

THE INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM AND THE PRODUCTION OF INDIGENOUS MATERIALS: CURRICULUM REFORM IN THE BAHAMAS

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ABSTRACT

This study from which the data in this paper are drawn examined the 'intended' curriculum of the Bahamian primary schools and the processes of its translation into classroom practices. The methods of investigation included documentary analysis, participant observation, informal interviews, and a teacher questionnaire. The study identified several factors that can influence the success of the curriculum implementation process. This paper focuses on resources since the question of resource availability, specifically resources of an indigenous nature, was the most significant issue uncovered by the study. A case is made for strengthening the local resource base, not only in terms of personnel, but also in terms of local materials.

INTRODUCTION

As each country of the Commonwealth Caribbean obtained its political independence, an important task was restructuring the educational system. This restructuring had two central elements. First, national leaders tried to eradicate the dual system of education established during the colonial era. Under the colonial system one branch catered to the ruling elites and urban middle class, while the other catered to the lower strata and rural middle class. Through this dual system, the colonial power separated the school from the indigenous culture. Second, new Caribbean governments made a systematic effort to encourage national unity by incorporating indigenous content into the school curriculum.

The Bahamas was no exception. The new nation's leaders expanded educational facilities, improved, and 'Bahamianised' the education system. Throughout the 1970s, and into the 1980s, there was a concomitant increase in the education budget. In 1969, the government's budget totalled approximately \$99 million and the education budget was \$15 million or 15 percent of the national budget. In 1976 when the government's total budget was \$177 million, the Ministry of Education's budget was \$38 million or 21 percent of the total. In 1986 the total budget was \$400 million

and the education budget was \$82 million, or 21 percent of the total.¹ National leaders used these budgets to attain 'Bahamianisation' primarily by including indigenous content in the curriculum, instituting technical education, and training Bahamian teachers.

Bahamian leaders placed importance upon the notion of developing a sense of national pride through cultural independence. Highlighting the government's commitment to social and economic development through education, planners produced various educational policy documents during the period following independence in 1973. These documents included the government's initial policy statement, Focus on the future:White Paper on Education², the report of a commission appointed by the Government of The Bahamas, the Maraj Report:Educational development in an archipelagic nation³, the commission's subse-quent guide for educational planning for the period 1976-1981, Education for national progress⁴, and the various 1982 Curriculum Guides for all subjects taught at the primary and secondary levels.

In 1985 the Evaluation, Planning, Research and Development Unit of The Bahamas Ministry of Education sponsored the "Curriculum Evaluation Project". The purpose of this project was to obtain feedback from teachers throughout the system regarding the 1982 Curriculum Guides. This feedback was then to be incorporated in later revisions of the curriculum. Apart from the "Curriculum Evaluation Project" in 1985, however, Bahamian policy makers have not done enough to investigate the crucial nexus between curriculum policy and classroom practice.

¹Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education Planning Unit, (1986) *Education Statistics: 1985-1986*. (Nassau:Ministry of Education Planning Unit, p.174).

²Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education and Culture, (1973) *Focus on the future:White paper on education*, (Nassau:Government Printing).

³MARAJ, J.A. and Greig, J.W. (1974) Maraj Report:Educational development in an archipelago nation, (Nassau:Commonwealth Secretariat).

⁴GREIG, J.W. and Maraj, J.A. (1976) *Education for national progress:A development plan for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas for the period 1976-1981*, (Nassau:Commonwealth Secretariat).

For some time now, Caribbean educators and other scholars from the Third World have questioned whether efforts, such as those made by Bahamian political leaders in the past, have been effective.⁵ Development theorists⁶ have called for an examination of educational practices in Third World countries, but few have completed comprehensive studies. The study upon which this paper is based, addresses this neglected facet of the research on educational practices in one of the Caribbean nations, The Bahamas.

DATA SOURCES

The data used in this paper were obtained from an ethnographic study of contemporary schooling practices in The Bahamas.⁷ This study conducted in 1991/1992 drew on data collected through document analysis, questionnaires, participant observation, and informal interviews. These data represent several sources: policy makers (via rhetoric employed in documents and interviews with Ministry of Education officials), the researcher as participant and observer, and discussions with school administrators and classroom teachers.

⁵CARNEGIE, C.V. "Strategic flexibility in the West Indies:A social psychology of Caribbean migration", *Caribbean Review* 11 (1982); Morrissey, Mike P. "Country preferences of school children in seven Caribbean territories", *Caribbean Quarterly* 29 (1983):1-20; Nettleford, Rex. "The Caribbean:The cultural imperative", *Caribbean Quarterly* 35. (1989);4-15.

⁶See for e.g., JENNINGS-WRAY, Zellynne. "A comparative study of influences and constraints on decision-making in the primary school curriculum:Some implications for the teacher as an agent of change in Third World countries", *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 12 (1980):231-244; MILLER, Errol L. *Research Environments in the Developing World*, (Canada:International Development Research Centre, 1983); WATSON, Keith. "External and Internal Obstacles to Educational Development", in *Dependence and Interdependence in Education:International Perspectives*, ed. Keith Watson (London:Croom Helm Ltd., 1984).

⁷DAVIS, L.A. (1992). Curriculum rhetoric and contemporary practice in the Bahamian Primary School System. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The purpose of the examination of the documents in that study was to search for patterns, common themes or ideas. Most of the themes that were highlighted⁸ in the initial policy documents of the Bahamian independence era were of the kind that Ben-Peretz and Kremer⁹ labeled process oriented. Yet, the framers of these initial documents did make specific references about the intended content. On the other hand, the curriculum guides and the teachers' schemes of work were predominantly content oriented, with occasional references to issues of process.

Beside identifying thematic descriptors, whether content or process, it was established whether these were common throughout the documents. Overall, the examination of the initial policy documents, Focus on the future:White paper on education; Education for national progress:A development plan for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas for the period 1976-1981; and the Maraj Report: Educational development in an archipelagic nation, set the framework for the then Bahamian government's intended educational policies. In turn, the 1982 Curriculum Guides represent the articulation of these policies into the suggested activities for classroom teachers. Finally, a review was undertaken of the interpretation of these policies from the perspective of classroom teachers as expressed in their annual written schemes of work.

The questionnaire administered to teachers in 1991 was an adaptation of one used by the "Curriculum Evaluation Project" sponsored by the Evaluation, Planning, Research and Development Unit of The Bahamas Ministry of Education in 1985. The Ministry of Education's instrument had 34 forced choice items and 8 open-ended response items. The 1991 instrument had 37 forced-choice items and 5 open-ended response items. The items of both questionnaires obtained teacher demographic information and asked teachers for their perceptions of and the availability and utility of the 1982 Curriculum Guides in the primary schools. Additionally, teachers were asked about the format and content of the guides, the availability of resource materials to use with the guides, support services, and the state of the physical facilities in which they taught. School subjects covered by both questionnaires were:mathematics, social studies, science, religious knowledge, reading, arts and craft, physical education, and

⁸**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** Although it does not reflect my personal writing preference, I have agreed to incorporate the passive voice throughout this paper to meet the editorial guidelines of College Forum.

⁹BEN-PERETZ, M. and Kremer, L. (1979). Curriculum implementation and the nature of curriculum materials. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 11(3), 247-255.

language arts. The 1991 questionnaire also sought to obtain teachers' perceptions of and the availability of indigenous resource material, the extent to which teachers followed the 1982 curriculum guidelines, and the relevance of the guides' goals and objectives.

Lists of teachers were obtained from the principals of each government primary school on the island of New Providence (n=24). The questionnaire was mailed to all government employed, upper primary (fifth and sixth grade) teachers on the island. The total number of questionnaires administered was 208. Fifty percent (50%) or 104 of the total questionnaires distributed were returned.

The six males among the 104 respondents were not included in the final analysis because the group was so small that it did not form a legitimate grouping for comparison by gender. Yet, gender might have influenced the responses to the questionnaire items. In addition, as 66 (67%) of the remaining 98 women did not teach arts and craft, and 91 (93%) of them did not teach physical education, these two subjects, and the ten women who only taught these two subjects were excluded from further analysis. The final sample included 88 women.

After discussions with The Bahamas Ministry of Education supervisors, the Assistant Director of Education in charge of curriculum, and curriculum officers, three schools were selected for the field work. Subsequently, these three Bahamian primary classrooms on the island of New Providence were visited during the fall term of 1991.

Initially, The Bahamas Ministry of Education, Education Statistics 1985-1986 was examined. (It was not possible to use more recent statistics since the publication for the years 1987-1990 had yet to be released at the time of the initial data collection). However, later more recent statistics regarding the teaching and student populations for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 were obtained. Overall, these statistics suggested that consideration should be given to the following factors in the selection of schools: enrollment in primary schools by grade and stream, the gender of pupils and teachers in each school, teachers' qualifications, and citizenship of teachers in each school. The physical characteristics of the schools (size and location), and social characteristics (social status and ethnic composition) of the school's population were additional factors for consideration. Then, to ensure that the three schools were representative, the Grade Level Assessment scores for these three schools for the last four years were examined. It was discovered that they represent 'average' government primary schools on the island of New Providence in terms of their academic achievement. The three schools in the study have for the last four years (1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991) maintained 'average' performances on the annual Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT). None of the composite performances for these schools fall in the 'below average' performance category, or the 'above average' category

(categories used in the annual reports of the GLAT) when compared to other groups of grade six Bahamian students taking the examination during the respective years.¹⁰

Beside the representativeness of the academic profiles of the three schools, a case can be made based on school size and location, as well as the social status and ethnic composition of the student population. The three schools represent each geographical subdivision, western, central, and eastern, that the Ministry of Education uses for management purposes on the island of New Providence. Although, the three schools did not cover the range of student population sizes, Grades A-F, the Ministry of Education lists two of the schools as Grade C schools (student population of 301-700), and the Grade C schools represent 54% of the government maintained primary schools on the island. Also, like most of the schools on New Providence, the three schools in this study report that their student populations are predominantly Bahamian. The Haitian student population in each school is 2%, 19%, and 7% respectively. (During the 1990-1991 school year, the mean of the Haitian student population at the primary school level on the island of New Providence was 13.75%).¹¹ The communities in which the three schools are located represent the lower, lower-to-middle, and middle income ranges. As a composite, these features do argue favourably for the representativeness of the three selected schools.

Finally, the three teachers in the cooperating schools were women, had Bachelor of Arts degrees, and were Bahamians. Two of them had taught in the Bahamian public school system between 16 and 20 years, while one had taught between 21 and 25 years. All the women fit the average profile suggested by the demographic data compiled by the Ministry of Education. (See Tables 1-3 below).

¹⁰Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education (1988). Bahamas grade level assessment test:Technical report:Grades 3,6,8. New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of education (1989). Bahamas grade level assessment test:Technical report:Grades 3,6,8. New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education (1990). Bahamas grade level assessment test:Technical report:Grades 3,6,8. New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.; Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education (1991). Bahamas grade level assessment:Technical report:Grades 3,6,8. New York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

¹¹STUBBS, E. (1991). An Analysis of the Haitian Students' Population in the Ministry of Education Schools. Nassau:Planning Unit, Ministry of Education.

TABLE 1 **CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHING POSITIONS OF
TEACHERS SURVEYED IN NEW PROVIDENCE**

YEAR	ASSISTANT	TRAINED	UNTRAINED	TOTAL
1991	3 (4%)	78 (93%)	2 (2%)	84
1990-1991 (Ministry)	6 (.8%)	605 (86%)	96 (14%)	707
1985-86 (Ministry)	NA	666 (88%)	90 (12%)	756

TABLE 2 **TEACHERS WITH UNIVERSITY DEGREES
SURVEYED IN NEW PROVIDENCE**

YEAR	UNIVERSITY DEGREE	TOTAL
1991	53 (63%)	84
1990-1991 (Ministry)	271 (38%)	707
1985-1986 (Ministry)	282 (37%)	756

TABLE 3 GENDER COMPOSITION OF TEACHING POPULATION SURVEYED IN NEW PROVIDENCE

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
1991	98 (94%)	6 (6%)	104
1990-1991 (Ministry)	675 (95%)	32 (5%)	707
1985-1986 (Ministry)	715 (95%)	41 (5%)	756

Note: The total number for the Ministry statistics includes principals, teachers and support staff at the primary level on the island of New Providence. While the final sample used in the 1991 sample of the study referred to in this paper was 88, the total number for the 1991 survey indicated on Tables 1-3 includes only the total number of respondents for the questionnaire administered.

BAHAMIAN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

An analysis of the three major educational documents, the White Paper, the Maraj Report, and the commission's subsequent educational plan, Education for national progress, establishes the former Bahamian government's commitment to an indigenous education. Of particular note is the rhetoric used by the drafters of the White Paper.¹² In this document, policy makers outlined eight goals that the new educational system should encourage. Beside the call for equal opportunities for all citizens, the former government leaders stressed the importance of the Bahamian heritage, the economy, nationhood, and teacher education. Their belief and commitment to these goals were evident in the language they chose to incorporate in the document. The Education system would encourage:

¹²Government of The Bahamas, Ministry of Education and Culture, (1973) Focus on the future: White paper on education, (Nassau: Government Printing).

a knowledgeable appreciation of the physical environment, and the cultural and social heritage of The Bahamas....Every citizen will be urged to assume a personal responsibility for the economic, social, spiritual and political life associated with free nationhood, and the efficient and harmonious management of the Bahamian nation.¹³

Highlighting the importance of primary schools, the government stated that the objectives of the primary level of the educational system would be to help every young citizen:

acquire the knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, beliefs and values that enhance the human race and give strength and life to Bahamian society...An effort will be made to improve the cultivation of the arts of communication, the learning of skills which are appropriate to the primary level and the strengthening of such areas of the curriculum as mathematics, science, health and citizenship....Every effort will be made to ensure that these learning experiences take place in the proper physical and social contexts and relate in a significant way to the real world of experiences such as the child does know, can know and comprehend. Thus, not only will learning be facilitated, but also a sense of national pride and identity be nourished.¹⁴

The key tenets that the framers of the White Paper outlined in the goals for the new educational system, and their stance on the importance of primary schooling were maintained throughout the remainder of the document. In particular, the importance of Bahamianisation was prominent. Yet, at this stage in the former government's articulation of its educational policy, the notion of Bahamianisation focused mainly on the composition of teaching population. The belief that Bahamian nationals, as teachers, by the very nature of their birthright would understand the problems and aspirations of Bahamians, was explicit.

Concurring with the major goals of the educational system as stated in the document, the framers of the White Paper highlighted the importance of support services in enhancing the success of its programmes. Again the focus was on teachers as the former government emphasized its priority as the supply, education and training of members of this profession. In addition, they stressed the importance of involving

¹³Ibid, p.3.

¹⁴Ibid, pp.4-5.

teachers in the "processes of curriculum revision, renewal and enrichment".¹⁵

Yet, it is interesting that except for this statement concerning the importance of teacher input to curriculum development, the document mentioned little else regarding the teacher's role in this respect. Nor was there a detailed examination of the financing of the proposed programme, other than the recognition that costs would increase as a matter of course. However, the teacher's role in curriculum development did become more focal as the White Paper's goals and objectives were further developed in the later documents. In fact, it was the role of the teacher in the development of the educational system, and the goal of Bahamianisation that occupied much of the rhetoric of these later documents, although there was occasional mention of the availability of financial resources.

Beginning with the White Paper, the former government expanded its initial call for Bahamianisation by stressing the need to maintain a cultural identity, hone civic responsibilities, and increase the respect for human and natural resources. To achieve these goals, the former government argued, indigenous educational materials must be produced and used. In every document the former government also stressed the central role of the classroom teacher at every level in the reform process. Finally, all of the documents highlighted the importance of communication within the Ministry of Education, and between the Ministry of Education officials and classroom teachers, and the education and involvement of the public in policy matters.

Reflecting the goals and intentions of these earlier documents, the 1982 primary school curriculum guides offered suggested guidelines for teaching practices. The Bahamas Government at the time, and the developers of these guides, intended that teachers would use the guides as the bases of their daily practices, and would further develop them in the years that followed their introduction. Indeed, it was the then Minister of Education, Darrell E. Rolle, who stated in the Preface to all of the guides that:

We would be mistaken if we regard the new curriculum as an end in itself. It is only a beginning. It is yet to be tested and tried. The final test of its validity will be found in the quality of Bahamian students produced in our schools in the years ahead.

Reinforcing this point, the Director of Education at that time, Marjorie W.T. Davis, highlighted the importance of teacher innovation in the further development of

¹⁵Ibid, p.5.

the curriculum. In the Introduction to the 1982 guides she stated:

These materials form the basic guidelines and must be adjusted appropriately in terms of teaching methodology and educational strategies. There is much opportunity for teacher innovation which is of course fundamental to curriculum development. Initiative on the part of the users of these materials is to be encouraged and teachers are urged to submit comments and suggestions to the particular subject committee so that the work that has now commenced may continue and quality education may be achieved in all our schools.

The nature of teacher innovation and initiative in their use of these curriculum guides can be investigated, at a preliminary level, by examining the schemes of work (semester forecasts that grade level teaching teams construct annually) and daily lesson plans of teachers. However, it is through discussions with the teachers that it can be ascertained what decisions they make, why they make certain decisions, and what impact this decision making process has upon the implementation of the indigenous curriculum.

THE NATURE OF TEACHER DECISION MAKING

An acceptance of the premise that teachers may be a main determinant in curriculum innovations,¹⁶ and that they are important agents in the process of innovation implementation in the school,¹⁷ focuses the enquiry on the decisions teachers make when implementing innovations within the educational setting, and what factors influence their decision making process. Doyle and Ponder have proposed that teachers use three major criteria in deciding how, or whether, to implement an innovation: its instrumentality in terms of classroom contingencies; its congruence with current conditions; and the costs involved in using the innovation. Hurst and Rust have extended this model and have argued that in choosing to adopt an innovation teachers use one or more of the following criteria: information, relevance and

¹⁶DOYLE, W. and Ponder, G. (1977) "The practicality ethic in teacher decision making", Interchange 8 pp.1-12.

¹⁷SPAULDING, S. (1975) "Are teachers facing a crisis of identity?", Prospects:Quarterly Review of Education 5 pp.209-219.

desirability, effectiveness and reliability, feasibility, trialability and adaptability.¹⁸ Finally, the teacher effectiveness literature has identified the following major research concerns that underlie the concept of teacher effectiveness: teacher skills and behaviours; teacher patterns of decision-making at both the instructional and managerial levels; teachers' modes of thinking and how they interpret teaching situations; the interrelationship between teaching purposes and pupils' interpretation of these purposes; and teacher-pupil tasks.

Drawing upon these insights, it was necessary to determine the state of the intended curriculum in The Bahamas. Through discussions with teachers and observations of upper primary (grades five and six) classes, issues surrounding the state of curriculum policy and the overall implementation of the intended curriculum became clearer. Despite the nuances in each school visited, there were commonalities. The schools are similar when resources, support services, assessment practices, personal backgrounds and professional experiences of teachers, and the intent dynamics of the school context are examined. Yet, it is resources that participants in the study repeatedly cited as a key determinant in the translation of the intended indigenous curriculum.

RESOURCES AND CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Educators consider textbooks, and resources generally, important instruments in the daily practice of teachers. The Bahamas Ministry of Education's 1982 Curriculum guides were the former government's attempt to provide national curriculum guidelines for its educational system. As Cohen and Ball have argued, in such nations where the school system offers prescriptive guidance for content coverage, "textbooks and curriculum guides can offer extensive and focused guidance about instructional content....(As a result,) textbooks might be quite a potent agent of policy in school systems of this sort."¹⁹ Similarly, Psacharopoulos has argued that textbooks and writing materials are particularly crucial in the educational systems of developing nations. Although Psacharopoulos' concentration on output as the superior way of

¹⁸HURST, Paul and Rust, Val. (1990) "The quality of education and the working conditions of teachers", in Teachers and teaching in the developing world, ed. Val D. Rust & Per Dalin (New York:Garland Publishing, Inc.).

¹⁹COHEN, David K. and Ball, Deborah L. (1990) "Relations between policy and practice:A commentary, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis" 12, Fall:p.332.

measuring school quality can be disconcerting, yet one readily accepts his argument that:

Aside from hardware (classrooms), school inputs, such as textbooks and writing materials, contribute to student learning... In a developing country...the student has to rely (more) on school rather than family to provide learning, and the evidence shows that this translates into increased learning.²⁰

This does not suggest, however, that classroom teachers do not exercise a certain degree of agency in their daily implementation practices. As Cohen and Ball have warned, some research supports the contention that "even when teachers use the same required texts, the content that they cover varies considerably from one teacher to the next."²¹ Still, this does not deny the importance of instructional materials if policy makers wish to enhance the conditions under which policy implementation takes place.

In this light, the state of resources, including the content of textbooks, their availability, and the availability of general supplies, as revealed by the questionnaire instrument and observations of the three schools of this study, is problematic. Teachers in three of the schools used for the field work reported, that the content of most of the textbooks that they used was foreign (This was also confirmed by an examination of the text-books). Yet, teachers yearn for more indigenous materials to help them in their classroom instruction. This desire of teachers for more indigenous materials is echoed by the following remarks of this classroom teacher:

Well, I would hope to see the day when we have our own books...I find that these (foreign) books are okay, but there are some things in the books that are just not adapted to our situation; of course you have to change it around... we can use them, I have no problems with that, other than I would like to see more Bahamian materials available. Not so much the maths books, but the social studies and even language.

Agreement with this finding echoed through the analysis of the 1991 questionnaire responses (n=88); 49 percent of the respondents indicated that there was less than

²⁰PSACHAROPOULOS, George. (1990) "Comparative education:From theory to practice, or are you a:\neo.* or b:*.ist?," *Comparative Education Review* 34, August, p.374.

²¹COHEN and Ball, p.332.

adequate use of Bahamian resources material, while 6 percent indicated that there was no use of Bahamian materials.

Discussions with classroom teachers revealed even more about the nature of the textbooks in the schools and the implications for the translation of the indigenous curriculum. Textbooks were more readily available for reading, language arts and mathematics. The Scott, Foresman and Company (Glenview, Illinois) reading series²² was used in two of the three schools, while the third used a series by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers (Orlando, Florida). The mathematics series, also by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers (Orlando, Florida),²³ was common to all three schools. Several language arts texts were used by the three cooperating classroom teachers, although some were more popular than others. Among the more popular ones were a Silver Burdett and Ginn (Morristown, New Jersey) language arts series²⁴ and a Caribbean text published by Heinemann, Caribbean Ltd. (Kingston, Jamaica).²⁵ A Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers (Orlando, Florida) health science textbook²⁶ was also commonly used by three of the schools. Classroom teachers often supplemented texts with their own materials, but for the most part these were also produced by foreign publishers, usually American.

Regarding the issue of indigenous resources, the data of the 1991 study agree with that of the Ministry of Education's 1985 study in which teachers requested more indigenously related activities and materials for use in their classrooms. Furthermore,

²²SMITH, R.G. and Tierney, R. (1978) *Scott, Foresman basics in reading* (Illinois:Scott, Foresman and Company).

²³ABBOTT, J.S. and Wells, D.W. (1985) *Mathematics today* (Orlando:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers).

²⁴RAGNO, N.N., Toth, M. Davies, and Gray, B.G. (1988) *Silver Burdett and Ginn English* (Morristown, New Jersey).

²⁵WILSON, D., and Campbell, H. with Wilson, B. (1985) *Language arts for primary schools* (Kingston:Heinemann Educational Books Caribbean Ltd.).

²⁶POEHLER, D., Sullivan, R.B., Tessier, L., and Utter, W.D. (1983) *HBJ Health* (Orlando:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers).

while the general availability of textbooks has improved over the years, the findings of both the 1991 questionnaire and the Ministry of Education's 1985 instrument, as well as the teachers' oral reports indicate that there has not been a satisfactory improvement in student access to textbooks. (See Table 4 below). An examination of the issue of textbook availability in the samples for both years (1985 and 1991) shows that percentages vary from subject to subject. However, the mean across respondents of both samples (55 percent for 1985 and 63 percent for 1991) show slight improvement. Still, while there has been improvement in the area of availability, an examination of student access to texts reveals that not all subjects have reached 50 percent. Only reading, language arts and mathematics are above 50 percent. (See Table 5, p.16.) What impact does the lack of student access to textbooks have upon the teachers' ability to translate the intended curriculum? What are the implications for classroom practice, including teacher and student activities?

TABLE 4 **STUDENT ACCESS TO SUGGESTED TEXTS BY SUBJECT***

SUBJECTS	1991		1985 (Ministry)	
	Yes**	n	Yes***	n
MATHEMATICS	51 (59%)	86	62 (39%)	161
SOCIAL STUDIES	20 (24%)	82	26 (12%)	222
SCIENCE	22 (27%)	82	22 (10%)	212
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE	25 (32%)	78	30 (14%)	210
READING	54 (70%)	77	156 (67%)	232
LANGUAGE ARTS	43 (51%)	84	76 (35%)	218

NOTES: * - Questionnaire item = Each child has adequate access to the suggested texts.

** - Mean across all subjects (1991) = 44%.

*** - Mean across all subjects (1985) = 29%.

TABLE 5

AVAILABILITY OF SUGGESTED
TEXTBOOKS BY SUBJECT*

SUBJECTS	1991		1985 (Ministry)	
	Yes**	n	Yes***	n
MATHEMATICS	63 (80%)	79	96 (62%)	156
SOCIAL STUDIES	30 (37%)	81	89 (39%)	228
SCIENCE	44 (54%)	81	87 (41%)	212
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE	45 (61%)	74	90 (43%)	207
READING	56 (82%)	68	189 (82%)	231
LANGUAGE ARTS	47 (63%)	75	134 (62%)	217

- NOTES:
- * - Questionnaire item = The suggested texts for the curriculum are available.
 - ** - Mean across all subjects (1991) = 63%.
 - *** - Mean across all subjects (1985) = 55%.

The availability of textbooks, and resources generally, is crucial. Cooperating classroom teachers revealed that they must compete daily with other teachers for the scarce resources they need to help them in the implementation of the curriculum. All the 1991 data concurred with the observation that, except for mathematics, reading, and language arts, there are insufficient books to ensure that students have access to individual, or shared, copies. The case of literature instruction in the three schools visited demonstrated the negative impact upon the implementation of the intended curriculum when students do not have access to these resources. A most important consequence is that teachers are called upon to make the decision whether they will incorporate indigenous aspects. Indeed, this situation serves to highlight the teacher as the central agent in the translation of curriculum policy. An example of this sentiment,

expressed by many teachers is found in the words of this science teacher:

It's up to the teacher to relate that (indigenous content) and break in our indigenous materials here or wherever they feel a concept is presented in a very Americanized way so that the children can identify it. It's up to the teacher to relate that to our indigenous formation, our indigenous materials. When they are talking about the tundra and forest and different ecosystems, that's all well and good. That comes into 'Ecology and Conservation". Different ecosystems, you do that from the book or even as a prerequisite to that unit in the book. We could actually take children into the swamps, the mangrove swamp and say let's examine, this is a Bahamian ecosystem and we are going to talk next week about ecosystems as it relates to the world and the survival of different organisms. So let's go into the mangrove swamp, this week and examine our Bahamian ecosystem, so when we do it in the book we can see which place our ecosystem is because in an American book they won't have anything on the mangrove swamps. They are going to talk about the tundra, the desert and forest and woods. So it is up to the (classroom) teachers.

The absence of sufficient textbooks, reference books and other teaching aids also reduces instructional time as teachers spend much of their time writing material on chalkboards. In turn, as it was observed on many occasions, students spent even more time copying this material into their note books. In addition, the onus on the teachers to purchase general supplies that they need to enhance the teaching of their lessons is troublesome. Many of these teachers have families and struggle to maintain a comfortable standard of living on salaries that are lower than those of their contemporaries in other professions.

The question of whose responsibility it is to provide the materials for the daily educational practices is one that policy makers must address since this concerns not only the implementation of the intended curriculum, but the larger issue of providing quality education. The question of quality, one that governments worldwide are asking, is further complicated when we acknowledge that most countries of the world find themselves under financial constraints. As Psacharopoulos has reported: "though a free education policy was sustainable during the first half of this century, the increased social demand for education has created strains on the public financing systems of both developing and advanced countries."²⁷ It is imperative that the

²⁷PSACHAROPOULOS, p.377.

priorities set by the Government of The Bahamas be re-examined with these considerations in mind.

While not suggesting that an educational system should use only those texts that are indigenous, it may be argued that one of the priorities ought to be production of indigenous educational materials. While there is no nation in this technological age that is independent of the 'knowledge exchange network', it is self defeating to propose to implement a curriculum that is indigenously focused, while having few indigenous materials available. The key lies in the domestic and regional production of indigenous materials.

PRODUCTION OF INDIGENOUS MATERIALS: THE ISSUE OF TEXTBOOK CONTENT

The almost total reliance on non-Bahamian school materials throughout the Commonwealth vitiates the Bahamianisation process and hinders learning for countless numbers of children. The development of a modest, yet effective, production unit for the purpose of producing low cost instructional materials, Bahamian in content and context, is indispensable to the fulfillment of a school programme which meets the social and educational needs of the country.²⁸ Little has changed since the commission team wrote the above excerpt in 1976.²⁹ In fact, the recent report, National Task Force on Education: Education a Preparation for Life which was submitted to the current Prime Minister, The Honourable Hubert Ingraham, in January of 1994 reported that: Materials are needed on all aspects of Bahamian life, society, politics, culture,

²⁸GREIG and Maraj, p.14.

²⁹(Author's note on the intended role of the Learning Resources Unit in The Bahamas). This is not meant to suggest that the production of indigenous materials in The Bahamas has not been attempted on a national scale. Indeed, the intended role of the Learning Resources Unit (LRU), according to the Maraj Report, was that it be a support arm for the Bahamian educational system. It would produce approved curriculum guides, courses of study, and other Bahamian learning materials. However, the LRU has fallen far below its anticipated effectiveness, primarily because the Unit has been understaffed. In addition, it has been held accountable for too many portfolios including in-service programmes for teachers, educational broadcasting, the media, library as well as the printing/production of indigenous materials. The business of the publishing of indigenous materials, as this paper argues, must be given greater attention and the support necessary for it to produce that which is envisioned.

psyche and natural environment. Given the reliance of the BGCSE (Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education) on individual learning through discovery and research as well as the low achievement of many of our children in reading, this situation (which is added to by the inadequate number of public libraries), undermines student success.³⁰

Yet, while the availability of indigenous material is crucial to the translation of an indigenous curriculum, it would be remiss not to place the issue of the production of indigenous materials within the larger issue of what Altbach terms 'the distribution of knowledge in the Third World'.³¹

Altbach has claimed that the Third World imports more 'knowledge products' than it exports, and that it is dependent upon industrialized nations for "books and journals and also for much of the knowledge in the major scientific and technical fields, for applied findings, and often for the results about the Third World itself".³² Such a situation is undesirable as Third World nations struggle to overcome the chains of dependency. Altbach's focus on publishing as a key element in the distribution machinery resonates strongly with the need for the production of indigenous materials for use in The Bahamian educational setting. The establishment and support of indigenous publishing houses is crucial if the distribution of knowledge in the Third World is to be challenged. As stated by two other Third World researchers, Dodson and Dodson:

To establish an indigenous publishing house is an act of liberation, and therefore, a necessity because it breaks the control, indeed the monopoly, which the white races have had over world literature, for which reason they have controlled the mind of the African.³³

³⁰National Task Force on education (1994). Final Report: Education a preparation for life. Bahamas: Government Printing Services, p.40.

³¹ALTBACH, Philip G. "The distribution of knowledge in the Third World: A case study in neocolonialism," in *Education and the colonial experience*, ed. P.G. Altbach & G.P.

³²ALTBACH, p.230.

³³DODSEN and Dodson, (1972) cited in Altbach, p.231.

Still, despite the attractiveness of such arrangements, the issue of cost effectiveness for a venture of this nature must be considered. The issue goes beyond a simple shortage of books for educational programmes. There is a limited market for indigenously produced books, as a result of small library systems in Third World contexts, a reliance on the oral tradition for certain kinds of communication, and inadequate infrastructures. In addition, the costs of publishing are high and as governments or private firms are unlikely to consider publishing as a viable industry, loans are unlikely to be forthcoming. Simultaneously, one cannot ignore the argument that, in Third World nations such as The Bahamas, importing foreign books costs valuable foreign exchange earnings and, in turn, limit the potential for growth of an indigenous publishing industry.³⁴

Altbach's recommendation, then, that Third World nations seek to establish viable means of book distribution among themselves has particular relevancy for the Caribbean Region in which The Bahamas is located. Such a recommendation is even more attractive when we acknowledge that other researchers report that similar shortages of indigenous materials exist in other parts of the Caribbean.³⁵

Additionally, the relevance of Paulo Freire's³⁶ work on literacy points to the urgency of this call. Indeed, deliberations on the production of indigenous materials would be incomplete if we did not review Freire's Pedagogy of the oppressed. According to Freire:

The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings

³⁴See for e.g., MSHANA, S.A. (1992) "Teacher education and teaching: An evaluation of a teacher education programme," (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton).

³⁵See for e.g., HOWELL, Calvin. (1984) "Education for endogenous development in the 1980s and beyond: A challenge for emerging Caribbean nations. (A comparative analysis of education systems in Antigua/Barbuda, Montserrat and St. Kitts/Nevis)," (M.A. thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec).

³⁶See for e.g., FREIRE, P. (1973). Education for critical consciousness, New York: Seabury Press; FREIRE, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Herder & Herder; FREIRE, P. & Macedo, D. (1987). Reading the word and the world. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.

do before reading the words. These are moments in history. Human beings did not start naming A! F! N! They started by freeing the hand, grasping the world.³⁷

At the very basis of this line of thinking are the views of the cognitive developmental theorists regarding the nature of learning. Such theorists argue that in order for learning to occur it must be meaningful. Similarly, Freire argues that the learner and teacher must engage in active exchange from which meanings emerge and are seen to emerge. Learners must be empowered by the knowledge that they are learners. Teachers must be "sensitive to the historical, social, and cultural conditions that contribute to the forms of knowledge and meaning that students bring to school".³⁸ The question of content is addressed quite specifically by Freire as he insists that words used in a literacy programme come from the "'word universe' of the people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, and dreams. Words should be laden with the meaning of the people's existential experience, and not of the teacher's experience".³⁹

In addition, Freire warns us not to fall prey to a literacy campaign that evolves around "the syllabification of 'ba-be-bi-bo-bu' instead of discussing the national reality with all its difficulties, and instead of raising the issue of the people's political participation in the reinvention of their society".⁴⁰ What is required are "radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis of literacy".⁴¹ Still, as Freire maintains, this does not suggest that

³⁷FREIRE, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York:Herder & Herder, (p.xiii).

³⁸GIROUX, H.A. (1987). Literacy and the pedagogy of political empowerment. In P. Freire & D. Macedo (Eds.). Reading the word and the world. Massachusetts:Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., p.15.

³⁹FREIRE, P. and Macedo, D. (1987). Reading the word and the world. Massachusetts:Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., p.35.

⁴⁰FREIRE, P. & Macedo, D. (1987), p.66.

⁴¹FREIRE, P. & Macedo, D. (1987), p.151.

learners be restricted to their own vernacular, as it would only lead to a "linguistic ghetto". Instead, by "mastering the standard dominant language of the wider society...students find themselves linguistically empowered to engage in dialogue with the various sectors of the wider society".⁴²

The Bahamas Ministry of Education's policies regarding the selection, purchase and production of educational materials, must be examined against this background within the larger issue of what Altbach terms 'the distribution of knowledge in the Third World' and what Freire terms 'people's existential experience' in mind. It is, undoubtedly, encouraging that the former Bahamian Minister of Education stated in his opening address to the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession Conference on Education and Culture in The Caribbean, held in The Bahamas during September 1991, that: "Through joint ventures we need to produce indigenous teaching materials and textbooks. We must encourage our poets, novelists, song writers, musicians and artists to become involved in preserving our heritage through publications, exhibitions and regional festivals". And, also that the recent National Task Force on Education notes as one of its recommendations that:

Bahamians should be encouraged to write and produce indigenous reading and teaching material...(and that the) development of such material should be facilitated through the curriculum department of the Ministry of Education, The Teacher Education Division and The Research Unit of The College of The Bahamas.⁴³

Still, it remains to be seen whether future policy will incorporate the philosophy of local and regional production of indigenous materials. It is too early to determine the direction that the current government, the Free National Movement (FNM), will take in this regard. The only reference that the FNM made to educational materials in their Manifesto '92 was that the expenditure of the budget allocation for education would be directed "so that all classrooms are adequately equipped and supplied with quality teaching and learning materials at a reasonable cost".⁴⁴ Just how

⁴²FREIRE, P. & Macedo, D. (1987), p.152.

⁴³National Task Force on Education (1994). Final Report:Education a preparation for life. Bahamas:Government Printing Services, p.45.

⁴⁴Free National Movement. (1992). Manifesto '92. Nassau:Author.

this will be translated into policy and its resulting practices will unfold over their term in office.

CONCLUSION

Rust and Dalin have posed a crucial question: "Is it possible to redirect the deteriorating quality of education and actually improve the quality of teaching in the developing world"?⁴⁵ This question placed within the context of curriculum reform in The Bahamas has even wider implications. As policy makers, administrators, teachers, students, parents and the wider community cast their eyes toward the school as a major medium of change, the answer seems to lie in the restructuring of educational priorities and foci. A greater commitment must be placed on those components that enhance success. The 1991 data of the study described in this paper has led to the conclusion that the production of indigenous materials must be high on the priority list.

If governments of developing countries such as The Bahamas are serious about their commitment to improving the educational systems of their nations, then they must pursue the advantages of regional collaborative efforts in this regard. The economics of the production of indigenous materials is one that has broad consequences. Yet, if the use of indigenous materials is perceived as worthwhile, then policy makers must pave the way for the realization of indigenous publishing houses. The establishment and support of indigenous publishing houses, whether in The Bahamas, or in the Caribbean Region, is a viable path to the production of indigenous materials. Bynoe's recommendation two decades ago rings as clearly today:

Commonwealth Caribbean countries by not exploring and exploiting the possibilities of co-operation in the field of education miss great opportunities for learning from one another and supplementing one another's resources. Much can be gained by the various territories through an exchange of information and through mutual assistance...(Yet,) suspicion and unrestrained nationalism will be forces to reckon with in the struggle for change.⁴⁶

⁴⁵RUST, Val D. and Dalin, Per. (1990). "Improving the quality of teaching," in *Teachers and teaching in the developing world*, ed. Val D. Rust & Per Dalin (New York:Garland Publishing, Inc.).

⁴⁶BYNOE, Jacob Galton. (1972) *Social change and high school opportunity in Guyana and Jamaica: 1957-1967*, (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia), p.307.

Policy makers, both national and regional, as well as teachers, students, and the public at large must recognize and learn to appreciate the value inherent in materials that these indigenous publishing houses can produce. Bahamian leaders need to focus on strengthening the local resource base, not only in terms of personnel, but also in terms of local materials. This approach is part of what has become known as ecocodevelopment - "the umbrella concept for future growth (that)...must be fully integrated into national planning (which)...might be the only hope for peaceful and comfortable survival of human population on small islands in the 21st century".⁴⁷ Ecocodevelopment accepts the value of regional and international co-operation in formulating and implementing policies geared at reducing dependency, and implies a serious educational commitment and initiative, particularly by the political leaders.

The challenge remains one that focuses on the reversal of attitudes and philosophies regarding the nature of the indigenous curriculum, curriculum policy analysis, formulation, and implementation. Nevertheless, in their search for an "acceptable balance between the development of a homegrown national education system, formal and non-formal, and some measure of dependence on financial support and services provided by other countries, bilaterally or through regional co-operation",⁴⁸ small states must come to recognize those neocolonial links that hamper their national educational development, and failures that are of their making. Indeed, many solutions rest not outside but within the former colonies themselves.

⁴⁷BONNET, J. and Towle, E.L. (1981) "Energy/environmental management: A broad perspective for the islands of the Caribbean," *Caribbean Educational Bulletin* 8, pp.13-33.

⁴⁸PACKER, Steve. (1985) "The small states of the Caribbean with special reference to education," in *Educational Issues in Small Countries: Proceedings*, ed. C. Brock (London: British Comparative and International Education Society Occasional Paper, No.2.), p.12.

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