

“Improving the Quality of Education in Jamaica: Accountability and Performance”.

Council Room, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus
October 29, 2008

Purpose of this Conference

In light of the recent call to implement accountability mechanisms in order to raise the quality of Jamaica’s education system, CaPRI (the Caribbean Policy Research Institute) held a one-day conference to look at practical measures that can be taken. The conference was a collaboration among CaPRI, Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH, a USAID/Jamaica-sponsored project), and the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL), an Inter-American Dialogue project. Its purpose was to address the need for education reform in Jamaica, particularly with regard to educational standards. The goal of the conference was to help Jamaican opinion- and sector-leaders understand the concept of accountability in education and to build support for relevant policy measures. This conference facilitated a transfer of knowledge between PREAL, which has years of experience measuring and implementing educational standards in the Americas, and the Jamaican education sector. It brought together an august group of politicians, policy-makers, educators, academics and key stakeholders, who dedicated themselves to the task of forging a consensus on the development of accountability standards and mechanisms.

This conference built upon the legacy of two reports - the Government of Jamaica’s own *Education Transformation Plan* (2004) and CaPRI’s own report - *Educational Reform in Jamaica: Lessons from Ireland, Singapore & Finland* (2007).



Agenda of the Conference

Sessions:

Overview – Education in Jamaica: Challenges and Accountability

Ruel Reid, Advisor to the Minister of Education

Jeffrey Puryear, Vice President, Social Policy, Inter-American Dialogue/ PREAL

Setting Clear and Ambitious Goals, and Measuring Performance

Dr. Gilbert Valverde, Department of Educational Policy & Leadership, University of Albany

Dr. Jean Beaumont, Project Director, Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH)

Rewarding Success, Tackling Failure

Dr. Lucrecia Santibañez, IDEA Foundation, Mexico

Hopeton Henry, Past President, Jamaica Teachers' Association

Keynote Address

Honourable Andrew Holness, MP, Minister of Education

Panel – Accountability in Jamaican Education - the Current State

Dr. Elaine Foster-Allen, National Educational Inspectorate

Dr. Dennis Minott, Head, A-QUEST

Basil Waite, Opposition Spokesperson on Education

Technical and Political Challenges Ahead

Maxine Henry-Wilson, MP, Former Minister of Education

Conference Summary

Definitions

The need to define standards, vision(s) and goal was also a theme of discussions at the conference. What are the standards for students, for the curriculum, and for teachers?

- There are two main components of accountability within the education system:
 - The policy of accountability needs to be enforced. Thus the Ministry of Education (MOE) needs to develop accountability matrices.
 - Compliance in accountability is achieved by persons believing in the standards set- “culture of accountability”. Our teachers need to internalize the goals and the Ministry of Education needs to create an educational campaign in order to provide a framework that will inform the public within this developmental phase. This will involve providing a proper channel of communication and training of agents (principals, teachers, parents, advisors). Also critical is the creation of a mass support for accountability within the education system.
 - Critical within performance accountability is the need for specific measurements and the necessity to make information available to those being held accountable.

- There is a worldwide change in education priorities - the quality of what transpires in the classroom matters. Evidence conclusively demonstrates that traditional repertoire of policy instruments is insufficient to address the poverty of educational outcomes in the region. Educational reform should be based on visions and goals.
 - Ambiguity of standards
 - Lack of focus and priorities
 - Absence of academic rigour

- Measures of school or individual teacher ‘production’ be based on the *value added* to each of their charges. To accomplish this:
 - Each child would have to be assigned a unique identifier based on his or her birth certificate number.
 - A uniform system of academic grading would be used from primary to tertiary level
 - Each student’s identity number would have subsidiary alpha-numeric fields that would readily allow tracking of a child’s progress in each school, right through to university.
 - The folder of data on each child/ student would be made available to the MOE, parents, teachers and to all schools that the child has attended or plans to attend (one DVD easily stores all CSEC results for 10 years and the CSEC and CAPE results for all Jamaicans over a seven year period).

- “Performance Management” may be defined as a process of creating an environment in which people and their jobs are defined. There is need for the realignment of the Jamaican education system. The Education Task Force Report 2004 underscored the fact that there is gross under-funding and lack accountability in the Jamaican education system. As previously, performance within the system was not emphasized.

‘Ownership’ by Stakeholders

- One point commonly mentioned was the need to have public buy-in and ownership of the ‘new’ direction of the transformed education system. There has to be a culture of performance accountability. A national stakeholder and public consultation process was

cited. "Education doesn't end in the classroom, we are all responsible and we all pay for failure."

- In order to effectively develop an accurate and measurable system of performance and accountability system within Jamaican schools, we need to strengthen and consolidate resource and priorities, particularly funding and project sustainability. Collaborations between stakeholders are critical within institutions for development and the way forward.
- Envisioning a system of accountability should be a multifaceted one involving parents, teachers, students, principals, ministry advisors along with personnel from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance and the Public Service.
- Education is a decisive factor in national progress. Within Jamaica, several factors have contributed to a level of poor performance and low educational quality. These include: lack of resources; inadequate educational financing; under financing of pre-education and primary education; dilapidated school infrastructure and staff at the primary level; over crowding of classrooms; unsanitary facilities and improper ventilation; and disparity between boys and girls.

Funding

- The need for funding the transformation was referred to throughout the day. The funding issue encompasses
 - teacher salaries
 - teacher training
 - upgrading of schools
 - abolition of the shift system
 - the implementation of the Transformation Plan itself
- The McKinsey Study (2007) done across OECD countries concluded that reforms in education do not necessarily lead to better outcomes in education. Therefore, Jamaica needs to look at what provides value for the money spent on reform efforts.

Teachers

- Teachers and their particular aspect of accountability attracted significant attention due to the developments during the past week regarding the conclusion of teacher salary negotiations (<http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20081028/lead/lead6.html>); and the presence of two past presidents of the Jamaica Teachers' Association. In Jamaica, it is being debated whether teachers should be rewarded for student performance, whether teacher pay should be scaled to student performance or whether all members of the school should benefit from rewards if the students perform well - contract teachers, teacher incentives, school incentives; and additional resources and funding.
- Global experiences have shown that teacher accountability reform can take various forms:
 - Teacher contracting (Mali, Cameroon)
 - Teacher incentives (India)
 - Teacher Management

- Globally there is anecdotal evidence of small pilot teacher incentive programmes have worked with regard to teacher and educational quality (Kenya and India).

New Government Initiatives

The four recently-launched accountability initiatives within the last month were discussed – the Parenting Commission, the Leadership Council, the National Education Inspectorate, and the Teaching Council.

The Way Forward

CaPRI, based on the calls to action by both the current and the former Ministers of Education, would welcome the opportunity to be part of a process to create an accountability matrix for the education sector. An idea of a secretariat to house such an effort has been mooted. CaPRI is willing to heed the call at this conference and head up this secretariat/committee providing that both funding and compliance from all stakeholders is readily available.



The Inter-American Dialogue is the leading U.S. center for policy analysis, exchange, and communication on issues in Western Hemisphere affairs. The Dialogue brings together public and private leaders from across the Americas to address hemispheric problems and opportunities. Together they seek to build cooperation among Western Hemisphere nations and advance a regional agenda of democratic governance, social equity, and economic growth.



The Expanding Educational Horizons (EEH), a five-year Project (2005-2010), is a joint initiative of the Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America, monitored by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Project provides assistance to the MOE to increase the levels of literacy and numeracy of students in 71 primary schools and 6 NGOs, administered by People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT).



Partnership for Educational
Revitalization in the Americas

The Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) encourages business and civil society to work with governments in common efforts to improve education, and strengthens their capacity to do so. Its mission is to improve the quality and equity of education by helping public and private sector organizations throughout the hemisphere to promote informed debate on education policy, identify and disseminate best practices, and monitor progress toward improvement.



The Caribbean Research Policy Institute is a Caribbean think tank that promotes evidence-based policymaking in the region. It evolved from a three-year evidence-based study on the socio-economic history of Jamaica since Independence known as "Taking Responsibility: The Jamaican Economy Project" which began in 2005. Capri seeks to counter one of the main missteps of our past, by addressing the widening deficit between researchers and policymakers - across the region. We seek to bridge this gap whilst consistently introducing fresh thinking into the policymaking process, we apply a unique methodology - one that is built on the values of multi-disciplinary work, team work, and the utilisation of the Diaspora in our search for evidence.