secondary Schools in the OECS: Establishing the Groundwork

For a programme to provide maximum literacy benefits to students in the context of USE, a multifaceted approach must be taken. There will have to be recognition that there are several

crucial components that can impact on student learning that must be addressed. These include teacher development, student assessment and the development or procurement of teaching-learning resources. These and other factors must be united in just the right manner in order for the students to achieve success. As mentioned before the JBTE is in a prime position to develop for the sub-region, programmes related to these areas that will help teachers to impact significantly on the literacy development of students in systems that offer USE. Importantly, the JBTE, led by the UWI School of Education (SOE) would design and oversee the implementation of the programme, but the local teacher training institutions would lead the charge in delivering the various components.

With the established link between teacher quality and student achievement (Good & Brophy 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000), the focus on teacher development is crucial. A worthwhile teacher development programme should provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and strategies that they need to help raise literacy levels among their students. To this end, a programme of training should expose teachers to critical areas of literacy such as:
- Developmental reading and writing strategies for adolescent learners
- Reading and writing in the content areas
- Leadership in literacy
- Assessing students in reading and writing
- Catering to diversity in the classroom
- Curriculum issues in literacy studies
- Conducting classroom research in reading and writing

This programme of training should be twofold: a formal certificate in literacy studies delivered by the local teacher training institutions, and a series of workshops designed to meet the individual needs of schools and teachers.

Although much of the training for the teachers would be linked to instructional strategies, training in student assessment should also be emphasised. One important task of literacy instruction is assessing students' needs, then using the information gathered to plan instruction to cater to the identified needs (Walker, 2004). Teachers need to be aware of the variety of tools that can be used for assessment in literacy. They also need to know how to make appropriate selections, how to administer them so as to gain valid outcomes and how to interpret these outcomes for further use. The information garnered from the various assessment activities should provide teachers with insights into the instructional content and strategies that will help address the students' literacy needs. This systematic approach to instruction ensures that all students' needs are addressed, especially those who are struggling with reading and writing.

Training and knowledge of assessment would be of little value if there are insufficient and/or inappropriate resources for teachers and students to use. For example, while teachers might be trained to construct their assessment tools, access to standardised instruments would go a long way to improving the quality of the assessment that they do and the scope of its interpretation. Hence, appropriate assessment instruments should be developed and validated for use across the region. Individual countries may have neither the capacity nor

the will to do this, however, the JBTE with its collective representations from across the region, could fill this need. In addition, with the wide range of student abilities, interests and socio-cultural backgrounds that will now be present in secondary schools, there needs to be adequate materials that promote literacy that take these diversities into account. Thus, there would be a need to identify or develop appropriate material for stocking resources centres in the schools across the region. Again, while this might be an expensive and daunting task for an individual country, a collective approach as would be facilitated by the JBTE could be more efficient and productive.

Implementation Strategy

As mentioned before, a regional literacy programme should be multidimensional in nature, catering to several components (teacher development; student assessment and materials procurement and/or development) simultaneously, but with one primary goal of raising literacy standards among secondary school students. In an effort to raise the literacy standards of the students, several key personnel would be involved in the implementation strategy. These persons along with the roles they are expected to play are outlined below.

- **Language and literacy professionals based at the SOE, Cave Hill** to plan and facilitate the implementation of the programme. The SOE personnel would also monitor and evaluate the implementation of the programme.

- **Literacy Coaches based at the teacher training institutions** in the various countries to facilitate the implementation of the programme in each country and to offer support to the teachers in the form of training, mentoring, coaching and supervision. As with the personnel from the SOE, the Literacy Coaches would be language and literacy professionals. From time to time, they would be required to participate in regional workshops conducted by the SOE personnel to strengthen their knowledge base.

- **Literacy Coordinators, namely a teacher from each department in each school,** to support the teachers in their departments in incorporating literacy strategies into their regular teaching. To take on the role of coordinators, they would be required to first participate in the Certificate in Literacy programme at their local teacher training institutions. They would also participate in workshops on a regular basis conducted by the Literacy Coaches.

- **Teachers of the various content areas** who would be expected to support the students in their literacy development. Among other things, they are expected to expose the students to a number of literacy strategies that they would apply towards becoming independent learners. The teachers would be mentored and coached by the Literacy Coordinators and they would be required to attend regular workshops conducted by the Literacy Coordinators supported by the Literacy Coaches. These teachers would also be encouraged to participate in the Certificate in Literacy programme.

Clearly, with the structure outlined above, the programme would have at its core a strong system to train, support and supervise the various personnel. However, for any programme of training, supervision and support to have the desired effects, then best practices in the field must be implemented. Though such practices are identified in available literature, much of these originate from outside of the region. Literacy professionals in the region need to use what is relevant from this existing body, but must also research and develop best practices that reflect the complex nature of the Caribbean. The SOE should take the lead in this, but should also enlist the assistance of the teacher training institutions across the region. This collaboration could even go beyond these institutions to include school personnel. The ultimate aim of this collaboration and establishing of best practices, is to ensure that all students, no matter what their background might be, would have their literacy needs met. This is even more likely to happen with the system of support that would be in place for the classroom teachers, as well as the other personnel who would be involved in the programme. Key aspects of the proposed system of support are presented below.

- The provision of developmental support for participating schools by establishing links within schools; across schools; and between schools and Teacher Training Institutions and the UWI SOE (e.g. through the Certificate in Literacy Studies).

- Establishing a system of support in a fan-like formation (Figure 1), that is, the SOE personnel support the literacy coaches; each Literacy Coach supports a number of literacy coordinators in schools; each literacy coordinator supports teachers within the schools and each teacher influences and supports students in the classroom.

- The provision of assistance to help the individual countries to adapt the programme elements to suit the context of the individual countries, teacher training institutions, schools, teachers and classrooms.
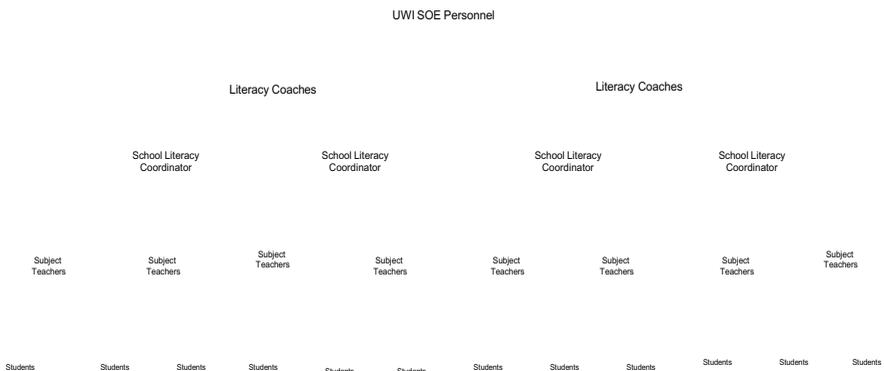

Figure 1: Pictorial Representation of the Proposed Support System for Literacy Development

This system of support is different from what currently exists. It entails systematic training (not just vacation workshops) and importantly, a system of support for the various personnel, especially the teachers. It must be reiterated that because of its links to the various teacher training institutions across the region, the JBTE (through its secretariat, the UWI SOE at Cave Hill) is in a prime position to oversee and coordinate the system of support that would be needed to successfully implement such a regional initiative. However, apart from the support of the SOE, the success and sustainability of the literacy initiative would also depend on the commitment of regional governments to literacy development in their countries.

Success through Commitment

The success of the literacy programme would be dependent on several factors. Prime among these is the Ministries of Education response, the most desirable of which would be commitment to the implementation and sustaining of the initiative. For example, Ministries of Education must commit themselves to finance the development of literacy among their citizens at the secondary education level. Their financial support could be manifested in two ways: (1) allocating a percentage of the spending on education to the development of literacy and (2) seeking funding from alternative sources. With this backing from the Ministries, and the technical support from the JBTE, it is more likely that conditions necessary for sustaining the literacy programme in the secondary schools across the various countries would exist. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- a teaching community that is trained in integrating literacy in all subject areas;
- a commitment from school administrators to adopt and adapt the programme as a whole school strategy for assisting all their students, but especially those who are struggling;
- a commitment from school administrators to earmark funds for maintaining and updating school resources to promote literacy;

There are several aspects of the programme that should be designed to ensure that these elements for sustainability are in place. For example, the programme supports capacity building in the field of literacy instruction by providing training that is designed to produce competent teacher trainers, knowledgeable and skilful classroom subject teachers as well as school administrators who are aware of the need to cater to the diverse learning needs of their students. It is to this end that the JBTE would offer the Certificate course in literacy instruction, to run concurrently with existing Diplomas, Associate Degrees, Bachelor's Degrees and Master's Degrees in literacy.

Conclusion

Without a doubt attaining universal secondary education is a laudable achievement for the various countries in the OECS. This can only bode well for the region since the more citizens are educated, the more likely they are to contribute to its social, economic and political development. Since literacy is one of the building blocks for that desired development, one of the goals of giving young citizens access to secondary education should be to help them to become literate, that is, able to read critically to learn; to read for pleasure and to express

themselves lucidly in writing. But in light of the fact that the call in the PPP that students should meet minimum standards at the primary level before transferring to the secondary stage seems not heeded, it is evident that conditions must be created at this higher level to compensate. Thus, the need for a comprehensive literacy programme for secondary schools is paramount. This paper advocates a regional approach to literacy development spearheaded by the Eastern Caribbean JBTE. Because of its structure, this organisation is the logical mechanism for planning, implementing and monitoring such an initiative. It brings together the human resources from the various countries and binds them in a powerful union that is stronger than the efforts of any of the individual states. This role is particularly suited to the JBTE since its mandate is to provide quality professional development programmes for teachers in the region. Furthermore, the success of the proposed literacy initiative is linked to the provision of adequate training, supervision and support for teachers in the secondary schools. These teachers in turn would be in a better position to cope with the diverse literacy needs of the students as they make use of the opportunity to pursue secondary education, and to ensure that each student exits secondary school with the literacy skills needed to read, write and think critically. This is the least that can be hoped if all young citizens are to realise their full potential and become productive contributing members of their communities.

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The University of the West Indies
SIR ARTHUR LEWIS INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES
(ST. AUGUSTINE)
Trinidad & Tobago

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social & Economic Studies (SALISES) is issuing a call for papers for its 11th Annual Conference to be held in Trinidad & Tobago over the period March 24-26, 2010 on the theme:

Turmoil and Turbulence in Small Developing States: going beyond survival

The small economies of the Caribbean and other areas are grappling with the consequences of a global financial and economic meltdown of unprecedented proportions. These consequences include falling demand for traditional products like tourism, dwindling remittances and the accompanying intensification of negative social ills like unemployment, rising criminality, overburdened health and educational facilities and the like. Many small developing economies, in the Caribbean and elsewhere, are also facing serious threats from climate change, the accompanying rising sea levels and the increase in number and ferocity of storm surges. What are the options, given the limited policy space now available to these small economies? It is to answer questions like these that the SALISES is hosting a conference on the theme indicated. Participation is open to scholars, policy makers, graduate students, professionals and all persons interested in the burning issues associated with this theme.

Papers and panels are invited on the following topics:

1. Constitutional reform, governance, democracy and development.
2. Migration and return migration in development and underdevelopment.
3. Development and maintenance of social capital as a survival strategy
4. Innovation and entrepreneurship as developmental platforms.
5. Disaster preparedness
6. The environment: coastlines, fisheries, sustainable development.
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8. Finance, offshore banking and investment in the new international economic order
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10. Crime, violence, repatriated criminals and regional security

11. The HIV/AIDS Pandemic, Well-being and Lifestyle Challenges
12. Issues in National and Regional Identity
13. Tourism and eco-tourism
14. Cultural industries in small states: copyright, piracy and technology
15. Caribbean Manufacturing
16. Vulnerable populations, social exclusion, poverty and inequality
17. Gender, Health, ageing and disability
18. Children and Youth
19. Sport and Culture in the developmental process.
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