COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN EDUCATION
IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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The Caribbean is generally grouped with Latin America as one of the regions of the world. The Caribbean is broadly defined as the islands located in the Caribbean Sea plus some of the continental countries touched by that Sea. Within that general and wide definition the region is subdivided by language groups and culture into Dutch, English, French, and Spanish. The English-Speaking, or Commonwealth Caribbean, is therefore a small part of an already small subregion when grouped with Latin America and its other Caribbean neighbors.

There are seventeen different territories that comprise the Commonwealth Caribbean. They are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands. Five of these are still British Dependencies: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, and Turks and Caicos Islands. The other twelve are independent countries represented in the United Nations. Their political status, notwithstanding the seventeen territories, is based on a linguistic and cultural block with a common history and many shared institutions.

This Chapter seeks to locate the educational systems of these mini and micro-states within the global context. The last decade has seen major changes worldwide. Normally changes are associated with progress. However, the changes of the last decade represent a bewildering array of interrelated paradoxes. At the same time that global peace appears a distinct prospect with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the accord between Israel and the PLO, there has been an unprecedented increase in crime, both street and domestic. The fear of nuclear holocaust has been replaced by the daily uncertainty of one’s personal safety on the streets or at home. While capitalism has appeared to have triumphed over communism, as the Eastern Block countries are bought into the market, poverty is increasing at an alarming rate. Substantial numbers of middle class people are becoming poor. While cyberspace
has become the new frontier, promising a brave new world of virtual reality, young people in appreciable numbers are becoming part of a growing underclass. Clearly, these fundamental changes are by no means Utopian.

It is not surprising, therefore, that educational reform has become a major item of public policy across the globe. Pushed by the pain of these fundamental changes, but prompted by the prospects of the new millennium parents, policy-makers and pedagogists have searched for answers and new approaches. All the equations for reform have included education as a key strategic input.

This wave of educational reform has not bypassed the Commonwealth Caribbean. The eight countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), decided that they would reform their education systems through a collective effort and geared their future to a common destiny. The result was Foundation for the Future—the OECS Education Reform Strategy of 1991. Since then Belize has followed through reforms related to a project with the World Bank, which includes revamping teachers education, primary education, the curriculum, textbooks, and evaluation processes.

In the last two years Bahamas, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago have all established Task Forces or Commissions that have recommended major reforms of the existing systems. Guyana and Jamaica have both been implementing reforms in an attempt to cope with the fall-out from structural adjustment. Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands have also instituted programs of reform. No corner of the English-speaking Caribbean has, therefore, gone untouched by this wave of reform.

What is interesting is that the period before the mid 1980s could not be described as being static in terms of educational development. Neither could it be said that education in the subregion was in the doldrums. The imperatives of political sovereignty, in the case of the independent countries or full internal self government in the case of the still dependent territories, had fueled their own wave of educational reforms in the 1960s and the 1970s.

The reforms of the 1990s have, therefore, followed the previous waves in an almost seamless manner so as to appear to be part of a continuous process of reform. However, some of the current reforms give the appearance of reversing relatively recently adopted policies. To some extent this has raised questions as to whether these reforms are substantial and long lasting changes of direction, or expediences of the particular regimes that enacted them.
Caribbean Education and the Anglophone World

The English-speaking Caribbean is part of the British Commonwealth and the wider Anglophone world. Its educational history is intricately interwoven with developments in education in that world. Because of its colonial history with Britain, educational policy and reform has always drawn inspiration, direction and even form from Britain. It must be noted, however, that British influence in Caribbean education has waned considerably over the last forty years.

Its geographical location to English-speaking North America and the increasing influence of the United States has been of greater contemporary importance. In that connection it must be noted that within the last decade, led by Thatcher and Reagan, conservative governments in all three countries have made educational reform a key element of public policy. Sweeping educational reforms have been undertaken by these governments.

Middleton (1992) makes the point that the conservative governments, not only in Britain, Canada, and the United States but also in Australia and New Zealand, have drawn heavily on the New Right for their critique of existing education. Elliott and MacLennan (1994) have summarized the lines of attack of the New Right on education as failure to:

- Teach traditional values. In many instances schools have encroached on matters that are the responsibility of other institutions, namely the church and the family, by programs related to sexuality and moral choices. Also, the content of some programs offend the values of many, for example, teachings on the gay lifestyles. Further, by teaching relativism focused around a therapeutic humanism, based on self-realization and self-validation, the very basis of objective morality was being undermined.

- Reaffirm the high culture of Western civilization. By imposing policies like multi-culturalism, and the idea of the relative equality of all cultures, the classics and other contributions of Western civilization were being devalued and underplayed.

- Maintain standards by turning out illiterates at all levels of the education system, after six, nine or even twelve years of education.

- Instill business values, respect for enterprise and entrepreneurial skills. Many students leave school, or even college unprepared for available jobs or self employment. Indeed, some teachers even criticize the market system and instead promote collectivist values.

In Britain reforms implemented by Conservative governments have included:
A national curriculum for all schools.

National testing and standards.

Greater accountability of teachers and schools to their clients.

Loosening the Local Educational Authorities control and responsibilities for education.

Increased parental choice in the selection of schools for their children.

Privatization of various services, and even of schools themselves.

Reforms in the United States and Canada have followed very similar lines with respect to curriculum, national testing and minimum standards, greater accountability, parental choice, and restructuring of the public education system. Several writers, Aronowitz and Giroux (1987), Livingston (1987), Greene (1988), Apple (1989), Flude and Hammer (1990), Yates (1991) have labeled and attributed the current wave of education reform in the Anglophone industrialized world to the New Right. Flattered by the importance ascribed by this attribution, the New Right has accepted authorship. The concern raised by these writers is that schools and education are being taken over by economic considerations to the exclusion of its wider mission to develop the whole person. Comparative advantage, competitiveness, efficiency, accountability, cost benefit, and the free market have hijacked both administration and instruction to the detriment of the civilizing mission of schooling and education.

Bell (1976) argued that modern capitalism had promoted modernity in secularizing and rationalizing various societal processes but that this has had both negative and positive effects. The positive effects related to the creation of modern consumer society's ability to make available the amenities of the bourgeois lifestyle. The negative manifested itself in hedonistic, self regarding, anarchistic lifestyles that were eroding the tradition discipline of bourgeois life.

Habermas (1985) makes the distinction between social modernity, which applies technical innovations to solve social problems, produce growth and prosperity, and cultural modernity, which embraces hedonism, self actualization, and alternative lifestyles. Habermas goes on to assert that what is common to the evaluative scheme of the New Right critique of the contemporary situation in the several societies is their affirmative stance toward social modernity and denigration of cultural modernity.

Elliott and MacLennan (1994) make the point that cultural modernity is not only about hedonism and self actualization but also about the extension or rights of individuals, equity and justice, and the positive freedoms of association, communication, debate, and claiming new rights. In this
respect the New Right’s position is not only an attack on licentiousness but also an assault on the exercise of individual rights in society.

Before commenting on the location of the Commonwealth Caribbean in this ideological milieu, it must be noted that the New Right’s position is also one of retreat from the social policies relating to marginal groups in access to the mainstream of society. This position has been more explicitly stated in Britain than in either the United States or Canada. Sir Keith Josephs, Secretary of Education in the Thatcher Government, argued for the abandonment of polices related to equality of opportunity and equality in educational system.

While it is true that educational reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean has always taken its cue from contemporary developments in the industrialized countries of the Anglophone World, it would be extremely disrespectful to suggest that recent educational reform in the subregion has been driven by the New Right’s Agenda. While there is similar affirmation of social modernity, especially with respect to the application of information and other technologies to solve social problems and stimulate growth, and while the subregion is conservative on several points of culture, the peculiar culture of the Caribbean renders several items of the New Right’s agenda meaningless. For example, multiculturalism is mainstream in the Caribbean; school prayers are standard practice; alternative lifestyles are not taught in schools; and an ideological retreat from the principles of equality and equity in social policy could not be sustained by any government or party depending on democratic means of ascent to power.

It is for these reasons that, in examining educational reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean, this monograph has ignored the partisan debate that is currently taking place in the United States and Britain, principally because it is not a driving force among the actors and stakeholders in this subregion at the present time. Instead, the reforms are examined and interpreted in terms of the imperatives identified within the subregion. Note, however, will be taken of the growth of the American influence on education in particular countries and specific levels of the educational system, especially in the immediate post-independence period.

Commonwealth Caribbean Education and the Third World

In their highly impressive work on primary education in developing countries, Lockheed and Ver spoer (1991) characterized the educational systems of these countries as being marked by improved, but not universal coverage of the school age population, high repetition, high drop-out, low completion, low efficiency with respect to throughput, limited access for
girls and women and low standards of achievement. Primary education in the Commonwealth Caribbean defies almost every one of these characterizations.

The subregion has had universal primary education for at least the last thirty years. In all countries children have free access to public schooling up to age 15 years, at least. The drop-out rate is low, repetition rates are low, completion of primary schooling is high, the efficiency rate in terms of through-put is high, and girls have access to schooling on the same basis as boys. In fact, on the whole, girls enroll earlier, attend more regularly, drop-out less, repeat less, complete more, and achieve at a higher level than boys.

At the secondary level eight of the sixteen territories have universal secondary education up to age 17 years. These are Anguilla, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Turks and Caicos Islands. In the case of Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago more than 80% of the 12 to 17 age group receive five years of secondary schooling. In the case of the other countries more than half the relevant population receive some form of secondary education. It is important to note that the gender difference in favor of girls is even more marked at the secondary level than it is at the primary level.

It can be seen, therefore, that the educational provision in the Commonwealth Caribbean is broad based and does not have the gender inequalities that mark the so-called Third World or developing countries. Any analysis or examination of education in this subregion that adopts the Third World stereotype is bound to meet with numerous paradoxes and contradictions. This point can easily be made by examining the position of Commonwealth Caribbean countries in the United Nation Development Program's Human Development Report for 1993.

The UNDP 1993 Human Development Index, HDI, ranks 173 countries world wide on the basis of human resource development criteria including years of schooling, adult literacy and educational attainment. Of this number, 31 are listed as industrialized if one excludes the new countries emerging from the break up of the former Soviet Union, and 46 if one includes them. For the purpose of this discussion one will exclude these 15 new republics from the industrialized country category.

When the HDI ranking of these remaining 31 industrialized countries is compared with the ranking of the 12 Commonwealth Caribbean countries included in the list, nine of the 12 Commonwealth Caribbean countries are ranked before the last ranked of the 31 industrialized countries. Barbados is the highest ranked Caribbean country at 20, placing it ahead
of Ireland, Italy, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Portugal and just below Israel, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Belgium. Among the 127 countries listed as developing, Barbados ranked 1st and Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas 5th and 6th respectively. The point to note is the considerable overlap on the Human Development Index between these so-called Developing Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the so-called Developed First World countries.

The implications for education reform, by this location of the Commonwealth Caribbean in the Development Index, are threefold:

- The inferiority of Caribbean education is a myth that needs to be debunked. In terms of the provision of basic education the Commonwealth Caribbean provision compares favorably with the industrialized world. This myth of inferiority stems from its colonial heritage and was part of the psychological means of justifying the colonial relationship and the hegemony of the imperial power. Note that this myth continues to enjoy great popularity among some sections of the elite and inteligencia of the subregion and for the same reasons.

- The Commonwealth Caribbean should approach reform in education with some measure of confidence. With far less resources than the industrialized first world countries these small states have been able to give their populations wide access to education and their attainment on basic standards are comparable to their better endowed counterparts.

- It is critical to recognize that the challenges and issues facing Caribbean education are indeed very similar to those facing the education systems of the so-called developed societies. They are the problems of mature educational systems in a world experiencing fundamental and far-reaching restructuring.

It is important to note that the location of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries on the UNDP Development Index represents nothing new about the subregion relative to the industrialized world. Ramirez and Boli (1981), reviewing enrollment data of school systems at the end of the nineteenth century, found a similar relationship between these British West Indian colonies and the countries of Western Europe and the rest of the world. Indeed, Commonwealth Caribbean enrollment data poses immense problems for explaining the spread of schooling in the world through reference to the forces of industrialization, nationalism and political independence, and the hegemonic manipulations of ruling classes (Miller 1992).
The point here is that the reform prescription currently in vogue by major donor agencies does not fit the realities of Commonwealth Caribbean education because the latter do not fit neatly into the education profile of "developing countries". Uncritical acceptance of donor assistance, predicated on their stereotypical diagnosis, could be both wasteful and costly to the subregion. While most educators and policy makers are mindful of this prospect, the dilemma is the scarcity of resources and the temptation to accept assistance on any terms. Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean has to be assessed on its own terms and not forced into convenient stereotypes developed elsewhere but do not fit.

Caribbean Education Defined in Its Own Terms

The micro and mini-states that constitute the English-speaking Caribbean provide basic education to their populations and have been doing this for some time. The education provided at the primary and secondary levels offer wide coverage of the population. This is not because governments are generous, but because the people place a high value on education. For the most part, the educational provision is below the demand and the level of participation. Accordingly, there are less school positions than children in school.

The reasons for the high level of participation and the high value of education relate more to the limited opportunities available for socioeconomic advancement in the general society than it does to any deep seated belief in the intrinsic value of education. But for whatever reason, both the state and private enterprise provide education that is readily consumed by the population.

The enduring features that mark Caribbean education, historically and currently, can be summarized briefly as follows:

- Broad-based primary and secondary education with very limited provision for tertiary education. While the degree to which this statement is true has varied with time, its essence persists. Even now when primary education is universal and secondary education is widely available, tertiary education is extremely limited. The tertiary education provision in the subregion can only accommodate five to six percent of the 18 to 24 years of age cohort. Prior to 1948, when the University of the West Indies was established, the only form of tertiary education available in the subregion was primary teacher training and theological education. Unlike Latin America and the British colonies of North America, universities were not established in the West Indian colonies.
The migration of young people in search of tertiary education abroad. Large numbers of Caribbean young people, unable to access tertiary education in their country or subregion, go abroad in search of such opportunities. Historically this trek was to Britain. In the past three or four decades it is largely to North America colleges and universities. On the one hand, it is facilitated by language since there are no such barriers to cross. On the other hand, it is also facilitated by the relatively large migrant Caribbean communities in the metropolitan centers by virtue of filial relationships and friendships. It is important to note that Simmons and Plaza (1990) found the Commonwealth Caribbean students in colleges and universities in North America had a very good record of successful completion of their courses compared with other groups of foreign students. Again this is no new feature of Caribbean education. Brathwaite (1971), in his study of Creole Jamaica society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, found that between 1770 and 1820, 229 Jamaican males had matriculated and studied at Oxford and Cambridge.

External examinations and internationally accepted credentials being non-negotiable outcomes of education. Commonwealth Caribbean education is driven by external examinations. This has been so for more than a century. This not only reflects its colonial history but also its external relationships and linkages. Because many people intend to use their education outside the subregion, any innovations or policies that suggest localization to the detriment of external recognition is strongly resisted. Accordingly, the schools in the region still perform the University of Cambridge Advanced level examinations. The Ordinary level has been replaced by the Caribbean Examinations Council, CXC, examinations but these are external examinations for which schools must prepare their students, and they maintain subregional standards.

Duality in provision and access. While the provision has always been broad, its quality has not been evenly distributed. The sections of the system that lead to external examinations and internationally recognized qualifications have always been small and restricted compared to the more accessible segments. While the quality provided in one section of the system has always been of international quality, the issue has always been who gets access to that section of the system. The issue in the Commonwealth Caribbean has not been so much getting into school, as to getting into what type of school. Macro analyses of the education system, which concentrates on numbers only, will always miss this very important point.
The strong involvement of the church in the provision of public education. Many of the public schools, financed by public revenue, are owned, and in many cases operated, by churches. The churches comply with Government policy and give access to children of all or no beliefs. While prayers are said daily in public schools, if by reason of conscience children do not wish to participate they can excuse themselves from such observances. But the continuous involvement of the church in education in almost all Commonwealth Caribbean countries has had an even more important impact. It has helped to maintain that cultural conservatism are the curriculum and education practices.

Caribbean education does not fit neatly into any of the prevailing stereotypes. The relatively low levels of provision for education and the limited quantity of tertiary education available locally resembles educational systems of several countries in the Third World. On the other hand, the universal coverage at primary level, mass or universal secondary education, low rates of drop-out and repetition, and high completion and enrollment of girls resemble systems of the First World. The central importance of external examination is characteristically British and standard in almost all Commonwealth countries. The high involvement of the church in the public system of education does not fit neatly into any of the standard categories. The fact that these educational systems are mature systems, that they have been around for over 150 years, is a feature shared with Latin America. This combination of features, which intersects with several stereotypes, gives the Caribbean its own character and personality and requires recognition in its own right.

Caribbean Education in Historical Context

While it is crucial to view Commonwealth Caribbean education in its own image, it is also important to understand it in a broader context. Probably the most insightful approach is to trace its historical development in relation to major trends in the global evolution of education institutions and systems. Because of the historical relationship of the Commonwealth Caribbean with Britain and the Anglophone world, it is only natural that this brief synopsis will be so biased in its focus and treatment.

The British began colonizing the New World in the early seventeenth century. They brought with them the concepts and paradigms that represented the state of the art of schooling and education at that time. From this starting point it is possible to identify four major eras in the evolution of Commonwealth Caribbean education which parallels, for different reasons, similar developments in the British Empire, the Commonwealth, and Anglophone World. These eras can be labeled as follows:
• Early Education: Laity, Piety, Family and Philanthropy
• The Denominational System with State Support
• The State System with Church Involvement
• The National System

Each of these will be discussed briefly.

**Early Education: Laity, Piety, Family and Philanthropy**

Just before Britain began to colonize the New World, Europe had been experiencing three important developments. The first was the gradual extension of education to the laity that had occurred mainly during the latter part of the Middle Ages. Second, was the Protestant Reformation that insisted that each individual was responsible before God for his/her own salvation and could interpret the Bible for themselves (Butts 1947). Third was the invention of the printing press and with it the increased availability of books at more affordable prices.

In Anglican England these developments translated into an approach to education that was premised on the following principles:

- The laity should be educated for reasons of piety—that is, at a minimum they should learn to read and understand the Bible and thereby be able to follow its precepts.

- Education was the responsibility of the family, particularly that of the head of the household. If families were unable to educate their members, then they should employ persons capable of providing the required teaching.

- With respect to poor families, or indigent children who had become wards of the community, the provision of education should be through church, community, or individual philanthropy. Elementary schools, therefore, were only provided for the poor and were provided through community or individual philanthropy.

In Calvinist Scotland a different tradition developed. While accepting the first premise, which was common to all Protestants, and permitting the second, it prescribed that education was a collective responsibility to be provided by the community. Accordingly it insisted on laws that would make it mandatory for towns to provide schools funded by taxes that were paid by the community (Anderson 1995). While it took decades for these two traditions to crystallize and become practice, in both England and Scotland they represent the ideas that the colonists brought with them to the New World. These were the cutting edge ideas about education at that time.
The New World colonists adopted the latest ideas on education by establishing themselves in their new situation. By such wholesale borrowing, the New World advanced to the education frontier without going through the stages that guided its evolution in Europe. The Puritans in New England, led by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, almost immediately adopted the Calvinist collectivist tradition. However, in the Middle and Southern American colonies and in the West Indian colonies, it was the Anglican tradition of family and philanthropy that prevailed (Cremin 1951).

One major difference between the American and West Indian colonies was the social composition of their societies. It was mainly composed of families that colonized North America bringing with them much of the infrastructure of community—the schools, churches, and small farms clustered conveniently near towns. In the West Indian colonies, it was mainly men who came without their families, and they were located mainly on estates. The family tradition of these West Indian colonies was, therefore, never strong. It was for this reason that the philanthropic aspect of the Anglican tradition was greatly reinforced by the nature of the society.

Those relatively few colonists, who came with families and could afford it, provided for the private education of their children or sent them back to Britain. Those who could not afford to do this, benefitted either from the charity of the church, through vestry schools, or from the philanthropy of individuals who, at death, bequeathed endowments for the establishment of schools. These schools were for poor white boys whose families could not afford to educate them. The Vestry schools or the Free schools, provided by endowment, were to provide elementary education to serve the purpose of piety as prescribed by Protestant theology. They were fashioned on similar institutions that were emerging all over Europe and particularly in Britain.

No education was provided for the slave population. Only in the last decade before emancipation was there some instruction aimed at literacy provided through Sunday Schools. As Beckles (1987) pointed out, slaves who taught themselves to read had to keep their accomplishments a secret. While some may have justified the lack of provision for the slaves by denying their human status, the fear was that education would be subversive to both slavery and the plantation system. Indeed, the educational landscape during this era in the West Indian colonies was but a mirror image of that in the Southern American colonies where slavery and the plantation dominated the social, economic, and cultural relations.

Caribbean historians have had great difficulty interpreting the educational developments of this period. Consequently, most histories of the
subregion begin with the institutions established after emancipation. The establishment of schools during the period of slave society is completely ignored. Where educational activity is acknowledged before emancipation, is often treated as an aberration. Yet this period is an important and organic part of the evolution of education in the subregion.

The relevance of the early history of Caribbean education to the reform at the end of the twentieth century is by no means farfetched and is easily established. Many of the endowed schools established in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are still operating today. Cumbermere, in Barbados, recently celebrated its 300th anniversary. Harrison and Lodge of Barbados, Wolmers, Ruseas, Titchfield, and Mannings of Jamaica are other schools of this genre. They are over 250 years old. Transformed in the nineteenth century into grammar schools, they are now the prestigious schools to which all sections of society seek to send their children.

The importance of these schools to understanding Commonwealth Caribbean education is not so much in the social influence of their graduates by virtue of the positions they hold in the various countries, although this should not be underestimated, but more importantly as symbols of the long history of schooling in the region and the resilience of its institutions to survive major social, political, cultural, economic, and educational changes.

Also, in addition to their own longevity, these schools have served as the model around which many similar schools were later fashioned. While these latter schools may not be as old as 250 to 300 years, histories of more than 100 years are no less impressive in contemporary society. The loyalties commanded by such schools in every Caribbean country cannot be overlooked or underestimated in any strategy for change.

The point being made here is that Commonwealth Caribbean education had its genesis in the educational ideas that prevailed in post-reformation Britain. The early colonists borrowed these institutional framework that was emerging then, and without shame, but rather with pride, implanted them in their new setting. This is not just past history because many of the schools so established have survived to the present. Moreover, they have spawned a whole category of schools that currently enjoy great prestige and fierce loyalty from all sections of society. These schools have not remained static. They have evolved over these centuries. They are no longer elementary schools serving poor white boys, but prestigious high schools educating boys and girls from all social strata. They are a part of the education landscape being reformed in the 1990s.
The Denominational System with State Support

It took more than a hundred and fifty years for the Calvinist tradition of collective responsibility of the community to supplant the Anglican tradition of family responsibility and philanthropy as the basis of providing education for the mass of the people. No doubt the success of establishing mass education by the Presbyterians in Scotland could not be ignored by the Anglicans in England. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, community responsibility, led by the church, had become the accepted mechanism for providing mass education.

It is also interesting to note that the absolutist monarchs of Central Europe had enlarged the concept of community responsibility to mean State responsibility, and had passed laws making elementary education compulsory: Prussia 1763 and Austria and Bohemia 1774 (Anderson 1995). In addition, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the collectivist tradition, pioneered in New England, began to be adopted in the other States of the Union in what was to become the public school system of America (Cremin 1951).

Given the developments in these marginal but ambitious countries, it is not surprising that Imperial England embarked on its own mission to spread schooling across the land. The Act to provide state support for the denominational system that came in 1833.

A companion measure to this act, and committing the same amount of resources, was the Negro Education Grant, which would provide support for the development of a mass system of education in the British West Indies following the proposed abolition of slavery in 1834.

The point to note here is that a mass system of elementary education, spearheaded by the churches and the Imperial Government, was inaugurated in England and the West Indian colonies at the same time, but for different reasons. The same education institutions, premised on the same principles, were created in two completely different settings. In England the socioeconomic imperative was to address some of the social implications of the industrial revolution. In the West, it was meeting the challenges of creating free societies following emancipation.

In England, education was being coopted to mitigate some of challenges of industrialization. In the Caribbean, it was being coopted to address the challenges of freedom of enslaved people and their incorporation as citizens of free societies. What this meant, however, was that West Indian education had been pushed to the frontiers of the evolution of schools, but for different reasons from Europe and North America.

One historical result is that there are villages, districts, and towns in the Caribbean that have had schools for as long as similar communities in
the industrialized world. Likewise there are teachers colleges that have comparable records in training teachers since they came into being at the same time that these institutions were invented.

The educational innovations of the 1830s added a new component to the educational landscape that had existed to that point. In addition to endowed and free schools, financed mainly by philanthropy, elementary schools and teachers colleges were added and financed by the churches and student fees. These two systems served different segments of the society. The first schooled the children of the middle strata of the society that had been fashioned in slavery. The second schooled the children of the ex-slaves.

The legacy of post-emancipation education that remains as enduring features in contemporary Commonwealth Caribbean education can be listed as follows:

- A broad based and widespread system of mass primary education.
- Teachers’ and theological colleges training native members of these professions.
- Duality in the educational provision, in the cleavages that are still apparent between the system of mass primary education, and the schools arising from the endowed tradition.
- The strong involvement of the church as a provider and partner in education.

The State System with Church Involvement

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Britain and France, the superpowers of that era, fully embraced the educational outlook that has been pioneered by the developing countries of those times: Germany, Austria, the United States, Australia and Canada. The view was that mass education was the responsibility of the State. Even then, England did not move to a full State system. The denominational system with State assistance was transformed into the State system with church involvement by the reforms of the 1870s. The essence of the shift was really in the relative position of the two partners. In the Denominational system with State assistance, the churches were the major partners and the State the minor player. In the State system with church involvement, the positions were reversed. The other major difference was that the State now mandated free and compulsory elementary education.

Similar reforms were enacted within the West Indian colonies within a decade. However, in extending these reforms to the West Indian colonies, the Imperial Government assumed a policy role that it had never
taken before. First, it decreed that education should serve the interest of the sugar industry. Second, it capped education expenditure to no more than 10% of public expenditure. Both of these measures fundamentally altered the course of Caribbean education at the turn of the century. The former shifted the content of education in a direction that the Black population had stoutly resisted. The latter halted the expansion of the schools system in its trajectory to cover all school-aged children.

By the end of the nineteenth century British Imperialism had come to definite conclusions concerning the treatment of the “darker races” of the Empire and their place in the scheme of things. As far as the West Indian colonies and the mass of their population were concerned, their role was to produce primary raw material for the manufacturers in the metropole. The mission of the education system was to serve economies within the framework of the Imperial prerogative. Although wealth was being created by industrialization, the West Indian colonies were to remain agricultural outposts of the Empire.

An ancillary feature of these reforms was the encouragement given to the education of girls and women. By the end of the nineteenth century, black male teachers and clergymen were becoming thorns in the sides of both the churches and the Colonial State. They began to form teachers’ unions and the native clergymen began challenging the policies and practices of the Missionary Societies. The Colonial officials became concerned about the prospects of the emergence of militant black educated leadership in these societies. At the same time, the Planters had been arguing that women should replace men as teachers in order to boost the supply of agricultural laborers depleted by migration to Central America. In addition, having taken over the Church System, the Colonial bureaucrats wanted to break to hold of the churches on the school system, held in place largely through Ministers acting as managers and teachers acting as catechists. For all of these reasons, great encouragement was given to, and provisions made for, expanding education of girls and women, including access to teacher education and teaching jobs (Miller 1994).

The essence of the Denominational system of education with State support was that the churches provided, financed, and managed the education system with some financial support and monitoring of quality by the State. The shift to the State system with Church involvement was that the former would set policy, provide, finance, and maintain quality while the latter would manage the day to day operation of schools. The continued involvement of the church was necessary because they owned most of the schools. The State was setting policies for and financing church schools. Only where there were no church schools, or where churches agreed to close their schools, would the State build and operate schools on its own.
behalf. This was the arrangement for schooling with which the Commonwealth Caribbean countries ended the nineteenth and entered the twentieth century.

This change in governance and financing of the school system fundamentally altered the churches’ relationship with the mass of the people. In the Denominational System, the churches and the Imperial State were agents of the liberation of the disadvantaged. In the State system both had become part of the mechanism of oppression. The churches and the Imperial State had changed sides and had finally become agents of Planter interests. What was to follow was decades of regression and stagnation in Caribbean education.

The enduring legacy of the reforms of the 1890s can be listed and summarized as follows:

- The state/church partnership in the delivery of public education. This arrangement continues with its fundamentals virtually unchanged in Belize, St. Lucia, Grenada, and, to a lesser extent, St. Vincent and Dominica.

- Free elementary education provided by the State. While private education has been part of the educational landscape, it has been a matter of choice and not necessity. The debate of privatization and cost recovery, as applied to primary, and to a lesser extent secondary education, confronts a long held view that the provision of basic education is the responsibility of the State to its citizens.

- Duality in public educational provision. This is noted in all Commonwealth Caribbean countries and is not of recent vintage. It is not the result of structural adjustment. The duality is long standing and has deep social and historical roots. The cleavages are not simply inequities in the education provision, but structural factors embedded in the social and economic framework of the societies.

- Strong provision for and involvement of girls and women in the education system. For reasons that had little to do with the ethical issues related to gender equality, Commonwealth Caribbean countries have been making deliberate and strong moves toward gender equality for the last hundred years.

- Oscillation between periods of dynamic development and regression and stagnation. Hope and despair, progress and retrenchment, development and disillusionment have replaced each other repeatedly.
The State System of Education

The move to political independence and national sovereignty could be said to have started in the post-war years although countries did not become independent until the 1960s. In particular, the developments of the 1950s anticipated and prepared for this new reality. This era could be appropriately labeled the age of nationalism in which the State ascended to being practically the only player in public education. In many countries the churches retreated to private education in order to fill gaps in the public provision.

Again it must be noted that the Commonwealth Caribbean was not entering an era cut off from the rest of the world. Indeed, this was the era of reconstruction and development following World War II. The significance of sovereignty goes beyond the independence of the individual countries. It marks, in fact, the demise of the British Empire and with it major realignment in geopolitics. That the United States should emerge as one of the new superpowers was a matter of enormous proportions to the Commonwealth Caribbean by virtue of both geography and language. Not only did the fulcrum of power shift, but also the cultural capital of the Anglophone world.

Chapters 3 to 8 describe and discuss in detail the course of educational reform during this era in Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and the Leeward and Windward Islands. Again, without attempting to anticipate or preempt those accounts, it is necessary to make a few pertinent observations with respect to the overall context of the evolution of education in the subregion during this era.

- The era of State ascendancy in education has brought the greatest investment, growth, expansion, and development in the history of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Primary education became universal, secondary education was expanded to include the majority if not all adolescents, tertiary education was expanded and extended, and early children education became almost universal. Analyses that underestimate, undervalue or downplay these achievements will no doubt lead to faulty prescriptions.

- Not all countries took the same directions during this era. Belize and St. Lucia have continued, to the present, the Church/State system of education that was fashioned at the end of the nineteenth century. To a lesser degree, this is also true of Grenada, St. Vincent, and Dominica. Schools at the primary and secondary levels are run by the various denominations while policy is made and finances provided by the State. The reasons why these systems never made
the transition to full State system is beyond the scope of this monograph. It is important to note these differences.

- In the countries where the State overpowered the churches, they retreated to the private system and became the major providers. Mainly the churches' private efforts were focused on gaps or deficiencies in the public provision. In some countries, for example Jamaica, the church owns most of both the public and private schools although its role in the public system is minimized.

Concluding Comments

In this brief historical synopsis attempting to set educational reform in the English-speaking Caribbean in some context, several points have been made that need to be highlighted explicitly. This is important because without some appreciation of the big picture, many of the details will not be properly and appropriately interpreted. No attempt will be made here to elaborate the observations made, just to list them.

- For better or for worse, Commonwealth Caribbean education, since its inauguration in the seventeenth century, has been part of the Western world view and the course of evolution of education in that view. Without going through the stages of evolution in Europe, Commonwealth Caribbean education was established on the very frontiers of Western education and has remained open to all the major shifts and changes in the Western world. The point of departure has been that unlike Europe and North America, the majority of the peoples of the Commonwealth Caribbean are neither Europeans or of European ancestry.

While the impact of the educational traditions of Africa, China, India, and the Mediterranean on Commonwealth Caribbean education has been minimal, the presence of such large numbers of non-Europeans in a Western system of education has created its own cultural dynamics including several contradictions. For example, the explanation of why these peoples have been so readily and consistently bought into the Western educational tradition rests mainly in their successful use of education as a means of mastery of the dominant culture in order renegotiate their place in society.

- The inauguration of the educational system and its reform since then has been influenced by major Western ideas about the individual and the nature of society. The major ideas that underpinned the inauguration of the system came out of the Protestant Reformation. The essence of the idea is centered around piety and individual responsibility. The consequential commitment to philanthropy, which was developed in the Anglican version of the Reformation,
created the endowments that founded the schools. Interestingly, when the denominational system was established in the 1830s, the major ideas were those of humanism and humanitarian causes. The reforms of the 1890s rested on notions concerning the Imperial State and its subject peoples in the colonies as well as whose interests they should serve. The reforms of the 1950s and 1960s were predicated on notions of the Nation-State and nationalism and the redefinition of identity and society along these lines.

- The inauguration of education and its reforms have all left enduring institutions within the educational system. The philanthropy of the seventeenth century still lives in many of the schools established then, as well as in other institutions whose creation were modeled in that mold. Church schools are still prominent elements in the public system of education although the role of the church has been curtailed and minimized in some countries. Even where Governments have taken over the church schools, the schools themselves remain part of the system. The State in the nationalist era has made its own indelible mark, however, as systems are reformed in this new wave of the 1990s.

- Time frames seem to be shortening. The era of philanthropy and piety lasted nearly two hundred years. The Denominational system survived for about 70 years. The State/Church system lasted approximately 50 years. The State system is just about 40 years old at the most. This seems to reflect the more rapid pace of change in society and may even suggest that future reforms could have a shorter “life span”. As these time spans have shortened, what has become possible is the survival of some of the reformers who to witness dismantlement or substantial disfigurement of their creation. The implications of this are probably still to be assessed. Given the prospect of even shortened life spans for future reforms, the full implications will become more evident.

- In its inauguration in the Commonwealth Caribbean, education was the instrument of religious ends. In its reforms following emancipation it served as the goal of social reconstruction in creating free societies. As such, it was the means to social ends. In the mid-twentieth century the Nation-State rested control from the Imperial state and used education for its own political ends.

What is demonstrated here is the robust nature and resilience of the institution of schooling to serve as the means of quite different ends. While schooling and education can be servant to widely varied ends, and usually delivers some aspects of the ends, the time frame involved is much longer than is commonly expected. The malleable nature of school-
ing is the means, but its long gestation requirements to effect ends makes it problematic to assessment the outcomes of recent and current reforms.

A major issue to be determined is what outcome education and schooling is likely to have at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first. Alfred North Whitehead makes the point, in his book of the philosophy on science entitled *Conceptual Activity*, that if the future course of a system of electrons, or any nuclear particles, are to be predicted, at least two things must be known about the system: its previous history and the dynamic forces at work at the present time. In this Chapter and the next we have tried to sketch the previous history of Commonwealth Caribbean education in broad terms. Chapters 3 to 8 describes the dynamic forces currently at work and connects them with previous history. Hopefully, in Chapter 9 we can speak to the future directions in terms of the reforms being predicated in the 1990s.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


