

**Issues in Curriculum Development and
Harmonization in the
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States**

A report to the OECS and the World Bank

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Table of contents

	Page
Acronymns	4
Executive summary	5
 1. The Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project	 8
1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Curriculum change	8
1.4 Harmonization	9
1.5 Universal secondary education	9
1.6 The OECS Education Reform Unit	10
1.7 Review of the ECERP	10
1.8 Work still to be done on harmonization	11
 2 The challenge of curriculum development	 12
2.1 Curriculum as a process	12
2.2 Responding to change	13
2.3 Schools and the curriculum	14
2.4 International perspectives on curriculum innovation	14
2.5 A context for school-based curriculum development	16
 3 Embedding curriculum reform in schools	 16
3.1 No more reforms!	16
3.2 A framework for a national curriculum	17
3.3 A challenge to the OECS	18

	Page
4 A shared OECS curriculum?	19
4.1 Elements of a written curriculum	19
4.2 A question for discussion and decision	20
4.3 Ownership of the curriculum	20
4.4 Proposal: a common curriculum framework for the OECS	21
5 The process of curriculum in classrooms	21
5.1 Roles in the process of curriculum change	21
5.2 Teachers' role in improving education systems	22
5.3 Working with teachers on curriculum improvement	22
5.4 An agenda for classroom-based improvement	23
6 Online teachers' network	24
7 A future role for OERU?	26
8 Assessment and monitoring	27
8.1 Working with the Caribbean Examinations Council	27
8.2 Assessment to support students' learning	29
8.3 Monitoring schools' progress	30
8.4 Recommendations for assessment and learning	31
9 Conclusion	32
References	33

ACRONYMS

AFL	Assessment for learning
AT	Attainment Target
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CCSLC	Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECERP	Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project
ETS	Educational Testing Service
G1, 2 etc...	Grade (school year)
K	Kindergarten
MOE	Ministry of Education
NERC	National Education Reform Council
OECD	Organisation for European Cooperation and Development
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OERS	OECS Education Reform Strategy
OERU	OECS Education Reform Unit
PISA	Programme for International Student Achievement
PoS	Programme of Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education
UWI	University of the West Indies

Executive summary

Proposed 10-year agenda for embedding curriculum reforms and harmonization in schools

This paper presents curriculum reform as a significant change in the culture and practice of teaching. It suggests that the school curriculum is dynamic and can only succeed if it fully involves the participation of teachers. The paper thus proposes curriculum development as a strategy for teacher and school improvement. The strategy is envisaged as growing from the work of the Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project and the OECS Education Reform Unit. The aim of any large-scale plan for school and teacher improvement, based on that strategy, should be that every teacher will be both involved in and empowered by the changes that are underway. The following agenda is proposed as a means by which the original vision of a more harmonized curriculum in the territories of the OECS can be effected.

Framework (Ministry-based phase). See Sections 3 and 4.

- High-level and concise OECS curriculum harmonization documents, based on those already written by the OERU and by Ministries of Education, should be brought together. These documents, starting with those for Core subjects, should refer to agreed Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study for each subject area.
- The Attainment Targets should be the basis of a curriculum harmonization agreement.
- Programme of Study documents should include expected learning outcomes.
- Success criteria, derived from the learning outcomes, should also be part of the Programmes of Study. These criteria should be referred to in the required Key Stage assessments, be they internal or external.
- All curriculum documents, for Core subjects initially, should be published, i.e. they should appear on Ministries' and the OERU websites and be available to schools, teachers and colleagues in other institutions.
- Foundation subject harmonization documents should also be developed and published similarly.
- If territories or other organisations, either on their own or in collaboration, produce Teachers' Manuals, they should publish them online. Such an agreement to publish work should be part of the OECS curriculum harmonization.

Process (Classroom-based phase) See Sections 5 and 6.

Principles

- Clear articulation of the outcomes of the project and what it will mean for teachers to improve their practice
- Explicit guidance, and material support, for improved teaching strategies
- Teachers to reflect on their teaching, with internal and external mentors
- Teachers working together, including with other schools and learning institutions
- Online availability of materials from other schools and territories
- Opportunity to network, mainly online, with teachers who are engaged in similar improvement initiatives
- Agreed review and Q/A structures to create a self-monitoring system

People

Principals as “instruction leaders”. See also Section 8.3.

- Advocate reforms as an important part of the school’s improvement strategy
- Provide space, time and materials to enable teachers to improve
- Challenge and monitor teachers’ progress
- Celebrate improvements in the classroom

In-school subject co-ordinators

- Build a team spirit to implement reforms
- Explain the purpose and the possibilities of new methods
- Demonstrate new strategies in their own practice

External advisers, mainly Curriculum Officers

- Communicate the purpose and aims of the proposed improvements
- Assist teachers in their classrooms
- Structure opportunities for teachers to develop professionally
- Support in-school and out-of-school workshops and collaboration
- Facilitate a lively online teachers’ network

Teachers

- Refer to the curriculum documents which address the subjects areas they teach
- Decide on ways they will try to improve their teaching
- Reflect on their teaching
- Work with colleagues, especially subject co-ordinators
- Accept others in their classrooms from time to time to share ideas on improvements
- Devise a professional development plan for themselves and suggest ways of improving teaching in their schools
- Network with teachers in other schools in the OECS and take part in workshops and training events

The OCES Education Reform Unit

The report also advocates a revived role for the OECS Educational Reform Unit. See Sections 7 and 8.1.

Issues in Curriculum Development and Harmonization in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

1. The Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project

1.1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the planning and implementation of curriculum change in the primary and secondary schools of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. During the past twenty years, under the umbrella of an Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP), major educational initiatives have been undertaken by these States. The programme was first set out in *Foundations for the Future: OECS Education Reform Strategy* (1991)¹ and that strategy was accepted by the OECS Ministers of Education in December 1991. In 1992, it was adopted by the Central Authority of the OECS as the official strategic education model for the organisation. After a mid-term review, and the writing of a report entitled *Pillars for Partnership and Progress* (2001)², the programme was somewhat revised and a Strategic Plan for 2001 – 2010 was drawn up. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), under ECERP, then committed to fund four areas in the programme: curriculum harmonization; school management; information management; and, information and communications technology.

The ECERP thus came into being in a period of significant change for education, not only in the OECS but in all countries which sought to upgrade their education systems. In the sub-region the three major currents which flowed into the project were:

- World-wide changes in countries' economies that led to demands for new thinking on school curricula and the way students are taught;
- The harmonization of the curricula in the OECs States;
- The move to Universal Secondary Education.

Each of these had a significant impact on the school curriculum.

1.2 Curriculum change

The demand in the second half of the twentieth century for new thinking on the curriculum was given added impetus by the digital technological revolution which was affecting both learning and the world of work. Old skills, which

¹ Miller, E. et al. (1991). *Foundations for the future: OECS Education Reform Strategy*. Castries: OECS Secretariat.

² Miller, E., Jules, D., & Thomas, L. (2000). *Pillars for Partnership and Progress – The OECS Education Reform Strategy: 2010*. Castries: OERU.

school subject committees seemed reluctant to let go, became increasingly irrelevant to the work that students would later find themselves doing. New and more flexible ways of thinking and acting were what was required in national economies. In a World Bank publication, *Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People: A New Agenda for Secondary Education*, the authors wrote about the need to respond to “the twin challenges” of curriculum and assessment. They outlined what they called the “the metacognitive capital” which would be required if students were to be prepared for work in the future. The broad skills that they described included the abilities to:

- integrate formal and informal learning, declarative knowledge (“knowing that”), and procedural knowledge (know-how)
- access, select, and evaluate knowledge in an information-soaked world
- develop and apply forms of intelligence beyond strictly cognitive processes
- work and learn effectively and in teams
- face, transform, and peacefully resolve conflict, which involves participatory and active citizenship skills
- create, transpose, and transfer knowledge
- deal with ambiguous situations, unpredictable problems, and unforeseeable circumstances
- cope with multiple careers by learning how to locate oneself in a job market and to choose and fashion the relevant education and training.³

This was not so much a call for new curriculum content, but for teaching which demonstrates to students new ways of learning and working.⁴

1.4 Harmonization

A main part of the vision that lay behind the ECERP was that the planning and delivery of school curricula in the Eastern Caribbean States should be brought together. This was seen as an inevitable and beneficial consequence of increasing economic cooperation between the states. The project is still referred to as the “harmonization project”. The strategy was described in the second OECS Education Reform Unit Strategic Plan⁵ as aiming to provide “the basis for national development, the framework for sub-regional initiatives and a focal point for regional cooperation in education within the eastern Caribbean.” It is the issue of harmonization of the curriculum that provides the main focus for this paper.

1.5 Universal secondary education

A second major ambition, which had an impact on the curriculum at both

³ *Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People: A New Agenda for Secondary Education*, 2005, World Bank, Washington, D.C. p. 80

⁴ *ibid.* p.81

⁵ *OECS Education Reform Unit Strategic Plan: 2001 – 2010*. (April 2001). Castries: OERU. P.1.

primary and secondary levels, was the plan to provide universal secondary education for students in the sub-region. This was set out in *Foundations for the Future* as Strategy 20 and in *Pillars for Partnership and Progress* as Strategy 32. The two prime objectives, of harmonisation between the States' education systems and the expansion of secondary education, were both significant reforms offering long-term, beneficial consequences for the OECS States. Managing both of them at the same time, as well as taking on the challenge to modernize the curriculum, provided a major challenge of organisation on the part of those responsible for the project.

1.6 The OECS Education Reform Unit

One of the recommendations in *Foundations for the Future*, Strategy 63, was for the establishment of an education reform unit with responsibility for guiding the reform process. As a result of that recommendation, the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) was established in 1994, with funding from CIDA. Funding was allocated for two phases of the project, 1994-2000 and 2001-2007 and "it was anticipated that as the reforms were implemented, member states would fund some of the implementation activities locally or in collaboration with donor funding agencies ... Subsequently, the implementation of the regional education framework was supported by a number of projects financed either at the bilateral or the multilateral level."⁶ Much of this funding has now come to an end, and the OECS is now faced with the challenge of how far it wishes to continue to use the OERU to advance the goal of a harmonized curriculum.

1.7 Review of the ECERP

The second stage of the project was evaluated in an exercise commissioned by the OERU, and reported on in *Report on the Evaluation of the OECS Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP)* in 2007. This report presented a generally positive picture of the progress made during the project, particularly of the training and development of ministry officials and school administrators who had acquired the skills to see through such a large-scale exercise.

In the section *Teaching and Learning* (5.3.3), which referred to the production of curricula and assessment tools, the report noted that the "goal of curriculum harmonization [was met] at the primary level in the core subject areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science and Technology. Curriculum harmonization was also achieved at the lower secondary level in Mathematics and Science and Technology."⁷ This comment referred to the detailed subject guides and teachers' manuals that had been produced to assist teachers in their lesson planning.

⁶ *Report on the Evaluation of the OECS Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP)*. September 2007. Pp. 3 and 6.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.45.

The following table gives an overview of those materials which are still available on the OECS web-site:

Table 1 : Curriculum Modules on the OERU website			
Subjects	Type of publication	Grades	Content
Primary			
Language Arts	Curriculum outlines with suggested activities and resources	K – G2 G3 – G4 G5 – G6	Goals, domains and strands, learning outcomes, suggested activities and resources
Social Studies	Teachers' Guide	K – G6	Learning outcomes, goals and values, topics and skills, instructional guidelines, sample lesson plans.
Mathematics	'Curriculum harmonization' documents	K G1 G2	Rationale, five key strands, learning outcomes, teaching/learning activities, assessment strategies.
Science and Technology	Teachers' Guides: 1. Learning Outcomes 2. Nine topic-specific teachers' guides	K – G6 K – G2	Overview, rationale, principles, learning outcomes, attainment levels. Teaching units with objectives, content, activities, assessment.
Lower Secondary			
Science and Technology	9 topic specific teachers' guides	G7 – G9 (levels 1 – 3)	Learning outcomes with objectives, content and suggested activities.

1.8 Work still to be done on harmonization

It can be seen in the table above that a great deal of work had been done to create various kinds of documents which describe the curriculum and give help to teachers in planning their lessons. The thinking about the requirements of the curriculum, for different subjects and at different grade levels, was very thorough and the suggested classroom activities were well in-

tune with the latest thinking on principles of active teaching and learning in those subjects. Nevertheless, some disappointments were expressed about the outcomes of the ECERP. The 2007 report recorded that promised final drafts had not all been delivered and added some people's opinion that the nature of those documents had not provided enough help to teachers. The latter point was felt to show a misunderstanding of the purpose of the documents and to overlook the fact that help was given to teachers to implement the new curricula. Nevertheless, it would seem reasonable at least to ask whether, after over ten years work, more could have been achieved. In answering that question lessons could be learnt for future curriculum development. The report concludes: "The data analysis revealed that the process of harmonization was initiated and much has been achieved on that dimension, but harmonization is a work in progress."⁸

This paper seeks to discuss this conclusion. From the perspective of the OERU there is disappointment that the process of harmonisation of the territories' curricula is incomplete in terms of the written documents, and has generally not gone as far as was hoped. It would seem to be a common opinion that the reforms proposed for the curriculum have some way to go before they are embedded in the classroom practice of teachers. From schools there is a perception that the ending of some funding left the project to run out of steam.

2 The challenge of curriculum development

2.1 Curriculum as a process

A school curriculum reflects a great deal about the concerns and priorities of a country. It is inevitably a combination of traditional beliefs about how young people should be prepared for adult life and of attempts to match what happens in school to the prospects for employment in a changing economic environment. This is a challenge which faces any curriculum developer. Currently the challenge revolves around issues such as:

- Supporting the economic competitiveness of the country;
- Building up social capital in groups of young people who will soon be adult citizens of the country;
- Passing on new knowledge, e.g. in the fields of science, technology and ICT;
- Integrating newly-prioritised skills into the curriculum, e.g. life-long learning, cooperative-working.

Definitions of "the ideal Caribbean person", which have been discussed over the past 25 years, have helped to clarify the need for a broad-based curriculum which expresses countries' vision for the kind of societies they

⁸ *ibid.* p.48

wish to be.⁹ The point here is that the work of producing a curriculum which reflects a complex view of society is a continuing challenge for the curriculum developer. There is no such thing as one perfect reform which will produce all the answers.

The word reform suggests a very significant, one-off change that one might, at the end of a given period, be able to say 'has worked'. This implication of the meaning of reform is not helpful since the work of curriculum development is an on-going process. We understand that when the report on the ECERP said that "harmonisation was achieved" what was meant that certain curriculum documents had been written and published. But this is clearly not a sufficient definition of a satisfactory conclusion to a period of curriculum development. Both curriculum development and harmonisation are similarly processes, and it would be better to claim success on the basis that both processes are satisfactorily underway.

2.2 Responding to change

We can take the same perspective to answer the question about how we are to incorporate new knowledge into the curriculum. There is so much we cannot rewrite the core curriculum documents every time something new turns up. What we need to create are situations in schools into which new knowledge can be incorporated. By modelling that kind of openness and flexibility the schools will be showing their students how they too will be challenged to adapt and learn in the world of work that faces them.

The same kind of response can be given when issues are raised as current problems. Problem issues are not just part of the on-going challenge of curriculum development, but are specific challenges which require a search for solutions. Currently the following are raised as problems which must be addressed:

- Declining performances in public examinations;
- The perception of some young people that school is "irrelevant" to them;
- Curriculum overload;
- The comparatively poorer performance of boys to that of girls.

Issues like this will influence the curriculum developer and will no doubt have an effect on the next revision of the curriculum documents. But such problems cannot wait for that. Research needs to be done, responses suggested and decisions taken. This could be done at the school level with support from Ministry of Education personnel, and indeed school principals and teachers daily have to come up with some kind of answer to these problems. What is needed is a dynamic and flexible approach to curriculum development which can accommodate such pressing concerns.

⁹ Caribbean Community Secretariat (1989). *Creative and Productive Citizens for the Twenty-First Century*. Georgetown, Guyana: The Secretariat.

2.3 Schools and the curriculum

It is implicit in what has been said above that the teacher is a vital player in the process of curriculum development. This is often overlooked. Miriam Ben-Peretz noted that “...without active teacher involvement, curriculum development may turn out to be futile and ineffective.”¹⁰ This is not just an issue about involving some teachers in the writing of formal curriculum documents. There is a widely accepted analysis that there are different realisations of the curriculum. Goodlad, Klein and Tye described:

- The ideal curriculum – what scholars believe should be taught;
- The formal curriculum – what is written down in ministry documents;
- The perceived curriculum – what teachers say they are teaching;
- The operational curriculum – what observers see being taught in classrooms;
- The experiential curriculum – what the students experience in their learning.¹¹

Others have used other terms but the important point is that there is likely to be a difference between what is in the official documents – the formal, planned curriculum – and what actually happens in the classrooms – the operational or delivered curriculum. In fact, for good or ill, it is what the teacher does in the classroom that trumps every other realisation of the curriculum.

2.4 International perspectives on curriculum innovation

Martha Montero-Sieburth puts the above point forcefully in her investigation of curriculum change projects in a number of developing countries. She says “...teachers are not only the most direct agents in the learning enterprise but also the designers of knowledge. They select and improvise. Their capacity to do this is critical to the success of learning. Curriculum models are only as effective as the teachers who design, plan, and implement the programs and evaluate their students’ progress.”¹² In this spirit she rejects the concept of a “teacher-proof curriculum”, since that assumes that the curriculum is a product. She argues for the idea of a curriculum as a process which “would focus on how a given curriculum is filtered through the teacher’s conceptual framework, how it comes to be actually implemented.”¹³

¹⁰ Ben-Peretz, M. “Teachers’ Role in Curriculum Development: An alternative approach.” in *Canadian Journal of Education* 5.2. 1980. p.53.

¹¹ Goodlad J., Klein F., Tye K. “The Domains of Curriculum and Their Study.” In *Curriculum Inquiry*, ed. J. Goodlad. McGraw-Hill. 1979. p.43-76.

¹² Montero-Sieburth M., “Models and Practice of Curriculum Change in Developing Countries” in *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 36. No. 2. May 1992. University of Chicago Press. P. 179.

¹³ Ibid. p.177.

This is now the widely accepted view. Ainee Shezad Salim, in an article for the International Network for Educational Transformation (iNet), suggests that we have moved from a time when curriculum was a “received perspective” to one where it is “active and alive” for the teacher. Reviewing recent international agreements about education, she emphasises “teacher deliberation” as one of the essential elements of curriculum development.¹⁴ Jean Young from the University of Alberta conducted a number of important studies on teachers’ attitudes to curriculum development. In an early paper she described the benefits to be gained when teachers took some responsibility for curriculum development from the local school district. One of the benefits reported was that “curriculum decision making is no longer a ‘sometime thing’ for it occurs on an on-going basis”.¹⁵

A paper by Professor Leo Bartlett, writing about a national curriculum project in Australia, is entitled ‘Curriculum Development is about Teacher Development’. He argues that curriculum innovation must be seen as a large-scale and long-term enterprise and he uses Hargreaves’ concept of “cultural interruption” to argue that it must be planned with this broad context in mind.¹⁶ In a paper for *Research Roundup*, the journal of the US National Association of Elementary School Principals, Bruce Bowers reviews the reports of four studies which looked at the issue of teacher involvement in curriculum development.¹⁷ One of them emphasised that it was important for teachers to take a long-term view of the process of curriculum innovation. Another that the support of the school Principal was essential. A paper by Ruth Wright concluded that what motivates teachers to innovate is to see their own students benefitting from changes in their teaching methods.¹⁸ Writing in the *South African Journal of Education*, R. Ramparsad describes an investigation into teachers’ attitudes to curriculum innovation which were elicited in structured interviews. He outlined four phases of an innovation – the design, dissemination, implementation and evaluation phases – and suggests different kinds of support for teachers in each of these phases. At the implementation phase he recommends realistic timeframes, realistic goals and appropriate training.¹⁹ Professor David Hopkins worked as a senior government adviser to the UK government in the late 1990s, and has written

¹⁴ Ainee Shezad Salim, *Strategies for Curriculum Innovation and Development: Deliberation, Student Participation and Context Relevance*. 2010. To be found at <http://www.sst-inet.net/resources/olc/papers/strategiesforcurriculum.aspx>

¹⁵ Young, J. H. “Teachers Participation in Curriculum Decision Making: An Organisation Dilemma”, in *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 9: No. 2 Summer, 1979. Blackwell, on behalf of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

¹⁶ Pdf copy kept at Hong Kong University, sunzi1.lib.hku.hk

¹⁷ Bowers B., “Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development”, in *Research Roundup*, Vol. 7, No. 3 Spring, 1991. P.

¹⁸ Wright R. “Motivating Teacher Involvement in Professional Growth Activities”, *The Canadian Administrator* 24, 5 (February 1985) p 1-6.

¹⁹ Ramparsad R., “A Strategy for Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Development” in *South African Journal for Education*, 2001, 21 (4).

extensively on in-school curriculum development as a tool for school improvement.²⁰

This international consensus creates a significant context for reflection on the way forward for the ECERP. We cannot really claim success in a curriculum reform until we see what is happening in classrooms. The project may well have brought the ideal and the formal curricula more closely together. But there is still some way to go in ensuring that the desired curriculum is what is delivered in schools.

2.5 A context for school-based curriculum development

From the 2007 review of the ECERP it can be seen that those mainly involved were ministry personnel and curriculum experts outside schools. This was inevitable, not least because the project encompassed a wider range of capacity building activities than just curriculum reform. It is important to acknowledge the real progress that was made in this area. The review's 5th conclusion was that "The knowledge, skills and experiences gained from training and curricula, tools and materials development have produced a competent cadre of trained professionals. These trained professionals are capable of providing technical expertise and driving educational reform efforts at the national level."²¹ In an earlier comment on the achievements of the project the report commented that, "Most Ministries of Education, through training and advocacy for reform have been transformed."²²

What exists now is a fertile context, of important administrative structure and professional skills, within which the desired reforms can be more fully mediated to teachers in their classrooms. We can talk of a two-phase programme. First there is the "Ministry-based phase", which is necessary to provide the supportive infrastructure for the reform effort. Next there is a "classroom-based phase" to ensure that the reforms become part of the operational curriculum.

3 Embedding curriculum reform in schools

3.1 No more reforms!

One ministry official has said, "We don't want any more reforms!"²³ What was meant was that there is still work to be done on the reforms that have been set in motion and, until the ECERP has made a greater impact in classrooms, it would be premature to initiate another round of changes. This thinking is

²⁰ Hopkins D., *School Improvement for Real*. 2001. Routledge Falmer. London.

²¹ Report on the Evaluation of the OECS Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP). September 2007. p.54.

²² Ibid. p.51

²³ In a one-to-one discussion in April 2011.

familiar to those working in education in the region. Dr. Didacus Jules wrote recently under the title “Rethinking Education in the Caribbean” about the uses which have been made of the many projects and policies which have been developed over the past twenty years. He says: “It is not that many of these projects have intrinsically failed; it is more that we have failed to create the synergies and apply the lessons of many of these projects to drive systemic transformation... We are failing to apply and universalize the lessons of projects that have worked well... Equally importantly, we fail also to digest the lessons of those initiatives that have not worked and so miss opportunities for understanding the factors which contributed to that result.”²⁴

So in reflecting on the aims of the ECERP’s curriculum reforms from the perspective of the school and the classroom, this paper does not come up with suggestions for a series of new initiatives. Rather it emphasises the framework that is already in place, which is necessary for the original ambitions of the project to be more widely implemented. The paper then moves on from that framework to describe the continuing support which is necessary for teachers as they seek to own and implement the reforms.

3.2 A framework for a national curriculum

The OECS Model Education Bill²⁵, which has been used by countries to draft their Education Acts, requires that a national curriculum be established by the State, based on certain goals and objectives (Part 1, Division 1, Section 3). In Part 8, *Curriculum and Assessment of Students*, paragraph 143.(1) the bill describes the curriculum for schools as being structured as follows:

“The curriculum for every public school and assisted private school shall comprise core and foundation subjects and specify in relation to each of them:

- (a) attainment targets that include the knowledge, skills and understanding which students of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of each key stage;
- (b) programmes of study that include the matters, skills and processes which are required to be taught to students of different abilities and maturities during each key stage; and
- (c) assessment arrangements that include the arrangements for assessing students at or near the end of each key stage for the purpose of ascertaining what they have achieved in relation to the attainment targets.”²⁶

Decisions about what are core and foundation subjects, and about the extent of the different key stages, are left to the individual countries. But the structure

²⁴ Jules D., “Rethinking Education in the Caribbean”, in *The Registrar’s Blog*, Caribbean Examinations Council website, <http://www.cxc.org>, December 2010.

²⁵ Model Education Bill for the OECS. 2005. OECS Secretariat, Castries.

²⁶ Ibid. p.95.

of the curriculum framework in the countries which have enacted this bill should be common throughout the sub-region. This structure comprises 1) Attainment Targets, 2) Programmes of Study and 3) assessment arrangements. The Minister of Education is charged with publishing those three elements, and the core and foundation subjects. According to the bill the different elements of the national curriculum are to be drawn up by subject panels, which are to be co-ordinated by the Chief Education Officer.

The bill thus provides a simple and useful curriculum structure for teachers. The Attainment Targets should be broad aims for each subject. The Programmes of Study (PoS), on the other hand, will be more detailed expansions for each subject, that state what students will be expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of particular periods of study. PoS are not so detailed as to provide plans for individual lessons, but lesson plans can be derived from them. Approved school textbooks would be expected to conform to the Attainment Targets and to provide materials and activities for lessons which are in line with the published PoS.

However, the two terms used in the Model Bill, “Attainment Targets” and “Programmes of Study”, do not appear in the materials published by the OERU. The focus in those materials is on learning outcomes, which are fundamental to curriculum development and certainly learning outcomes should form the bulk of the material in a PoS. But the lack of a clear link between such major documents is striking. Attainment Targets are a key element in the structuring of the whole scheme. They are anchor points in the Model Bill since it is to them that the required assessments must be tied. It would thus have been beneficial, in the overall planning for the ECERP, if getting agreement on Attainment Targets had been the first discussion in the curriculum harmonization process. Such discussions would then have clarified the differences between producing detailed teaching materials, of great use to teachers, and the production of shorter, higher-level documents to complete the big picture of a harmonized curriculum.

3.3 A challenge to the OECS

The aim of the harmonisation project was that the curriculum would be shared by the OECS member states. Using the terms in the draft Education Bill, this should mean that Attainment Targets, PoS and assessment arrangements are common between the countries. How far is that vision practical in reality? To understand this, the progress and outcomes of the ECERP need to be reflected on. While that project was underway did other priorities overtake the work? Or for some reason was it decided, but not stated, that a common curriculum was not really wanted? Or was it that the work had become so demanding in terms of time and the size and number of documents, that it became overwhelming? Certainly, frustration has been expressed about the length of time it took to produce final versions of the OERU materials. If the key issue is now how far the curriculum reforms are being embedded in the classrooms of the sub-region, there needs to be further discussion about exactly what collaboration between States is needed to further that ambition.

4 A shared OECS curriculum?

4.1 Elements of a written curriculum

Some thoroughly developed curriculum materials can be found in Dominica, where a set of documents has been published as part of a project which was supported financially by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). A comprehensive introductory document has been produced explaining the framework on which the curriculum has been structured.²⁷ Programmes of Study have been produced for each grade of primary schooling and also a “National Curriculum Guide” for teachers for each subject at each grade. These guides give detailed suggestions of materials and activities for lessons. (In Dominica seven core subjects have been selected at the primary level: they have Health and Family Life Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and Physical Education and Sports, in addition to the four already mentioned.).

In the Programmes of Study, learning outcomes and success criteria are included which are derived from the overarching Attainment Targets. The Learning Outcomes specify what the students are expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of course of study, as is the case in the OERU materials. For example, in the Programme of Studies for Key Stage 2 for Language Arts (Grades 3 and 4), there is one Attainment Target for **writing**:

“The learner will be able to create / produce texts, both print and visual, competently and effectively in different kinds of factual and imaginative forms for a wide range of purposes, using grammatical structures and appropriate writing conventions.”

This broad statement is broken down into Learning Outcomes under the following five headings:

1. Producing personal texts
2. Producing texts for different purpose and audiences
3. Transferring data
4. Developing a positive attitude to writing
5. Using texts across the curriculum.²⁸

The learning outcomes are then expressed in more detail as “success criteria”. An example under Learning Outcome 1 for writing (see above), is the first success criterion: “Begins to use a journal for recording personal

²⁷ National Curriculum Framework for Dominica. Curriculum, Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Roseau, Dominica. April 2006.

²⁸ National Curriculum Primary Programme of Studies: Key Stage 2 (Grade 3 & 4). Curriculum, Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Roseau, Dominica. 2008. Pages 9 – 10.

information.” These detailed statements create a link between the students’ learning and the requirements for assessment, since they provide the criteria against which teachers can assess their students and give them feedback on their progress.

4.2 A question for discussion and decision

The above example illustrates a well-thought out curriculum framework, one that is both useable by teachers and available in the sub-region. The documents were produced at about the same time as the materials for the OERU. When one looks closely at the recommendations for teachers in the two sets of documents, one finds that they are working in similar ways and addressing the needs of similar kinds of students. Learning outcomes are at the heart of both. This raises again the question raised from the start of the ECERP strategy for the curriculum. How far does collaboration between territories on their curricula mean that they should all aim to use the same documents?

4.3 Ownership of the curriculum

In discussing the vision of a shared curriculum, Ministry officers are positive about the idea as a big vision but, as one would expect, they also believe there must be room to allow different States to reflect their own particular contexts. An important concept that can be found throughout the OERU materials is that of “ownership” of the curriculum. It is understandable that States want to develop their own curriculum guidelines for their teachers. In this way Curriculum Officers and teachers can work together to improve teaching. If the key challenge at this stage is to embed curriculum reforms in classrooms, the priority should be that *teachers* feel ownership of the new methods that they are being asked to employ. The detailed materials produced by various groups for teachers are full of excellent ideas and the motivation to communicate the reforms in lessons plans for teachers is laudable.

But these detailed documents are not fit-for-purpose to create the broad structure needed for curriculum harmonization between States. Large commitments of time and energy have to be put in to getting the agreement of all OECS States for teachers’ manuals. This takes Curriculum Officers away from working closely with teachers in their classrooms. Something larger-scale, more broad in its scope, would be easier to agree on. It would be very unfortunate now if another round of detailed and high-level discussions about the curriculum documents delayed the “school-based” work of the project. So this paper envisages a two-part strategy:

1. That shorter, more generalised documents should be used to create a framework for harmonisation.
2. That curriculum materials produced to help teachers should, like OERU’s materials, be published online and made available for use,

when they wish it, by Curriculum Officers and teachers in other territories.

If this strategy was followed, first, the key harmonization documents would provide a context which encouraged the desired school-based curriculum development. And second, teachers and others with good ideas for teaching would benefit from harmonization by communicating directly with each other about what they are doing in their classrooms.

4.4 Proposal: a common curriculum framework for the OECS

We are seeking to describe an agenda of actions that support dynamic curriculum development in schools. The elements in the agenda should be familiar, since they are written in to the ECERP documents and are being addressed in schools already. What we have called the Ministry-based phase of the agenda should provide the *framework* of the curriculum. The school-based phase, which we will look at shortly, should address the *process* of the curriculum.

We propose the following for the harmonisation of curriculum documents, on the understanding that much of the work has already been done:

High-level curriculum harmonization documents for each subject area, with the agreement of Ministries and facilitated by the OERU, should be structured around a common set of Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study. The latter should include desired learning outcomes, and preferably an agreed set of “success criteria”. The latter will be important when the issue of assessment is addressed.

5 The process of curriculum in classrooms

5.1 Roles in the process of curriculum change

The following organisations and groups have been involved in recent curriculum developments:

- Ministries of Education
- OECS Education Reform Unit
- National, Curriculum Development Units
- Subject panels (as required by the Education Acts. The panels should involve employers and other community representatives.)
- School Principals and senior managers
- Heads of department / subject co-ordinators
- Subject associations and other teachers' groups
- Teachers

The top four groups above have been heavily involved in the ECERP. The argument of this paper is that it is right now to put the focus on a “bottom-up” approach which addresses the issue of the curriculum as it is delivered in classrooms.

5.2 Teachers’ role in improving education systems

The emphasis above reflects the crucial importance, for the future of education systems, of teachers improving their performance. That is a truism, but it is reinforced by new international data that indicate the characteristics of the better performing education systems in the world. Those that do well tend to recruit teachers from the more able people in their cohort and they encourage teachers to perform at the highest standard. In reviewing the reasons for the success of some education systems, a report from McKinsey and Co. gives three reasons for their high-performance:

- They get the right people to become teachers (the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers);
- They develop these people into effective instructors (the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction);
- They put in place systems and targeted support to ensure that every child is able to benefit from excellent instruction (the only way for the system to reach the highest performance is to raise the standard of every student).²⁹

5.3 Working with teachers on curriculum improvement

When teachers are working to improve their own teaching three important elements need to be in place in their schools. First, there has to be the right attitude from the school from the school leadership. Teachers need to be both supported and challenged by Principals who understand their role as “instruction leaders”. Second, the role of “subject leaders” (Heads of Department / subject co-ordinators) is crucial in providing professional support in subject domains, particularly when they can demonstrate in their own practice the effectiveness of the desired reforms. Finally, from outside the school, advisors, such as Curriculum Development Officers, are key to helping teachers to implement the ideas already set out in the relevant documents. These and similar requirements are advocated in a recent OECD paper which contains a section on “Teacher Engagement in Education Reform.”³⁰ Such thinking has been part of the vision of the ECERP from the

²⁹ Barber M. and Mourshed M. *How the World’s Best-performing School Systems Come Out on Top*. McKinsey and Co. September 2007. <http://www.mackinsey.com>

³⁰ OECD (2011) *Building a High Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from Around the World*. Paris. p. 51-59

start.

Personal interaction with teachers is important. There needs to be some understanding of how they are reacting to the curriculum reforms that have been proposed. Where they are reluctant to take on new ways of teaching there are usually reasons for teachers' reactions. Bongani Bantwini, writing about some school reforms in South Africa, expresses the issue in terms of what the reforms "mean" to teachers. These meanings become a map which the teachers use to guide them through the changes, and in some cases the maps produced can have unhelpfully negative connotations. He suggests that negative meanings can come from:

- A lack of understanding of the curriculum reforms and their purpose;
- A lack of classroom support;
- A lack of in-service professional development for the teachers.

He proposes that teachers should be involved in the conceptual and developmental stages of the reform; that they should be given the space and tools they need to be able to develop their teaching within a collaborative school culture; and that continuous professional development should be provided for them in the form of support structures, monitoring and evaluation.³¹ Bantwini also advocates that school districts (in South Africa) should "promote teacher collaboration with other schools and other learning institutions."³² This kind of professional interchange is an activity that we suggest the OERU could facilitate.

5.4 An agenda for classroom-based improvement

The above points describe an agenda for the work of Curriculum Officers as they work in schools with teachers who are implementing improvements. Such an agenda offers to teachers the experience of talking about what they are doing in their classrooms and why they are doing it. In the article referred to earlier, Montero-Sieburth emphasises the need for teachers to develop the skill of reflecting on their work "so that their practice and experience are consciously integrated into the ongoing curricular development."³³

We have focused on the role of teachers as curriculum reform implementers as we consider where the ECERP programme should go next. It may be said that such a focus shows little appreciation of the actual situation in schools in which significant proportions of teachers are untrained and are uncertain of

³¹ Bantwini, B.D. "How Teachers Perceive the New Curriculum Reform: Lessons from a School District in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa" in *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, January 2010. P. 83-90

³² Ibid. p.89.

³³ Montero-Sieburth M., "Models and Practice of Curriculum Change in Developing Countries" in *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 36. No. 2. May 1992. University of Chicago Press. p.180.

their ability to take on more demanding teaching tasks.³⁴ But at whatever level of proficiency they may start, teachers must be encouraged to improve. There is a trend now to advocate school-based training as an effective, and cost-effective, strategy to overcome a world-wide shortage of teachers, particularly at the secondary level. In a paper about new approaches to teacher education, which he says must include school-based training, Professor Bob Moon lists five things that are necessary to support teachers as they develop their skills:

- the need for a clear articulation of the expected outcomes of training with a clear focus on the improvement of classroom practice;
- school-based support from more experienced educational staff (school inspectors, teacher trainers, experienced teachers working in school clusters are just three examples of where the support can come from);
- clear assessment and quality assurance structures so that the teachers know what they have to do and the system is self-monitoring in terms of effectiveness;
- material resource support that explicitly guides the teachers in trying out and experimenting with improved strategies within the classroom;
- school and Principal guidance to ensure that teacher training contributes not just to individual performance but to school improvement as a whole.³⁵

This list contains similar points to those that have been made above and to the ideas expressed in the OERU curriculum documents when they address their goals and values. Moon's paper also makes much of the use of online tools for teacher support and gives examples, particularly in an African context, in which technology has been used to support teacher development. The potential for teachers' online networking is perhaps something that we have only come to appreciate since the ECERP was started.

An agenda for supporting curriculum development and harmonization in schools is given in the Executive Summary at the start of this report.

6 Online teachers' network

We have suggested that online publishing of teachers' manuals, and other such documents, would be a way of creating a different kind of harmonization in the curriculum in the OECS. This has been done with the OERU teachers' materials and it could be done within an online teachers' network, an example of which can be found in the St. Kitts' Ministry of Education website. If such a

³⁴ See Middleton J. *Skills Strategy for the OECS: a Report to the OECS and the World Bank*, April 2011. p.30

³⁵ *Open Learning And Icts: A Radical Solution To Preparing Teachers To Meet The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Challenge*, March 2004, to be found at http://www.col.org/SiteCollectionDocuments/Moon_Bob.pdf

network extended across the OECS, teachers in the sub-region could use it to find ideas for their subject-specific teaching needs. This would provide them with a useful tool for self-improvement. It would also address the issue of the overload of work which afflicts Curriculum Officers when the focus is on them producing official documents. Online curriculum discussions between teachers would be at the level of suggestions of what has worked in their classrooms. Documents which are shared in such networks are always considered to be works in progress. Teachers are free to use them as they wish. In the spirit of dynamic curriculum development, rather than trying to devise lessons on using new technologies in the workplace, teachers would be seen by their students to be actually doing it. It would be a way of modernising the curriculum.

In terms of the harmonization agenda a network would involve person-to-person collaboration within the OECS that would embody the vision of the organisation to individual teachers and their students. The opportunity to be in contact with others in different territories with whom they discussed professional matters would be motivating for teachers. In terms of dynamic curriculum development it would be a way of enriching the teachers' teaching by providing a wider pool from which they might draw materials and activities.

There are plenty of networks to which one might turn for a model. The interaction on the site in St. Kitts is specifically related to the publication of curriculum ideas and interaction between teachers. Elsewhere in the Caribbean there is the Caribbean Educators Network, which is an informal contact space run for the benefit of its members. More formal networks such as the CKLN (Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network) project and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) virtual university project could be possible partners in a similar venture for schools. The right approach is that to be found in teachers' subject organizations, for example The Caribbean Association of Home Economists, where the reason for meeting is to help each other. Looking at the way such groupings of teachers attract support could help OERU to facilitate groupings in other subject areas. The internet makes it much easier for people with a common interest to come together.

The key to the success of networks is that they provide what it is the members need. It is necessary for such a website to be well-managed and to be constantly updated with new ideas and online events. This work could be a responsibility for a post within the OERU. The person in that post would be the facilitator of the site. He or she would need to be well in touch with the work teachers are doing at all levels and in all subjects, and to have the enthusiasm to generate activity. But he or she would not be working alone. The network of Curriculum Officers in the OECS should feel the site to be an important vehicle for their work and they should encourage their teachers to use it. One way they might do this is by encouraging teachers to publish on the site. There can be a reluctance to do this, because of the awe in which we have held published documents in the past. But in the new world of instant electronic communication, reporting on what has worked for you and being willing to join in are the key factors.

A paper, produced in 2005 for the National College of School Leadership in the UK, by Professor Mark Hadfield and others summarised the findings of then completed studies on the impact of networking and online collaboration on students' learning and teachers' in their work. Important claims were made for the positive effect of networking on teacher's professional development.³⁶

7 A future role for OERU?

Participants who responded to the 2007 review of the ECERP envisaged the following roles for the OCS Educational Reform Unit:

1. Collaborative entity/mechanisms for OECS
2. Technical and advisory role
3. Resource centre/clearinghouse
4. Database – information management
5. Dissemination of information
6. Facilitate development in information management and accreditation
7. Consultancy services – Ministries of Education
8. Provision of training/training agency
9. Repository of educational materials
10. Monitoring and evaluation agency
11. Agency for mobilizing and leveraging resources
12. Agency to promote/drive the use of technology
13. Agency for conducting research
14. Advocacy group for OECS
15. Agency for sustainability of reform efforts³⁷

This paper has referred to OERU's contribution in activities 5, 8, 9, 12 and 15. The paper's emphasis on creating a dynamic curriculum and using online networks particularly expands the role under 8. Here the OERU could offer in-service professional development for teachers using its vision of collaboration and harmonization to gain teachers' support. As envisaged above the OERU would work closely with Curriculum Development Officers.

Another important role, which has been at the heart of the discussion in this paper, is that the OERU should be the keeper of the centrally written curriculum harmonisation documents. (See Section 4.4 above). The paper has advocated that most effort should be going in to the "classroom-based phase" of the project. But there is still work to be done on tidying up from the Ministry-based phase. The paper does not advocate that all the gaps in the teachers' manuals should be immediately filled, though this should be another strand of work for the OERU to complete. But the key curriculum harmonisation documents need to be produced as soon as possible to clarify the framework for other work. This would require a close review of all the relevant documents produced in all of the territories. Derived from these it

³⁶ Hadfield M. et al, (2005) *The Impact of Networking and Collaboration: the Existing Knowledge-base*, for the NCSL, UK. www.ncsl.org.uk

³⁷ *Report on the Evaluation of the OECS Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP)*. September 2007. p. 39.

should be possible to draft a set of common Attainment Targets and learning objectives within Programmes of Study. A good deal of work on the latter is to be found in the materials that have already been published. Once a draft has been produced, Ministries would be asked for their approval. It would be hoped that enough discussion has taken place about these matters for it to be a fairly straightforward matter to get agreement to a document at this high level.

Going further than this, the OERU could also have a role in developing sub-regional collaboration on documents. A central resource, through which all important OECS education documents could be accessed, would be a useful step. Currently it is sometimes difficult to find relevant documents which relate to curriculum development in the sub-region. It would be very useful to have one central place where a comprehensive view of the situation in the OECS States could be found. This could partly be by means of links to Ministries' own websites.

8 Assessment and monitoring

8.1 Working with the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)

The influence of public examination syllabuses is clearly significant for the curriculum in schools. CXC assesses those who continue to upper secondary in its main examination, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), and for those who progress beyond that they offer the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). In addition to this, CXC began in 2007 to offer a Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC), in order to support the introduction of universal secondary education. CXC also offers a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), for which the only country to submit entries in 2010 was Trinidad and Tobago. Finally, plans are being drawn up for a common primary school leaving examination in the Caribbean region, which would extend to the primary level the link between regional public assessments and the curriculum.

CXC works to ensure that its syllabuses are in line with the latest thinking on the curriculum. From the 2010 annual report it is noteworthy that the thinking behind many of their new syllabuses and syllabus revisions begins with the "ideal Caribbean person" concept that we referred to earlier.³⁸ In the section about CXC's corporate strategy, the annual report notes that it is working to create vocational assessments that provide "greater diversity and choice on which knowledge and careers may be built" and "help to cultivate the essentials of employability – attitude, behaviour and communication."³⁹ In the CSEC there is a good selection of employment-related subjects and the CCSLC "was developed to provide the learner with the competencies that will

³⁸ *Caribbean Examinations Council: Annual Report 2010*. CXC Headquarters, Barbados. Pages 37 – 40.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p.33

serve as a foundation for more advanced studies, the world of work and life as a citizen of the region.”⁴⁰

CXC’s strategy in the 2010 annual report also makes it clear that they either are, or intend to be, active in some of the areas we have discussed in this report. Concerning the endorsement of textbooks they are, with the approval of participating governments, working towards a centralized review process. They will be offering open and distance learning opportunities to both students and teachers in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning and NotesMaster. They intend with the University of the West Indies Open Campus to offer a professional development programme for teachers, which will deepen their knowledge and help them acquire new methods of delivering CXC examination courses. This programme will begin by focusing on the delivery of CCSLC and CSEC English and Mathematics courses. CXC are also looking into more ways in which they can assess wide-ranging employability skills, and with “University for Industry”, a UK government initiative, they are exploring an adult learning programme to transform skills and productivity through a range of flexible online courses.⁴¹

The vitality of CXC should be welcomed, since examinations are such a fundamental part of modern education systems. No one would benefit from an assessment body that was weak and lacked credibility. But there is an issue, for OECS, of its relationship with the CXC. Do the activities of CXC, and the fact that it maintains its own direct relations with the OECS States, reduce the space in which a revived OERU might work? The discussion in Section 7 above suggested that this should not be so. Indeed, as the CXC offers an increasingly diverse range of services to teachers and students, it will be useful for the OECS States to have a combined voice with which to speak, as well as their individual influence with CXC.

Anxieties have been expressed about the impact of CXC activities: that the CCSLC was intended to be a curriculum, but has turned into an exam; that a common primary school leaving examination could undermine important local efforts to monitor primary students’ progress; that the work of CXC’s subject panels can cut across the communication of Curriculum Officers with their schools; and that CXC has to increase for financial, not educational, reasons the numbers of students taking their examinations. But to allow such issues to loom too large would be to overlook the benefit to the region of having an independent and successful examining body. The familiar arguments for collaboration can also be used for the OECS territories’ relationship with CXC, which will include, for example, the value of working together on a common primary school leaving exam. What the above points do suggest is that there is work for the OECS States to do together with the CXC, to ensure the maximum educational benefits of their assessment activities in the sub-region.

⁴⁰ CXC website: www.cxc.org/examinations/ccslc

⁴¹ *Caribbean Examinations Council: Annual Report 2010*. CXC Headquarters, Barbados. Pages 32 – 35.

8.2 Assessment to support students' learning

The purposes for which assessments are given are key to our understanding of their impact on the curriculum. Much has been written recently about the kind of assessment which is used by teachers primarily to support students' learning. This is formative assessment, sometimes referred to as "assessment *for* learning" rather than "assessment *of* learning". The classroom strategies which have been proposed for formative assessment are very close to the strategies of interactivity and student responsibility which have been implied in other sections of this paper. As we said earlier, renewal of the curriculum will be introduced as much by the way it is taught as by new content. There is much to say about the place of formative assessment in the modern classroom. Its advocates claim that, properly implemented, it can have a more significant effect on students' learning than any other teaching strategy.⁴² A number of the teachers' documents produced by the OERU have advocated the use of formative assessment and they rightly remind us that assessment is not just a matter of setting examinations and tests.

The Model Education Bill states that there should be assessments at the end of each Key Stage (KS). These summative assessments will have a number of purposes. The assessment at the end of KS4 will mainly be the CSEC examinations, which are intended to recognize students' achievement, and to provide evidence to be used in making decisions about applications for further study or employment. At the other end of the age range, the KS1 assessment should have a mainly diagnostic purpose. It is important to identify as early as possible those children who seem not to be coping with school, particularly with reading.⁴³ At KS2 the uses to which the results will be put, whether achievement, monitoring, selection or diagnostic, will be decided by the individual States, which could have different policies about the purpose of this assessment. This will prove a challenge if a common end-of-primary test is to be developed. Even if the results are used to select students for secondary school, it would be advantageous to use the opportunity to transfer assessment information about the students' progress to secondary schools. To do this a profile of the students' relative achievements in different curriculum areas could be provided as well as the examination result. The KS2 assessment will also be used as part of a system for monitoring primary schools.

States could decide to merge the KS3 assessment with the CCSLC. This examination is broad in its coverage, aiming to assess students' attitudes and values as well as their knowledge and competencies. English and Maths are compulsory and three more subjects are needed for the qualification. Science, Languages and Social Studies are offered at CCSLC level, and a

⁴² William D. *Does assessment hinder learning?* given at an ETS Breakfast Seminar, on 11th July 2006. www.uk.toeic.eu

⁴³ OERU publications: 1) *Curriculum Development and Remediation*, Section 4, June 1998, and *Reading a Key to Success*, June 1998, a paper of advice for parents on how to help their children in reading. http://www.oecs.org/doc-lib/education-reform/cat_view/29-education-reform/76-curriculum-documents

wide range of CSEC and other vocational qualifications are offered. The focus on competencies is a notable move away from a pass/fail examination, in order to give support to students who might traditionally have failed to gain much from school at this stage. However, it is not the intention that the CCSEC is for 'the less able' and it is hoped that all students will participate. There is no individual student fee, but this leaves the issue of how the CCSLC will be paid for. Some States are only funding two subjects at present and some parents are saying that they do not see the need for the exam. Another issue about the CCSLC is that a good deal of reliance is put on teachers to carry out their part in the assessment well.

8.3 Monitoring schools' progress

A system for monitoring the progress of students will yield information about a school's progress in improving the education that it offers. Currently the examinations of the CXC are the main measures which provide this kind of data. The OECS Model Education Bill required States to publish a plan for assessment in their systems as was discussed above. The important point is that information comes back to schools about the effects that their efforts are having on the progress of their students. The need to empower schools and the need for the structures which make them accountable are described in John Middleton's paper, referred to earlier.⁴⁴

What must also be in place is the monitoring of teachers' progress. OERU already has a well-devised and agreed OECS Generic Teacher Appraisal Scheme. A questionnaire asks an observer to judge the teachers on their:

- Planning and organization
- Instructional process
- Classroom management
- Assessment
- Interpersonal relations
- Professionalism⁴⁵.

If the scheme is consistently applied and focused on the reformed teaching methods which are being promoted, it can provide data about teacher's progress in their classroom performance.

The same questionnaire could also be used by teachers themselves to make judgments about their own lessons. Collaboration and peer observation can be used, where the emphasis is on teachers reflecting on their own performance and thinking about how they can make improvements. As well as classroom observation, we have also mentioned earlier the need for professionals to have a sense of their own development as professionals, and to plan for their own improvement in their teaching. Professional development

⁴⁴ See Middleton J. *Skills Strategy for the OECS: a Report to the OECS and the World Bank*, April 2011. Pages 21 and 43

⁴⁵ *OECS Generic Teacher Appraisal Scheme*, Prepared by Dr. Veronica Marks, Consultant, Edited by Dr. Henry Hinds, Curriculum Specialist, OERU. April 2003.

plans are therefore also beneficial.

All monitoring strategies depend on the criteria that are used to make judgments. A map of desired teaching competencies can be drawn up, which can be used both for external monitoring and self-assessment by teachers. Such a checklist can be used to ensure that teachers' progress is monitored against the overall aims of the reform project. The OECS scheme above allows for variation where particular issue need to be highlighted in a specific appraisal. Overall, the scheme is still clearly focused on the objective of interactive teaching which the curriculum reforms require.

8.4 Recommendations for assessment and monitoring

The following are issues for collaborative discussion within OECS, about how to maintain or improve the current situation:

- 1 The value of a combined OECS voice in working with CXC, in addition to the individual States' work with CXC.
- 2 An OECS input into work which seeks to realize the benefits of the CCSLC for students.
- 3 Additional training and support for teachers responsible for running the CCSLC in their schools
- 4 Sub-regional support for the assessment of vocational and life skills in the CXC's examinations, which reflects a main strand in OECS's project for education reform.
- 5 Coordination between CXC subject panels and curriculum advisory groups run by Ministries of Education.
- 6 Collaboration with CXC in the areas of school textbook endorsement and teachers' professional development, further study and networking.
- 7 The fitness-for-purpose of examinations at KS2 and KS4 to provide useful information about schools' improvement by ensuring that useful feedback reaches teachers.
- 8 The implications for test development at KS2 that different states will have different uses for a common end of primary examination.
- 9 The potential benefits from end of primary assessments which produce transfer information about students to secondary schools.
- 10 The use of assessments at the end of KS1 to diagnose students with a need for additional assistance, before they reach the stage of transfer to secondary school.
- 11 The promotion of formative assessment techniques as a frequent teaching

strategy.

12 The range of school monitoring information which could be collected, in addition to examination results

13 Research on the effectiveness of the OCES teacher appraisal system.

14 Teacher appraisal to be linked to delivery of skills described in curriculum reform documents.

15 Supporting the inclusion of self- and peer-assessment by teachers themselves, as part of a teacher improvement programme.

16 How to encourage among teachers the idea of planning their own professional development.

9 Conclusion

The example of the OECS Teacher Appraisal Scheme is a good one on which to conclude this paper. It reminds us of the large amount of well-thought out work that has been done in collaboration with the OERU over the past years. It would be unwise to set that aside and move on to something different.

In the Executive Summary at the beginning of this report is an outline agenda for work with schools on embedding curriculum reforms and on harmonization of the curriculum development work being done by the OECS states.

This paper has sought to define what it would mean for the OECS to have a shared and dynamic curriculum development environment, in which the work that has already been done is built upon, since whatever is introduced into the curriculum will have to be embedded into the classroom. For that, the co-operation and enthusiasm of teachers will be essential.

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