ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION: SUPPORTING LEARNING TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS – A CXC PERSPECTIVE

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– “Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education”

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Didacus Jules,
Registrar,
Caribbean Examinations Council
ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION: SUPPORTING LEARNING TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS – A CXC PERSPECTIVE

A WORD ABOUT UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION

It is vitally important from the outset to begin with an historical ideological context about the notion of universal quality education because in our Caribbean, the evolution of education was coterminous with the expansion of rights and freedoms. Education was historically an instrument of privilege and even as it became more available, it continued to function as a mechanism of social selectivity, shaping a middle class but continuing to exclude large sections of society from its apex.

It is important to assert this because even today when the notion of universal access to education has become an accepted logic on the global stage, there are still some (unfortunately even within the education fraternity) who still uphold a perspective that upholds privilege. When the big thrust towards USE was being made in the morning of the new Millennium, there were powerful voices questioning whether universality would mean devaluation and create an egalitarian flood that would sweep away accomplishment. I was often reminded by these arguments of the
concerns expressed by the plantocracy that “to educate the children of the poor, would be to unfit them for that role in life which must necessarily be theirs.”

The notion of universal education was therefore the product of the wider struggle for the creation of a more equal society and the democratization of education. Much credit must be given to UNESCO for its exemplary role in spearheading this thrust at the time among the multilaterals and helping to mainstream the concept. Universal education was a rising tide of civilization lifting all boats. It was seen as essential in providing every individual with the knowledge, skills and capabilities to function as an empowered citizen, an effective member of the family unit, and a worker. In creating this individual capacity on a universal scale, it was argued that social and economic advancement would be assured.

Our history bears testimony to the contribution of access as educational scaffolding to the transformation of Caribbean economies. Just as the attainment of universal primary education provided the human resource capacity for the emergence of the post-colonial production economy in the 19th Century, it was the attainment of Universal Secondary Education that laid the basis for the emergence of the Service Economy in the 20th Century and so it is – from the experience of
more advanced countries – that universal tertiary education is the educational foundation of the Knowledge Economy in the Information Age.

The fact sheet on education in the Caribbean today is textured: while we have attained virtually universal access in primary and secondary education, provision is still sadly limited at the extreme poles of the spectrum. Early childhood and tertiary education are far from universal with early childhood representing the overlooked sinkhole into which the cognitive and physiological potential of our children is crippled even before formal education begins. Only 40% of Caribbean children enjoy access.

In all sectors of education quality is also lacking. Our concerns about quality unfortunately seem principally focused on learning outcomes as measured by terminal examinations. For these outcomes to improve, our focus must be shifted from the end result to the process and the context of learning in our schools and communities. Put simply we cannot drive quality AFTER Common Entrance or CXC exam results are released – the struggle for quality must be driven every day at every grade by every teacher. And while we recognize that every education system is only as good as its teachers; let us also not lose sight of the significant reality that the responsibility for quality – for success
or for failure – rests equally on the shoulders of policy makers, administrators and others whose duty it is to provide the architecture of support to the teacher.

For brevity, the main factors impacting learning indicated below are the key areas of focused intervention to drive the quality imperative:

**MAIN FACTORS IMPACTING LEARNING**

- **CONTENT**: Not just knowledge but SKILLS and ATTITUDES
- **ASSESSMENT**: Assessment FOR learning; assessment OF learning Certification
- **MACRO ENVIRONMENT**: Home Institution/School Society
- **LEARNING**: Instructional/Learning methods Teacher capacity/quality
- **PEDAGOGY**: What is to be done?

**SO WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

We have become mired in a culture of complaint and complacency. Sadistic recitations of the litany of problems will not make them disappear. What is needed is a clear optimism of the
will, a sharp vision of what we hope to be and simple effective steps in that direction. When we reduce the complex to the simple (without becoming simplistic) we are able to move effectively and decisively to systematically overcome our challenges.

The first step is the rethinking of education with a view to its fundamental realignment to the needs of Caribbean society in the era of globalization and towards the articulation of a seamless education system. As I noted in an article in the Caribbean Examiner “our education system needs to be reshaped as a seamless system in which opportunity is open to all with varying pathways to success according to the interests, capability and development pace.” For the past twenty years we have conducted every variant of reform but the approach has essential been a tinkering with different parts of the system.

The reshaping of education reduced to essentials is summarized in the graphic below:
The three main arenas of intervention are People, Processes and Structures and each of these has at least three focal concentrations.

Transformation of education for improved outcomes requires a core focus on three essential stakeholders: teachers, learners and managers. The transformation of processes must encompass the re-engineering of the teaching, learning and assessment processes. The frameworks of accountability for effective learning must be built around the people and process changes. A different structure of education must allow for seamless transitions – facilitating the movement of learners from wherever they are to where they strive to go via multiple pathways for success and with a clearly articulated qualifications framework.

The details of each core area of intervention are as follows:
<table>
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<th>KEY ELEMENT</th>
<th>STRATEGIC INTERVENTION</th>
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| Teachers    | • Selection, hiring and remuneration — select for attitude/passion; hire for competence; pay for performance (not on test score but student and parent satisfaction)  
             • Training and professional development — core training in C21 instructional modes; modular training in multiple configurations for varying needs; continuous professional development & certification |
| Learners    | • Development of Core Competencies  
             • Center of focus of the education system  
             • Ideal Caribbean Person  
             • Towards individualized learning  
             • Service and support orientation to learning function/not command & control  
             • Performance management — accountability of individuals and collectivity (institutions)  
             • School Leadership |
| Managers    | • Cater for different learning styles and abilities  
             • Guide on the side; not sage on the stage (facilitatory more than directive)  
             • Emphasize acquisition of competencies |
| Learning    | • Make learning fun  
             • Interactive; challenging, discovery-based and practical  
             • Mastery of principles; development of KSA  
             • Assessment FOR learning; Assessment OF learning  
             • Assessment FOR learning; Assessment OF learning |
| Assessment  | • Flip side of the learning paradigm  
             • Benchmarking for regional & global competitiveness |
CXC’S CONTRIBUTION

The Caribbean Examinations Council has made a major contribution to the expansion of quality education in the region – particularly at the secondary and pre-university levels - over the past 32 years. Unlike the traditional examination board, CXC has added value at many points along the continuum of educational delivery from syllabus development to assessment and certification.

It has helped to harmonize standards and content in 34 CSEC subjects and 24 CAPE subjects; it engages
both classroom teachers and subject experts from the higher education institutions (4,800 of them from 17 territories) in the full cycle from preparing/revising syllabi to preparing exams to marking exams. The bi-annual CXC exam marking exercise is the only opportunity that brings classroom teachers together by subject area from across the entire region in a professional or social context to focus on learning outcomes.

At every stage of the education value chain, CXC is creating innovations that are directed to improved standards and quality. Our syllabus reforms/revisions more explicitly focus on not just the knowledge but also the skills and attitudes to be developed through engagement with every subject area and these are benchmarked internationally.

Recognizing that delivery of quality instruction is key to securing improved performance, we will be taking our teacher orientation to new levels through partnership with UWI Open Campus by offering blended mode certificates in the teaching of every subject at every level that we examine. The provision of a free interactive learning portal – www.notesmaster.com – will provide exciting possibilities for learning for an increasing digital generation of learners.
A healthy debate is warming in the region about the number of subjects being taken by top students (as high as 14 subjects in several instances) and whether this highly competitive direction is desirable. As an assessment body, we are seeking to ensure the following:

- That 21st Century core literacies and competencies are delivered and embedded in every subject (critical thinking etc)
- That competency based learning and assessment is promoted and that the principles represented by the UNESCO Pillars of Learning are inculcated.
- That formative assessment (assessment for learning) is strengthened and that our School Based Assessments (SBAs) are made practical and exciting; represent application of knowledge, civic engagement or entrepreneurial or creative impulse.

And finally we are pushing the envelope on results and statistical reporting to provide candidates with more immediate results; schools with comparable reports on examination and school population performance and ministries with comparable and time series data for evidence-based policy formulation.

Ultimately our contribution to quality education is the extent to which we can assure the global human resource competitiveness of the Caribbean.
through the quality of our own assessment in education and the international currency of our certification.
ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION:

SUPPORTING LEARNING TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS

Dr. Didacus Jules
Caribbean Examinations Council
May 2011
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A WORD ON UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

CXC'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNIVERSAL QUALITY AND IMPROVED LEARNING
ABOUT UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION
Is education in the Caribbean:

**Universal.... And.... quality?**

**Limited** EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Universal** PRIMARY

**Approaching** SECONDARY

Working towards TERTIARY
Current levels of access to education in the Caribbean

Sources: Tewarie 2009; Charles & Williams 2010
Secondary Enrollment – Caribbean 1970-2010

- 1970s: 51.0
- 1980s: 71.1
- 1990s: 73.0
- 2000: 84.5
- 2010: 100.2
Importance of the concept of UNIVERSAL EDUCATION:

• Education a rising tide of civilization lifting all boats
• Building a democratic, meritocratic society
• Creating capacity for society to develop
• Social empowerment

Learning for **ALL**... access for all...
Not just **knowledge** but **SKILLS** and **ATTITUDES**

**MAIN FACTORS IMPACTING LEARNING**

- **CONTENT**
  - Assessment **FOR** learning; assessment **OF** learning Certification

- **ASSESSMENT**
  - Instructional/ **Learning methods**
  - Teacher capacity/ **quality**

- **LEARNING**
  - Home Institution/School Society

- **MACRO ENVIRONMENT**

- **PEDAGOGY**
WHAT IS TO BE DONE?
Re-think education ...

Fundamental realignment to needs of Caribbean society in the era of globalization

...towards a seamless education system

An eco-system approach

“our education system needs to be reshaped as a seamless system in which opportunity is open to all with varying pathways to success according to interests, capability and development pace”

in Caribbean Examiner
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• Guide on the side; not sage on the stage (**facilitatory** more than directive)  

• Emphasize **acquisition of competencies** |
| Learning | • **Make learning fun**  

• Interactive; challenging, discovery-based and practical  

• Mastery of principles; development of KSA |
| Assessment | • Assessment **FOR learning**; Assessment **OF learning**  

• **Benchmarking** for regional & global competitiveness |
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<td>• Specification of standards at all levels</td>
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<td>• Structured opportunities for learner progression “from where you are to where you want to be”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qualification framework</td>
<td>• Formal architecture for rationalizing certification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establish equivalences between different knowledge and skills domains: technical, general, creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple pathways</td>
<td>• Establishing pathways for continuous learning, certification and professional development</td>
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CXC’S CONTRIBUTION
HOW WE ADD VALUE TO CARIBBEAN EDUCATION

SYLLABUS DEVELOP
- Teacher & Expert Panels
- Industry experts (incl. Caribbean Diaspora)
- Wiki stakeholder involvement

EXAM DEVELOP
- Subject Experts (teachers)
- Moderators

EXAM ADMIN & MARKING
- Issue exam
- Teacher examiners (SBA and paper marking)
- Standardization

INSTRUCTION SUPPORT
- Syllabus Orientation for teachers
- Instructional Support material
- Website
- Teacher Portals-VSA
- UWI-QC Teacher Certification

LEARNER SUPPORT
- Website
- CXC Notesmaster
- Study Guides
- Textbook endorsement

PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK
- Statistical Digest
- School reports
- Policy analysis
Content expertise

Industry expertise

International benchmarking

Teacher orientation

Interactive Portal

Support material

Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes

DELIVERY

Teacher Competencies
C21 Core literacies & Competencies

Competency based learning

Practicalization of SBAs

Teacher involvement

Formative + Summative

Co-/Extra-curricula recognition

RECEIPT (LEARNING)

Pedagogy of engagement

ASSESSMENT

Unified standards
Item development
World class certification
Examinations as a tool for objective determination of **learning outcomes**; assessing the whole (Caribbean) **person**; contributing to evidence based policy formulation; and supporting a change in the **pedagogical paradigm**.
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