Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU)

Universal Secondary Education in the OECS: Policy and Access, Quality and Rewards

(A paper for discussion)

Henry Hinds, Head, OERU

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Introduction: The Policy Landscape

Formal education at the primary and secondary levels is firmly entrenched in the socio-cultural fabric of OECS and Caribbean countries. The provision of primary education at a social cost to the population of OECS countries accords with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child. The following Articles 28 and 29 summarized read:

(28) -*The child has the right to education; …*

(29) -*The child's education should be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (UN, 1989).*

The OERU subscribes to the right to education, and in the case of secondary education the *Pillars for Partnership and Progress [PPP] (Miller, Thomas & Jules 2000),* strategy document embodying the principles of educational reform in the OECS, outlines the following strategies as foci for attention by OECS member countries, facilitated by the OERU:

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.

The *PPP* also advocates the establishment of a common curriculum in the first three years of secondary education. Further, another strategy suggests that, as far as possible, students should be guided to pursue subjects in which they are interested and have the requisite talent.

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.

Strategy 36:

Strengthen and enhance the delivery of support services in guidance and counselling, social welfare and library and learning resources.

Strategy 37

Strengthen and expand the articulation of secondary schooling with the upper grades of the primary school, tertiary programmes, continuing education, and national, sub-regional and regional TVET programmes.

These strategies, developed about eighteen year ago and reinforced in *PPP* in 2000, point to the need to pay serious attention to the provision of a diversified secondary education system for all students. A focus on this provision raises a number of issues of policy in access, pedagogy and management. Traditionally access to public secondary education was obtained only through academic merit. Such a policy may be interpreted as subscribing to a philosophy of academic elitism: those individuals who do not gain entry will not benefit from the type of grammar-school type schooling provided. In other words, tacitly the selection examination at 11+ is used as a predictor of future academic performance. Another plausible explanation for a selection process has been the inadequate number of places and insufficient human and physical resources to satisfy the demands of secondary education. With the gaining of political nationhood OECS countries have made extraordinary effort to be more egalitarian in its provision of secondary education.

Gradually the percentage of the 11+ cohort being admitted to secondary education has increased and for a few countries it is, for all practical purposes, one hundred percent.[1]

The substance of this paper uses the *PPP* strategies outlined earlier as a base to present a case for true egalitarian approaches to secondary education. As this paper will argue, physical access, though very important, must be accompanied by a number of mechanisms based on recognition of the role of the curriculum, teachers, more recent ideas of the psychology of learning and learning support structures. The paper also emphasizes the collaborative and sharing paradigm that should be part of the provision of secondary education and seeks to establish domains for identifying indicators for process and exit rewards.

Developing countries usually are enmeshed in a complex web of ideas and practices developed by powerful international agencies and the developed countries in general. For example, The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) developed in the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 have been used to provide a focus for social and economic development especially in developing countries. These Goals are

1. *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*
2. *Achieve universal primary education,*
3. *Promote gender equality and empower women*
4. *Reduce child mortality*
5. *Improve maternal health*
6. *Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases*
7. *Ensure environmental sustainability*
8. *Develop a global partnership for education*

Although these goals at first glance do not seem to have a direct bearing on secondary education close scrutiny will show that each one serves as a foundation or prerequisite for

[1] Data received from seven of the nine OECS countries during a meeting in September 2006 indicated the following: Anguilla, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis, countries with a long history of universal access have 100% access at age 11-12; Dominica in 2006 attained complete access at age 11-12; St. Lucia with universal access in principle in 2006 had about half of the cohort being transitioned to secondary schools on the first attempt. By 2006, St. Vincent and the Grenadines in its second year of universal access had attained 75% in the 1-12 age group. Antigua and Barbuda was the only country reporting access strictly by success at Common Entrance.

children, first of all, to reach secondary education level, and then to benefit from the experience optimally. The Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Education Ministers have identified specific projects arising from the *MDGs*. Some of these projects relevant to the Caribbean are: reducing gender disparities in primary and secondary education, and improving the overall quality of education by 2015.

Even before the MDGs were hammered out in 2000, Heads of Government in CARICOM constructed a concept of the *ideal Caribbean citizen* that depends in large measure on the formal educational system for this realization. Some of the characteristics of the ideal citizen are that this person *should be able to demonstrate multiple literacies, is independent and thinks critically, questions the beliefs and practices of past and present and brings this knowledge to bear on innovation and problem solving*. The citizen should also demonstrate *a positive work ethic, value and display creative imagination and nurture its development in the economic and entrepreneurial spheres and all other areas of life*.
(Adapted from *Creative and productive citizens*, Caribbean Community Secretariat, 1999).

The unfolding of the ideal citizen depends on a sound education in the childhood and adolescent years of the individual to ground the fundamentals of the expected behaviours embodied in the Heads' aspirations. Expansion of secondary education to all adolescents brings into play a potentially wider pool of human talent that has to be nurtured. However, the vision, the enabling policy, appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, as well as a reward system that recognizes a wide and diversified range of achievement, are all critical in ensuring success of universal access to secondary education.

The *PPP*, in full realization of the difficulties experienced by some families in the OECS, has set out strategies to reduce inequity between rural and urban areas and gender. Specifically with regard to gender there are specific suggestions to enhance the inclusion, retention and graduation of boys in secondary education. A pattern of gender distribution among entrants to secondary education has emerged with the introduction of universal access. For countries with a history of universal access there is gender parity in entry, for example, Anguilla and St. Kitts and Nevis. As countries mature in the provision of universal access, the proportion of the female and male entrants becomes similar. Dominica has 51% female, St. Vincent and

the Grenadines 52% female, St. Lucia 60% female and Grenada 62% female in the 11-12 age groups. Antigua and Barbuda, where there is still entry by merit (Common Entrance), has a 58% female entry.

Data on transition from primary to secondary school for four OECS countries in 2006 – Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines – indicate that girls outperform boys at the point of transition to secondary school. At 80%+ performance level there was a greater percentage of girls in all countries, except Grenada; between 60% and 79% girls were again better achievers than boys, and between 50% and 59% girls were better in all countries except Dominica. These data suggest that there is a consistent pattern of girls performing at a higher level on the relevant curriculum than boys in the primary school.

The remainder of this paper examines more closely the components of universal secondary education and its implications for ministry level administrative officials, professional educators at the central ministry offices and at the school (and district) level. A number of theoretical perspectives will be used to form the framework for this analysis. The paper also examines the resource implications as well as the social legitimation complexities of implementing universal access.

An Issue of Access

Physical access

Universal secondary education is embedded in the framework of equality of opportunity in education. From a conceptual perspective, equality of opportunity in education consists of three components: *access*, which is a socioeconomic variable hinging on bringing equity to all sectors of the population; *quality* - a sociological/pedagogical variable that is influenced by policy and available resources as well as by the practices legitimized and practised within the institutional setting; and third, a system of *reward* which is a variable that relates in some sense to accountability and access to wider societal benefits..

Beyond being a policy commitment, access is essential in realizing national and regional goals that promise development of human resources through education. A human capital approach to development argues for the provision of the highest level of education as a stimulus to human economic development. Access is visible and is probably the most powerful and compelling component of equality of opportunity. However, access is expensive to achieve and maintain, as construction, refurbishing and equipping school buildings and resource centres is costly. There is also the recurrent cost of maintenance to retain the state of repair and to replace obsolete equipment with more advanced ones. Specifically in terms of universal secondary education, access involves preparing space for a cohort of participants beyond the traditional merit (Common Entrance) awardees. Issues surrounding definition and configuration of space and related equipment and facilities are all important components of access. In this regard, OECS countries have invested financially to ensure access in the shortest possible time, especially since the enactment of the new education legislation.[2]

It is worthwhile to note that while most OECS countries have instituted universal access the actual implementation varies, an issue that points to the need for some level of harmonization. For some time now, the smaller OECS countries have had true universal access. The mode for Anguilla and Montserrat is 100% transition from primary to

[2] Six of the nine OECS countries have enacted education legislation based on a model bill developed by OERU: Dominica (1997); St. Lucia (1999); Grenada (2002); Montserrat (2004); British Virgin Islands (2005), and St. Kitts and Nevis (2005).

secondary school, based on a number of measures including a combination of continuous assessment, a Grade 6 test, and teachers' recommendations. A system of learning support and remedial learning is part of the institutional framework of the secondary school.[3]

St. Kitts and Nevis, another long-standing USE country, and Dominica have 100% transition. They both use a system of zonal placement; however, Dominica, in addition, allows the secondary schools to play a role in the selection of their intake. St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have retained the Common Entrance Examination and the ranking of secondary schools. St. Lucia allows parents to choose seven secondary schools while St. Vincent and the Grenadines allows a choice of six, prior to the writing of the Common Entrance. Placement is based on order of merit in St. Lucia and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines a combination of merit and area of residence. For these two countries the prestigious schools have not been affected in any way by the introduction of universal access. Antigua and Barbuda still retains its traditional Common Entrance; no candidate who fails to attain a pre-set mark is allowed to benefit from a government-run secondary school. A likely consequence of the present situation in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines is that students who score near the bottom of the cohort in the Common Entrance will be confined to specific schools. The unfortunate result of this occurrence may be negative labeling of such schools as well as of the students who are enrolled there.

The universal access policy in Grenada proposed a phased introduction; in the first year of implementation all Common Entrance candidates who gained the " pass mark" at the Common Entrance would be allocated places; in addition, all 13-year old students who did not gain the " pass mark" would be admitted. In the second year all 12-year olds will gain entry and by the third year (2007) there will be complete access. During the first year enrichment programmes were instituted to provide remedial support (Baptiste 2004).

[3] Although data for the BVI were not available, that country will best fit the mode used by Anguilla and Montserrat.

Human resources and the organization of entrants: An issue of quality

As indicated in the previous section, some OECS countries - Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis - have institutionalized universal access for decades. One feature that is common to the modalities used by these countries is the placement of students into ability/achievement bands, based on the student achievement data available for individual students on their entry to secondary education. Since all Grade 6 students move to secondary school, the first form (Grade 7) of every secondary school contains the complete range of student abilities or talents.

Separation into bands may be analogous to the selection process at Common Entrance, except that in the case of automatic entry all students in Form 1 are in the same institutional setting/school, being involved in the same social and cultural experiences both in the classroom and in informal play. The success of this differentiation into bands while maintaining a common cultural experience may be worth examining in some detail, in order to identify the sociological constraints that ought to be overcome to maintain a positive social and learning climate throughout the school. It is essential to determine the degree to which students may be stigmatized socially because of their placement in low status "academic streams". Anguilla has a flexible arrangement, whereby students retain their classroom cohort bonds but move to appropriate academic level classes for specific subject areas, mainly mathematics and language arts. (See Osterman 2000, for a discussion on the importance of belongingness in the school community).

It will be worthwhile to study systematically the academic/learning benefits that are accrued when students move across bands/streams within a grade level for specific curriculum areas within a given term or school year. Data on these realistic opportunities for meaningful learning will definitely inform the policy implementation process of universal access. Access must be seen more fundamentally as access to the actual opportunity to learn. Both the enacted curriculum (what teachers teach) and the achieved curriculum (what students actually learn) need to be investigated in order that educators gain a more informative picture of student achievement during the first year of secondary education (Smithson & Porter 2004).

Another component of the automatic entry and banding involves the chances of all students in all bands/streams to write high stakes tests (CXC Secondary Education Certificate - CSEC). Countries with much experience in universal access over time have been able to bring a greater proportion of their different streams/bands to the CXC CSEC level. Of concern, however, is the academic fate of those students who are evaluated as unlikely to be successful at CXC CSEC.[4]

What is the likelihood that these students may tend to opt out of the formal system to pursue their options in the job market? Data on this phenomenon will be instructive in informing policy decisions on full implementation of universal access. Further, what is the probability that these young persons will/do rejoin the educational stream later on a part-time (or full-time) basis? This latter feature speaks to the need for meaningful continuing/distance education programmes and the trend toward a system of certifying prior technical work experience for these individuals when they seek to continue their education.

As a form of support for universal secondary education some educational systems have instituted remedial education programmes, especially for improving proficiency in literacy and numeracy, as a possible solution to narrowing the potential achievement gap in secondary school. In some cases there have been attempts to equip teachers to do remedial education, at least for some of the initial cohort of new secondary school entrants.[5]

[4] CXC has introduced new examinations (Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competencies – CCSLC) - in core and specialized areas that cater to all secondary school leavers, but will b useful to those students who do not gain certification in the traditional CSEC. The first examination was held in June 2007.

[5] Some OECS countries have reported specific activities that have taken place to improve the competence of teachers and principals. For example, Anguilla concentrates on training teachers to deal with differentiation in meeting the varying needs of students; Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have provided professional development sessions for heads of department and secondary school principals, Grenada's concentration has been on improving student competency in language arts and mathematics. To this end qualified primary school teachers have been transferred to secondary schools and there is a plan to reduce class size in the Form 1. Lucia has prepared teachers to use diagnostic tests in reading for entrants to secondary education.

However, traditional subject-specialized secondary teaching may not be wholly appropriate to address this phenomenon, without additional support. More fundamental, though, is the need to chart a way of dealing with perceived student learning inadequacies before they become deep-rooted in the primary school system. Here again, automatic entry systems (into secondary education) may be able to provide experience on methods that have attempted in the primary school system to lessen the demand for remedial work at the lower secondary[6].

Given that in the early stages of the implementation of universal access there may have to be some "enrichment curriculum" to develop basic skills, there is still a debate on whether the phenomenon of remediation should be a permanent feature of secondary education as part of differentiation, or whether with a richer array of instructional techniques and engaging content the primary school will produce a higher proportion of capable students ready for secondary education. Nevertheless, it will be useful to equip all teachers who teach the lower forms in the secondary school with the skill of preparing instructional material/texts that reach students who are not proficient readers. Overall all teachers in the lower secondary may have to adopt a role in learning support.

Recent discussions among educators in the OECS have focused on alternative combinations of teacher allocation to class and subject groupings at least for the first year in secondary school. There is the notion that children become accustomed to interacting with one teacher for an entire year throughout primary school. On transition to secondary school these students may find adapting to a day punctuated by defined periods and the frequent change of teachers during any school day somewhat challenging. A suggested option may be to devise a system that will retain some of the primary school characteristics in the lower secondary school.

First, it may be possible to organize the first year in a way that will reduce the number of teachers who will teach these entrants. A team of teachers may be grouped to teach cognate

[6] An investigation into the secondary education system of Montserrat in January 2007 indicated that this issue is being addressed vigorously as a means of improving quality of entrants to the lone secondary school. Also Anguilla, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis have systematic remedial interventions in the first year of secondary education.

subjects. For example, the language arts and modern languages may be the responsibility of one teacher (or a group of teachers accepting collective responsibility for the classes at this level). Similarly, science and technology, health and family life education may be grouped. The social studies, including history and geography, may be a third group. Information technology and TVET may form another grouping. In addition the core should include mathematics. Students may then do more specialized work in aesthetics and physical education.

Of course, these suggested groupings are only illustrative of the idea this paper wants to convey. The point is that grouping of curriculum areas and teachers will have two potential results: 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 whom they may be able to form closer bonds, reducing the development of alienation.

Concern for the academic achievement of all students is the concept of multiple intelligences (Walters & Gardner 1986, Sternberg 1994). If an egalitarian view of access to secondary education embraces the multiple intelligences paradigm, then the opportunity presents itself for the use of a mix of human, physical and technological resources that will engage the potential talent of all students. As a consequence much thought has to be put into the planning for and providing foundational resources that will increase the probability of the development of this pool of talent. This emphasis should be the focus of continual teacher development interventions, and should be organized for as many teachers as possible at individual secondary schools. The institutional setting will provide the context for the application of specific strategies based on an enlightened view of intelligence.

The implementation of adjustments in human resource development introduced in this section suggest implications for teacher education, both formal teacher education programmes and in-service school-based interventions. A focus on more constructivist forms of learning support for such approaches to student learning may be addressed in both forums. Teachers-in-training need to explore the possibilities that exist for them to make an impact on and contribution to student learning and to a greater understanding of their own teaching. As a post-training process, practising teachers may be encouraged to explore the

feasibility of class-level action research especially in the lower forms of the secondary school to test the multiple intelligence orientation. Professional development exercises within and across schools should be used to share results of interventions made at the classroom level. Sharing in this way will tend to stimulate further investigation, and in time, teachers will develop a better understanding of the nature of learning and teaching in the context of universal access. (See Lankshear & Noble 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1999). In this way a network of teachers within a school or in neighbourhood schools will develop appropriate skill and attitude to deal with the intricacies of teaching students with a wide range of interests and aptitude.

Another point in relation to human resource input is the need to consider the inclusion of non-traditional faculty and resource persons into the "extended classroom", and so forging a more integrated relationship with the human resource component of the community, for example, in the agricultural and industrial sector. This inclusion will give tangible meaning to the involvement of the wider community in the process of student development and will represent what Anderson (1998) refers to as authentic participation. Farmers and technicians, community voluntary organizations and even ordinary parents may provide valuable resources of work-related and cultural experience for students. Such participation from the world of work and community will tend to improve the level of legitimacy of the school programme, as well as give practical meaning to inclusiveness with regard to the community in which the school is located.[7]

When students gain entry into secondary education, the focus of attention on them shifts from granting them access to the providing them with a high quality of education. Quality is manifested in the treatment situation – the human interaction involved in the choice of pedagogy, alternatives and combinations available in the curricular offerings and the use of resources. The value given to the social relations among the various participants within and

[7] In an OERU career counselling workshop in Grenada in March 2006 representatives from the world of work called for the school to set up mechanisms to involve industry and the commercial sector in a more deliberate way. Also, during an evaluation exercise in Montserrat in January 2007, the wider public and private sector expressed a high level of willingness to be integrated into the teaching and learning fabric of the school.

among student groups in the school is critical to the smooth functioning of the school as a social system. With regard to pedagogy the following extract makes a telling point:

> *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. 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. 64).*
>
> (UNESCO/CARICOM Teacher Education Study, November 1989

Also, in relation to pedagogy, teacher commitment to student learning is hypothesized to lead to higher quality teaching (Hinds 1997; Hinds 1999). Commitment to student learning in turn depends on teacher efficacy which is "the extent to which the teacher believes that she has the capacity to affect student performance" (Berman et al, [1977], in Tschannen-Moran et al 1998). The important point to note here is that teachers who believe that they can make a difference in student learning will tend to have high expectations for future success in their teaching. In universal access to secondary education the conceptualization of student learning has to be re-oriented to recognize and acknowledge the present unexplored talent in the "new" student cohort.

The traditional view of ability, including ability to learn, tends to conceptualize this characteristic as fixed and hereditary. More recent views, however, see abilities as forms of developing expertise (Sternberg 1998); abilities, according to Sternberg, are flexible and are modifiable. "Developing expertise" here connotes a pathway a person takes in moving from a novice to an expert in a specific domain. Experts have rich networks of knowledge, can solve problems more efficiently and in a shorter time than a novice, and usually bring more insight (creative ideas) to the problem-solving task. (See Sternberg 1995.)

Any score a student obtains on a measure is usually a combination of his (modifiable) ability to do the task, with his present and past experience in a specific environment. Given this view, students who gain access to secondary education have a range of abilities that can be modified; also, the richness of their abilities and quality of their performance can be influenced by the

pedagogical arrangements and processes available and practised in the learning settings. In other words, teaching may be conceived as striving to help each student to develop expertise in a specific area (domain) of intellectual and practical activity.

Emerging views of learning posit that cognition (knowledge acquisition, thinking, etc.) is *situated* (Putnam & Borko 2000); that is, the physical and social contexts in which learning occurs are an integral part of the learning that takes place in that environment. Therefore, it is essential to design social interactive classroom environments that facilitate meaningful and rich cognitive development. The situated learning conceptualization forms the foundation for another family of concepts, namely authentic learning.

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.[8] An alternative view argues that authentic learning involves *the kinds of thinking and problem-solving that are important to out-of-school settings* (Putnam & Borko 2000), and forms the basis for transfer, a major part of the concept of lifelong learning. (See also Bransford & Schwartz 1999).

Authentic learning, then, may be best achieved through transforming the class into a thinking group – a cognitive community. The knowledge and skills gained by each member of the group may be seen as the products of interaction among the members. Each member then selects and appropriates that portion that will fit into his or her schema - network of internal concepts (Eisner 1993). In more recent understandings of schema theory the social and cultural environment of the individual plays a significant role in the formation of schema, as does prior knowledge or learning (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). The group member then presents an output (speech, writing) that represents this learning. This output, capable of being measured against a standard, is termed achievement. Moreover, the group as a whole combines its cognitive power of all its members to produce a more powerful result than the individual can produce independently.

[8]In a career counselling workshop in Grenada in March 2007 representatives from industry challenged the school system to prepare school leavers for the reality of the workplace. This comment may be interpreted as practicing a more intense form of authentic learning. (See OERU 2007)

Application of the ideas raised in this section, namely, ability, multiple intelligence and constructivism, situated and authentic learning requires a significant level of teacher preparation. It will be impractical to advocate retraining of all practising secondary school teachers; however, a system of rigorous in-service teacher development interventions designed and implemented at the school and district levels over time should be bring about some positive results for student achievement at the Form 1 level.

First of all teachers ought to learn to collaborate on specific techniques, the most salient being designing learning tasks for all students. Because of the range of student aptitude and interest that will be present the involvement of a cross-section of learning disciplines should be involved. The actual teaching of an instructional module may involve a smaller team, as argued in an earlier section, but the development of modules should focus on integration. The inclusion of technical and vocational interests will enhance the quality of the module and will help students to make the connection between the academic and the practical.

Aligned with this collaborative approach to designing learning tasks/modules is the need to use cooperative learning principles as a major paradigm for classroom and task organization. In this mode the contribution of each student is valued; this reward helps to reduce social status differences that may be present among students. Further, students in a cooperative learning setting have the chance to decide on the nature of the response to the task, thereby developing responsibility for their learning outcomes. It is necessary that teachers are prepared for this mode of teaching. For one thing, teachers must develop competence at devising and teaching skill-building exercises, a pre-requisite for cooperative learning. Skill-building will be particularly useful to reinforce foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and critical thinking. Also, teachers must exercise patience with students who experience some difficulty in pinpointing their areas of interest.

Quality: External Accountability, Internal Accountability and Collaboration

External accountability

The processes and products of the learning context in the classroom are subject to assessment, both at the student and the teacher level. Student and teacher assessment together form a major component of accountability at the school level and at times the entire educational system. Educational managers and practitioners are acquainted with the complex of student assessments that permeate both the primary and secondary education sectors. The OERU, working with assessment professionals in the OECS, has taken the bold step to broaden the application of student assessment, through the systematic inclusion of the classroom teacher in the assessment process. (See Framework for student assessment, OERU, September 2007).

Other forms of assessment and certification that have been implemented recently are the components of the CARICOM Qualifications Framework that form the foundational standards of a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). This development is critical in the light of the renewed emphasis being placed on TVET in secondary and tertiary education. Here, again, students will have a chance to develop their fluid abilities in contexts that are meaningful. Also of note is the provision for assessment of prior learning in a vocational skill area under this scheme. This new avenue caters to the needs of the early school dropout who at a later time decides to have his or her work experience certified and counted towards the award of a specific level of competence in a well-defined skill area.[9]

The Caribbean Development Bank's Caribbean Forum for Development (CFD) Education Working Group has suggested a proposed scheme of multiple pathways through secondary education. This concept when put into practice presents the secondary school student with choices that will lead to entry into the world of work directly or indirectly through tertiary education. These pathways, however, also depend on the collaboration between the educational and industrial world in a productive partnership arrangement. Apprenticeship schemes and work study attachments are all essential components of a process that will help to certify the skill level of our workers. This new thinking is in alignment with the RCMTVET

[9] The CARICOM Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Technical and Vocational Education (RCMTVET) has authorized CXC and National Training Agencies to commence administering competency-based tests. CXC examines these competencies at Level 1 in the scheme, while national agencies may administer tests from Levels 1 to 5, dependent on the proper training of assessors.

strategy for TVET education. It requires the input of industry and education in the planning, setting of workplace standards and coordinated implementation if consonance between school and the world of work is to be achieved and maintained.

Accountability processes in secondary education will have to be broadened to accommodate these new facets. As is, accountability to a higher external authority (Ministry of Education) for a more diverse student body will tend to make schools pay greater attention to internal efficiency. Given the high stakes nature of schooling and more particularly the increasing financial investment in secondary schooling, accountability to central administration will be an imperative. External accountability, according to Newmann, King, & Rigdon (1998), has four components:

1. *Providing information about the organization's performance*
2. *Standards for judging the quality or degree of success*
3. *Significant consequences (rewards, negative sanctions) for performance*
4. *An agent or constituency that receives the information and makes a judgment*

With regard to the first component the emphasis is on evaluation and specification of success/achievement. In the case of universal access this means providing a current stream of data on the success achieved and new challenges faced by the range of talent in the student cohort.

The challenge in the second component will become more apparent when consideration is given to greater diversification of the curriculum. Standards will be required for both student and teacher performance. OERU has produced a discipline policy (OERU 2007) that suggests incorporation of student input into school level decisions. Also, the OERU generic Teachers' Code of Ethics suggests standards for teacher behaviour and commitment that are relevant in this expanded conception of secondary education.

Component 3 requires a careful study of the implications of expanding the secondary student cohort to formulate an appropriate curriculum. Such expansion necessitates rewards to be offered for those schools (and districts) that show innovative work in addressing essential imperatives. For this condition to be realized there must most likely be more autonomy allowed for school administration and leadership to make decisions that are appropriate for the success of all students. The local community will seek to be involved

both at the level of providing critical assistance to the school, as well as formulating and administering positive and negative sanctions that will reflect the mission of the school within that community.

Traditionally external accountability has been to the Ministry of Education in the first instance, with some lesser level of accountability to parents. Accountability has to be extended to the local community to a greater extent; the widening of access to secondary education provides a workable opportunity for the involvement of the local community in a real sense. For this paradigm to be successful, however, true recognition must be given to all economic ventures within the country: farming, fishing, craft, as well as leading edge technological ventures must see the school as fruitful soil for investing in human resource development. Social, cultural and religious groups and organizations may also lay claim to recognition in this regard. If this arena of partnership works, information on the outputs and outcomes of the "curriculum" must be made available to legitimate constituents of the "school in community". On the other hand, involvement of community also suggests that the community will be held accountable to an external source for some aspects of the school performance.

Internal accountability

Achieving external accountability depends to some extent on the ability of the organization to achieve internal efficiency and accountability. Newmann, King and Rigdon (1998) identify *organizational capacity* as one of the characteristics of schools that influence internal accountability measures. According to Newmann et al, organizational capacity is the degree to which human, technical and social resources are organized into a *collective* to produce results that would satisfy external constituents. Such an arrangement will have to be accompanied and fostered by a shared concern and desire to enhance teaching and student learning.

Internal accountability is presumed to be enhanced through collaborative effort among teachers, and consequent increase in visibility among teachers as they prepare and execute their work. However, collaboration is not an natural phenomenon among teachers. In a St. Lucia study Hinds (1997) examined collaboration as a school contextual feature in relation to

curriculum implementation. He defined collaboration in four ways: *as curricular and instructional help provided to the teacher by the school, observation of a teacher's instructional practice by colleagues, direct instructional help that the principal provides the teacher,* and *instructional help provided to and accepted by teachers.* First, collaboration as a whole was very low in frequency (mean=2.48, on a five-point scale). Second, the longer the teacher was at her present school, the less likely it was that she would be involved in any type of collaboration. Third, the higher the quality of the human resources (the professional preparation of the staff as a whole), the greater was the likelihood that teachers would collaborate on curricular matters. These results suggest that principals ought to strive to attract and retain high quality teachers and to strive to continue meaningful professional development in order to engender collaboration.

Teachers' work traditionally has been conceived as individualistic: teachers are usually in full charge of the academic welfare of a specific group of students over a defined period of time. This privacy in teaching propels teachers to consider their class-level responsibility and to become involved minimally in whole-school activity. Apparently there must be valid reasons for teachers to collaborate. A major reason for working together is to reduce the complexity and non-routine nature of teaching. Particularly in this case of universal access to secondary education there are still many unknown variables. Demands will be novel and unexpected and the complete picture will only become decipherable if the level of task-related collaboration increases (Rowan, Raudenbush & Cheong 1993).

Thompson (1967) posits three levels of interdependence or collaboration within organizations: sequential, pooled, and reciprocal. Sequential interdependence occurs when teachers at sequential grade levels collaborate; for example, Forms 1 and 2 mathematics teachers working together to solve a instructional matter; pooled interdependence is the collaboration of all teachers in the same subject at the same grade level, while reciprocal interdependence is whole-school collaboration. One challenge for secondary schools in this regard is to use the departmental system in collaborative ways that will help to identify specific talents among students and seek out students and teachers' interests and aptitudes that will inform appropriate instructional approaches (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Hinds 2003).

An important ingredient of internal accountability will be the extent to which student discipline is achieved and maintained. Ministry of Education officials, as well as principals and teachers, are concerned about the quality of discipline displayed by some secondary school students. Student discipline is an integral part of the social norms of the secondary school. For this reason it is important that educational authorities provide an analytical approach to unravelling the causes and consequences of high levels of student indiscipline in particular school contexts. The secondary school is one arena in which adolescents will tend to play out their identity-formation roles through becoming involved in conflictual situations. This may be particularly so in the first year where new students are struggling to gain high status in a new setting. Students who want recognition from peers may deliberately engage in rule-breaking behaviour, and if not censured will continue this practice throughout school. Teachers need to be able to recognize the symptoms and take preventive actions. Student councils may play critical roles in alerting the student body to the need to maintain a peaceful working environment.

Research on school discipline in the OECS (OERU 2006) uncovered particular patterns to the occurrence of indiscipline in schools. For example:

- Rural schools on the whole had a higher quality of student discipline than urban schools.
- Adolescent girls were less tolerant of poor student discipline than were boys.
- Regular teacher attendance and punctuality were predictors of good discipline.
- A high quality school environment predicted good student discipline.

The research also found that some of the more frequent form of indiscipline included *breaking class rules, being rude to a teacher, shouting at, insulting and bullying peers.* The results also showed that, according to teacher and principals' reports, the severe indisciplinary acts were *lack of proper attention to school work, misbehaviour in class, violence against peers and bullying other students.* Others findings disclosed that school corridors, the school compound and its entrance were targeted areas for indiscipline at certain times of the day. If school leaders are to be internally accountable they need to be able to respond to the demands of maintaining a behavioural climate that is conducive to learning. Therefore, the institution of a class-level rule-making process as part of a more fundamental programme of school-level moral

development may provide students with a deeper understanding of the need to maintain good relationships among their peers and with teachers and other adults who care for and teach them.

At the wider school level much of the success in the process of democratization of secondary education will depend on the creation of basic structures to enhance and sustain viable learning support initiatives. The guidance and counselling programmes in place in the OECS educational systems cater to emotional/personal and academic guidance and counselling. This aspect of learning support has to be strengthened considerably so that students have recourse to an appropriate professional when there is the need. It is worthwhile to note here that guidance classes/sessions should form an integral part of the school curriculum and should complement the basic life skills areas such as family life education. Guidance and family life programmes should also help students to define their identities. In this process teachers ought to come to respect the cultural and historical milieu in which students are immersed (OERU 2007; OERU 2002; Hemmings 2000).

In addition to the emotional and academic guidance service a more strenuous effort must be made to conceptualize and implement appropriate and meaningful career guidance programmes. The OERU has analyzed the state of career guidance and counselling in the OECS and found that there is a great need to coordinate effort and to develop common principles that will underpin the approaches used by guidance and counselling professionals in the school systems. The recommendations from the Working Group of career guidance officers and counsellors at a recent workshop emphasized the following:

- Integration of career guidance activities into the whole secondary school curriculum;
- Application of a team effort in the implementation;
- Finding innovative ways of presenting learning activities (OERU 2006).

Fundamental to the execution of a well-integrated career guidance programme is the empowerment of students to make informed career decisions. Career guidance needs to be so fully interwoven into the secondary school system, that teachers play a supportive role alongside guidance officers and counsellors (OERU 2007). Careers must be seen in a developmental paradigm as a lifelong experience, characterized by adjustments to new working environments (Dawis 2005; Super 1990). A tracer system may be set up in order to

find out to what extent adolescent entry level workers begin to assign meaning to their occupational experience as a process of developing a career (Savickas 2005). Such information may be used to modify existing career counselling programmes that will assist school leavers in approaching their job assignments with a view to analyzing it in terms of their own preferences.

Choosing and developing a career path depend to a great extent on making good decisions. In decision-making one's values tend to influence the choices one makes (Brophy 1990). This means that student involvement in decision-making in the secondary school is a good preparatory ground to provide opportunity for students to contend with their scales of values. Brown (2003) argues that it is one's scale of values that influences career choice and development and attitude and approach to the work situation.

Decision-making in turn requires critical thinking in order to weigh alternatives in making choices. Therefore, students need to gain experience in situations in which thinking skills are developed and used productively. Critical or analytic thinking, creative thinking and practical thinking are all essential to the development of the intelligent human being (see Sternberg 1998; for an interesting and informative discussion on creativity in schools, see Edwards 2000-2001). Given the competition to find a niche in the industrial and commercial work environment, throughout secondary school students ought to be provided with adequate engagement in developing their thinking skills.

External accountability provides a process through which the overall performance of an entire school will be judged. The quality of the products measured against known standards will be rated by the Mnistry of Education as well as by the general public. Internal accountability contributes to external validation of the worth of the school, but serves another more fundamental purpose. It is through internal accountability that members learn to shoulder responsibility, to build trust, to care for one another and to develop and maintain a cooperative institutional ethos. Students behave well because they feel a sense of belonging and desire to add their contribution to the good name of their school. In return they gain an additional (school) identity that they are proud to use for the remainder of their lives.

System of Rewards: Process and Product

The paper so far examined the inputs necessary for expanded access to secondary education within the framework of a policy that advocates secondary education for all. Then the focus turned to the use of human and other resources, programme organization and support, accountability, and teacher collaboration. These processes are hypothesized to raise the probability that the all students in secondary education gain worthwhile experiences from social and educational interaction in a school environment.

The paper will now discuss the potential rewards that may be offered to a wider cohort of students in an enlightened secondary education experience. The full complement of rewards of formal education is multi-faceted and may not be immediately discernible by the individual student upon exit from the formal school situation. Of course, the more tangible rewards include success at the exit examinations and the chance to move to the next higher level in the educational hierarchy. Even for those individuals who do not continue directly into further education, finding a job is in a way a reward for successfully negotiating the school system.

Process rewards

Before looking at the obvious exit rewards, it may be useful to discuss the on-going benefits that students may derive as they traverse the many boundaries they encounter during their secondary school experience. Unlike the primary school the secondary school operates on a departmental system. Also, departments (and streams) do differ in the social prestige attached to them. One way in which the possible social stigma that may be associated with departmentalism and streaming may be lessened may be to provide opportunity for students to meet in cross-grades, cross-discipline groups, similar to the traditional house system. In this affirmation of status for traditionally less advantaged groups, specific effort must be made by the school to share leadership responsibilities among all groups of students. If this democratic process is practised honestly within the school setting, then there is the likelihood that students and teachers will develop respect for the variety of potential talent and give students a chance to develop and display them.

Higher priority needs to be given to new curriculum areas that are now included in high stakes (CXC CSEC) tests: physical education, music, theatre arts, for example. Of course, the school and educational system as a whole have to promote the instrumental as well as symbolic value of achievement in these formerly less recognized areas of achievement. Recognition of students who choose these subjects should be seen as a form of reward; such reward may foster the need for achievement in these students, once the proper encouragement and support are provided by faculty and school administration. Creative thinking and application can raise the standards of the aesthetic component of the school curriculum so that students see the opportunity and challenge to select a career from these areas. Immediate benefits will be the use of these talents for the entertainment and enjoyment of the school and neighbourhood community. Concomitantly the educational authorities, the private sector and community groups should see the allocation of resources to develop talent in aesthetics as an investment in the human potential of the community. The return on this outlay will be the enrichment of aesthetics as an important facet of personal and social development.

A third component of a process reward structure may be exemplified during the implementation of learning support systems. When inclusive support systems are in place there will be the tendency for students to learn how to manage conflict; they need to experience conflict resolution where the parties in contention come to a conclusion that will be beneficial to all parties. Students should come to accept the decisions of mediation, once the process has been just (Johnson & Johnson 1996). They should be given the chance to experience the role of mediator, so that they are able to reduce their subjectivity on important interpersonal and social issues. In time students will recognize the satisfaction derived both from arriving at a successful solution to conflict as well as being a competent mediator in a conflictual situation.

All of these support systems will only be useful if trust exists between teachers (and counsellors) and students. The secondary school environment must be nurtured in such a way that there is an environment of trust. Trust consists of a display of confidence especially in times of uncertainty, a condition of caring, reliance and reliability. Honesty and openness are also vital components of trust. The one in whom trust is placed must also

have the competence to fulfil the expectation of the other. A trusting relationship requires guidance from the more knowledgeable person, but not a dominance that stifles the one who depends on the trusting relationship (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy 2000). The implementation and maintenance of support systems, including expression of trust within the secondary school will be enhanced if the school embraces an *inclusive school* paradigm. In such a setting the principal makes a definite and purposeful effort to enlarge his or her roles, as well as those of the faculty, in an effort to have wider and deeper involvement in school leadership. The pool of available ideas will be tapped in order to afford more opportunity for helping all students to succeed (Riehl 2000).

Exit rewards

Universal access to secondary education undoubtedly will require the recognition of multiple-level outputs at the end of the secondary cycle. Standards of academic excellence should never be compromised; however, these standards must transcend academics and be rewarded in a number of other fields traditionally considered as practical. Special effort must be made by educational administration and by professional faculty at all levels to bridge the gap between the academic and the practical. For one thing, there should be exposure to a pre-vocational programme for all students, so that student experience is enriched in the movement between the theoretical and the practical. Also, in this regard, the practice of vocational education being relegated to students who are perceived as less academically able ought to be revalued. More important, though, is the requirement for all levels of thinking and authentic learning to be encountered in a true pre-vocational programme.

Recognition of the range of rewards available and achievable as educational outcomes is essential if secondary school graduates are to benefit from the programmes they choose while at school. The various strands of the Caribbean Examinations Council's initiatives, as well as the interventions by other agencies, such as RCMTVET, have to be understood and internalized by employers, and educators alike. The foundation laid in secondary school should be sound and adequate for school leavers to build a career, chosen from a variety of available options. Real partnerships between education and industry will involve the joint work on the design and operation of valid assessment schemes that will accurately describe the knowledge and skills of students on a wide range of criteria.

Further, the linkage between secondary and tertiary education should be sound, yet flexible, allowing the secondary school leaver to become engaged in one of a variety of modes that are applicable to the young adult's aptitudes and flexible abilities. Although this paper does not deal specifically with tertiary education, it is useful to note here that the structure and implementation of tertiary education will have to be under constant scrutiny and must be adaptable as the graduates from a democratized secondary education system seek to gain access to higher levels of education, training and certification.

Another implication of the exit reward system will be the degree to which the graduates of secondary education gain skills of entrepreneurship that may be used in meaningful self-employment ventures. Some countries are already experimenting with incentive schemes that encourage youth to prepare investment proposals for micro industries, for which they receive start-up funding. Such ventures, however, need to be accompanied by well-organized support mechanisms that provide sound advice to the entrepreneurs without stifling creativity.[10]

Reward systems on their own do not solve all problems for the school leaver. Acceptance by the world of work of a wider range of accomplishment will be the real test. So, while schools devise a variety of incentives and reward structures, the world of work must be meaningfully apprised of and involved in the thinking and development of relevant schemes. Also, since industry is integrated into a world system of innovation, invention, production and trade, both the educational system and the world of work have to be at the cutting edge of technological development in order to reap benefits in the competitive arena of industry, trade and employment.

[10] The Common Youth Programme Caribbean has been involved in promoting entrepreneurship and enterprise development among youth.
The OERU conducted a survey of youth skills programmes in the OECS and found that only a small fraction of youth were engaged or expressed a desire to engage in entrepreneurial activities. This is one behaviour that needs to be changed (OERU 2007).

Conclusion: Finding a Niche

The discussion in this paper dealt with the issues surrounding the provision of universal access to secondary education. Major sections of the discussion examined modes of and consequences of access, quality of treatment, including teacher preparation and collaboration and accountability processes. The conceptualizing and implementing of reward systems seen as a developmental process as well as an exit phenomenon, formed the third component of the paper. The issues raised in this discussion are the micro-level manifestations of the broader agenda surrounding schooling, education and socialization. Powerful international ideas propel individual systems to conform to well-defined patterns of thinking about and organizing educational processes (See Anderson 1983 on World Systems theory; DiMaggio and Powell 1991). For example, the *UN Millennium Development Goals* and *the UN Education For All* initiatives set the recent tone for the structure and content of the provision of education worldwide. Also of importance are the UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (commenced in January 2005), and the current emphasis on science and technology in shaping the focus on education.

This paper made reference to the ideal Caribbean citizen as formulated by CARICOM Heads. Jules, Miller & Armstrong (2000) expand on this idea by setting out imperatives for the provision and maintenance of high quality education in the Caribbean. They identify five essential imperatives: *narrowing the knowledge gap; making the school the focus of the learning community; reducing inequities in the school system; strengthening regional cooperation for global competitiveness and a goal of educational reform; improving education financing and management.* This agenda is intended to form the core of education strategy formulations in a harmonized approach to education at the CARICOM level. These ideas have been incorporated into the main policy that guides educational reform in the OECS, *Pillars for partnership and progress* (Miller, Thomas & Jules 2000). The thrust of the OERU has been to address these imperatives from a sub-regional perspective.

In particular the OERU has developed products to address strategies 33, 34, and 36 in PPP. In addition, this paper raised pertinent issues and offered suggestions with reference to strategies 35 and 37. It is left to the OERU to coordinate its efforts with individual OECS member countries, and development partners to strive towards designing systems and

opportunities from which all secondary school students will gain optimal benefit from a policy of universal access.

The quality of the provision of education is subject to a number of evaluations internationally, including the periodic international tests administered in mathematics and science to secondary school-aged students, and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), concentrating on reading, mathematical literacy and problem solving, and scientific literacy. Further, there is greater call for accountability in the form of more frequent student testing at the local level. Most OECS countries have introduced intermediate primary school assessments (Grades 2 and 4) and at least one assessment at the mid-point in secondary education. The rationale for these tests at the primary level includes the opportunity for remedial work that will increase the level of numeracy and literacy for secondary school entrants. This foundational work is essential if students who enter secondary education are to benefit from whatever concentration they elect to follow.

There is no doubt that the Caribbean Examinations Council will play an even more significant role as a certifying agency for diverse range of competencies. This move, complemented by the implementation of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications scheme will increase the legitimacy of the educational systems in the Region at the secondary and tertiary levels, including participating apprenticeship and youth skills programmes. One of the challenges that face OECS educational policymakers is that of continually refashioning their educational structures, processes and outputs in order to be aligned with current thinking and practices in education and the economy at the international level. At the same time policy makers have to cognizant of the salient local and regional socio-cultural structures and imperatives that help to foster national and regional identities among youth. Modernization and economic imperatives must be tempered by history, culture, local and regional traditions.

The main objective of this paper is to raise issues that will help educators to think of ways to deal with national and sub-regional level concerns that will be critical to school leavers' successful entry into a liberalized economic environment. Secondary education has now become pivotal in the striving toward economic competitiveness. However, secondary

education also must flow naturally into a variety of institutional and personal frameworks that encourage and predispose individuals to re-enter the educational arena at any time in the future. Lifelong learning through distance modes should become part of the educational landscape for individuals who desire to upgrade their knowledge and skill and have their competencies certified. The watchwords of provision of educational opportunity should be should be “flexibility” and “adaptability” in terms of refining and developing the talent pool of our students.

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