

TRIANGULATING EDUCATION

The Education Magazine

● NCEL: The voice of the participant

● Teacher Stress and Burnout

● Middle Managers
- Roles and Challenges



● Resolution on: THE FUTURE OF THE
TEACHING PROFESSION

● TRIANGULATING JTA

● VOX POP: Triangulating education



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JTA PRESIDENT OWEN SPEID



The Jamaica Teachers' Association prides itself in conducting research through its various arms commonly referred to as committees. For periods extending across decades, our Education and Research Committee has strategically extended itself beyond boundaries in conducting surveys and interviews with the overarching intention of arriving at reasonable conclusions with respect to issues trending in education locally and abroad.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE



Honourable Minister Karl Samuda

The past two and a half decades has seen an increased demand for accountability in all aspects of governance, including within the education system. Expectations that schools should be preparing students to be citizens of a globalised world have fueled reforms in education that are increasingly centred on evidence-based approaches, with the objective being to boost student's performance. Yet, there is a recognition that the way in which evidence is gathered, collated, interpreted and results used

We commend the Education and Research Committee of the 2019-2020 Conference Year for living up to our accepted standard which is promulgated to our stakeholders as they worked under the theme, "Triangulating Education".

We, as a professional body, constantly remind our stakeholders at all levels that education is not merely the qualification certificates achieved, but everything that we learn and apply to our ways of life. In a society which constitutes people of diverse views on educational matters, it is imperative to impress on our people that all stakeholders are significant contributors to the development of a sound educational structure.

It therefore means that we as educators must contrive to have our parents and the society on board where it concerns establishing standards which, if adhered to, will lead to positive values and attitudes among the current generation and generations to follow. We must never lose sight of the fact that we all have rights, but with those rights come responsibilities designed from our established roles in the educational framework.

We appreciate the diverse views of our stakeholders in this initiative and thank the Education and Research Committee for undertaking this awesome responsibility, especially as we are undergoing forced changes in the education sector.

**Owen R. Speid
PRESIDENT**

as a basis for policy formation cannot be divorced from the work and involvement of educators themselves.

Within this context, the Jamaica Teachers' Association's focus on Triangulating Education for your Annual Education Publication is most timely. Policy formulation must be anchored in evidence obtained through various forms of assessment, including teacher observation, student-teacher interaction, tests, peer assessment and practical performance. This information and data can then be used to gauge the educational attainment and progress of individuals and cohorts as well as the effectiveness of programmes and performance of the educational system as a whole. This is an area of collaboration that is sometimes overlooked in the development and implementation of policy and which must be corrected.

I must note however, that the Ministry of Education has long appreciated the importance of a multifaceted approach to information gathering. Indeed, the National Education Inspectorate, an agency of the Ministry has, as part of its mandate, the provision of evidence-based advice to the Minister of Education, Youth and Information to inform policy development. It is also required to present to Parliament and the wider Jamaican public, status reports on the quality of education being provided, and the state of students' attainment and achievement in the education system. The validity and usefulness of its reports are dependent on careful crosschecking of data from multiple sources to ascertain and confirm corroborating findings. Meaningful policy changes cannot be implemented in isolation hence for all stakeholders, triangulation in education is an imperative. Our Ministry remains committed to working with all stakeholders in the continuing efforts to improve students' performance.

As the JTA goes into its 56th Annual General Meeting, I am sure this focus will enrich your discussions and help in the recommendations to the Ministry on how we can continue to work collaboratively for the good of the nation's children.

SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE



Byron Farquharson
Secretary General

I wish to commend the efforts of the Education and Research Committee in seeking to highlight the importance of Research to the education process. While the theme, Triangulating Education, on the surface, might not appear to be the most elegant theme, its implication for education is profound and far reaching. Education, if it is going to be meaningful and beneficial, must seek to serve the total person with the fundamental purpose of making him fit to live and live with. Triangulating Education must of necessity seek to cater to all persons within society, irrespective of their circumstances. Triangulating Education must seek to draw on all the resources within the environment as well as seeking to produce productive citizens who can contribute to human development.

Triangulating Education therefore requires the state to play a pivotal role as well as all other players accepting that they too must have a role to play. By nature, it is non-discriminatory and inclusive. Everyone has a right to it but equally, everyone has a responsibility to ensure that no one is left out or deprived of the possibilities that education presents. Therefore, Triangulating Education for its acceptance must provide quality, access and equity for all citizens.

I therefore embrace the outcome of the findings and materials unearthed through this initiative. It is my hope that others will find value in this great effort.

Congratulations on a job well done.

DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE



Mark Nicely
Deputy Secretary General

I am exhilarated to pen a message for the 2nd edition of a magazine of this nature. The effort to publish this educational magazine is commendable. The content on various educational issues that “triangulates education” provides for much conversation. Consequently, I feel compelled to add my thoughts to this stupendous effort borne out of the salient points awakened by information that is constantly communicated through different media. It also necessitates a position about education and its universal significance.

The importance of education and its intrinsic value to global development has been perpetually posited and reinforced by a range of renowned thinkers, revolutionaries, celebrities, transformational leaders and the common man across the length and breadth of human existence. Among the most profound contributors whose influence transcends time are:

- Nelson Mandela – “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.
- Malcolm X – Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today”.
- Benjamin Franklin – “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”.
- John Dewey – “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself”.
- Aristotle – “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet”.
- Albert Einstein – “Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school”.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. - “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”
- Diogenes - The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.”
- Denzel Washington - “Never confuse movement with progress. Because you can run in place and not get anywhere.”
- Marcus Garvey - “Liberate the minds of men and ultimately you will liberate the bodies of men.”
- Kofi Annan - “Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”
- Barrack Obama - “Higher education can’t be a luxury — it is an economic imperative that every family should be able to afford,”

DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL'S MESSAGE (CONT'D)

This fascination with education, its characteristics and purpose, provide much focus for intellectuals around the world. Across the globe, diverse countries have prioritized differently. In Japan, the focus has been on developing character before knowledge. As a result, Japanese culture focuses on the character-building of children before the introduction of traditional education, to include formal exams and testing. In Finland, the focus is 'Less is More'. The theory is that less time spent standing in front of the children will allow for more time for teachers to invest in professional development.

The belief is that this approach will result in quality hours of teaching and learning rather than a focus on quantity. The methodology is seen as beneficial to both the teachers and students. Teachers in Finland spend approximately 600 hours each year teaching in the classroom; this compares with approximately twice that amount of time in the United States of America.

In Singapore, more is invested in technology. Singapore has one of the highest achieving school statistics in the world. Technology is leveraged to improve schools. The focus is on a social and emotional skills curriculum with the emphasis on discovery, positive psychology around mindset, resilience and grit. Germany ensures that the monitoring of teachers and pupils are not excessive; this, they argue, will minimize the chance of teacher's creativity being inhibited. The result is that the focus will be on the process of education and not the outcome. This approach ultimately will result in less pressure on students and an enjoyable approach to learning.

Having established the ideology that educational expectations and positions differ; a mention of learning theories is imperative. The theme, triangulating education, allows for a careful examination of the major theories in education as an attempt is made to widen my perspective. The theory of **Multiple Intelligences**, developed by Howard Gardner, posits that humans can possess eight different types of intelligence. **Bloom's Taxonomy**, developed by Benjamin Bloom, is a hierarchical model of learning objectives. Lev Vygotsky developed two important classroom concepts, the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)** and **Scaffolding**; these concepts delineate a number of important pedagogical theories. **Schema and Constructivism**, developed by Jean Piaget, suggest that new knowledge that is developed on existing knowledge will allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the new topic. **Behaviourism**, a set of theories laid out by B.F. Skinner, suggests that all behaviour is a response to an external stimulus. Finally, **Spiral Curriculum**, posited by Jerome Bruner, contends that children are capable of comprehending challenging topics and issues, provided that they are presented in an age-appropriate manner.

This summary of the theories transitions into a focus on Jamaica's contribution to education. As we focus on the theme "Triangulating Education", the mantra of the Ministry of Education, "Every child can learn, Every child must" should take centre stage. The time for reflection has come. The adoption of the CVM media statement, "Looking in, looking out, looking even better" must be the minimum expectation and the minimum deliverable that the country's education must, in the short term, commit itself to and on behalf of our students. Our motto, "Out of Many One People" must in the context of educating a nation, be seen as a rallying call for the development of an equitable education system for the nation's children. To educate our nation's children, we need to emancipate ourselves from copying, out of context, the methodologies of countries across the globe, whose education system is rated as the best. As we celebrate brand Jamaica, we must develop an education system tailor-made for the needs of our children based on their cultural and socio-economic realities. Jamaica needs a robust custom-built education system, the authors of which, must disabuse their minds from the cobwebs of what works over yonder. They need to acquire a fixation of purpose to develop, nurture, implement and maintain a Jamaican brand of the education system, grounded in a philosophy which works for our people.

I offer high commendation to the Education and Research Committee for facilitating this very relevant and timely publication. This will, no doubt, add tremendous value to the ongoing academic discourse along the path of enhancing our education system as we continue to "Unite and Serve."

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CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW

The Education and Research committee of the Jamaica Teachers Association is delighted to present the 2019-2020, Education & Research committee Annual Conference publication of Triangulating Education, the education magazine – 2nd edition. Within it, proudly lies a triangulating view of education from varied angles of the sector, in Jamaica, the Caribbean and across the world.

The dimensions of education are wide and varied; however, there are common denominators that connects us through a global lens. It is therefore of paramount importance that the views and perspectives are echoed and educators are given an appreciation of what obtains. Thus, this magazine reflects connectivity and inclusivity as we operate within the global context and are encouraged to apply best practices where applicable as we retool, innovate and network for sustainable development.

A new reality is forced upon us; we are forced to seek methods that will contribute to an alleviation of our dilemma. Our reaction to this dilemma must be fourfold, 1)it must preserve continuity and 2) we must adapt tools that can meet the challenge of the day and also act to mitigate the shortfalls faced 3) be able to be retrofitted systematically and 4) do not exist in a vacuum but be highly relatable and utilizable. Triangulating education is one effective way that permits educators to use the aforementioned methods. We look at it and how it allows us to react in a particular way, a way that does not cast off the past (March 2020) but recast the future; our educational history is a profound dialogue between the past and the present.

As the linkages are explored, one can also consider the triangulation of education involving three main vertices; 1) the conversation 2) the observation/teaching 3) the assessment. Its significance lie in its shape, that of a triangle, which allows the relating of one vertex to another. Typically, educators teach and then assess, in some instances this is sufficient, in others, some students are definitely left behind. To preserve the continuity of this practice – teach then assess – educators must be allowed to follow this trend, it has produced some stalwarts in society, but you need not only apply this practice but also seek the inclusion of other mechanisms that will bolster the education process. Therein lies the solution, conversation - the other vertices.

A universal human characteristic is to seek audience with others, to express ones emotion and way of seeing things that is being co-opted and used for the benefit of education. Teachers talk with students and get feedback. The conversation is based on the principle one is discussing in class and it gives a window of opportunity for students to creatively organize information and disseminate this information during their conversation with the educator. The conversation is not limited to the corridor but also (most importantly) to the classroom. Of interest, one is relating one vertex to another, in perpetuity. Having students in front of you, having to complete a curriculum, having to meet teaching deadline, like setting tests and examinations will remain true but can an innovative way be developed.

In the context of our magazine, the conversation is many fold, as educators through peer-reviewed articles as well as union heads and other educational experts, presents a glaring insight into the world of education. The conversations are held in order to achieve more accurate and qualitative results for particular constructs as educators are forced to embrace a new era. Some of the articles contained within include:

- an insight into ‘Teacher Stress and Burn Out,’ a phenomenal that has plagued the teaching / learning sector world wide as teaching is said to be one of the most stressful professions.
- ‘The Roles of Senior Managers’ - this is critical especially at time as this as the general hierarchical structure must transform in order to deal with the challenges of the new normal.
- A comparative analysis of the education sector in Jamaica and Scandinavia – a noteworthy reflection, as we seek to adopt best practices
- ‘The Voice on NCEL’ - A critical opinionated view of the College of educational leadership
- A view on reconstructing the Learning Community as we adapt to changes within the education sector - a road map on the way forward
- Views from our Caribbean Union of teachers, education international and the Diaspora, among others.

This magazine is therefore a melting pot of views, solid analysis, criticisms and commentaries reflecting the dynamics of change in the education sector. I would therefore like to express sincere thanks to our president, Mr. Owen Spied who afforded us this awesome responsibility of producing this timely magazine. To Dr. Mark Nicely, the administrative officer who sets the scaffold on which the committee is built and facilitates solid team membership; to include the editorial team who stuck to the task.

Well done.



Carole Davis Cunningham



Dr. Mark Nicely



Sandra Hunter



Eugunando Williams



Itena Williams



Lorraine Reid-Henningham



Norton Leveridge



Philmore McCarthy



Rhamona Bromfield



Sheryl Barnaby-West



Tamara Riley



Rose Marie Thompson-Collins



Carlene Miller-Thompson



David Edwards, Ph.D.
General Secretary
Education International

Introduction

In the summer of 2019, some 1,400 delegates at Education International's World Congress looked into the future, passing a resolution "Recognising that over the next 15 years, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to assist teachers in the classroom and the home will expand significantly, as will learning based on adaptive online courses and virtual reality applications." That future turned out to be now, in 2020, with more than a billion students and tens of millions of teachers and support personnel forced out of school by a health crisis to engage in various forms of distance learning. It's no surprise that our global federation of some 32 million educators in 178 nations would resolve that education technology flow from professional pedagogy and be infused with respect for human rights and democratic values. But I think the average reader might find it remarkable – to know that unions whose members have helped lead the response to the pandemic in their communities were taking the lead on some of today's most critical and controversial related social issues months before the virus was even identified.

Below are excerpts of the resolution of the 'Future of the Teaching Profession' for perusal for the necessary discussions on how it will guide our professional development and growth over the next decade.

Resolution on: THE FUTURE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Text by: Education International

Published: 23.09.2019

Last edited: 23.09.2019

The 8th World Congress of Education International (EI), meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, from 21st to 26th July 2019:

- (1) Noting that the development of artificial intelligence (AI) software and super-fast computers, combined with sophisticated and highly capable robotics, will change the work of most workers including teachers and professionals in education;
- (2) Recognising that over the next 15 years, the use of AI technologies to assist teachers in the classroom and the home will expand significantly, as will learning based on adaptive online courses and virtual reality applications;
- (3) Asserting that the implementation of sophisticated technology in the learning environment and workplace will happen regardless of the actions the world's education unions do, or do not, take. However, how that implementation is done and the effect it will have on teachers can and should be influenced by education unions;
- (4) Noting that the AI in the education market is dominated by a small number of corporations, namely Google, Microsoft, IBM, Pearson, and Amazon;
- (5) Stating that there is a distinction between simple robotics that have been in the work environment for decades and the advent of sophisticated AI. In the past, robotics frequently replaced repetitive manual labour. Today's AI attempts to partially replace human thinking;
- (6) Asserting that new technology can never substitute for the relationship between teacher and student or teacher and class. Technology should supplement but should not supplant teaching. These technologies, which include AI, should not, under any circumstances, jeopardise the professional independence of teachers;
- (7) Asserting the importance of uniquely human skills and capabilities in the face of automation and robotisation. The role of education should increasingly be to support students in developing soft skills and non-cognitive skills, such as creativity, communication, curiosity, civic skills, and emotional intelligence. Education in a globalised and digital world must foster values of cooperation, intercultural awareness, democracy and a sense of responsibility;
- (8) Affirming that the advancement of new AI technologies in the learning environment has amplified the "digital divide" and increased inequity. Many schools do not have the resources to implement new technologies because it requires significant investment in information technology (IT) as well as reliable internet access;

(9) Recalling that most research, including recent studies on the future of work by the OECD, estimate that today's technology, driven by AI, will fundamentally change the labour market in in the next 10 to 12 years. Predictions vary greatly, but some researchers estimate that 400 million to 800 million jobs worldwide could be automated by 2030;

(10) Noting that many predict that the large job loss will be mitigated by the need for workers in yet-to-be-determined jobs. However, these new jobs will require workers to obtain new skills. How workers will develop these new skills and who will pay for all this "upskilling" are two of the most important questions;

(11) Affirming that education will become a life-long pursuit for most workers. In order to have the flexibility that new technology requires workers will have to continue their formal education throughout their lives. This need for life-long upskilling is one reason the education field will see less job loss than other sectors during the revolution;

(12) Believing that the future of union work will be, at least in part, to oversee and support the constant, life-long upskilling of their members that the new work environment will require. It is crucial that unions stand up for their members and make sure that good and free continuous professional development on AI is provided so that education personnel can get the skills they need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing world of work;

(13) Stating that all unions must get ahead of the digitisation curve. Unions are uniquely positioned to address the challenges posed by AI in the learning environment and workplace, and these challenges are growing every day. Every union should dedicate time and resources to understand the potential challenges AI brings to the work of their members. When unions understand the impact of AI, they can effectively help their members adjust to the new work environment.

(14) Mandates the EI Executive Board:

(i) To assess the relevance of including in the EI work plan a component to map and document the development of technologies in the different environments where EI affiliated unions are active;

(ii) To encourage member organisations to engage with the public they serve and develop a "social compact" on the appropriate use of AI and the future of work. The public needs to gain an understanding of the inherent risks if a large number of workers are replaced by learning machines. They must understand that even if their own jobs are not directly affected by artificial intelligence or even if they are not in the workforce, without a functioning social compact, they will also feel the negative impacts of this revolution;

(iii) To consider the need to establish a commission of representatives from unions, employers, the government and OECD to study and make recommendations regarding the scope and use of artificial intelligence and robotics in the workplace as well as the future of work in our country. Similar commissions should be convened in every state / country.

(iv) To develop framing guides for collective bargaining language and public policies on the possible implementation of artificial intelligence and robotics in the workplace and in public service. These guides would help local workers develop the agreements and policies as quickly as possible without having to redo the analysis that was done at the national level;

(v) To jointly develop strategies (political, legislative, and media) to ensure the possible infusion of artificial intelligence and robotics in the workplace protects workers, is well regulated, protects privacy and creates numerous "free of cost" opportunities for workers to acquire the skills they need to secure gainful employment;

(vi) To develop internal strategies that include job sector policies regarding AI and programmes to help under-employed workers obtain new skills and secure full-time work. Unions should reorganise themselves to be essential, life-long partners for workers as they navigate this new, ever changing world of work;

(vii) To affirm the importance of uniquely human skills and capabilities in the face of automatisisation and robotisation and promote the role of teachers in developing soft skills and non-cognitive skills in addition to cognitive skills;

(viii) To continue to be involved with the global union community and work together on successful ways to deal with this new reality. This is not a time to pull back; it is time to seek out new information, new understandings, and build consensus on the best ways for the world's unions to influence the world of work in the next few decades.

Education International

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TRIANGULATING JTA

What is the current status of education?

The current status of education globally sits squarely in the matrix of technological development and the availability of access to information and communication technology (ICT). This arguably has been true of every era known to mankind. It is so, that scientists and anthropologists have generally agreed that the needs of man have not changed over the ages. However, the way those needs have been met from prehistoric times to our present age have undergone radical changes. The world has lived through three and is now about to exit the fourth industrial revolution in some parts of the world, while others are just hearing of it. Wherever one falls on the spectrum it is clear that all are affected by the advent of the technologically driven Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, augmented reality, genome editing, 3D printing and the general thinking occasioned by technology's rapid advance. Humanity is faced with the questions of sustainable development on the one hand and the ethical principles with which we will implement the use of these technologies. It begs the questions of food security, healthcare advances, clean air and water, safe shelter, communication modes and globalization concepts. These developments and considerations are taking us into the fifth industrial revolution which grapples with the possibilities of man and technology co-existing in such harmony that enhances rather than renders the human capacity second rate.

In education, the advances experienced in industries often lag behind on many school campuses. The reasons would make for an article in itself. What is clear to many educators at this time is that this lagging behind cannot continue as we witness the floundering of economic models and their promise. For some, the current pandemic has only hastened the inevitable and forced schools that could, to leapfrog into using modes of ICT. Within a relatively short period of time a tiny virus has travelled the globe and literally brought life as we know it to a standstill. The industries that had embraced technology or were able to use technology are the ones that have survived best. Schools in the traditional mode have literally been shut down. The jury is still out on the level of appreciation of the times that educators now face and what it will take to fully integrate technology into our teaching, learning and assessment processes in a meaningful way.

What is the vision?

Let us start from a simple but profound premise. Educational institutions should produce graduates who are capable of the basic use of technology found in any industry regardless of its service to the user. These industries can perhaps be best framed by the ¹United Nations seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or even closer home, Jamaica's own Vision 2030 National Development Plan. This is not the case today. Educators and schools therefore, should be in the forefront of redesigning the face and application of ICT in education. This redesign should result in spaces that are aligned in concept and objectives to what the world of work and play need to look like ten-fifteen years into the future. At the same time, the introduction or refashioning of ICT cannot be seen as a panacea for all the core and opportunity gaps in education delivery. It has to be seen as another tool in education that is more aligned to the mode of access to information, communication and innovation of the day. This realignment is essentially about the quality of life we envision. Whether or not most of our schools can begin to own any part of this premise, asks that one examines the relevance and or reach of education policy initiatives regarding technology. Education International, the education union parent body, has been proactive in offering policy guidelines to unions globally to shape the nature of advocacy in this area. Perhaps the latest, most important thinking from this body is contained in the *International Protocol on the Use of Information and Communication's Technology in Education*. While this document sounds a cautionary note akin to the ethical nature of the use of technology in a global context, it clearly delineates the need for the blending of technology into the teaching and learning process.

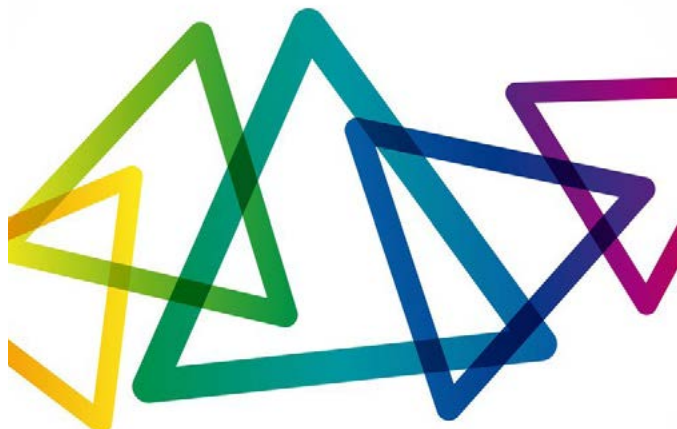


Miss Nadine Molloy
Executive Board Member
Education International (EI)

First Jamaican elected to serve on the EI Board

What does It mean for the teacher?

Educators need to let go of the last vestiges of the thinking that we are repositories of knowledge and be facilitators to our students. Additionally, students should be guided along the process of problem solving and discovery using whatever ICT capacity that is available to us. Our students need to have their abilities to try new things, fail, learn and re-learn supported by schools. They need makerspaces where they have the opportunities to experiment and make new things via trial and error with us cheering them on every step of the way. Exposure to even the most rudimentary of tools both physical and digital will unearth potentials and visions we cannot begin to imagine once used with creativity and innovation. It means that we have to become new beings as teachers and educators who think student-centred engagement at all times. We have to be creative and innovative with the use of ICT and other tools to maintain our relevance in next few years. Our remit as teachers have already changed and is changing. We cannot afford to be left behind. In our collective role as union members, our advocacy must also be on the side of capacity building. It is known that teacher unions walk on two legs: professionalism and advocacy. This is a time for this powerful combination to be used to set a blistering pace for the policymakers and funding partners. Schools have begun to lead in this area, mostly through the collaborative efforts of the staff and have demonstrated that it can happen. Let us adopt the theme from Education International's 2019 World Congress which mandates that the quadrennium should see ***“Educators and their Unions Taking the Lead.”***



How does government support the needed skills-set?

The current era calls for educators to be disruptive in thinking and actions. This is even more of a clarion call for our Jamaican educators who do not have the benefit of an even spread of technology across the sector. It will require innovation and creative thinking based on the local context to begin the revolution in our schools. We will have to find the formula to create public-private partnerships to support this new imperative in education. The value of applying ICT in the classroom is inestimable and therefore justifies the time and effort. Governments are to be the leading facilitator in guiding meaningful changes and inputs into the education sector through training primarily and grant funding opportunities in partnership with foundations and other philanthropic enterprises. It is important that the teachers be an integral part of this process in order for greater appreciation at all levels. A top down process where teachers are told to do or simply given a device without the proper orientation and guidance, will only result in at best a goodwill gesture to a lost account. Governments must act now with a type of grassroots approach to capture everyone.

What do we have to do to make it successful?

³Bernard Marr, in a YouTube video shared several things he believes schools should do to prepare for the fourth Industrial Revolution and I find them to be in keeping with what the future quality of life is demanding of schools. He speaks of the redefining of the purpose of education in a very direct way. Schools should no longer prepare students for “something” in particular but for “anything” that comes at them. This is so riveting when one contemplates that up to eighty percent of the jobs as we know them will no longer exist in 2030. On the strength of his presentation, the need for every school to become a STEAM school is a vision too long delayed. All schools have the basics to so do and should move with alacrity to begin where they are. There is no shame in starting small by first recognizing the vast human potential that is framed by emotional intelligence and creativity so that the technology and man work together to make life more bearable and cross cultural from all angles. Life-long learning is not a new concept but takes on new meaning in a rapidly emerging world where an appreciation for languages, historical context and tolerance are part and parcel of what fills out the human technology experience. This must be woven into the rethinking on how educators are trained to deliver in our classrooms and equally be reflected in the new curriculum that we design for our schools. When we scrutinise the building blocks of our institutions we must be honest about the readiness of our curriculum, systems and policies, capacity, culture and leadership to embrace this new norm and begin the process of small wins. Then we must use the resulting findings wisely.

Education International in its comprehensive statement on ICT in schools indicates that,

“ICT has the capacity to enhance the learning process and facilitate communications within education institutions and between educators and learners but it must be used in education institutions under the supervision of qualified well-trained professionals with the expertise in pedagogy and in education to ensure that its impact does not damage or undermine the learning process or the development of learners.”⁴

This excerpt captures the essence of the critical role of teacher conversations, observation and the ultimate education product in this new paradigm that is framed by the demands of the 4th Industrial Revolution. Relevant, meaningful and lifelong student learning in all its facets must be our mission driven by a vision of us taking the lead wherever we are in ensuring that change, however incremental, takes place. The time for disruption, first in our own collective minds, is ripe and we need to move in tandem with the signs that are clear for us to see. Then, we must take it beyond the confines of our campuses to capture the imagination and support of those whom we serve as key stakeholders. The message must be clear that we are making provision for the advent of the Fifth Industrial Revolution inside our classrooms. We know our history, we value our beloved traditions, we keep our rights front and centre but we must change with the times in a responsible manner. Let us make ⁵“Jamaica the place choice to live, work, raise families and do business” and I add, to retire.

¹United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

²Education International, International Protocol on the Use of Information and Communications Technology in Education <https://www.ei-ie.org>

³Mart, Bernard 2019, 8 Skills Every School Should be Teaching, <https://youtu.be/1cuzylEplK0>

⁴Education International, International Protocol on the Use of Information and Communications Technology in Education <https://www.ei-ie.org>

⁵Vision 2030, Jamaica <http://www.vision2030.gov.jm/National-Development-Plan>

Regional Perspective an Educational Integration



I am delighted to submit this article on “*Regional Perspective an Educational Integration*” to be published in the 2nd edition of your Annual Education Magazine for your 56th Annual Conference. This is a timely and quite relevant topic for discussion especially in the context of the impact of COVID-19 on the educational landscape in the region and across the world. The pandemic has highlighted the need for small developing states like ours to develop a plan of action to ensure high-level resilience, using an integrated approach for greater effect and sustainability.

“Education, according to Nelson Mandela, is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. This statement holds true, particularly for us in the Caribbean Region. We must endeavour to invest in our education systems and peoples of the region to overcome the remnant of our past and to forge a new pathway for our region.

Quality education connotes a type of education system that caters for all our people and rooted in the use of technological tools as a means of enabling innovative and productive citizens. This innovation calls for the transformation of our minds, systems and structures of our education framework. The work of CARICOM and the integration dream cannot be realized unless we as a region move resolutely to benchmark our achievements based on set educational standards or framework that is globally competitive. The reality is that outside of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examination, the Early Childhood, Primary, Vocational and teacher education programmes vary from island to island. This gap requires immediate attention if we are to produce the idea of an integrated education system.

As a region that shares a common history and similar vulnerabilities by virtue of our sizes, locations and other socio-economic disparities, we must find common grounds on which to integrate and coordinate our education plans and policies, while fully appreciating the local realities of our states. Such integration and coordination would, no doubt, significantly aid in the integration process and allow for the region to be more productive and indeed prosperous. We must take a keen look at the content, skills and attitudes that are contained in the curricula of our schools and how we measure students’ achievements across the curriculum.

Closely aligned to the need for common standards across the education system is the harmonization of Quality Assurance at the tertiary level. With the exception of the University of the West Indies (U.W.I), states, for the most part, have other national colleges or post-secondary institutions. These institutions have been developed to enhance human capital in the regions. The major challenges we have is that the standards by which qualifications are adjudged are not the same in different spaces. The requirements for entry to many of these training programmes are not clearly defined and do not reflect world-class standards. It is therefore not a far-fetched idea to see the implications of free movement, employment, quality education and development in the region. As we seek to arrest the challenges, the UWI, no doubt should

play a greater role in the development of an inter-state tertiary system in the region as we seek to register a framework for the advancement of our people through quality education. The online open-source education revolution has changed how tertiary education is resourced and delivered. The quality imperative is even more pronounced in such a dynamic learning environment. As such, educators and policymakers must be proactive in shaping the way forward to eliminate things just happening sporadically. When we speak of quality, it must not be seen as a product but instead a process that must be guided by well-defined standards. It must be evident at all levels of our institutional operations, to include, programme at the individual levels and in administration.

With the improvement and the increasing use of technology to deliver education, our systems are severely challenged for several reasons. These include the internationalization of education, greater diversity of students’ profile and needs, increased pressure of global competition, economic efficiency, and the need to produce a workforce to meet the 21st century demands. All these issues require a robust quality assurance system in the region to ensure that we are on the cutting edge of development in education and training while maintaining standards that are globally competitive and in the best interest of our region.

I am aware of the work CARICOM has done in the area of quality assurance in terms of developing standards and qualification framework’ but the implementation process seems to be severely impeded and so this needs to be our main focus. The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) which is the Quality Assurance network in the region, has been trying to aid in the process of aligning standards of quality but has not reaped much success. It is my view, therefore, that the efforts being made require greater political will. If our leaders are serious about the development of the region, focusing on the quality standards in our tertiary institutions is paramount. They must, therefore, commit to funding these entities since funding has remained inimical to their development. Tertiary education is the driver for human and national development across the world. It must, therefore, be seen by our leaders as a public good that must be nurtured, supported and the synergy for the advancement of the region.

As we contemplate our present realities and future prospects, let us take inspiration from words of wisdom by John Ruskin *“Quality is never an accident it is always the result of intelligent effort”*

Dr. Garth Anderson
President
Caribbean Union of Teachers



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A comparison of Jamaica's Education System with Scandinavian Countries Finland, Sweden and Singapore

Submitted by International Relations Committee

The concept of the provision of quality education has gained increased currency in literature and in sustainable development plans internationally. Extensive structural adjustments have created paradigm shifts; as efforts are made to meet the educational needs of the society; so that the learner can function globally. Still many countries experience transformational challenges that repudiate effectiveness and efficiency. Jamaica, like numerous other countries struggles with structural vulnerabilities in its provision of education. Even with many challenges Jamaica's Education System has been ranked as one of the top Educational Models by other Caribbean countries with similar history. Being the third largest island in the Greater Antilles with a population of approximately 2.6 million people; it has been a leader in many dimensions of regional and international life.

As a major competitor in the space, what are the explicitly recognized qualities of the education system that it provides? A comparison of major aspects of Jamaica's Education System such as the payment of fees, the provision of adequate teaching resources, standardized testing, teacher qualification, streaming of students and structured daily timetable was done to ascertain how on par Jamaica was with the three (3) top ranked Scandinavian countries: Sweden, Finland and Singapore.



Finland Education System is regarded as one of the best in the world, which other countries are striving to emulate. Education in Finland is free at all levels starting at kindergarten, primary, secondary up to tertiary. Furthermore, all the learning materials including textbooks are free of charge during kindergarten and basic education. All students from kindergarten to upper secondary level are provided a free lunch at each school (EDUFI, 2018).

Students and teachers have flexible arrival and dismissal times. Finland also has the shortest school year and days in the Western World. Students do one standardized test, (National Matriculation Examination) and they are not streamed in Finland. In fact, students usually have the same teacher throughout primary school. According to Ahtee, (2008) Finland is rated as having one of the world's high-quality, research-based teacher education or as (Sahlberg, 2011b) describes, highly qualified teachers. Another factor related to teacher education is that teacher education programme are highly selective. Therefore, some of the best high school graduates are selected to be a prospective teacher (Sahlberg, 2011b).

Sweden's Education System is not only ranked as one of the best in the world but, is described by many as 'education of the future'. The teacher education programme plays an important role in Swedish education policy. However, Sweden has a shortage of qualified teachers, even with a policy in place. Notably, there is no other programme that is so often evaluated or that has been so regulated by politicians over time (Hallsén, 2013). Like Finland Education is free and in this case, teachers and students are given free lunches. Students schedules throughout, the week are normally not organized and structured as in other countries. Schools in Sweden are fully resourced and students are streamed throughout their grade levels and all have to complete standardized testing.

The Education System in Singapore is regarded as the best in the world. Singapore has the highest achieving students in the world and tops International Labour Boards when it comes to learning. The Education System has been acknowledged as a "sustained improver" and described as "Great" in the McKinsey report (McKinsey, 2010). Singapore's success as it relates to education is largely due to the fact that the budget allocation is high. This is so, perhaps because Singapore lacks Natural Resources hence, they invest heavily in education.

Teachers in Singapore are among the top 30% of graduates and teaching is regarded as a top profession. Students are taught by specialized teachers from age three (3) onwards in well-resourced classrooms. Students are usually streamed in Singapore and tuition fees are normally paid in Singapore; however, these are mainly privately owned.

The main aspects of Singapore, Finland and Sweden's Education System have been outlined. How is Jamaica's Education System in comparison to these first world countries. Finland, and Sweden offer free education starting at kindergarten. Though, the government has taken full responsibility for the running/daily operations of public schools' parents are asked to pay a voluntary contribution to the school. In Jamaica there are private schools that charge tuition fee. Payment of fees are also similar to that of Jamaica in Singapore. Students in Jamaica, Singapore and Sweden are also introduced to standardized tests as early as kindergarten in contrast students in Finland who are required to sit one standardized test, in order to matriculate to university or higher education.

Research indicates that adequate teaching resources is not an area of concern in Scandinavian countries mentioned above. In fact, students are equipped with individual devices and classrooms have the necessary tools to assist with teaching and learning. This is in contrast to Jamaica's Education System where teaching resources are in limited supply or are lacking. Compared to Sweden, Finland and Singapore where students have individual technological devices, while in some areas in Jamaica even the availability of internet service is a challenge.



Though, the practice of streaming students throughout their grade level is widely practiced by Jamaica. In Singapore and Sweden in order for students to be placed in an area it would have to be seen as the best that would suit his or her career path; this is not so in Finland as, students usually remain with the same teacher throughout their early years of schooling.

Having highly qualified teachers is a desired goal for most countries. Fortunately, in Finland and Singapore this is not a goal or wish instead this is a requirement. Research has shown that Finland and Singapore are rated as having one of the world's high-quality, research-based and specialized set of teachers. Hence, teaching is regarded as a top profession in these countries. Sweden on the other hand, though, its matriculation requirement in teacher training programme is similar to that of Finland and Singapore there is a significant lack of trained teachers to fill vacancies. Compared to Jamaica, there is a significant difference as it relates to teacher matriculation. The minimum requirement outlined by law for teachers to fill vacancies is a teaching diploma. The sad reality is that most students matriculating into teaching programmes selected that career not because it was their desired career path but they did not meet the required standard for career of choice.

Sweden and Finland's success in education can be attributed to its unstructured daily planning as highlighted above. Both systems allow flexible arrival and dismissal times. With Finland having the shortest school year and days in the Western World. In contrast Jamaica's education system is likened to that of Singapore with rigid timetables. This structured way of learning is normally practiced even after dismissal as students are enrolled in extra lessons and have to complete homework assignments.

Continued refinement and restructuring of the Jamaican education system is mandatory if it is to be elevated and to be highly ranked, similar to the Scandinavian countries being notarized. Hopefully, evidence of significant improvement will be seen in order to accomplish goals and targets of Vision 20/30.

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Heartfelt thanks and congratulations go to our E-Testing Team for the groundbreaking work carried out in successfully developing and implementing our E-Testing System. We saw the dream and lived it. We did it!

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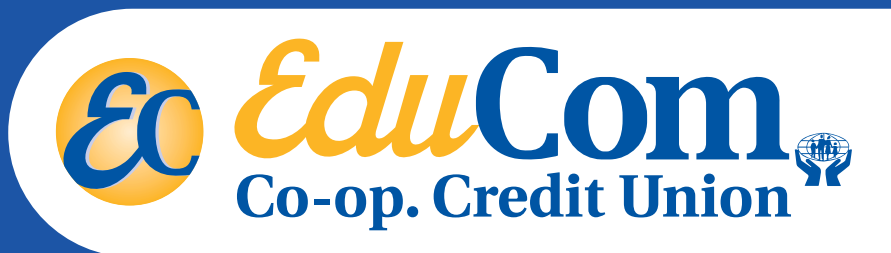
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VOX POP : TRIANGULATING EDUCATION

ST. CATHERINE

Sandra Hunter Parish president (2019-2020)

The social model of education has been disrupted by the globalizing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transnationalization of the responses has seen 'physical distancing' being championed as one way to prevent or reduce the pace at which the infection takes place. It has defrocked the established standards of how education is offered and asks for deep thinking. COVID-19 has provided a catalyst for the intensification of efforts to seriously examine how we offer educational opportunities. The common concept of "*new normal*" is rather ambiguous as it denotes a falsified averageness that is a cultural feature. The universal capitalistic mode of operation does not allow me to visualize economies where all individuals have equal access to the required gadgets and connecting properties to successfully engage in an online mode of operation. Additionally, numerous theorists have advocated and we have practiced; to use different types of activities in order to reach different types of learners among which are those who need substantial scaffolding. Subsequent shocks to the system must be of concern as we "wonder" about the future. We must make mental adjustments; we must view coherently, political, institutional, theoretical and ideological positions, in order to prescribe convenient and easily accessed education in times of uncertainty.

LET'S RESCUE OUR BOYS

By Mr. Jasford Gabriel - President Elect

The issue of the underperformance of our boys continue to be a major concern in the Jamaican Education System. Administrative and expert staff at the Mico University College Child Assessment and Research in Education (CARE) centre in Kingston, reveal that boys feature heavily (upwards of 70%) in their assessments for learning disorders and underperformance.

We must move beyond contemplation to implement strategies such as

- Gender specific instruction
- National boys' mentorship programme
- Greater investment in and expansion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training and,
- Addressing the inequities existing in our education system

It is well established that enough research has been conducted in the area of boy's underachievement, invariably unearthing massive deficits in boy's education. It is a most opportune time to bond together in the quest to save our young men, many of whom become irresponsible and misguided individuals who continue to terrorise the society.

ST. MARY

Standardized Tests: Its downfall.

By: **Timroy A Shaw JP** - Parish President

Standardized tests refer to any test generated from a common set of question where students are required to answer under similar controlled conditions. Standardized tests are designed to show what students have learned, but do they really reflect students' true abilities? Are we catering to Gardner's Multiple Intelligence? Standardized tests usually lead to unfavorable practices such as:

- Narrowing of the curriculum
- Teaching to the test
- Loss of instructional time which is spent on test preparation

Students development for the real world not only take into account their academic performance, thus classroom instructions should go beyond just test preparation; but fostering students' skills, talents, abilities and creativity into becoming worthwhile 21st century citizens.

ST. JAMES

Kareen Binns - Parish President

TRIANGULATION EDUCATION

The COVID-19 crisis caused the parent/teacher interaction in our students' lives to become sharply interwoven through the immediate Emergency Remote Response initiative, pushed by the MOE. We were called upon to cater to our children through the use of online modality, which exposed our limitations. This mammoth task saw Online training and collaborative activities among the MOE, JTC and teachers' groups materializing to bridge teaching/learning gaps that developed. Nonetheless, for the way forward, as we work with our children ensure meaningful conversation, observation of non-verbal signals and the promotion of real life solutions are all a pivotal aspect of our best practice.

TRELAWNY Triangulating Education

Triangulation is a process by which a teacher collects evidence about student learning; this evidence is collected from three different sources. These sources are conversations, observations, and products.

It is quite commendable that in recent times, the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) has introduced School Based Assessments as a significant method of triangulating education. Despite many concerns surrounding the advent of SBA's for a final assessment in CXC, these have given educators and students a better chance of achieving a more accurate portrayal of learning as oppose to in the past when the assessment of students' learning depended mostly on their products instead of including conversations and observations. I believe that CXC has met the need for fairness in assessment by using SBA's as a means of triangulating education.

Horace Mckellop
Parish President Trelawny

MANCHESTER Rosemarie Thompson - Parish President

The disruption in our education system at present was long overdue.

This paradigm shift will allow us to position ourselves technologically to prepare for any pandemic this world might experience in the future.

The lack of resources is critical to the development of the nation's education system. All categories of schools should establish an e-structure framework to facilitate our next normal. Covid-19 serves as a constant reminder that no man is an island.we need to collaborate with each other and use our strengths to complement each other's weaknesses. The collaboration among educators in our parish is phenomenal, if we continue on this same trajectory we will be victorious in the end.

KINGSTON PARISH ASSOCIATION Paula Plummer - Parish President

In some communities, there have been high instances of limited access to dedicated electronic learning opportunities during the period of COVID-19 induced school closures. This can never be allowed to happen again. All students have a right to equity in educational opportunities. As our country puts in place measures to keep the economy open, it is imperative that **every student in every school** be given **every opportunity** to participate with efficacy and pride in their learning, in any situation. This will ensure that in the future, **all Jamaicans** can contribute to the continued development of the society.

ST. ELIZABETH Jacqueline Brown - Parish President

ASSESSMENT THROUGH TRIANGULATION EDUCATION

Triangulation is the process by which a teacher collects evidence about a student learning over a period through observations, conversations and student products. Triangulating evidence provides a more valid and reliable picture of student learning. Success criteria will inform students of what the successful attainment of the learning goals look like. It is important that teachers and students have a common understanding of what is to be learned as this will be the focus of assessment after a period of learning. Collecting the evidence should be intentional and purposeful which would better assess if the students achieve the required benchmark. Conversations, observations and products allow teachers to see the level of attainment by their students.

SCHOOL CAUGHT IN A DILEMMA Dr. Garth Anderson (Immediate Past President)

There has been much debate in the society concerning the ruling of the Supreme Court on July 31, 2020, on the Kensington Primary School case; a day before our Emancipation celebration. It was seen by many as an insult to us as people of African descent, and highlighted the reality that despite the strides we have made, we have a far way to go as a nation as it relates to affirming our black identity. Many viewed the no braids, no beads and no locs policy of Kensington Primary as an affront and an infringement on the right of free cultural expressions.

The Court ruled that there was no violation of the child's constitutional right. In my view, the school is caught between a rock and a hard place. One thing for sure, it cannot be a place where you have a 'free for all' reign of freedom of expression of our cultural identity. The reality is that now we are discussing hair, but if we should simply allow students to deport themselves as they want, the question is, what next? My own experience as an administrator has caused me not to readily join the outcry for a prescriptive policy outline from the Ministry of Education, as school rules are usually germane to the local experiences.

The complexity of the school environment, requires rules that apply to all who operate in the space and so it is a very delicate balancing act that must be undertaken, to create an environment that is supportive of teaching and learning. Indeed, schools are established to prepare learners for life, that is, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary for the progress of society. The great challenge which lies in the responsibility- is to determine in this pluralistic society whose knowledge, skills and attitude should take precedence. I am sure that despite the well-measured ruling by the court, the jury is still out on this one. My suggestion is that we take note of words of wisdom from Alvin Toffler "*The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn*".

ST. ANN**Alando Lawrence** - Parish President**How socio-economic status affects education**

Socio-economic status is one of the many factors that affect a child's education.

The position that the child's family occupies as it relates to standard of living, income and social involvement in their community determine to a great extent the value placed on education in the family.

Students who fall in the lower ranks of the socio-economic ladder are often at a disadvantage as the family might have to sacrifice education for something as basic as food or healthcare.

On the contrary those of the upper echelon do not need to make such a sacrifice hence access to education is not a struggle.

CLARENDON**Marjorieth Manning (Mrs.) JP** - Parish President

Triangulating Education is a creative way to reach this 21st century generation, most of whom are active learners. This method allows learners to be given a chance to play an active role throughout all stages of assessment, to own their work and obtain feedback on their performance. Additionally, this method lends itself to student involvement; which includes conversations with the teacher and discussions or interviews about information collected from teacher observations. As a result, students are encouraged to invest in their own learning which ultimately increase student motivation. However, be reminded that the paradigm in our classroom has evolved into student centered learning with teachers facilitating this process to aid our learners' growth and development.

ST. ANDREW**Tanya Lynch** - Parish President

The coronavirus virus has severely impacted learning by compromising the diversity that's usually found in the teaching styles of the classroom setting. The online teaching/learning environment that was aggressively implemented in schools by MOE, further crippled the opportunities of educational growth for students who were already lacking basic resources. Therefore, not having the presence of these teaching styles, parents are being burdened with responsibilities teachers are trained to fulfil and teachers are lacking the skills needed to help a diverse student group to adapt to the online modalities. One size doesn't fit all. We need to ensure that all teachers are able to teach in various ways through this medium in a digestible manner to the majority of students.

ST. THOMAS**Itena Williams** - Parish President

The advent of COVID 19, has created a new norm in our educational system prompting stake holders, many if not all to seek to acquire necessary devices to facilitate online teaching/ learning for their children/students with a blended approached. Similarly, to other parishes, St. Thomas have been seeking to be innovative and maximise the potential for effective and evidentiary learning with the resources afforded us. However, the challenges are real as St. Thomas educators boast several hills and valleys which are now known hindrances for cell site signals to be received in certain places; thus creating a challenge for students to access online learning.

Additionally, having a compatible device is another challenge for several stakeholders especially those residing in deep rural communities and who never saw the necessity of such non-essential luxury devices.

Based on in-formal research, consultation and feedback through our various District Associations, approximately 70% of persons residing in deep rural communities, reported they were more focused obtaining the necessities of daily living, against acquiring Smart devices. Against this background, the Ministry promised to fast track its tablet in school initiative and partner with the various internet providers for reliable internet coverage and access.

WESTMORELAND**Jean P. Brown** - Parish President

Triangulating Education in light of the Covid-19 Era

2020 was dubbed “The Year of Perfect Vision”. The education sector was among those that aimed to attain perfection and maximize prosperity. It was already communicated that pedagogy would be seeing some changes. No one knew that one virus would be the means of triangulating this sector in such a dramatic way. Education is now more tri-partal than ever before as Covid -19 forced parents, educators and students to work together more synchronously with existing or new technologies to achieve common goals.

As there will be no retreating to the former methods of pre Covid-19 ; the new hybrid / blended approach is of essence in keeping with the new norm. Hence everyone: parents, educators and students must be fully prepared and ready so as not to be left behind. Therefore, educating, training and continuously evaluating the process and the stakeholders must be a part of the new thrust forward.

PORTLAND**KENEISHA TAYLOR** - Parish President**THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

Schools will be reopened in September, how many parents are ready and willing to face the new norm?

How will the education practitioners deal with this new situation? How much can we keep our children apart?

Parent at the basic and infant school level are now finding it more difficult to get their young ones ready for the new school year as it is now more demanding economically.

The pandemic has taken a nose dive in our little island and this has started to drive fear in me. We are going out this September, we have no idea if COVID – 19 will be seated in one of our benches waiting on the register to be marked to raise his/her hand to say present.

Teachers will now have to be on guard every minute every hour to ensure that each child uses the wash hand stations, breaking at intervals for each child to be sanitized. There will be no more lunch time socializing with fellow colleagues. We will be marooned in our classrooms, ensuring that protocols are observed.

It is my view that if this virus continues to rise we will be right where we were March 13,2020. (Working from home). Those students in the remote areas with no internet connectivity, will suffer. Does the Ministry of Education and the government have enough resources to cater to the needs of the less fortunate?

In a third world country such as Jamaica, if the pandemic continues to spiral, the future of our education system will be “dark”. Especially those at the infant and primary level who requires face to face interactions and those who cannot afford the necessary gadgets for teaching and learning

HANOVER**Nadienne Crossman** - Parish President

TRIANGULATING EDUCATION

The “new normal” has had school leaders and teachers now preparing to educate our students differently. It cannot be the same old way. The teacher now has to shed the role as the giver of information and more of a facilitator. A more creative and technological engagement of students and parents in lessons taught has to be employed. We have now been faced with the reality we have been ignoring that we now have to train a generation for jobs that do not exist as yet.

The collaborative efforts of the major parties in the education sector is key and most importantly the voices of the teachers in the classroom must be heard. The top down model needs to be put aside and a bottom up model done.

*Thanks to the Editorial Team***Miss Sandra Hunter** – St. Catherine Parish President, Secretary of Education and Research Committee**Dr. Mark Nicely** - Deputy Secretary General Member Services and Industrial Relations Unit**Sonia Cunningham**

Let's have a conversation

By: Sandra Hunter



The world's global virus has offered opportunities for restructuring and creating of diversified technological capabilities. It would appear that responding to the pandemic requires a strengthening of innovative technical savviness that encompasses the use of telecommunication, computerization and informatics which eliminates barriers of distance of time and space. Several individuals in a myriad of geographical locations, have referred to the realities in education being experienced since COVID -19 as the "new normal." Normalization denotes unrestrained cultural existence, fortified by lived human geographical indicators. This normalcy is transitioned into the position that it is an uncontested fact that internationally schools were closed physically, for an extended period in an effort to eliminate the spreading of the virus; as governments try to deal with the unseen attacks. **What do you think, is this now the new normal?**

Fast forward to now; to a situation where schools will be reopened for the coming school year with several adjustments. An interrogation of the pervasive information available has led to much insight, but ostensibly there are challenges that can materialize. The immediate antecedents of the proliferation of the virus appears to be maddeningly interlinked into any plan of education. Consequently, the Ministry of Education has suggested that schools be opened strategically in order to ensure that the population is not adversely affected. The following is a part of the bulletin giving the instruction.

The Ministry has taken the decision to approve a phased resumption plan for the new school year accordingly:

September 7, 2020 to September 11, 2020 – This period will be referred to as "Simulation Week". All schools should have a day for each year group of students to attend school to simulate or to be orientated to the acceptable practices and safety guidelines to be observed on a daily basis. This will allow for a full test of the systems in place to manage the spread of the Coronavirus and for changes to be implemented accordingly. This exercise is very important for students and staff to become accustomed to the new normal especially in light of their health and safety. Depending on school type and size, two different year groups of students may be accommodated on the same day.

September 14, 2020 to 25, 2020 – Only the upper school students should report to school, that is, Grades 4-6 for the primary schools and Grades 9-11 for the secondary schools.

September 28, 2020 – Grades 1-3 and 7-8 should resume school.

Grades 12-13 should report to face to face classes **October 26, 2020**. The CXC results will be released by **September 22, 2020** and this will be utilized to determine the Sixth Form Pathway that each student will pursue. The Sixth Form Pathways under the Career Advancement Programme and the Tertiary Credit on High School Campus programme will be implemented in partnership with our tertiary institutions. The tertiary institutions may commence their blended learning programmes prior to October 26, 2020 informed by their level of readiness. **(Bulletin 136/2020)**

I'm curious:

- Anecdotal information indicated that several students were not engaged, academically or at all during the onslaught of COVID -19 in meaningful ways. Conversations also indicated that some students were engaged as all the necessary variables were in place. There were inconsistencies due to lack of equity in the system with regards to differentiation in access to content; some students were concomitantly supported by skilled teachers who could provide engaging lessons on the virtual platforms and there were those who struggled to make the connection using this modality. This augmented a divide in the students' ability to access educational opportunities. While the gaps have not been filled there is a planned reopening of schools.

In light of the above; how will the multiple gaps be closed especial for students who are to sit standardized national and international examinations?

- It is the natural nature of humans to socialize in close proximity. According to one philosophical position, "As humans, social interaction is essential to every aspect of our health. Research shows that having a strong network of support or strong community bonds fosters both emotional and physical health". (<https://www.southuniversity.edu/news-and-blogs/2018/05/why-being-social-is-good-for-you>).

In light of the restriction in place; how will educators foster this healthy interaction among student?

- Heightened sense of anxiety due to stressors brought on by COVID-19 created situations where some parents had to battle their fear, some had to work, some are functionally illiterate and still others were unable to provide any form of support especially to some primary age children.

What measures will be put in place to mitigate against known deficiencies in parents' ability to monitor and guide learning?

- Bearing in mind that the re-opening of school asks for COVID-19 preparations in a sustained, precautionary, health, oriented manner, and has added additional costs to the general school expenses; and whereas the pandemic highlights inequities in our education system; and fiscal deficits with unsustainable monetary policies may be a feature;

Can we afford the true cost of resumption to the government, the school and the parent?

- In light of the challenge to determine the road map to normality within the education system globally, and the fact that Jamaica seems to follow "international best practices"

How will Jamaica navigate this global pandemic when it has less resources available, even with the injection of additional funds in the system in its current state?

- The resumption of schools' result is in the gathering of a community of learners. It has been posited by the technocrats that it is a real possibility that one can contract the virus that may be deadly for some; if there is the congregating of large numbers. This information is the concern of many individuals.

In light of the above, what measures will be put in place to deal with the fear of contracting COVID-19?

- The international press has reported that some countries are experiencing a second upsurge of the virus. Current local newscast of August 7, 2020 highlighted the necessity of enforcing quarantine on communities in the parish of Clarendon, because the number of persons infected has increased. It has also been predicted that a hike in the number of persons being infected could become a reality internationally. Thus the concern that any, revitalization of the education sector can experience an architype shift unravelling plans for adaptation and adjustment.

If Jamaica is to get a second wave of the virus would the education system be positioned to deal with and overcome it?

Still I ask

- ***How will physical distancing be maintained and assured in a situation where it is impossible to police students' movements consistently?***
- ***What guarantees will be put in place to deal with psychologically issues brought on through isolation and lack of entertainment?***

I wonder

The possibilities of the future could see mixed modalities with a focus on knowledge formed from conceptual understanding. Social learning theory argues that learning takes place through observation and sensorial experiences. Albert Bandura asks that the learner be given pertinent clues, be given opportunities to accurately reproduce activities that are observed and be motivated to apply new learning. How will elements of the sampled characteristics highlighted be replicated as efforts are made to engage learners; when there is limited time to fill gaps and teacher centered content delivery may take pride of place. Will these be long term or short term issues? Nobody knows. The world is in suspense.

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Reconstructing the learning community, adapting to changes within the education system

Submitted by the Education & Research Committee

This paper reflects on the entrance of COVID -19 virus into the life and lexicon of the ordinary global citizen, which has brought with it numerous challenges that permeates the standardized system of education. As the pandemic makes its presence felt around the world, the education system as it was known had to be adjusted quickly, restructuring and re-organising to provide for a wider more substantial use of technology. The future looms formidably, as the wide disparity in fiscal preparedness does not allow for equity and equality. The paper examines succinctly the immediate impact of COVID -19 on the education system. In particular, it draws on commentary and data sourced from international literature and local experience as an attempt is made to analyse the many issues brought on by the pandemic. It argues implication and application for the future.

The unprecedented changes in the way education and educational processes have had to be made, in order to encourage the continuation of the system, have introduced a myriad of concerns. Research into the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems around the world, have registered extensive disruption. UNESCO May 25, 2020, statistics highlighted that most countries have had to close schools temporarily with 1,184,126,508 or 67.6% of total enrolled learners being affected. Routinized administrative function of education gave way to an emerging medium that utilized mainly computerized online platform to include other gadgets such as cell phones and tablet computers.

It is important to acknowledge that the current crisis will have long-lasting consequences for education systems in terms of access, quality, equity and management, which are likely to persist beyond the pandemic. Furthermore, risks of disasters, conflict and violence, are becoming more frequent, pointing towards the increased need to strengthen risk reduction capacities in the education sector, through prevention, preparedness and mitigation activities.

However, it must be noted that any serious assessment of education, theoretically and or practically, will indicate that there have been consistent changes. From student demographics to teaching techniques, many aspects of the education system change from year to year and decade to decade. Whether the teacher is a neophyte or a veteran educator, staying current is of paramount importance. This need is even more necessary owing to the sudden global educational shift, the changing landscape, the influx of technology and the current reality of space and distance in our teaching, learning and leadership interfaces. The shift also results Educational professionals being encouraged to engage in generative and analytical online teaching.

This necessary skill set, it is believed will result in the designing of systems that are sustainable and will assist in the preparation of leaders in education; along with their teams who will manage changes in the teaching and learning space effectively. The activity of delivery of lessons online at all stages due to COVID -19 pandemic prompted innovation and actions not previously thought to be possible.

Within education and technological spaces there are seismic modifications that impacts learner-centred strategies meant to build healthy productive learning environment. Access to technology will change how students learn and how schools will function; but the change will be a learning process in itself as the shift to increasingly digital and technological classrooms brings with it its own set of challenges. Of importance is the fact that quality education demands consistency and reach in a timely manner; technological offerings may be lacking in most instances and “reach” is missing. Hence the purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the education system and teaching and learning as it relates to the input of increased online teaching.

Positioning technological development

As we reflect on the reconstructing of learning community within which changes are being made and to which adaptation is fundamental. Different questions seek answers as clarity on the issue is sought. What are some challenges that educators experience while delivering online learning? How can these challenges be overcome? and what are the effects of online learning to learners?

Additionally, a starting point from which a discussion of COVID -19 can be explored asks for an interpretative understanding of three terms. The first is reconstructing which is being defined as the ability to re-create or reimagine (something from the past) especially by using information acquired through research and experience. The second is learning community, which may be interpreted as a small group or cohort of learners who share common academic goals and work collaboratively (Mutnick, 2019). The definition is expanded to include quality educational circle (QEC), District Associations, Parish Associations, Regions and other interest groups The other is adapt which refers to the process of adjusting to a system suitable for its new purpose. As an important positioning of our argument we highlight limitations in the literature mainly through the “newness” of the virus and time did not allow for in-depth interviews with a large number of stakeholders which would perhaps have provided a broaden perspectives on the topic.

Research Team:

Carlene Miller-Thompson
Sandra Hunter
Sheryl Barnaby-West
Carole Davis-Cunningham



Where was the Jamaican education system positioned in its technological use to facilitate the teaching learning? The literature on E-Learning Jamaica posited on its website; stated that it was mandated to “promote the integration and infusion of technology in the education system” with the vision projected to transform learning virtually. In fact, it was established in 2005 to facilitate web-based and computer-based learning. E-Learning is a joint project of the GOJ and Ministry of Education and has undertaken many projects to boost Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools. Three main projects embarked on are the, tablet for teachers programme, tablet in schools’ project and a high school project. Tablet for Teachers Programme is being done in collaboration with the JTA and the MOE. The agreement signed in 2018. E-Learning is the implementation agency to execute the programme. Twenty-five thousand (25,000) tablets will be distributed to the public sector teachers island wide.

The rollout of the Tablets in Schools Project (TIS) will see the use of tablets as the major support strategy in the teaching and learning process. The Government of Jamaica will be providing tablets to public schools beginning from pre-primary and primary aged students throughout Jamaica as well as the ten **(10)** teachers’ colleges, and twenty-two (22) State Care facilities for a total of 1,106 institutions

There is also the High School Project, which was a joint initiative between the e-Learning Jamaica and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information **(MOEYI)**. The primary objective which is to integrate Information and Communication Technologies **(ICTs)** into the delivery of lessons and contribute to improvement in the quality of education at the secondary level. This would result in enhancements to the teaching and learning experiences as well as improved performance or pass rates in school-leaving and CXC/CSEC examinations.

The project sought to provide instructional materials for teachers and students, computers, multimedia equipment, remedial software and training of teachers in the use of the technology and how to integrate it in lesson delivery. Over eleven thousand secondary teachers and college lecturers combined have been trained in core ICT skills; by HEART Trust/NTA, the use of presentation technology; including the use of multi-media projectors, interactive whiteboards, document cameras as well as modern technological methodologies on how to integrate the skills learnt into the lesson delivery. A Virtual Learning Environment **(VLE)** was another component that was created which focused on students preparing for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exams for 11 subjects. The High School Project, the VLE and the equipment rolled out under this project have now been handed over to the **(MOEYI)**.

Education online during the COVID 19 pandemic: Latin American and the Caribbean

There is an emerging body of literature emanating from international stakeholders such as UNESCO and UNICEF. On June 11, 2020 UNICEF reported that it launched an online platform that promises to provide pedagogical support for Latin America and the Caribbean. They offered advice for the reopening of schools; paying attention to the need to incorporate every child in an inclusive and comprehensive manner.

It is reported that countries are adapting using innovative and flexible ways to teach during this crisis. They are incorporating different channels and media to facilitate teaching and learning. The literature indicated that over 143 countries implemented a national repository of digital resources



(and offline learning materials when possible) and/or a learning management system (LMS) where students connect with their teachers. WhatsApp, phone calls or social media was adopted to provide pedagogical guidance and support for teachers and parents. However, since the Internet is not accessible for all, the use of educational radio and TV still played a relevant role. (<https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/covid-19-unicef-education->)

Emerging lessons and next steps

A comprehensive assessment to ascertain the impact of these actions on the educational process would be based off assumptions due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic. However, it must be noted that there is a plethora of valuable lessons ubiquitously present in the responses to the pandemic. Numbered among these is the extent to which the use of the existing technologies and resources provided suitable rapid solutions; keeping in mind that the primary objective is pedagogical. How do educators collate educational resources in one place, implementing a multi-channelled strategy? It is imperative that an effort is made to ensure that content can be used offline. Effort should be made to include television and radio as a valuable resource. The establishing of a hotline and the use of WhatsApp can become media to provide guidance and pedagogical assistance. There should be the provision of downloadable textbooks which may be inexpensive in comparison to the mandated hard copies that often becomes necessary. Governmental luminaries can adopt national channels for the provision of social and emotional support for parents and educators. There is the need to deploy public Wi-Fi access points on a wider scale than is presently offered in order to facilitate those who cannot provide their own. Call centres can and should be established as a means of parental support; and there should be an exploration of partnerships with local mobile and telecom operators for reduced costs access for educational purposes.

Obviously, there are countries that are more advanced than others. Now the challenge will be to ensure that technological solutions being utilized can effectively minimize the disruptions that the COVID19 pandemic is generating. Evidently, digital technologies are not a panacea, but they can offer scalable solutions especially when the current crisis risks amplifying the existing inequalities and provide emerging teaching points.

Jamaican teachers have adapted and adopted the strategies, being highlighted. They used the zoom platform, Google classroom, Facebook live, WhatsApp, printed material and other platforms to reach their students. However, in deep rural areas this posed and still poses a challenge as most places are not equipped with Wi-Fi connection. Importantly, many parents and teachers alike made complaints of not being able to access the internet. Still several community of learners with comprehensive societalization techniques have integrated different modes of teaching and learning and have been able to reach the economically challenged.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and all stakeholders should develop a crisis sensitive plan which will address the needs of all students if and when another pandemic should occur. Crisis sensitive planning also entails analysing capacities and existing resources for risk reduction and emergency responses in the education sector. In the context of COVID-19, this can include a review of existing distance and open learning programmes and available resources to expand the delivery and accessibility of such programmes. It is also important to understand the capacities of teachers, school leaders and other education personnel as they support student in navigating the world of distance and remote learning, often without sufficient training, support and resources.

To reduce risks of conflict and violence, crisis-sensitive planning also requires identifying and overcoming patterns of inequity and exclusion in education, as well as harmful cultural and social practices. This is particularly important in the current pandemic context, as confinement and school closures may have long-term consequences on the most vulnerable and marginalized populations; exacerbating already-existing disparities within the education system. Crisis-sensitive planning in the context of COVID-19 should pay particular attention to equity, for example by tackling the digital divide and ensuring that inclusive and gender-responsive learning solutions are a feature. Reflecting on specific impacts of school closures on girls, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, learners in crisis-affected contexts and other vulnerable groups and providing adapted solutions is also key. Without reaching those who are furthest first, gains made on the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups into national education systems face regression.

Implications for Education

Teachers as leaders need to be empowered with the requisite skills of online teaching in order to keep abreast with the growing demand for virtual learning. Educators should practice lifelong learning as it is imperative that educators grow and learn to so they acquire the skills and tools needed to reach the learners. In a twenty-first century globalized world the need for improved training on all online platforms that offers learning opportunities of an academic appeal, has become necessary. Hence problems that exist with local internet providers need to be addressed with alacrity. Our education system need to get equipped so that it can efficiently accommodate volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity all of which have become features (VUCA) (Bennis & Nanus 1987). Parents also need to be trained in navigating the learning platforms in order to assist their children. There should also be the positioning of learning communities to enhance online interaction.

Conclusively, the focus of this paper was to look at the reconstructing of the learning community, as we adapt to changes within the education system. The reconstruction of the education system at this time was and is a needed change which requires urgent attention from all stakeholders. Teachers must be trained to utilise online platforms in order to continue effective teaching and learning and to merged dual modalities; still embracing face to face instruction according to the need. It is necessary for metamorphosis into the use of all forms of social media platforms to continue the learning process be considered. Teachers have to become innovative and practical in order to ensure that students stay abreast of knowledge and skill development.

The pandemic has caused a sudden shift in the education system and all stakeholders had to adapt to a rapid change in the teaching and learning process. The effects on pupils and students, particularly those preparing for national or international examinations, and those studying at all levels of higher education have been affected. The reconstructing should stem from end of the system to another. The impact started at the primary level and extended to tertiary. First the government had to rethink the PEP final papers and utilise grades from the Grade 5 and Grade 4 test results to place primary school student. The high schools' students had to contend with using their SBA's and a final multiple choice paper for CSEC students. Colleges had to follow safety protocols and sit their exams online or complete alternative papers. For school leavers entering higher education in 2020, admissions procedures have been disrupted. Students planning for higher education in 2020/21 may miss out on extracurricular social interaction which is a crucial part of the traditional experience. These experiences at the beginning normally provide opportunities for students coming from a restricted school environment to develop their personalities, independence of thought and responsibilities as citizens of democratic societies. They work together with peers from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and so develop tolerance and understanding, in addition to simply having a good time with their peer group. Without direct exposure to debate and discussion in an organised way, higher education becomes simply transmission of knowledge.

The mental health of those who may be isolated from peer contact, particularly those with special educational needs should be of concern. All these and the impact of cybercriminals on internet platforms are all problems that the education system going forward will have to consider as we reconstruct to meet the challenging demands of the 21st twenty-first century and beyond.

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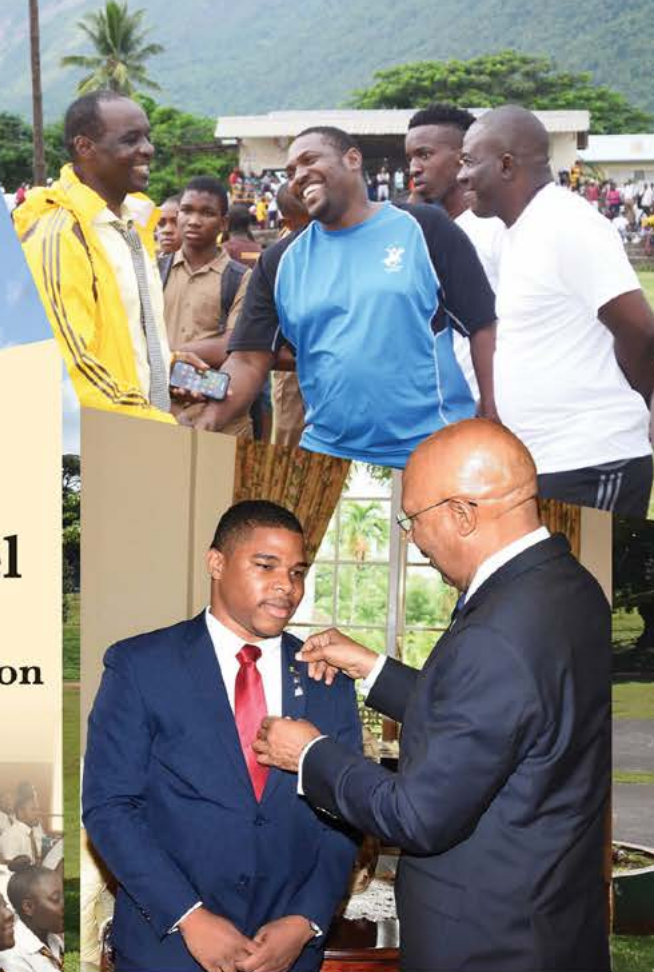
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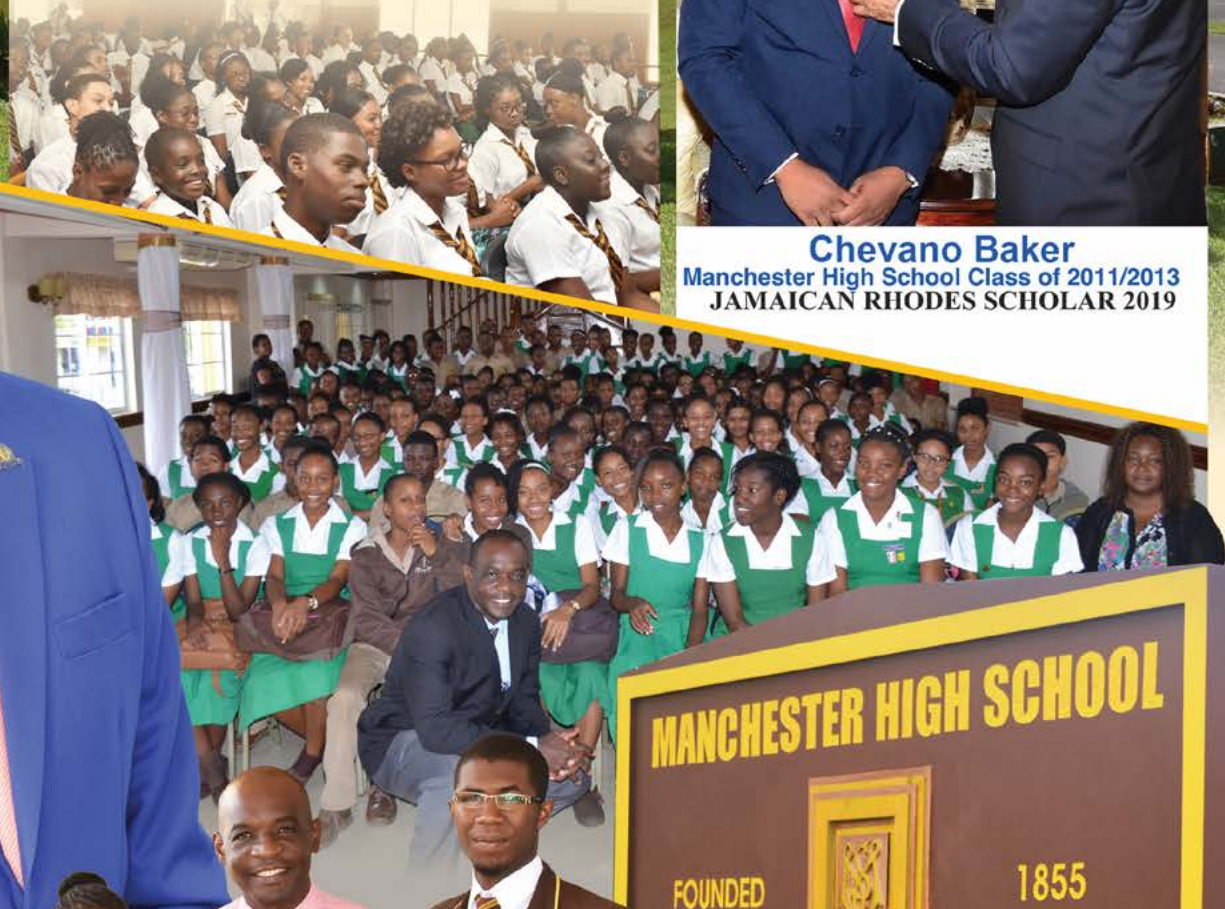
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TEACHER STRESS & BURN-OUT

Carole Davis-Cunningham

The very old and noble profession of teaching has been one on which many other professions are based, as teachers are responsible for moulding the minds of the young in order for them to take their positions and rightful places in society. The importance of the profession is indubitable. However, in recent years, teachers and teaching have been subjected to unrelenting criticism from the public. Individuals within the society have failed to acknowledge the increasing complexities and responsibilities of educating the children of today. Both the type of children being educated and the general ecology of the school are far more diverse than they were twenty or forty years ago. As a result, there is growing disillusionment with teaching, as teachers have identified and acknowledged the lack of support and recognition for their contribution to society. It should be easily understood why teachers are extremely susceptible to stress, as many of the ills within the education sector are squarely laid at their feet. This problem is not a simple one; it is complex and dangerous.

The educational reforms in Jamaica and other parts of the world lack focus on the individuals who are key to the survival of the sector; the reforms focus primarily on curriculum and organizational structures. These focuses have led to an undue increase in the roles and responsibilities of teachers, creating a more demanding and challenging teaching and learning environment. Researchers have thus declared that teachers become overwhelmed by the multiple and complex challenges, while trying to balance and fulfil the public's expectations. However, while teachers adapt well to adversity, they cannot do so forever.

In many countries, the profession has experienced a high attrition rate and major problems with recruiting individuals for replacement, as for many the teaching profession is no longer

attractive. Teachers enter the profession with high expectations, a vision for the future and a mission to educate the children and youth. However, the demands, poor leadership, varying pressures and sordid work environments, in some cases, have resulted in teachers losing their zeal and vitality, and becoming burnt out.

In many countries, teaching is considered as one of the most stressful professions and in recent years, teacher stress has provided a plethora of opportunities for study. In the last two decades intensive research in the United States of America and Europe has been developed regarding both the sources and symptoms of teacher professional stress (Schwab, 1995). Unfortunately, very little research has been done in Jamaica and the Caribbean, despite this being an issue of major concern, especially among the educators themselves.

Investigations of the issue indicate that the greater part of teacher stress can be explained by the rapid pace of changes in education in the 1980s and 1990s. In Jamaica, for instance, the education system has experienced many modes of transformation dating back from as early as the 1940s. At the start of self-government in 1944, funding for education was increased. This paved the way for a more structured education system for all, thus the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1953. Through this platform, a national education policy was developed that expanded the scope of education and redefined educational priorities. This was the scaffold on which the education of the nation's youths commenced and no doubt led to the expanding roles and responsibilities of teachers. Teachers are not only expected to impart the written curriculum but are expected to engage students more than ever before in extracurricular activities, empathize with the learners, facilitate their general conduct and progress, ensure

discipline is maintained at all times, make the necessary preparations for class, conduct assessment and do varying paper work for the school and the Ministry of Education, among others. These onerous tasks cultivate an atmosphere of stress and burn out, thus causing emotional and mental maladjustments.

Generally, the incidence of various types of emotional maladjustment among teachers has received considerable attention from the early years of this century. A growing body of research evidence supports the view that teaching does not only sap the energies of teachers, but it is an occupation that is potentially stressful. In Jamaica, many observers, including educators, view the atmosphere for teaching as strained and difficult. Indiscipline in some Jamaican schools is described as, wild, cyclic and frightening. A teacher literally must carry the whole brunt of the battle to create a new generation with a different value system. Additionally, as Jamaica embraces the era of market economics or neo-liberal ideology which reflects a thinking of nationalists, forms of education under the power of a global civil society; there is greater and greater demand for accountability from educators.

Jamaican teachers are also held to the highest scrutiny to facilitate the 'every child can learn, every child must learn' ideology, a mantra of the Ministry of Education. This no doubt places a demand on teachers to ensure that every child reaches acceptable levels of achievement. Pressures are also mounting from varying stakeholders including parents and the private sector. The latter has joined the debate of calling for performance-based pay for teachers. With the myriad of issues, teachers are left with the insurmountable task of balancing increased pressure and ensuring maximum performance. Day (2000) focuses on the situation within the teaching profession:

For many teachers, the last twenty years have been years of survival, rather than development. As social and economic change have placed new demands upon and created new expectations from schools. Hardly a year has passed without some reform being mooted, negotiated or imposed in the name of raising standards (appraisal, inspection), increasing 'user' participation (open enrollment, local financial management) and students' entitlement (a national curriculum) (pg.1).

Researchers have further reported that the primary health problem of teachers is stress and that the causes are multiple and complex. Workplace stress has also been found to diminish teachers' enthusiasm and distance them emotionally from their students, thereby lessening the teacher-student interaction and performance at large. School reformation and consolidation in Jamaica have caused the incremental downloading of additional duties for teachers and, in their perception, unreasonable demands. The constant demands impact gravely on the health and well-being of the teachers. As a result, many persons have attributed the death of several teachers, especially those who have just taken sick and died on the job, to stress and or stress related illnesses. Hence, the high stress level of teachers in Jamaica is worrisome.

There is indeed dire need for administrative and collegial support, effective communication, adequate resources and professional development, and the recognition of the excessive workload and the associated stress that teachers are feeling.

It is of utmost importance that intense research be conducted with much urgency, to provide new insights into the serious problem of teacher stress in the country, and a serious resolve made to address them.

Carole Davis-Cunningham

Brain Drain, or Brain Strain? **By Nadzadeen Jalal**

In March of this year, teachers were hailed across the world as heroes by all stakeholders. Fast forward to today, whenever today is, and you will find, those heroes are now being vilified for daring to stand up for "justice" and "truth."

As a Jamaican teacher sojourning in foreign lands, I can say without a doubt that I have never felt so appreciated. Many times, I chuckle when I hear my now coworkers lament the lack of resources. I teach at a Title 1 school (inner city in Jamaica), and strangely enough these schools are allocated greater resources than the others, talk about equity. There are so many issues (flaws) in the school system here, that I could write a book. However, I prefer to address the flaws in the system that forced me to leave, and the one I will eventually return to.

As a teacher with two children attending school and paying rent, there was no way to make ends meet. I know I am not pointing out anything new, just simply giving a voice to the reasons why we volunteered to have our brains drained. I can't remember ever speaking to a Jamaican teacher who is not heavily in debt. So much so that, the only places that will give them a loan are the ones that hover at our staffroom doors, we know who they are. Some teachers teach outside of their parish of residence; is that unique to teaching? I doubt it, but they end up paying two sets of rent and utilities. It is no different for most teachers who accept jobs abroad; we still have all our bills and responsibilities in Jamaica and here (wherever here is). Yet, somehow we still manage to live a better standard of life, dig ourselves out of chronic debt and get SLB off our backs.

Speaking about utilities, during the onset of COVID- 19, teachers had to be delivering lessons from home using their own devices, utilities and internet service. We all know that internet is not readily accessible in all communities or households, so how did the teachers do it, and at whose expense? With all this, whenever teachers ask for an increase, they are chided like an errant child and told "teaching is a calling". Is it? If so, why do we need to incur millions in students' loan to answer this call? In response to this I say: yes, we have been called to a profession; teaching is a profession, and until the powers that be accept that, and treat it as such, teachers will continually offer their brains to be drained by foreign schools.

A few of the greatest complaints that Jamaican teachers have include the long months they must work before they receive their first pay cheque; the even longer terms they have to work without being offered a permanent appointment to a vacant position; the inability to break their service for whatever reason without having to return as a junior teacher, lack of teaching/learning resources and the list runs on. I am not about to compare my present employment situation to Jamaica, but some things are too glaring to ignore like the fact that teachers here get their students' loan written off after five years of continuous employment, if you have not missed a payment. A pay increase that makes sense for every job-related certification that you complete and wait for it... drum roll please! PAY for after school activities! Isn't that awesome? Who wouldn't want that?

As the school year fast approaches, what plans does the ministry have in place to address the issue of access to technology, I mean apart from passing off the tablets that were originally a part of the teacher's pay package as eLearning inputs for 2017/2018 school year? I am sure teachers have lots, if not tons of ideas that would improve the teaching and learning experience for all, but as always, I don't think they are being included in the decision making processes. I admit the grass is not really greener here, but by God, it is more digestible.

Testimonial: National College of Education and Leadership (NCEL)

Carlene Miller-Thompson



NCEL is an organization that provides training for leaders, middle managers and principals of all educational institutions. The organization provides training in strategic leadership through programmes aimed at equipping principals with the skills necessary for the 21st century.

While this may be the fundamental purpose, the leadership programme, lacks structure. Although the modules provided give guidelines for the delivery and assessment of the courses, some lecturers expect the writing of almost a thesis for completion of the course and this is not one of the assessment. In addition, persons who have organizational experience are engaged to teach courses such as Transformational leadership, but lack the experience of applying the principle to what exist in the classroom. The final course is actually a project which is done within the school over a three-month period. The evidence from this exercise is presented in a folder, followed by an oral defence.

Evidence of this inability to apply the knowledge to the classroom, is seen in the financial management course. The lecturer seems not to be able to transmit the requisite skill necessary for leaders to be able to develop financial acumen to effectively transfer the knowledge within their organization. It has also been observed that some lecturers who are engaged to teach courses do not have the skill set to effectively and efficiently do so, or are unsure of what the module entails; resulting in discussions about concepts and principles that are misleading.

Admittedly, NCEL does pass on information that is useful but this should not be mandated as necessary qualification to be appointed as a principal. The qualification received, even after such 'rigorous' training, is only a certificate that is not even accredited by the UCJ or the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. The objective is not to downplay the quality of the programme or the necessity of the training, but to point out that some of the modules seem irrelevant. I have had the opportunity to do another leadership course which is basically the same thing. The leadership programme provides the same experiences and offers the same pedagogy for leaders. Therefore, making the NCEL course a necessity for a leadership post within education should be revisited.

Some principals really need to be trained, so there is a role for NCEL and its programmes to help principals to be effective leaders. The organization has a plethora of skills and ideas for principals to adapt to effectively run their organization, however it is being reiterated that it lacks proper structure and delivery. The programme needs restructuring in order to become an accredited course.

Others views on NCEL

Conversation within the space indicates that there are mixed views on NCEL. Some middle managers and principals do not see NCEL as the organization for leaders. Others who think NCEL is the ideal organization, are of the view that principals who have received NCEL training are more effective in terms of leadership and leading their organizations.

If NCEL is to achieve its aim of satisfying the kind of direction the 21st century leader needs to reap success, then drawback such as the volume of work to be covered needs to be addressed. In addition, the time frame should be extended to give participants time to really hone some of the skills and concepts taught; the financial management course, for example would benefit from such an adjustment.

The new NCEL

It is heartening to learn that NCEL has moved most of its courses for leaders into the online learning environment. As it is early days yet, an assessment on the effectiveness of these new programmes cannot be made. Concrete evidence is not yet available. It seems, however, that NCEL is on the path to providing leaders with the requisite skills necessary for the twenty-first century and to offering an excellent leadership programme.



The experiences of middle managers in their role as supervisors

Prepared by Sheryl Barnaby – West



Introduction

The role of supervision in the management of the education system requires greater attention. The need to improve performance and, significantly, students' outcomes, have become pressing concerns. The quality of supervision provided for teachers in the classroom and at all levels of the school system is essential if performance is to be improved. It is against this background that the researcher has sought to gather data related to the challenges, which might hinder the purpose of effective supervision and also examine the roles which might serve to add value to the teaching and learning process

Purpose and Methodology

The researcher conducted an empirical generic qualitative study to gather data for this study. The primary focus of the research was to examine the experiences of middle managers in their role as supervisors and the challenges they encounter as they conduct their duties. Purposeful sampling was utilized. Ten middle managers were selected from two primary schools in East Rural St Andrew. Data was collected through interviews. The researcher collected data using focus group and individual interviews. The instrument used was a semi-structured interview questionnaire which consisted of open-ended and probing questions. The researcher sought answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the middle managers' understanding of their role as middle managers?
2. What roles do middle managers play as supervisors?
3. What are the challenges middle managers face as supervisors?

Major Findings

1. The study showed a major disconnect between middle managers and administration. All participants echoed this sentiment in one way or another. More than fifty percent of participants expressed incidence of poor communication, usurp of authority and abuse of authority.
2. Balancing classroom duties and supervisory responsibilities is a major challenge for the middle managers within the primary system.
3. Most middle managers' understanding of their role is limited to a few administrative activities which they find rather difficult to undertake. These activities are limited to:

- marking lesson plans
- overseeing lesson execution and submitting records
- attending meetings and doing other activities while classes are left unmanned.

4. Most middle managers describe their role as being that bridge between administration and junior staff. However, this undertaking, on many days, proves almost insurmountable with the number of things to oversee. In addition, they find themselves having to deal with different personalities while aiming to collaborate and network towards common goals.

Discussion

Beach and Reinhardt (2004), define supervision as a complex process that involves, working with teachers and other educators in a collegial and collaborative relationship to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within schools and; promoting the career-long development of teachers. It is a clear understanding of the roles middle managers play that will effectively achieve this end.

Glickman (2008) suggests that these roles may be administrative, service and support, and educational. The middle manager, based on these benchmarks of supervision, are expected to carry out several tasks, including teaching a class to perform at satisfactory levels. Several participants indicated that they hardly get a chance at effectively supervising or managing class responsibilities. The study was also undergirded by a study conducted by Fitzgibbon in 2004, where it was found that the major challenges standing in the way of supervisors' professional efficiencies fall under three main categories, namely: administrative, technical, and materialistic. The findings of the study conducted in East Rural St Andrew would stand in agreement, to a large extent, with what was found in the Fitzgibbon study, as there were several administrative and technical issues.

Middle management is an enormous task within the primary system. Based on studies and participants' contribution, if middle managers are to fulfil their role as effective supervisors, it will require collaboration, collegiality and effective communication between administration, junior staff and the middle manager.

Implications and conclusions

If it is assumed that the middle manager's role should embody a two-way growth for both the supervisor and the supervisee and also viewed as a lifelong learning experience, then the obligation rests heavily on the gatekeepers in the education system to ensure that:

- Middle managers clearly understand their roles and that these roles are realistically assigned so that they can be achieved.
- The act of supervision is clearly outlined and understood.
- Challenges are discussed and solutions are charted towards a winning pathway.
- Expectations are understood and met.

Ultimately the school's mission, vision and academic goals would be realized.

Diaspora Link Up

Dr. Dwayne Dyce



I am sending greetings on behalf of the Jamaica Diaspora Education Task Force (JDETF) to all members of the Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA). The JDETF shares a wonderful partnership with the Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA). On your 56th Annual Conference, I want to encourage you to continue your dedication to the education system of Jamaica. As educators, we possess great responsibilities in the continuous reformation of our education systems to meet the needs of our people. Our very function in the teaching profession serves to ignite advancement in thinking and innovation in the lives of our people. We are always guiding, training, and motivating the present as well as the next generation of educators by our own skills, refined techniques, and professional growth. Our collaboration gives strength to these functions of the teaching profession. The Education Task Force provides executable teaching and learning training that directly support the initiatives and goals of the JTA.

Our partnership represents a model that is highlighted in the theme “Triangulating Education” by our shared approach to providing world-class support to the education system of Jamaica. Triangulating Education speaks to the profound responsibility of our educators to seek and implement the superior teaching and learning techniques within our educational arena. It also speaks to the profound responsibility of educators to provide purposeful change within areas of education that need reformation. Triangulating Education encompasses the charge of our educational leaders to facilitate educators’ autonomy to be creative in the implementation of best practices within their own classrooms to benefit their students. This theme points to the very ideals of global partnership in education. This is a vision that is shared by both the JTA and the JDETF.

The Education Task Force is privileged to share those functions with the JTA and we are confident that this collaboration will only become stronger for our Jamaican people.

My hope is that our Jamaican education system will continue to seek and implement the very best practices drawn from world-class approaches. In this way the goals of actualizing a developed nation status will be achieved.

Best wishes

Dwayne Dyce

Chairman - Jamaica Diaspora Education Task Force (JDETF)





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- b. Pharmacy Technician Programme (UTECH)
- c. Master of Science in Mathematics Teaching (UTECH)
- d. Master of Educational Leadership (Temple University)
- e. Doctor of Education in Educational Administration (Temple University)
- f. Post Graduate Diploma (CASE)



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