



## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR CARICOM COUNTRIES

### *Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*

Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa, Montego Bay, Jamaica

May 24 – 25 2011



## Conference Report

Ministry of Education, Jamaica  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland  
The Commonwealth Secretariat  
and  
Caribbean Examinations Council

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

***INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR CARICOM COUNTRIES***

***Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education***

Montego Bay, Jamaica

May 24-25, 2011

Ministry of Education, Kingston, Jamaica

July 2012

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# PREFACE

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*Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador-at-Large to the Caribbean (ACS, CARICOM, OECS), Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago*

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland is very pleased in presenting this report on the outcomes of the *International Conference in Education for CARICOM countries: Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*. First of all, I want to express Finland's sincere gratitude to the Hon. Andrew Holness, now Prime Minister of Jamaica also with the education portfolio, who gracefully provided his message of greetings to this publication, and at the time of the Conference and its preparatory stage was the visionary Minister of Education and actively participated in the planning and in the Conference itself. This gratitude is extended to the entire team of the Ministry of Education of Jamaica and the participants in the preparatory meeting in Tortola, as well as the Planning Committee in Jamaica itself. Mrs. Sharon Neil, Deputy Chief Education Officer, worked as the Coordinator of the Conference and gained the admiration and affection of all of us with her dedication, skills and attitude.

We in Finland are very pleased that all CARICOM member countries save one, and many non-independent English speaking territories, plus Cuba and the Dominican Republic, participated in the conference, mostly at the Chief Education Officer level, and also sending the officer in charge of Curriculum Planning, as the organizers had suggested. The Conference gathered a great variety of actors in the field of education, also as truly competent lecturers, and as passionate participants. We thank them and we thank all the persons who provided effective services to the running of the Conference. We also thank the Government of the Netherlands for having contributed to the participation of two outstanding lecturers.

We must thank our other partners which were the Caribbean Examinations Council and Commonwealth of Learning. Many Caribbean Heads of State and Heads of Government had encouraged us to go ahead with this Conference, as had Dr. Len Ishmael, Director-General of OECS, and her team. I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Halden A. Morris who contributed so much to this Analytic Conference Report, in particular giving it a scientific frame and references, and to Ms. Hannele Halmeranta, who contributed to the drafting of the report.

It is widely known that the Caribbean education systems have been producing and still produce highly qualified professionals for service to their own country, but also for export to other labour markets. In this Conference it was often repeated that a crucial challenge to the development efforts of the Caribbean countries is to broaden the base of well-educated citizens. Many emphasised the need of quality education starting in early childhood. All speakers voiced support for better training and employment conditions for teachers. Naturally there was intensive debate on issues like should there be more testing, or less; what should be the balance of disseminating knowledge and creating capabilities; how does an individual child's brain development allow or inhibit formal learning at an early age.

Why did Finland sponsor this Conference? Given that Finland's educational achievements in the last decade when international comparisons have been made under OECD's PISA criteria, have been first ranking in the world, or at least always among the top group, there has been huge global interest in knowing what are the determinants of the success of Finland's boys and girls. We felt that rather than bring representatives from all the Caribbean states to Finland, we should start by bringing educational experts from Finland, and some other successful countries, to the Caribbean. From the outset it was felt that curriculum development would be the key issue.

When I am asked about our success in education, I like to answer that it is due to the high social standing of teachers in the Finnish society. In opinion surveys, the public gives the highest rating of prestige to teachers. In the Caribbean, the teacher profession is not usually so highly respected. Could there be a lesson here? Of course, each country can only proceed on the basis of its own history and culture. In Finland teachers, including kindergarten teachers, are university graduates. Teachers' salaries are on average level among all academic professions.

I remember that some 40 years ago I read a book called "Education and Ecstasy" by George Leonard (published in 1968), and it really opened my eyes, and I believe, of many other people. Education should not be torture, it should be fun. That is how you learn infinitely better. In Finland, we have invested a lot in research on special education, and research on learning abilities. There is great variance among individuals, and the brain of many children is not sufficiently developed for formal learning until they are about 7 years old. That is why we in Finland only start formal education at that age. Many, if not most, learn to read and write, and to do math, much earlier – but without any pressure, no testing, no comparing with other children, basically through games, play and their own initiative. Then indeed, education is fun and not torture.

One of the important characteristics of Finland's education system is that all pupils in all schools do well – and we only have public schools. There is no difference between achievement in urban and rural schools. Girls perform better in reading, due to the well-known fact that their brain capacity in that respect develops earlier than for boys. Boys tend to perform better in math. Boys should not be punished for slower learning when that is due to variance in gender development. Throughout the education system, school days are not exhaustingly long, there is plenty of time also for sport and outdoor activities, for art, literature, and humanities. There is little homework, because curricula are so designed that the necessary capabilities are developed in class, and through well designed school books. There are no inspectors; instead, there is self-evaluation. Curriculum development is decentralized so that each school and each teacher has great liberty in deciding which materials and which procedures to apply.

It would be naive to think that Finland's educational system could be transplanted as such in the Caribbean. There are no shortcuts. Finland's educational system is the result of a long democratic development in a society that values equity and transparency with almost no corruption. But through good education, social evils can also be impacted. Finland's educational system has benefitted from the fact that there has been a relative political consensus on developing education through decades despite government changes. However, there are certain aspects of which application would be useful to consider in every country's education system. Firstly, it is important to focus on enhancing the status of the teacher profession and teachers' work, as well as

improving teachers' professional competences, and their working conditions. Secondly, better consideration of pupils' needs and individual differences in teaching arrangements is crucial. Thirdly, another important aspect is moving from an evaluation system that classifies pupils and schools towards an evaluation system that supports learning.

As the Montego Bay Conference was a technical meeting among specialists, it did not have a mandate to give agreed recommendations to Governments. However, this report serves as a broad inventory of various proposals made by speakers, panelists, and workshops. Undoubtedly our participants have already taken these proposals home for the benefit of their own administrations. It is now up to the Ministries of Education to see which of the recommendations are relevant and workable.

It is my earnest hope that this publication would help the Caribbean educational authorities, professionals and the public at large in taking steps to make the education in their countries more inclusive, more enjoyable for their children and more successful. And thereby, to transform their societies.

# ENDORSEMENT

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*The Hon. Andrew Holness, Minister of Education, Jamaica*

I am pleased to be associated with the publication of the report on the *International Conference in Education for CARICOM Countries*, which was held in Jamaica May 24-25, 2011. Jamaica was honoured to have been selected by the Finnish Government to host this regionally significant event which brought together educators from twenty two Ministries of Education in CARICOM/OECS, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. The strategies employed by Finland and other highly successful education systems which were articulated at the conference resonated well with the strategic direction and policies which the Government of Jamaica is pursuing in order to ensure that our education system becomes the vehicle through which we achieve full economic independence and personal fulfillment.

The transformation of our education system is well underway, and we are tackling some of the difficult, deep-seated and controversial issues which for too long have stymied the country's development and thwarted the efforts of our people to achieve their fullest potential. My administration is resolute and committed not only to the process of transforming education, but also to the process of transformation *through* education. The policies of transformation seek to embrace the fundamental principles of inclusiveness, equity, and accountability as we pursue the goal of high quality education for all, with the firm conviction that as we improve education we are also improving lives.

As part of our transformation thrust we have so far introduced:

- The National Student Registry to identify, document, and track the performance of every student, and adequately plan for the provision of their educational needs.
- The Competence Based Transition Policy, which is a departure from social promotion, and which will, in effect break the cycle of illiteracy by ensuring that students entering secondary schools are able to access the curriculum.
- The Alternative Secondary Transition Education Programme (ASTEP), will provide remedial instructions in a supporting and caring learning environment for students who have not mastered literacy skills at the Grade 4 level.
- The School Accountability Matrix provides a management framework for the effective and efficient delivery of educational service at the primary level.

The initiatives we have implemented have been bearing fruit; as we have seen over the last three years - an increase in the number of students leaving primary school literate and numerate, improved performance levels among students entering secondary school, and increased parental and community support for the schools. We expect to continue seeing improvements in education in Jamaica as our transformation efforts gain momentum.

Notwithstanding the strides we have made, however, we acknowledge that challenges remain and that there are useful lessons to be learned from the successes and 'best practices' information contributed by the more highly effective education systems, which were shared during the conference. I therefore welcome this report and congratulate the government of Finland and those who have contributed to its publication. I expect that its widespread dissemination will inform the review of policies and practices of regional Ministries of Education as we seek to achieve the equity, quality and sustainability that are hallmarks of Finland and other successful education systems.

## ABBREVIATIONS and ACRONYMS

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ACS	Association of Caribbean States
ASTEP	Alternative Secondary Transition Education Programme
CAP	Career Advancement Programme
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCETT	Caribbean Center for Excellence in Teacher Training
CCSLC	Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CEO	Chief Education Officer
CKLN	Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
EC	Early Childhood
ECED	Early Childhood Education
ECERS	Early Childhood Environments Rating Scale
EFA	Education for All
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICS	International Council for Science
IRPC	Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum
JTC	Jamaica Teaching Council
LO	Learning Outcome
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCB	National Commercial Bank
NCTVET	National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NICD	Netherlands Institute of Curriculum Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OFSTED	Office of Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SEA	Secondary Entrance Assessment
SSEE	Secondary School Entrance Examinations
QEC	Quality Education Circles
UNESCO	United Nations Education Social & Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
UWI	University of the West Indies

# SUMMARY

## Introduction

The International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries "*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*", was held at the Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 24-25 May, 2011. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland through its Ambassador to Venezuela and the Caribbean sponsored the conference, with support from the Commonwealth of Learning, the Caribbean Examinations Council and the Ministry of Education, Jamaica which organized the event. The main purpose of the conference was to expose Ministries of Education in the region to solutions and best practices in education which have been achieved by some successful education systems internationally, and to provide an opportunity for Ministries of Education within CARICOM to share their own experiences and successful practices.

One hundred and forty six participants drawn from twenty two Caribbean countries attended the conference, among them highly placed representatives of Ministries of Education in the region, representatives of international funding agencies, local educators and students. Broader participation was facilitated by the transmission of some conference events on one local radio station and by live streaming of part of the first day on the web page of the Ministry of Education of Jamaica. The web page of the conference is [www.moec.gov.jm/caricomconference](http://www.moec.gov.jm/caricomconference).

## Opening Ceremony

Dr. Simon Clarke set the tone for the conference by referencing previous efforts to bring together education specialists and practitioners in the region and emphasised the urgent need for the development of the affective domain in students and teachers, alongside improvements in academic outcomes. Opening statements were made by the conference sponsors and organizers - Mr. Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador of Finland to CARICOM, Mrs. Audrey Sewell, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Jamaica, Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch of the Caribbean

Examinations Council and Ambassador Burchell Whiteman of the Commonwealth of Learning. The conference was declared open by the Honourable Andrew Holness, Minister of Education, Jamaica.

## Speakers

Experts in education from Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, USA and the Caribbean region addressed the two day conference.

## Presentations

The conference was organised into five main strands:

Learning for Earning, Learning for Living

Achieving Universal Quality Education

Achieving Quality Primary Education - Curriculum Development

Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education – Mathematics, Science and Literacy

Accountability in Education

The presentations were followed by discussions and there were two working group sessions which provided opportunity for participants to share their own views and challenges and propose solutions.

Among the policies and best practices which emerged as most relevant for the region are:

- Systematic development of education and educational policies.
- Deliberate emphasis on quality education for all.
- Ensuring a child-centred curriculum that is balanced, free from social and cultural biases, and that engenders a love for learning, that builds a strong base in literacy and critical thinking skills, and emphasises personal and character development.
- Recognising the role and importance of teachers

- Emphasising research, development and innovation
- Leveraging advances in the field of Information and Communication Technology which puts a wide range of tools to enhance instructional delivery at the disposal of teachers
- Promoting the role of school and community libraries as a learning centre for students, teachers and parents
- Developing legislation to govern aspects of the teaching profession
- Moving from punishments and excessive testing of students towards providing students with the support they need to enjoy their schooling and achieve desirable learning outcomes
- Consulting all stakeholders and promoting co-operation among all actors, including parents

## **Conclusion**

The two day conference saw presentations on a variety of successful practices and policies in education from Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, the USA, and the Caribbean countries. It succeeded in summing up and discussing the current educational practices, challenges and problems faced by the Caribbean region, as articulated by high level officials within Ministries of Education, education practitioners, and representatives of parents associations and students at the secondary and tertiary levels. Among various educational events in the region, the conference succeeded in deepening the discussions on the improvement of education provided Caribbean leaders and educators with valuable tools for utilisation in the development of their education systems.

# 1. CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

## 1.1 Introduction

The International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries "*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*", held at the Hilton Rose Hall Resort & Spa in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 24-25 May, 2011, was the culmination of a series of meetings between the Finnish government and political leaders in the Caribbean region. In addition to the English speaking CARICOM countries, representatives from Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic were also invited to participate in the Conference.

The first planning meeting of the Conference was held in Tortola, British Virgin Islands, on September 15, 2010, in conjunction with the meeting of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Ministers of Education. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Caribbean education sector including: The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), Commonwealth of Learning, CARICOM, Caribbean Development Bank, OECS, University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus, University of the West Indies Open Campus, UNICEF, and World Bank, as well as representatives of the Finnish Government. At that Ministerial Meeting Finland's representative was invited by the OECS to make a presentation on that country's education system focusing on the secondary level of the Finnish education system. Mrs. Irmeli Halinen, Head of Curriculum Development of the Finnish National Board of Education made the presentation.

The second planning meeting was convened in Kingston, Jamaica, on 24 January, 2011, and was attended by representatives of the Finnish Government and the planning committee of the Conference. Also present at that meeting was The Honorable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Education of Jamaica (Appendix 3).

The Conference addressed recent advances in educational theory and practice and shared good practices from Finland, Canada, the Netherlands and the USA as well as from the Caribbean. The Conference was funded by the Finnish Government and organized by the Ministry of Education of Jamaica, the Caribbean Examinations Council and the Commonwealth of Learning in collaboration with the Embassy of Finland to CARICOM.

Heading the list of one hundred and forty six participants drawn from 22 Caribbean countries (See Appendix 1) was the Honourable Andrew Fahie, Minister of Education of the British Virgin Islands. The Conference participants included two participants from each country: the officer responsible for curriculum development and a representative from a public educational institution, teachers' union or university in each territory. Also participating were political decision makers, academics and professionals. Students from several Jamaican schools and the main universities were also in attendance.

The Conference presenters included internationally recognised experts from Finland, Canada, the Netherlands, and the USA who shared their experiences with the Caribbean education professionals. Speakers from the CARICOM countries addressed the outstanding achievements as well challenges common to the Caribbean region. The conference was organized in four focus areas and spread across five sessions.

These tracks synchronize well with the educational trends and activities that are currently taking place globally. The sessions of the conference were:

1. Learning for Earning, Learning for Living
2. Achieving Universal Quality Education
3. Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education 1
4. Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education 2
5. Accountability in Education

Each strand was followed by rich, open discussion with participants commenting on the presentations and asking questions for clarification. The programme also included two working sessions, the first working session focused on early childhood and primary education and the second focused on four areas - the role and importance of teachers; transformation of the education system; closing gender performance gaps and utilisation of research in transformation. (Appendix 2)

The conference proceedings were covered by the Jamaican and Regional media. Day 1 of the Conference was transmitted on the radio station RJR 94 FM. The first part of the first day was streamed live on the web page of the Ministry of Education of Jamaica. The web page of the conference is [www.moec.gov.jm/caricomconference](http://www.moec.gov.jm/caricomconference).

## 2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Education in the Caribbean Region

#### 2.1.1 Background

The International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries, *Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*, synchronized well with initiatives aimed at achieving regional developmental goals. One such goal to achieve Universal Quality Education is aligned with the overarching Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which view education as a tool for development. According to the World Bank (2005), "education creates choices and opportunities for people, reduces the twin burdens of poverty and disease, and gives them a stronger voice in society. For all nations it creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizens able to compete and cooperate globally, opening doors to economic and social prosperity". Consistent with this direction, the objectives of raising the quality of teaching and learning have become a critical priority of governments in the context of national development, in meeting educational goals as approved by the United Nations through the Millennium Declaration.

The Conference also followed on initiatives such as those initiated by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) which support the development of education in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, President Luis Alberto Moreno of the IDB has stated: "We believe that education is critical for raising the quality of life in the region and for reducing poverty and inequality. The IDB has identified three strategic areas as keys to success: ensuring the best possible early childhood development for all children up to six years of age; improving the quality of teaching through better teacher training; and raising the skills and competencies that young people acquire in school so as to facilitate the transition from school to work. These goals are among those that the countries of the region have set for themselves in the Education Goals for 2021." Educational improvement has been a priority for the IDB and other organizations in line with growing concern over education in recent years on the part of governments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Caribbean consists of countries with varying levels of social, economic, cultural and political development. Consequently, severe challenges will be experienced in achieving Universal Quality Education as a regional goal. Although several countries have made strides towards achieving Universal Quality Primary Education, the pre-primary and primary education in many is characterized by overcrowding in the classroom, inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate number of trained teachers and limited teaching-learning resources.

Roberts (2011) challenged Caribbean educators to act when he wrote "the idea of a contracting world and the development of ever expanding global communication networks challenge Caribbean educators with the reality that they too are a part of a global discourse and their practices part of a global trend". This conference represented a rich exchange of ideas emanating from experiences gained over several years in many countries. The theme "*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*" created an appropriate forum for educators to share their experiences and effective practices and establish partnerships. This opportunity to share experiences also provided educators in the region a platform on which they could build to achieve the established goals of quality education.

### 3. OPENING CEREMONY



From left to right: *Dr. Simon Clarke, Ambassador Mikko Pyhälä, the Hon. Andrew Holness, Mrs. Audrey V. Sewell, Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch and Ambassador Burchell Whiteman*

The International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries "*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*" was opened on May 24, 2011. The Ceremony was chaired by Dr. Simon Clarke, former UNESCO Director and Education Advisor for the Caribbean. The ceremonial opening of the Conference began with the playing of the national anthems of Jamaica and Finland.

The Ceremony which was attended by approximately 150 persons was addressed by Mrs. Audrey V. Sewell, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education of Jamaica, Mr. Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador of Finland to CARICOM, Ambassador Burchell Whiteman, Chair of Commonwealth of Learning, and Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch, Pro-Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council. The main speaker was the Honorable Andrew Holness, Minister of Education of Jamaica.



Dr. Simon Clarke, former UNESCO Director and Education Advisor for the Caribbean

### **3.1. Chairman's Opening Remarks**

The Chairman in his opening remarks posited that this Conference was intended to build on previous efforts to bring together education specialists and practitioners in the region. Specifically, the conference would promote quality education by identifying and sharing good practices in education and finding good ways for teaching and learning. He emphasised the urgent need for the development of the affective domain in students and teachers – love, care, sharing, and feeling. Dr. Clarke concluded by confirming that the objectives of the conference were consistent with the UNSECO Strategy for Peace which includes respect for life, rejecting violence, sharing with others, listening to understand, rediscovering solidarity, and preserving the planet.

### **3.2. Greetings by Mrs. Audrey V. Sewell, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education of Jamaica**

Mrs. Sewell welcomed all members of the audience including those who would join the conference via the web page of the Ministry of Education of Jamaica at [www.moec.gov.jm](http://www.moec.gov.jm) through live streaming and those who would join on radio RJR 94 FM. She reiterated that the collaborative platform provided by the conference enabled Caribbean countries to benefit from strategies used in Finland in Reading, Science, Mathematics and problem solving techniques. The conference would present good practices also from the Caribbean region. She further highlighted the fact that the conference, following the UNESCO Workshop in St Lucia in December 2010, came at a most opportune time when the Caribbean Region was moving with a sense of urgency and purpose to implement new programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the education system.



Mr. Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador of Finland to CARICOM

### **3.3 Statement by Mr. Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador of Finland to CARICOM**

Ambassador Pyhälä welcomed all participants to the conference and emphasised the importance of having persons from as many Caribbean countries as possible among the conference participants. He made reference to the twenty two countries and territories represented and expressed appreciation to speakers from Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, the USA and the Caribbean who agreed to present at the conference.

Ambassador Pyhälä drew attention to the gains made by Finland despite the country's challenges of not having much natural resources and very little economic resources in the earlier years. He posited that education needs to be carefully planned, well organized, executed by qualified teachers, and sufficiently financed. Education, he added, must be open and accessible by all.

Ambassador Pyhälä made a number of critical points as it relates Finland's strategies and gains towards the development of the country's education system:

- Educational opportunities and achievements played a major role in making Finland the best place in the world to live, according to Newsweek in August 2010.
- Finland focused on developing a knowledge-based economy because it had few natural resources.
- Finland does not spend as much on education as some other countries but gets excellent results.
- No one has fallen behind. Both boys and girls achieve good results, although the performance of girls is better.
- A distinguishing feature of Finnish education is learning through play at the early stage.

Ambassador Pyhälä pointed out that the conference was an example of Finland's active and diverse co-operation with the Caribbean countries. Finland, he stated, wanted to give ideas and share practices which could be adopted in the Caribbean, not transplant its own education system. He noted that Finland has

diplomatic relations with every Caribbean country and an honorary consulate in almost every country in the region. Consequently, there were interesting connections and different kinds of exchanges in many sectors between Finland and the Caribbean.

#### **3.4. Remarks by Ambassador Burchell Whiteman, Chair, Commonwealth of Learning**

Ambassador Whiteman saluted the Governments of Finland and Jamaica on their decision to stage this conference and to facilitate Caribbean participants who are policy makers and practitioners. He reminded the audience that the Commonwealth of Learning seeks to support learning through open and distance mechanisms for development of the Caribbean and beyond, and facilitated the dissemination and use of materials generated through this initiative throughout the region and beyond.

#### **3.5. Remarks by Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch, Pro-Registrar, Caribbean Examinations Council**

Mr. Cumberbatch reminded the audience of the reason they were gathered in the particular location. He provided some statistics on the performance of students in the region, indicating that one fifth of the students sitting the Caribbean Secondary Examinations Council (CSEC) examinations earn five CSEC subjects in a single sitting. This, he indicated, is relatively good performance and claimed that this will provide excellent human capital for the region. He, however, reminded the audience that the Caribbean community requires far more than this number to make major economic gains.

### 3.6. Keynote Address by the Honourable Andrew Holness, Minister of Education of Jamaica



The Honourable Andrew Holness, Minister of Education of Jamaica

The Conference was declared open by the Honorable Andrew Holness, following his keynote address. Minister Holness expressed his gratitude to Finland for making the conference a reality and for sharing its experiences, and thanked Finland for its continued active partnership with the Caribbean region.

Minister Holness emphasised the importance of sharing good practices in education and cautioned that the quality of education should not be compromised. Despite economic challenges, access and quality must be pursued simultaneously. A culture of excellence and accountability must be promoted from the early childhood to the tertiary level. Minister Holness pointed out that with the right leadership and vision a country can overcome its limitations and challenges. He stated that Finland has addressed the critical areas of educational management and was a positive model, having maintained equity, efficiency and sustainability, while achieving excellence.

Minister Holness outlined several initiatives designed to enhance the Jamaican education system. At the early childhood level, Minister Holness indicated that the Ministry is targeting parenting support; early screening and intervention; teacher education; a child-centered curriculum; and upgrading of the physical infrastructure. He reminded the audience that full literacy is an important national goal in Jamaica, the Ministry having established 2015 as a target for Universal Literacy at the primary level. This target was being pursued within the context of an all inclusive system which supports the Ministry's motto that *"Every child can learn, every child must learn"*.

Among the initiatives which Minister Holness highlighted are:

- The Competence-Based Transition Policy - no child is eligible to transition to the secondary level without being certified literate at the Grade Four level.
- The introduction of the Alternative Secondary Transition Programme (ASTEP) for children who will not transition immediately to the secondary level at the end of grade 6. A key component of the ASTEP is the focus on the building of literacy skills as well as the honing of affective skills such as ambition and self-esteem.
- The establishment of the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC), which will seek to register and license teachers. The sharing of best practices will be facilitated through Quality Education Circles.
- The implementation of the National Parenting Support Policy and the National Parenting Commission to ensure a tripartite relationship among parents, community and school.
- The establishment of a National College of Educational Leadership to promote effective school leadership through training for principals in leadership and management.
- The establishment of the National Education Inspectorate to assess the quality of educational delivery and student outcomes.
- The development and promotion of a system of accountability to ensure that children receive the best education possible.
- The development and implementation of the Career Advancement Programme (CAP), designed to put a cap on the number of unskilled and uncertified workers which stem from our school system.

### 3.7 Entertainment

During the Opening Ceremony entertainment was provided by students from the Cornwall College Choir and the Herbert Morrison Technical High School Band.



Left to right: Herbert Morrison Technical High School Band and Cornwall College Choir

# 4. PRESENTATIONS

## SESSION 1

### 4. LEARNING FOR EARNING, LEARNING FOR LIVING

“Learning for Earning, Learning for Living” was addressed during the first session of the conference. This session featured two speakers, Mr. John Yearwood, World Editor, The Miami Herald, USA and Mrs. Belinda Williams, Manager for Group Corporate Communications, the National Commercial Bank (NCB) in Jamaica. The session was moderated by Professor Stafford A. Griffith of the University of the West Indies, Mona.

#### 4.1. Background

The economic realities of the Caribbean suggest that the type and quality of education provided in the region should inculcate certain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are adequate for preparing the individual to face the realities of a harsh economy. According to Jim Haas (2010) “All this emphasis on learning for earning is well and good, and surely understandable in the continuing aftermath of the Great Recession. Helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to earn a living and contribute to the general welfare is a fundamental purpose of schooling and an obvious justification for society's investment; but it is not the sole purpose or the only justification”.

Haas (2010) stated that the historian Paul Gagnon, viewing schools through the lens of democracy suggested three aims: 1) preparing young people for work; 2) citizenship and 3) private culture. Within this framework, schools empower citizens to participate in the economy, to serve the community, have an informed voice in public decisions, and enjoy a rich personal life nourished by the freedom to choose from all that the human experience has to offer. Gagnon also emphasised that, in a democracy, government-supported schools, at least, have the obligation to offer a first-class programme of studies to every student. According to him, “there are no second-class citizens, so there can be no second-class schooling; no mere training for worker bees; no Delta indoctrinations from the Brave New World”. Both presenters of this session supported Gagnon's views of schools through the lens of democracy.



Mr. John Yearwood, Miami Herald



Mrs. Belinda Williams, NCB

## **4.2. Summary of Presentations**

### **4.2.1. Mr John Yearwood**

At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Yearwood reminisced on his early upbringing in Trinidad and Tobago, and drew attention to the quality education he received. He compared his Caribbean exposure to what obtains in the United States of America (USA) and concluded that the education obtained in the Caribbean was superior. He, however, made several recommendations which could positively impact education systems within the Caribbean. In his recommendations, he advised regional participants to examine successes in other countries outside the region and modify these to fit Caribbean circumstances; commit to winning the century with a strong science curriculum; commit to overseas training, for example, in Canada and the USA; harness the potential of early childhood learners and teachers; have excellent educators in all classrooms; get other family members, apart from parents, involved in the educational development of students.

Mr. Yearwood referred to the educational successes of Finland and Singapore and to the visit of Miami Herald's leading columnist Andres Oppenheimer to Finland where he met among others the President of Finland, Tarja Halonen.

### **4.2.2. Mrs. Belinda Williams**

Mrs. Williams outlined the National Commercial Bank Foundation's involvement in promoting human development through learning and educational growth and its commitment to developing education in Jamaica. She stressed the importance of public-private partnerships for educational development. Her presentation centres around the question: *"How can one get government schools/education systems to use high impact strategies/research to improve education?"* She also used the opportunity to clarify the support of the national Commercial Bank, Jamaica to improvement in education in Jamaica through its fee payment programme. This, she declared, was designed to provide students with support to access CSEC subjects in Business Education. It was evident, however, that maximum benefits were not being derived from NCB's intervention since many students were not adequately prepared for the examinations. The following key questions/issues were also raised in her presentation:

1. How can parents be brought on board to aid in raising performance of students?
2. What are some of the challenges impeding students' learning and early performance in their job functions?
3. How has public/private partnerships facilitated education?
4. What measures of accountability were incorporated in the support provided by the private sector?

## **4.3. Discussion**

The presentations prompted the following discussion points:

- Educational leaders in the Caribbean should:
  - Develop strategies to attract more public-private partnerships in education.
  - Develop strategies to foster greater collaboration among stakeholders
  - Solicit support from the media to promote educational activities

- Familiarise themselves with and incorporate the elements of quality education in their planning and implementation.
- The education system should:
  - Provide training for parents.
  - Create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.
  - Establish mechanisms for accountability in public private partnerships
- Caribbean curriculum developers should design curriculum/programmes with uniqueness so as to gain a competitive edge.

# 5. PRESENTATIONS

## SESSION 2

### 5. ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL QUALITY EDUCATION

“Achieving Universal Quality Education” was addressed during the second session of the conference. This session featured three speakers, Mrs. Irmeli Halinen of the Finnish National Board of Education, Dr. Didacus Jules of the Caribbean Examinations Council, and Dr. Rose Davies of the Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica. The session was moderated by Ambassador Burchell Whiteman.

#### 5.1. Background

Universal quality education should not be taken for granted but is by no means an easy target to be achieved. Most countries in the Caribbean have incorporated strategic measures to secure success in meeting this target. The challenge of providing adequate funding to provide the ingredients such as an appropriate physical environment, adequately trained teachers, appropriate curriculum and equal opportunities for all students across the Caribbean has increased significantly in recent times.

Azim Premji (2006) in his article “What will it take to achieve Universal Quality Education?” published in the anniversary issue of *Business Today* outlined four essential ingredients for achieving universal quality education:

- Creating the necessary learning conditions;
- Resolving systemic, historic and cultural inequity;
- Enhancing appropriateness of curriculum;
- Radical re-engineering of the system.

He stressed that “we are still a long way from offering every child quality access to a schools with sufficient classrooms, toilets, drinking water, play ground, teachers, learning material, quality mid-day meals, timely text books, etc.”. He suggested that “today’s top-down control structure of education management needs to be replaced with a structure with the child at the centre. For the teacher, the child’s context, status, preferences and interests become the primary input to develop curriculum. The school and community, in turn, support the teacher with physical and developmental resources that are required. The local government official now supports and mentors the schools” and ceases “being a controller. In this flat concentric structure, management, autonomy and accountability shifts to the school.”

According to UNESCO (2011), “the Dakar Framework for Action, adopted by 164 governments in 2000, is one of the most comprehensive, wide-ranging and ambitious of all commitments undertaken by the international community. It pledges to expand learning opportunities for every young adult and child and to achieve specific targets in key areas by 2015”. It is evident that the educational landscape in the Caribbean is somewhat similar across the various countries and to some extent has features of what obtains internationally. All countries in the Caribbean are making efforts to achieve the targets established. They embrace early

childhood education and have established pre-primary education facilities, albeit many are private entities. All countries also have a well established primary education system and have reported achieving universal quality education attendance target at this level. UNESCO (2007) reported that several Caribbean Countries including Cuba, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and Aruba achieved net enrolment ratios (NER) of at least 90% at the pre-primary level without instituting compulsory pre-primary attendance laws.

Table 1 presents a sample of the education system across the Caribbean and Table 2 shows the 2007 enrolment of pre-primary and primary students and the amount spent in US\$ on each student per annum in selected Caribbean countries. Also included in Table 2 is the percent GDP spent on education by each country and the percentage of trained teachers at the primary level.

**Table 1: Caribbean Systems of Education**

<p><b>Notes on Caribbean Systems of Education (Selected Countries):</b></p> <p><b>Belize:</b> Primary education consists of 8 grades (including 2 K) and secondary level of 4 grades which are called Forms.</p> <p><b>Dominica:</b> Primary education consists of 7 grades (including 1 K). Secondary level consists of 5 Forms. (Senior primary level consists of 3 grades (after grade 7 of primary).</p> <p><b>Grenada:</b> Primary education consists of 7 grades (including 1 K). Secondary school consists of 5 Forms. (Senior primary education consists of 3 grades (after grade 7)).</p> <p><b>Guyana:</b> Primary education consists of 6 grades. Secondary education consists of 5 Forms.</p> <p><b>Jamaica:</b> Primary education consists of 6 grades. Secondary level education is offered in two cycles. The first cycle consists of grades 7 to 9 followed by a second cycle of 2 years in grades 10 and 11.</p> <p><b>St. Kitts &amp; Nevis:</b> Primary education consists of 7 grades (including 1 K). Secondary school consists of 5 Forms.</p> <p><b>St. Lucia:</b> Primary education consists of 7 grades (including 1 K). Secondary school consists of 5 Forms. (Senior primary level consists of 3 grades (after grade 7 of primary).</p> <p><b>St Vincent and the Grenadines:</b> Primary education consists of 7 grades (including 1 K). Secondary school consists of 5 Forms. (Senior primary level consists of 2 grades (after grade 7) of primary).</p> <p><b>Trinidad &amp; Tobago:</b> Primary education level consists of 7 grades (2 K and 5 standards). Secondary education is made up of 5 Forms. (Senior primary consists of two grades after standard 5).</p>
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Source: The World Bank - Human Development Department, 2005.

Table 2 reveals that during the 2007 academic year, nine selected countries in the Caribbean region registered 222,000 pre-primary and 646,000 primary students of which approximately 50% were male for both groups. These students were accommodated at an approximate cost of US\$933.80 per student and taught by a pool of teachers of which a significant percentage was untrained (56.8 % pre-primary and 32.5 % primary). Although current records indicate that the pool of untrained teachers has been significantly reduced during the last decade, it is evident that the Caribbean's pre-primary and primary education systems are still plagued with a significant number of untrained teachers and that there were wide disparities among countries. The Conference heard that in the Caribbean, teachers at the early childhood level are the least trained. In some instances infant/pre-primary schools are operating without a single trained teacher.

TABLE 2

Pre-Primary and Primary School Enrolment in Selected Caribbean Countries (2007)

Country	% GDP spent on Primary Education (per annum)	US\$ spent on each Primary Student (per annum)	Pre-primary Students	Primary Students G1-UP	% Trained Pre-Primary Teachers	% Trained Primary Teachers
Barbados	2.0	-	6,000	23,000	50	70
Belize	2.4	767	5,000	52,000	9	41
Dominica	1.8	1,082	2,000	9,000	-	65
Grenada	-	-	3,000	14,000	42	69
Guyana	2.0	372	28,000	109,000	53	58
Jamaica	2.4	1,155	142,000	310,000	-	-
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	2.5	1,293	4,000	16,000	59	78
St. Kitts & Nevis	-	-	2,000	6,000	46	62
Trinidad & Tobago	-	-	30,000	130,000	-	89
TOTAL/AVERAGE	2.18%	933.8	222,000	646,000		

Source: UNESCO – EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2010.

In the wider Caribbean context where states are separated by large masses of water and they possess diversified social and cultural dispositions as well as differing political outlooks, collaborative efforts to improve quality education have proven quite challenging in the past. With modern technology it is likely that a solution for this restriction is forthcoming. The Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN) is one such organization that is particularly interested in harnessing the collaborative efforts of the Caribbean region. This entity, utilizing the Caribbean research and education network, C@ribNET plans to bring together educators and researchers as an essential community of interest to share information and experiences. According to the CKLN, targeting Caribbean educators, researchers and research institutions will not only facilitate increased intra-regional collaboration through connectivity, but also strengthen international cooperation for collaborating in areas of mutual interest.

5.2 Summary of Presentations



From left to right: Ambassador Burchell Whiteman, Dr. Didacus Jules, Mrs. Irmeli Halinen and Dr. Rose Davies

### **5.2.1. Supporting Learning to Achieve Better Results: The Finnish Experience by Mrs. Irmeli Halinen, Head of Curriculum Development, Finnish National Board of Education.**

Mrs. Halinen in her presentation gave a brief profile of Finland with focus on the Finnish education system. Mrs. Halinen informed that Finland is a small Nordic welfare state of 5.3 million inhabitants situated in Northern Europe. The country has two official languages: Finnish (91.2 %) and Swedish (5.5 %). The Finnish education system is divided into early childhood education, one-year pre-primary education, 9-year basic education (with the possibility of 10<sup>th</sup> year), upper secondary education (general upper secondary education or upper secondary vocational education and training), universities and polytechnics. Mrs. Halinen alluded to the 5.8% of Gross Domestic Programme (GDP) provided by the Finnish government to support education. She pointed out that the education provided in Finland is based on the basic principles of equity, equality and high quality, and the focus of the whole system is on supporting good teaching and learning. She indicated that in order to develop inclusive, high quality education, the entire system had to be developed. This includes all persons inclusive of those who are physically challenged and those with learning disabilities – all are entitled to basic education.

In order to develop inclusive, high quality education one needs to develop the whole system. This includes education strategy and policy guidelines, coherence between national, local and school strategies, structures of the education system, governance and leadership, teacher education, working methods and school culture, support in learning and wellbeing, learning environment and materials, pupil assessment, and evaluation of learning results and the quality of education. In this systemic development approach, it is important to know where to focus; what are the important goals; how to connect all people in education to these goals; how to locate self between the past and the future; how to organize development work towards these goals; how to make people see the steps taken and be proud of their achievement; and how to evaluate the development critically and take new steps. One needs to understand the past and present, recognize weaknesses and build on strengths, but at the same time, one needs to be able to think about the challenges of the future, and draw conclusions by looking at both directions. Mrs. Halinen also stressed the importance of being patient and accepting that development takes time. At the same time, one must not accept features in the system that deteriorate conditions for good teaching and learning. Flexibility, readiness to changes and coherence are essential.

Mrs. Halinen presented various perspectives on how to achieve better learning results using Finland as example. With regard to the early childhood education, the Finnish families are supported in many ways by the state and municipalities. Parents are entitled to 43 weeks' parental leave and allowance. They have a right to receive the child home care allowance immediately after parental leave until the youngest child is 3 years old or enters municipal day care. In Finland the municipal authorities provide the early childhood care and education in day-care centres (kindergartens) or as family day-care. Over 90 % of the early childhood care and education is provided by the municipal authorities under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. According to the National Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, the early childhood care and education promotes children's healthy growth, development and learning. There are different fee categories according to the family size and income level. By law, kindergarten teachers must have Bachelor's Degrees and nurses upper secondary level degrees.

In Finland, it is a legal requirement for the municipalities to provide pre-primary education for 6-year-olds. Pre-primary education is voluntary for families, but as much as 97 % of 6-year-old children participate. The aim is to promote children's favourable growth and learning, healthy sense of self-esteem and readiness for studies through play and other child-centred activities. Pre-primary education is organized either in schools or in day-care centres. It is based on early intervention, and the task is to recognize learning difficulties and developmental problems as early as possible and organize individual support as soon as possible. The system benefits from a multi-professional and community approach. Teachers work together with parents and with health and social authorities. Parents are actively involved in planning processes of education, especially of individual goals and support.

According to Mrs. Halinen, Finland's education system is inclusive and flexible. Systematic studying starts only at the age of seven. Nine-year compulsory basic education is the same for all children, but it is flexible and takes into account their individual needs – there is no streaming or tracking in basic education, and the drop out is only 0.3 %. There is no high-stakes, national testing in basic education, but instead very strong support systems. After completing basic education, pupils can choose the tenth voluntary year or apply for a study place either in general (more academic) or vocational upper secondary education. After basic education, 96 % of pupils continue their studies immediately. There are no blockades for studying - all pathways take you to the university level if you want to.

In Finland, all parts of the steering and curriculum system support teaching and learning, and the good interaction between the teacher and the learner. The intensive interaction and co-operation among different levels (national, municipal, school) of action and among different stakeholders are the means for finding knowledge and common understanding. Instead of controlling afterwards, Finland invests on good pre-conditions for the high quality of education. Quality is based on national standards given by Education Acts and Degrees, National Core Curricula, national teacher qualification criteria, as well as on financial guidance, internal (self) evaluation and external evaluation.

Mrs Halinen emphasised that Finland does not invest much on heavy controlling mechanisms. There are no inspections, no nationwide testing, and no ranking lists in pre-primary or basic education. Education providers are obliged by law to conduct self-evaluation and they use national quality criteria as tools. National assessment of learning results is based on samples, 10 % of the age cohort. There are tests in two or three subjects every year, provided by the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE). University institutes take care of international assessments like PISA. National thematic evaluation of education is the responsibility of the Finnish Education Evaluation Council.

In Finland, the curriculum is an interactive tool. It has three layers – national core curriculum, municipal curriculum, as well as school curriculum and year plan. Curriculum is the mediator between different levels of action, and more a process than a product. It is a strategic document that covers all areas of school life, not only school subjects. Curriculum is a pedagogical tool for teachers, school principals, municipal education leaders and for national education authorities. National quality criteria for basic education (provided by the Ministry of Education) support the implementation of the core curriculum. The school curriculum has several roles and tasks. It is the basis for schools' annual plans, teachers' work plans, and individual study plans. It is

a tool for pedagogical leadership and it interacts with other schools, parents and other partners. It is also related to the municipal strategies, school's self-evaluation, and pupil assessment.

Mrs. Halinen in making reference to Finland's Centre of Excellence in Research of Learning and Motivation 2006-2011, stated that both structural and process factors are important with regard to learning and motivation in pre-primary and basic education. However, the influence of structural factors filters largely through process factors. Structural factors include, for example, pupil/teacher ratio in study groups, teacher qualifications, quality and quantity of learning materials, quality of learning environment, curriculum, and process factors consist of teacher's pedagogical approach and the quality of interaction. According to Marja-Kristiina Lerkkanen on teachers' pedagogical approach, the pupil-centred approach helps the progress of academic skills, attainment and commitment to school, and improvement in social skills and learning motivation. The teacher-centred approach promotes the learning of some basic skills, like Reading and Mathematics skills, especially with less advanced pupils. The quality of interaction depends on how the teacher expresses emotional support, gives support in learning and how well he/she can organize the activities of the study group. This is connected to the development of pupils' learning processes and skills.

Mrs. Halinen highlighted the key role of teachers in the Finnish education system. She pointed to the exclusiveness of the teaching profession and the inclusiveness of teaching in Finland. Required qualifications of teachers are prescribed in the Decree given by the Parliament. All teachers from primary to upper secondary level are required to have a Master's Degree. Teacher education is a very desirable choice of study. Teachers have a lot of autonomy in their profession, which allows them to have a creative approach to their work. Teachers are valued experts in curriculum and other development processes. They work with the same study group for at least two or more years during grades from 1 to 6. Teachers are empowered and supported through a co-operative and participatory approach, and capacity building. Teachers are not left without support – they work in multi-professional teams and are supported by health and social authorities. They are expected to teach, guide and support all learners. This results in success in the early years of teaching, relative stability of the teacher work force, and finally, success with students.

Mrs. Halinen stressed that in Finland one does not want to add pressure to the pupils. Instead, the idea is to support pupils in their development as learners and human beings. In the Finnish system, there are 190 school days per year, and 4-7 school hours per day. The amount of homework is moderate, and there is no need for private lessons after school. The core curriculum emphasises holistic development, future-orientation and the development of extensive competences. The role of arts, crafts, home economics, sports and health education is important. Extra curricular activities (so called school clubs) during the school day, as well as before and after school activities have been strongly developed during the past few years.

In Finland, the support the pupils receive is systematic, flexible and individual. The new Basic Education Act from 2010 guarantees immediate support for learning and for school attendance according to the needs of every individual. Support has three stages: general, intensified and special support and the focus is on early, preventive support. Support is based on careful, long-span planning in multi-professional teams, and on individually tailored learning plans for pupils, the effects of which are regularly assessed. Class repetition is

only 2 %, the drop-out only 0.3 % and 96 % of pupils continue their studies immediately after basic education while just over half (53.8 %) of 20 to 24 year-olds study in universities or polytechnics.

Pupil assessment in Finland is divided into two parts – assessment during studies and the final assessment at the end of basic education. There are three types of assessment: of learning, for learning and as learning. Assessment during studies focuses on encouraging feedback and helping pupils to understand their own learning process - not on comparing pupils with each other. Assessment is predominantly for and as learning. Final assessment is assessment of learning and it must be comparable throughout the country. In assessment, the interaction between the pupil, his/her parents and the teacher is important.

Teachers have a central role in assessment. Teachers are responsible for pupil assessment, and they use tests designed by themselves, tests from teachers' guidebooks and voluntary national tests designed by teacher organizations. Goals and learning standards (criteria for "good achievement") are described in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. These criteria are described mainly as competences - what the pupil should be able to do (combining values, knowledge and skills and the ability to use these according to the context).

Mrs. Halinen raised the question of why thinking about the future is so important. There are many competences and many elements of individual development needed in the changing world: self-awareness, identity and ability to express oneself, crafts and expressive skills, interaction, engagement and cooperation, knowledge and skills in different subject areas, thinking and working skills, thinking and problem solving, as well as participation, influence, initiative, and responsibility. These competences are included in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education from 2010.

Mrs. Halinen emphasised that respect and trust are the heart of education. Respecting every child, respecting the learning process, and respecting the teaching profession are crucial. One must respect the power of education. It is important to trust that people do their best when they feel respected and supported.

Finally, Mrs. Halinen summarised the strengths of the Finnish education system:

- The system has high standards for everybody, it is encouraging and emphasises capacity building.
- The supportive ethos includes early intervention, individual approach, active role of students, and good student-teacher relationships.
- Teachers are true professionals. The profession is empowered and teacher education is of high quality.
- There is a strong learning culture and an ethos of trust.
- The system is comprehensive and non-selective.
- Central policy direction and goals exist, but the implementation is local.

## **5.2.2. Achieving Universal Quality Education: Supporting Learning to Achieve Better Results – a CXC Perspective, by Dr. Didacus Jules, Registrar and CEO, Caribbean Examinations Council.**

Dr. Jules in his introductory remarks posited the view that “early childhood and tertiary education are far from universal, with early childhood representing the overlooked sinkhole into which the cognitive and physiological potential of our children is crippled even before formal education begins”. He indicated that only 40 % of Caribbean children enjoy access to early childhood education which, by international standards is woefully inadequate. He called for “the re-engineering of the teaching, learning and assessment processes” and suggested “rethinking of education with a view to its fundamental realignment to the needs of the Caribbean societies in the era of globalization and towards the articulation of a seamless education system”. He indicated that greater collaboration is necessary for universal quality education to be achieved.

According to Dr. Jules, the biggest problem in Caribbean education is not the teachers or the students but the Ministries of Education which lack a vision of systematic development of education systems and on the direction of education. He cited the lack of continuity in education programmes evidenced by a change in direction when governments change.

Dr. Jules opined that we have become mired in a culture of complaint and complacency, and warned that sadistic recitations of the litany of problems will not make them disappear. What is needed, he insisted, is a clear optimism of the will to improve, a sharp vision of what we hope to be and simple effective steps in that direction. In his view, the first step to achieving quality is the rethinking of education with a view to its fundamental realignment to the needs of Caribbean society in the era of globalization and towards the articulation of a seamless education system. He concluded that for the past twenty years Caribbean education systems have conducted every variant of reform, but the approach has essentially been a tinkering with different parts of the system.

The three main arenas of intervention which are needed relate to people, processes and structures and each of these has at least three focal concentrations:

1. Transformation of education for improved outcomes requires a core focus on three essential stakeholders: teachers, learners and managers.
2. The transformation of processes must encompass the re-engineering of the teaching, learning and assessment processes.
3. The frameworks of accountability for effective learning must be built around the people and process changes.

A different structure of education must allow for seamless transitions – facilitating the movement of learners from wherever they are to where they strive to go via multiple pathways for success and with a clearly articulated qualifications framework.

Dr. Jules contended that the Caribbean Examinations Council has made a major contribution to the expansion of quality education in the region – particularly at the secondary and pre-university levels - over the past 32 years. Unlike the traditional examination board, CXC has added value at many points along the continuum of

educational delivery from syllabus development to assessment and certification. It has helped to harmonize standards and content in thirty four CSEC subjects and twenty four CAPE subjects; it engages both classroom teachers and subject experts from the higher education institutions (4,800 of them from 17 territories) in the full cycle from preparing/revising syllabi to preparing examinations to marking these examinations. The bi-annual CXC examination marking exercise is the only opportunity that brings classroom teachers together by subject area from across the entire region in a professional or social context to focus on learning outcomes. At every stage of the education value chain, CXC is creating innovations that are directed to improved standards and quality. Its syllabus reforms/revisions more explicitly focus on not just the knowledge but also the skills and attitudes to be developed through engagement with every subject area and these are benchmarked internationally. Recognizing that delivery of quality instruction is key to securing improved performance, the CXC would be taking teacher orientation to new levels through a partnership with UWI Open Campus by offering blended mode certificates in the teaching of every subject at every level that the Council examines. The provision of a free interactive learning portal – [www.notesmaster.com](http://www.notesmaster.com)– will provide exciting possibilities for learning for an increasing digital generation of learners.

Dr. Jules highlighted the fact that a healthy debate was warming in the region about the number of subjects being taken by top students (as high as 14 subjects in several instances) and whether this highly competitive direction is desirable. As an assessment body, the Council was seeking to ensure the following:

- That 21st Century core literacies and competencies, for example critical thinking, are delivered and embedded in every subject
- That competency based learning and assessment is promoted and that the principles represented by the UNESCO Pillars of Learning are inculcated.
- That formative assessment (assessment for learning) is strengthened and that CXC's School-Based Assessments (SBAs) are made practical and exciting; representing application of knowledge, civic engagement and entrepreneurial or creative impulse.

Dr. Jules in concluding his presentation gave notice that the Council was pushing the envelope on results and statistical reporting to provide candidates with more immediate results; schools with comparable reports on examination and school population performance and ministries with comparable and time series data for evidence-based policy formulation. Ultimately, the Council's contribution to quality education would be the extent to which it can assure the global human resource competitiveness of the Caribbean through the quality of its own assessments in education and the international currency of its certification.

### **5.2.3. Meeting the Challenges of Quality Early Childhood Education and Development (Dr. Rose Davies, Head, Institute of Education, the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica)**

Dr. Davies in her introduction emphasised the importance of early childhood education in the process of building human capital and in human development. Early childhood education is crucial to achievement in later schooling, the quality of adult outcomes and a nation's prosperity. The healthy development of young children provides the building blocks for healthy and competent adulthood, responsible citizenship, economic productivity, strong communities, and a just and sustainable society.

Dr. Davies referenced scientific evidence in support of the importance of the early years. She underscored the fact that the period of most rapid brain development is from the birth to five years. At birth brain connections are relatively few, 50 trillion, and are determined by genes from parents. In first few months, connections increase by 20 times to over 1000 trillion - these are determined by a baby's experience. Experiences determine which channels are formed and repeated experiences make these channels stronger and stronger. Channels that are not used fade away. Experiences of love and affection wire channels for these emotions, but experiences of anger and aggression also wire channels for these emotions. Approximately 80 % of the brain's capacity is developed by the age of 3.

Dr. Davies highlighted a number of the social and economic challenges faced by the Caribbean countries: significant poverty (1 in 3 children lives in poverty); high levels of external debt; economic crises and diminishing finances; rising unemployment; high levels of economic and environmental vulnerabilities and natural disasters. She emphasised that investing in quality early childhood education intervention programmes will in the long term, produce the adult outcomes and human capital that can make a positive contribution to reducing the poverty and increasing the prosperity of the Caribbean nations. Thus, investing in quality early childhood education also makes economic sense. She pointed out that major international longitudinal studies (UK – EPPE Effective Pre-primary and Primary Education, USA - High Scope Perry Pre school Project, USA - ABECEDARIAN Project) have established that preschool experience – more than any other factor - enhances children's development, promotes schooling, reduces crime, promotes productivity in the workplace, and reduces teenage pregnancy. The earlier it begins the greater the impact is on intellectual development, sociability, concentration and independence. However, the quality of related programmes, especially teacher training and pedagogy, are critical to the child's outcomes.

Dr. Davies made reference to the report of the Profiles Project (Maureen Samms-Vaughan, Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2004), a longitudinal research in Jamaica on a national sample of 6-year-olds entering primary school in 1999. The research found that most children attended early childhood facilities as 3 years old, but that facilities lacked materials, space, furniture and programme structure. In 2003, 69% of the sample was followed up and assessed. Children from lower socio economic status performed significantly less well than their peers with higher socio economic status, and the gap was widening. Those in attendance at higher fee paying schools had improved academic and behaviour outcomes.

Dr. Davies analyzed different elements of quality for early childhood education based on CARICOM Regional guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services from 2008. The elements of quality are the physical environment, nutrition and health provisions, group and class size, staff/class ratios, staff qualifications as well as curricula and materials. The physical environment needs to be 25 –40 sq. ft per child indoors (40 sq. ft for babies), and 40 sq. ft per child outdoors. Indoor and outdoor spaces need to be safe, and all equipment, furniture, and utilities assured. The nutrition and health provisions promote good health and nutrition practices and the overall well being of children. As for group and class size, in primary school the class size should not exceed 30 children. Regarding children 3 years and over, the group size should be 26 children. For children 2 and under, the group size should be 12 children or less. The staff/child ratios should be 1:30 for children from 7 to 8 years, and 2:30 for children from 5 to 6 years, including at least one qualified person. In situations where the teacher has an assistant the ratio should be 1:12 for children from 3 to 4 years, 1:6 for children from 2 to 3

years, 1:4 for children from 1 to 2 years, 1:3 for children under 1 year and 1:1 for children with special needs as required.

With regard to staff qualifications, at least 50 % of staff should be qualified, preferably educated beyond secondary level. Unqualified programme staff should pursue qualification training. All staff should be trained in First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). As for curricula and materials for children 2 years and under, toys and activities should be age-appropriate and provide a variety of language and sensory activities both indoors and outdoors on a daily basis. There should be opportunities provided for children to look at books, listen to stories, rhymes and songs, recognize pictures, symbols and letters and hear familiar stories retold.

Furthermore, important issues in early childhood education include familiar daily schedules, routines and activities that occur in relatively the same sequence most days. There should be an appropriate balance between indoor and outdoor play and learning activities daily. Daily scheduled activities provided for children aim to foster creativity, independent thinking and physical development. Children should be provided opportunities to work independently and confidently on their own choice of projects, over a period of time. Staff should provide experiences that will stimulate children to learn by trial and error and risk taking, to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, for example, how to conserve water use at the centre, cooking, and trying experiments. There should be a balance between small and large group and individual activities. Quality of care is reflected in the warm, loving relationship between staff and children, positive guidance techniques used to help children learn to regulate their behaviour, positive, respectful relationships between staff and parents/guardians, and in equity, fairness and inclusion evident in all interactions.

Caribbean countries, she explained, are now on the road to achieving “quality” in provisions to the early childhood sector, as there are some notable achievements. There is a significant expansion in access to children between 3-5 years of age with significant differences between countries ranging from 30 % to 100 %. There is significant progress in the development of legal frameworks and comprehensive plans on early childhood; e.g. Establishment of the Early Childhood Commission (ECC) in Jamaica and a variety of early childhood bodies, for example, councils and working groups, in different Caribbean countries. Many countries have established 1, 2 or 3 years of mandatory early childhood education, or have expanded schooling to all 5- or 4-year-olds without making it mandatory. Regional documents to guide curriculum and programme development, for example, the Learning Outcomes Guide, CARICOM Regional Guidelines for ECED Services have been developed and disseminated regionally. Moreover, teacher qualifications and care-giver certification, for example, levels 1-3 of NCTVET and Associate Degrees in Early Childhood Education, have been established in some countries, but they need expansion and progression routes to degree level. Certifications are not yet established in half the countries of the region. There are more practitioners being exposed to training in appropriate early childhood pedagogy. There is increased thrust to improve health, nutrition, parenting education, and innovations for disadvantaged children.

In addressing the early childhood education “quality” challenge in the Caribbean region, Dr Davies stressed that some 17-41 % of 0-3 year-old children have access to day care services; some 65-100 % of children from 3 to 5 years have access to preschool; in combined age groups, the access percentage to early childhood

education services is 41-51 %; approximately half of the eligible 0-5 age cohort across the region is not adequately accessing early childhood education services. She also lamented the fact that there is very little deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. Also, the involvement of the private sector is disproportionately high, as only 19 % of the services are provided by the state and 81 % by the community or private sector.

The ECERS Surveys in 10 Caribbean countries which were assessed 2000 - 2008, showed that the majority of the early childhood education centres were inadequate on support for language and reasoning development, for children's activities, indoor space and furnishings, programme structure and provisions for parents and staff. Between 25 % and 50 % of the centres failed to maintain minimal standard in personal care routines or in interaction with the children. Minimum standards drafted in many countries have still not advanced to legal status.

With respect to teacher education and training, the majority of the early childhood education staff is under-qualified and insufficiently trained to ensure high quality care and education in a variety of contexts and social groups especially in non-formal modalities. A majority of practitioners in early childhood education services does not have the education entry level requirements to access formal training and some countries still do not provide vocational training as early childhood practitioners. Attracting and retaining trained early childhood teachers in pre-primary settings is a huge challenge. The terms and conditions of employment are poor in the largely under-resourced private/community run facilities. These facilities cannot compete with more stable and better pay conditions of service in the state run facilities.

Inconsistent curricula are another challenge. Many countries do not have appropriate "national" curriculum for the early childhood years. The LO Framework is available to support curriculum development but countries are often challenged to find resource persons with the skills to carry out this task. Countries who have introduced new curricula are challenged to find sufficient numbers of teachers trained in the new pedagogy of child-centred learning to effectively implement the curricula. With regard to the parent participation, the ECERS quality surveys show that almost 50 % of centres do not keep parents informed and involved in children's learning. However, at the same time countries are increasingly developing various parent participation initiatives at both community and national levels.

Dr. Davies emphasised the importance of meeting the challenges and the way forward in order to achieve quality early childhood education in the Caribbean region. She highlighted the need to increase access for both 3-5 and 0-3-year-old children, and to expand early childhood education innovations to reach more disadvantaged children especially in rural areas. Concurrent with this, must be the application of formal targeting strategies to increase participation of poor and vulnerable groups, for example, those with special needs. It is important to train all staff to address how children learn and develop and how to extend children's hands-on learning. There is a need to deploy early childhood trained teachers to teach in lower primary grades, and the state investment in early childhood education needs to increase through various modalities to ensure an equitable re-distribution of resources; physical infrastructure must be improved, and loan/grant funds targeted to private early childhood sector partners to improve services. Early childhood practitioners

must have increased customized in-service training opportunities, and teachers must have improved working conditions and improved salaries.

Finally, Dr. Davies presented key recommendations stressing the importance of immediate action. She advised that CARICOM states should:

- Approve and implement coherent early childhood education policy frameworks. About 75 % of CARICOM countries have draft policies awaiting cabinet approval and minimum standards awaiting gazetting, while children continue to receive unregulated services largely provided by the private sector.
- Comply with the CARICOM guidelines (2008) for early childhood education services which state that: "A policy statement without the supporting implementation structures is practically useless". These supporting structures include ECD Administration and organization of implementation; investment plans; advocacy and communication strategies; partnering with the private sector; and monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Legislate minimum standards as the basis for raising the quality of services. Without a legal basis for the minimum standards, service operators (largely private sector) will not feel compelled to raise standards.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to raise societal consciousness about the characteristics of the quality required in early childhood education and to develop the social demand for high quality early childhood services.

#### **5.2.4 Discussion**

The discussion points that emerged from the presentations included the following:

- Provide early stimulation for young children as a means of guaranteeing high performance later in their educational development.
- Improve libraries so that they are better positioned to play a central role in early stimulation and general early childhood development.
- Re-assess teaching methodologies – teacher-centered vs. student-centered methodologies.
- Facilitate multiple developmental pathways for students and remove status distinction between vocational and general upper secondary education.
- Introduce school-based assessments in order to produce a shift in attention from final results to process and incorporate creative and imaginative processes for assessment
- Initiate steps to achieve universal quality education ensuring achievement of the established goals.
- Formulate early childhood policies/regulations on which all Caribbean governments should agree.
- Fast-track the enactment of early childhood policies/regulations that are already in progress.
- Establish Early Childhood Commissions in all Caribbean countries. The Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago Early Childhood Commissions should serve as models.
- Implement a system to provide training for all early childhood teachers to at least a bachelor's degree.

- Establish acceptable standards for the delivery of early childhood education (standards should not be compromised at the expense of the children of the region).
- Facilitate the development of standards for early childhood and primary education systems through a collaborative approach to ensure consistency across the region.
- Facilitate increased collaboration between stakeholders across the region through the use of modern information and communications technology.
- Re-engineer the region's education systems to align them to the needs of the Caribbean society.
- Provide an education system that will cater to all children at the early childhood level and embrace seamless transition from one level to the next.
- Invest a greater percentage of GDP in the education sector since the current allocation is inadequate to achieve universal quality education.
- Provide appropriate working conditions and remuneration for teachers at this level.
- Articulate clear policies for operating in the education sector.
- Enforce quality standards for early childhood education with respect to the physical environment, nutritional and health, group and class size and staff/class ratio, staff qualification and curricula and materials.

## 6. PRESENTATIONS

### SESSION 3

#### 6. ACHIEVING QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION – CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The third session of the conference addressed the topic “Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education”, focusing on curriculum development. This session featured two speakers, Dr. Jan van den Akker, of the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development, and Mr. Laurie King, of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development of Barbados. The session was moderated by Mr. Kenneth Russell.

##### 6.1. Background

The curriculum is a critical element towards the achievement of Universal Quality Education. The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (IRPC) report (2008) supports this view in the rationale it provides for the primary curriculum: “Nothing is more important than the body of essential knowledge, skills and understanding we choose as a nation to pass on to our young people. The primary curriculum must ensure that all pupils build on their prior learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to develop the essential reading, writing, numeracy and personal skills they need to learn and develop. It must provide all pupils with a broad and balanced entitlement to learning which encourages creativity and inspires in them a commitment to learning that will last a lifetime.”

The IRPC report further claims that there are four broad approaches to the curriculum development that is apparent in primary schools. These are “subject based; areas of learning based; skills based; and theme based. International comparisons suggest that countries that have recently reviewed their curricula are increasingly favouring approaches based on broad areas of learning.” The report further explains that each approach has strengths. However, no single one offers the full range of opportunities that the IRPC report considers sufficient for primary children. Moreover, the highly successful schools visited in the report do not deploy one approach to the exclusion of all others. The English regulatory organisation for education, OFSTED, reports that schools with outstanding curricula provide both skilled subject teaching and opportunities for children to benefit from rich, cross-curricular studies which make connections between subjects and encourage pupils to apply what they have learned in one subject to others, thus reinforcing learning and deepening their understanding.

Both Dr. van den Akker and Mr. King's views coincided with those by Premji (2006) who emphasised the importance of enhancing the appropriateness of the curriculum as a means of achieving universal quality education. It is evident that the curricula available at the early childhood and primary levels across the Caribbean are country specific and of varying standards and expectations, and there may be merit in a joint approach to curriculum development, evaluation and review at these levels to take advantage of synergies within the region.

## 6.2. Summary of Presentations



Dr. Jan van den Akker, Director General, NICD, the Netherlands

### 6.3.1. The Role of Curriculum in the Development of Education: The Netherlands Story by Dr. Jan van den Akker, Director General, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development.

Dr. van den Akker in his introductory statement posited that a curriculum view on education helps to avoid over simplistic policies, to stimulate careful problem and context analysis, as well as to guide coherent policies and productive practices. According to him, however, curriculum reforms tend to fail, worldwide.

Dr. van den Akker noted some of the frequent challenges facing educational reform. There are discrepancies between intentions, realities and outcomes, gaps between different curriculum levels, inconsistency between various components of learning, and the worlds of theory and research as well as policies and practices differ from each other. The innovation efforts sometimes result in scattered pockets of success, but have slow integration and limited transfer. The implementation of the reform is many times problematic, and sustainability weak. Sometimes there are even illusions about what curriculum implementation and development can achieve.

According to Dr. van den Akker, there are no “quick fixes” or “silver bullets”. Curriculum improvement is not an event but a long-term process which requires hard work. It is carried out at many levels, includes various components, and has to be implemented with the co-operation with many participants. He quoted Hargreaves

and Fink (2006), who state that “change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain”.

According to Dr. van den Akker, successful change benefits from a combined approach. This means steering from the top (for example, national educational policies), having support and pressure from the side (support agencies, textbook publishers, teacher training colleges), and building-up from the bottom (teacher and school involvement). All these components can help in implementing the educational change. There are various levels of curriculum development. Firstly, the supra level, which is the international and comparative level (for example, the European Framework of Reference for Languages); secondly, the macro level which means national (system) frameworks (for example syllabi, core objectives, attainment targets, standards, “statements”); thirdly, the meso level, which includes schools and programmes (school-specific curriculum); fourthly, the micro level, which consists of classrooms, groups, teachers (textbooks, courses, instructional materials) and finally, the nano level which means the learner, the individual (personal curriculum), and sometimes there are even more relevant levels of planning in-between these levels.

The curriculum has several representations. The intended representation (world of policy and design) is ideal, formal and written. The implemented representation (world of teachers) is perceived and operational, and finally, the attained representation (world of students/pupils) is experienced and learned. There needs to be consistency among the different curriculum components. This means consistency between time, assessment, aims and objectives, content, learning activities, teacher role, materials and resources, grouping, and location.

With regard to the purpose of learning, it is important to have a balance and synergy between, firstly, the subject, in other words what to learn about subject matter, knowledge and skills (also in view of continuous learning). Secondly, the student, how to meet the personal development needs and interests of the individual on the one hand, and the motivation of all learners on the other; and thirdly, the society, how to respond to the demands from society, to produce functioning citizens, and for the job market.

Dr. van den Akker emphasised that no curriculum change is possible without teacher development. Teachers are the key. Teacher learning is most effective when it is connected to lessons, embedded in practice; when teachers have active and investigative roles; when teachers learn and develop together, and when teachers have sufficient time and space to develop and hone their skills. He offered the view that there is a need for shared vision and responsibility for ensuring the learning of pupils and the learning of teachers, and opined that teacher learning might be more successful where schools are viewed as learning organisations and where they provide a supporting environment.

In addition, there needs to be coherence at system level. This means coherence among the following components: policy making, examinations, monitoring, leadership development, teacher education, textbook publishers, professional learning communities, support agencies, inspectorate, interest groups, school development, and research. All these build up a curriculum in interaction with each other.

Finally, Dr. van den Akker concluded that curriculum development is about building bridges and combining different perspectives from the substantive and technical-professional perspective to the socio-political perspective. It is not so much about stuff on paper, but about what people think and do.

### **6.2.2. Curriculum Development and Implementation in Barbados – the Journey to a National Curriculum by Mr. Laurie King, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Barbados**



Mr. Laurie King, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Barbados

Mr. King in his introduction highlighted Barbados' commitment to the adoption of a national curriculum. He made extensive reference to that country's White Paper of Education 1995, which states that "the Government of Barbados pledges to significantly increase the success rate of the education system by making it possible for all children to fulfill their potential, while preparing them for active participation in an increasingly demanding technological age". He also referred to the CARICOM Summit in Montego Bay in 1997 which stated that "education is the major mechanism to bring about the necessary transformation in Caribbean society".

Mr. King compared the traditional curriculum development process with the process that was employed by the National Curriculum Development Council (NCDC). The old curriculum in Barbados was characterised by content - based syllabi in rigid time frames, rote learning, and emphasis on what the teacher hopes to achieve. It was also examination driven, saw learners as passive, and was solely teacher-centred. Standards for curriculum design at the primary level, however, promote integration within and across subject areas, with various modes of assessment, provision for students with special needs, and inclusion of social and emotional learning activities. The curriculum development process in Barbados was an interactive process including reviewing, designing, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. With regard to assessment of pupils, there has been a shift away from reliance on pen and pencil and norm-referenced testing to include observation, questioning, portfolios, interviewing and conferencing, journals, projects, peer and self-assessment, and exhibitions of the assessment.

In Barbados, the development of a national curriculum began with the establishment of the NCDC. Its responsibilities include providing a statement of vision, providing a curriculum policy statement, and the formulation of educational goals. After setting up the NCDC, the curriculum development steps included setting up subject committees, reviewing existing curriculum, re-designing curriculum, developing attainment targets, developing teaching activities, presenting the results to the NCDC, further amendments and review, printing, distribution to schools, field testing in schools, and sharing attainment targets with the public. While work was done with committees, there were meetings held with all schools, teacher discussions organized, on-going training at subject levels, as well as Town Hall meetings.

The new learner-centred curriculum in Barbados helps teachers innovate and create their own programmes, includes on-going assessment and new report formats, promotes real-life relevant situations, encourages critical thinking, reasoning, reflection and action, focuses on technology and activity, utilizes more group work, team work and enrichment activities. The Formal Assessment in Barbados includes Basic Skills Assessment Battery Tests (BSAB), Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (BSSEE), Continuous Assessment (included in BSSEE), Criterion-Referenced Tests, and Barbados National Diploma of Secondary Education (BNDSE).

Regarding the implementation of the new curriculum, since 1998, the teacher training in Barbados has been focused on learner-centred curriculum, use of ICT, integration of ICT and curriculum, technology mastery, new teaching methodologies, and making classrooms learner-centred. Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum are carried out by curriculum officers of the Ministry of Education and by the Education Evaluation Centre (EEC). In 2005, the University of Toronto carried out an evaluation which was the first external and independent evaluation. Naturally, the implementation of the new curriculum faces challenges. Many times traditional approaches are preferred, and teachers are inadequately prepared for the new curriculum.

The curriculum journey continues in Barbados. There is ongoing ministerial support for the curriculum development, and EMIS and PMIS have been established. Teachers' professional development is enhancing, facilities are continuously upgraded, CVOs are implemented, and the country is piloting the Caribbean Certificate Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC). As a conclusion, Mr. King noted that the success of any curriculum reform requires teacher buy-in, effective school management, efficient resources, and co-operation and collaboration of stakeholders.

### **6.3. Discussion**

In the ensuing discussion it was agreed that governments in the region should provide:

- Adequate financial resources for revising the curriculum for the pre-primary and primary education sectors.
- Appropriate infrastructure to support the curriculum so as to ensure success of the primary education system.
- Strategic training for primary school teachers to deliver newly developed "dynamic" curricula.

# 7. PRESENTATIONS

## SESSION 4

### 7. ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION – Mathematics, Science and Literacy

The fourth session of the conference continued with the topic “Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education”, focusing on Mathematics and Science and on Literacy. This session featured three speakers, Mr. Leo Pahkin and Mrs. Pirjo Sinko, both of the Finnish National Board of Education, and Professor Stafford A. Griffith of the University of the West Indies. The session was moderated by Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch.

#### 7.1. Background

Performance in English and Mathematics at the pre-primary and primary levels in the Caribbean is of major concern. In several countries, performance in these subjects is dismally low, whereas for others the performance could be considered relatively good. Table 3 shows the pass rate for English and Mathematics in primary level examinations during 2000-2001 which ranged from a low of 22 % to a high of 78 % for English and a low of 21 % to a high of 75 % in Mathematics. Although current statistics reveal significant improvements in these subjects, this concern was echoed at the conference as one of major concern during the last decade.

TABLE 3

Kindergarten and Primary Students' Performance in English and Mathematics in selected Caribbean Countries (2000/2001)

Country	Pass rate in English	Pass rate in Mathematics
Belize	22	35
Dominica	40	25
Dominican Republic	71	41
Grenada	25.5	21
Guyana	36.4	43
Jamaica	58	49
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	75.9	75
St. Kitts & Nevis	62.3	29
Trinidad & Tobago	63	68
<b>TOTAL/AVERAGE</b>	<b>50.46%</b>	<b>42.89%</b>

Source: The World Bank - Human Development Department, 2005.

The importance of good performance and achieving excellence in Mathematics, Science and Literacy to propel nations such as those in the Caribbean towards economic prosperity and sustainability cannot be overstated. This view is supported by the International Council for Science (ICS), Regional Office for Latin America and

the Caribbean (2009), when it articulates the relationship between education and development, as well as the role of education in social inclusion and civil society participation thus: “Like never before, education is appreciated as a right and as a factor for the development and collective conquest of higher civilization. Within this framework, education in Mathematics and Science is of primary importance, due to an increasingly interdependent global economy, labor market and technological developments that characterize our era and the near future.”

The ICS further states that Mathematics Education is now understood as a right for all students as a specific type of preparation for life. According to the definition used by PISA, the OECD assessment programme, “Mathematical literacy is an individual’s capacity to identify and understand the role that mathematics plays in the world, to make well-founded judgments and to use and engage with Mathematics in ways that meet the needs of that individual’s life as a constructive, concerned and reflective citizen”.

It is of interest to note that Caribbean countries have long developed national systems for measuring, monitoring and assessing learning outcomes. As evidenced in Table 4, in 2002, all countries in the Caribbean had established national assessment systems that determined student performance at various grade levels. Clearly, Caribbean countries have been taking the necessary steps to standardize assessment at the primary level. According to the World Bank (2005) the main objective of these systems is to deliver information on academic achievement using standardized tests, to provide inputs for policy and decision-making.

**TABLE 4**  
**National Assessment at the Primary Level (2002)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Examinations</b>
Belize	Entry exam to secondary: BNSE (Belize National Selection Examination), now BPSE (Belize Primary School Examination)
Dominica	Grade 2: National Assessment Entry exam to secondary: CEE (a)
Dominican Republic	Grade 8 : Pruebas Nacionales
Guyana	Entry exam to secondary: SSEE (Secondary School Entrance Examination)
Jamaica	Grade 1: Diagnostic Test; Grade 4: Literacy Test; Grade 6: GSAT (Grade 6 Achievement Test)
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	Entry exam to secondary: CEE (a)
St. Kitts & Nevis	Grades 3, 4, 5, 6: Test of Standards
St. Lucia	Grade 2 and 4: Minimum Standards Examination Entry to Secondary: CEE (a)
Trinidad & Tobago	Entry to secondary: SEA (Secondary Entrance Assessment)

Notes: (a) CEE=Common Entrance Exam. Source: Countries’ Education Statistical Digests and information directly acquired from the countries’ Ministries of Education. Source: The World Bank - Human Development Department, 2005.

## 7.2. Summary of Presentations



Left to right: Ms. Pirjo Sinko and Mr. Leo Pahkin (Finland);  
Professor Stafford Griffith, (UWI)

### **6.2.1. Achieving Excellence in Mathematics and Science: The Finnish Experience (Mr. Leo Pahkin, Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Board of Education)**

At the start of his presentation, Mr. Pahkin pointed out the critical factors in the development work of education: education system, teacher and instruction, pupil and his/her background, and interaction between these factors. He referred to the history of development of Mathematics Education in the USA and in Finland from the 1960s to today pointing to the similarities and differences in the development.

Mr. Pahkin referred to the sub-areas of learning defined by neuropsychologist, Tuula Mentula: attention, intelligence and reasoning, memory, emotions and social reactions, motor-sensor activities, basic visual operations, and language activities. All these contribute to data analysis and learning, and to learning of reading, writing and mathematics. He also cited Anders Ambrus, who posited that communication in Mathematics includes real items and real events, spoken language, images, and written symbols. Mathematical learning includes various kinds of perception. Auditory perception means listening and speaking, visual perception includes seeing, reading, and visualization, tactile perception is touching and trying, and finally kinesthetic perception means doing and feeling.

Mathematical concepts and thinking consist of comparison, arrangement, classifying, construction, modelling and measurement as well as concepts, relations and correlation. Mathematical thinking includes preparation to proving: guesses, systematic trying, proving false, and connections of definitions of concepts and statements, as well as methods of combinatoric problems. Children start learning by developing their mathematical thinking

and gradually move to handling methods of mathematical thinking at the end of the basic education, which in Finland is the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Environmental and natural science studies include an experimental approach meaning observations, measuring, planning and making tests and experiments. The approach includes discussion, conceptualisation of observations, presenting, interpreting and modelling of observations as well as drawing conclusions, making hypothesis and testing them. Important issues are also critical assessment of observations and information, and application of the material learned during practice. In addition, Mr. Pahkin addressed the various considerations in designing the mathematics and science curriculum.

Mr. Pahkin explained that the Finnish education system is characterized by providing support for the development of self confidence and capability. Teachers are responsible for assessment and are able to encourage pupils to trust themselves. There is no ranking of pupils or schools and no fear of punishment. Classes are heterogeneous and rather small. There are common aims for all, and all individuals are encouraged.

### **6.2.2. Literary Initiatives and Successes in Primary Education: The Finnish Experience: Mrs. Pirjo Sinko, Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Board of Education**

Mrs. Sinko pointed out that in Finland, children are supported to learn to read and write in their own mother tongue. Finnish and Swedish are both official languages. The Swedish speaking minority is about 6 % of the population, and they have full rights to use their own language. Everybody has the right to study Finnish, Swedish, Sami (only in the region of the indigenous Sami people), Romany and Finnish sign language as their mother tongue.

In reading literacy Finland compares favourably with international standards:

- 1991 IEA Reading Literacy Study: Finland 1<sup>st</sup>
- 1998 OECD Adult Literacy Survey: Finland 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2001 PISA: Finland 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2003 Pisa: Finland 1<sup>st</sup>
- 2006 PISA: Finland 2<sup>nd</sup> (after Korea)
- 2009 PISA: Finland 3<sup>rd</sup> after Shanghai (China) and Korea

Mrs. Sinko emphasised the importance of the mother tongue. Mother tongue is the basis of thinking and learning concepts. It is the tool and object of learning, and basis of self-expression, oral and written communication/interaction, and reading comprehension. Children build their self-esteem and identity through the mother tongue. As a school subject it is used to pass on knowledge, skills and art. Language skills development is a cross-curricular theme and every teacher is a mother tongue teacher. Literacy is about making meaning. It is learned in a socio-cultural context, and through interaction. Oral language is a vital foundation for literacy. Affective learning, motivation and engagement are the keys to successful learning.

Mrs. Sinko pointed out that in Finland children are given a long childhood. The formal school starts relatively late, at the age of 7. Voluntary pre-school education for 6-year-olds has existed since 2000, but it does not include any tight objectives or schedules. Mrs. Sinko highlighted the importance of play as an important factor in the learning process. The Finnish pre-school focuses on the readiness for formal learning and school through play and child-centred activities. It is important for the child to gain positive learning experiences and a healthy sense of self-esteem. Language skills develop constantly - at home, in day-care and at pre-school.

The main predictors for reading ability include knowledge of sounds and letters, linguistic (phonemic) awareness, sufficient memorizing skills, ability to name things rapidly, sufficiently large vocabulary to understand texts, motivation to learn to read and write, and interest in words, stories, play, reading and writing. Pre-school education enhances children's readiness to start school by reducing the differences in children's verbal skills caused by differences in verbal stimuli in the homes.

Some features of the Finnish language help the children in the beginning. The Finnish language has a consistent grapheme-phoneme correspondence, which means letter-sound correspondence. It has also easy decoding. Young readers can have a "flying start" because of the shallow orthography of the Finnish language. However, Finnish is a syntactic language with long words consisting of many meaningful particles (morphemes) in a word. It thus demands a good memorizing capacity.

The pre-school year lays the foundation for learning to read and write. Pre-school is a learning environment where children develop their phonological awareness, vocabulary and literacy and where they get experiences of different text types and genres. Nowadays, half of the pre-school pupils learn to read as if by chance - previously only one third of seven-year-olds knew how to read when entering the school. According to the core curriculum for pre-school education in Finland 2000, the basis for the beginning of literacy is that "children have heard and listened, they have been heard, they have spoken and been spoken to, people have discussed with them, and they have asked questions and received answers."

A good learning environment in pre-school is joyful, open, encouraging and unhurried. There are opportunities for play, and for other activities but also peace and quiet. A good learning environment is a healthy, safe and aesthetically pleasing place where children can learn together with and from each other. The idea is to stimulate linguistic development, and support children becoming members of the modern information society. An inspiring environment to learn to read has lots of books and other reading stuff around, plenty of time to read, lots of comfy corners to read all around the school, for example, an attractive school library. Children can see supportive and encouraging reading models, share reading experiences and discuss books. Pre-school working methods support language skills through concrete experimentation, children's own investigation, playful activities, imagination, interaction, drama, active participation, information acquisition, problem solving, and reflecting.

In Finland, the concept of text in mother tongue syllabus is enlarged. One must consider the rapidly changing media environment in which children live. They use different media simultaneously. In 2010, the most important media for 6-8-year-olds in Finland in order of importance were TV, video, DVD, CD, book, cartoon,

Internet, and radio. All types of texts are used: literary, information, media, visual, vocal, graphic, spoken, and written.

In Finland, weak readers and writers receive a lot of support. The underlying ethos is a strong sense of equality and inclusion. Finland's weak learners are better in basic skills than the weak learners in other OECD countries. Every pupil has a right to get special needs part-time or full-time education, and remedial (additional) teaching. Early intervention is emphasised. Some 37 % of first-graders get additional support. Diagnosis and rehabilitation are done as early as possible, and there is intensive co-operation among parents, teachers and other experts. All class teachers and special needs teachers have knowledge and expertise in treating with learning difficulties.

Mrs. Sinko described what is meant by good performance in reading and writing in Finland at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. Pupils have progressed from the initial reading phase in which basic technique is reinforced and their reading is fluent enough to allow them to read texts intended for their age group. Pupils have begun, while reading, to observe whether they understand, what they are reading and they will be able to draw conclusions from what they are reading. Pupils are able to express themselves in writing, which enables them to cope with writing situations in their own daily lives. They are also able to use imagination in their writing. Pupils are able to connect letters when they are writing by hand, and to produce original text with a computer. Pupils are able to write simple and familiar words without error and have begun to use terminal punctuation in sentences, and capital letters to begin sentences.

Mrs. Sinko also summarized what good performance in pupils' relationship with literature and language includes at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Pupils look for something appropriate and pleasant to read, and they use their reading skills both for pleasure and to find information. They have read at least a few children's books appropriate to their reading skills. Their media literacy will suffice to follow programmes directed at their age group. Pupils are able to make observations characteristic of their age group about language. They feel encouraged to analyze the phonetic and syllable structure of words and will be able both to list the letters in alphabetical order and use alphabetical order.

Mrs. Sinko referred to a new promising method related to reading through writing. It consists of creative writing on computers for grades 1 to 4. This playful learning method was created by Norwegian Arne Trageton. The question is whether playful computer writing in grades one and two (and postponing the formal teaching of handwriting to grade 3, age 9) lead to better performance in writing and reading than the traditional teaching methods. This project is an ongoing longitudinal action research study over three years in 13 schools in Norway, and also in Denmark, Finland, and Estonia.

In the beginning of school in Finland, the evaluation of children is individual, encouraging, and verbal. If the child does not learn how to read during the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the school and parents decide together whether to repeat the year. Finland has no national reading or writing tests. The rationale is to guide and encourage studying, and to track how well the pupil has met the objectives. Verbal and numerical assessments are used separately or in parallel. Numerical assessment is compulsory by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the latest and the scale is from 4 to 10. The average grade in mother tongue and literature is 8. Grade 4 (fail) is rarely used.

The mother tongue syllabus has a strong intra-subject integration. It is structured in 3 phases with their respective objectives, core contents, and descriptions of good performance (grade 8) after the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> school year. The objective is to improve the pupil's interaction skills, his or her skills in interpreting and utilizing various texts, skills on producing texts and utilizing texts for different purposes, and to deepen the relationship with language, literature, and other culture.

Literature is a powerful "teacher", and speaking and listening are the bases of literacy. One must recognize the importance of each child telling his/her own stories, and of listening to stories that the teacher and parents read to the child. When listening, the child learns language, vocabulary, structures, style, and text conventions. In Finland, the name of the school subject is Mother Tongue and Literature.

In implementing the curriculum in Finland, the schools and teachers are given quite a lot of flexibility and autonomy in allocating goals, contents, time and resources, selecting methods and materials and forming study groups. Goals can be reached by means of different contents, methods and materials. Goals and criteria for good performance are expressed mainly as competencies, not as detailed knowledge. Teachers are encouraged to take into account the various needs of their students and to emphasise good basic competencies. In mother tongue instruction flexibility and autonomy mean that teachers are free to design their school's own curriculum, make their own materials or choose the "best" text book, choose the reading materials with their students, and devise their own tests for the class.

The subject, Mother Tongue and Literature includes a broad concept of the text, and a skill-based curriculum. The emphasis is from the very beginning on meta-cognitive and strategic skills. Reading is seen as a process, and the focus is on the mastery of genres and text types. It is important to enforce the motivation to read, and to be able to make free individual choices of reading material.

In Finland, schools and teachers are not alone when teaching reading and literature. The Finnish society supports reading in many ways. Most families subscribe a daily newspaper to their homes. Finland has one of the world's best library systems. The number of books published or borrowed annually from public libraries is high. Women especially, are keen readers and they understand the importance of reading. Foreign TV programmes have subtitles instead of dubbing which improves children's reading routine.

Good results in reading literacy call for a strong and effective co-operation between homes, schools and the whole society. Good reading skills result from interactive, co-operative ways of working at all levels in partnership among parents, research, other stakeholders (media, libraries), and education administration, the school being in the middle of this supporting structure.

The last big national reading project in Finland was carried out between 2002 and 2005. The objectives were to improve the reading and writing skills of the pupils in basic and general upper secondary education and to increase their knowledge of literature. At the time of the project, the name of the subject was changed to Mother Tongue and Literature. There were several themes or subject areas in the project. Curricular development was carried out in all subjects in order to improve reading and writing skills and the knowledge of

literature. Deductive and critical reading strategies as well as writing different genres of texts were improved in all subjects. School libraries were improved and collaboration between schools and public libraries promoted. Improving reading and writing skills was carried out through a collaborative effort between basic education and special needs education. The project also included improving pedagogical methods for educating boys in the areas specified in the project.

Mrs. Sinko pointed out that in Finland a challenge exists with the boys regarding reading and writing. Boys are not reading as much as girls and boys read fewer books on their leisure time than before. Tackling this gender gap in reading and writing is essential. It is important to set clear objectives for boys and to use the attraction of the information technology. One can include different motivating strategies in the teaching: writing on a computer, finding information on the Internet, applying competitiveness, reading challenges, using drama, role plays, and recording with a video camera. It is important to improve school libraries, get interesting reading material, fantasy and sci-fi literature, and provide magazine shelves as well as comfortable surroundings. Boys like working with other boys and even simultaneous pronunciation exercises can be conducted with them. One could have also, a writer school for boys with a male author or teachers/parents could paraphrase the plot of a book in an exciting way in order to arouse interest for it on the part of the pupils.

A Network to Improve Pedagogical Methods for Educating Boys was founded in Finland and its results highlighted the importance of the following: setting clear objectives for boys, using the attraction of ICT, writing on a computer, finding information on the Internet, working with a video camera, competitions to determine who reads the most, reading challenges, using drama and role plays, recording with a video camera, and monitoring the pupils, for example by using cards to record reading activity.

In Finland, school libraries are established with the aim of raising the attractiveness of reading. In reaching this objective, it is important to throw away outdated books, modernise the libraries and include databases and Internet access, as well as organize visits by authors, exhibitions, and campaigns. It is crucial to have a place where students can read magazines, books, newspapers, and comics in peace and quiet. The aim is also to support the learning of information acquisition and management skills.

Finally, Mrs. Sinko concluded that Finland's example shows that it is possible to have at the same time, equal opportunities for education and to achieve good results within one educational system. Good results in reading literacy need strong co-operation between homes and schools and within the whole society. A culture which values education, reading and learnedness does not leave literacy to the teachers alone.

### **7.2.3. The Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) Project: Professor Stafford A. Griffith, the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica**

Professor Griffith in his introduction gave an overview of the Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) Project. He informed that CETT was established in 2002 under an Agreement with USAID and the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE), University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, Jamaica, as the executing agency. The objective of the project was to upgrade the skills of teachers to become more effective reading instructors in the early primary grades (grades 1 to 3). The goals of the project

were pursued through five components: diagnostic and performance assessment, teaching and learning materials, teacher training, research, and information and communication technology (ICT). The programme implementation model included the participation of: The Ministry of Education, Teachers Colleges, Primary Schools, ICT Specialists, Reading Specialists as well as an Administrative Support arm which included a Project Implementation Unit, and a Cluster Implementation Unit. Annually, there were in total 208 beneficiary schools, 978 beneficiary teachers, and 22, 053 beneficiary students. The countries participating in the project were Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

According to Professor Griffith, the triangulation of different sources of evidence points to the success of the project. A study undertaken to track the progress of students who entered the programme in grade 1 in 2005 and completed the three year cycle, showed significant improvement in students' performance. The target of the project was to have at least 60 % of students reading at, or above grade level, and 80 % of students no longer at risk. This dual target was achieved, and in fact exceeded, for the cohort who entered the programme in 2005. There was a clear indication from teacher performance as well, that their proficiency had improved. This is well illustrated by the 2005-2007 tracking data for grade 1 teachers in three different clusters: Belize, Sam Sharpe (Jamaica) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. There was also evidence that project schools were outperforming other mainstream schools in a number of independent national measures of student literacy and achievement, including Grade Six Achievement Tests.

Dr Griffith opined that the most critical factor contributing to the success of CETT was the extensive use of feedback. The project collected and analysed on every aspect of implementation and used this to guide refinements/decisions. All training workshops were systematically evaluated and the feedback used to guide improvements. Materials developed were piloted over time and refinements made to achieve the desired results. Teacher proficiency was carefully assessed and analysed and gaps addressed. Student achievement and diagnostic test data were used to define interventions that targeted areas of weakness.

Dr Griffith also highlighted other critical factors which may have contributed to the success of the project. He informed that the Cluster Implementation Units (CIUs) were located in the teacher training institutions and there was a close working relationship with the Ministries of Education. In addition to the institutional arrangement, the project benefitted from capacity building initiatives across all levels. The project staff was competent and passionate about success, the teacher training programme was intense, principals were trained to serve as instructional leaders, school libraries were established and the materials provided were designed to meet the specific needs of students. He also attributed success to the support provided by the private sector

Professor Griffith stressed the importance of investing in sustaining the benefits of the project which ended in September 2009. He informed that since the project ended the UWI has been working with Ministries of Education and teacher training institutions to assure the sustainability of the intervention. In this regard the UWI has: retained a small unit to coordinate and deliver technical assistance to countries; continued the provision of assessment services; continued the provision of texts and other print and non-print materials and has garnered additional funding to help countries in rolling out the reading programme. Dr Griffith concluded

his presentation by calling attention to the critical challenge of finding a way of extending the benefits of CETT in an effort to rapidly replace less effective programmes which are currently embedded in the primary school curriculum.

### 7.3. Discussion

During discussion, the following points emerged:

- The CETT project promoted the rich oral culture of the Caribbean as a means of raising literacy performance (for example, story telling) – this compensated for the limited reading in Caribbean.
  - For example, building a methodology around writing down stories which are first orally communicated. Finland has successfully developed such a methodology in order to preserve its oral culture and to empower identity.
  - Each culture must focus on its strengths but aim at developing in other areas as well. Traditionally, Finland has a strong literary culture and the Caribbean a strong oral culture.
- Caribbean governments should build on existing initiatives such as CETT and prevent duplication and waste of resources.
  - The CETT project incorporated critical elements such as research, involvement of key stakeholders, clinical supervision, competent and passionate members of staff, and data-driven approach (diagnosis, tracking, and final assessment).
  - Belize was portrayed as an excellent example of how a Caribbean country can build on existing initiatives. This Caribbean country has extended the CETT project to a mainstreamed programme.
- What was the fundamental philosophy that underpins the success of the CETT intervention?
  - Extensive and ongoing use of assessment data that promotes learning.
  - Utilization of modern information and communication technology (ICT) as critical ingredients.

**Recommendations:** Caribbean countries should:

- Collaborate towards development and establishment of a standard pre-primary and primary education structure and attendant assessment instruments for the region.
- Study examples of good practices in their environment and implement aspects of these practices that are applicable to them.
- Use the experiences gained from the CETT project to further develop educational programmes.
- Seek to implement a project similar to the CETT which focuses on improving the performance in Mathematics at the primary level.

## 6. PRESENTATIONS

### SESSION 5

#### 8. ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION

The fifth session of the conference addressed the topic "Accountability in Education". This session featured two speakers, Dr. Avis Glaze of Edu-quest International Inc. in Canada, and Mr. Jan Berkvens of the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development. The session was moderated by Dr. Jennifer Obidah.

##### 8.1. Background

Accountability is viewed as a major challenge in the Caribbean since many breaches have occurred over time but few have been held accountable because appropriate systems are not in place. Anderson (2005) identified three types of accountability systems: compliance with regulations; adherence to professional norms; and results-driven system. She claimed that school accountability systems operate according to a set of principles and use a variety of implementation strategies. She alluded to the fact that educators have worked mostly within the three accountability systems and often find themselves responding to all three systems. She further claimed that an accountability system should have five components, namely objectives, assessments, instructions, resources, and rewards or sanctions. Providing information about the context of an accountability system is paramount to the success of a system. Information about teacher quality, curriculum rigor, and resource allocation should provide the basis for selecting or designing strategies that will most likely solve problems.

School quality is not only evident in assessment results, but also in the diversity of programmes offered, the preparation and performance of educational professionals, student behaviour and attitudes, and the relationship between the school and the community. Anderson posits that systems should provide data that increase parent involvement and community support as well as inform public policy and the allocation of resources. School reports should publish contextual and programmatic information along with assessment results.

Foster-Allen (2008), in her suggestion for holding the system accountable through inspections in Jamaica, identified three issues: the unsatisfactory educational outcomes and performance of children; less than desirable teacher performance; and expensive funding of education which places strain on the national pocket. Holness (2009), in support of this view, stated that "accountability will be coupled with capacity building, which starts with teaching and leadership certification developed in conjunction with the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) and which builds on lessons learned from Jamaican schools that have raised learning with limited resources". Still, guided by the principal that "you cannot keep teachers who do not deliver results," Holness explained that teachers who chronically underperform would be provided with supplemental training and, if this failed, they would be "eventually removed from the classroom". Dr. Glaze and Mr. Berkvens' presentations identified with Anderson and Foster-Allen's positions and provided good examples of successful interventions.

## 8.2. Summary of Presentations



Dr. Avis Glaze, Edu-quest International Inc

### 8.2.1. School and System Improvement: Lessons from Ontario, Canada (Dr. Avis Glaze, President and CEO, Edu-quest International Inc.)

Dr. Glaze had a central role in the school and system improvement in Ontario, Canada. She was Ontario's first Chief Student Achievement Officer and founding CEO of The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. Later she was appointed as Ontario's Education Commissioner and Senior Adviser to the Minister of Education. In her opening statements, Dr. Glaze quoted the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario who stated that "making public education the best education is the single most important thing that we can do together to build a bright and promising future for all of us". According to McGuinty, "we can build a stronger economy, a stronger society, a stronger Ontario, by strengthening the education and skills of our people".

Dr. Glaze began her presentation by introducing the Province of Ontario. Ontario is the most populous province in Canada. It has 2.1 million students, almost 126,000 teachers (unionized teaching and support staff), about 5,000 schools (4000 elementary and 1000 secondary), 72 school districts, and 33 school authorities. In Ontario, there are four education governance systems and school boards. Elected trustees determine board policies and strategic directions as well as hire the Director of Education. School board officials carry out hiring, implementation and system and school improvement. In Ontario, there are six school sites for deaf, blind and severely learning-disabled students. In 2008-09, Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding was of \$19B (CDN). Between 2002-03 and 2008-09, there was declining enrolment of 4.5% (almost 90,000 students).

In Canada, 20 % of the population is foreign-born, and more than 10 % of newcomers are school children. The immigrant population is growing faster than the Canadian-born population. In 2010, the immigrant population grew 6 % more than expected. Some 60 % of the 225,000 recent immigrants live in Ontario. Based on the 2006 Census of Canada, more than 200 languages are spoken as mother tongue in Ontario. The visible

minority population is increasing, as well as the aboriginal population. The population of English and French speakers is declining.

In Ontario, the key strategies in school and system improvement included setting targets with district school boards, identifying teams at all levels to drive continuous improvement in literacy and numeracy, building capacity to support student learning and achievement, allocating resources to support target setting and improvement plans, embarking on a process of community outreach and engagement to build support for the literacy and numeracy initiative, demonstrating a commitment to research and evidence-based inquiry and decision making, mobilizing the system to provide equity in student outcome, reducing class sizes in the primary grades to a maximum of 20 students per class by 2006, and establishing a growing presence on the national and international scene. The work of the established Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat included various phases: forging consensus, building capacity, sharpening the focus, intensifying the collective efforts, consolidating for deeper implementation, and aligning the work.

The results showed significant improvement. The English-language learners improved 26 percentage points in writing and 18 percentage points in reading within a short period. Students in Special Education Programs improved 22 percentage points in writing and 17 percentage points in reading. According to Dr. Glaze, the four "pillars" for student success and for improving results in secondary schools are literacy, numeracy, program pathways, as well as community, culture and caring which means a focus on student well-being. The Secondary Strategy included investment in leadership capacity for secondary school reforms at the school district level, investment in leadership capacity at the school level and investment in leadership at the classroom and student level.

What is the essence of the Ontario strategy? How did Dr. Glaze and others involved in improving learning results in Ontario create alignment and coherence? According to Dr. Glaze, the role of the teachers is crucial. Dr. Glaze referred to Schmoker (2006) stating that "instruction, itself, has the largest influence on achievement". According to Leithwood et al. (2006) "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning".

The essence of the strategy is action at the provincial level, at the school district level, at the school level, and at the classroom level. Engagement of various stakeholders is crucial. Other essential factors are high impact strategies to improve learning and achievement, character development, student engagement, and teachers who are the key to student engagement. Teachers must know their students, have high standards and expectations, use differentiated instruction, and proactive intervention. Dr. Glaze reminded the conference that student engagement affects achievement. She supported this by quoting Schonert-Reichl (2000): "Functioning in school is inextricably linked with his or her sense of belonging and connection to the school environment and his or her relationships with peers and teachers within it". Dr. Glaze also made reference to Michael Fullan (2001) who has pointed out that "when adults think of students, they think of them as potential beneficiaries of change... they rarely think of students as participants in a process of school change and organizational life". In addition, research clearly indicates that many benefits accrue when parents are involved in their children's education.

According to the Education Quality and Accountability Office (2010), "Ontario is among the few jurisdictions in the world that demonstrate both higher achievement in reading and a smaller performance gap between high- and low-income students when compared to the OECD average. This is a characteristic of education systems that deliver both excellence and equity. Dr. Glaze referred to Fullan (2002), who stated that "at the school level, the moral imperative of the principal involves leading deep cultural change that mobilizes the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning of all students, including closing the achievement gap". According to Edmonds (1979), "we can, whenever and wherever we choose, teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to know to do that. Whether we do so or not will ultimately depend upon how we feel about the fact that we have not done so thus far." Dr. Glaze also quoted Albert Einstein who said that "excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of focused intention, sincere effort, and intelligent, skilful execution. It represents wise choices among many alternatives."

In closing, Dr. Glaze reminded the participants that an educator's mission is about democracy, our future health, prosperity, well being, our unrelenting sense of purpose, and about the country we wish to sustain. Educators alter destinies, and create an enduring legacy. Ontario's example shows that it is possible to close the achievement gaps and achieve excellence with equity. She insisted that education is the ultimate tool of empowerment, and that the time to regain public confidence in public education and to ensure that schools serve the needs of students was now.

**8.2.2. Lessons from the Suriname Project: Towards a New Curriculum for Basic Education in Suriname: Mr. Jan Berkvens, Curriculum Developer, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development.**



Mr Jan Berkvens, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development

Mr. Berkvens started his presentation by providing basic information about the Suriname Project, with which he is working. The project aims to improve Suriname's basic education. The project is scheduled to last eleven years and it is being implemented with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In

Suriname, primary enrollment is high, 99 % overall, and 85 % in the interior of the country. Secondary enrolment is 49% and 21% in the interior. The completion rate at the primary level is 39 % for boys and 53 % for girls. At the secondary level this changes in the interior due to teenage pregnancies and marriage. The compulsory education cycle is 7 years. The country's curriculum and the pedagogy are outdated, and teachers' education level is low. Language and numeracy skills are poor.

The key factors in improving basic education in Suriname are curriculum framework, learning strands for grades 1-8, pre-primary curriculum, and teaching and learning materials. The development areas for the learner are self-fulfillment, relationships, social skills, citizenship, effective learning, information and communication technology, and problem solving. The learner is learning several subject areas: Languages (Dutch, English and Spanish), Mathematics/Arithmetic/Economics, World Orientation/Science, Arts and Cultural Education, Physical Education, and Vocational Orientation. In the learning process there are several factors influencing the learner: the support network in its totality, professionalism of the teacher, learning environment, and support and coaching.

A collaborative approach is important in carrying out sustainable curriculum development and it has been used in implementing this project. The approach includes several actors: the central government, curriculum development institutes, labour market, teacher education, teachers, teacher unions, educational publishers, school boards/management, parents, NGOs, support agencies, test developers, and inspection/examination board. The Suriname Project is connected to other initiatives in the country and based on sound academic curriculum knowledge. In designing the project one must consider what is practical in the Surinamese context and incorporate different needs and wishes into the project. The project should provide answers on the issues raised. Key principles in the process are broad involvement, shared responsibility, and concentric ownership. The design principles centre around creating communities of learning which include mutual learning, by designing socio-constructivist learning and relational curriculum approach. This is the "effective professional development model" proposed by Joyce and Showers, 2002, which was implemented in the project.

The quality of the products is determined by their relevance, consistency, practicality, and effectiveness. The positive impacts of the project stem from its long-term presence in Suriname, the strong network, and thorough understanding of context. The collaborative, mutual "learning by design" approach means involving many different representatives and people of different ages. Key issues in the project have been the incorporation of Joyce and Showers' model and the principle of concentric ownership.

The remaining challenge for the project is how to continue to build broad ownership and involvement. The curriculum products are just the first step; bureaucratic processes and hierarchical thinking remain challenges to the successful implementation of the curriculum.

### 8.3. Discussion

Several points were raised during ensuing discussions. These included the notion of change; sustainability and ownership; decentralizing the process of educational development; strategic research as a key component of educational transformation; the changing in focus of professional teacher associations from that of only seeking better working conditions to that of quality of education and professional development; assessment of knowledge and character development through clearly established criteria; collaboration with key stakeholders and one-on-one consultations, engaging people as a key strategy.

The ideas and views presented by both Dr. Glaze and Mr. Berkvens synchronized well with current policies and practices across the Caribbean. Based on the strategies outlined by Dr. Glaze towards making public education efficient, it was recommended that the Caribbean Ministries of Education:

- Establish an accountability system for the pre-primary and primary education sectors. This system should incorporate rewards and sanctions.
- Provide training for administrators and other critical stakeholders in the implementation and use of accountability measures.
- Conduct research as an ongoing activity.
- Promote literacy, numeracy, programme pathways and culture as critical elements in school and system improvements.
- Encourage collaboration with stakeholders as an important approach in development.

## 9. WORKING SESSIONS

The working sessions were organized to allow opportunity for conference participants to continue the dialogue on issues raised by presenters, to seek further clarification, and to share the experiences, challenges and successes of their own countries.



Working Session in Progress

### 9.1. Working Session 1: Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education

#### 9.1 Working group 1: Early Childhood Education

1. It noted that in Trinidad and Tobago, in the past, the focus was on building early childhood centres through public private partnership; in several instances, sections of primary schools were used. However, many of these were not fully utilized. The current challenge is to find qualified early childhood teachers. The qualification requirement has been set at a Bachelor's degree but this is unattainable for a large number of practitioners. The plan is to downgrade the qualification to a certificate in the first instance and to introduce the bachelor's degree as entry requirements at a later date. Another challenge is the contractual arrangements being followed. The government currently employs teachers on short term contracts; however trained teachers prefer permanent positions. Qualified early childhood teachers are reluctant to take these positions.
2. Legislation is urgently needed to move early childhood education forward. Many draft policies exist. However, governments are reluctant in moving them forward because of cost and other factors. There is a need to make this level of education compulsory. In many Caribbean countries, early childhood

education is optional. Legislation remains critical since it will facilitate implementation of critical standards. It may be necessary to revisit the regional strategy for early childhood which has been outlined by CARICOM.

3. It is heartening that although most of the early childhood institutions in Jamaica are privately owned, 90 % of practitioners have complied with the regulatory standards of the Early Childhood Commission or are working towards acquiring registration status.
4. Government-owned early childhood institutions (infant schools) in Jamaica are not outperforming their private counterparts. This may be due to overcrowding which in part is due to the inadequate number of these institutions.
5. One strategy currently employed by the Ministry of Education in Jamaica is to deploy at least one trained early childhood teacher in each basic school. This is expected to raise standards and achieve learning targets. It is anticipated that the trained teacher will assist “untrained” staff. The effectiveness of this initiative is yet to be determined.
6. The Ministry of Education in Jamaica has also sought to increase its presence in the system by operating early childhood centres as departments of some primary schools.
7. There is need for attention to be paid to the transitioning from early childhood to the primary level. There is a 98% enrolment at the basic education level in Jamaica. However, children entering first grade are unprepared to access this level. Making the first two years of primary education an extension of the pre-primary level could be a plausible solution.
8. A UNICEF meeting has addressed the fragmentation of early childhood programmes.
9. Early childhood education could benefit greatly from public/private partnerships. For example, a 1 % levy on businesses could go a far way in providing needed funding.
10. The establishment of the Early Childhood Commission in Jamaica is commendable.
11. Stimulation is definitely needed in early childhood. In cases where homes cannot adequately provide this stimulation, well-equipped early childhood centres could aptly provide this service. If more parents are educated in the value of these centres, their demand will increase and there will be greater need to develop a formal structure.
12. Some systems are in place for early childhood education. However, the region needs help in using what exists for working towards the achievement of targets.
13. Much of the money being spent on remediation at higher levels could be better spent on getting early childhood education, the foundation, right.
14. Library resources can be maximized in advancing early childhood education.

15. Coaching of expectant mothers in nurturing strategies could be beneficial in the implementation of an effective early childhood education programme. Finland and Cuba are two countries which currently utilize this intervention.
16. A cautionary note from Finland is that we should not make early childhood education a stressful situation for children. Teachers at this level need to know the goals of this level, as well as how to work meaningfully towards the achievement of same.
17. Jamaica is currently working on a "Parenting Support Strategy". A component of this strategy is the identification of "parent spaces" in places such as churches and libraries where parents can be supported through workshops and consultation sessions.
18. A National Parents/Teachers Association was recently established in Jamaica. This body plays a pivotal role in helping parents develop their children in a meaningful way. It is believed that parental support is most essential at the early childhood level.
19. Teacher training at the early childhood level, as well as other levels, should address strategies for working with parents.

### **9.1.2. Working Group 2: Primary Education**

1. Put in place accountability measures; emphasis should be placed on monitoring to assist this accountability.
2. Focus on the critical curriculum expectations in light of the several organizations which want their interests included in the curriculum.
3. Define the critical curriculum issues that schools can do well and what are other curriculum issues that can be shared with other interest groups.
4. Improve the delivery at the primary level through innovative instructional methods – effective leadership, partnership with parents and community.
5. Adopt a multi-sectoral approach to teaching and learning - health, security, social services.
6. Establish special schools for the severely challenged. Routinely in Barbados, students aged 5-7 years are screened for physical challenges.
7. Design a curriculum that meets the needs of all students. One movement towards this inclusiveness is to mainstream vocational subjects. The primary programme must begin with the transitioning from the early childhood level.
8. Systematically and meaningfully integrate Information technology in the curriculum process. Avoid arbitrary utilization of technology.

9. Establish zone areas and facilitating interaction between different types and levels of schools can help to remove social barriers and consequently aid student performance. The establishment of the Quality Education Circles in Jamaica is a move in this direction.
10. Set standards and sensitize the public to these standards. The names of schools that have met these standards should be highlighted as a means of stimulating other schools to raise their level of performance.
11. Implement initiatives to support parents in assisting their children's learning. The Roving Care Givers Programme (Barbados) focuses on parental literacy and early stimulation. It is an effective, low cost solution.
12. Focus on the accomplishment of Universal Literacy at the primary level in the Caribbean. Some critical steps in this direction are :
  - Refrain from 'overcrowding' the curriculum and widening the focus too much; keeping it simple and straightforward. Building a strong base is critical but we must determine what the critical skills and knowledge at this level are, for example, a critical skill is the capacity to think.
  - Restructure the curriculum to meet the needs of learners and increase their options. Finland has done a good job of balancing both academic and vocational programmes. This might require a shift in the thinking in the Caribbean.
  - Ensure that there is adequate and appropriate curriculum leadership.
  - Re-orient our teachers in the area of curriculum management and instructional delivery; a behavioural change mechanism is necessary.
  - Ensure that the curriculum does not promulgate social biases and segregation of the population (rural/urban, high/low status).
  - Promote data-driven decision making as it relates to literacy – use continuous assessment, different levels and types of assessment and ensure efficient monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning process.

## **9.2. Working Session II: Comprehensive focus**

Three working groups were established to discuss selected focus areas. All conference participants with exception of students were asked to choose their areas based on their individual interests. Participating students were asked to meet in a special group to discuss issues they view as critical to the education system.

### **9.2.1. Working group 1**

#### **a) The role and importance of teachers**

Among the views expressed were, that Caribbean countries should:

1. Invest in improving the competencies of teachers to carry the transformation forward.

2. Strengthen the teaching profession through:
  - Clear specifications of the kind(s) of teachers to be recruited
  - Clear professional standards - linking these to characteristics of a profession
  - Establishment of teaching councils for the licensing of teachers
  - Establishing clear career paths for teachers - build on regional work previously done
  - Supporting professional teacher associations
3. Institute measures to retain teachers by improving the terms and conditions of service by
  - Providing improved working conditions
  - Increasing remuneration
  - Allowing free movement of teachers across the territory
  - Balancing the autonomy of teachers with accountability
4. Support the development of teachers
5. Build trust as one of the immediate measures which is central to teaching reform. Embark on immediate and extensive capacity building, while putting other measures in place.
6. Build partnerships with private and public sectors as a critical ingredient in teaching reform.

**b) Transformation of education requires both skill and will**

1. Foster teachers' commitment to their countries' development
2. Build competencies through professional development
3. Increase autonomy, capacity building, strengthening of the profession and improved terms and conditions of service.

**9.2.2. Working group 2**

**a) Close the gender gap between high performing girls and low performing boys**

1. Examine existing research on single sex schools, single sex classes, differences in learning styles, effective teaching strategies
2. Deliberately prepare teachers to teach boys
3. Utilize males in the schools for peer and team teaching
4. Utilize male mentors from the community
5. Re-socialize parents on appropriate child - rearing practices
6. Document and disseminate good practices on teaching boys, for example the case of Jamaica.

## **b) How can research be effectively utilized in transformation?**

1. Use existing research to inform decision making
2. Provide open access to existing repository of research information with equality of access and fair use to be made available to member states (Commonwealth of Learning)
3. Lobby for annual Caribbean conferences on good practices
4. Establish clear vision for what research information is needed
5. Link research projects to what we want to know
6. Utilize technology, virtual meetings, Twitter, Facebook, on-line video conference
7. Establish a multi-agency collaborative task force to pilot the way forward
8. Provide access to data from Ministries of Education for research purposes

### **9.2.3. Working group 3: Students' working group**



Students from Herbert Morrison and Montego Bay High Schools

Secondary school students, led by Dr. Didacus Jules, discussed their issues of interests and made an interesting presentation. They drew attention to the need for more involvement from them as stakeholders. Their presentation added emphasis to the sentiments which were expressed throughout the conference, that curriculum development and delivery ought to be child-centred. They recommended the following:

1. Make students a greater part of the decision-making process, as it relates to the content and methodology of their learning.
2. Place less emphasis on tests and focus on building the "whole person".
3. Balance the curriculum to include the character development of students.

4. Create a balance in student placement so that weaker ones can be helped by stronger ones.
5. Facilitate greater use of modern technology that is more in keeping with what young people currently use, to enhance instructional delivery.
6. Provide training for teachers in the use of modern technology in their teaching/delivery.
7. Allocate more resources to schools.
8. Promote the dedication of teachers to the task of teaching.
9. Place emphasis on stronger parent-teacher relationships.

## 10. Closing Ceremony

At the closing ceremony, there was a call for the staging of follow-up conferences on good practices in education. Ambassador Whiteman alluded to the respectful conversation that took place during the conference and spoke highly of the passionate involvement of the participants. Mrs. Grace McLean, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education of Jamaica, presented a summary of the conference and thanked the sponsors, participants and the organizing committee. She indicated that, while the conference was successfully staged, the “truth” regarding the conference’s outcomes would be revealed by the decisions made in the education sector in the near future.

Ambassador Pyhälä expressed pleasure at the outcome of the conference and reiterated Finland's commitment to supporting the development of education in the Caribbean. In addition, he expressed his satisfaction that there were so many officials responsible for curriculum development among the participants. Ambassador Pyhälä stated that there is a high consciousness of the challenges and a strong will to improve education in the Caribbean region, and that it remains to be seen what kind of political decisions are made in the future. He expressed a wish that the participants, when returning home, would take the most important messages and conclusions of this conference to the Ministers of Education and other political leaders in their respective countries.

# 11. Conclusion

The International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries "*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*", represented a major step towards the coalescing of initiatives and energies around the broadening of the pool of Caribbean nationals equipped to participate in a borderless and fiercely competitive global market place. Accordingly, Ambassador Pyhälä in his Preface noted that, *it is widely known that the Caribbean education systems have been producing and still produce highly qualified professionals for service to their own country, but also for export to other labour markets. In this Conference it was often repeated that a crucial challenge to the development efforts of the Caribbean countries is to broaden the base of well-educated citizens.*

Consistent with Ambassador Pyhälä's view, was the acknowledgement by Caribbean speakers that despite the tremendous achievement made by the Region in securing universal access to education, quality education for all, continues to be an elusive target. Of significance was the statement by Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch, Pro-Registrar, Caribbean Examinations Council, in which he provided data on the performance of students in the Region, which indicated that one fifth of the students sitting the Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (CSEC) examinations, earn five CSEC subjects in a single sitting. Mr. Cumberbatch cautioned that despite this being a relatively good performance in providing excellent human capital for the Region, the Caribbean community requires far more than this number to make major economic gains.

Minister Holness emphasized the importance of sharing good practices in education and cautioned that the quality of education should not be compromised. He posited the view that despite economic challenges, access and quality must be pursued simultaneously and a culture of excellence must be promoted from the early childhood to the tertiary level. Minister Holness reiterated that with the right leadership and vision a country can overcome its limitations and challenges. He applauded Finland for its commitment to education and acknowledged the Finnish education system as a positive model, which promotes and maintains equity, efficiency and sustainability, while achieving excellence.

The foregoing expressions of solidarity around a common theme of a broadened base of educated and trained nationals provided a platform for the Conference. This general direction was aligned with the following Conference objectives as articulated by the Chairman Dr. Simon Clarke:

- To build on previous efforts to bring together education specialists and practitioners in the Region;
- To promote quality education by identifying and sharing good practices in education;
- To find good ways of teaching and learning.
- To develop the affective domain in students and teachers – love, care, sharing, and feeling in an effort to advance UNESCO's Strategy for Peace which includes respect for life, rejecting violence, sharing with others, listening to understand, rediscovering solidarity, and preserving the planet.

The two-day Conference received presentations on a variety of best practices and effective policies in education, from Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, the USA, and the Caribbean countries. The Conference succeeded in addressing current educational practices, challenges and problems faced by the Caribbean

region, articulated by officials within Ministries of Education, education practitioners, and representatives of parent associations and students at the secondary and tertiary levels. Five areas were addressed by the Conference:

## **1. Learning for Earning, Learning for Living**

The common theme running through the two presentations under this area was the critical need for renewed attempts at stakeholder participation in bolstering the educational enterprise. It was generally accepted by presenters and participants that any improvement in the quality of education must be a collaborative enterprise, drawing on the energies, resources and the commitment of all stakeholders. In this new dispensation, Ministries of Education will continue to frame the policy direction and provide the minimum standards. Consultation and collaboration must define the relationships as countries tap into the capacity and potential of the wider community. An indirect benefit will be the demonstrated value placed on education and ultimately national development. Some level of decentralisation may be necessary to bring the delivery of educational services closer to the population served. The concept of communities of practice, being implemented in Jamaica as Quality Education Circles, was recommended as one way to position the school as a learning organisation and promote co-operation among stakeholders as they sought solutions to challenges affecting their schools

## **2. Achieving Universal Quality Education**

Common to all three presentations under this area was the emphasis on the importance of consultative leadership in the development of school curricula in order to: ensure balance between academic and vocational offerings; avoid the promulgation of social and cultural biases; prevent the 'overcrowding' of the curriculum and widen its response to special interest groups. The Conference acknowledged gains towards the provision of universal access to education across the Region, while admitting that some populations – the very young, those with special needs, children from low-socio-economic backgrounds and boys remain inadequately served by the system.

Focusing specifically on the very young, the presenter referenced major research findings which have established that the preschool experience – more than any other factor - enhances children's development, promotes schooling, reduces crime, promotes productivity in the workplace, and reduces teenage pregnancy. Investment in early childhood education was highlighted as the linchpin, in achieving the outcomes and human capital that can make a positive contribution to reducing the poverty and increasing the prosperity of the Caribbean nations.

A major recommendation emanating from the presentations was for the basic education curriculum to lay the foundation for a love for learning, build a strong base in literacy and critical thinking skills and emphasise personal and character development. In keeping with this direction the Conference advocated a shift away from reliance on formal high-stakes testing to continuous, classroom-based assessments and from paper and pencil norm-referenced testing to performance-based assessments and criterion-referenced interpretations of results. The view was expressed that excessive formal testing during the basic education years placed undue pressure on students and shifted the emphasis from gradual mastery of a wide range of knowledge, attitudes

and skills to competition for passing grades, better school places and higher ranking of schools. Instead what was advocated was that students be provided the support they need to enjoy their schooling and achieve desirable learning outcomes. The need was recognised for some assessment of learning. However, the emphasis should be on assessment as learning and assessment for learning.

The Finnish model which does not invest much money on heavy controlling mechanisms such as inspections, nationwide testing and the ranking of pre-primary or basic education was presented as a possible recalibration of methodologies presently employed in most jurisdictions including the Caribbean.

Caribbean speakers during the Conference left no doubt that the region as a whole was falling short of a relentless commitment to the pursuit of achieving quality education for all. This issue was contextualized in the following poignant comment: *the biggest problem in Caribbean education is not the teachers or the students but the Ministries of Education which lack a vision of systematic development of education systems and on the direction of education. One speaker cited the lack of continuity in education programmes evidenced by a change in direction when governments change.* He called for “the re-engineering of the teaching, learning and assessment processes” and suggested “rethinking of education with a view to its fundamental realignment to the needs of the Caribbean societies in the era of globalization and towards the articulation of a seamless education system”. He indicated that greater collaboration is necessary for universal quality education to be achieved.

A final point worthy of note in respect of achieving quality education was the need for systematic development of education and systematic educational policies. This recommendation was made against the background of the tendency in some Caribbean countries where significant changes to the strategic direction of education to be made whenever governments changed. The resulting changes have not always been systematic nor have they been grounded in a shared philosophical view of the goals and value of education. The cases of Canada and Finland demonstrate that transformation of education in the region requires transformational leadership and political will to make fundamental changes.

### **3. Achieving Quality Primary Education - Curriculum Development**

In this session, the two presentations highlighted the importance of a collaborative or combined approach to curriculum reform and development. While the first presentation was focussed on the enabling conditions for successful curriculum reform and implementation, the second validated the theoretical considerations posited and provided participants with an illustrative example of a current best practice in curriculum development in the Caribbean.

“Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain (Fink, 2006), was the common thread running through both presentations. The first presenter issued a cautioned statement highlighting the tendency of curriculum reforms to fail worldwide, if countries do not recognise early in the process that curriculum improvement is not an event but a long-term process which requires hard work. He pointed to the frequent challenges facing educational reform such as discrepancies between intentions,

realities and outcomes, gaps between different curriculum levels, inconsistency between various components of learning, and the several world views of theory and research as well as policies and practices.

The presenter, a proponent of the combined approach to curriculum reform stressed the importance of a reform process directed from the top by clearly articulated national educational policies; supported at the side by support agencies such as textbook publishers, teacher training colleges; and reinforced at the bottom by teacher and school involvement. In this scenario teachers are the key and learning is most effective when it is connected to lessons, embedded in practice; when teachers have active and investigative roles; when teachers learn and develop together, and when teachers have sufficient time and space to develop and hone their skills.

Complementary to the theoretical perspective was the presentation of a case study showcasing Barbados' unrelenting commitment to national curriculum development. In this session, Barbados' successful development, adoption and continued adaptation to socio-cultural realities in the curriculum development process was presented as a model of successful curriculum reform. Acknowledgement of the efficacy of the combined approach to curriculum development as a contributing factor to the success of this innovation was emphasised.

#### **4. Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education – Mathematics, Science and Literacy**

While the preceding presentations addressed curriculum development in general, the three presentations in this session were subject specific and focussed on the various considerations in designing the Mathematics and Science curriculum. "*Common aims for all*" provided the ethos for curriculum development in the subject areas highlighted. In the case of Mathematics, the presenter referenced the body of work by neuropsychologists who posited the view that Mathematics includes real items and real events, spoken language, images, and written symbols as well as the various kinds of perception such as:

- Auditory perception - listening and speaking;
- Visual perception – seeing, reading and visualization;
- Tactile perception – touching;
- Kinesthetic perception – doing and feeling.

The role of intelligence and reasoning, memory, emotions and social reactions, motor-sensor activities, basic visual operations, and language activities were highlighted as not only contributing to the learning of Mathematics but also positively impact learning to read and write.

In the case of Environmental and Natural Science, the experimental approach which includes observing, measuring, planning, testing and experimenting was emphasised. The approach includes discussion, conceptualisation of observations, presenting, interpreting and modelling of observations as well as drawing conclusions, making and testing hypothesis.

A case study approach was used by the second presenter to highlight the Finnish Literacy Curriculum as a best practice. The pre-school years was emphasised as the basis for the beginning of literacy studies, on the

premise that: *“children have heard and listened, they have been heard, and they have spoken and been spoken to, people have discussed with them, and they have asked questions and received answers.”*

The role of the *mother tongue* in formal education settings was highlighted in the presentation. This was a most significant development in light of the fact this approach is viewed with scepticism and continue to be a hotly debated topic in most jurisdictions in the Region. The Conference was informed that the Finnish education system promotes the use of the mother tongue in schools, as the tool and object of learning, the basis of self-expression, oral and written communication/interaction, and reading comprehension. As a school subject it is used to pass on knowledge, skills and art and every teacher is a mother tongue teacher.

Despite Finland’s commendable performance on international literacy indicators the Finns share with the Region the challenge of boys not reading as well as girls and boys reading fewer books in their leisure time than girls. In its effort to tackle this gender gap in literacy performance, A Network to Improve Pedagogical Methods for Educating Boys was founded in Finland to address this issue in an informed and systematic manner.

The final presentation in this session was focussed on the importance of on-going teacher education as critical to curriculum development. The Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) Project was highlighted as a best practice designed to upgrade the skills of teachers to become more effective reading instructors in the early primary grades (grades 1 to 3). The impressive success of this Project was reflected in Project schools outperforming other mainstream schools in a number of independent national measures of student literacy and achievement. There was also a clear indication that teacher proficiency had improved in three different clusters: Belize, Sam Sharpe (Jamaica) and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The CETT Project, which ended as a major Project in September 2009 continues to be supported by the University of the West Indies through a small unit which coordinates and delivers technical assistance to countries; provides assessment services; provides texts and other print and non-print materials and has garnered additional funding to help countries in rolling out the reading programme. To maximise the benefits of this model teacher upgrading initiative, attention was drawn to the importance of finding a way of extending the major elements of CETT in an effort to rapidly replace less effective programmes which are currently embedded in the primary school curriculum.

## **5. Accountability in Education**

In this presentation the education system of the Province of Ontario was featured as a best practice in respect of effective systems of accountability in education. In justifying this coveted position the presenter cited the Report of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (2010), which states that “Ontario is among the few jurisdictions in the world that demonstrate both higher achievement in reading and a smaller performance gap between high-and low-income students when compared to the OECD average.

The strategy adopted by Ontario is driven by action at the provincial level, at the school district level, at the school level, and at the classroom level. Complementing this collaborative approach are high impact strategies

to improve learning and achievement, character development and student engagement. Four “pillars” of student success are promoted for improving results in secondary schools: literacy, numeracy, program pathways, as well as community, culture and caring which means a focus on student well-being, and teachers who are the key to student engagement. Teachers must know their students, have high standards and expectations, use differentiated instruction, and proactive intervention.

Critical to Ontario's success is the value placed on instruction as having the largest influence on student achievement, with school leadership placed second only to “classroom teaching gap”. In this jurisdiction the educator’s mission is about democracy, health, prosperity, well being, and an unrelenting sense of purpose.

The presentation on Suriname reflected a situation of a stark contrast to the Ontario reality. The presenter highlighted several challenges faced by Suriname’s education system such as: low enrolment rates at the secondary level in selected parts of the country; low completion rates at the primary level for boys and girls with the boys being the worst off; poor language and numeracy skills; high rate of teenage pregnancies and early marriages; outdated curriculum and pedagogy, low levels of teachers’ education.

Most encouraging is the Suriname Project, designed to improve Suriname’s basic education. The Project scheduled to last eleven years is being implemented with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The Project employs a collaborative approach and includes several actors: the central government, curriculum development institutes, labour market, teacher education, teachers, teacher unions, educational publishers, school boards/management, parents, NGOs, support agencies, test developers, and inspection/examination board. The Suriname Project is connected to other initiatives in the country and based on sound academic curriculum knowledge. The key principles in the process are broad involvement, shared responsibility, and concentric ownership. The project design is centred on creating communities of learning which include mutual learning by designing, socio-constructivist learning, and relational curriculum approach. The presenter in his conclusion acknowledged that the remaining challenge for the project is how to continue to build broad ownership and involvement as the curriculum products are just the first step; bureaucratic processes and hierarchical thinking remain challenges to the successful implementation of the curriculum.

## **Working Sessions**

The Working Sessions organised to provide participants with the opportunity to continue the dialogue on issues raised, seek clarification and share common experiences were well received. Of the several educational events in the Region, the Conference was considered to have succeeded in deepening the discussions on the improvement of education in the Region. It was also evident that the Conference provided Caribbean leaders and educators with valuable tools for utilization in the development of their education systems. A number of salient points not sufficiently addressed in the presentations was raised in the working sessions. Among these are:

## **A. Support for the Role and Importance of Teachers**

The Conference called for teachers to be supported in their role, for the system to build trust in teachers and for them to be accorded the autonomy consistent with their professional standing. Alongside this recommendation were the views that there is a need to establish standards and accreditation mechanisms in order to enhance the teaching profession, to require that all teachers be trained to at least the first degree level, and to effect improvements in the teachers' terms and conditions of service.

## **B. Emphasis on Research, Development and Innovation**

Improving education in the region must be driven by research. Responsive Ministries of Education use research findings to guide policy direction, strategic planning and programme implementation. Advances in the field of Information and Communication Technology put a wide range of tools to enhance instructional delivery at the disposal of teachers and the region should exploit this potential.

## **C. Drafting of Legislation**

The Conference recognized that inadequate accountability was contributing to less than satisfactory levels of performance of the system. It recommended that legislation, such as that being considered in Jamaica, be enacted to govern aspects of the teaching profession, and that minimum standards of teacher training be established. Systems of accountability should be established to ensure that once legislation and standards are in place, they are monitored to ensure compliance.

## **Strategies for the Implementation of Conference Recommendations**

The proximity of CARICOM states, the commonalities of culture and educational challenges within the region and efforts towards greater regional integration suggest that a regional response to the conference might be most appropriate, even while recognizing that individual nations will seek solutions unique to their social, economic and political contexts. The following are a general set of guidelines/tools for regional states to consider as follow-up to the recommendations emanating from the *International Conference on Education for CARICOM Countries*:

- Engage CARICOM as the coordinating entity for implementing the recommendations.
- Engage consultants for reviewing and prioritizing the recommendations and developing appropriate project proposals, where agreed, for implementation, as well as to provide legal advice.
- Through CARICOM, identify appropriate grant-aided funding sources to facilitate implementation of the recommendations.
- Solicit and utilize public-private partnerships to assist with meeting funding targets.
- Engage appropriate public and private organizations in the implementation process.

- Establish a regional advisory committee to drive the implementation process.
- Establish national committees to guide initiatives towards meeting universal quality education (UQE).
- Renew/formulate national initiatives and drive to achieve UQE.
- Establish national working groups to develop policies and guidelines and to analyze good practices to determine aspects that could be adapted in various countries.
- Audit all institutions to determine their strengths and needs.
- Conduct research to determine challenges and inform the decision making processes.
- Conduct study tours for implementers to gain first hand information and exposure to best practices.
- Establish targets for institutions and provide incentives for meeting targets.
- Identify and recognize exemplars and publicize and share information on implementation status.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<b>Country Delegates</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Mrs. Daphne Cassell	Montserrat	Ministry of Education	Permanent Secretary
Mrs. Cherlyn Hogan	Montserrat	Montserrat Secondary School	Principal
Mr. Julian Anderson	The Bahamas	Ministry of Education	Acting District Superintendent
Mr. Colin Johnson	The Bahamas	Ministry of Education	Acting Principal
Ms. Edith Elizee Tilon	Suriname	Ministry of Education and Community Development	Policy Coordinator
Mrs. Gladys Sapoen Sastropawiro	Suriname	Ministry of Education and Community Development	Policy Official
Ms. Lornette Queeley-Connor	Nevis	Ministry of Education and Information	Principal Education Officer
Mr. Michael S. Esdaille	St. Kitts	Ministry of Education and Information	Education Officer
Dr. Caridad Rosario Zurita Cruz	Cuba	Advisor of the Latin American Reference Center for Special Education	Psychologist
Dr. Omar Abreu Valdivia	Cuba	Pedagogical University	Chancellor
Ms. Maxine Headlam	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Regional Director
Mrs. Lena Buckle-Scott	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Senior Education Officer, Core Curriculum Unit
Mr. Laurie King	Barbados	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Ms. Joy Gittens	Barbados	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Education Officer
Mrs. Sharon Mangroo	Trinidad & Tobago	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Education Officer
Mr. Bhadase Seetahal Maraj	Trinidad & Tobago	Ministry of Education	School Supervisor III
Ms. Rhonda Connor	Anguilla	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Mr. Worrel Brooks	Anguilla	Ministry of Education	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)
Mrs. Arlene Buckmire-Outram	Grenada	Ministry of Education	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Andrea Phillip	Grenada	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Education Officer, Curriculum

<b>Country Delegates</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Ms. Beverly Neptune	St. Vincent & The Grenadines	St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College	Dean, Division of Teacher Education
Ms. Eula Adams	St. Vincent & The Grenadines	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Education Officer
Mrs. Jennifer Wallace-Lafond	Dominica	Ministry of Education	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Stephenson Hyacinth	Dominica	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Hon. Andrew Fahie	British Virgin Islands	Ministry of Education	Minister of Education
Dr. Marcia Potter	British Virgin Islands	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Mr. Edgar Howell	Turks & Caicos	Ministry of Education	Director of Education
Mrs. Sonia Williams	Turks & Caicos	Ministry of Education	Under Secretary of Education
Mr. Olato Sam	Guyana	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Ms. Carol Benn	Guyana	Parent Teacher Associations	National Coordinator
Ms. Wendy McDonell	Bermuda	Ministry of Education	Commissioner of Education
Ms. Terry Cox	Bermuda	Ministry of Education	Acting Staff Development Officer
Ms. Kiva Powell	Cayman	Ministry of Education	Head, Professional Development
Ms. Gloria Pollard-Bell	Cayman	Ministry of Education	Principal
Dr. Rufina Frederick	St. Lucia	Ministry of Education and Culture	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Marcus Edward	St. Lucia	Ministry of Education and Culture	Acting Chief Education Officer
Mr. Alan Genitty	Belize	Ministry of Education and Youth	Deputy Chief Education Officer
Mrs. Jamuna Vasquez	Belize	Hummingbird Elementary School	Principal
Mrs. Jacinth Pringle	Antigua & Barbuda	Ministry of Education	Director of Education
Ms. Cynthia Crump	Antigua & Barbuda	Ministry of Education	Curriculum Development Officer
Mr. Julio Leonardo Valeiron	Dominican Republic	Dominican Institute Research and Evaluation of Ed. Quality	Executive Director

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Mr. Robert Fuderich	Jamaica	UNICEF	Country Representative
Mr. Kenneth Russell	Jamaica	UNICEF	Quality Education and Early Childhood Specialist
Dr. Carol Clarke	Jamaica	Mico University	Vice President of Academic Affairs
Dr. Bermadee Briscoe	Jamaica	Mico University	Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology
Ms. Merris Murray	Jamaica	National Council on Education	Executive Director
Mr. Ceibert Adamson	Jamaica	Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica	Executive Director
Mrs. Andrea Wilson-Graham	Jamaica	Bethlehem Moravian College	Vice Principal - Academic Affairs
Mrs. Heather Smith-Sherwood	Jamaica	Bethlehem Moravian College	Vice Principal
Mr. Henry Grey	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Manager, ETMU
Mr. Luz Johnson	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Chief Information Officer
Mrs. Karen Gayle	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Regional Programme Director
Mrs. Cynthia Dewdney	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Regional Programme Director
Mr. Winston Fletcher	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Regional Programme Director
Mr. Samuel Bowen	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Regional Programme Director
Ms. Arden Grant	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Regional Programme Director
Miss Alison McIntyre	Jamaica	HEART, Caribbean Institute of Technology	Actg. Manager
Ms. Michelle Garrick	Jamaica	Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning	Workplace Coordinator
Mrs. Monica Porter-Lewis	Jamaica	HEART Trust/NTA	Manager
Mr. Edward Shakes	Jamaica	G.C. Foster College	Principal
Dr. Geraldine Hodelin	Jamaica	University of Technology	Director, UTECH Academy
Prof. Zellyne Jennings-Craig	Jamaica	UWI School Of Education	Director
Dr. Dawn Barrett Adams	Jamaica	University Council of Jamaica	Accreditation Officer
Mrs. Rosemarie Vernon	Jamaica	Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO	Board Member and Chairperson

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Mr. Keino Senior	Jamaica	Edna Manley College of the Visual & Performing Art	Senior Lecturer
Mr. Burchell Duhaney	Jamaica	Edna Manley College of the Visual & Performing Art	Principal
Mrs. Carol Hamilton	Jamaica	Edna Manley College of the Visual & Performing Art	Vice Principal
Mrs. Esther Tyson	Jamaica	Jamaica Assn. of Principals of Secondary Schools	Vice President
Mrs. Lorna Lawson	Jamaica	National Parents Teachers Association	Region 4
Mrs. Marjorie Leyden-Vernon	Jamaica	National Parents Teachers Association	President
Dr. Jacqueline Clarke	Jamaica	Northern Caribbean University	Chair, Department Teacher Education
Mr. Kenrie Hylton	Jamaica	Northern Caribbean University	Chair, Department of Computer and Information Science
Dr. Teran Milford	Jamaica	Northern Caribbean University	Vice President, Academic Administration
Dr. Jean Beaumont	Jamaica	USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project	Chief of Party, Project Manager
Dr. Maureen Byfield	Jamaica	USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project	Literacy Specialist
Mr. Derrick Hall	Jamaica	USAID/Jamaica Basic Education Project	Numeracy Specialist
Mr. Denworth Finnikin	Jamaica	TVET	Director
Dr. Renee Rattray	Jamaica	Mutual Building Societies Foundation	Programme Manager
Mr. Barrington Richardson	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Guidance & Counselling Education Officer
Mrs. Sonia Benjamin	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Guidance & Counselling Education Officer
Ms. Patricia Perry	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mrs. Maureen Dwyer	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Inspector, NEI
Ms. Michele Meredith	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Project Coordinator, ESTP
Mrs. Patricia Roberts	Jamaica	Jamaica Library Service	Director General
Mrs. Karen Barton	Jamaica	Jamaica Library Service	Senior Director
Mrs. Patsy Gordon	Jamaica	Jamaica Library Service	Director, School Library Network

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
Mrs. Cynthia Hobbs	Jamaica	World Bank	Senior Education Specialist
Dr. Winsome Gordon	Jamaica	Jamaica Teaching Council	Chief Executive Officer
Mrs. Marica McGann	Jamaica	Jamaica Teaching Council	Chief Mentoring Officer
Mrs. Francine Rhoomes	Jamaica	Child Development Agency	Team Leader - Southern Region
Mrs. Poala Genas-Brown	Jamaica	Child Development Agency	RCCF Manager - Western Region
Mr. Hector Stephenson	Jamaica	Overseas Examinations Commission	Executive Director
Mr. Owen Wilson	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mr. Alan Beckford	Jamaica	National Youth Service	Executive Director
Ms. Audrey Williams	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Denham Town High
Mr. Ruel Reid	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Special Advisor,
Mr. Colin Blair	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Director, Communication
Ms. Haydee Gordon	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Legal Consultant
Dr. Rebecca Tortello	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Senior Advisor
Dr. Phylicia Marshall	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Assistant Chief Education Officer
Mr. Robert Miller	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Advisor Consultant
Mr. Marlon Morgan	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Advisor/Consultant
Mrs. Hedda Watson	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Senior Education Officer
Mr. Clement Radcliffe	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Deputy Chief Education Officer
Mrs. Arlene Williams	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Director, Executive Services
Mr. Sydney Henriques	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Director, Schools Safety and Security
Mr. Alphansus Davis	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Senior Advisor
Ms. Sylvia Henry	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer,
Mrs. Janice Steele	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer,
Mrs. Andrea Weir	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mr. Lenworth Wallace	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mrs. Yvonne Campbell	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Registrar
Ms. Sonia Madden	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Senior Education Officer
Mrs. Leonie Dunwell	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mrs. Kasan Troupe	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Community Relations

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
			Education Officer
Mr. Phillip Tomlinson	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mr. Robert Phillips	Jamaica	e-Learning, Jamaica	Education Specialist
Miss Carol Forbes nee Daley	Jamaica	Educator	Self Employed
Dr. Carol Granston	Jamaica	Caribbean Examinations Council	Assistant Registrar
Mrs. Yvette Dennis-Morrison	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Education Officer
Mrs. Charmaine Bailey-Bloomfield	Jamaica	Project Officer	CARICOM Secretariat
Mr. Marcellus Albertin	St. Lucia	OECS Secretariat	Education Development Officer
Ms. Jacqueline Kerr	Jamaica	WKHA	Officer
Mr. Barrington Flemming	Jamaica	The Daily Gleaner	Reporter
Mrs. Vilma Miller	Jamaica	MOE, Region 4	Education Officer
Mrs. Angella Samuels-Harris	Jamaica	Montego Bay Community College	Lecturer
Mr. Carlton Samuels	Jamaica	Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network	Officer
Dr. Martin Baptiste	Barbados	Caribbean Development Bank	Operations Officer, Education
Mrs. Irene Walters	Jamaica	National Commercial Bank Trust	Board Member
Hon. Andrew Issa	Jamaica		Hon. Counsel General of Finland in Jamaica
<b>SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS</b>			
Dr. Simon Clarke	Jamaica	Retired, Formerly of UNESCO, Kingston Office	Chairman, Conference Opening Ceremony
Ambassador Mikko Pyhala	Caracas, Venezuela	Embassy of Finland to CARICOM	Ambassador
Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch	Jamaica	Caribbean Examinations Council	Registrar - Western Zone
Ambassador Burchell Whiteman	Jamaica	Commonwealth of Learning	Chairman
Hon. Andrew Holness	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Minister of Education
Mrs. Audrey Sewell	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Permanent Secretary
Mrs. Grace McLean	Jamaica	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Mr. Didacus Jules	Barbados	CXC, Barbados	Registrar
Mr. Laurie King	Barbados	Ministry of Education	Chief Education Officer
Mr. John Yearwood	Miami	The Miami Herald	World Editor
Mrs. Belinda Williams	Jamaica	National Commercial Bank, Jamaica	Group Communication Manager

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
<b>SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS</b>			
Mrs. Irmeli Halinen	Finland	National Board of Education	Director of Curriculum
Dr. Rose Davies	Jamaica	Institute of Education, UWI, Mona	Head
Dr. Jan van den Akker	The Netherlands	Curriculum Development Institute	Director
Mr. Leo Pahkin	Finland	National Board of Education	Mathematics Expert
Ms. Pirjo Sinko	Finland	National Board of Education	Literacy Expert
Professor Stafford Griffith	Jamaica	Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training/UWI	CEO, Professor
Dr. Avis Glaze	Canada	Edu-Quest	Chief Executive Officer
Mr. Jan Berkvens	The Netherlands	Suriname's Basic Education Project	Project Officer
Dr Jennifer Obidah	OECS/UWI	Joint Board of Teacher Education,	Chairman
Dr. Halden Morris	Jamaica	Institute of Education, Mona	Senior Lecturer
Ms. Hannele Halmeranta	Finland	Embassy of Finland to CARICOM	Programme Officer
Mr. Kenneth Russell	Jamaica	UNICEF	Education Specialist
<b>RAPORTEURS</b>			
Mrs. Allison McCallum	Jamaica	Student Assessment Unit	Education Officer
Mrs. Novelette McLean-Francis	Jamaica	USAID-BASIC Education Officer	Education Officer
<b>NURSES</b>			
Ms Andrene Nelson	Jamaica	Ministry of Health	Nurse

<b>Other Participants</b>			
<b>NAME</b>	<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
<b>STUDENTS AND TEACHERS</b>			
Ms. Carol Blanchard	Jamaica	University of the West Indies, Mona	Student
Mrs. Patricia Linton-Forrest	Jamaica	University of the West Indies, Mona	Student
Kimberly A. Webb	Jamaica	Mount Alvernia High	Student
Reagan Daley	Jamaica	Mount Alvernia High	Student
Mrs. McKnight Jones	Jamaica	Mount Alvernia High	Teacher
Basil Thompson	Jamaica	Herbert Morrison High	Teacher
Sheray Reid	Jamaica	Herbert Morrison High	Student
Ms. Onicca Morrison	Jamaica	Herbert Morrison High	Teacher
Karee Parkinson	Jamaica	Montego Bay High	Student
Therrel Stennett	Jamaica	Montego Bay High	Student
Ms. Tameka Stewart	Jamaica	Montego Bay High	Teacher
Tannisha Jones	Jamaica	St. James High	Student
Shaney Tomlinson	Jamaica	St. James High	Student
Shayn Hacker	Jamaica	Cornwall College	Student
Tahur Thompson	Jamaica	Cornwall College	Student
Bridgette Lecky	Jamaica	Cornwall College	Teacher

## APPENDIX 2: Opening Ceremony and Conference Programmes

### Conference Objective:

The Finnish Embassy to CARICOM has partnered with the Ministry of Education in Jamaica, the Commonwealth of Learning, and the Caribbean Examinations Council to sponsor this conference for CARICOM countries and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

The Conference is organized under the theme “*Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education*” and aims to find ways to support teaching and learning and to reach better learning results. It will therefore showcase highly effective policies and practices in education, and facilitate the sharing of solutions and culturally appropriate approaches to teaching and learning.

*Thank You for Participating*

Website: <http://moey.gov.jm/caricomconference>  
E-mail: [caricomconference@moey.gov.jm](mailto:caricomconference@moey.gov.jm)



The poster features a blue background with a yellow wavy line at the top and bottom. It includes the coat of arms of Jamaica and the coat of arms of Finland. The text is centered and reads: "The Ministry of Education, Jamaica in partnership with the Foreign Ministry of Finland INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION for CARICOM Countries". Below this is the logo of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the theme: "Partners for Development: Sharing Good Practices in Education". The event details are: "Opening ceremony May 24, 2011 9:00 A.M.". At the bottom, it lists the venue: "The Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa Montego Bay, St. James, Jamaica" and includes the logos of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC).

The Ministry of Education, Jamaica  
in partnership with  
the Foreign Ministry of Finland  
**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION**  
for  
CARICOM Countries



*“Partners for Development:  
Sharing Good Practices in Education”*

**Opening ceremony**  
**May 24, 2011**  
**9:00 A.M.**

The Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa  
Montego Bay,  
St. James, Jamaica



<b>National Anthems</b>	Jamaica Finland
<b>Chairman's Opening Remarks</b>	Dr Simon Clarke Former Dir. UNESCO- Caribbean Office
<b>Invocation</b>	The Rev. Mr. Clement Clarke Chairperson, St James Ministers' Fraternal
<b>Greetings</b>	Mrs. Audrey V. Sewell, JP Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Jamaica
<b>Cultural Item</b>	Herbert Morrison Technical High School Band
<b>Statement</b>	H.E. Mikko Pyhala, Finnish Ambassador to CARICOM
<b>Remarks</b>	Ambassador Burchell Whiteman, Chair, Commonwealth of Learning
<b>Remarks</b>	Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch, Pro-Registrar, Caribbean Examinations Council
<b>Cultural Item</b>	Comwall College Choir
<b>Main Speaker</b>	Hon. Andrew Holness, MP Minister of Education, Jamaica
<b>Chairman's Closing Remarks</b>	

### National Anthem of Jamaica

Eternal Father, Bless our Land,  
Guard us with thy mighty hand,  
Keep us free from evil powers,  
Be our light through countless hours,  
To our leaders, great defender,  
Grant true wisdom from above,  
Justice, truth be ours forever,  
Jamaica, land we love,

**Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love**

Teach us true respect for all,  
Stir response to duty's call,  
Strengthen us the weak to cherish,  
Give us vision lest we perish,  
Knowledge send us Heavenly Father,  
Grant true wisdom from above,  
Justice, truth be ours forever,  
Jamaica, land we love,

**Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica, land we love**

### National Anthem of Finland

Our land, our land, our fatherland,  
Sound loud, O name of worth!  
No mount that meets the heaven's band,  
No hidden vale, no wave-washed strand,  
Is loved, as is our native North,  
Our own forefathers' earth.  
Thy blossom, in the bud laid low,  
Yet ripened shall upspring.  
See! From our love once more shall grow  
Thy light, thy joy, thy hope, thy glow!  
And clearer yet one day shall ring  
The song our land shall sing

## Conference Programme - Day 1 – May 24, 2011

8:00 - 8:45	<b>Registration</b>	
9:00 -10:40	<b>Opening Ceremony</b>	
10:40-11:00	<b>Break and Media Interaction</b>	
<b>11:05 – 1:00 - Learning for Earning, Learning for Living - Professor Stafford Griffith - Moderator</b>		
11:10-11:55	<i>Learning for Earning, Learning for Living</i>	Mr. John Yearwood – <i>The Miami Herald</i> , USA
12:00-12:30	<i>A CARICOM Perspective</i>	Mrs. Belinda Williams - <i>National Commercial Bank Foundation, Jamaica</i>
12:35-1:00	<i>Discussion</i>	
1:00 - 2:10	<b>Lunch and Media Interaction</b>	
<b>2:15 – 4:30 – Achieving Universal Quality Education – Ambassador Burchell Whiteman - Moderator</b>		
2:20 – 3:00	<i>Supporting Learning to Achieve Better Results: The Finnish Experience</i>	<b>Mrs. Irmeli Halinen</b> Finnish Board of Education
3:05 – 3:35	<i>A CARICOM Perspective</i>	<b>Dr. Didacus Jules</b> , Registrar & CEO, Caribbean Examinations Council
3:40 – 4:00	<i>Meeting the Challenges of Quality Early Education and Development</i>	<b>Dr. Rose Davies</b> , Head, Institute of Education, University of the West Indies, Mona
4:00 – 4:30	<i>Discussion</i>	
<b>4:30 – 4:45</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>4:45 – 6:30 - Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education 1 - Mr. Kenneth Russell - Moderator</b>		
4:50 – 5:15	<i>The Role of Curriculum in the Development of Education: The Netherlands Story</i>	<b>Dr. Jan van den Akker</b> , Netherlands
5:20 – 5:45	<i>A CARICOM Perspective</i>	<b>Mr. Laurie King</b> , Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Barbados
5:50 – 6:30	<b>First working session: Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education</b>	
7:00	<b>Cocktails and Dinner</b>	

**Day 2 – May 25, 2011**

<b>8:30 Registration</b>		
<b>8.45 – 10:30 - Achieving Universal Quality Primary Education 2: Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch – Moderator</b>		
8:50 – 9:15	<i>Achieving Excellence in Mathematics and Science</i>	<b>Mr. Leo Pahkin</b> , Finnish National Board of Education
9:20 - 9:45	<i>Literacy Initiatives and Successes</i>	<b>Ms. Pirjo Sinko</b> , Finnish Board of Education
9:50 - 10:20	<i>CARICOM Perspective</i>	<b>Professor Stafford Griffith</b> , Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training
10:25 -10:50	<i>Discussion</i>	
<b>10:55-11:10</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>11:15 -1:05 - Accountability in Education – Dr. Jennifer Obidah – Moderator</b>		
11:20 -12:00	<i>System and School Improvement: Lessons from Ontario, Canada</i>	<b>Dr. Avis Glaze</b> – Edu-quest International Inc.
12:05 – 12:40	<i>Lessons from the Suriname Project</i>	<b>Mr. Jan Berkvens</b> , Netherlands
12:45 – 1:05	<i>Discussion</i>	
<b>1:05 -2:10</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
2:15 – 3:15	<b>Second Working Group</b> - Accountability in, and Quality Assuring the Education Sector	
<b>3:15 – 3:30</b>	<b>Break</b>	
3:35 – 3:45	<i>Presentation of Working Group Results (Days 1 and 2) - <b>Dr. Halden Morris</b>, Chief Rapporteur</i>	
3:45 – 4:35	<i>Panel Discussion- Improving Education in the Region: The Way Forward – <b>Dr Jennifer Obidah</b> Chair</i> <b>Panelists:</b> Presenters and Speakers	
4:35 - 5:30	<i>Closing Ceremony</i>	

## APPENDIX 3: PLANNING COMMITTEE



**Members of the Planning Committee**

The conference planning committee comprised persons drawn from several institutions including the Ministry of Education, Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the University of the West Indies (UWI), Jamaica Teachers Association (JTA). Twelve meetings were held over a six month period of planning.

### Planning Committee:

Name	Organization
Ambassador Burchell Whiteman	Commonwealth of Learning
Mr. Kornel Brown	HEART Trust/NTA.
Dr. Moses Peart	Institute of Education, UWI
Dr. Halden Morris	Institute of Education, UWI
Mrs. Esther Tyson	Ja. Association of Principals of Secondary Schools
Mr. Wentworth Gabbidon	Association of Principals and Vice Principals
Mrs. Nadine Malloy-Young	Jamaica Teachers' Association
Mr. Glenroy Cumberbatch	Pro-Registrar, CXC Western Zone
Mrs. Grace McLean	Chief Education Officer. MoE
Ms. Barbara Allen	Planning Division, MoE
Mrs. Hedda Watson	Office of the Permanent Secretary, MoE
Mrs. Analia Wallace-Muir	Projects & Technical Services, MoE
Mr. Conrad Hamilton	Communications Specialist, MoE

Mr. Alton Davis	Communications Specialist, MoE
Ms. Glen Lee	Welfare Unit, MoE
Mrs. Sonia Banton	Finance Division, MoE
Mrs. Gertrude McKenzie	Policy Analysis & Research Unit, MoE
Mrs. Mellodene Henry-Davy	Policy Analysis & Research Unit, MoE
Ms. Terry-Ann Coley-Graham	International Desk, MoE
Mrs. Sharon Neil (Chair)	Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, MoE

### Technical/Administrative Support Team

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>
Mr. Arthur Hylton	MoE Jamaica	Website development and maintenance
Mr. Tyrone Anderson	MoE, Jamaica	IT Support
Mrs. Martha Corbett-Baugh	MoE, Jamaica	Spanish-English/English-Spanish Interpretation
Mrs. Maite Villoria		Spanish-English/English-Spanish Interpretation
Mrs. Judith Lindsay	MoE, Jamaica	Secretarial Support/Administration
Mr. Ricardo Allicock	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica	Protocol
Ms. Kimberley Morgan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica	Protocol

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