CARIBBEAN CURRICULUM

CONTENTS

ADDRESSING CULTURAL DIVERSITY
IN A CREOLE SPACE
The SEMP Language Arts Curriculum[1]

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Proposals for curriculum reform under the Secondary Education Modernisation Programme (SEMP) call for a curriculum that respects the diverse cultural experiences of students in Trinidad and Tobago, and that gives all students the opportunity to develop to their full potential, regardless of culture. This paper reports on an analysis of the curriculum proposed for a core subject in the proposed curriculum, Language Arts. The curriculum document was analyzed, using qualitative content analysis techniques, to determine its orientation, as reflected in its approach to dealing with issues of cultural diversity. It was found that while the curriculum reflected an orientation to social relevance in dealing with other aspects of students' cultural experience, in addressing students' language experience, it remained largely traditional in its orientation. The paper discusses implications for teaching and learning Language Arts at the secondary level.

Introduction

In 2002, the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education issued drafts of curriculum documents for eight subjects that formed the proposed core for a new curriculum for Forms 1 and 2 in the country's secondary schools. The new curriculum represents part of a project for education reform called the Secondary Education Modernisation Programme (SEMP). The curriculum reforms proposed for the SEMP programme reflect the state's attempt to democratize the education process in Trinidad and Tobago—a movement that is evident throughout the Caribbean and, indeed, throughout the world (Papadopoulos, 1998).

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One of the identified challenges to promoting democracy and achieving equity in education in the Caribbean, and internationally, is to provide an educational experience that reflects the many different cultural experiences which constitute students' field of experience, and provides part of the context of their learning (Trinidad and Tobago [T&T]. National Task Force on Education, 1994). In addition, students must be prepared to negotiate the cultural practices that characterize communication in different disciplinary communities (Kalantzis & Cope, 1993). Still another challenge is to determine what relationship must be established, in the curriculum, between the canonical knowledge of Europe and North America, which has traditionally constituted mainstream academic knowledge in once-colonized Caribbean countries (London, 2003), and other forms of knowledge that may be of equal importance to students, and to the society. Such forms of knowledge may serve either to promote dimensions of students' development other than the purely academic, or to make bridges between the knowledge they already possess and the mainstream academic knowledge that they must develop. Kilgour Dowdy (2002), Banks (1993), and other writers have discussed the tensions that are often set up in the curriculum between these two types of knowledge, which may be regarded by many persons in the society as being in opposition, rather than as being necessary parts of the whole universe of knowledge to be included in the curriculum.

However, since a national curriculum is also a formal statement of what the society in general considers important for its young people to know, a curriculum may also be seen as a form of political discourse (Slattery, 1995). Curriculum content, in this paper identified as including proposed subject matter and learning experiences (Schubert, 1986), is a hotly contested issue, as different groups in the society fight for the power to prioritize areas of knowledge they consider important to the fulfilment of their agendas.

In establishing such priorities, one consideration is the preservation of what different groups consider important components of their cultural heritage. The *National Education Policy Paper* (T&T. National Task Force on Education, 1994) affirms a commitment to multicultural education that will engender respect for the cultural experiences of students (p. 40, par. 3.5), and that will ensure that each child has equal opportunity to learn, no matter what that child's culture may be. Policy guidelines have

proposed values education and comparative religion as areas of the curriculum appropriate for fulfilling those commitments (p. 39, par. 3.3.3; p. 40, par. 3.3.5). However, no proposals or guidelines for infusing necessary content into other parts of the curriculum have been put forward.

Yet, there are other places in the curriculum where such commitments can be fulfilled. As Crawford and McLaren (2003) note, for instance, the teaching of language and culture are essentially inseparable. According to Brody (2003, p. 40), "Culture is negotiated through language … and language codifies many cultural assumptions and values."

However, many people in Trinidad society still see no need for a specific approach to ensuring that students have a multicultural education. Some subscribe to one of the prevailing myths of the society—that it has realized the melting pot ideal, favoured by early colonial administrators to modify the plural society (Campbell, 1997) and later articulated by its first Prime Minister, Eric Williams, in the context of his ideal of a West Indianized curriculum (cited in Campbell, 1997). Others feel that the only adequate approach to preparing students to live in the global society is an education experience that focuses almost entirely on knowledge from the academic mainstream that is prized in the developed world.

These factors are particularly important to the teaching of secondary-level Language Arts—previously called "English"—in Trinidad and Tobago. As the name implies, the English curriculum has traditionally emphasized the teaching of the English Language, the development of literacy applied to texts written or spoken in Standard English, and analytical and aesthetic responses to examples of the English literary canon. London (2003) has described how the aim of the English curriculum in colonial times was to prepare students to function as good colonials. London recounts the primacy given to English as a subject within the colonial curriculum, as a major tool for maintaining British hegemony over the minds of its colonized people. A strong commitment to the principles that shaped the English curriculum in those days has been maintained in post-colonial Trinidad and Tobago.

As Carrington (1993), Robertson (1996), and others have noted, the curriculum has also been influenced by prevailing misunderstandings

about Caribbean people as being speakers of English as a first language. Carrington (2001) has argued that even when the differences between the Creole and the Standard languages are understood, and educators accept the need to use the Creole as a bridge to increased mastery of the Standard, policy makers rarely make formal provision for the Creole to find a place in the curriculum. He points out that Haiti and Aruba are the only Caribbean countries where a formal commitment to use the Creole in the curriculum has been made, as evidenced by the production of written materials to support the delivery of such a curriculum.

It is likely, therefore, that in spite of the commitment expressed in the policy paper to a reformed curriculum that acknowledges and respects our multicultural experience, strong pressures may be exerted on the curriculum to maintain it as it has always been—a reflection of the world from the perspective of persons outside the Caribbean, serving the agendas of persons other than ourselves.

Moreover, it must be recognized that it is necessary for curriculum developers in the Caribbean to establish their own conceptualization of multiculturalism, which may be very different, given the region's history and cultural experience, from that used in countries of Europe or North America, where multiculturalism in education is conceptualized from the perspective of a dominant culture dealing with the influx of migrants from what may be considered minority cultures.

It is necessary, therefore, that proposals for reform of the curriculum be analyzed from the outset to see whether, and how, the ideal of a multicultural curriculum is being realized. These considerations informed the research questions that drove the study.

Research Questions

The study sought to understand how the SEMP curriculum addresses the issue of cultural diversity in its proposals for teaching and learning Language Arts. It focused on the Form 1 curriculum, which represents students' introduction to Language Arts at the secondary level, and sets the stage for their construction of understandings about the field. Specifically, the study asked the following questions:

1. What choices are made in the curriculum, in representing the cultures of the different racial and ethnic groups that contribute to the Trinidad and Tobago multicultural experience?
2. What approach does the curriculum take to integrating multicultural perspectives into the teaching of Language Arts?
3. What orientation to curriculum is reflected in its treatment of the cultural context, the proposed subject matter, and the learning experiences of the curriculum?

Limitations of the Study

- The study defined "culture" in this case to include primarily dimensions of race, ethnicity, and language. It is recognized, however, that other possible dimensions of cultural experience may have been considered, including gender.

- This stage of the study has been focused on the curriculum document for Form 1. However, the curriculum is being developed for all levels of the secondary school. At the time of writing, the development of the curriculum for Forms 4 and 5 is about to begin, and it is recognized that students' overall curriculum experience in Language Arts may be somewhat different, once the whole scope and sequence of the curriculum are realized.

The Literature

Cultural dimensions of the Creole space

Many attempts have been made in the literature to come to terms with the concept of the "Creole space." Allen (2002) has acknowledged the problem of arriving at definitions of the concepts "Creole" and "creolisation." Allen refers to Kamau Brathwaite's articulation of the cultural dimensions of the process of creolisation, "in which the arrivants and their progenitors forge a complex dynamic of group identity and interrelations" (p. 47). She notes that creolisation is being increasingly recognized as having worldwide importance, as scholars turn to the Caribbean region for tools with which to understand global culture/s. Warner-Lewis (2002) describes how dynamic and often paradoxical manifestations of the creolisation process can be identified in linguistic, artistic, and material cultures of the Caribbean. She explains that cultural

artifacts and behaviours (including language) that are shaped by the process "exhibit syncretism, fragmentation, but also admit innovation" (p. 248). It is clear that one major force shaping that process is the formal education to which all young persons in the society are exposed.

Carrington (1988) has discussed some implications of this creolisation process for language users, teachers, and learners in the Caribbean. He describes features of Caribbean Creoles that reflect the qualities described by Warner-Lewis, and the asymmetrical relationships that often still exist between the official languages and the Creole vernaculars. Carrington notes that this leads to the deprecation of the Creole and Creole speakers in their own countries, since the Creole is still often associated with "lack of education … lack of social grace" (p. 11). Craig (1999) notes that yet another challenge presented to Creole speakers required to learn Standard English is the fact that because the vernacular and the standard language share a lexicon, Creole speakers may not even recognize that they are not speaking English, and so may not be motivated to learn it.

Learning language for literacy in programmes of formal schooling also makes special demands on learners. As Baynham (1995) points out, students must make transitions between spoken and written languages, and between spontaneous and planned, casual and non-casual, and standard and non-standard uses of language. Kalantzis and Cope (1993) point out that students must also be able to make language transitions to meet the demands of different cultures of schooling and the different cultures of disciplines.

Language education in Caribbean contexts

Robertson (1996) argues that in the Caribbean, language education must be conceptualized to include tasks related to language learning and to language for literacy, and also to include a broader conception of the education process that reflects the unique experiences of Caribbean language learners. He identifies certain broader issues that must be addressed by language education within the Creole space, including: 1) the damage done by traditional understandings of the relationships between English and Creole to the psyche of Caribbean students, 2) the social disharmony that may be caused by "uninformed positions" in developing language policy for the Caribbean, and 3) the role of

language competence in meeting the developmental needs of the countries of the region. These are all questions that a reformed Language Arts curriculum may be expected to address.

"Language awareness" may be considered a fundamental component of education in the Language Arts in Trinidad and Tobago. The importance of language awareness development for speakers of Caribbean Creoles who are being taught Standard English has been advocated by Craig (1999), and Simmons-McDonald (2001), among others. These writers argue that language awareness is a necessary dimension of the content of any curriculum that has, as a primary aim, learning Standard English. This is because a language awareness component can provide opportunities for Creole speakers to confront the differences and relationships between Creole languages and cultures and the dominant European languages and cultures that are the sources of the lexicons of the various Creoles. This focus on uses of language in society, and on language as cultural practice, implies that language awareness may be interpreted as being one dimension of "cultural awareness," which, according to Hymes (1972, as cited in Byram, 1997) and van Ek (1986), is, in turn, one dimension of communicative competence. Gee (1996) also argues that every language is situated in a sociocultural context, and that appropriate use of language can only be achieved by cultivating an acceptable level of familiarity with that context.

Teaching and learning about culture

It may be argued that in the Caribbean, where cultures are in constant contact with one another, there is no need to teach language learners about the various cultures of the Caribbean. Yet Reddock (2002) has identified situations, in Trinidad and Tobago, where certain sub-groups within the society may choose to live apart from others, out of feelings of ambivalence and rejection of other cultures, or out of the fear of cultural domination. Situations also exist where some groups have been marginalized or stereotyped to the point where they are almost invisible to other groups. Mutual contact and extensive knowledge cannot, therefore, be taken for granted.

The literature notes various approaches to teaching and learning about different cultures. Fantini (1997), for example, proposes curriculum content that focuses on artifacts of the culture—the things people make;

sociofacts – the ways in which people come together for different purposes; and mentifacts – people's perspectives on reality. Banks (1993) notes that content for a multicultural curriculum can be selected from a range of areas of knowledge. These include mainstream academic knowledge, knowledge from popular culture, transformative academic knowledge, concepts and theories derived from personal experience, and schooled knowledge. Christensen (1994,as cited in Byram, 1997) argues that students should not be required to learn any particular combinations of beliefs, behaviour, and meanings dominant in a specific society, because since they are dominant, they represent primarily the interests of a powerful minority. Instead, Christensen proposes that learners should be taught methods of analyzing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter, whatever their status in the society. Byram (1997) suggests that Christensen's approach can be used to promote critical analysis of the ways in which particular cultural practices and beliefs maintain the social position and power of particular groups.

Banks and Banks (1993) propose that the various approaches to integration of multicultural content in the curriculum be conceptualized along a continuum:

- *The contributions approach.* Mention of discrete elements, ethnic heroes, and events is added to the curriculum, selecting them by criteria taken from mainstream perspectives. No attempt is made to explore their significance or change the curriculum's structure or dominant perspective in any way.

- *The additive approach.* Significant cultural content is integrated into the curriculum, and material may be studied from alternative perspectives. The structure is not basically changed.

- *The transformative approach.* This enables students to explore curriculum content from different cultural and ethnic perspectives, and changes the curriculum structure to facilitate the process. The focus of the curriculum is to understand the common culture as a synthesis of the diverse cultural elements.

- *The social action approach.* This curriculum maintains the transformative approach, but also requires students to make decisions and take actions on cultural diversity issues.

These possible approaches to developing students' understanding about dimensions of the cultural contexts of language use may help language students in different ways, and to different extents, as they make decisions about the appropriate use of language in different contexts.

Teaching language in Caribbean multicultural contexts

An assimilationist approach, which excludes language awareness, dominated Caribbean education throughout the region's colonial past, and is still apparent in some curricula developed in Caribbean countries today. As Robertson (1996) describes it, in this approach English is taught on the assumption that its status as official standard language means that it is also Caribbean students' first language. The Creole that is students' true first language, and an important marker of Caribbean ethnicity, may therefore be entirely excluded from such a curriculum, the aim of which is to ensure that students attain an acceptable level of proficiency in the standard. In fact, in an assimilationist approach, even languages that are accepted as legitimate curriculum content may be taught in isolation. The cultures in which they originated are often not analyzed for their impact on language learners at all. In addition, it often happens that only cultural content from the dominant culture is included.

However, as Evans (2001) and Simmons-McDonald (2001) point out, approaches have been proposed to incorporate elements of the Creole within curricula in Caribbean countries, and some of these approaches have already been implemented in schools. These approaches may be described as either additive or transformative approaches, using the typology proposed by Banks and Banks (1993).

Curriculum orientations

Approaches to selecting and organizing content and learning experiences for any curriculum usually reflect a specific orientation, or specific orientations, to curriculum and curriculum inquiry. An orientation to curriculum is shaped by a certain curriculum philosophy

and an understanding of the way learning takes place, which influences the choices of persons making curriculum decisions (Eisner, 1985). Thus, the Language Arts curriculum can be analyzed from the perspective of the orientation/s it may reveal.

Schubert (1986) suggests three orientations to curriculum: critical, or emancipatory; hermeneutic, or interpretive; and, finally, reflective of the dominant paradigm. Eisner (1985) himself describes five possible orientations to curriculum—curriculum for academic relevance; for development of cognitive processes; for self-actualization; for social relevance and reconstruction; and curriculum as technology, which purports to be value free and to be focused purely on the effective delivery of instruction.

More recent post-colonialist perspectives on curriculum propose that all aspects of culture (including language) and identity featured in the curriculum must be treated as the products of human encounters, arising from experiences of cross-culturalism and hybridity. From this perspective, the shaping of cultures is an ongoing process, for Hall (1990) maintains that within any community, several alternative communities are always struggling to surface.

Each of these orientations has implications for how issues of cultural difference and identity may be addressed in a Language Arts curriculum. Therefore, from an emancipatory or post-colonialist perspective, for instance, the curriculum will allow students the opportunity to critique the language and the literary canon, and to construct understandings of language as being continuously socially constructed in an interdependent world. On the other hand, an orientation to academic relevance would focus primarily on students' mastery of the Western canon in literature, and their mastery of the dominant language or languages of the society, as the benchmark of cultural literacy (Hirsch 1988). Where an academic relevance orientation would also perceive a divide between the traditions of the literary canon and the cultural forms of the developing world, or of minority groups, a critical approach would allow students to question the canon from the perspective of how language and the canon maintain certain groups in positions of social power. It would attempt to empower learners to re-create themselves as subjects having agency in their societies.

Methodology

The data source for this paper was Sections 2-4 of the SEMP curriculum document issued for Form 1 Language Arts for secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Qualitative content analysis of the document, as described by Mayring (2000), focused on the statement of philosophy and goals, the proposed learning outcomes, and the techniques suggested for delivery of the curriculum and assessment of students. The analysis employed inductive category development, with open coding of the material informing step-by-step formulation of inductive categories. The initial categories were informed, but not dictated, by the researcher's familiarity with theoretical frameworks proposed in the literature, and by her professional familiarity with English curricula, as a teacher educator for English teachers. These areas of experience helped to develop "theoretical sensitivity" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As the analysis proceeded, original categories were subsumed into broader categories, or new categories were formed, as careful analysis of the data suggested was appropriate. Periodic checks on the reliability of the researcher's interpretations were conducted through consultation with other Language Arts specialists.

Findings

Curriculum representation of experiences from diverse cultures

The curriculum document does indeed make an attempt to identify cultural elements, including events, icons, tools, and technologies of different cultures, so as to illustrate and exemplify concepts related to language learning and literacy development. It also directs teachers and students to texts that can increase students' knowledge of such elements.

Input into the curriculum from the diverse cultures that contribute to the creolisation process is selected primarily from the dominant European and North American cultures, and from cultural practices of the numerically dominant Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian sectors of the population. Indo-Trinidadian cultural practices are selected primarily from the Hindu sector of the population, although there are occasional references to the Muslim religious festival of Eid, and to Hosay. Some cultural practices of minority groups such as African-Americans in North America are also included.

When, for instance, students are required to learn certain concepts related to the use of style in language, the genres used to provide examples of the concepts often reflect literacy practices situated in familiar sociocultural contexts. Thus, for example, teachers are advised to use festivals that are widely celebrated across groups within the culture, like the Hindu festival of Divali and the Christian festival of Christmas, as occasions for having students write informal letters to friends (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-46). It is also suggested that to enable students to differentiate between formal and informal occasions, they role-play conversations taken from familiar contexts. To teach the appropriate use of figurative language (p. 2-46) teachers are asked to ensure that students create "similes and metaphors that are Caribbean."

Attempts in the curriculum to develop students' affective responses to texts usually propose the use of genres from the popular culture, both indigenous and international, as most likely to evoke such affective responses. Content labelled "Emotional response to literature" is to be taught using, as resource material, traditional poems, rap from the African-American culture, or calypso, an indigenous art form (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-44). Poetry appreciation, it is recommended, will be taught by using resource materials such as chutney songs, also indigenous to the Caribbean and, again, the calypso (p. 2-78). The oral tradition, therefore, has a strong presence in the curriculum.

However, to help students construct understandings about generic structure, the curriculum proposes that they should be exposed primarily to examples of dominant genres from the literate cultures of the Western world—short stories, newspaper stories, and formal letters, for example.

The examples of such genres suggested, on the other hand, often make reference to icons, incidents, and themes from the local or wider Caribbean cultural context. For instance, in learning "Reading Skills," students are expected to be familiar with sub-genres within books, such as the title page. Examples proposed for study are local texts like Caribbean Poetry Now. Proposed for assessment are such questions as, "On what pages will you find poems by Louise Bennett?" [the Jamaican

poet] (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-38). When students are to be taught to use the encyclopedia, they are to be encouraged to search for information about iconic local figures like Dr. Eric Williams, Trinidad's first Prime Minister; the Trinidadian Nobel Prize winner, Sir Vidia Naipaul; and the dancer, Beryl McBurnie, as well as international figures like Dr. Martin Luther King (pp. 2-39, 2-42).

It must be noted that the majority of the examples proposed are persons who would be considered in the society as being of primarily Afro-Trinidadian or Indo-Trinidadian origin—the numerically dominant racial groups in the society. The festivals cited are generally either Christian or mainstream Hindu, with limited references to Muslim festivals. Other cultural practices and significant persons in the society, reflecting the beliefs of, for example, the Baha'i or the Orisha, are not evoked in this curriculum. Iconic figures named do not include persons from, for example, the Syrian-Lebanese community, although this community now exercises significant economic power. Hence the curriculum, in attempting to acknowledge the contributions of different groups, excludes many. It also simplifies the way in which different permutations of race and ethnicity characterize the society.

Nevertheless, there are explicit attempts to engender a value for persons and practices of all cultures in the country. When, for example, the curriculum introduces the concept of "descriptive vocabulary," it suggests that students be asked to use such vocabulary to describe persons whom they know. The "connected activity" proposed in this case is described as "seeing beauty in self and other people" (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-32). Also, a proposed discussion of family structures includes not only the dominant nuclear family, but also the extended family, which is a much more familiar concept for many Trinidadians.

Students' experience of popular culture, and especially of the mass media and popular music, is acknowledged throughout. In fact, a component of the curriculum deals with media literacy, and students are introduced to texts produced by the popular media, including films and television shows like soap operas and cartoons, and advertisements from the print media. For the most part, however, while students are encouraged to analyze the technologies the mass media use to compose their messages, they are not required to critique the messages

themselves, which, consequently, are invested with significant power. In fact, teachers are most often encouraged to ask students to identify the benefits of the mass media. When, on occasion, students are to be encouraged to critically analyze mass media (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-127) the critique is focused on individual programmes they may have heard or seen, rather than on mass media as a social institution, with powers of representing reality from certain perspectives.

Language as dominant cultural practice

It is noteworthy that, in spite of its attempts to ensure that a range of cultural experience is presented, and valued, the most significant feature of the Language Arts curriculum is that it communicates an expectation that students' own communications with others should be conducted primarily in Standard English. This is to happen, apparently, even when the context of language use is not formal, and does not relate to the production of academic or other formal, written texts. For example, students are to be taught the concept "idiomatic expressions" (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-111), but the examples of idiomatic expressions proposed do not seem to acknowledge that there is a place among the Language Arts they are learning for even those Trinidadian Creole idiomatic expressions, like "going on a lime," that are used in a range of social contexts.

Each term's work includes a section dedicated solely to the mechanics of language, but this section never refers to the mechanics of the Trinidad or Tobago English Creole, even for the purpose of differentiating between English and Creole structures. The curriculum does not articulate a need for students to develop language awareness related to the specific differences between the grammatical features of the English and the English Creole, and to how they are used in different contexts. Even when the resource materials for teachers, which form part of the document, describe the language experience approach as a strategy for teaching reading (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 4-8), no adaptation of the approach is proposed to meet the specific needs of Creole-speaking secondary school students when such a strategy is employed, in spite of the fact that the philosophy behind the strategy is that the student's own language experience is to be respected.

The document does signal that students are permitted to use the Creole under carefully defined situations, related to learning how it can be incorporated into English language narratives they produce, and signalled as being the speech of fictional persona by quotation marks. When they are to be assessed for their ability to produce narrative writing, the sample instrument provided notes, as one criterion for assessment, "Use of dialogue (vernacular structures acceptable)" (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 3-24).

There is only one place in the entire curriculum document where a Creole structure is provided as an example of possible ways of using language in an identified sociocultural context. Even then, it is there to be stigmatized as being among "Impolite ways of speaking. (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-71). In the example, it is proposed that classes should discuss the language used by a young person, depicted as asking on the telephone, "Owicho going to the savannah later?" The curriculum directs that the student should compare this with the "acceptable" form: "Good day. I am Jackie. Can you tell me if Owicho will be going to the savannah later?" It may well be that the primary focus is the absence of the salutation, but the document does not make this clear. What is clear, however, is that the impolite speaker betrays his rudeness while using a Creole grammatical structure.

One attempt is made to explicitly put the Trinidad English Creole lexicon into its sociocultural context. When students are to be taught the meanings of unfamiliar words, teachers are advised to teach them the history of words and phrases like Hosay, Chutney, Dimanche Gras, and silly mid on (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-79). The words selected refer to a range of practices reflecting the meeting of European, African, and Indian cultures, in the common cultural space of Trinidadian Creole culture.

However, no opportunity is explicitly provided in the curriculum for students to distinguish between uses of the two language systems in different contexts, or to make choices as to when it might be appropriate to use each. It is left to teachers to decide when and how this is going to happen, or if it ever will.

Attempts at curriculum integration

As indicated above, the attempts at integration focus largely on integration of cultural content with knowledge of concepts from the dominant language. Thus, cultural content related to knowledge of practices, icons, tools, and texts is integrated with knowledge of language skills and concepts by using one area of knowledge as a context for understanding another. Information about the culture students have already been exposed to as members of the society, or of specific racial or ethnic groups, may be used to help them to develop certain language skills. It is assumed that they will know the culture's values for a good calypso, for instance, and that they can use that knowledge to develop an effective argument about what constitutes a good calypso. They can also tap their knowledge of cultural contexts in which that skill will be relevant and necessary (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-92).

The curriculum also proposes occasional opportunities for students to integrate the knowledge of the classroom with their knowledge of the cultural life of the community, as when, for example, teachers are directed to have elders of the community come in to provide descriptions of community life, so that students can see how information can be made vivid through use of language (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-114).

There is, however, only a very limited attempt made to integrate their multiple experiences of different uses of language across contexts and cultures with the language rules and genres that they are now learning. No attempt is made to tap their experience of how choices between two language systems can be integrated into one stretch of discourse, or of the contexts in which these choices are made.

Curriculum orientations

The curriculum reflects multiple, and sometimes contradictory, orientations. The statement of the vision that informs it notes that Language Arts must portray a way of life that reflects "the ideal culture" (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-2). It asserts, in its rationale, that "great literature allows the writer to delineate and define reality. To be conscious of this it is necessary to be immersed in their works" (p. 2-3). At the same time, however, the document claims that this curriculum

"moulds citizens who … appreciate the diversity inherent in a multicultural society" (p. 2-3). There is no apparent recognition of possible tensions between the two perspectives.

Teaching and assessment of language in the curriculum are conducted from one dominant perspective—that of speakers of English as a First Language. Students are expected to learn the Standard English, but there is no acknowledgement of the Trinidad and Tobago Creoles that constitute a first language or dialect for many of them. In addition, no attempt is made to have students examine critically what the advantages and limitations are of having to either study a language that is not their own or be penalized for using their own first language or dialect. All the assessments for speaking and writing include a criterion "Use of Standard English" (e.g., T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 3-13, 3-14, 3-18).

Even when students are allowed to examine the use of Creole structures in social contexts, they are rarely to be encouraged to think of themselves as using the language themselves. Students are to be required, instead, to imagine the Creole as being used by market vendors or shopkeepers, not by educated people (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2-128). Thus a dominant message is sent, which perpetuates the stigmatization of the Creole as unacceptable, uneducated, or impolite. The attitude to the Creole – Standard relationship therefore establishes a divide, which is constructed from an orientation to what Eisner (1985) has termed "academic relevance." Students are to develop cultural literacy, assessed by their control of cultural capital from a dominant Western culture of language use.

The inclusion of cultural practices is used partly as a stimulus for the development of concepts about language, by connecting new ideas with previous personal knowledge (T&T. Ministry of Education, 2002, pp. 2-79, 2-128). It also appears to be used as a means of making the curriculum relevant to students, and of making the language learning experience fulfilling to them. The curriculum also attempts to provide students with a stock of knowledge about the cultural icons and a more limited exposure to the significant literacy practices of their society, such as the practice of composing and performing texts from the oral tradition for commentary or description. The inclusion of cultural practice thus seems to reflect some orientations to self-actualization and social

relevance. However, no attempt is made to introduce students to methods, or provide them with opportunities to question the dominant language agenda, or to see language use as entailing the possibility of informed choice. Therefore, it may be argued that the proposed orientation to teaching Language Arts is almost totally uncritical.

Discussion

As may have been expected, many of the contradictions and tensions within the society with regard to issues of language and culture are reflected within the SEMP Language Arts curriculum. It seems obvious that the curriculum developers have not arrived at a rational approach to dealing with these contradictions.

The first and most important of these has to do with the philosophy that informs the curriculum as it relates to what must be considered the ideal culture, as described in the curriculum vision statement. In a Creole society where so many cultures and combinations of cultures co-exist, what is to be considered the "ideal culture"? Is any one ideal possible? And what are the criteria to be used to select important features of the ideal for teaching the young of the Trinidad and Tobago society? Also, if another ideal towards which the curriculum is aimed is to reflect and respect all cultural experiences of young people, what are the grounds for inclusion of particular cultural practices in the curriculum, given that inclusion of any necessitates exclusion of others?

Another issue that must be clarified is the aim of the curriculum with regard to the language learning experience. The curriculum attempts to cultivate effective language-in-use, but has not yet arrived at a position with regard to important language and literacy practices when the English and the Creole language systems compete in providing effective ways to communicate in various contexts of use. It assumes a stance of respecting students' personal knowledge and cultural experience, but does not signal the need to accommodate the wealth of knowledge and experience they already have, of using language in situations that may require them to shift codes continuously within a single stretch of discourse.

The curriculum document reflects a static view of language use in the society. The assumption is still that learners must simply be able to

choose English over any English Creole, and to distinguish between "polite" forms of language and "impolite" forms. It must be questioned what tools it gives students to deal appropriately with situations where, for example, some students may at times have to move from speaking Trinidad English Creole with friends, interspersed with influences from the Jamaican English Creole and African-American English as they discuss popular music and films, to using the language appropriate to different disciplinary communities during the school day, and then to using Trinidad English Creole intermixed with Hindi and, possibly, Bhojpuri at a puja or Hindu prayer session at night. In each case, the cultural practices of different communities will establish different criteria for appropriate use of language.

Preparation for successful interaction on these occasions demands that students be given the opportunity to develop a more sophisticated and critical language awareness, so that they will know how best to choose. They should develop awareness not only of the differences between the vernacular they already command and the Standard they are expected to learn, but also of how each can be a language of power within identified contexts. They are exposed to a limited, but somewhat unrealistic, range of choices in the experiences of the SEMP curriculum, and little opportunity to develop principles for making those choices with confidence. There is no exposure, certainly, to the concept of more and less powerful discourses, and no opportunity to learn what factors must be considered in evaluating the power inherent in opting to use a certain type of discourse in a given context. Yet, these are factors that must be addressed urgently, if the curriculum is to be effective in helping students to develop true communicative competence.

Conclusion

It must be recognized, in evaluating the curriculum, that many of the issues that it fails to address are in fact potential sources of intense conflict in the society. It is therefore unlikely that the teachers and Curriculum Officers who developed the curriculum would have the power to make the necessary decisions about the role of language, and about ways of dealing with cultural issues, which might have addressed some of the challenges that have not been faced in this curriculum. The wish to reflect true respect for all the cultures that constitute the society can only be realized in the context of well-conceived language and

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culture policies at the national level. Without such policies, even the best-planned curriculum is likely to be ignored, or to be subject to vituperation in the ongoing struggle among languages and cultures for their place in the Trinidad and Tobago society.

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RECONSIDERING THE CONSEQUENCES
Gender Differentials in Performance and Placement in the 2001 SEA

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This paper provides an analysis of the gender fairness and consequences associated with the test design used for the 2001 Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) in Trinidad and Tobago. It is argued that the rationale for choosing the SEA test design emphasized the usefulness and purpose of the selection instrument, but failed to consider one significant consequence: the likelihood of adverse impact resulting from large performance differentials in favour of females. The study also tests the hypotheses that gender differences are (1) institution-specific and (2) vary across ability groups. The major findings were that patterns of gender inequity were complex and sometimes even contradictory, with females favoured on SEA composite total score, language arts, and creative writing and males favoured on the placement process. However, males and females performed similarly in mathematics. An analysis across different ability groups indicated that large differentials favouring females were more likely among students below the 50th percentile. On the other hand, among higher achievers, males performed just as well as females. The gender fairness of five alternative SEA test designs was evaluated using Willingham's (1999) social matrix.

The point is that the functional worth of the testing depends not only on the degree to which the intended purposes are served but also the consequences of the outcomes produced, because the values captured in the outcomes are at least as important as the values unleashed in the goals. (Messick, 1989, p. 85)

Introduction

Gender differentials in favour of females: A growing problem in the English-speaking Caribbean

Large gender differentials favouring females are a major concern at all levels of the education system within a number of Caribbean territories, including Jamaica, Dominica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago (Bailey, 2000; Goldberg & Bruno, 1999; Kutnick, Jules, & Layne, 1997; Layne & Kutnick, 2001). However, this phenomenon has also been observed in First World countries such as the UK, Australia, and New Zealand (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997; Gallagher, 1997; Harker, 2000). In the research to date, the primary focus has been on achievement and access as indicators of educational performance, with differences in enrolment ratios and tests scores most often emphasized (Leo-Rhynie, 1999).

In the English-speaking Caribbean and elsewhere, some have approached the issue from the singular perspective of male underachievement, arguing that males are at a disadvantage in schooling (Goldberg & Bruno, 1999; Miller, 1991). However, it might well be that patterns of gender inequity are complex and contradictory, varying for each sub-group across attainment levels and contexts (De Lisle & Pitt-Miller, 2002; Elwood, 1999b; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 1999; Warrington & Younger, 2000). Nevertheless, fairness and equity are critical concepts in the search for social justice, and therefore it is important to determine which factors contribute to differential performance (Gipps & Murphy, 1994). Indeed, the opportunity to develop the full potential of each gender is central to efforts at human resource development (Behrman, 1996). As such, one might argue that analyzing the nature of gender inequity within the education system is a prerequisite to planning a 2020 vision for Trinidad and Tobago.

Reconsidering the research: Issues of measurement and focus

Despite the increasing number of empirical studies analyzing gender differences in the English-speaking Caribbean, two notable weaknesses are readily apparent. The first is the failure to report statistical measures that allow an evaluation of the practical significance of differentials. Although this is the most critical aspect of the analysis, in the past, some studies have made judgements based solely upon the raw difference

between means (Rampersad, 1999). On the other hand, although newer studies frequently report tests of statistical significance, effect size measures are rarely included (Bailey, 2000; Layne & Kutnick, 2001). Practical significance, however, can only be assessed through a measure of effect size (Daniel, 1988; De Lisle & Pitt-Miller, 2002; Fan, 2001). Indeed, it is critical for researchers to distinguish between statistical and practical significance, especially in studies with large sample sizes, because statistically significant differences will be obtained even when the magnitude of differentials are, in fact, relatively small (Thompson, 2002). For this reason, many publication manuals now make the reporting of effect size mandatory (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001; Daniel, 1988).

The most common and useful effect size measure in the study of gender differentials is the standard mean difference, Cohen's d (Pomplun & Sundbye, 1999). This index is obtained by subtracting the mean score of females from the mean score of males and dividing it by the pooled standard deviation (Willingham & Cole, 1997). Cohen (1988) also provided a metric for interpreting the standard mean difference in terms of practical significance. According to this estimation, d-values of ± 0.2 are considered negligible, 0.2 to 0.5 small, 0.5 to 0.8 medium-sized, and values greater than 0.8 large.

A second notable weakness in the empirical research to date is the limited range of indices used to describe patterns in differential performance. As a result, it is possible that some issues have not been readily apparent and the overall complexity of patterns obscured. To illustrate, Feingold (1992) noted the tendency for the scores of males and females on critical intellectual abilities to differ both in magnitude and variability. He showed that, for any given value of Cohen's d, the gender with the wider distribution of scores would be over-represented at the tails. Thus, differences in score variability will result in differential impact at the high- and low-ability groups. It is always useful, then, to report both a measure of effect size and index of variability when analyzing differential performance by gender. One useful index of variability is the standard deviation ratio (SDR), defined as the ratio of the standard deviation for the female sub-population to the male sub-population (Willingham & Cole, 1997; Witt, Dunbar, & Hoover, 1994). Another useful index for measuring the impact of gender differentials, especially across different ability groups, is the female to male ratio

(F/M ratio). Willingham, Cole, Lewis, and Leung (1997) used the F/M ratio for failing students at different percentiles as a measure of the relative impact of differential performance across the ability range.

While a number of studies have focused upon differential performances at the secondary level, there is a dearth of empirical studies at the all-important primary-secondary transition point. The absence of empirical research at this transition point is alarming because of the high-stakes nature of the decisions. Indeed, it is common in the English-speaking Caribbean to administer a one-shot public examination at this transition point. This choice of selection instrument remains a colonial legacy, which continues despite the growing assessment literacy of educators and the public (Payne & Barker, 1986). Inferences from this one-shot examination are used to make critical life decisions, often resulting in vastly different opportunities and outcomes. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, placement outcomes might range from a high-achieving seven-year secondary school to a special school for low achievers. By no means can these different outcomes be considered equal, neither can fairness nor meritocracy be automatically assumed, especially without evidence (London, 1989).

With universal secondary education implemented in 2001, it might have appeared that the stakes associated with the placement process were significantly reduced. However, in reality, the prospect of outright failure was replaced by the threat of assignment to a classroom or school for special children. Arguably, this placement decision might be considered somewhat dubious since it is neither standard nor criterion-referenced, but based upon a norm-referenced cut score of 30%. In short, poor performance at 11+ will greatly alter the child's future life chances. It becomes critical, then, to examine the consequences associated with the current 11+ selection procedure. Indeed, the negative impact of assessment was one of the major concerns that led to the change from the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) in 2001. The negative impact of the CEE was believed to be individual, pedagogical, and curricular, ranging from curriculum distortion to undue anxiety among students. By contrast, it was believed that the SEA would prove a more useful design, with the likelihood of positive impact upon teaching and learning in the primary school. However, in this paper, we will focus upon the adverse consequences that result from use of the SEA. More specifically, we intend to explore

the possibility of differential performance among males and females and its impact upon placement. We argue that this aspect of validity must always be considered when evaluating high-stakes tests in Caribbean societies because of the likelihood of large gender differentials favouring females and the possibility that gender might interact with other variables in predicting performance. We strongly support the argument that if any high-stakes test is to be administered at 11+, it requires a design that is explicitly gender-fair (Chilisa, 2000).

Consequences and fairness as aspects of validity

Gender-fairness is a subset of the broader issue of fairness in test design and use. Willingham and Cole (1997) highlighted the importance of validity as a conceptual framework for analyzing test fairness, noting that:

> Validity is an all-encompassing technical standard for judging the quality of the assessment process. Validity includes, for example, the accuracy with which a test measures what it purports to measure, how well it serves its intended function, other consequences of test use, and comparability of the assessment process for different examinees. We see fairness reflected in various aspects of comparable measurement, and anything that reduces fairness tends also to reduce validity. (p. 228)

This broad approach to validity incorporates Messick's (1989) notion of the consequential aspect of testing. Messick (1989, 1994) stressed the need to focus upon the social consequences of test use and argued that both intended and unintended consequences should be considered. Indeed, both Moss (1997) and Broadfoot (2002) have reminded us that, like an emerging Frankenstein's monster, unintended consequences can sometimes outweigh the positive impact of assessment change. In analyzing tests used for selection, Messick (1989) has argued that the entire process should be considered along with alternatives and values that provide the foundation for the test design. This is a useful approach because it suggests that, in examining the consequences of the SEA, both test design and placement should be considered. Indeed, Jules (1994) has provided evidence that a number of ancillary factors are likely predictors of the CEE placement process.

Willingham (1999) developed a social matrix for evaluating fairness in test design and use, consisting of three distinct criteria: usefulness, fairness, and practicality. Usefulness is the intended function or purpose of the tests, and practicality refers to the constraints that impact upon acceptability and feasibility in use. Fairness, the focus of this study, is the differential performances of sub-groups resulting from factors either related or unrelated to the test construct. Willingham argued that in the design of a high-stakes test, the three criteria must be balanced against each another. Earlier, Cole and Moss (1989) developed an alternative framework for evaluating fairness. They used the concept of test bias, defined as the "differential validity of a given interpretation of a test score for any definable, relevant subgroup of test takers" (p. 205). The five categories considered were: (1) constructs in context, (2) content and format, (3) administration and scoring, (4) internal test structure, and (5) external test relationships. Therefore, both frameworks consider construct and format as critical aspects of test design. We believe that in making choices about construct and format, the possibility of adverse impact resulting from differential performance by gender must be given equal weight to any expectation of positive impact.

Predicting consequences: Factors influencing differential outcomes

Gender differentials in achievement are influenced by a wide variety of individual, sub-group, and systemic variables. However, the majority of studies in the English-speaking Caribbean highlight primarily sub-group variables, with some theorists perhaps overemphasizing the role of the victim in the resolution of inequity (Figueroa, 2002; Parry, 2000). Nevertheless, there is now a growing awareness of the impact of systemic variables, including institutional characteristics such as school ethos; organizational variables like tracking; and classroom factors like pedagogical style (Evans, 2001; Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994; Kutnick, Jules, & Layne, 1997). A UK study by Daniels, Hey, Leonard, Fielding, and Smith (1999) provides an interesting perspective on the possible role of systemic variables in the creation of gender differentials. This study included schools in which either males or females performed better on English. It was found that some institutions were able to minimize the size and direction of gender differentials by establishing a pedagogic focus on learning rather than on learners, and by fostering collaborative

and supportive environments. On the other hand, the demand of performance pedagogies within competitive classrooms often provoked defensive/subversive attitudes in boys. The possibility that some schools might reduce the differences between male and female performance is a hypothesis worth testing, because it implies that whole-school strategies can be developed to ameliorate the underachievement of specific sub-groups (Younger, Warrington, & Williams, 1999).

One of the more important systemic variables, with a consistent impact across different contexts, is student assessment. Assessment-related factors that may influence gender differentials include construct, task, format, and the stakes involved in testing (Chilisa 2000; Willingham & Cole 1997). An emerging explanatory model suggests that different assessment factors interact with both the learning environment and gendered preferences for working, knowing, and communicating in creating differentials in performance across assessment purposes, formats, and tasks (Elwood, 1999b). For example, one possibility is that females prefer social aspects of learning and may therefore have an advantage in collaborative learning environments and on assessment tasks that emphasize communication and teamwork. On the other hand, it could be that the failure to acknowledge and remediate these gendered preferences accentuates differential performance. For example, some classrooms might inhibit the achievement of males by failing to provide the scaffolding necessary to reach minimal competence on collaborative or performance tasks.

Choice of construct is one of the more important decisions that determine the size and direction of gender differentials. For example, regardless of assessment format, females consistently do better on language-related tasks such as writing and reading, although this advantage is much reduced at both secondary and tertiary level. On the other hand, in mathematics, females often do better on tasks related to computation and knowledge of concepts but are worse at problem solving (Garner & Engelhard, 1999). However, the pattern is less clear in the social and natural sciences (Rampersad, 1999). In many cultures, males have an advantage in the natural sciences, a difference which increases with age (Herbert & George, 1996). Males may also have an advantage in some social sciences, such as geography, where the difference is often sizable and possibly related to differential ability on spatial tasks. Although these differences are often apparent at an early

age, the size of the differentials changes with class level, independent of the assessment used (Gray & Sharp, 2001; Witt, Dunbar, & Hoover, 1994). For example, in writing and language use, females increase their substantial advantage over males up to Form 1, but then the gap remains steady. On the other hand, the gap in favour of males appears to widen in mathematics, science, and geography at secondary school, although the rate of increase is comparatively smaller (Willingham et al., 1997). Kutnick's (1999) study of schools across Barbados suggests that this pattern is also evident in the Caribbean. Specifically, he found that large differentials favouring females in Standard 1 of the primary school were reduced or reversed by Form 2 in secondary school across a range of subjects including science, English, social studies, and mathematics.

There is a substantial and conclusive body of literature that describes the influence of assessment format on both the size and direction of gender differentials. For example, the early work of Murphy (1982) showed that females had a significant advantage on constructed response (CR) items in the British General Certificate of Education (GCE). A similar pattern was also observed in the US Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, although the magnitude of the effect varied by discipline (Breland, Danos, Kahn, Kubota, & Bonner, 1994; Bridgeman & Lewis, 1994). At the same time, differentials in selected response (SR) formats such as multiple choice (MC) tests are often negligible or favour males (Mullins & Greene, 1994). While some have taken these results to mean that MC tests are biased against females, the reverse argument might well hold for CR tests against males. The truth is that no assessment, however authentic, is implicitly gender neutral and the authenticity of an assessment task will not compensate for adverse impact due to large gender differentials favouring one sub-group (Chilisa, 2001; Elwood, 1999b; Gipps & Murphy, 1994).

Gender-influenced format effects have been observed at all levels and on a variety of subjects in basic schooling, including mathematics (Garner & Engelhard, 1999), reading (Pomplun & Sundbye, 1999), and science (DeMars, 1998). Format effects are partly responsible for the female advantage in coursework; however, test stakes and motivation may also have a role in determining differences in performance when scores on coursework and final examinations are compared (DeMars, 2000; Elwood, 1999a). Format effects may be due to construct-related, task-embedded factors such as language skill or verbal fluency in writing, or

to construct-irrelevant factors such as test-wiseness, neatness, handwriting, scoring, and differential reliability (Pomplun & Sundbye, 1999).

These findings have important implications for test design. Moreover, although test design is the first step in the assessment cycle, followed by development, administration, and use, fairness issues permeate all four steps. Nevertheless, decisions at the test design stage often prove critical because this step is intimately interwoven with the others. For example, test development depends upon the table of specifications constructed in test design. The development of items therefore requires frequent cycling between these two stages. Likewise, score reporting and intended test use must be congruent with the design chosen (Willingham & Cole, 1997). In view of the possible impact on the size and direction of gender differentials, the choice of construct and format are major considerations in the design of a fair test (Chilisa, 2000). For example, if an examination samples heavily from constructs and tasks in the verbal-linguistic sphere, large gender differentials favouring females are likely. Similarly, if an examination makes exclusive use of constructed response, gender differentials will be shifted towards females.

> *When the use of a test results in outcomes that affect the life chances or educational opportunities of examinees, evidence of mean test score differences between relevant subgroups of examinees, should, where feasible, be examined for subgroups for which credible research reports mean differences for similar tests. (American Educational Research Association [AERA], APA, & National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 1999, p. 83)*

Great Expectations! Choices, From SEA to CEE

In 1988, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago appointed a task force (committee) to consider the removal of the CEE. The committee included several current and past educators along with a variety of prominent citizens representing various stakeholder groups, and was chaired by a former Minister of Education. The committee's terms of reference centred on the preparation of a plan for removing the CEE as the basis for placement of students in the secondary school (Trinidad and Tobago [T&T], 1988). Although this committee had the unique opportunity to

remove selective testing at 11+, it chose not to, arguing instead that there were secondary schools of varying quality that necessitated an adequate mechanism "to place the most academically capable students into the schools best equipped to maximise their potential" (p. 52). This vision of equity perhaps reflected loyalty to existing societal "folk norms," which maintain and legitimize elements of sponsorship in the selection process (London, 1989, p. 283). Surprisingly, as well, the committee frowned upon alternatives such as using scores from the continuous assessment and the zoning of students, both of which might have facilitated the removal or reduced the impact of a high-stakes one-shot examination.

In the end, the committee envisaged a selection procedure that, they believed, would (1) lessen the anxiety and stress associated with the CEE, (2) provide diagnostic and formative information on student performance and ability, and (3) ensure greater meritocracy. To accomplish these goals, the committee sought to redesign the selection instrument. The changes proposed included: (1) removing science and social studies, which the committee believed were not satisfactorily tested in the CEE; (2) increasing the mark for creative writing; and (3) limiting the instrument to achievement in English, mathematics, and creative writing, with an emphasis on reasoning and verbal ability.

The rationale for these decisions was founded upon a number of beliefs. For example, three reasons were given for restricting the choice of constructs. Firstly, it was argued that, in the past, components such as science, social studies, and creative writing exercised an inordinate influence upon the composite total score of the CEE. Secondly, it was believed that science and social studies were badly taught and inappropriately tested in the CEE. Thirdly, it was suggested that literacy and numeracy were the main goals of the primary school system and, therefore, low CEE scores in these areas were indicative of a system-wide problem. Concerning choice of format, it was argued that the MC format measured facts rather than critical thinking and facilitated guessing. At the same time, it was believed that CR tests were more authentic and better assessed higher-order thinking. A major expectation was for these changes to influence the pedagogical approach of teachers, encouraging a greater emphasis on teaching for critical thinking (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004).

Wisely, the committee also extended its analysis to the placement system, noting the lack of fairness. It was argued that the system was possibly biased against females, because it sought to artificially balance the number of boys and girls placed despite the disparity in the number of places and the superior performance of females. In terms of crafting a solution to this disparity, however, the committee believed that:

> It would be a simple matter to remedy this situation but one has to consider the possible consequences of placing students purely on the basis of merit without any consideration of balancing the selection on the terms of gender. (p.43)

Nevertheless, the committee mistakenly believed that placement issues were no longer relevant with the implementation of universal secondary education, and so did not consider the need for further reform in this area.

Judging the choices: Evaluating the SEA test design

From an assessment perspective, the faith of the committee in the ability of a one-shot examination to fairly select and allocate students to different life opportunities was surprising. Perhaps this credulity was reinforced by the perceived transparency of the selection process and a lack of trust in teachers' judgements (London, 1989). However, from a psychometric standpoint, it is obvious that multiple assessments would better capture both ability and achievement at 11+ (Henderson-Montero, Julian, & Yen, 2003). Indeed, the 1999 version of *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* emphasized the fallibility and limitations of single measures of achievement, especially in the context of high stakes testing. Notably, Standard 13.7 stated:

> In educational settings, a decision or characterization that will have a major impact on a student should not be made on the basis of a single test score. Other relevant information should be taken into account if it will enhance the validity of the decision. (AERA et al., 1999, p. 146)

This standard alludes to the superiority of multiple measures, whether in terms of multiple samples, different formats, or different measures across time (Henderson-Montero et al., 2003).

To a large extent, the committee's major focus was on the purpose or use of the selection instrument, with practicality and fairness considered to a much lesser extent. However, the full range of fairness issues was not explored and little consideration was given to the unintended consequences that might result from choice of format and construct. More than that, the committee failed to balance the expectation of positive impact with the likelihood of adverse consequences resulting from the choices made.

Admittedly, there was some support in the assessment literature for many of the arguments put forward by the committee, especially in its decision to make greater use of CR items. For example, Snow (1993) listed eight plausible rival hypotheses concerning the use of CR and MC items, and argued that CR tests were a better measure of ability and higher-order thinking and most likely promoted understanding and critical thinking. Likewise, Martinez (1999) summarized seven similar propositions about the use of CR and MC item formats and argued for an increased use of CR items, stressing that the range of cognitions elicited by extended CR items are usually broader than that assessed by MC item formats. He agreed that CR items might promote higher-quality learning through the washback effect.

However, the literature is not unified in its support for the exclusive use of CR item formats in a high-stakes test used for selection. Likewise, not everyone is euphoric about the value of CR items as measures of higher-order skills or as a mechanism to stimulate washback. Indeed, Mehrens (1998) has pointed out that there is little evidence to support the claim that the use of extended CR items in high-stakes testing impacts positively upon teaching and learning. Similarly, empirical studies on the psychometric difference between MC and CR items have not been conclusive. For example, Bridgeman (1992) found little difference between open-ended and multiple-choice formats in the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). Similarly, Martinez (1991) compared stem equivalent figural MC and CR items and found only slight differences in statistical performance. In a later study of licensing tests in the field of architecture, even though figural CR items were more difficult, MC items proved more discriminating (Martinez & Katz, 1996).

A recent meta-analysis of past studies by Rodriguez (2003) confirmed that stem equivalent MC and CR items measure the same construct equally well. Moreover, it has been found that the use of CR items does not necessarily prevent test-takers from employing deleterious strategies such as working backwards from an answer (Katz, Bennett, & Berger, 2000). Hancock (1994) has explicitly tested the hypothesis that MC items cannot measure higher-order skills when compared with CR items. He found little support for differences in the two formats, but suggested the need for greater skill in the writing of MC items to test higher-order skills. Bearing in mind the weight of the evidence, some have even argued that in terms of testing time and cost-effectiveness, it might be better to replace a limited number of CR questions with a large number of MC items (Kennedy & Walstad, 1997).

Administration, aftermath, and myth

With hindsight, perhaps, there was no concerted effort to implement all the committee's recommendations in the test development stage. For example, it is unclear whether the committee's stated focus on higher-order thinking, development of diagnostic capacity, and tasks related to ability were actually translated in the development of the 2001 SEA. Nevertheless, prior to the administration of the examination, there proved to be tremendous support for the proposed design. This came from both prominent educators and writers in the popular press (Findlay, 2001; McDowall, 2000; Ragbir, 2000). Reasons given for the strong support centred upon the perceived focus on critical thinking, reduction in guessing and anxiety, and expectation of significant washback. Indeed some were suggesting that washback had already occurred (Allen-Agostini, 2001). On publication of the results, however, the possibility of adverse consequences soon turned into reality, with the then Minister of Education observing that "looking at the statistics yesterday of the SEA results and remembering the Common Entrance results, by far the majority of students who perform at low levels are in fact boys" (Pickford-Gordon, 2001, p. 5).

Consequently, the great majority of students assigned to "one-special" classes and schools were males, with 1,812 males to 704 females in 2001 and 2,240 males to 1,010 females in 2002. Such an adverse impact is significant, whether or not the reasons for it are construct or format related.

The Design of the Study

Research questions and hypotheses

This study was designed to determine the size and direction of gender differentials in performance and placement in the 2001 SEA. The study also investigated the possibility that gender differentials vary across schools, school types, and ability grouping. A variety of indices were used to analyze the data, including Cohen's d-values, SDRs, and F/M ratios.

The key research questions were:

1. What are the size and direction of gender differentials in overall scores and on each component of the SEA?

2. To what extent are there differential outcomes for males and females in the placement process?

3. To what extent do the size and direction of the differentials vary by school and school type?

4. To what extent do gender differentials and placement outcomes vary across ability groups as measured by total score SEA?

The literature provides support for the hypothesis that gender differentials will be small or negligible for mathematics, larger for language arts, and largest for creative writing (Garner & Englehard, 1999; Pomplun & Sundbye, 1999). Because the design of the SEA battery included two language components, the differential for the composite total score should strongly favour females (Willingham & Cole, 1997). It is possible that patterns of gender differentials in both performance and placement would either be uniform or vary across ability groups. Based on the findings in Jules (1994), however, the latter option is more likely. One possibility is for negligible or small differences among males and females in the high-ability groups, and larger differentials favouring females in the lower-ability groups. On the other hand, it might well be that high-achieving females will also have an advantage over high-achieving males on a test composed solely of CR items (DeMars, 1998).

In terms of gendered placement patterns, there are three possible options. One possibility is for equal placement opportunities for males and females. This is likely if males and females are allocated separately and/or the numbers of available places are equal. However, if males and females are competing for a specific number of places, then placement opportunities should favour females, with females more likely to receive their choice of school. A third possibility is for placement opportunities to favour males. This will occur if there are more "first and second choice" school places for males. In terms of the equity, one might argue that if parental choice is the sine qua non of the placement process, then both males and females should have comparable placement opportunities based on their stated choice of secondary school. On the other hand, it can be argued that, even with a flawed test design, placement opportunities should be solely dependent upon test scores regardless of gender.

Sample and methodology

The original data set consisted of 2,258 students in 44 schools in the St. George East Educational District (Smith, 2002). This district is reported as having one of the highest mean scores in the CEE (Jules, 1994). The 44 schools included 5 private and 7 single-sex primary schools. For this sample, the 7 single-sex primary schools, including two private schools, were excluded. The total number of schools in the sample was therefore 37, inclusive of 4 private schools. The total number of students was 1,896. In terms of the target population, the St. George East Educational District includes 61 public schools, 19 of which are government-run and 42 government-assisted (T&T, 2001). However, one of the new public schools included in the sample was not listed. Overall, then, the sample represented more than 53% of the schools in the district.

The profile of the schools in the sample is provided in Table 1. As shown, the sample included mainly government, Hindu, and Roman Catholic (RC) schools. The majority of schools were situated in the semi-urban areas along the East-West Corridor. However, the sample also included two rural RC schools. The Presbyterian, government, and Anglican schools were usually larger and the RC and Hindu schools smaller. The largest numbers of candidates in the sample were from the government and Presbyterian schools. Mean total SEA scores were highest for the

private and Presbyterian schools and lowest for the government and RC schools.

The data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows 9. For each school, means and standard deviations for the overall SEA score and each of the components were calculated. An EXCEL spreadsheet was used to calculate Cohen's d and the SDR. Schools in the sample were then categorized based on the size of Cohen's d. The seven categories and associated d-values were: 1) females performed much better (>0.8); 2) females performed better (0.5 to 7.99); 3) females performed slightly better (0.2 to 4.99); 4) males and females performed similarly (-0.199 to 0.199); 5) males performed slightly better (-0.2 to -4.99); 6) males performed better (-0.5 to -7.99); and 7) males performed much better (<-0.8).

Table 1. Profile of Schools in the Sample (St. George East Educational District)

Denomination		Location			Mean Size		No. of Candidates		Mean
Type	No. of Schools	Ur.	Semi Ur.	Rur.	Cap.	Pop.	Total M	F	SEA Score
Anglican	2	-	2	-	672	660	107	80	618.17
Gov't	12	2	10	-	727	507	444	336	557.54
Hindu	6	-	6	-	388	273	105	104	589.47
Muslim	2	-	2	-	485	500	58	64	604.54
Presb.	3	-	3		569	724	154	158	644.03
Private	4	-	4	-	-		36	38	646.53
R.C.	6	-	5	2	363	292	103	104	545.50
SDA	2	1	-	1	298	290	29	44	602.16

To obtain the percentage number of students placed according to choice for each gender, the six parental choices and the actual placing of the student were recorded. The percentage of students receiving each placement choice was then calculated. To obtain the female to male choice ratio for students at different ability groupings within the sample, percentiles were calculated using the students' composite total score. The percentile data was then used to create five ability groupings. The groupings were: 1) below the 30th percentile, 2) below the 50th percentile, 3) above the 50th percentile, 4) above the 75th percentile, and 5) above the 90th percentile. For each category, the weighted proportion of males and

females receiving choices 1 to 6 along with the Cohen's d and SDR was calculated.

Results

What are the size and direction of gender differentials in performance and placement?

Table 2 provides the means, F-ratios, p-values, SDRs, and Cohen's d-values for 37 schools in the sample categorized by denominational type. As shown by the means, p-values, and Cohen's d-values, females performed better on all three SEA components and on the composite total score. However, the differences were negligible for mathematics (0.193), relatively small for language arts (0.405), and medium-sized for creative writing (0.511). Overall, the standard mean difference for the composite total score (0.409) was relatively small. However, bearing in mind that composite total scores are used to determine placement, the size of this differential may be considered educationally significant, since it often results in different outcomes for males and females. When compared with the sample of CEE scores in a 1999 study analyzing students in the lower percentile who repeat the CEE, this Cohen's d-value was higher[1]. The SDR indicated that male scores were more widely distributed than that of females. This meant that at lower percentiles males were likely to be over-represented.

Table 3 includes the percentage of males and females placed according to the listed parental choice—1 to 6. As shown, males were more likely to receive placement choices 1 to 4. However, females were favoured on the lower placement choices 5 and 6, or were assigned to a school by the Ministry of Education. The chi-square value suggests that the overall distribution of the placement choices in this district was significantly different from what one would expect by chance. This implied that there were differences in placement opportunities for males and females. It is possible, however, that these particular placement patterns were district specific, dependent upon gender-based performance differentials, choice patterns, and the availability and distribution of schools.

Table 2. Means, F-ratios, p-values, Cohen's d-values, and SDRs for the Three Major Components of the 2001 SEA (St. George East Educational District)

SEA Components	Male		Female		p	Cohen's d	SDR
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Mathematics	198.92	31.50	207.59	27.68	0.000	0.193	0.961
Language	195.73	32.01	208.47	27.06	0.000	0.405	0.956
Essay	194.45	31.92	209.76	27.65	0.000	0.511	0.957
Overall	589.09	89.95	625.81	76.09	0.000	0.409	0.961

Table 3. Numbers and Percentages by Gender of Students Placed According to the Six Parental Choices (total data set)

Choices	Students Placed						F/M Placement Ratio
	Males		Females		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1	210	17.7	157	14.6	367	16.3	0.825
2	160	13.5	110	10.2	270	12.0	0.755
3	178	15.0	125	11.6	303	13.4	0.733
4	203	17.1	130	12.1	333	14.7	0.707
5	194	16.4	184	17.1	378	16.7	1.042
6	124	10.5	181	16.9	305	13.5	1.609
Total	1,069	90.3	887	82.6	1,956	86.6	0.837
Assigned	115	9.7	187	17.4	302	13.4	1.794

N=2,258, =65.065, df=6, p=.000

Do gender differentials vary by school type & institution?

Figure 1 shows the distribution of schools in the four categories constructed using Cohen's d. There were very few schools with medium or large gender differentials in favour of males. Indeed, only two schools fell in these two categories. However, in mathematics, there were 7 schools with small differentials favouring males, 8 schools with negligible differences, and 13 schools with small differentials in favour of females. Eight schools also reported negligible differentials for language arts and seven schools for creative writing. On the other hand, although only 3 schools reported medium-sized differentials favouring females for mathematics, as many as 11 schools reported such differences for language arts and eight for creative writing. Significantly, 8 schools reported large gender differentials favouring females in creative writing. This suggests that medium to large size differentials favouring females were more likely in language arts and creative writing than in mathematics. In terms of the composite total score, it may be significant that as many as 9 schools reported negligible gender differentials. Twelve schools, however, reported medium-sized differentials favouring females and 5 reported large differentials. This suggests that schools in this sample were more likely to report a female advantage in the SEA composite total score.

Schools grouped within the various gender differential categories had no unique identifying characteristics. However, schools reporting large gender differentials favouring males often sent up fewer candidates. Nonetheless, there were also schools with large numbers of candidates in which gender differentials for all three SEA components were either negligible or consistently small in favour of males. These schools were likely to report the highest SEA total scores. It follows that schools reporting medium-sized to large differentials in all three components tended to be either low achieving urban and rural schools. This suggested that a positive learning environment contributed to a reduction in the size of differentials, and that large differentials favouring females might reflect both overall underachievement and a poor learning climate.

Nevertheless, the expected pattern of negligible differences in mathematics, small differences in language arts, and medium-sized

differences for creative writing was not found in all schools. A few schools reported large differentials in specific SEA components while minimizing differences in others. In some cases, the component in which differences were minimized was unexpected. For example, in one semi-urban small Hindu school there were large differences favouring females in mathematics but medium-sized differentials for language arts and creative writing. Similarly, one semi-urban government school in the San Juan/El Socorro area reported medium-sized differences for language arts but small differentials for mathematics and creative writing. This suggests that differentials may have been created, in part, by institution-specific factors such as administrative support, the organization of instruction, the management of resources, learning climate, and teaching-learning focus.

It was unclear whether denominational grouping was an important variable influencing the size and direction of gender differentials. For example, in Hindu schools, two of six schools reported differentials in favour of males for all three components, whereas the other four schools reported large differences in favour of females. Individual Presbyterian, RC, and private schools were likewise found in the extreme categories. On the other hand, government schools were often found in the middle categories, reporting either low gender differentials in favour of females or negligible differences in all three components. The two Anglican schools in the sample were large in size and also reported large differentials in favour of males.

A case study: Institutional factors vs. school type

The three Presbyterian schools in the sample highlighted the weakness of using denominational type as a variable in the analysis of gender differentials. All three schools were situated in suburban areas and sent up large numbers of candidates. The schools were all high-achieving, with mean composite total scores above 620. However, differentials for mathematics, language arts, creative writing, and the composite total scores varied in both size and direction. For example, the highest-achieving school reported small mean differences in favour of males in mathematics (-0.210) and negligible differences for language (-0.032). The Cohen's d for creative writing (0.250) was small and in favour of females.
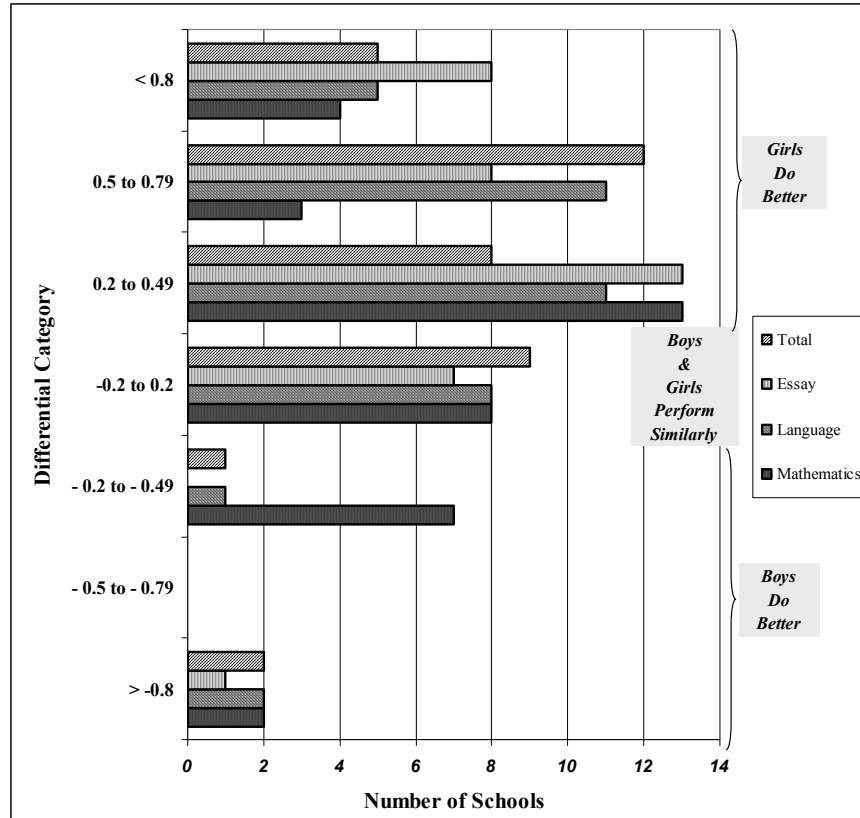
Figure 1. Number of schools in sample categorized by size and direction of differentials for scores on total SEA and components.

Significantly, in this school, the distribution of mathematics scores was more variable for females than for males (SDR=1.158). In the second school, all differentials were small and in favour of females, ranging from 0.245 for mathematics to 0.482 for writing. By contrast, in the third school, the differentials, all in favour of females, were more variable. Significantly, the differentials were small for mathematics (0.442), medium-sized for language arts (0.734) and large for creative writing (0.970). The SDR in all cases indicated that the distribution of scores for males was more variable than that for females. These findings confirm that institution-specific variables were more important in creating or reducing gender differences in achievement compared with overall school type or physical characteristics, such as size.

Do gender differentials in placement and performance vary across ability groups?

Table 4 provides the placement choice ratios, SDRs, and Cohen's d-values across different ability groupings. As shown, at all ability levels males were more likely to receive their first choice compared with females. The reverse was true, however, for students receiving the lowest choices (5 and 6) and those assigned to a school by the ministry. Below the 50th percentile, males were more likely to receive a favourable placing for choices 1 to 4. This was also true for students above the 50th percentile. However, this pattern of gender disparity was reversed for students above the 75th percentile, with females favoured on placement choices 2 to 6. Above the 90th percentile, males were favoured on their first choice. Notably, despite their high score, 36 females received their second choice and 13 received their third choice. This suggests that very high- and low-ability females were more likely to receive unfavourable outcomes in the placement system.

The Cohen's d for the composite total score was negligible for students in the top half of the class but approached a medium-sized effect in the lower half. This suggests that the greatest disparity was between low-achieving males and females, with differentials reduced in the higher-ability groupings. This pattern held for language arts, with medium-sized differentials favouring females for the lower half of the class reversed for students above the 75th percentile. In mathematics, for students above the 50th percentile, the magnitude of the differential was negligible and in the direction of males. Notably, as well, above the 75th percentile, differentials were also small and in favour of males. On the other hand, for creative writing, differentials were consistently in favour of females. For the lower half of the class, the Cohen's d was medium-sized whereas for students above the 50th percentile the differentials were small. Based on the SDR, the distribution of scores for males was restricted for language arts, creative writing, and the composite total score. Interestingly, above the 50th percentile in mathematics, female scores were more variable.

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Table 4. Female to Male Weighted Placement Choice Ratios, Cohen's d-values, and SDRs at Different Percentiles (for total score)

Choices	F/M ratio @ percentile				
	$\leq$30th	$\leq$50th	$\geq$50th	$\geq$75th	$\geq$90th
1	0.94	0.73	0.66	0.70	0.63
2	0.47	0.34	0.75	1.30	*NM (36 F)
3	0.42	0.50	0.85	1.16	*NM (13 F)
4	0.74	0.65	0.84	1.63	*NM (1 F)
5	0.93	1.03	1.48	1.34	0
6	1.33	1.46	3.35	3.28	0
Total	0.85	0.86	0.91	1.00	1.49
Assigned	1.70	1.73	11.83	0.73	0
Cohen's d					
Total Score	0.444	0.477	0.152	0.056	0.085
Mathematics	0.155	0.219	-0.140	-0.253	-0.156
Language Arts	0.482	0.503	0.071	-0.054	-0.060
Essay	0.436	0.507	0.326	0.251	0.240
SDR					
Total Score	0.854	0.827	0.977	0.970	0.927
Mathematics	0.855	0.821	0.997	1.038	0.977
Language Arts	0.913	0.891	1.096	1.186	1.036
Essay	1.003	0.897	0.972	10.51	1.183

*NM (_F) = No Males (Number of Females Assigned)

Discussion

Overall, the results show that the pattern of gender differentials in placement and performance was complex and sometimes even contradictory, varying across school and ability level. The paradox is that while overall SEA composite scores favoured females, placement patterns appeared to benefit males more. These two contradictory and discriminatory patterns existed together, and therefore it might be premature to conclude that there is an advantage (or disadvantage) to any one group. The finding of different and opposing patterns in performance and placement supports the idea that the entire selection process should be studied when examining consequences (Messick,

1989). It appeared that the SEA test design, with its choice of construct and format, may have contributed to a measure of gender inequity in the system. However, the sizes of the differentials for the composite total score were relatively small, below the benchmark of 0.5 for a medium-sized effect. Nevertheless, it is possible that an alternative test design might reduce the size of this differential and improve the validity of inferences.

It was notable that the predicted pattern of gender differentials was not found in all schools, even within the same denominational type. Therefore, generalizations about the impact of school type on gender differences were not very useful. These findings confirm the minimal role of school type in the creation of gender differentials (Harker, 2000; Yang & Woodhouse, 2001). At the same time, there was evidence that institution-specific variables influenced the creation or reduction of gender differences. One such factor may be the quality of the learning environment (Evans, 2001). This is an issue that also needs further study.

The pattern of gender differences in placement choice may be considered an issue of distributive justice. These inequitable patterns were possibly brought about by differences in the availability of school places for males and females within the education district. Even with the implementation of universal secondary education, this source of inequity remained and therefore should be considered in the redesign of the selective system. The inequity in placement opportunities also provides opportunity for further study. Key questions to consider are, *"How can differences in placement opportunities be reduced?"* and *"What factors motivate the choice of schools and in what ways are the patterns different for boys and girls?"* While the placement system may have been designed to ensure that the top 20% receive their choice of school, there is little evidence that this does take either place consistently or fairly.

Some have suggested that gender differentials may vary across ability groupings; however, this issue has not been studied in the English-speaking Caribbean (Figueroa, 2002; Parry, 2000). It is significant, then, that the data in this study support this hypothesis. It is clear that the question is not necessarily *"Are boys underachieving?"* but *"Which boys are underachieving?"* (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, & Maw, 1998). In light of the contradictory patterns found, however, an additional question may be, *"What structures disadvantage either males or females in situations where they*

should receive favourable outcomes in the selection procedure?" The analysis of ability groups suggests that small to medium-sized gender differentials favouring females were more likely to be found at lower percentiles, with differentials negligible in the top half or last quartile. Creative writing was an exception, with differentials either small or medium-sized and always in favour of females. It may also be significant that female distributions were more variable at higher percentiles. While the overall findings support the hypothesis that "*not all males underachieve*," it also emphasizes the poor performance of males in the lower-ability groups, who appear to be doing significantly less well than females in the same ability range (De Lisle & Pitt-Miller, 2002). Indeed, the concern over the academic and social classroom performance of low-achieving boys in the classroom has been noted elsewhere:

> Low attaining boys frequently received negative attention from classmates and teachers, this was also characteristic of girls (to a lesser extent). This attention was not focused on all low attainers, it tended to be focused on just a few students. Low attaining students displayed poor basic school skills (such as reading) and poor social skills. Particularly among boys, evidence has been provided showing poor reading (especially reading aloud skills). These boys also did not show care or concern for classmates. They were responsible for class punishments and often teased their classmates. (Kutnick et al., 1997, p. 21)

Such poor social and academic skills will likely hinder remediation efforts in the "one special" classroom or special school.

We believe that the current debate on gender policies in schooling must move beyond the rhetoric of pro-feminist pedagogies on one side, and male recuperative philosophies and backlash politics on the other, to focus on ways in which schools can become efficient learning organizations for all students, with an emphasis on structures and policies for inclusion (Mills, 2000, 2003). We agree that gender differences must be seen as one of the conceptual keys to unlocking the range of discourses about "effective learning" (Daniels, Cresse, Hey, Leonard, & Smith, 2001; Fielding, Daniels, Creese, Hey, & Leonard, 1999). The work of Evans (2001) on streaming in Jamaican schools is illustrative of the approach needed. Indeed, she provides evidence of a common

organizational arrangement that may lead to the kinds of inequity found in this study.

We argue that using the 30% cut score on the SEA to place students in the "one special" classroom or school may increase the potential for misclassifications because low-ability males are more likely to do poorly on language-based CR tests, independent of their "true ability." For example, it is likely that some students (possibly male) would not have been classified as "one special" if either a MC or multiple measure test format was used (Chester, 2003; Kennedy & Walstad, 1997). The numbers of misclassifications (false negatives) may even be higher because the SEA measures fewer achievement constructs with fewer items. Additionally, the CR format does not provide response options, so students with very low language skills are less likely to provide an answer, thereby reducing the amount of information on performance available. In effect, the SEA may discriminate against low-ability males, without providing the diagnostic information promised.

This study has important implications for the design of high-stakes tests. It may be that the committee did not fully weigh the benefits against the costs in deciding on the choice of construct and format in the new test design. Additionally, the committee may have failed to consider alternative test designs that are gender-balanced and more congruent with the purpose of the assessment (Chilisa, 2000). We argue that a multiple measure test design is more likely to achieve this goal (Chester, 2003).

Five alternative test designs for the SEA are presented in Table 5. As shown, the most straightforward alternative is to include a MC-section in mathematics, measuring knowledge and problem solving through context-dependent items. This may provide a balance for the two language components and would better reflect an appropriate emphasis on numeracy, a construct equally important for success in the secondary school. A second option may be to add a language arts MC-component. This might work to reduce the differentials in both the component and composite total score. A third alternative would be to retain the social studies and science section, where gender differentials are likely to be negligible or small, combining both components into a test of general knowledge. Scores on this component would likely balance the higher

differentials in the language arts and creative writing, which now favour females.

Table 5. Five Alternative Test Designs for the SEA

Change in Test Design	Impact/Rationale for Change
1. Add MC component in mathematics	Improve validity of inferences for success on quantitative tasks in secondary school
	Reduce gender differential in composite score
2. Add MC component in language arts	Reduce gender differential in composite score
3. Add general paper MC component combining science and social studies	Improve validity of inferences for measure of achievement in primary school
	Reduce gender differentials in composite score
4. Add CA component in science and social studies	Improve authenticity and provide a better measure of the construct
	Reduce gender differentials in composite score
5. Add CA component in writing	Improve authenticity
	Reduce gender differentials in composite score

The first three options are traditional approaches and do not make use of multiple measures across time, thereby limiting the validity of inferences. The third and fourth options, however, assess students continuously or at different times during Standards 4 and 5. In terms of writing, a more authentic design might be to allow students to engage in

the real process, from drafting and editing to the creation of an authentic final piece. While this approach will not reduce the size of gender differentials, it may be argued that the gender-differentiated skills assessed are both construct- and task-relevant. In terms of authenticity, we agree with the committee that the science and social studies constructs are better assessed holistically and in context. One possibility might be to use standard performance assessment tasks administered at a particular time in the lower forms. The tasks may be scored by a team of teachers across schools using well-developed rubrics, with scores moderated by a team of principals and supervisors in the area.

A decision to redesign a high-stakes test is an important one, critical not only to the life chances of examinees but also to the resolution of inequity and the future economic development of Trinidad and Tobago. Such decisions should never be made lightly and must be guided by the weight of empirical evidence. We believe that such decisions should minimize reliance on implicit beliefs and folk norms. Moreover, for increased transparency and assessment literacy, issues related to fairness and equity in the testing must be fully articulated in public. Indeed, it may be that the apparent meritocracy of the current selective system is more apparent than real and, in fact, only a few students gain an advantage, since most students are placed in the new-sector schools (either by choice or by the Ministry of Education). The situation may be as Chilisa (2000) reminds us:

> Assessment, especially when it takes the form of a national examination, is the most powerful tool that those who control the schools use to assert their power . . . . Whenever gender inequalities in academic achievement are observed, we ought to ask the following questions: How is achievement defined? Who defines achievement and in whose interest? What is the purpose of achievement? Who grades? Who defines the criteria for grading? What messages do the language, the content and materials used in the assessment tasks convey?" (p. 61)

Note

1. The Cohen's d in this study, which was presented at the 1999 Biennial Cross-Campus Conference on Education held at the School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine, was 3.63 for the first score and 3.52 for the second score (N=616).

Disclaimer

This study was conducted with data used in the second author's M.Ed. Thesis. The data were reworked using the conceptual framework and analytical methods described. It was completed when the author was a student and is not in any way connected to his current employment.

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THE SOCIAL STUDIES FOR A POSTMODERN AGE

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The social studies has remained an enigma for most of its existence. In rhetoric it is highly regarded; in the lived reality of schools it is perceived as a "soft option." This article traces its origins and development in different contexts, and the epistemological debates and conundrums that still obscure what a study of the social is. The politics of knowledge illuminates its low status in organizational settings such as schools. A case is made for a return to the foundational principles espoused by social theorists, who see a study of the social as essentially that of being human. This knowledge is vitally important in a postmodern age where contradiction and fragmentation are increasingly the norm. Finally, it is shown that the Human Development Paradigm rests squarely on a deeper appreciation of the social, which can come from a reformulated social study.

Introduction

The social studies has been an enigma for almost a century. It has endured turbulence, conflict, and determined attempts to purge its seemingly ineffable character. At the heart of the enigma is a conundrum. In rhetoric the social studies is highly regarded. Since the development of *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS) (Bruner, 1966), and even before that, the social studies was seen as the major vehicle promoting an understanding about what it is to be human and the processes by which we could become more so. In the 1990s, these ideas were again articulated by educators, planners, and policy makers as the Human Development Paradigm (ul Haq, 1995), put forward as a framework for social and economic development in a postmodern age.

The case for the social studies is well made, yet it continues to be marginalized amongst the traditional disciplines (Barth, 1993). Therein lies the central conundrum. Its so-called weak frame (Bernstein, 1971) renders it susceptible to protagonists of different epistemologies. The enigma arises therefore within abiding controversies regarding what it

is—is it a discipline or an area of studies; should it emphasize disciplinary social science knowledge such as history and geography or socialization, as in the claims made for citizenship education, or both; should its constituent elements be taught separately or integrated; and, most importantly, if axiological issues are to be emphasized, through what vehicles (Longstreet, 1990)?

The multiplicity of answers to each of these questions has limited the stature of the social studies in the eyes of teachers, students, and parents, who tend to interpret ambivalence and uncertainty as indications of some inherent weakness.

This article traces the ways in which the social studies has been made manifest in different times and places. It is intended to show that contextual realities have displaced the fundamental purposes of what a *social* study should encompass. It makes a case for deconstructing the enigma to show its relevance and importance to life in a postmodern age.

Disciplinary Dynamics

    The United States of America

The nation state began as a refuge from persecution in the mother country and went to war to throw off the shackles of colonialism. These contexts inevitably fashioned an emerging social curriculum. The triumph of democracy, equality, and independence meant that these became cherished principles of the new republic to be taught to the young in order to be perpetuated.

These ideas about what was important to impart about society eventually coalesced into an emphasis on citizenship education. That goal became even more relevant as wave after wave of immigrants hit the USA in the 19th and 20th centuries (Dynneson, Gross, & Berson, 2003). This mission of moulding the "good citizen" to enact social reform and ensure social stability competed with another view of the social studies as providing disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences, particularly history and geography, but also economics, anthropology, political science, sociology, psychology, and religion. During the latter half of the 20th century these conflicts came to a head as the social studies endured the deliberations of one commission after another over the direction it

should take (National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, 1989; National Council for the Social Studies, 1993; Project Span, 1982a; Project Span, 1982b). Should it be discipline based so as to provide an adequate foundation in knowledge and skills for the study of the social sciences at higher levels and the world of work, or should it be student centred and concerned with the development of the good citizen who could enact social reform?

Great Britain

Quite different circumstances guided the development of the social studies in the UK. Mass schooling developed there at the same time, or even later, than it did in certain Caribbean countries. British society, dominated as it was by a royal line, an aristocracy, and rigid class codes, could not espouse freedom and independence. Even now, Garratt and Piper (2003) suggest that citizenship education in the UK is a non-starter because they "are subjects within a monarchy, and not citizens in the sense taken for granted by many nations" (p. 128). Personal, social, and health education became the emphases of the social curriculum in the UK. These themes aimed at personal well-being and a concern for social welfare, in which the disciplines such as history, geography, literature, economics, and others were integrated. There are strong links with this social curriculum and early education in the Caribbean where hygiene or health science, civics, and the Royal Reader stories promoted personal awareness of health, governance, and moral development.

However, in the 1970s and 1980s a tremendous furore occurred in higher education in the social sciences, particularly around sociology, *which should have had* far-reaching implications for the *social* studies. Although, the debates and controversies focused on the nature of the *social*, bringing a "new sociology of education" into being (Young, 1971), it inadvertently resulted in sidelining the social studies in schools. One reason for this was that the re-conceptualization prompted an expansion of social science disciplines in higher education. This was reflected shortly after in schools as the high-demand subjects of business and management, giving students other social science options.

`The Caribbean

The social curriculum in Caribbean schools in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries reflected the colonial bias of civilizing the immigrant population into English values and customs (King & Morrissey, 1988). Interestingly, when the revisions occurred in the social science disciplines in higher education in the UK, the Caribbean, now experiencing decolonization and independence, turned its attention to the New Social Studies movement in the USA. The New Social Studies advocated inquiry and communication skills, and social science disciplines with a decided emphasis on citizenship education (Howe & Marshall, 1999), and was a response to the clamour made by the American public after the successful launch and orbit of the Russian satellite, Sputnik. It was in this context of educational reform designed to put the US on a more competitive footing with its rivals, that rigorous, disciplinary knowledge became dominant (Gardner, 1970). The humanist or progressivist orientation to the social studies as a means of social reform was now marginalized, though not removed, and it is this new conception of the social studies that was adopted in Caribbean curricula in the 1960s and 70s.

It should be remembered though that the organization of schooling in the Caribbean still largely followed the British model, and so the context of the school now became important in charting the fortunes of the social studies. Schools are social organizations within which the social and political meaning of the curriculum emerges. A discussion of the politics of knowledge is instructive in further refining our understanding of the epistemic controversies affecting the social studies in Caribbean schools.

Whilst the social science disciplines in higher education comprise the foundational content from which any social curriculum in schools should be drawn, the primary and secondary social studies curricula retain little of the controversial and contested nature of the concepts as they are understood in economics, sociology, political science, and the like. Rather, such curricula show efforts to simplify social issues focusing largely on history, geography, consumer education, and citizenship, as can be seen in the present Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) social studies syllabus (1999). White (2003), discussing this issue in the USA today, says that, "social studies education often avoids controversy and the hard issues in history and society in favour of transmission of

essential knowledge and values" (p. 752). In fact, the school's curriculum actually censors complex knowledge and controversies such as those that affected the social sciences in Britain (Patterson, 1970).

Censorship pares away at the fundamental ideas of the disciplines that should undergird a *social* study, and what is left is virtually a commodified body of knowledge. Whilst curriculum developers may find it necessary to simplify social science content for primary and secondary school students, what conception of the *social* is left when controversies, debates, and critical insights are purged from the knowledge base? The decision by Caribbean educators to opt for the US model, and turn away from the controversies being raised in the social sciences in the UK, meant that the social studies in schools turned away from investigating the social to accepting a commodity with an already formulated view of the social. The social and political meaning emerging from such an orientation was system maintenance and, possibly, that was understandable in an era of decolonization and independence.

However, this version of *a social study* had adverse effects on the status of the social studies in schools. The predicament of the social studies as it had been conceptualized and operationalized in schools was that, being largely a sanitized version of social science content, it could not be pursued at higher levels of study. In our inherited system of education in the Caribbean, the status of a subject is tied directly to its instrumental value in accessing the higher rungs of the educational ladder, ultimately being helpful in securing a place in the world of work. The organization of schooling contributed to this perception of low status by confining the social studies to the lower forms of the secondary school. Some high-achieving schools did not offer it all (King & Morrissey, 1988). Where it was accepted as important, it was as a neutral, commodified body of knowledge that came to a stop at fifth form. These organizational arrangements signalled to parents, teachers, and students that the social studies was not a serious discipline. In fact, its weak framing had already sent that message to secondary school teachers, most of whom were specialists in the traditional disciplines.

Further, with successive attempts to refine and re-cast the social studies as a serious discipline, the politics of knowledge consistently reared its head. At the university level, there was no social studies department to help in spearheading the development of the discipline. Special offices

were set up to do so (Beddoe & Seepersad, 1985; Morris, Morrissey, & King, 1996) where local materials were developed, though the problem of interdisciplinarity went largely unresolved. However, while people in universities could discuss interdisciplinarity at great length, the fact was that teachers in schools had to practise it. The materials emanating from the universities—largely from the social sciences—to be used as curriculum guides were disciplinary in focus. Thus, in schools, teachers had to go it alone (Morris et al., 1996), not for want of helpers, but because the bodies set up as some sort of authority, in lieu of having social studies departments in universities, were the very ones to advocate a less politicized and less critical sampling of social science knowledge. They could not find a workable means of creating an interdisciplinary focus. Even today, social studies teachers see the lack of relevant resource materials as the major problem they face in teaching social studies (Griffith, 1999). The social studies in schools, then, largely reflected these epistemic dilemmas and came to be seen as a body of knowledge in search of some direction.

The contexts and locales in which the social studies emerged—international, national, and organizational—subverted the original purposes of what a study of the social should involve. To unearth the foundational elements of *a social study* we need to go back and examine the ideas of those who have reflected on what constitutes social science knowledge, namely, social philosophers and social theorists.

Social **Studies for the 21st Century**

The postmodern age

Whether we agree with the term "postmodern" or not, we are likely to acknowledge that many of the social issues facing the world today seem to arise from the nature of the clash between the contradictory forces of globalization and nativism, and how they seem to intensify the problems associated with an emphasis on human difference. It is being suggested here that the social studies, if it is conceptualized in a manner that is faithful to its foundational principles, can be a resource *through* which individuals can come to better understand the complexities of living in the postmodern world. At present, it is seen as a tool to educate *in* certain precepts—such as social studies *for* citizenship.

Complexity, indeterminacy, fragmentation, inclusion, global unifying themes, nativist sentiments, and multiple and conflicting views are being increasingly recognized as the "normal," contradictory conditions of living in society today (Farganis, 2000). The social studies presented as certain knowledge, with prescriptions about the good citizen and instruction in certain values, finds itself increasingly irrelevant in today's world. Reflection and reflexivity rather than certainty are more likely to help students recognize the importance of the **ALL** as in Education For All and Health For All—key tenets of the Human Development Paradigm. These tenets focus on human relationships as the pivot for development requiring that **ALL** people should have the same sets of opportunities to lead the good life. To be able to participate effectively in this development thrust, there must be an understanding of what the social is—one that does not present certain knowledge and one that recognizes the commonalities amongst peoples. A *social* study that is not cognizant of the fragmentation in postmodern society and does not see the need to educate persons to live effectively in such a world is an *anti-social* study.

Social theorists and social philosophers recommend that we go back to first principles and examine what the social means. Winch (1958) and other social theorists pose as central to this project, engaging in how we come to know, an epistemological undertaking that sees the social as inherently about Man and his ways of knowing and understanding and generating culture. Reflexivity is at the heart of this undertaking, as culture itself needs to be addressed in our assessment of knowing and knowledge. The fundamental purposes of the social studies emerge as the study of human society—reflecting on what being human means, how can we become more so, and how do we judge our acts and those of others. It requires a consciousness of being human.

A view of the *social* as being human

These ideas all centre on one theme—that the social is about being human. For example, the only reason we should study uniqueness or difference is to understand *what is general in the unique*. This is the message about human affairs—that all the uniqueness and difference must be studied, *but it must be understood as an aspect of what it means to be human*. Fay (1996), another social philosopher, makes the point that in studying the social, how one understands something is not the goal but

how others understand it as well, necessitating a scrutiny of how we come to know, in the interests of not privileging one's own views.

Several examples may clarify these ideas. A *social* study should:

- begin with the nature of human society and not with cultural products such as history or economics, which are specific aspects of cultural knowledge

- question history, anthropology, and the like to see what aspects illuminate the study of the social in human society

- use history to illustrate that the unique events chronicled—the French, Russian, and Haitian Revolutions—are only studied to demonstrate the *general* aspects of human life *in the unique*

- explore how we construct our thoughts, noting that *it is the construction* that is the real knowledge that we are after, in the human sense

- induct students into an examination of social relationships—that they can change and have changed over time and that individuals could effect change

- be reflexive and try to illuminate the flux of social life.

The three questions in MACOS are still relevant today as we re-formulate a *social* study for the postmodern age:

- What is human about human beings?
- How did they get that way?
- And, how can they be made more so? (Bruner, 1966, p. 74)

Thus, whilst there is a continued press to clearly articulate goals for the social studies (Brophy & Alleman, 1993), it may be instructive for those concerned to revisit the foundational principles on which a study of the *social* should rest.

The place of history in a *social* study

History occupies a contentious place in the social studies, especially in the epistemic debates in the USA, and if we follow the ideas of social theorists about what a social study should involve, history would be a necessary part of such a study. It may be enlightening to discuss how history can illuminate a study of the social to help us understand what makes us human. For example:

- The idea of human progress in history comes largely out of the Enlightenment as unfolding in a linear manner with certain forms and ideologies becoming dominant and others dying. This masks important understandings of human life. When, for example, socialism declined as an important force in world development, it did not mean that the world capitalist order would enjoy unmitigated dominance. We have seen the USA, without any "bear in the woods" face serious challenges from alternative ideologies. The message here is that progress should not be simply thought of as linear. Even as socialism declines and alternative forms spring up, human progress continues in how we understand dominance and the challenge to it—it is irregular and takes place on different fronts.

- It is somewhat fashionable today to decry technological progress because of its deleterious effect on the environment. However, through a historical study of these developments we may learn more about how to protect and rehabilitate the environment, adding to our store of knowledge, and the face of technological progress itself will change as this knowledge is embraced.

- While there may be some universal understandings about morals and values, history can show how this varies over time and place. Thus, moral relativism is not to be decried out of hand, but describes a certain kind of "givenness" about the world. Each place and time will have justifications for certain acts using moral precepts. The lesson here is that one can learn a lot about being human by comparison and contrast—why something was legitimate in the past and is not so now in this society but continues in another.

- Some forms of history may deal in the unique, but a *social* study tries to find what is general in the unique. Through history, then, one can

come to a better sensitization about human difference; one that differs from conventional ways of dealing with difference, as if exceptionality was all there was to be seen.

These are some of the reasons why the social studies should claim history at all—because it is able to do all this. While history is a good vehicle to teach about human life, the content and context should be selected with this in mind. The case made above is not in the interests of privileging history over that of the other social science disciplines but rather to clarify this point about selection of content and context. In choosing to emphasize in a *social* study how *context* shapes *human* life—be it progress, morality, values, or relationships—the teacher will be keeping in the forefront of the lesson what is human about human beings. And the social sensitivity arising from such a course of study ought to be helpful in negotiating the fragmentation of a postmodern world.

Emphasis on human development

To counter the conditions of a postmodern world, we need to address the conundrums besetting the social studies. Redefining and re-asserting the fundamental purposes as stated by social theorists have been shown to be in the interests of being human. Today, human development is the espoused goal of national and global development. The Human Development Paradigm (ul Haq, 1995), which is the vision underlying this goal, is very similar to what can be accomplished through a thoughtful social studies programme. The four pillars of human development are:

1. Equity - This speaks to increasing opportunities for **ALL** by broadening choices. As social beings we need to understand what choices exist and which ones can be described as human choices—for example, longer life or more money are not sensible choices if good health and safe environments are not a part of that choice. The emphasis on **ALL** directs our attention to the adverse effects that forms of prejudice have had on human development, and is specifically aimed at eliminating prejudice. This is the nature of the challenge if we are to be more human.

2. Productivity - This is the human dimension of a concept that in the previously dominant ideology of *human capital* was understood as being increased through skills. In *human development*, it is envisaged that once persons make choices about what they want to do, they can execute or do their jobs in ways that actually contribute to their humanity. Thus work, or whatever activity or opportunity is undertaken, should through proper legislation, practices, and cultures (or relationships) enable human beings to add to their progress.

3. Empowerment - This is a necessary corollary if these conditions make persons feel that they are becoming more human through what they do.

4. Sustainability - In the conventional economistic version of development this idea has been difficult to implement. Based on an understanding of what it is to be human and how that is promoted through the previous three pillars, sustainability is more likely to be a normal part of social life.

A social studies reformulated to stress its foundation principles and the tenets of the Human Development Paradigm is a necessary strategy in preparing our youth to deal with the conditions of a postmodern world.

The Way Forward

It is not the intention of this paper to emphasize an *approach* to teaching and learning in social studies so much as an *awareness* of some a priori assumptions about what it means to be human, and how one can learn that through social science content. The first step in generating a proper social studies is for the persons involved at all levels to be conscious of its purposes, as outlined by social theorists. The purposes constitute the major part of its subject matter. Therefore, everyone who treats with it must understand and get on the inside of these purposes—from the university right through to curriculum developers, teachers, and students. Its reflexive nature must be captured in how curricula are developed and how pedagogy is planned. Weak frames should not lead to its marginalization if we understand what the purposes are, and if we try to get them enshrined in how the social studies is conceptualized and operationalized. This is an ideological struggle.

Secondly, there must be a thoughtful working through by university personnel about their contribution to the development of the discipline, and the same should be said for Ministries of Education and schools where organizational arrangements reinforce the status of a subject. These deliberations, though, must be collaborative and participatory, or else the fundamental purposes will be undermined. Thirdly, through an organized publications thrust, which is state driven, there is more likelihood that materials could be developed which are faithful to the fundamental principles of the social studies, where standards are developed and disciplinary bias reduced.

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A CALL TO ACTION
Will French Survive This Time in the School Curriculum in Trinidad and Tobago?[1]

Beverly-Anne Carter

This paper examines the interface between language planning and French language teaching/learning in Trinidad and Tobago. It does not revisit the larger policy issues on the role and status of French (see, for example, Carter, 2000 and Carter, 2001 for such discussions), but focuses instead on how a bottom-up approach to language planning is critical to ensuring the viability of French in the school curriculum. Mindful of Stern's (1983) contention that, "the planning process … includes constant renewal and revision" (p. 431), this paper argues that a bottom-up approach to language planning is more likely to contribute to a focus on renewal and revision, than has been possible to date with a top-down approach. In this regard, the paper offers some suggestions to French language teachers—an important group of stakeholders—since they can play a significant role in fighting attrition in French language learning. In conclusion, this paper suggests that while subject specialists must act as catalysts for renewal and revision, language policy and planning would be better served by a more comprehensive approach, including all teachers of language. Such a holistic approach would see educators recognizing the interconnectedness of their task, and ensuring that language planning is geared to nurturing the multilingual communicator of the future in today's classrooms.

Language Policy and Planning

Language policy making and planning is described as an "official, government-level activity" (Robinson, 1988, cited in Ingram, 1989) concerned with formulating a country's official position on a wide range of language-related phenomena. According to this view, language

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planning and policy is a macro-activity, comparable to social and economic planning and thus properly the purview of what Wright (1995) labels "government-authorised" agencies. Weinstein (1989, cited in Weinstein, 1990), for example, suggests that the role of contemporary language policy and planning in France is to preserve the identity of the French society and the power of the French state in world affairs.

Kaplan (1993/1994) concurs that language planning should not be restricted to linguistic phenomena, for example, grammatical, lexical, or phonological change, but that issues such as attitudinal change, values change, and economic and political changes are all within the remit of language policy and planning. Taken collectively, these positions on the role of language policy and planning seem to imply that the state is the driving force in determining language policy and engineering language planning, although intellectual and power elites may have a non-negligible effect (see, for example, Cooper, 1989, cited in Wright, 1995). To sum up, the prevailing view in the literature is that language policy and planning is a top-down activity, emanating from the state.

This paper argues that the top-down model of planning, the preferred model of language policy and planning to date, has not sufficiently engaged the other stakeholders in the system—teachers, parents, the business sector, and so on. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, or even the wider Caribbean context, there is little evidence to suggest that the model of the state as language planner has been a very successful one. It is true that a number of policy documents show that the state is not unaware of the role played by foreign languages in the curriculum. In the draft *Education Plan 1985-1990* (Trinidad and Tobago [T&T], 1985, pp. 14-15), the place of foreign language learning as an essential component of modern education is clearly spelt out. Education must serve to:

> (g) develop an appreciation of the interdependency of the peoples and nations of the world, the need to work to foster a greater spirit of mutual understanding among nations and the ways in which Trinidad and Tobago can participate in this process;
> (h) equip citizens to participate with profit and to contribute significantly at the international level;
> (i) enable its citizens, through its foreign language teaching programmes, to be able to communicate with a reasonable degree of facility in at least one foreign language.

This was as a follow-up of an earlier statement contained in the draft *Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago, 1968-1983* (cited in Morris, 1985, p. 47), which advocated the inclusion of a modern language in the junior secondary curriculum:

> to develop an awareness of the structure and sound of either French or Spanish and of the culture of Spanish or French-speaking peoples of the world especially in the Caribbean area; to promote facility in elementary conversation in these languages and to provide an adequate grammatical foundation for the further study.

One could also say that the rationale for foreign language learning contained in the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) most recent foreign language syllabus, that is, the *Modern Languages Syllabus* (1996), is a fair indication of the foreign language education policy of Trinidad and Tobago, and the other member countries of the CXC. The rationale states in part:

> The Caribbean is a unique meeting place of different races, cultures, languages, social structures and political systems. Four official languages are spoken in countries which are now beginning to appreciate that strength lies in unity. Our task is to contribute pro-actively to this process by encouraging students to develop a positive orientation to the country, or countries, of the target language(s) and thereby contribute to development at the personal, as well as the international level. (1996, p. 1)

Yet, despite the noble ideals contained in these documents, few would suggest that in Trinidad and Tobago, the state has aggressively pursued a language policy with the same vigour that it has managed fiscal or trade policies, for example. In the absence of proactive state planning, language planning seems subject to prevailing winds and currents. It is left to the other stakeholders in the education system to step in and fill the breach. More often than not, stakeholder intervention is in an ad hoc manner, in response to some particular problem.

A recent example of such intervention arose in response to the CXC's decision to discontinue the January sitting of Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) French from 2003. This decision was made on pragmatic grounds. It had proven to be far from cost effective to

conduct an examination for a population of fewer than 100 candidates in the January sitting, compared to the 3,000 plus candidates who sit the June examinations. Yet, in the absence of a clear policy statement from either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Information, clarifying the reason for the discontinuation of the January examinations, the move was interpreted as further evidence of the attrition of French in the school curriculum.

On a positive note, the suggestion that French would be removed from the school curriculum was not greeted with public approval, as might have been expected, given the perceived attrition in French language learning. The public's dismay in reaction to the rumoured removal suggested that any attempt to remove French from the syllabus would be an unpopular decision. The controversy that was sparked by this incident put paid to the assumption of French being of minimal importance in the Spanish-dominated Americas. Instead, it forced stakeholders to reiterate the historical, political, and cultural role of French in Trinidad and Tobago (see, for example, Carrington, Borely, & Knight, 1974; Carter, 2000; Robertson, 1993). The public outcry suggested that many see the economic and cultural merit of having at least two of the region's languages taught in the nation's schools. Temporarily, at least, French has earned a reprieve. Though it may be premature to speak of language revival and language expansion, the often-mooted death of French is unlikely to occur in the immediate future. Nonetheless, those who see the continuing need for French in the curriculum should look upon what happened as a wake-up call and think of what action is needed to keep French language learning energized.

As comforting as the public support for French was on this occasion, one cannot help but wonder what would have happened if the public had adopted another stance. What would have been the official response if the public had supported the removal of French from the curriculum? Would the primary constituents of French language learning—the teachers and students of French—been able to do anything to stem the tide of public opinion? It is perhaps out of concern for this kind of eventuality, and also in keeping with the contemporary focus on bottom-up models of development, that some have been calling on teachers to see a role for themselves in language policy and planning.

Teachers as Language Planners

Díaz-Rico (1995) believes that one way to forestall a scenario in which some of the other stakeholders—the business community, lobbies, sectarian interests—determine the direction of language policy and planning is by stressing teacher agency in the planning and policy process. She argues that, "if teachers do not influence planning and policy, decisions will be made by others: by the force of popular opinion, by politicians, by bureaucrats, by demagogues" (p. 11). Whyte (1995) also advocates a role for teachers in defining and determining language policy and planning. But Whyte assigns teachers to a less central role in the planning process. He sees teachers playing a supportive role and challenges states to assume their responsibility in language policy and planning. This paper is nearer to Díaz-Rico's view in arguing that classroom teachers must be catalysts in language planning and policy. If teachers were to endorse this role, by making a concerted effort to influence language planning and policy, they could develop a greater voice in matters relating to foreign language education. In the rest of the paper, I shall explore some of the ways in which teachers could influence the process from the bottom-up.

Teachers as Curriculum Planners

The primary and enduring role of teachers must be as curriculum planners. Stern (1983) supports the ideal of a distribution of responsibility in planning. He argues that planning should involve all the stakeholders who assume responsibility for different aspects of the system. Teachers are thus charged with the responsibility of being expert curriculum planners and facilitators of learning.

Classroom practitioners would no doubt be happy to receive such encouragement in carrying out one of their core functions. This, moreover, as the present generation of foreign language teachers is in some ways freer than past generations of colleagues to exercise their professional responsibilities fully. Where, before, teachers might have felt disempowered because they were presumed to be consumers and not producers of foreign language methodology, the passage to what Kumaravadivelu (1994) calls the "postmethod condition" has changed this. In the post-method condition, teachers' classroom practice is no longer circumscribed by the reigning orthodoxy. Instead, teachers are

now challenged to assert themselves and embrace their autonomy as classroom practitioners. This paper argues, as a consequence that, it is initially via the curriculum that teachers can bring their weight to bear on the planning process.

One area that immediately reveals something of the vibrancy of the French language course is the textbook. Dörneyi (2001) points to Chambers's (1999) empirical findings that the textbook is second in importance after the teacher in determining students' attitudes towards the language course. The question that we then need to ask is whether the French textbooks in circulation convey the sense of renewal and revision previously identified by Stern (1983) as essential elements of the planning process. Is the textbook in use in the first decade of the 21st century one written two or three decades ago? This question is an important one on several counts, the first relating to the kind of language reproduced in the textbook.

A study by Kinginger (1998) underscores the empirical evidence that shows that there is a gap between classroom talk and native speaker talk and, additionally, points to a gap between the language reproduced in textbooks and authentic spoken French. When we consider Glisan and Drescher's (1993) contention that textbook descriptions of language reflect "classical grammatical rules based on formal written language" (p. 25), it becomes evident that models of French conveyed by very dated textbooks will be several generations removed from the language found in the speech community. In an era of language learning for communicative competence, this could prove to be a serious handicap for learners whose primary linguistic models are those found in anachronistic texts.

Similarly, textbooks that were published several decades ago are unlikely to convey accurate images of contemporary France in its sociocultural evolution. Do the textbooks in use reflect metropolitan France as a country coming to grips with its multicultural identity, or are they textbooks where all the protagonists are the Marie-Frances and Jean-Pierres of an earlier time? Are croissants still the main fare at the breakfast table of the average French family or does textbook reality reflect current economic and gastronomic reality?

What of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne? Are these places presented as exotic tourist destinations, or are they presented as real

places, with real people, dealing with real issues—cultures to which the students can relate? Is francophonie given adequate representation in light of the present geopolitical reality where more speakers of French are found outside the hexagone than within its frontiers? (See Ager, 1996, for a good discussion of the problems and opportunities of francophonie.) In other words, have the textbooks kept pace with the reality of modern France and the French-speaking world, or do students come away from our classes convinced that most adult men wear berets and drive around in 2CVs? If the textbooks available come up lacking, then teachers who are concerned about presenting a picture of a vibrant, dynamic language and culture must turn to other media, for example, cable television and the Internet, and to realia to fill the gaps in their students' worldview of speakers of French in the 21st century.

A second way in which teachers must leave their mark as curriculum planners is in the types of learning activities in which they engage their students. Is their pedagogical practice premised on an up-to-date understanding of how proficiency can be improved in the various skills? Teachers can be more effective facilitators of learning if they are aware of the stages in listening, or writing; if they bear in mind the importance of background knowledge in reading; or if they balance the role of accuracy **and** fluency in speaking. Do they in fact aim in their teaching to develop all four skills? Or is language learning synonymous with learning vocabulary and grammar by rote?

When one observes the foreign language lesson in a classroom in Trinidad and Tobago what seems to be driving force? The textbook? The CSEC or General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level exam, or the students' own centres of interest? Kohonen (2001, p. 33) raises a concern shared by many others with an interest in appropriate methodology, when he notes that the "*quality of the learning tasks*" is a fundamental issue in modern pedagogy. He contrasts "learning that has little or no personal meaning and does not involve the learner's feelings" with learning that is "characterised by personal involvement, use of different sensory channels, a sense of self-initiation and discovery, and a tendency towards self-assessment by learning". He concludes that, "the essence of such learning is personal meaning."

Curriculum practice that is grounded in renewal and revision cannot ignore, for example, that the present generation, fed on television, cable

television, the Internet, and so on, are a generation of visual learners who, moreover, thrive on interactivity. Le Loup and Ponterio (1996) underscore this, making the point that the interactive nature of modern technology makes it far more attractive to students who have become used to interacting with information in these modes than a textbook, no matter how colourful. Students who access more and more of their information through interactive media are more likely to chafe at the disjunction between the world at large, that supports these media, and the classroom that still sees the textbook as the primary resource for **all** learners, whatever their "intelligence," as described in Gardner (1993), whatever their preferred sensory mode (see, for example, the discussion in Harmer, 2001).

A critical look at the curriculum should lead teachers to reappraise the role of culture in helping students make meaning of their learning. Do students gain in understanding of themselves as speakers of a mother tongue containing words like *pommecythère* and *chardon béni*? Are they moved along a path of intercultural communication that begins with themselves and then radiates outward to explore concepts such as diversity, otherness, foreignness (Kaikkonen, 2001)? Foreign language education is the ideal site to help students internalize one of the previously identified goals of education, namely, to "develop an appreciation of the interdependency of the peoples and nations of the world, the need to work to foster a greater spirit of mutual understanding among nations in ways in which Trinidad and Tobago can participate in this process" (T&T, 1985). Post- September 11, 2001, we should not need too much convincing of the urgency of promoting intercultural learning through foreign language education. Curriculum planning that strives to keep renewal and revision at the heart of the planning process must pay attention to all these concerns.

Yet, curriculum planning, however current and relevant it may be, is doomed to failure, if teachers are perceived simply as technicians charged with implementing curricula. Teachers understandably have a hard time maintaining "a sense of excitement and engagement with the business of teaching" (Harmer, 2001, p. 344) when they are expected to fulfil so many different roles on a daily basis. Language teachers must surely have been the inventors of terms such as multitasking and multiskilling, given that it is expected that they will function as "planners, assessors, disciplinarians, motivators, facilitators, target

language users and modelers, and creators of positive learning environments" (Smith & Rawley, 1998, p. 15)! Unfortunately, the weight of their responsibility is such that many (language) teachers may find they have little energy left over to keep their practice creative, authentic, and relevant. However, without the time, space, and opportunity to develop their professional expertise, their professionalism could be seriously jeopardized. Kohonen (2001) poses the challenge differently when he says that, "They [teachers] are committed to foster human growth in themselves in order to be able to foster growth in their learners" (p. 20). If teaching is not to slide into being a routinized activity, the focus on renewal and revision must be applied equally to the teaching profession and professional development.

Promoting Reflective Practice

Wallace's (1991) model of the reflective practitioner, which integrates teacher knowledge, received knowledge, experiential knowledge, practice, and reflection, is perhaps a useful model for teachers to consider. The concept of the reflective practitioner values teachers as professionals, possessing specialized knowledge and capable of making competent choices. Yet, being a reflective practitioner is not a **product** approach to teaching professionalism; it is very much a **process** approach. Teachers who adopt the reflective model keep their teaching fresh, because they remain focused on their professional performance. By reflecting and exploring what worked or did not work in the classroom, these teachers develop insights into their day-to-day practice. Reflective practice is cyclical by nature. Teachers move from mapping (What do I do as a teacher?) to informing (What is the meaning of my teaching?) to contesting (How did I come to be this way?) to appraisal (How might I teach differently?) and finally to acting (What and how shall I now teach?) (Bartlett, 1990).

Bartlett, however, urges teachers to extend themselves even more, arguing that simple reflection should not be the final goal of the committed professional. He encourages teachers to move to a more critical reflective practice. Teachers have to "transcend the techniques of teaching and think beyond improving [their] instructional techniques" (Bartlett, 1990, p. 205). Teachers must move from "how to" questions to "what" and "why" questions. Bartlett contends that reflective teaching as a form of critical inquiry leads teachers to see their teaching not only in

terms of instructional and managerial techniques, but also as part of broader educational purposes. He continues:

> Becoming a critically reflective teacher is intended to allow us to develop ourselves individually and collectively; to deal with contemporary events and structures (for example, the attitudes of others or the bureaucratic thinking of administrators) and not take these structures for granted.

Lehtovaara (2001) in "What is it - (FL) teaching?" makes an even stronger case for foreign language teachers to transcend linguistic concerns and assume their responsibility as educators. Herself a foreign language teacher and teacher educator, she alerts practising teachers to "the need and benefits of a contemplative reflection on the foundational principles of our practices" (p. 141). Lehtovaara argues that "the reflective professional" cannot shy away from fundamental considerations like the meaning of humanity. She contends that responsible educators must first be responsible human beings. They must begin by asking, ***"What does it mean to me to be a human being who teaches something (e.g. a foreign language) to somebody? And What does it mean to be a human being whom I am teaching?"*** (p. 148).

It is clear that both Bartlett and Lehtovaara advocate a more embracing role for the teaching professional than the technician's role that is usually assigned to teachers. Teachers are urged to view themselves and their profession more holistically. They are to try to situate the microcontext of the classroom squarely in the macrocontext of society. This kind of vision of teachers and teaching would certainly imply a stronger voice for teachers in all facets of education, including language policy and planning.

A natural corollary of foreign language teachers assuming their responsibility as educators would be the promotion of more collaborative relationships with other colleagues who are engaged in a similar enterprise, starting with those who teach English. All language teaching aims for the same objectives: helping learners to communicate in the four modalities—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The classroom objectives of the teacher of English are thus intrinsically the same as the objectives of the teacher of French or Spanish. While some may argue that the goals for the official standard and goals for foreign languages would lead to substantially different foci in practice, this

paper suggests that there are sufficient areas of overlap for educators to find a mutuality of purpose in their professional approach.

This paper posits that language learning could be best served by rejecting the compartmentalized view of language learning that has prevailed thus far. Stressing language education in this way would foster a spirit of collegiality where teachers would work collaboratively, making curricular decisions that would benefit all languages. In such a movement, language teachers would affirm the importance of language for communication and promoting intercultural learning. Language teachers would promote a language policy inclusive of all the languages taught in our schools. Renewal and revision would be a goal shared by all language teachers who would drive language policy and planning from the bottom-up.

Will French survive this time? The survival of French in the school curriculum can best be assured if the atomistic view of subject area teaching that has driven the curriculum for so long is replaced by one that operates from a different paradigm and poses the problem differently. In the current view, French shares an uneasy relationship with Spanish, and support for Spanish sometimes implies the marginalization of French. In society and in the school, such attitudes are passé. Interconnectedness and interdependency are the order of the day, and these are the ideals that should inform our thinking. The vision is too narrow, utilitarian, and profoundly anachronistic when what prevails in the area of school-based language policy and planning is a content-area perspective.

Foreign language educators must approach their professional practice as one grounded in the education of the human being. And in the educating of human beings, the study of foreign language**s** is unparalleled in helping learners reach out and encounter other ways of being and thinking. If we are truly committed to the ideal of educating 21st century citizens, questions such as "will French survive this time?" are of nuisance value. French **has** to survive in a curriculum that promotes diversity and intercultural learning as critical 21st century skills. Starting from the bottom-up, we can move our society into understanding that foreign languages must form part of the education of the 21st century citizen. Starting from the bottom-up, we must inform our society that the trend worldwide is to more foreign languages, not less. Starting from the

bottom-up, we must infuse the curriculum with renewal and revision and shake off the monoculture approach in the language classroom, as we seem at last set to do in agriculture. The case has been argued for Trinidad and Tobago, but the same holds for the wider Caribbean.

Conclusion

This paper challenged the notion that language planning and policy is primarily a top-down process. It suggested that the time has come to apply more current, bottom-up planning models to the education context. Consequently, the paper urged teachers to see themselves as agents for renewal and revision in the curriculum. It argued that teachers who allowed themselves to be typecast as disempowered, dependent technicians would find their professional status compromised. Teachers were therefore encouraged to become critical reflective practitioners.

Being a reflective professional assumes more contemplation, more collegial collaboration, and the assumption of greater responsibility as an aware educator. This kind of practitioner would be better able to respond in an informed manner about the goals of foreign language education and be able to drive language policy and planning from the bottom–up. In this more proactive view of language planning and policy, the business of preserving French in the curriculum would be posed differently. Stakeholders would grow into an awareness that the issue at stake is more crucial than the maintenance or loss of French, *per se*. What would be emphasized is that a curriculum that seeks to educate for peace, understanding, and solidarity among all peoples is better served by fostering more intercultural communication, notably through more exposure to foreign languages and cultures in the school-age population.

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BREAKING THE SILENCE

Using Journals to Stimulate Self-Evaluation Toward Change in the Trinidad Primary School System

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Attempts at Caribbean education reform have traditionally suffered from lack of implementation and resistance to change. This paper argues that in Trinidad and Tobago, the slow march of education reform is compounded by the culture of silence that is institutionalized in the teaching profession. It posits that unless teachers become articulate about themselves, their students, and their practice in the classroom, recurrent top-down reforms are destined to fail. Against the background of a discussion of the cultural contexts of education in Trinidad and Tobago, and the fact that primary school teachers are subjecting themselves to repeated training with little apparent effect on the system, the paper evaluates the journals and the responses to journaling of 14 teachers enrolled in a Language Arts teacher education programme. The paper suggests that breaking the code of teacher silence could stimulate empowerment from within. With support, this empowerment could propel a tradition of documented Caribbean best practice toward building a base of regional educational research, generated by insights from the people in the trenches.

Introduction

The subject of education reform in Trinidad and Tobago usually generates comment about the primary school teacher, one of the elements considered to be a large source of the "problem" or "crisis" in the education system. One criticism is that the entry qualification into the teaching service of 5 CXC passes is too low. Both Beddoe (2001) and Spence (2002) suggest a minimum entry qualification of a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree for the teaching profession, regardless of secondary or primary teacher status. In fact, new job descriptions for principals in the primary school specify the requirement of the B.Ed. degree, and this will be implemented on a phased basis so that senior

teachers currently working in the system would not be disadvantaged by the new stipulations (James, 2003).

But low entry level is not the only charge against primary school teaching. The lack of visible impact of teacher training on the system and the downward spiral of public education have prompted questions about teacher training as well. Worrell (2003) raises not only questions about the quality of the teacher training received at training institutions, but like Jennings (2001) of Jamaica, she suggests that societal and economic debilitating factors, non-provision of necessary tools, and the larger culture of disempowerment in schools remain powerful factors influencing the inability of teachers to deliver, or their tendency to revert to ineffective pre-training modes of classroom practice.

None of the above voices is the voice of a rank-and-file teacher, and to all of these accusations and well-meaning remonstrations, the silence emanating from the teacher is profound.

Nevertheless, teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are preparing themselves for the proposed requirements for higher levels of academic qualifications and professional training. The new B.Ed. (Primary) at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, which was launched in the 2003-2004 academic year, has attracted copious enrolment.

This paper was born out of this teacher educator's observation that the majority of teachers she had taught previously in the Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.) programme at the School of Education had signed up for the B.Ed. degree, for which they were accepted as Year 2 students. It did indeed make sense for them to sign up for the degree programme, since they were considered continuing degree students. All 16 of the teachers (15 female and 1 male) enrolled in her Level 2 course, the Teaching of Language Arts in the Primary School, had already done three years of teacher training in which they had been exposed to a variety of Language Arts courses.[1]

It was assumed that the majority of the 16 teachers would be actively engaged in teaching Language Arts, regardless of the reason for their training.[2] Thus, the primary aim of this teacher educator was to encourage the teachers to implement what they were being exposed to

on the course, more so since language competence in the primary school as a feeder for the secondary school is of major concern.

To aid with implementation and teacher accountability, a weekly journal requirement was designed as one component of the course. It was felt that the informal nature of journaling would be a good way to get teachers to evaluate both their product and their process. Journaling was also envisaged as a mode of teachers dialoguing with self and peers, since it was felt that lasting change would come from building a community of professionalism arising out of discussions of best practice. To offset the biases of reliability and validity—problems that are inherent in the mode of journal writing—anonymous pre- and post-questionnaires were used as crosschecks.

This paper presents an analysis of the Language Arts journals and the pre- and post-questionnaires of teachers enrolled in the course, The Teaching of Language Arts in the Primary School, on three fronts:

- The teachers and their work environments
- Insights into the teachers' teaching practices, especially with regard to the implementation of Language Arts strategies they were being exposed to on the course
- Teachers' attitudes to journaling and the reflective process.

Teachers' documented verbalizing of their thoughts and processes is important, since much of what they do is currently shrouded in silence.

A Background to the Trinidadian Teachers' Code of Silence

The well-known conservatism of Trinidadian teachers is rooted in a systemic attitude to the legacy of colonial authority and to the Victorian ethos of culture and decorum. Norrel London (2003) provides a context for these two phenomena. Examining the period 1938 to 1959 (the latter date being the run-up to British Caribbean Independence of the 1960s and 70s), London notes the stranglehold of the colonial inspectorate on primary education in the interest of the dissemination of the English language. This was done from the seat of the Ministry of Education. The altruistic, civilizing agenda of the British, coupled with a school inspection system that "struck fear into student and teacher alike" (p. 304), reinforced the silencing of indigenous practices. According to

London, "reclaiming voices that may have been silenced, occluded, muffled, or submerged is therefore one of the objectives in the contemporary postcolonial debate" (p. 300).

Scarcely a generation has elapsed since that century-old ingrained culture has passed into local hands. The current administrators of education in Trinidad and Tobago and the dwindling number of teachers born before 1962 are products of that colonial experience. The Ministry of Education retains the role of policy maker and issuer of teaching standards. Current syllabuses and regulations originate from this centralized institution, housed on the same premises. The inspectorate has crumbled and visits to schools have become less frequent, partly because of expansion in the system and inadequate numbers of curriculum supervisors. However, the ethos and the bureaucracy of the inspectorate, with control from the top, still prevail. This is very evident in some of the regulations governing the teaching service, particularly with regard to policy regarding the expression of views (Trinidad and Tobago. Laws, Statutes, etc., 2000). A teacher "shall not make any unauthorized disclosure" (Clause 66.1); "shall not respond to questions of public policy in a manner that may be reasonably construed as criticism" (Clause 67.1), unless the teacher is "acting in his capacity as a representative of an appropriate recognized association" (Clause 67.2).

One obvious challenge to these legal caveats is for teachers to form vibrant associations. However, this challenge has not been taken up. At the secondary school level, professional associations in subject areas such as Geography, English, History, and Science are either dormant, defunct, or functioning without the widest representation from their potential membership; and at primary school level there are no equivalent organizations.

The main organ of teachers is *TUTOR*, the quarterly newspaper of the teachers' union, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA), which represents both primary and secondary levels. *TUTOR* updates teachers on the work of the union; informs on and interprets new requirements of the ministry; provides a forum for the opinions of teachers and union officials on current educational issues; informs on professional improvements, innovations, and achievements organized by the union; features the activities and successes of individual teachers and schools; and generally performs the role of a newspaper, bonding

teachers and seeking their welfare. But the teaching fraternity functions like receptors, not generators of this information.

Recently, however, TTUTA put out its first issue of an educational magazine, *The Professional Teacher*, a publication "for educators and the public" (Manning, 2003, p. 1). It is too early to determine what role teachers will play in this magazine, but in its inaugural issue important items missing include: policies of operation, when the next issue is due, how often issues will appear, its board of directors, and guidelines for submission of articles. Volume 1 of *The Professional Teacher* is a colourful feature magazine and does not pretend to be an academic journal. Research is not its guiding principle; three of its short articles are by male lecturers of the School of Education, UWI, and most of the other articles are by prominent figures in education such as a teacher educator from one of the teacher training colleges and the President of the National Parent Teachers' Association (NPTA). The point is that a vacuum still exists, especially among primary school teachers, for voicing their opinions, making their practices known, and for articulating professionalism.

The academic journal and its less formal relation, journal writing, by their very nature of being written modes of ongoing conversation, encourage reflection and generate developmental change. On the one hand, academic journals, with the currency of their research and examination of trends and new ideas, are action oriented. They can be a ready database, a monitor, and a steady stream of on-the-pulse information that are vital to the forward movement of developing nations. On the other hand, although loose, open-ended journal writing has earned a bad name in teacher education (Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002), structured and supportive journal writing that gives feedback and stimulates higher-order reflection have been promoted as beneficial to teacher change (Kerka, 1996; Maloney & Campbell-Evans, 2002).

In embracing teacher change, however, developing nations need to be cautious. Johnson, Hodges, and Monk (2000), citing the case of post-apartheid South Africa, argue "that northern/western ideas about teacher change and development are poorly suited to modeling practices and challenges for those who were historically disadvantaged." Examining in-service teacher education in a territory with several

different and unequal educational systems, they note that classroom environments determine teachers' choices of pedagogical practice to a large extent, and so they must be taken into consideration.

Reflective journaling and, by extension, its formal counterpart the academic journal are well suited spaces of dialogue for filling the vacuum created by the movement from colonial silencing systems to autonomous systems. These spaces for dialogue need to be encouraged to link Caribbean teachers, the implementers of change, with Caribbean policy makers as they devise a culturally relevant way forward.

Methodology

The Teaching of Language Arts in the Primary School was taught using four formats: lecture-discussion, educational videos, peer-group overhead projector presentation, and journal writing. Two methods of information gathering were used to inform the finding of this paper: 1) weekly journal entries tracked teachers' practice in the classroom and teachers' reflection on these practices, while 2) pre- and post-questionnaires evaluated attitudes to and outcomes of the journaling process.

Sixteen participants (15 female and 1 male) were enrolled in the course. Two were eliminated from this discussion, because one (the lone male) taught in the secondary school system and the other, a teacher facilitator, supervised teachers in remedial streams in secondary schools. The remaining 14 participants, all teachers in primary schools in Trinidad, formed the data pool for the analysis presented in this paper.

A learning journal concept, involving feedback from the teacher educator on every entry, was used. The aim was to encourage teachers to reflect on the concepts, skills, or strategies that they had implemented each week. Since the prescribed text and the support videos used in the course were foreign and metropolitan based, the journal rubric sought to encourage teachers to evaluate the teaching idea that they had chosen to implement for each week within the context of their own classroom realities (Appendix A).

An online journal tutorial, designed by the teacher educator, was used to support classroom explanation of the learning journal and examples

were provided. Teachers were able to access the online journal tutorial both on and off the university campus throughout the duration of the course. Although teachers could have submitted their weekly entries online, only two teachers did so and for purposes of beating the weekly deadline.

Twelve journals entries were originally envisaged. However, since the first week of explanation, a mid-term week for an in-class test, and the last week of closure were discounted, each teacher submitted nine journal entries, one per week.

The topics for two entries were specifically set by the teacher educator. The first journal entry was devoted to teacher self-introduction (Appendix B), while the seventh entry was a metacognitive exercise, requiring teachers to reflect on their processes as readers and writers. For the remaining seven entries, teachers were free to choose their own topics from those studied for the particular week.

Pre- and post-questionnaires, to which the teachers did not have to put their names, served both as evaluation and crosschecking devices (Appendixes C and D). One questionnaire was administered on the day that the first entry was submitted, and a post-questionnaire on the last day of the course. The pre-questionnaire sought information on teachers' prior familiarity with journal writing, their attitudes to keeping a journal, and the level of comfort or difficulty they experienced in writing their first entry. Teachers were also asked to evaluate the usefulness of the online tutorial and how it could be improved to serve their needs. Additionally, they were asked after their first entry to say what they had learnt about themselves and their students that they did not know before, in order to exemplify the type of analysis and critical thinking processes that would be required of them (see Appendix C).

The main element of the post-questionnaire was evaluation of the journaling process that teachers had undergone for the duration of the course. Here the teachers were asked to rate journaling in the context of the other modes of instruction of the course. Additionally, they were asked details about their weekly journaling routine and to state their views on journaling in light of their journaling experience. The post-questionnaire also sought to verify statistical information on teachers (see Appendix D).

All teachers referred to in the discussion that follows taught at Trinidadian public primary schools. The first names used in the discussion that follows are not the real names of the teachers enrolled in the course. Further, for purposes of anonymity, no name on the class list is used.

Although the discussion that follows refers specifically to the 14 primary school teachers enrolled in the Language Arts option of the B.Ed. Primary Programme at the St. Augustine Campus of UWI during 2003-2004, this discussion is of significance to teacher education and teacher change in primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago as a whole, especially since the B.Ed. degree is available on a large scale for the first time to teachers in Trinidad and Tobago, commencing in the 2003-2004 academic year.

Limitations of reliability usually attached to journal responses affect the findings of this paper. Another limitation is that what the teachers said is not corroborated by peer-evaluation nor by visits to schools, partly because primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are responsible for their classes all day while school is in session, and partly because the after-school nature of the teacher training programme made visits to schools difficult.

Discussion

What teachers said about themselves and their teaching environments

All 14 teachers teach in the public school system, which is composed of denominational and government schools. All have had three years of training and none have taught for less than five years.

Under 5 years	0
5 to 9 years	5
10 to 19 years	6
20 years and over	3

Large class size is a problem for 6 of the 14 teachers. Among the 6 who reported small or adequate sized classes, only 1 indicated that her class

of 14 Standard 3 students was "a bright, energetic and eager group of pupils who, for the most part are highly motivated and interested in their school work." Four of those with small classes complained that the students were way below the normal level for their age. This suggests that small classes are in the main remedial classes.

Because of the positive impact that one teacher's prior Cert. Ed. training has had on her school, the principal had given her a Standard 4 Special class, which she described in these terms:

> Special! Yes, they all have special needs. There are fifteen pupils, ten boys and five girls. Their ages range from 11 to 15 years. Ten pupils are of average ability and five below average. Five pupils read at independent level, six at instructional level and four at frustration level. They are categorized as slow learners. The majority of these pupils come from broken homes, single parent families, low-income group and have suffered some type of abuse or the other. They come to school hungry, untidy and without essential school tools. Some of their parents don't show interest in them nor their education because most of them are of a low literacy level. They don't attend parents meeting nor come if you send to call them. If they do come, it is to embarrass their children or abuse a teacher. These students have also suffered neglect and have been branded as "dunce" by previous teachers, all because of their special needs. Would you like to walk in their shoes? I have been there.

Although this entry was the most extreme, many of the first entries focused on similar complaints. Poor facilities, elements of incompetence among administrators, and the fact that the secondary school entrance exam determined the status and the operation of primary schools were other complaints. But the main complaints were the low ability of their students and parents' apparent disinterest in their children's education.

With the exception of two teachers who refer to their schools as "prestige" schools,[3] teachers use other clichéd labels such as "from single-parent homes" to describe many of their students. Teachers use these labels, not so much in a derogatory as in a clichéd descriptive manner that bespeaks lack of thought about Caribbean family patterns and realities. However, the overall tone of all the 14 teachers is that they have become attached to their students, that they seek their students' best interest, and that they are coping, although they feel put upon. The following comment of a young teacher is very representative: "Of the

two Standard Five classes, I possess the slower. They are willing and loving students, always calling me 'Mummy' or 'Ma.'"

Teachers do not report a prevalence of disruptive students, but indicate that there is a measure of dysfunctional behaviour in their classrooms that affects the operations of entire groups. In addressing these challenges, teachers' journals indicate that they mix and match conventional methods with affective strategies, behaviourist strategies, and psychological devices of their own making. In her fourth journal entry, for instance, Janice, who has a C-streamed class of 28, whom she had previously described as "very energetic and vocal, but they have difficulty in reading and spelling," reports: "I am now flexible in terms of dealing with the varying special needs in my classroom. I am sourcing new information and strategies for dealing with Children with Special [sic] needs, so that I can create a structured and positive classroom environment for my students." Her most disruptive student already goes for counselling twice a month, so the strategies she has resorted to include:

- I pretend to ignore his disruptive behaviour. This works sometimes. When he realizes that no one is listening or laughing, the behaviour is discontinued. If at times, he continues, he is asked to write about such in his journal.

- He is monitored very closely and is rewarded or punished by myself, the principal and his parents.

Primary school teachers in Trinidad greatly need the support of special education, counselling, and psychiatric services, which are in short supply in the education system in the Caribbean as a whole. There is also a widespread need for carefully monitored and scientifically managed literacy programmes to deal with the large numbers of children that teachers' journals say are falling behind.

With regard to facilities at schools, journal entries portrayed an unevenness in rural as well as urban parts of the country. At one end of the scale a teacher reported:

> Our school is a newly built one. We have spacious individual classrooms, single metal desks and chairs. There are: Science Laboratory, Library, Computer Room, Overhead Projectors, television

and a VCR. There are many opportunities for using the multimedia equipment. However, I have not yet used these teaching aids in my classroom. I must admit that we have excellent resources for effective teaching at my school.

At the other end of the scale another teacher reported:

The present physical conditions of my working environment (the ____Community Centre) leave much to be desired. The situation is most challenging, (claustrophobia, noise, heat and humidity, nonexistent space for things like: library and furniture manipulation, few books, no multimedia facilities) but we rise to the circumstances, using the setbacks as motivating forces to prove that, environment is but a single factor in the education process. I certainly do not allow it to hinder the progress of my students.

A speedier upgrading of schools is urgently needed to minimize disadvantage and to give all students and teachers a fair chance at formal education.

With regard to technology, 9 of the 14 teachers reported that their schools had received an upgrade, indicating technological equipment available for classroom use such as computers, television sets, VCRs, and cassette players. Even among the 5 teachers whose schools had not received an upgrade, 3 reported that their schools were similarly equipped. Therefore, only 2 of the 14 teachers indicated that they had substandard technological equipment for use in their classrooms.

At the end of the course, 7 teachers reported greater use of this equipment, 5 reported that they were always using their equipment, while 2 of the 14 teachers reported no increased use. There are wide variations in teachers' abilities to use technology, although the technology may be available in their schools. There were confessions in journal entries, for instance, such as: "My weak point is that I am not a technology person, so I don't use much multi-media in my teaching. I need to strengthen this aspect." Lack of technological competence was also evident in teachers' explanations of their preparation of their weekly journal entries. It is not good enough merely to provide schools with multimedia equipment. Access to training, technical services, and repair networks is needed if technological equipment is to remain more than a white elephant in primary schools.

Insights into teachers' teaching practices

Journal entries reveal that all 14 teachers (who have three years training behind them) are very knowledgeable about pedagogy. However, there are three main approaches to their use of it: dependence, cynicism, and culturally relevant adaptation. The former two approaches are predominant among teachers with less years of experience. In the work of teachers with fewer years experience, Vygotsky, the ZPD, Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, and cooperative learning are referred to with frequency. Teachers refer to their students as not coming from "print-rich" homes, not so much in a derogatory manner as in a clichéd descriptive manner that again bespeaks lack of thought about Caribbean realities.

Another common response among teachers with less years of experience can be seen as a mixture of frustration and cynicism on analyzing their own classrooms in the context of pedagogical practices found in their foreign course texts. The following statement from Karen (not her real name), a teacher with 7 years experience, is typical, indicating the gap that she feels exists between what she is exposed to in teacher education courses and the limitations of her Trinidadian situation:

> As I read Chapter 2 in the 'Tompkins' I am attracted to the fact that in my Standard 5 class I do not have publishing centers, author's chairs and computer banks with word-processing. I do, however, have a library filled with books, which the student read. So far, in all the schools I have taught, none has the above necessities. In other words, if someone were to show me the list found on pages 46 and 47 [Tompkins, 1998] and ask me if I have ever seen a language rich classroom in Trinidad and Tobago, the answer would be, "Nope, not even in the Infants' Department." Oh how I wish classrooms could be set up like the third grade classroom (p. 51). It is very student-centered but can only be done here, if the Government rebuilds or renovates schools and solves our over-crowding in schools.

Teachers had to be reminded often that resourcefulness and creativity were important targets of the project and not complaint. Karen had not come to terms with the fact that the ideal classrooms depicted in textbooks are presented as models, and are not always available even in the rich foreign countries in which the texts are produced.

Both positions—that of parroting educational jargon, and that of adopting a tone of cynicism—can immobilize teachers for imaginative teaching. Since most of the material used in education courses in the Caribbean emanate from metropolitan cultures, teacher educators need to be very sensitive about their use.

By contrast, Adriana, a teacher of 22 years standing, began her sixth journal entry entitled "Fostering Children's Interest in Reading and Writing" in the following way:

> This week I decided to engage my pupils in poster making. I asked them to go to the café and ask Ms. Glenda for the cost of certain items. They did not know why they were sent on this mission. They were provided with pencil and paper and were told to spend about ten minutes in the café. On their return I allowed each child to either pin her information on the board or write out the information.

Adriana's journal entry continued with an explanation of how she conducted her interdisciplinary lesson "Mathematics, Grammar and Art," teaching students to "categorize," "spell," "how to write statements for problems," and how she "guid[ed] them during the poster making activity."

Teachers' journals also reported on the teaching practices of their colleagues, most often finding those practices lacking by comparison with their own. All the same, they indicated that some of their colleagues were open-minded, that some encouraged them, and that some were willing to learn. One teacher commented on sharing with her colleagues at school in this way:

> The approaches I am using are new to my pupils because the school has some very traditional teachers who are comfortable with their teaching methods. These pupils were taught by these traditional teachers. However, there are some who are pleased with my lessons and they often borrow my resources and try to implement new ideas into their lessons.

None of the 14 teachers reported resistance from their administrations to their experimentation. On the contrary, the fact that they were undergoing or had undergone additional teacher training made them

valued, and in some cases singled out for more challenging classes. In other cases, doing the B. Ed. influenced their principals to give them more freedom to experiment. Adriana, for instance, got her wish to be assigned to the library where she teaches a wide variety of classes and feels unfettered by the examination requirements of the traditional classroom. In her self-introduction she reported:

> I taught a Standard Two last year. This year I was placed in the library. This decision was made by the principal, based on what she had observed in my classroom over the years. [Named School] has a library, which is fairly equipped with books, television, videocassette and games. It was not utilized properly over the years. Thus, the principal thought it best to assign me the job. I welcomed it because I had my eyes on it and was hoping that one day I would be given an opportunity to implement certain teaching strategies that I have been exposed to in the area of Language Arts.

Again, it needs to be noted that technology remains underused in schools because of teachers' lack of training. Additionally, policies about assigning teachers to classes seem to vary, with teachers in certain schools being given challenging classes in spite of their little teaching experience. Overall, length of teaching experience was the biggest factor influencing teachers' competence at implementation of strategies in the classroom.

With regard to language policy, a varying mix of approaches exists. Teachers' comments about their students' use of Creole in the classroom, for example, indicate that the situations in which their students use the first language (L1) are complex, thus frustrating teaching agendas. There is considerable ambiguity about what to do. One teacher of nine years experience, who teaches a First Year class wrote:

> I try to use Standard English when I am speaking to the pupils. At times, I see the need to adjust my speech to operate within the pupils' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) according to 'Vygotsky'. This is a form of scaffolding that facilitates language development and communication. This is seen in the example which follows.
> One day I asked a pupil, "Who brought you to school this morning?" He said, "Miss whey yuh say?" I rephrased the question to, "Who bring you, this morning?" and he responded.

No sequel is given to the episode, but from her own reporting, the teacher decided to make a linguistic compromise, retreating after the gratification of comprehension and response. Noteworthy, too, is that the teacher chose to reference Vygotsky's ZPD in a context in which a reference to Dennis Craig, the Caribbean linguistics scholar, for example, on teaching English as a second language (1999) (to which she was exposed), might have been more appropriate. The point is that the teacher's prefatory explanation and her manner of dealing with the situation exemplify the ambiguous approaches to dealing with language in the primary school.

On the same subject of the teaching of Standard English as a second language, one of her more experienced counterparts reported:

> As a class teacher, I use the following activities to help my students differentiate between both languages: One involves allowing students to speak the language they know and use games, such as hear and tell to identify the differences. Also, students are encouraged to practise the correct usage by repetition. Two, I try to model proper language usage in my classroom and at the same time grasp at every opportunity to improve my speech habits.

The use of the words "correct" and "proper" above suggest that traditional views about the Creole still obtain. This teacher also admits indirectly to using Creole spontaneously in the teaching process. The reports of both teachers suggest their own ambivalent use of Standard English in the classroom. Teachers need more than the comfort zone approach to language teaching and language use indicated in these examples. Competence in Standard English is one of the targets of Language Arts programmes in Caribbean schools. Journals suggest that a clear language policy is lacking and that teachers need defined strategies, especially for teaching students in the formative years.

Attitudes to the reflective process and to journaling

The pre-journaling questionnaire revealed that all 14 teachers had theoretical familiarity with the structure and the function of journaling either as a method of reflection, or as a method of stimulating students' writing, but only 4 had prior personal experience of writing journals. Of these four, one had kept a teacher journal previously that "dealt mostly with reflections from [her] lectures, not so much with [her] teaching or

observation of pupils as they worked." In other words, although all the teachers knew about the benefits of journal writing and a few had implemented them with their students, most had not kept a journal before in the context of their own teaching. All the same, half of the teachers found writing the first entry of the teaching-learning journal easy.

Responses to what they had learned about their teaching that they did not know before they did their first journal entry suggests that only 3 of the 14 teachers were consciously in the habit of critically evaluating their practice. While some reported findings about their students, the majority spoke of teaching failings such as not putting theoretical knowledge into practice. One teacher expressed this failing in these terms: "Although I know what to do in the constructivist approach, most of the times I am still using the traditional approach to teaching." After their first journal entry, all 14 teachers felt that keeping a teaching-learning journal would be beneficial, but 2 felt that it would be burdensome.

It was evident that, generally, the teachers with 10 years and more experience had thought about their strategies and prepared them before implementing them. Their evaluations indicated that they were satisfied with outcomes. They gave examples of what they had done or appended their students' work to their journal entries. However, their post-mortems were mainly in the order of projections and improvements that they would make if they tried the strategies again. Their treatments were well judged and well supported, but controlled by the limitations of their respective competencies and school environments. The result was a tendency to self-satisfaction rather than to imaginative experimentation among these experienced teachers.

On the other hand, the entries of teachers with the least years of experience tended to be more descriptive than reflective and, in some cases, to be dependent on promise and good intentions. For instance, Deborah's willingness to reflect on best practice seemed awakened by keeping a journal. This can be inferred from the closing remarks of her first journal entry: "I am in the process of looking for other strategies to facilitate language development. Now that I have to reflect on the teaching and learning of language in the classroom, I will monitor the impact [that] the strategies have on the learning outcomes."

Being faced with a class level to which she was not accustomed may have contributed to her lack of preparedness and lack of adequate resources at the beginning of the journal. However, inadequate self-evaluation recurs in her work. In her seventh journal entry, she cites a scenario, which shows knowledge of strategy and methodology, but indicates a recurring tendency to inadequate preparation. Deborah reports:

> I have read Red Riding Hood to the pupils but I decided to reread it again. I used a different approach. This time I asked pupils to role-play parts and say the dialogue conversation in the manner they think the characters would have said it. During the reading of the story, I realized that it was a different version from the one I read before. None of the pupils said anything . . .I could have seen the puzzled look on some of their faces when they realized that it was a different story, from the one they had heard before. . . . The pupils agreed that one author could not write both stories and they said that if there are other stories with different versions, they would want to hear them. So I promised that I am going to get the different version of the Three Little Pigs. These pupils' interest has sparked somewhat and I want the interest.

The account suggests limitations in Deborah's ability to pinpoint her strengths and weaknesses. Poor preparation is deflected by the gloss of student interest.

The entry in which teachers used their reflective powers at the highest level was the metacognitive assignment on their reading and writing processes. For most of them it was the first time that they were examining their own behaviour. Five of the 14 teachers made connections with their students' reading and writing processes in light of their review of their own experiences, realizing that whereas previously they engaged these literacy activities in the classroom taking much for granted, they would need now to consider factors such as defining a purpose and creating a mental set in preparing their students. The metacognitive assignment prompted one teacher to question the effectiveness of the manner in which she conducted the Silent Sustained Reading period in her school. Another felt she understood her students' "rituals" much better:

> Looking at yourself is a good way to consider what children as young writers go through. Many times a child sits in class and fights with an ink pen to complete an assignment . . .. [At] their rituals as a teacher

> sometimes I become impatient. Understanding myself as a reader and writer has made me more sensitive to my students.

The teachers seemed to take their journaling very seriously. Although they were only required to turn in two sides of a quarto-sized sheet, double-spaced, once per week, most teachers exceeded the requirement, submitting at least twice the amount with appendages of students' work. Attaching support to their entries suggested that they felt either that their efforts would be better understood, that they could prove that they did try a strategy, or that they were proud of their achievements. The logical outcomes could be perceived to be "better" feedback and a better mark overall at the mid-term and end-of-term points when the journals were graded. However, a better gauge of their attitude to journaling can perhaps be gleaned from their anonymous post-questionnaire responses to what they liked and disliked most and least about keeping the weekly journal.

Nine of the 14 teachers said they disliked the writing-related process, citing elements such as "time consuming" and "the obligation to write it up." Although the requirement was only one entry per week, one teacher cited "frequency" as her greatest dislike. Four teachers did not respond. However, 12 of the 14 teachers cited benefits such as "experimentation," being able to practice what was done in class," developing awareness," and "reflection." One teacher responded with "I am yet to like it" and another did not respond.

> Eight teachers feel that they need time during the school day to reflect on their teaching. This expressed need is important since primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are on duty for the entire teaching day and do not have free periods. Although, they were encouraged to share their journals with a colleague either on or off the programme, only half of the teachers said they did so. This 50% reported peer-interaction is encouraging since Trinidadian teachers have such few fora outside of their individual schools for talking about professional matters.

One of the limitations of this study is that no reliable verification of the positive effect of journaling on teaching and learning is possible. However, by the end of the learning/reflective journal experience, all 14 teachers felt that their teaching had improved, and would recommend the practice of reflective journaling as one method of improving teacher

professionalism in Trinidad and Tobago. Of the five methods of teaching used in the delivery of the course—journal writing, lectures, whole class discussion, educational videos, and peer group overhead projector presentations—journal writing polled the highest response as the method that teachers found most beneficial. All the same, only five teachers chose it as number one, while the traditional lecture format ran a close second with 4 responses as number two.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Educational platforms in Trinidad are traditionally talking spaces for the academic élite who see the societal outcomes of schooling, but have little real knowledge of what goes on in the classroom. As present, teachers are little more than functionaries locked into a system in which they are told what to do and in which there is a lot of blame heaped on them when the system fails. The 14 teachers in this study indicate that there has been improvement in the Trinidad and Tobago education system in terms of physical facilities, and in the educational knowledge that teachers have acquired from years of training. The gap between theory and implementation can be narrowed if teachers are given the encouragement and confidence to create a critical practice out of the many strands of knowledge, both universal and indigenous, that they possess.

The aim of this paper has not been to promote journaling or any specific method of teacher reflection. The paper uses journaling as an articulation and reflective device to gain an understanding of the primary school teacher—her students, needs, teaching practices, her implementation of strategies from theory to practice, and the factors that affect her response to positive change.

As is evident from the comparative wealth of Trinidad and Tobago, it is a fallacy to think that the problems of Caribbean education are largely economic. Even if such were the case, it is unlikely that the region will have enough money in the near future to cure its social ills. The Caribbean education system must be modernized, but for modernization to mean more than computers and foreign structures, teacher input must provide the ingredients for culturally relevant innovation and problem solution. Ideas from the academic élite, teacher training, curriculum reform, and infrastructural social work must all be parts of a multi-

pronged approach to systemic change. However, in order to dismantle negative aspects of historical acculturation, policymakers need to work alongside teachers. One by-product of such harmonization would be a body of professional doctrine and best practice—educational resources that can be truly called Caribbean.

In light of the above the following recommendations are made:

- Teacher education programmes in the region should help primary school teachers to initiate ways of talking to each other. One method could be through promoting teacher confidence through support for professional journals refereed by their peers. Helping teachers to set up talking spaces would signal to teachers that they have a stake in the education of the region. This is one of the quickest ways of promoting teacher change among a body of specialists who have acquired quite a bit of universal educational lore, but none of their own Caribbean making. In this regard the professional magazine published by TTUTA is welcomed. But it must not fall into the hands of those who have the loudest voices and are removed from the classroom where the education happens, thus silencing teachers' voices in their own domain.

- Some attempt must be made to establish linkages among the different sectors involved in formal schooling from kindergarten to age 12, such as private schools, public schools, early childhood centres, and special schools for the challenged. At present, it is difficult to understand how these disparate sectors are related to one another or even how they feed into each other, especially in terms of the early childhood sector. Above all, the linkages between the early childhood sector and the primary school system must be clarified or documented, in the interest of monitoring the continuous growth of children from toddler stage to their entry into secondary school.

- There is an urgent need for donors of technology, including the Ministry of Education, to realize that technical support must come with technological packages. Teachers need to be trained in the use of multimedia if these media are to become useful in strategies for improving literacy in Caribbean education systems.

Notes

1. Two of these years of training were done either at Valsayn Teachers' College or at Corinth Teachers' College—training colleges of the Ministry of Education. The other year was done on evenings after school in the Certificate programme at the School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine.

2. Telephone interviews with teachers signed up for the B. Ed. (Primary) in Language Arts, Level 2 revealed that their reasons for signing up for the Language Arts option included: (1) wanting more expertise in the Language Arts; (2) long-term plans for promotion as curriculum officers and teaching facilitators; (3) eventual movement out of the primary school system into the secondary school after doing required additional courses; (4) preparation for possible raising of professional requirements by the Ministry of Education; (5) not getting into the Educational Administration option; and (6) the intention to migrate.

3. In the Trinidad and Tobago primary education system, "prestige" refers to schools whose students attain the highest marks in the secondary school entrance examinations. Many "prestige" primary schools are denominational and serve as feeder schools for "prestige" secondary schools.

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Appendix A

Rubric for Learning Journal

During this course you will be expected to keep a journal to chart your teaching and learning development. Your journal will account for 20% of your overall mark in this course. Entries should not be longer than 2 sides of a quarto-sized page, unless your discussion will really suffer from the omission of important detail. Even in these circumstances of burning compulsion, you should aim at conciseness and not exceed 3 quarto sides. In other words, focus on your learning experience is more important than the narrative detail. You should have 12 entries by the end of the course one for each week.

You may use any of the formats outlined in the journal tutorial (double entry, single entry, dialogue); that means you may use more than one style over the 12-week period. With respect to the dialogue format you may share your journal with another teacher from your school or on the course.

Your weekly journal entry will be collected on Mondays, when you will receive feedback for the previous week. A loose-leaf ring binder or folder will be appropriate to allow you to write while your weekly submissions are being reviewed. I will make brief comments and give a mark out of 10 at mid-term and at the end of the course (20% according to the following rubric).

Journal Rubric
(Use sentence and paragraph format, except for charts, diagrams, graphic organizers, etc. You may use bullets to help you with organization, conciseness and focus. Diagrams should carry labels and explanations. Put your name, ID, and date on each entry.)

Out of our discussions on the topic for the week or the multimedia material presented, identify one idea, theory, concept or teacherly moment that has made its impact on you. (1 mark)

For the theory, idea, concept or teacherly moment you have chosen, identify at least one skill and one strategy that you intend to

implement in your classroom. Say why the skill and strategy are important. (2 marks)

Identify and discuss at least 3 steps, procedures, or processes in the application of your chosen idea with your students during the week. (3 marks)

Evaluate your experiment by highlighting 3 outcomes—benefits, problems etc, as they relate to your students. Say what you have learned, how beneficial it was for your students, and project for the future by commenting on whether you would try the strategy again, abandon it, or repeat with modifications. (3 marks)

Organization of ideas, neatness, presentation. (1 mark)   (Total = 10 marks)

Appendix B

Journal Entry for Week 1

- Introduction and self-appraisal of teacher as a professional
- Assessing structures; classroom analysis; evaluating classroom practices; organizing tools

Introduce yourself as a professional. What class do you teach? Describe your pupils. How would you categorize your learners? What would you say are their needs?

Male and female ratios; feelings about class; disruptive? social/home backgrounds; prestige? aura of the class; competitive? eager to learn?

How often do you see their parents and for what reasons?

What text/s do you use? Say how you have been using text/s in your Language Arts programme.

Describe your classroom; opportunities for multimedia. How often do you use multimedia?

Describe 5 aspects of your teaching situation that you like. Describe aspects that you do not like and what you are doing or are prepared to do to remedy the condition. In what ways would your students benefit from the changes that you intend to implement?

How is Language Arts structured into your timetable?

Do you follow that emphasis strictly? i.e. how much of classroom time is spent on Language Arts?

Layout of your classroom, showing position of teacher's desk, blackboard, the class library and what is on the walls.

Seating arrangement and how many children are in your class.

Appendix C

Teacher Questionnaire

1. What did you know about journal writing before doing the online tutorial?

2. Have you kept a teaching-learning journal before? Y/N

3. Did you find the tutorial helpful? Y/N

4. What areas did you find most helpful?

5. What areas do you find could be improved?

6. How do you feel about keeping a learning journal?

7. Was writing your first entry easy or difficult?

8. Explain your response to Question 7 above.

9. Did you find out anything about yourself as a teacher that you did not know before (for example, how you think, how you learn, how you teach etc.) after your first week of writing in this journal? Explain your response.

10. Did you find out anything about your students that you did not know before?
    Explain your response.

Appendix D

End of Journal Project - Evaluation

Answer all questions.
Circle or write the appropriate responses.

1. Is this your first teacher-training programme?   Yes   No

2. If no, say where you have been trained before.

   Teacher's Training Institution ……………. from ………to …….
   Teacher's Training Institution …………… from ………to…….

3. I have been teaching for the past …years at Primary school
   years at Secondary school
   years as Teacher facilitator /educator

4. Complete either (a) or (b). For (b), delete the choice that does not apply.
   (a)I teach Standard…at present; there are …students in my class.
   (b)I teach at Form level at present; I am responsible for….(no.)students /teachers.

5. I have always taught at the Class level in (4) above.   Yes   No

6. If no, state the Class/Form levels that you have taught previously Stds… …; Forms……

7. The students I teach are between ………and ………years old.

8. My school has been recently upgraded.   Yes   No

9. If yes, say how ……………………………. (Technology, SIP., etc.)

10. Circle and/or add technological equipment that you school possesses for classroom use.

Overhead projector, computers, television, VCR, videos, DVDs, ……………

11. Which of the media equipment in (10) above do you use on a frequent basis?

    …………………………………………………………………………

12. Have you used them more during ED 21D than before?   Yes No

13. Place the following teaching strategies used by your instructor of ED 21D over the duration of the course in the order of their greatest benefit to you:
         (1 = most beneficial   5 = least beneficial)

    lectures( )   whole class discussion( )   educational videos( )
    journal writing(   )   peer group overhead projector presentation( )

14. When did you normally do your weekly journal entry? (Day; time; if related to a specific classroom procedure, how close to procedure, e.g. same day? after lesson? that night? etc.)

    …………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………

15. List in order and explain the stages you normally took in the weekly production of your journal entry:
A.…………………………………………………………………………

B.…………………………………………………………………………

C.…………………………………………………………………………

D.…………………………………………………………………………

E.…………………………………………………………………………

16. What I liked least about journal writing for ED21D……………..

What I liked most about journal writing for ED21D…………….

17. Which journal format did you use most and why?………………

18. Complete as many as apply:
I shared my journal entries with another teacher because……

Journal writing is a waste of time because………………………

I need time during the school day to reflect on my teaching because…………………………………………………………………

The journal writing was beneficial to me because…………………………………………………………………..

The journal writing was not beneficial to me because……………………………………..……………………………

19. Compare your teaching before and after using the reflective journal. Circle one:

I think my teaching after reflective journaling was: the same   worse   better

20. I would recommend reflective journaling as one strategy for improving teacher professionalism in Trinidad and Tobago:
Yes   No

FORMATIVE APPROACHES TO CONSTRUCTING SYLLABUSES FOR THE CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

Cherryl Stephens

This paper examines the approaches used to construct syllabuses for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE). These approaches are described as **formative.** Two principles undergird the major activities that drive syllabus development using this approach—the iterative and the widely consultative process, and the use of data from a variety of sources as a feedback mechanism. This formative approach to syllabus construction produces a document that is culturally relevant, authentic, and "fit for purpose."

Introduction

In the literature, curriculum as a concept is almost without boundaries. Portelli (1987) indicated that more than 120 definitions of curriculum exist in the educational literature. According to Tanner and Tanner (1980), curriculum is "that reconstruction of knowledge and experience, systematically developed under the auspices of the school, to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience." This definition posits that curriculum is an interactive process, which involves the interface between the learner and the teacher with the subject matter in a particular milieu. The learner is an active participant, engaged in a constructivist mode of learning as he actively makes sense of the subject matter by bringing his personal and past experiences to bear on the content of the subject (Henderson, 1996). In this definition, the school serves as a microcosm of the society, where learning impacts on, and is impacted by, what takes place in the society.

To date, all Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) syllabuses attempt to capture the interaction between the school and the wider society by the inclusion of a rationale which establishes the justification for developing the syllabus, aims, general and specific objectives, content, suggested teaching and learning activities, and the details of the assessment component. The Council has continued to go beyond the mere

development of syllabuses and continues to develop curricula.

According to Griffith (1999), the establishment of the Council was an essential component of the independence efforts of Caribbean territories, which sought to establish institutions that would reflect the interests, characters, and aspirations of Caribbean peoples and governments. The CXC syllabuses and the corresponding examinations are not only relevant to Caribbean students but also reflect the social, economic, and development needs of the region.

This paper examines the procedures that the Council has used and continues to use to ensure that its syllabuses are linked to the curriculum in the schools of the participating territories. In this way, CXC ensures that its examinations remain accountable to the school system within each territory, and that the certificates awarded reflect the learning that takes place in the classrooms. This paper focuses on the approaches used to construct syllabuses for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE). These approaches are **formative** because there is continuous evaluation of the process during the development of the product. The term *formative evaluation* was first used by Scriven (1967) in connection with curriculum improvement. Scriven was of the view that formative evaluation involves the collection of appropriate evidence during the construction and trying out of a new curriculum, in such a way that revision to the curriculum can be based on this evidence. Beyer (1995) contends that formative evaluation is distinguished by three critical features:

- it is ongoing
- it involves assessment
- it seeks specific information.

These three critical features are also essential elements in formative approaches to syllabus construction. In constructing syllabuses using formative approaches, specific information is gathered on an ongoing basis from a variety of sources. This information is assessed and used as feedback to restructure or modify the product. These formative approaches result in a product that has the highest potential for producing or achieving its objectives.

Two principles undergird the major activities which drive syllabus development that uses formative approaches. These principles are the iterative and widely consultative process, and the use of data from a variety of sources. The iterative principle ensures that syllabuses are continually being upgraded in light of new ideas and insights that are derived from the interaction of learners and teachers with the syllabuses. Each iteration of the syllabus is based on consultations with the major stakeholders in the process. Among them are teachers, students, employers, parents, principals, curriculum directors, school board members, and community members. These consultations with a variety of stakeholders represent views from different perspectives. These perspectives are used to construct a refined version of the product. This version is then subjected to further analysis. The data collected from the analysis of this version of the product are then used as feedback to further refine the product and produce another iteration of the syllabus. Indeed, each iteration of the syllabus represents a further refinement based on wide consultation and the use of data from a variety of sources.

The Decision to Develop CAPE

The CXC syllabus development process is usually initiated with an assessment of the demand for a subject, following a request from one or more participating countries for an examination in that subject. In the case of CAPE, the Chairman of Council, in 1979, reported to the Standing Committee of Ministers of Education that the Council had successfully launched the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) programme and that the time had come for the Council to consult with Curriculum Officers of Ministries of Education on the need to develop an alternative to the A'Level examination. The Ministers agreed that Council should consider a new developmental model that emphasized post O'Level certification rather than replicating A'Level examinations in the Caribbean. The Council was asked to continue to consult with the major stakeholders to determine the extent of the need and demand for examination at a level above CSEC, and to make proposals for the consideration of the Ministers (Caribbean Examinations Council [CXC], 1979).

At the 1988 meeting of the Standing Committee of Ministers of Education, the Council was able to report that, based on consultations, the proposed post-CSEC programme had received general support from

The University of the West Indies (UWI), the University of Guyana (UG), regional community colleges, and other tertiary institutions. Moreover, through an extensive process of collaboration between CXC staff, representatives of UWI, other tertiary institutions, and Ministries of Education, the central concept of the CAPE framework had been developed (CXC, 1988). This consultative process produced the major working document, which outlined the general guidelines for the development of the CAPE programme, *The Post-CSEC System of Examined and Accredited Courses* (CXC, 1996). This document outlined the structure, philosophy, rationale, objectives, target groups, and proposed subject offerings of the CAPE programme. In addition, it provided general guidelines for syllabus development and assessment.

Based on the consultations with different stakeholders, it was determined that the CAPE programme should provide educational opportunities for a wider cross-section of students who wish to pursue post-secondary education. Courses were to be defined in terms of one or two Units. One Unit may be completed in one year of post-secondary study. In cases where the subject consists of two Units, the student may proceed to the second Unit of study and examination in the same year, in the next year, or in a later year. Thus, the CAPE scheme allowed for breadth and depth of study. In this way, a student pursuing CAPE is able to select Units of a subject that match his or her own interests and abilities (CXC, 1996).

Panel Formulation

All CXC syllabuses are developed by Subject Panels. A Subject Panel is made up of five to six specialists drawn from various CXC participating territories. The Panel comprises teachers who are qualified to teach the subject at the secondary level; specialists drawn from the tertiary institutions of the region, including universities; and practitioners in the field. In developing the syllabus, the Panel receives technical guidance from a CXC curriculum officer and a CXC measurement specialist.

CXC undertakes consultations with a number of entities in the region, including Ministries of Education; UWI; UG; the University of Technology, Jamaica; University of Belize; community colleges; and subject associations, to obtain proposals for members of subject Panels. These consultations yield several nominations. The nominations are first

reviewed by the Syllabus Officer and an effort is made to find persons with the best mix of skills. This is followed by a review and consultation with the Pro-Registrar, in his capacity as Head of the Syllabus Unit, out of which refinements are made. After this, another consultation and review between the Pro-Registrar and the Registrar, who is the Chief Executive Officer of CXC, takes place where the list of prospective Panel members undergoes further refinement. A further consultation and review is done between the Registrar and the Chairman of Council, who approves the final selection. What finally emerges from this iterative and consultative process is a team that the Council is confident can guide the syllabus development process and one that best represents the views of the region.

The Process of Developing the Drafts of the Syllabus

In preparation for the first Panel meeting, CXC staff consults with Ministries of Education in the region to find out what is happening in the territories and to examine existing syllabuses and programmes taught in schools. In addition, other documents and materials are sourced and together they form a package that is circulated to Panel members for their review.

The Subject Panels having been appointed, the first Panel meeting is convened. These meetings last for three or four days. At this meeting, panellists are reminded that they must bring to the meeting the views and concerns of the interest group they represent as one of the data sources to inform the syllabus development process. Developing the rationale, aims, and general objectives represents a critical first step in syllabus development because all subsequent steps are designed to respond to these parameters.

During the meeting, the Panel is subdivided into working groups and assigned tasks. These working groups are followed by plenary sessions where amendments are made, informed by the collective thinking of the group. At the end of the final day of the meeting, and following several rewrites of each section of the document under preparation, the Panel produces Draft 1 of the syllabus that includes the rationale, objectives, content, and assessment criteria.

As part of the formative approach to syllabus development, further

inputs are made; in the first instance by the Sub-Committee of the School Examinations Committee (SUBSEC). SUBSEC is responsible for overseeing the syllabus development and maintenance work of the Council. The Sub-Committee comprises representatives of Ministries of Education in the region. The Chairman of Council presides over these meetings and the Registrar, Pro-Registrar, and Heads of Technical Divisions participate. The report on the initial deliberations and recommendations of the Panel is submitted to SUBSEC. SUBSEC reviews the progress made and provides feedback to the Panel for further consideration. The inputs from members of SUBSEC occur at several stages in the development of a syllabus, as will be shown. It provides a critical review of the work of the Panel, as well as comments that are critical to the further deliberations of the Panel.

In addition to SUBSEC, Draft 1 of the syllabus is referred to resource persons who are considered experts in their field. Each syllabus is sent to at least five reviewers. In the case of interdisciplinary syllabuses, there may be at least eight reviewers. The critical issue is the selection of the right reviewers and asking the right questions. In the absence of these two elements, this formative assessment of the early draft of the syllabus is unlikely to yield the desired results.

The selection of the reviewers by Council is also a result of consultations—first with the Panel members who are asked to nominate persons they consider subject experts in the region, then among the Subject Officer, the Pro-Registrar, and the Registrar—before final selections are made. The objective of the consultations is to ensure that persons best suited to the task are selected. Indeed, one of the six critical flaws in formative evaluation identified by Beyer (1995) is the use of unqualified persons as expert evaluators. The consultations provide the opportunity to ensure that the persons with the right skills are selected for the task at hand. In addition, to ensure that reviewers are encouraged to provide the kinds of information that would be most useful to the Panel, reviewers are asked to respond to specific aspects of the document. They are invited to comment on the structure of the syllabus, general objectives, specific objectives, content, and the assessment criteria.

Additionally, Panel members are asked to consult with colleagues in their territory and institution. After this round of consultations, the

second Panel meeting is convened, at which the data from the many different sources, namely, comments from the reviewers, SUBSEC, and colleagues of Panel members, are analyzed by the Subject Officer and used as the major data source at the second Panel meeting. Each comment is discussed and, based on agreement by the Panel, adjustments are made to Draft 1 of the syllabus. In effect, the results of the consultations from the different sources (individuals and institutions) provide the data that are used to produce the second iteration of the syllabus, Draft 2.

This second iteration of the syllabus is subjected to a wider consultation. According to Beyer (1995), an educational product must be continuously assessed throughout the entire course of its development. Each iteration (draft) or reiteration (redraft) of the product must be assessed. The purpose is to not only get as many key persons as possible to comment on a draft of the syllabus, but also to ensure that changes made as a result of earlier formative feedback do not cause an unanticipated problem. Assessing changes as they are made ensures progress toward the production of a quality product. One way to do this is to expand the sources of data.

CXC employs two mechanisms to ensure that this ongoing assessment is conducted. The first involves the dispatch of a detailed questionnaire and the syllabus to selected schools within each territory, national CXC committees, subject associations, university lecturers, and teachers' colleges for their consideration.

The second mechanism for consultation involves regional syllabus scrutiny workshops. This was particularly applicable during the early development of CAPE syllabuses. Syllabus scrutiny workshops are held with selected groups of teachers from each territory. The workshops are managed by the Syllabus Officer, a Measurement Officer, and the convenors of the Panel. At the workshops, Panel members discuss with practising classroom teachers:

1. the scope and nature of the rationale and objectives of the syllabus;
2. the scope and nature of the objectives in terms of their feasibility, validity, and efficient articulation with tertiary institutions;

3.   the main organizing concepts, principles, values, and perspectives that undergird the content and teaching methods of Units, Modules, and themes;
4.   the depth and breadth of content coverage;
5.   the appropriateness, compatibility, and marketability of the syllabus;
6.   the appropriateness of the teaching methods; and
7.   the way achievement is measured in the subject.

In addition, practising teachers are invited to sit with a sub-committee of the Panel to develop specimen examination papers. During this exercise, the syllabus document is scrutinized as the syllabus is viewed from the perspective of examiners and item writers. In attempting to develop the specimen papers, critical data are collected and inconsistencies and gaps are identified. This process provides a valuable source of data for use in further refining the syllabus document.

These consultations reveal the varying interpretations that teachers from different schools within the same territory, and from different territories, make of the written document. The perspectives provide an invaluable source of qualitative data that are essential and critical to the next phase of the development process. Here, teachers are seen as partners in the curriculum process. This is important, as the teachers know best the milieu in which the syllabus must function. Schwab (1983) suggested that the active involvement of teachers in curriculum development and revisions was essential. Curriculum developed under conditions detached from the real teaching-learning situations does not fit the needs of teachers and learners. Eisner (1988) recommends the use of an experienced eye in the consideration, interpretation, and assessment of data. Teachers do have the experience and can make discerning judgments on the emerging syllabus. Through these interactions with teachers, shared understandings evolve and meanings are constructed.

The deliberations of the third Panel meeting are informed by several sources of data representing a variety of critical perspectives. The comments from SUBSEC on Draft 2, the quantitative data collected from the teacher questionnaires, and the qualitative data from the syllabus scrutiny workshops are used at this Panel meeting to further refine the syllabus document. Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) agree that because curriculum is contextually and personally expressed, it must be viewed

through multiple lenses that reveal not only major elements but also the relationships among them. The Panel discusses each comment from the variety of data sources and arrives at a resolution. The perspective of each Panel member is an important component for resolving conflicts. At the end of the exercise, the wisdom of the collective group is used to decide on the issues. This consultation produces Draft 3 of the syllabus, that is, another iteration of the document informed by the consultations and the data collected from several sources. This draft is submitted to SUBSEC for its review and approval. Based on consultations with SUBSEC, the syllabus is finalized and ready for piloting.

Piloting the Syllabus

The activities of piloting the syllabus are designed as another major data collection exercise, where the viewpoints of an even wider cross-section of the teaching fraternity are sought as they seek to implement the syllabus. Partnerships are established among CXC staff, Panel members, Ministries of Education, Principals, teachers, and students from across the region. Together, they agree to be part of the consultative process in developing the syllabus.

Three major activities are used to collect data during the initial implementation of the syllabus. The activities include workshops, site visits, and a Panel finalization meeting. Teachers selected to participate in the piloting of the syllabus are involved as partners in these activities. They participate, together with CXC staff, Ministry representatives, and Panel members, in two workshops, three site visits, and the keeping of a journal. An orientation workshop is held prior to the start of teaching, where teachers are asked to collect information on how they implement the syllabus in the Teacher Journal. This journal provides information that will be used to refine the syllabus document. A second workshop is convened midway in the teaching year, where teachers can seek further guidance and provide additional evidence of the working of the syllabus.

In addition, each teacher is visited three times during the year by a Panel member selected by the Council. Site visits provide immediate advice and assistance to teachers in implementing the syllabus but, more importantly, they provide the syllabus developers with the best opportunity to see the syllabus at work. During the site visits, Panel

members make timely interventions by providing guidance to teachers on how to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Opportunities to interact with teachers, principals, deans, students, and parents provide invaluable insights into the working of the syllabus. This strategy provides additional information and additional perspectives on the syllabus. Reports of site visits are made to the Council, and immediate remedial action is taken, if required. The procedures for conducting site visits to pilot schools are provided in Appendix A.

Syllabus Finalization

At the end of the year of piloting, a syllabus finalization meeting is held. A wide selection and variety of data are available for finalizing the syllabus. These include data from the site visit reports, the orientation and midterm workshop reports, reports of discussions with employers, teacher journals, and examination performance. The views of Connelly and Clandinin (1988) support the use of content analysis of journal entries, teacher interviews, and focus group sessions as sources of data to finalize the syllabus. This varied data help to create a holistic picture of the curriculum, which is needed to construct a syllabus. The finalization meeting produces an iteration of the syllabus which was informed by several consultations that provide data from a variety of sources. It is this iteration of the document that is used for wide-scale implementation.

Conclusion

This paper describes and analyzes approaches used in the development of CAPE syllabuses. These kinds of descriptions and analyses are generally omitted from the literature on curriculum development. The description and analysis demonstrate a creative approach to syllabus development, which ensures that CXC benefits from the extensive educational resources of the region. The consultative and iterative processes used assure that the syllabuses are responsive to the needs of the region. The process attempts to satisfy the needs of the various stakeholders in the 16 participating territories of CXC. The composition of the Panel and the continuous interaction with employers, teachers, students, specialists, and other stakeholders in the course of syllabus development ensure that the syllabus responds well to the provision of skills required for personal and social development, for employment, and for further education and training. These measures assist in assuring

and sustaining the relevance of the CXC syllabuses and examinations to the needs of Caribbean students, and to the social and economic development needs of the region.

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FORM PCSV

CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL
WESTERN ZONE OFFICE

CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS (CAPE)

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING SITE VISITS
TO PILOT SCHOOLS

1.   Visiting Resource Persons will make three scheduled visits to each teacher during the academic year.

2.   The Visiting Resource Persons will be panel members and subject specialists recommended by Ministries of Education.

3.   For the first visit to each teacher, the Assistant Registrar/Syllabus will coordinate the activities which include:

   (i)   informing ministries and schools of date and time of visit;
   (ii)   overseas and local travel arrangements;
   (iii) hotel accommodation.

4.   The schedules and arrangements for the second and third visits will be made by the panel members and in other instances resource persons recommended by Ministries of Education.

5.   In territories in which the Visiting Resource Persons are resident, all three visits (first, second and third) will be made by the Visiting Resource Persons. The schedules of the second and third visits are to be forwarded to the Assistant Registrar/Syllabus.

6.   (a) In territories where the Visiting Resource Persons are not resident, the first visit will be made by the Visiting

Resource Persons and resource persons recommended by Ministries of Education, and the second and third visits will be organized and arranged by resource persons recommended by Ministries of Education.

(b) During the first site visit, the Visiting Resource Persons will work closely with the resource persons recommended by Ministries of Education in order to introduce the teaching and assessment approaches used by the CAPE programme.

7.   The focus of the activities undertaken by the Visiting Resource Persons will be to:

> (i)   offer support and guidance to teachers with respect to problems encountered in the implementation of the syllabus;
>
> (ii)   hold discussions with students, teachers, and administrative staff and provide guidance where necessary. These discussions will in general be based on journal entries made by the teachers.

8.   On completion of each site visit, a report, carefully identifying problems and suggested solutions, must be completed and submitted as quickly as possible to the Assistant Registrar/Syllabus. This report will be used to determine appropriate action to be undertaken by the Council.

Western Zone Office
1998.09.02

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY STUDENTS ATTENDING ASSISTED AND PRESTIGE SCHOOLS IN TRINIDAD[1]

Frank C. Worrell and *Leah B. Bucknavage*

Participation in 19 extracurricular activities was investigated in 1,312 secondary school students attending assisted and/or prestige schools in Trinidad. The sample was 60% male, 21% African descent, 41% East Indian descent, and 30% Mixed descent. Research questions focused on mean number of activities and participation rates in activities by ethnicity and gender, and the relationship between extracurricular participation and student achievement and attitudes. Results indicated that ethnic and gender groups participated in the same number of activities on average, although there were gender-stereotypical rates of participation in some activities. Participation in steelband, solo instruments, debating, and chess were associated with higher student achievement, as was length of time on student council. Females reported playing in steelbands at significantly higher rates than males, and students of East Indian descent reported higher rates of involvement in cricket and lower rates in steelband than their peers of the same gender.

Extracurricular activities play an important role in the lives of secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, there are national school-based competitions in sporting events such as football (soccer), cricket, basketball, hockey, and swimming, and non-sporting events such as drama and debating. Schools also compete against each other annually in steelband competitions and biennially in the national music festival. When all of these activities are put together, it is clear that they require a substantial amount of time on the part of students. However, as in many other areas of education, there is little research on students' participation in extracurricular activities in Trinidad and Tobago.

On the other hand, several studies have been conducted in the US on extracurricular activities and, more specifically, on the relationship between students' participation in extracurricular activities and other variables of importance in the educational arena. Some studies have focused on specific populations such as athletes, whereas others have focused on outcome variables such as personal and social development, academic achievement, and participation in activities related to delinquency. High school students have been the most frequently studied age group in the US, with the majority of the research focusing on the relationship between participation in athletics and academic achievement.

Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

Marsh (1992) examined the effects of participation in extracurricular activities (PEA) during students' last two years of high school. Data on 10,613 students from the second follow-up of the sophomore cohort of the High School and Beyond study were examined for this study. He found total PEA to be positively related to 13 of 22 outcome variables studied. Total PEA was positively correlated with global self-concept, academic self-concept, taking advanced courses, time spent on homework, post-secondary educational aspirations, GPA, parental involvement, absenteeism, senior-year educational aspirations, being in the academic track at school, college attendance, parental aspirations, and high school seniors' occupational aspirations.

Silliker and Quirk (1997) also examined the effects of PEA on the academic achievement of high school students. They were interested in seeing whether PEA enhanced students' academic performance. Participants consisted of 123 high school students who participated in interscholastic soccer during the first quarter of the school year but were not involved in any extracurricular activity during the second quarter. The results of the study indicated that participants had higher grade point averages in the first quarter (i.e., during soccer season) than in the second quarter (after soccer season). Student attendance was also higher during the soccer season, but this finding was not statistically significant.

Most recently, Broh (2002) looked at the impact of PEA on the academic performance of high school athletes. She analyzed data on 12,578

students from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988. She reported finding academic benefits, as well as personal and social benefits from participating in sports. However, the results also indicated that academic performance had different relationships with different activities. For example, she reported that participation in interscholastic sports and music clubs was most consistently associated with high achievement, whereas participation in student council, drama, and yearbook had less consistent relationships with high achievement. On the other hand, Broh found that participation in cheerleading, intramural sports, and vocational clubs was associated with lower achievement.

Research on Ethnic Minorities

Several researchers in the US have examined the participation of ethnic minorities in extracurricular activities. Lisella and Serwatka (1996) looked at the relationship between PEA and academic achievement in minority students attending urban schools. Participants consisted of 766 8th grade students of African American, Hispanic, or American Indian descent attending poor inner city schools who had been included in the NELS study. The pattern of extracurricular involvement for minorities was similar to that of the general student body, as reported by other researchers, and was also similar to the pattern for White peers attending the same inner city schools. Lisella and Serwatka also reported that male minority students who participated in extracurricular activities had significantly lower academic achievement than non-participating males, whereas a smaller majority of females participating in extracurricular activities had higher academic achievement than their non-participating counterparts.

Schreiber and Chambers (2002) looked at data from a stratified sample of 8,305 8th and 10th grade students included in NELS. Extracurricular activities were categorized based on whether they were in-school or out-of-school, academic or non-academic, and organized or unorganized. Results indicated that all of the activity types predicted academic achievement, but their effects were different across school years, academic content areas, and ethnicity. In sum, studies of ethnic minority students suggest that the relationship of extracurricular activities to academic achievement in ethnic minority groups differs by gender, age, and ethnicity.

Extracurricular Activities and Risk Status

In 1986, using the High School and Beyond database, Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock reported that dropouts had participated less in athletics in school than students who had not dropped out, and Finn (1989) argued that students' participation in school activities in general led to greater identification with school and lower probability of school dropout. Recent findings have supported a link between PEA and risk status. For example, Yin, Katims, and Zapata (1996), in a study of 1,200 low-income, at-risk Mexican American middle school students, found that these students were less likely to participate in *organized* after-school activities, and that participation in unsupervised activities was related to increased substance abuse.

Eccles and Barber (1999) examined student participation in prosocial activities, team sports, school involvement, performing arts, and academic clubs using participants from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (N = 1,259). They found that involvement in prosocial activities and team sports was related to doing well educationally, but involvement in prosocial activities was related to low participation in risky behaviors, whereas participation in team sports was related to increased alcohol consumption. Other authors have also reported findings that are nuanced. Mahoney (2000) found that PEA was related to lower dropout and arrest rates for criminal activity in high-risk students, but noted that decreases in antisocial behavior was dependent on the social networks developed in the extracurricular activities. In another study, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) noted that extracurricular activities were related to reduced dropout rates for at-risk students, but had much lower impact on students who were not considered to be at risk.

The Current Study

As indicated above, the research on participation in extracurricular activities in the US has yielded mixed results. There are data that suggest that PEA is beneficial for students, particularly those who are at risk in school, and is related to positive developmental outcomes (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh, 1992; Silliker & Quirk, 1997), but other research suggests that the benefits may differ by type of extracurricular activity (e.g., Broh, 2002; Yin et al., 1996) or student risk status (e.g., Mahoney,

2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). In this study, we examine PEA in a group of students from assisted and prestige schools in Trinidad and Tobago, a group that can be described as the least at risk, at least academically, on the basis of their educational assignment.

Several research questions were examined. The first question examined differences in mean PEA by gender and ethnicity. The second question focused on the relationship between PEA and academic achievement, school-related activities (e.g., turning in homework), and more general attitudes toward school and the future. The third question examined extracurricular participation rates by gender and ethnicity. Although tradition suggests that there are traditionally male (e.g., football) and female (e.g., dance) extracurricular activities, there is little literature that suggests that ethnic groups will differ along specific lines.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 1,312 secondary school students (59.4% male) with a mean age of 14.6 years (*SD* = 1.8) attending 11 assisted or prestige secondary schools in Trinidad. Five of the schools were assisted all-female schools (3 from the north, 2 from the south, and 1 from central Trinidad); five were assisted all-male schools (3 from the south and 2 from the north); and one school was an all-male government prestige school from north Trinidad. In sum, 56.7% of the participants attended schools in the north, 36.1% attended schools in the south, and 7.2% attended the school in central Trinidad. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 19, and all seven years of secondary schooling were represented, with the examination year classes, that is, Form 5 (5.5%) and Upper 6 (2.9%), contributing the smallest numbers. Participation across the other grade levels ranged from 15% to 24% of the sample. Participants were of several different ethnicities, including of African descent (20.5%), of East Indian descent (41.2%), of Mixed descent (29.7%), and Other (8.5%).

Individuals of African descent were under-represented, given their percentage in the population, and individuals of Mixed descent were over-represented. It is not clear if these percentages are an accurate representation of students attending the upper-tier schools in Trinidad, or a reflection of a societal shift in demographics that will first be

reflected in the younger members of the society. Students in the "Other" category indicated that they were Caucasian, Syrian, or unspecified Other. Seventy-one percent of the sample reported their fathers' education level and 75.8% reported mothers' education level, with the medians for both groups of parents being completion of A'Level examinations.

Measures

Students were administered a questionnaire which contained questions on demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity), single questions on academic achievement and homework completion, questions on participation in different extracurricular activities, the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APSR, Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001), and the Measure of Perceived Life Chances (MPLC, Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1990). Students reported their perceived academic achievement on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *Below 40%* average; 2 = *40 to 49%*; 3 = *50 to 59%*; 4 = *60 to 69%*; 5 = *70 to 79%*; 6 = *80% or* higher) labelled Marks. The question on Homework asked students to rate their homework completion rates over the last year using a 5-point scale with the following anchors (*Never, Rarely*, *Sometimes*, *Often*, and *Always*).

Students were asked to indicate if they participated in 19 activities: basketball/netball, cadets, chess, cricket, dance, debating, drama/acting, football (soccer), hockey, junior achievers, music (choral), music (solo instrument), music (steelband), photography, religious clubs, scouts, student council, swimming, and table-tennis. There was also an option for *Other*, indicating that they participated in an activity not included in the list of 19. For each of the 19 activities that they indicated participating in, respondents were asked to report how long they had participated in the activity. Two psychologists, a high school principal, and a teacher trainer came to consensus on this list of common extracurricular activities that students participated in.

The Almost Perfect Scale-Revised

The APSR (Slaney et al., 2001) is a 23-item scale designed to measure perfectionistic attitudes, and consists of three subscales: High Standards, Discrepancy, and Order. High Standards is a 7-item adaptive perfectionism subscale, which assesses individuals' striving to reach

personal goals (e.g., *I try to do my best at everything*). Order, a 4-item adaptive perfectionism subscale, reflects respondents' concerns with organization and neatness (e.g., *I think things should be put away in their place*). Discrepancy is a 12-item subscale measuring maladaptive perfectionism. This subscale assesses respondents' failure to live up to the standards that they set for themselves (e.g., *I am hardly every satisfied with my performance*). APSR items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (7), with higher scores indicating higher levels of each construct.

There is substantial reliability and validity information for APSR scores (Slaney et al., 2001; Vandiver & Worrell, 2002). Slaney et al. reported support for the three-factor structure in two independent college samples using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and internal consistency estimates for the subscale scores ranged from .83 to .92 (*Mdn* = .86). APSR scores also had correlations in the appropriate direction with other perfectionism scales as well as measures of depression and worry. Vandiver and Worrell (2002) reported similar findings for APSR scores with school-aged academically talented adolescents. They reported moderate to high internal consistency estimates for APSR scores and support for the three-factor structure, as well as significant correlations between APSR subscales and students' academic achievement.

Vandiver and Worrell (2002) also found that Item 5, a High Standards item, did not load on any of the three factors and this finding was replicated in a Trinidad and Tobago sample (Worrell & Cammack, 2003). Thus, only six items were used for High Standards in this study. In keeping with the recommendation of Worrell (2000), internal consistency estimates of scores are reported for all of the subgroups examined in the study, and these reliability estimates are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the estimates were in the moderate to high range as in previous studies (High Standards *Mdn* α = .77; Order *Mdn* α = .79; Discrepancy *Mdn* α = .86).

The Measure of Perceived Life Chances

The MPLC (Jessor et al., 1990) is 10-item unidimensional scale that assesses the subjective likelihood of a number of future events (e.g., what are the chances that you will graduate from high school or own your

own home). Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale with verbal and numerical anchors indicating the respondent's subjective probability that a certain event will happen, ranging from *Very Low* (1) through *About Fifty-Fifty* (3) to *Very High* (5). Jessor et al. reported that students with higher perceived life chances were less likely to engage in risky behavior, and Worrell, Latto, and Perlinski (1999) found that academically talented students had higher scores than at-risk youth on this measure. Since the academic events are predicated on the American school system, these items were reworded to match school completion markers in Trinidad and Tobago (e.g., attaining at least 5 CXC passes, completing A'Levels), resulting in a 12-item measure. This modified version of the MPLC yielded two factors, labelled *academic* perceived life chances (APLC) consisting of 3 items, and *general* perceived life chances (GPLC) consisting of 9 items. The reliability estimates for APLC and GPLC scores by subgroup are also presented in Table 1 (APLC *Mdn* α = .78; GPLC *Mdn* α = .83).

Procedure

Participating schools were members of the School Leadership Center of Trinidad and Tobago, and were asked to participate by the Director of the Center. Teachers administered the questionnaires to all students in classrooms at their home schools, and the questionnaires were completed anonymously. Teachers were provided a master administration copy to standardize administration procedures and were available to answer questions as the students completed the measures. Completed forms were collected and sent via mail to the School Leadership Center of Trinidad and Tobago for analysis. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Pennsylvania State University.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Major Variables in Study

Variable	Male			Female		
	M	SD	α	M	SD	α
African Descent (171; 98)						
Age	15.07	1.84	-	15.01	1.97	-
Marks	4.23	1.06	-	4.68	0.89	-
Homework	2.80	0.92	-	3.08	0.83	-
Total Extracurricular	2.89	1.95	-	2.79	2.28	-
High Standards (6)	5.95	1.08	.86	6.07	0.77	.75
Order (4)	5.32	1.13	.70	5.07	1.28	.84
Discrepancy (12)	3.90	1.29	.86	3.82	1.19	.86
Academic PLC (3)	4.20	0.83	.78	4.55	0.59	.78
General PLC (9)	4.15	0.59	.84	4.17	0.46	.79
East Indian Descent (321; 220)						
Age	14.35	1.78	-	14.10	1.63	-
Marks	4.31	0.96	-	4.94	0.80	-
Homework	3.14	0.89	-	3.30	0.75	-
Total Extracurricular	3.08	2.28	-	2.66	2.28	-
High Standards (6)	6.00	0.73	.70	6.03	0.82	.79
Order (4)	5.40	1.20	.79	5.44	1.18	.78
Discrepancy (12)	4.19	1.20	.86	3.88	1.31	.90
APLC Score (3)	4.28	0.68	.77	4.50	0.63	.81
GPLC Score (9)	4.14	0.52	.81	4.26	0.55	.87
Mixed Descent (230; 160)						
Age	14.37	1.79	-	14.70	1.90	-
Marks	4.12	1.12	-	4.67	0.88	-
Homework	3.02	0.92	-	3.04	0.84	-
Total Extracurricular	3.29	2.71	-	2.84	2.81	-
High Standards (6)	5.95	0.78	.67	5.84	0.94	.81
Order (4)	5.30	1.14	.71	4.98	1.31	.83
Discrepancy (12)	4.04	1.23	.86	4.17	1.25	.88
Academic PLC (3)	4.15	0.80	.75	4.36	0.74	.75
General PLC (9)	4.19	0.61	.87	4.08	0.55	.84
Other (57; 55)						
Age	14.80	2.10	-	15.16	1.78	-
Marks	4.19	1.22	-	4.69	0.81	-
Homework	3.00	0.91	-	2.89	0.69	-
Total Extracurricular	2.69	3.28	-	2.34	1.93	-
High Standards (6)	5.71	1.00	.82	5.82	0.77	.74
Order (4)	4.96	1.29	.81	5.26	1.06	.73
Discrepancy (12)	3.66	1.02	.80	4.11	1.23	.89
APLC Score (3)	4.16	0.85	.71	4.38	0.69	.79
GPLC Score (9)	4.21	0.46	.77	4.09	0.50	.80

Note: Numbers in parentheses next to groups indicate the number of male and female participants, respectively. Numbers in parentheses next to scales indicate the number of items making up the subscale. APLC = Academic Perceived Life Chances; GPLC = General Perceived Life Chances.

Results

As indicated in the Method section and Table 1, males outnumbered females in each ethnic group, but the gender by ethnic differences were not significant, X2 (1, 3) = .15, p .05. Males and females also did not differ significantly in age, F (1, 1295) = .60, p > .05, but there were age differences by ethnic group, F (3, 1295) = 13.72, p < .001, with students of African descent (M = 15.05) being older than students of East Indian (M = 14.25) and Mixed (M = 14.51) descent, and students of Other descent (M = 14.98) being older than students of East Indian descent. These differences reflected, at maximum, a mean difference of 9.6 months. Females (M = 4.79, SD = .85) reported higher Marks than males (M = 4.23, SD = 1.05), t (1249) = -9.97, p < .001), and as in other studies (e.g., Vandiver & Worrell, 2002; Worrell & Cammack, 2003), students reported higher scores on High Standards and Order than on Discrepancy. Scores on APLC and GPLC were also high. Most of the variables were normally distributed; however, scores on High Standards and APLC were negatively skewed (both at -1.2) and positively kurtotic (2.3 and 1.2, respectively).

Mean Number of Extracurricular Activities

Students reported participating in two to three extracurricular activities, on average, across gender and ethnic groups. Means in Table 1 indicate that East Indian and Mixed descent males were on the high end of the distribution, and that East Indian and Other descent females were on the low end of the distribution. However, a univariate ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences on number of extracurricular activities reported by gender, F (1, 1092) = 3.51, p > .05, or ethnicity, F (3, 1092) = 1.29, p > .05, nor an interaction between these two variables, F (3, 1092) = .26, p > .05.

Relationship of PEA to Achievement-Related Variables

The relationship of PEA and achievement-related variables was examined in three ways. First, point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated between participation/non-participation in an activity on the one hand and Marks and Homework on the other. For these analyses, the significance level was set at .001, given the large number of correlations involved, and only correlations accounting for at least 9% shared variance (i.e., r > .3) were interpreted. Neither Marks nor

Homework was significantly related to participation in any of the 19 activities. Second, the relationship between number of years participating in an activity and Marks, Homework, High Standards, Order, Discrepancy, APLC score, and GPLC score was examined. Marks was positively correlated with length of time on student council ($r = .31$, $p < .001$), and Homework had significant negative correlations with length of time in photography ($r = -.56$, $p < .001$) and length of time in scouts ($r = -.35$, $p < .001$).

Finally, independent t-tests were used to examine the differences between participants and non-participants in the 19 activities on Marks and Homework. For this family of analyses, the critical alpha level was set at .002 to control for Type I error. Given the significant difference between males and females on Marks, this variable was included in these analyses. Significant differences at the .001 level were found for three comparisons. Individuals who played solo instruments and chess reported higher Marks than their counterparts who did not participate in these activities, with moderate effect sizes (Cohen's d) of .31 and .37, respectively. Students who played chess also reported turning in Homework more frequently than those who did not (Cohen's d = .42).

Extracurricular Participation Rates

To ascertain the specific extracurricular participation rates by gender and ethnicity (e.g., what percentage of males of African descent play football), data were analyzed using 4 (ethnicity) by 2 (participation/non-participation) cross-tabulations for each of the 19 extracurricular activities, and calculated separately for males and females. These results are presented in Table 2. The critical alpha for these analyses was .001. The highest participation rates for the entire sample were in the areas of football (35.2%), cricket (29%), swimming (28.7%), and religious clubs (25.8%). Additionally, 51.4% of the respondents indicated that they participated in an extracurricular activity not included in the 19 options provided. Activities with the lowest participation rates included photography and cadets for males, and photography, scouts, cadets, and hockey for females, all with rates of less than 5%. Four percent of the sample reported not participating in any extracurricular activities at all.

Gender and ethnic comparison

Significant differences between gender and ethnic groups are flagged in Table 2. Female participation rates were about 1.5 to 3 times greater than

males in dance, the three music categories, drama/acting, and debating, and males participated in chess, football, cricket, and table tennis at rates that were 1.5 to 3 times greater than females. Additionally, the male rates in scouts and cadets were 7 and 11 times greater, respectively, than female rates in these activities. Ethnic group differences were found in steelband, hockey, cricket, and other participation, and as can be seen in Figures 1 to 4, gender and ethnicity seemed to interact in these activities.

In steelband (Figure 1), female participation rates are higher than males for all ethnic groups; however, both male and female East Indian participants participated at far lower rates than other groups, with East Indian females participating at rates comparable to Mixed and Other descent males, and East Indian male rates approaching zero. Rates for hockey (Figure 2) are generally low with seven of the eight means being less than 10%. Females reported participating at lower rates than males in every group but the Other descent category, which reported the only participation rate of almost 15%. The pattern for cricket (Figure 3) is the mirror image of the steelband pattern, with males participating at higher rates than females, and East Indian males and females participating at the highest rates, and East Indian female rates paralleling those of African and Other descent males.

Finally, males reported greater participation in activities other than the 19 that were listed (Figure 4). However, the male participation rates fluctuated considerably by ethnic group, ranging from a high of 74% (East Indian descent) to a low of 42% (Other descent). However, females in the three identified ethnic groups had similar participation rates, with the Other descent group reporting less participation in other activities. Moreover, males of African and East Indian descent reported participating in other activities at substantially greater rates than females, but the gender differences for the other two groups were less than 10%.

Table 2. Extracurricular Participation Rates by Gender and Ethnicity

Variable	Male					Female				
	AD	ED	MD	OD	Total	AD	ED	MD	OD	Total
Dance[a]	9.0	9.7	9.4	7.5	9.3	31.5	28.9	40.9	30.0	33.1
Solo Instrument[a]	19.2	23.9	20.2	21.8	21.6	37.8	31.0	27.1	30.0	31.0
Choral Music[a]	13.9	16.0	19.5	9.4	16.1	40.9	30.2	32.0	18.0	31.4
Steelband[ab]	15.6	1.3	10.3	9.3	7.7	31.8	11.1	26.5	22.0	20.5
Student Council	8.4	14.2	5.9	13.0	10.4	13.8	7.7	11.6	7.8	10.0
Drama/Acting[a]	6.1	11.8	15.8	10.9	11.7	19.0	15.2	26.9	23.5	20.2
Debating[a]	6.1	7.2	5.4	3.8	6.2	16.5	10.1	12.0	14.0	12.2
Chess	12.8	20.0	12.7	11.3	15.6	6.1	11.8	6.3	4.1	8.4
Photography	1.2	2.3	4.1	5.7	2.8	2.4	2.0	2.1	4.2	2.3
Religious Clubs	20.0	27.6	24.7	20.0	24.5	25.0	35.2	28.6	34.0	31.4
Scouts[a]	23.6	20.1	27.4	19.6	23.0	7.4	0.5	4.2	4.2	3.2
Cadets[a]	5.5	4.3	5.0	3.8	4.7	1.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.4
Junior Achievers	9.8	7.9	8.2	11.3	8.7	8.8	10.3	9.2	10.4	9.7
Football[a]	57.3	46.2	55.0	46.2	51.3	16.3	18.5	18.3	14.9	17.7
Hockey[b]	5.2	2.7	8.0	5.1	5.1	3.8	1.0	5.0	14.9	4.1
Basketball/Netball	27.5	18.4	15.4	21.1	21.1	22.2	13.8	15.5	6.3	15.0
Cricket[ab]	24.5	54.8	33.9	24.0	39.9	14.6	26.9	13.7	8.5	19.0
Swimming	32.1	26.8	37.0	27.5	31.1	34.9	28.1	35.7	29.4	31.7
Table Tennis[a]	19.6	22.6	22.4	11.8	21.1	4.9	14.4	7.4	2.2	9.5
Other[ab]	63.8	73.9	57.3	42.3	64.3	50.0	51.0	49.3	39.2	49.0

Note: AD = African descent; ED = East Indian descent; MD = Mixed descent; OD = Other.
[a]Significant differences by gender at the .001 level.
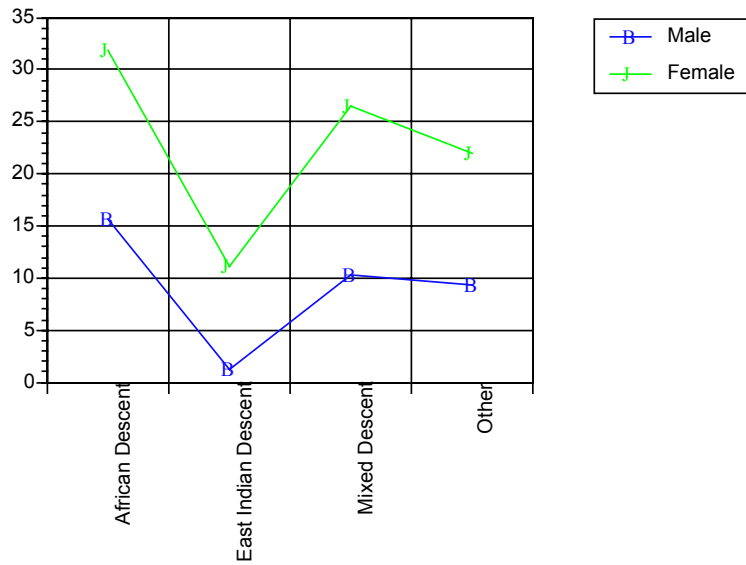[b]Significant differences by ethnicity at the .001 level.

Figure 1. Participation rates in steelband by gender and ethnicity.
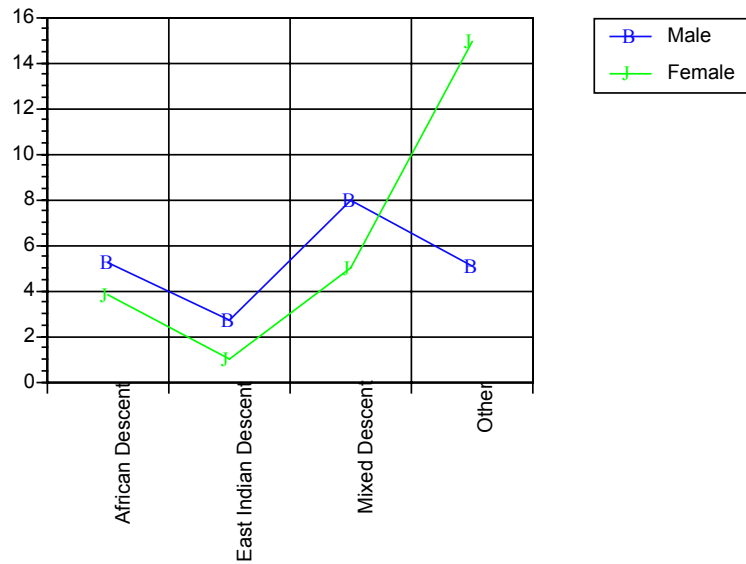

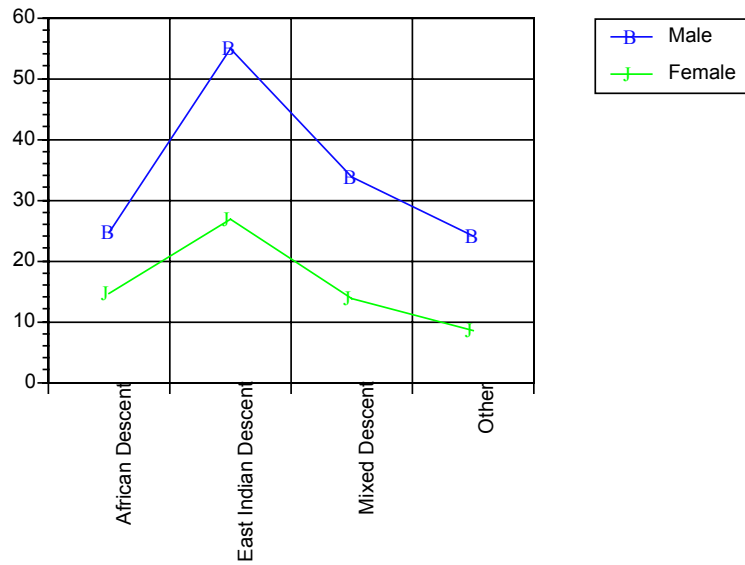*Figure 2.* Participation rates in hockey by gender and ethnicity.

Figure 3. Participation rates in cricket by gender and ethnicity.
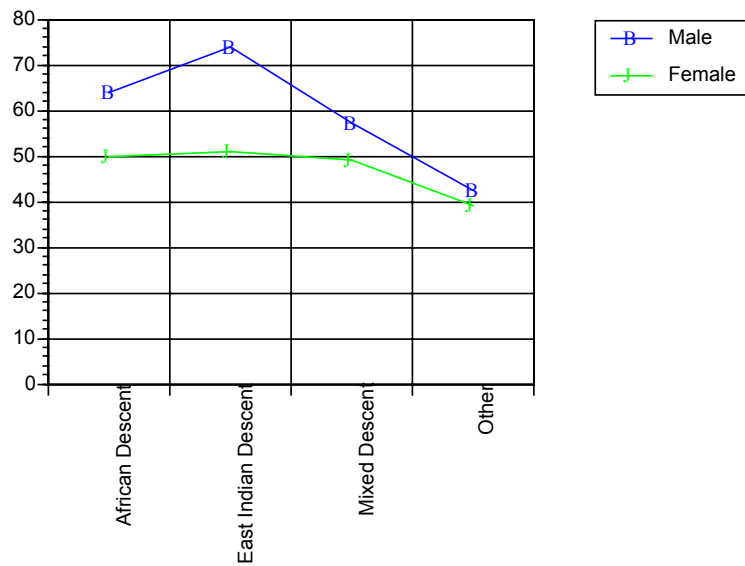

Figure 4. Participation rates in other extracurricular activities by gender and ethnicity.

Discussion

This paper examined PEA in students attending assisted and prestige secondary schools in Trinidad. The results indicated that the majority of participants engaged in extracurricular activities, with participation rates in some activities falling along gender-stereotypical lines. Differences by ethnic group were also evident for some activities. The data also indicated that males and females as well as ethnic groups do not differ in the mean number of extracurricular activities that they engage in. Although there were no significant relationships between the number of activities that students participated in and student achievement or frequency of turning in homework, students who played a solo instrument and students who played chess had higher perceived achievement than non-participants, and chess players also reported turning in homework more frequently than students who did not play chess. Additionally, length of time participating in student council had a positive relationship with perceived achievement, and length of time participating in scouts and photography had negative relationships with turning in homework.

PEA and Perceived Achievement

The findings of this study suggest that the number of extracurricular activities students participate in is modest—two to three—and bears no relationship to their perceived achievement and, in most cases, PEA was not related to students' perceived achievement at all in contrast with some of the findings in the US (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Lisella & Serwatka, 1996; Marsh, 1992; Silliker & Quirk, 1997). This conclusion is tentative at best, however. First, participants were from the top-tier secondary schools in Trinidad, and it is probable that the perceived academic achievement variable is restricted in range. Moreover, we do not know if students at other types of schools participate in a similar number of extracurricular activities and this needs to be examined in subsequent work. However, the findings were similar to the more nuanced findings of Broh (2002) in that the relationships that were found differed by activity. Paralleling Broh's findings, participation in one musical category was associated with higher achievement, as was length of time on student council. However, unlike Broh's study, neither positive nor negative relationships were found between sports or drama and student achievement.

Gender Differences

The data from this study indicate that a substantial majority of secondary school students participate in extracurricular activities, and neither gender seems to be at a disadvantage with regard to finding activities to participate in. As suspected, participation rates indicate that there are some activities that are still predominantly male (e.g., scouting, cadets, chess, football, cricket, and table tennis) and others that are predominantly female activities (e.g., dance, choral music, drama/acting, and debating). As is evident from these lists, the activities that are predominantly male are more physical, consisting of sports and activities that take place outdoors, whereas the activities that are predominantly female are more cultural, less physical, and primarily indoor activities, suggesting that there is still a substantial gender gap. However, the picture is a little more complicated than these activities suggest. For example, activities that did not have gender differences in participation range included active sporting activities (e.g., hockey, basketball/netball, and swimming) and some less active activities (e.g., religious clubs, junior achievers and student council) as well.

One surprising finding is the participation rate for females in steelbands. Early in their history, steelbands were equivalent to gangs in the US—note names like Renegades and Desperadoes—and as such were traditionally male in membership. However, the increased national emphasis on the steelband as a cultural icon of Trinidad and Tobago and its incorporation into schools have resulted in a sea change in membership, with female participants outnumbering their males counterparts by almost 300%.

Ethnic Differences

As indicated in the introduction, we had no hypotheses about ethnic differences in PEA at the outset. Nonetheless, some ethnic differences were found. East Indians had much lower participation rates than other ethnic groups in steelband and much higher participation rates than other groups in cricket, and these differences were found for both males and females. Traditionally, the East Indian population has had lower participation rates in Carnival-related activities than other groups, and this pattern may explain the lower steelband participation rates for this

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group. However, there have been reports of increased participation by East Indians in Carnival in general, and studies in the future may yield a different picture. Unfortunately, there are no previous data on PEA to compare the current data to. Also, East Indian participation in the other musical activities was comparable to their peers. The finding in cricket, particularly for females, was also unexpected, and may be related to East Indian participation rates in cricket nationally and at the international level (i.e., the West Indies team), but this is an area that requires further consideration.

Limitations and Conclusion

This study had several limitations. First, participants were a sample of convenience and may not be representative of assisted and prestige schools in Trinidad, although the size of the sample does mitigate this concern to some extent, as does the distribution of the schools. Additionally, junior and senior secondary schools and traditional five-year government schools were not included, and PEA at these schools may be different. Third, the number of participants who indicated that they participated in an extracurricular activity other than the 19 ones listed was substantial and a delineation of these activities by type may lead to different conclusions. Certainly, future studies should include all types of secondary schools in both Trinidad and Tobago, and should allow students to write in activities that are not listed so that we can see what categories these activities fall under. Limitations notwithstanding, this study makes an important contribution to the educational literature in Trinidad and Tobago, in that it provides a baseline for comparing student PEA in other schools currently, and for examining changes in PEA over time in future studies.

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