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ENGENDERING PEDAGOGY IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM: Looking Back to Look Forward

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The idea for this paper arose out of the need for a new vision for secondary English teaching and an evolving view of literacy in the Anglophone Caribbean. It also came into being because of a growing lack of agreement about what is needed for teachers of English to be effective in their practice. The consensus, in the Anglophone Caribbean, has always been that English, as a subject, matters. Educators, students, parents, researchers, examiners, policymakers, and businesspeople agree that the subject English is a prerequisite for social, personal, and professional advancement. There is little argument, therefore, about the importance of subject English and its purposes and values in the curriculum. But the question of how English should be taught, who should teach it, and who decides, has been contentious. This paper traces a series of overlapping shifts in pedagogical conception and practice that have triggered for secondary teachers of English new and different ways of understanding the subject they teach. It aims at advancing two primary purposes: (1): understanding the implications of the emerging discourse for Secondary English Teaching; (2) facilitating the adjustment required for a different conception of English Teaching as well as the preparation of English Teachers.

Keywords: Secondary English Classrooms, Anglophone Caribbean, English Teachers, English Teaching, English Pedagogy

Introduction

> "On a daily basis, teachers confront complex decisions that rely on many different kinds of knowledge and judgement…" (Bransford and Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 2).

A casual search, as a prospective student of English, to validate whether one is making the right subject or discipline choice can quickly lead to a realization of how under-marketized the study of English has become. Yet, there are myriad expectations situated in this one discipline, some of which are worth referencing here:

- To acquire tools that will never lose value, such as the ability to read analytically and write well
- To navigate a world of global English in order to thrive in the complex multinational, transcultural world and to think about literature in English in multilingual and global contexts
- To develop the ability to place literary texts in their wider intellectual and historical contexts

- To learn, for the distinct pleasure of reading, the satisfaction and surprises of the well-wrought sentence, the ingenious plot and poetic effect
- To read text and diagram its functions
- To be taught by eminent writers and thinkers

There are also three important aspects which characterise the perspectives above:

- They span North America, United Kingdom and the Caribbean
- They reflect students' voices
- They point to expectations and experiences of pedagogical engagement

The knowledge and experience expectations of students are many and require particular and different kinds of content and pedagogical knowledge and judgement. Teaching requires that teachers come to think about (and understand) instruction in ways quite different from what they have learned from their own experiences as students (Hammerless et al., 2005, p.35).

Alternatively, often when asked what English is, the characteristics many English educators ascribe to the discipline as distinctive are, as expected, varied. These characteristics often include a focus on meaning and critical engagement, underscored by thematic values derived from textual engagement. In some instances, responses focus not on the "what" of English but rather on the "how" – the methods and activities used by those who teach the subject. But how does one's defining of English relate to English teaching? Can the way one feels about the "what" of a discipline correlate with the "how" as it relates to instruction in that discipline?

In the Anglophone Caribbean generally, and within the Eastern Caribbean in particular, the dominant conversation surrounding English teaching regards English as an autonomous, generic and, by extension, neutral entity or skill set – the ability to read and write. Consequently, the perception is that English teaching requires no special ability and, therefore, anyone can teach English. This simplified perception that English is about what we speak or how to read and write, and therefore anyone can teach it, is part of the wider problem. The recent research that has emerged in the Anglophone Caribbean, especially as it relates to language teaching, has indeed refuted this simplification of English teaching (Bryan 2010; James, 2003; Milson-Whyte, 2015; Warrican, et al., 2019; Worrell, 2004). Also, the idea that such a perception is pervasive is also something that has contributed to the problem. Consequently, recognising the invalidity of this notion – that anyone can teach English – is important.

As an English teacher educator, my point in looking back at these experiences and perspectives is, on the one hand, to situate secondary English teaching within the tradition of teaching from which it emanates and, on the other hand, to juxtapose this perspective to the current expectation and context which English teaching necessitates. As such, this paper traces a series of overlapping shifts in the pedagogical conception that has triggered, for secondary teachers of English, new and different ways of understanding and instruction in the subject they teach. It unpacks how this understanding creates and fashions the pedagogy of English teachers at the secondary level. In addition to situating secondary English teaching, the paper advances the argument that a more thorough and encompassing discourse and approach should centre on the demonstration of the complexity of English teaching in the secondary classroom. In so doing, it aims to further two primary purposes: (1) to understand the ongoing tensions between traditional and transmitted paradigms spawned by a colonial legacy and progressive movements; (2) to recognise the pedagogical adjustments in English teaching engendered by the Caribbean Examinations Council's (CXC) Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) syllabus and examination and the wider implications these have for English teachers regarding the knowledge foundations of their professional practice.

Inevitably, how English teaching is arranged and structured is just as important as how it is conceptualised as a discipline. It is not an ad hoc discipline. Rather, given the diverse composition of students in English classrooms, teaching subject English requires particular paradigms of practice which make clear what students should be able to do and understand as a result of their exposure to pedagogy in the discipline. Instruction should lead to and accomplish some aspect of learning. Brass & Webb (2015) believe that the pedagogical and political implications of a rapidly changing world with its attendant cultural and linguistic diversity urge a more intentional and planned approach to English teaching. They point to issues such as narrowing of the school curriculum and pedagogy and the de-skilling of teachers and teacher educators as external variables which can get in the way of this purposeful approach. This is an observation which correlates with the premise that English and English educators have always been in a state of transition.

Within the Anglophone Caribbean, there is little argument about the importance of subject English and its core purposes and values in the curriculum (Baugh, 2020; Bryan et al., 2013; James, 2003; Pollard, 2020 & 2013; Ramsay, 2008; Seunarinesingh, 2002; Wade, 1999).

But, the question of what should be taught, how it should be taught, who should teach it and who decides has been a contested issue.

My focus in this article on "engendering" English teaching in secondary classrooms rests on some of the contested issues that have plagued English teaching in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Indeed, educators, for the most part, know the debates that drive English as a subject and fuel the research that helps students learn better within the discipline. But they should also understand the broader historical development of English teaching at the secondary level through different lens.

The study of English and its attendant sub-disciplines has always had significant turning points. The significance of those watershed "moments" is a matter that has provoked much consideration and discourse. They signal that English is certainly a discipline in the process of perpetual change. This is change that prompts the need for a re-visioning not just of English as a subject and its content, but also of its attendant pedagogy and its knowledge base, the underlying experiences, knowledge, understandings, and assumptions, for those privileged with the task to teach it.

Quality, knowledge and pedagogy of English Teachers

Within and without the Anglophone Caribbean, there have been those who have pointed to the value of re-framing and re-positioning our understanding not only of what *is* English but also what it *means*, as a teacher, to teach English. Britzman (1991) observes that:

> Learning to teach is not a mere matter of applying decontextualized skills or of mirroring predetermined images; it is a time when one's past, present, and future are set in dynamic tension. Learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always in the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become. (Britzman, 1991, p. 8)

Teacher quality, therefore, is an important education characteristic that relates to instructional leadership and knowledge in English education. It influences how teachers promote quality learning in others.

Whether quality relates to "highly qualified" or "certified with content knowledge" (Wilcox, 2007), distinctions of quality are earned and developed with long term experience. In addition, being "certified"' or "endowed" with content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, whether through qualification or experience, is a salient characteristic of all teachers (Day, 2017). However, defining what the different kinds of knowledge mean, should look like, or how they are acquired is challenging and complex. Shulman (1986) conceptualizes teacher knowledge as both (1) content (what is known) and (2)

pedagogical (how what is known is used). In other words, content and pedagogy embody what teachers should know and be able to do. Content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) also distinguish between the "what" and "how" of teachers' knowledge and practice. Kunter et al. (2013) deem the premise of Shulman's distinction of content knowledge as "cognitive perspectives" of what teachers know, and of pedagogical content knowledge as given to "situated perspectives" on teachers' classroom practices.

Grossman (2005), in her investigation into the influence of subject-specific knowledge in the development of pedagogical content, describes the differences in teachers' knowledge as linked to the purposes for teaching secondary English, curricular knowledge, and knowledge of student understanding. Grossman's study points to the knowledge base of teaching, particularly to the conceptualisation of pedagogical content knowledge. Rethinking the subject matter of a discipline from a pedagogical perspective is an important aspect in the paradigm of English teaching. It is a process of pedagogical thought engendered through intentional planning. As Parr (2004) and Yandell (2017) observe, in the field of English teaching, research and practice over recent decades have increasingly concentrated on knowledge and pedagogy. This signals that English teaching is not static; it is dynamic.

Much research in the field of English and English Teacher Education acknowledges the need for ongoing discourse that connects the things we already know about English and English educators. Research provides multi-level insights and broadens the scope of our thinking and understanding in a way that situates the discipline pedagogically (Doeke & Locke, 2004; James, 2003; Kelly, Luke & Green, 2008; Pasternak & Scott, 2007, Parr & Bellus, 2013; Phelan, 2005; Robinson, 2015; Thomas, 2019; Yandell, 2017). Yet, consensus about what English is and what teachers need in order to be effective and quality teachers is difficult to achieve and even more challenging to sustain.

Situating this subject discipline within a historical context is therefore a necessary brief step towards reviewing what English teachers already do and have been doing when they teach. English teaching, and more specifically the teaching of literature, is predicated on contexts – place, history, language and culture. Having a knowledge of and an interest in that context is also part of what it means to be a teacher of English, to participate both in its contextual and pedagogical traditions and the prospects and promise it springs. For although the influence of English education on English teaching is at times difficult

to know with certainty, its growth and promise are surely not (Sperling & Di Pardo, 2008).

History, Colonial Legacy and English Teaching

Teachers of English work within a particular history – a sort of narrative with both horizontal (wide) and vertical (deep) movements. The horizontal or content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) moves across "what" is known and needs to be taught and understood in a linear fashion. This knowledge is situated in a prescribed curriculum about "what" is to be "covered". As a secondary English student, I enjoyed the lure of the culture and romance of literature. This led me to further studies in English and English Education en route to becoming an English teacher and eventually an English teacher educator. Back then, there were few challenges to my perceptions and perspectives about English as a discipline. Reading was a process of understanding the intended meaning of the author, with some appreciation of the artistic nature of the work being read. Writing was a response, in the form of an essay, to a prompt or question given by the teacher. The approach to teaching text was not contested or multi-dimensional. The teacher directed the learning. Knowledge was transmitted through the text – mainly a book. There was no internet or Google. Test results signified understanding and learning. Of course, the teaching of English and any other subject has always been a challenging endeavour. Still, it was a simpler time.

A look at some of the historical processes which have produced the current moment in English teaching brings to the fore aspects of colonial education. Some of the central ideologies of English teaching have their origins in the cultural construct of colonialism. This construct of colonialism was characterised as a method to educate, and the underlying motive and intended outcome of this type of education was religious. It was explained as a "benevolent act" intended to moralise and create appreciation. It did so by engendering colonial constructs of self and other. Alexander (2000) proffered that:

> No education policy … can be properly understood except by reference to the web of inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views which made one country, one region or one group distinct from each other (p. 5).

Colonial philosophy of education grounded instruction in the social context, so that education was both cultural and historical. Hence, English teaching – indeed education – in the former British colonies of the Caribbean must be understood against the background of the region's predominantly colonial history, linguistic context and post-independence ties with England. Milson-Whyte (2015) sees the

Caribbean region as "an archetypal contact zone that was balkanised through European expansion into British, Danish, Dutch, French and Spanish West Indies" (p. 4). This "interactive" nature of "contact", Milson-Whyte explains, dates back to the fifteenth century and influenced educational and language patterns. The idea of contact zones is a historical concept that Pratt (1991) relates to classrooms, describing contact zones as social spaces where different cultures interact regardless of power relations.

As English emerged as an educational subject, its importance became more recognised. The focus of English teaching moved towards Literature teaching. In this regard, it was deemed "responsible" for shaping character by not only serving as a model of "civilised" being to others, but also worked upon them in colonial schools as "mask of conquest". As Viswanathan (1989) observes:

> the genius of literature …clearly sees … that she has found the men who are created to extend her empire to the ends of the earth, and give her throne a stability that will be lasting as the sun (p. 166).

As a great advocate of the educational value of literature, Matthew Arnold, the English poet and cultural critic, championed the utility of English for the education of the disadvantaged and its value in shaping the "soul and character" (1908, p. 60). Even with this advocacy, from the then inspector of schools who supported the concept of state-regulated secondary education, English literature struggled to find a place as an academic discipline in the "major" universities at the time. So, while it may not be as old as other subject disciplines (e.g., Latin) of the time, English teaching dating back to the English Education Act of 1835 was meant not only to parallel Latin, but was also thought of as shaping a people's character. In the Anglophone Caribbean, the establishment of English as a secondary school subject was also intended to reflect an Arnoldian commitment to fostering cultural unity and countering new-world intellectual mediocrity. In a way, English was used to disseminate moralistic and religious values and thereby make the school and education a significant bastion of instructional colonialism.

The colonial reality of education and English teaching in Anglophone Caribbean secondary classrooms is also linked to a complex language situation. Studies about language in the Anglophone Caribbean and its implications for Caribbean education have focussed on classroom practice as it relates to Language Arts teaching. Many Caribbean scholars of English education have explored the importance of teachers' awareness of and attitudes to the language situation in the Anglophone Caribbean language and how

this influenced their own use of language and their pedagogy (Bryan, 2010; Bryan & Burnette, 2006; Hodge, 2011; Milson-Whyte, 2015; Pollard, 1983; Simmons-McDonald, 2006; Taylor, 2007). The notion here is that how English as a discipline is conceptualised influences how it is taught and who is deemed appropriate to teach it. An important focus of the scholarship emerging from this research was also the re-framing of English in the secondary classroom as English Language Arts as well as the value of pedagogy in this new paradigm of developing students' comprehension of English expression.

In this regard, English and the study and teaching of it were also concerned with language and the contextual identity associated with it. But while it is now recognised and accepted that a Creole variety is the first language (L1) of most Anglophone Caribbean people, colonial schooling and education required and validated Standard English as the "educated and preferred" language. English teaching encapsulated both language and literature. However, there was much tension and many contradictions associated with the language component of English teaching as evidenced in the research on language and education in the region (Allsopp, 1979; Bogle, 1997; Bryan, 1998; Craig, 1971; Pollard, 1978; 1983; 1998; Roberts, 2007; Simmons-McDonald, 2006; Thompson, 1984). Consequently, English teaching in this linguistic situation has been re-framed, adapted and updated (Lambert, 2010). An attendant implication of this reframing is that those who may not have the pedagogical inclination or know how or even the content knowledge to teach in the discipline are ascribed the responsibility for English teaching. An important reality of English classrooms across the Anglophone Caribbean is that the Creole variety of the first language (l1) of most students interacts with the "validated Standard English" of the education system and, consequently, this gives rise to variations regarding accepted approaches to language teaching. At times, this required teachers be intentional and deliberate in their recognition, in the English classrooms, of students' home language and the bi-dialectal nature of the first language of most Anglophone Caribbean people (Jules & Belgrave, 2020; Warrican, et al., 2019). A wider implication of the language context underpinning English teaching, therefore, is the standardised English curriculum guiding the English examination which English teachers must grapple with alongside the language and experience which their students bring to the classroom.

The inextricable link between literature, language, literacy and culture and the ongoing dialectic present for teachers of English challenges regarding the *what* and the *how* of their pedagogy. Consequently, there is value in any exploration of the importance of English teachers' awareness of and attitudes to the Anglophone Caribbean language situation and how this influences their own use of

English teaching pedagogy. Hymes (1972) notes that "only by examining the relationship from the side of contexts can we see an essential part of what is going on when [English] is taught" (p. xix). As such, the instructional choices teachers make also have an impact on students' development in secondary English classrooms. Indeed, whether it is explicit or not, teachers of English, and all teachers for that matter, approach instruction – their practice –informed by a philosophy of teaching. This philosophy determines how we view our students, structure our classrooms, or choose instructional materials. This pedagogical viewpoint will also affect what students in the English classroom take away from the transaction of teaching.

Most instructional decisions made by English teachers at the secondary level also focus on assessment and, more specifically, examinations. While examinations are a necessary component of instruction – as an assessment tool – what they do, at the same time, is signal to students what knowledge is important or deemed necessary and worthy of knowing. That knowing often relates mainly to what will appear on the examination. In a sense, therefore, from the moment students begin English at the secondary level, they begin the journey towards examination and the knowledge and understanding required to pass and achieve. But English teaching is also about transfer and meaning, not simply acquisition of knowledge. This is also part of English teachers' beliefs (Baker & Down, 2020; Grossman, 2005; Robinson 2015). And this contestation is at the core of English pedagogy, the dichotomy between a teaching philosophy that English is for life and a pedagogy that focuses on academic achievement.

Some of the aims and consequent knowledge guiding English teaching/education included *"to know ourselves and the world"*. Then, Literature characterised English teaching and was deemed to contain the materials which sufficed for *"making us know ourselves and the world"*. Canonical British and American literatures were the mainstays of many English education curricula and programmes. Students were introduced to all the "great works" through a survey of subsidiary lessons: – drama, prose and poetry – the novel in different forms. These lessons shaped English instruction as mainly reading. Reading the text – drama, prose or poetry – was then a process of understanding the author's intended meaning and appreciating the artistic nature of the work. The interpretive nature of the works by great critics scaffolded teachers' textual engagement with students. This approach told students what they were reading and guided the interpretations they should take away from what was read. The idea that meanings might

be discourse – dependent, contested, or tied up in the multiple identities of individual students was not part of this process.

Subsequent to this period, many countries in the Anglophone Caribbean had begun to enter their own postcolonial state of nationhood – statehood and independence – and with it came a push towards, "Literatures in English", with a broadened focus, as opposed to "English Literature" – the literature of England. Ledent (2007) links the genesis and subsequent emergence of "literature in English" from the Anglophone Caribbean to the arrival in the United Kingdom of the Empire Windrush in June 1948. Stewart (2020) writes:

> this was the start of a large exodus of post-war Caribbean people who settled in Britain and among whom were a number of writers and artists. From this group came an outpouring of creativity. They were prolific in the writing about their experiences in the country of their former colonizers as well as of their Caribbean home. (p. xi)

This "literatures in English" writing spawned a novel approach to English teaching that now explored and interrogated cultural concepts and messages, as well as the language used to communicate these ideas. Down and Baker (2020, p. 13) note that in this regard:

> There are two important strands highlighted in this teaching and learning of literature. On the one hand is teacher recognition of students' capabilities and the landscape they will travel through literature. On the other hand, is the teachers' knowledge of what is required, the "lenses" needed for such a journey. They garner this knowledge more from their life experiences than from texts and such knowledge provided the key to unlocking the literary work.

Down and Baker here provoke and describe perspectives of a new kind of pedagogy engendered in English. It was no longer confined to a specific geographic region or limited to instructional experiences related to its educational mission and an enduring historical faith in literature's unconscious powers. The colonial legacy as a pedagogical construct in English teaching evoked ways of seeing and knowing in a civilising missionary approach to engaging texts. In the Anglophone Caribbean, to recognise this history in respect of English teaching is to expand the scope and purpose of education and English teaching as something that will need to be revised and its place determined. A community shaping its education to suit its own needs is not new. As Arnold (1882) long observed:

> If the usual education handed down to [a community] from the past does not suit it, it will certainly before long drop this and try another…The question is whether the studies which were long

> supposed to be the best for all of us are practically the best now, whether others are not better. (p. 21)

This focus on the historical and cultural context points not only to what obtained in English teaching in the past but is also instructive in understanding what shapes secondary English teaching in this era. The literary classics and canonical texts which exemplified English, and consequently English teaching, also captured how literature and its "literary greatness" were readily considered to be what today is still seen as an essential component of English and secondary English teaching.

Given the primary focus on content in English at the secondary level, many have characterised English teaching in this domain as monologic, teacher-led recitation (Bryan, 2010; Clarke, 2011; Nystrand, 1997; Skerrett, 2011; Warrican, 2012). Additionally, students in a secondary context, mainly adolescents, and as in all levels of schooling, require high levels of literacy skills – writing, reading, thinking, analysing – in order to access and interact with classroom pedagogy (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Ganoran, 2003). English teachers in their instructional response must be cognisant of the many variants in this context. For example, the way in which, in their professional practice, teachers address the needs of the students in their classroom as well as the tensions posed by mandated assessment, creates certain challenges regarding the need to be responsive to the language and culture of students as they are taught English. For the teacher who must respond instructionally to these needs, context is therefore key.

Teacher education in the Caribbean – inclusive of English teaching – mirrored colonial education, in a way that reflected the practice of societal and historical imperatives. The actions that shaped teachers' instruction had to do with, on the one hand, conformity and necessity and, on the other hand, adjustment to societal imparity. And there remains a tendency to focus on ethical and moral issues as a civic responsibility of the teacher. But while the thematic, cultural, historical and critical value of literary works lingers, the civilising mission of this discipline's pedagogical origins continues to influence aspects of practice in the English classroom. The more things change, they more they remain the same.

Progressive Movements

The progressive movement was a major challenging and radical force in education in the 20th century. It looked forward. With this movement, great literary works were placed on the periphery of

English teaching, and pedagogy became student-focused. The experience of the students and what they brought to the text became central. And literature and English teaching began to focus on exploration. Louise Rosenblatt's Literature as exploration was ground-breaking in that it triggered a shifting of pedagogy from locating meaning within the text to one of a transactional exchange between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt's research transferred the focus of English teaching from exposing students to the meaning of great works to developing the students' own experiences with, and responses to, literature. It was a recognition of individual experience and expression. In this paradigm of English teaching, each student's experience is worth nurturing, facilitating and encouraging. This new iteration of English teaching was aimed at equipping students with "tools and the knowledge necessary for a scientifically objective, critical appraisal of accepted opinion" (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 212). The progressive movement provoked change in English content and English teaching. It forced the discipline to evolve.

An early observation regarding English teaching related to the matter of access. In her analysis of the changes in secondary English in the Caribbean, Drayton (1990) notes that "…the evolution of Caribbean education systems has followed a path of progressive expansion of access to increasingly higher levels of education from the advent of public education…to the post-colonial era…" (p. 210). Who was able to access English as a subject was an integral aspect of the culture and politics of education. Additionally, schools described as low achieving did not and, to a certain extent, still do not offer literature as a component of subject English. Even when literature appeared on the curriculum of these schools, it was available only up to third form, as students within the academic context of "low achieving" schools were considered poor readers and therefore unable to engage with the texts which constituted the literature component of English teaching. A look into classrooms across the Anglophone Caribbean, and informal chats with teachers, will confirm that English teachers and English pedagogy continue to struggle with questions of inclusion and exclusion – both of curriculum materials and as it relates to students of differing abilities – in the effort to meet the diverse needs of students in English classrooms. Pai et al. (2006) note that teachers' understanding of the culture of their school and the ethos they and their students generate within the teaching and learning context can greatly enhance pedagogy and teacher effectiveness.

In English teaching, the effort to bring students' experiences to the fore and value their perspective within the classroom in a sense also shifted the English teacher somewhat from the sage on the stage domain. It would begin to require of teachers of English a new perspective of their classroom pedagogy – a focus on the students'

engagement with the text and language of literature in a way that now equipped them with the skills that would shape the direction of classroom discourse. This pedagogical shift challenged teachers to release the reins, placing emphasis on students developing their own voice as readers and writers. Knowledge is no longer transmitted by an expert. Rather, students are invited to consider the transactional nature of reading as they negotiate particular meanings in texts. Besides student engagement and articulation of thought, the pedagogy engendered through this new form of classroom exchange generates and emphasises collaboration. In challenging ideas and thinking with the text as common space, meaning emerges.

This movement now was characterised by pedagogical approaches such as reader-response and whole language, where what the reader, not necessarily the teacher, brings to the text becomes important as a takeaway. The teacher of English in this context enables, through instruction, an understanding of language and its power – indirect and direct – to contribute to meaning and understanding.

This pathway of practice moves English teaching pedagogy beyond the teacher. Meaning and significance of the novel, the play, the poem – whatever the genre of the text – transcend the teacher. Students are empowered to trust and communicate their sense of the text as an outcome of the transaction between reader and text. A pedagogy emerges which, as Dewey (1916, p. 84) notes, transfigures for students – and teacher – "a variety of shared undertakings and experiences" through which they are better able to engage the world through English. Naturally, such practices push against traditional methods and understanding of secondary English teaching. Writing is made complete through stages; process leads to product. Assessment can be multi-purpose and authentic, not just a summative test; and, central still to this dialectic dichotomy – of transmission and transaction – is the question of the purpose and value of English as a subject in secondary school.

Standards, Syllabi and Examination

Since The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) came into being, in most of the Anglophone Caribbean, secondary English has been shaped by the examination required at the end of schooling. In fact, teachers of English within this context have often looked at the CXC's Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) syllabus as a curriculum guide (Robinson, 2015). This examination/assessment positioning of secondary English teaching, a new iteration of the traditional transmitted paradigm, has now expanded the discursive

boundaries of secondary English teaching in most countries of the Anglophone Caribbean.

Developing knowledge as a teacher requires knowledge of what should be developed. This is especially true for the teacher of English. The ongoing tension between the traditional transmitted paradigm and other versions of English teaching remains. Whether teachers of English support, resist or accept the new iterations of English teaching spawned by the CSEC syllabus, they should do so on the basis of the knowledge that lies at the foundations of their professional practice. While knowledge is obviously invested in each new curriculum and syllabus which guide the preparation of students for the English examinations, it is also important to recognise that teachers' knowledge is and should be greater than that which is reflected in any curriculum document.

Of significance, too, is the fact that changes in English often occur while pre-service teachers are away, training, from the secondary classroom and while in-service teachers struggle with myriad professional challenges and assessment and policy changes. These changes and challenges include a policy of universal secondary education that caters to students with several literacy needs. Included also is a School Based Assessment (SBA) as an assessment component that requires pedagogical adjustment.

The CXC has, since its inception, contributed to the framing of secondary education in most of the Anglophone Caribbean region. The body was established by a Caribbean Community (CARICOM) agreement in 1972, with a mandate to broaden access by moving away from an exclusionary approach to education to an inclusionary approach (Griffith, 1999). The CXC aimed to provide "secondary education for all by developing courses of study and related examinations which defined knowledge and skills that students completing secondary school should have" (Griffith, 2009, p. 41). Until the mid-1970s, the curriculum of secondary education was based on the attainment of knowledge and skills linked to British examination boards that led to GCE and "A" Level certifications, a reflection of the region's colonial past. The CXC was established to reflect a "Caribbean ethos" aimed at attaining a new direction for secondary education.

Under the CXC, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations were established. The CSEC was offered under three schemes: General Proficiency, Basic Proficiency and Technical Proficiency. All schemes were intended for students who completed five years of secondary schooling (Grades 7–11). The General Proficiency has since been recognised as the ultimate standard for secondary education achievement throughout most of the Anglophone Caribbean region (CXC, 2009). The CXC states that the "General

Proficiency examination is of such breadth of knowledge and understanding that it allows candidates who do well to undertake study of the specific subject of examination beyond the fifth year of secondary school" (CXC 2009, p. 1).

CXC examinations are also criterion-referenced. When setting standards, examiners focus primarily on whether or not secondary candidates have reached established levels of mastery. Comparisons are made between examinees' performance and the pre-set standard judged to be adequate for the award of particular grades. Examiners, therefore, determine the competencies, abilities and skills that candidates must demonstrate in order to qualify for particular grades (CXC, 2018).

To give guidance regarding what content should be covered in preparation for examinations, the CXC provides syllabi for each subject discipline. The English syllabus is organised into two areas: English A, which covers language and has a linguistics focus; and English B, which covers literature with a literary focus. English A focuses on the development of students' oral and written language skills through a variety of strategies, and English B provides opportunities for students to explore and respond critically to specific literary texts as they observe and appreciate the authors' craft (CXC, CSEC Syllabus, 2016-2020).

The rationale underpinning the duality of the syllabus is that expressive and receptive English Language Arts (ELA) skills are critical factors in managing secondary students' personal and social wellbeing. The syllabus objectives are organised under understanding and expression in order to guide both content development and the assessment scheme. Understanding indicates more than basic comprehension, and Expression is of more significance than the ability to employ structural and grammatical correctness. The English syllabus, the CXC also notes, seeks to express and invite the recognition of reflection as being intrinsic to both (CXC, 2020).

The language and literature syllabus document goes on to advocate an approach to teaching that creates a strong inter-relatedness of the language and literature. The principle, it notes, is that structured language learning situations which use literature provide opportunity for guided reflection on, and understanding of, the human condition and life itself. The ultimate aim in the syllabus guidance is to guide curriculum development, to give meaning to the secondary English teaching programme and to define the assessment scheme which supports and reflects that English syllabus. (CXC English Syllabus, 2016 - 2020, p. 1).

The CSEC ELA syllabus and examinations, for the most part, have framed the structure and nature of ELA instruction in secondary classrooms. Pedagogy and assessment in the secondary English classroom are predicated on the CSEC syllabus. The CSEC syllabus has become the curriculum guide for what teachers do in ELA and what they require students to do. This inter-relatedness of instruction and assessment is an integral notion of how English teaching is perceived and conceived in this context. The situation has become one in which schools and teachers are driven by, and therefore operate within, a culture of assessment. When teachers' classroom practices are driven by examinations, the thinking of both students and teachers becomes impoverished. The practice places a ceiling on both the quality and the relevance of the learning that are possible and engenders an uncritical citizenship. In this context, a culture of teaching and learning is fostered that focuses on answers which seek correctness and completion as opposed to responses which require reflection and process. As a result, thinking is disabled and only information relevant to the "answer" required for examination questions receives credence.

In the Anglophone Caribbean, the consensus has been that English as a subject and as a discipline matters. And this makes sense since stakeholders (i.e., parents, students, teachers, examiners, policymakers, businesspeople, politicians) all agree that subject English is a prerequisite for social, personal, and professional advancement. Hence, English has been at the centre of every curriculum as a core subject. All other learning flows from competence in this discipline. A student's success in English at the secondary level examination has important implications for their future endeavours and because of the social capital it brings. For stakeholders, this success requires a particular kind of teacher and a particular kind of pedagogy. How that pedagogy promotes students' achievement matters, since there is a greater pressure on the teacher to deliver practice that guarantees achievement.

The ideal transactional approach driven by a student-centred focus is encouraged as best practice during training and professional experience. But examinations are high stakes – the trump card and pedagogic deal breaker. This attainment of success in high stakes assessment as the ultimate mark of achievement for students triggers for teachers a return to "transmission" as the more relevant and expedient form of pedagogy. Yet, in this assessment context, it is not so much the value and authority of the teacher's knowledge that characterise this instructional approach. New factors are the drivers – covering the curriculum and accountability regarding student achievement. Of course, teachers' content knowledge remains valuable; this is still foundational in "covering" the text and ultimately

the syllabus. But assessments carry more weight today, because the examination results carry greater significance, and it is this which determines not only what is taught but also how it is taught.

Curriculum, therefore, as it relates to the secondary English teacher and secondary English teaching in the Anglophone Caribbean, is the CSEC syllabus. Content knowledge zeroes in on what needs to be known and understood for the examination. Teaching is re-configured to meet the examination needs and accountability to stakeholders. The practice/teaching that will best help students pass the examination is the knowledge and understanding teachers feel constrained to pursue and master. This shapes the conversation English teachers have about the "what and how" of English teaching. Teachers' response to this "pervasive" and "intrusive" impact on practice has for some been passive compliance, willing acceptance, or practical recognition. It has, in the past and even more so now, situated teachers, in their pre-dispositions to secondary schooling, as conformers and reformers (Goulbourne, 1988).

This culture of assessment also determines to a large degree teachers' scope and sequence – the amount of the curricular content and the order of presentation. Scope tells teachers what to cover and sequence guides the order of the instruction (Maxwell, Meiser & McKnight, 2011). The examination questions, tasks and activities that correspond to this instruction, and the way in which this instructional method will be leveraged in the classroom, situate and guide pedagogy.

In effect, by adhering to the examination syllabus as a curriculum guide, English teachers have adopted particular interpretations that shape the levels of knowledge they should possess, this being ultimately what the examination requires. This perceived expectation of what students and teachers are required to know and do determines to a significant degree the levels of understanding – horizontally (breadth) and vertically (depth) – teachers allow themselves to pursue. These levels of knowing are in turn shaped by tenure/teaching experience, academic and professional qualification and school culture (Robinson, 2015; Steele, 2003).

English Teaching in Secondary Classrooms: Engendering Practice

Schools and teachers assume the role of enabling the political, civic and economic participation of adolescents in society. Teaching is intended to support this access to what society has to offer. Dewey (1929) notes that the needs of the child and the demands of the

curriculum are mediated by teachers. But the precise nature of the values and beliefs of teachers of English, who mediate the needs of the child and the demands of the curriculum, remains in a constant state of development and change (Davies, 1996).

English teachers' understandings of the purposes of their work are often anchored in a pedagogical and professional context that is linked to their subject and how these are transmitted and sustained within the profession. While assessment does configure, to a large extent, the nature of the practice in Anglophone Caribbean secondary English classrooms, teachers still do indicate through their practice their intentions and beliefs concerning the work they do and the ideals which determine particular pedagogical actions. The fact is, how we theorise about English teaching does not generally fit the mould of all contexts. Indeed, the match between how English teachers were taught and how they are expected to teach continues to be buffeted by internal and external forces and events that challenge teachers to re-conceptualise and, at times, radicalise their practice.

We also often teach in the way we were taught. But secondary English classrooms are different today, in terms of students and subjects, from the ones teachers left behind. Thus, this is both a paradigm and an intellectual shift for teachers regarding how they teach and what they teach. The space in which English teachers seek to establish, develop and sustain their practice has always been shifting and continues to be influenced and transformed by myriad local, national, international, social, economic and political forces. Yet, English teachers also do have pre-dispositions about the ways in which they teach that are parallel to their convictions about what they ought to teach. These beliefs then become the personal pedagogies which underpin their practice. While these challenges often exert instructional pressure within the classroom, new instruction and new curricula can also emerge in this attempt by teachers to grapple with and make sense of their practice.

Within the community of English departments, teachers' beliefs thrive, since this context subscribes to a particular collective culture. It is a space that helps to define and keep their teaching grounded. It also helps to determine the knowledge and information relevant to accomplish subject outcomes and how they should be organised. In this regard, aspects of the integrity of professional knowledge and practice ascribed to the discipline, in some respects, are preserved along with particular attitudes and pre-dispositions towards teaching and schooling. Bryan (2010) acknowledges that, in the Anglophone Caribbean context, the teaching of English has been "even more firmly problematised as a deeply contested practice" (p. 156). The tension emanates from policy imperatives of the English teaching environment, the culturally specific nature of the situation of English

teachers and the way the culture and history of the Caribbean shape the professional practice of English teachers. It also exerts an even greater influence on teachers' practice. Bryan contends that while these teachers strive for efficiency especially as it relates to accountability – they desire to get it right – they remain aware of the sociocultural impact of their practice. Teachers' commitment to the profession, therefore, has been central to their role and attitudes in the development of secondary schooling.

Secondary English classrooms have emerged as a highly dynamic space – one in transition as it shifts curricular policies and practices to meet changing social, economic and demographic conditions of the 21st century. A re-defined focus should therefore enable teachers to go beyond covering the curriculum (Robinson, 2020). Such a focus would require, too, a reframing of the knowledge teachers value and determine to be relevant about their subject matter. Calderhead (1995) explains that beliefs represent teachers' personal knowledge that is often tacit and unconscious. While this observation about beliefs may represent teachers' implicit theories of teaching, it can also serve as a mediator for experiencing and responding to the environment in which the practice takes place. This observation is central to appreciating teachers' orientation towards secondary teaching and how they work through the inevitable assessment matters that eventually inform instruction in this space.

While teachers' pedagogical actions are grounded in a personally held system of beliefs and principles, it is difficult for anyone, and more so teachers, to deliver what they have not experienced. In addition, as was discussed earlier, the influences on the beliefs and practice of teachers in the Anglophone Caribbean come from different paths that are historical, linguistic and deeply personal (Bryan, 2010; Warrican, 2012). These paths are, in turn, formulated by the cultural context, and not by the individual.

Embedded within its syllabi and rationale, the CXC points secondary teachers of English to the kind of practice required to engage students with the syllabus and the thinking that this practice would require in order to realise the expected outcomes:

> It is envisaged that [students] certified by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) will demonstrate the ability to understand and appreciate what they listen to, read and view, and the ability to express themselves clearly in speech and in writing. The teaching and testing of English is founded on the premise that the abilities mentioned are fostered by the study of language and literature, separately and jointly, and that the abilities are vital

> factors in managing personal and social well-being. Indeed, in the current socio-political world climates, the study of language and literature underpins our understanding of human dynamics and prepares us to respond critically to the wealth of material that bombards our lives through the media. (CXC, CSEC English Syllabus 2016-2020)

This integrated syllabus provides a map to help students to develop the ability to read and enjoy literary texts; to explore social and moral issues using the skills acquired while learning to "read" texts; to evaluate the way their personal ownership of language promotes and optimises their own growth. The syllabus also creates opportunity for students to practise using the acquired language to express themselves effectively. By crafting the interweaving of literature and language study of the English syllabus, this "lighthouse" for secondary English teaching also aligns English teaching with UNESCO's "Pillars of Learning": to know, to do, to live together, to be, and to transform self and society.

Additionally, the syllabus acknowledges that the "literature of the region is fore-grounded so as to foster a positive sense of selfhood and Caribbean-ness" (CXC, CSEC English Syllabus, 2016-2020; p. II). The focus encourages recognising the region's talents, valuing regional varieties of language, and developing the skills of selecting form, tone and register appropriate to the transactional context. Language, the syllabus notes, is essential to basic, effective transactions – personal, social, scientific, technical and business. Literary texts are also chosen, therefore, to help in the development of appropriate responses to general human behaviour, to promote understanding of the human condition.

The implications for English teachers' practice, therefore, evident in the demands of both the syllabus – how to teach– and the examinations outcomes, provoke tensions for teachers. With such high value being placed on the CSEC syllabus and its accompanying assessments and pedagogical requirements, English teachers need to learn how to critically read and engage these "curriculum documents". They need to consider and analyse the pedagogy which the documents require for their classroom practice. They need to analyse what precise experiences and knowledge their practice would generate to enable students to be successful achievers and at the same time sensitive to the world and the human condition.

The concept of English teaching assumes that an English teacher's knowledge and experience shape their ways of knowing and, by extension, their pedagogy. These characteristics of an English teacher's pedagogical identity intersect to determine instructional decision-

making and content knowledge application in the English classroom. As Luke (2004) explains:

> I, too, believe that English education has reached a crucial moment in its history, that this moment is contingent upon the changing demographics, cultural knowledges, and practices of economic globalization. . .. We need a broad and thoroughgoing thinking of the very intellectual field that we are supposed to profess. . .. [We] need to demand more than canonical and reproductive machinery for the production of lists, outcomes, competencies, and skills, or required textbooks. But this shift will require working principles for how we define profession, work, and field. (p 85-87)

An example of this is the lack of secondary English texts which focus on the "how" of teaching English. Most textbooks written for English teaching in secondary classrooms in the Anglophone Caribbean focus on what should be taught. These texts reflect mainly the content changes taking place in English for the purpose of examinations and assessment, not necessarily the curriculum change related to instruction. What these examinations mean, what they imply and the effects they have influence English pedagogy in secondary English classrooms as do the textbooks and the other resource materials which support examination preparation. However, in a sense, these texts also foreground the traditional views and conceptions of the discipline – where grammar and discrete skills mattered.

The truth is that English, by its very nature, is a contentious discipline. Much of the change required in English Language Arts instruction in recent years is largely a response to global, regional and national educational shifts. Bryan (2010) and Protherough & King (2006) have observed that notions of "English" and language have been given heavy ideological weight by social, economic and political forces. The world outside the secondary English classroom has changed dramatically in the last two decades and more so within the last two years. The indications are that the rate of change will not abate. Moreover, a number of ideas that have shaped opinions about English in the Anglophone Caribbean continue to influence pedagogical discourse that addresses questions about knowledge pertinent to secondary English teachers. Rather than information being simply pre-packaged and transmitted from teachers, knowledge can therefore also be understandings that are socially constructed and transactional between students and teachers and students themselves in self-directed inquiries. This is especially relevant as it relates to the current context when students and teachers are reading, writing and teaching and learning offline or online. And the process of this kind of

pedagogy can serve as a context for generating, for both students and teachers, new knowledge and understanding.

The ability to make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practical, personalised and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thought and beliefs is central to teachers' pedagogical decision-making process (Borg, 2003, p. 81). This professional and pedagogical identity fashions teachers' expectations not only of themselves, but also of what they perceive to be the expectations and perceptions of others from inside and outside the school. It also shapes their efficacy and agency, the strength of their beliefs that they can, or cannot, succeed in their [practice] (p. 49).

Professional learning, and the attendant pedagogy, is "never a mere technical process of acquiring knowledge and skills, but always implies the personal integration of the new insights with the knowledge and beliefs that a [teacher] already holds" (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 43). Change in English education and English teaching is not new. The Caribbean, as well as the wider world context, is soon requiring a difference in English teaching pedagogy. The onset and proliferation of new literacies, technological and other changes make this inevitable. Down and Baker (2020) write, "The changing landscape and contexts of learners, teachers and books [is an ongoing exploration]. The new generation of Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instragram – the techie generation, whose preference is of instant, soundbite morsels of text – calls for new approaches" (49).

Conclusions and Envisioning a Way Forward

This exploratory paper considered the complex ways in which English and English teaching in the Anglophone Caribbean have been and are mediated by multiple contexts, most notably the historiography of the region, its colonial legacy, the progressive legacy of what constitutes literature, the English curriculum emerging from that progressive push, as well as the CSEC English examinations. Additionally, the objectives of English teaching in the bullet points at the beginning of this paper are also firmly anchored within the discourse of standards-based reforms. Thus, the question of how English teachers can actually "engender"' a truly responsive pedagogy within the specific cultural setting of the Anglophone Caribbean would still seem to go abegging.

In looking back at the history, the colonial context and the progressive legacy, the paper argued that these variables have indeed determined in large measure pedagogy in English classrooms in the Anglophone Caribbean. The colonial legacy determined what counted as English – language and literature – in content and practice. The progressive push began to challenge the notions of what English teaching was about, what texts and literature mattered and whose

perspective was valued. And, by the mid-20th century right into the 21st century, examinations, and more specifically the CSEC examination, took centre stage when it came to English and English teaching in the Anglophone Caribbean.

While it is recognised that these forces have shaped how we have conceptualised and how we teach subject English, with wide and varied implications, the question is how do we move forward. Having had our practice configured by these forces, we are now in an era when it is time to look at the situation with new lens and move forward.

As a consequence of trying to grapple with this dialectical state of affairs, this discourse points to an indirect attendant variable that often goes unnoticed by those who have access to it. That variable is the power of teachers' choice, and it is based on and influenced by what teachers believe is relevant in the moment. What this variable also makes clear is that teachers' pedagogical choices, as it relates to English teaching, are not necessarily intentional but rather consequential. The challenge in going forward, therefore, is to go beyond the economic aims and traditional classroom practices sanctioned by educational policies and to be intentional. As a way of consolidating the thesis of this paper, I offer three considerations in this regard:

1. We must become open to the process of grappling with the pedagogical, cultural, economic and political implications of the 21st century world and its influence on teaching. This includes paying closer attention to the influence of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity, social and economic inequalities made more glaring in crisis situations, and rapid technological change in a "post truth" and social media-driven world.
2. We cannot assume by virtue of the fact that students are in classrooms and are labelled learners that they know how to learn. This is true of the learner in the primary classroom and just as valid for the adolescent in the secondary classroom. As teachers and educators, we need to demonstrate to these learners what learning is and what it can look like. We have to make learning visible to our students, encouraging and guiding students into an approach to learning that focuses on thinking, transfer and meaning rather than simply the acquisition of knowledge.
3. Twenty-two years into the 21st century, no students exist in the secondary classrooms who was not born in the 21st century. Accepting this fact is an essential understanding for effective

planning for teaching. This must matter and be factored into our practice as Caribbean teachers and educators. It will also require pushing against traditional boundaries of teacher education and development and top-down approaches to reform.

This paper looked back in order to look forward to the challenges of English teaching in the Anglophone Caribbean. It considered some of the significant developments and influences in a deliberate attempt to provoke and expand the conversation about the pedagogical horizons of English teaching. It is a small but hopefully a consequential step toward shifting the conversation of subject English toward a more generative vision of English pedagogy in the secondary classroom.

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