

**POLICY ISSUES IN SELECTING STUDENTS  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE BAHAMAS  
1975 - 1989**

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**INTRODUCTION**

A shared experience of developing countries is the compelling need to, “catch up”. Perhaps in no other area is this need so keenly felt as in education for the underdeveloped systems of education, a legacy of the colonial era, have proven to be incapable of making the necessary contribution to national and economic development. In an attempt to compensate for the past deprivations and inequities, policy makers seek to formulate and implement in their respective countries, educational policies which have as their goal the democratization of all levels of the education system.

In these countries, in most instances the democratization of higher education has created a demand so great that it has outstripped available supply. Further, it has given rise to the need to reconcile equality of access with the maintenance of standards of excellence. As a result, many countries have attempted this reconciliation through their selection procedures for admitting students to institutions of higher education (UNESCO Report, 1989: 5 - 7).

In developing countries national institutions of higher education, face complex issues in the selection of students seeking admission. These issues are related directly to national education policies or emerge from the need of the institutions to be responsive both to societal demands and national priorities, within a context of resource constraints.

This paper presents a discussion of some policy issues in the selection of students at The College of The Bahamas during the early period of its existence (The College is the sole state funded institution for tertiary-level education in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas). Major issues examined were concerned with the reconciliation of:

1. equality of access with the maintenance of standards of excellence;
2. freedom of choice in programme selection (implicit in democratization) with the national imperatives of manpower needs.

**THE CONTEXT OF SELECTION ISSUES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

It will be the position of this paper that in developing countries such as The Bahamas, issues in the selection of students for higher education emerge primarily from the national education policy which has as its goal the provision of equal higher education opportunities for all citizens. Selection issues come to the fore when the attempt is made by educational administrators to translate the broad principles of such a policy into practice. Often, the experience is that, when implemented, the policy has the opposite effect of that intended and, therefore, corrective action is considered necessary to redirect the goals of the policy or to redefine the policy itself.

Grindle (1980) accounts for the mismatch or gap between the intent of the policy and the actual outcome by attributing the cause to the specific conditions surrounding the execution of the policy. Not the least of these are the effects of the policy itself on subsequent implementation.

In Third World and/or developing countries, national policies are often reformatory in nature, having as their goal broad, sweeping changes. According to Grindle (1980), governments of these countries in defining policy, are influenced by the special conditions comprising their environment:

**Most are in a position of having to promise much  
to their citizens. The enormity of human and**

**physical needs in poor countries and the desire to establish the legitimacy of the political regime by providing tangible evidence of improving conditions, the feeling that the deprivation of the colonial or neo-colonial past must be obliterated. The commitment to indigenous or “third-way” ideologies, the need for rapid development — all create a situation in which political leaders are likely to espouse policies that will lead to radical and rapid improvements in conditions of life (pp 2-23).**

Policies which are defined in this way tend to exhibit several characteristic features. There is a lack of agreement about the scope and rapidity of the intended change. Policy goals are unclear and ambiguous because of a failure to obtain agreement from political and administrative officials at all levels of the Government hierarchy. Important decisions regarding priorities and funding have been left unmade.

In addition to these features, the actual problems of implementation may be clouded by the ideological context of the policies. This situation is exacerbated by the exclusion of administrators/implementors from the process of policy formulation, as is often the case, so the opportunity to identify potential obstacles to the success of the policy is missed.

The conditions of limited resources and widespread and competing needs which exist in developing countries contribute as much to policy failure as the unrealistic goals and expectations of the policies themselves. Operating within these constraints, it is the implementors of policies who must decide the hard questions. In the end, therefore, the opportunity exists for implementors to have considerable influence in shaping policies.

### **DEFINITION**

For the purposes of this paper the definition of ‘higher education’ will be taken to mean

**the third level of an education system embracing all kinds of institutions offering recognized courses to students who have completed a secondary education (although not necessarily to university level)(Hayden 1976: 449).**

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The provision of higher education in The Bahamas on any comprehensive, sustained basis has been a relatively recent development. Attempts throughout the 20th century and earlier, to introduce some form of education or training beyond the secondary level have been sporadic. It has been in the past 30 years only that consistent measures have been taken to incorporate post secondary programmes into the country’s educational system (Bethel, 1989).

It was the attainment of popular government in the late 1960s and the rapid move towards independence which forced on the Bahamian government, the recognition of the need for better educated and more highly skilled citizens to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding and increasingly sophisticated economy. Further, the provision of such opportunities has been essential to support the effective implementation of the Government’s policy on Bahamianization, i.e. the replacement wherever possible of foreign nationals in the work force by appropriately qualified Bahamians.

Prior to the late 1960s higher education was provided locally by the Government only in the areas of teacher training and technical education. In addition, the Government granted a limited number of scholarships for study abroad. The mounting nationalism in the periods spanning Independence, coupled

with the need to 'catch-up' in the production of a better educated and more highly skilled workforce, propelled the Government into taking steps towards the establishment of an indigenous institution of higher education. Such an institution would fulfill twin objectives. It would produce the trained manpower needed for the expanding economy. Further, it would serve as the focus of intellectual sovereignty, becoming a symbol of national identity, a phenomenon not uncommon in the newly emerging nations (Husen, 1977).

In conceptualizing this indigenous institution, the Government sought assistance from foreign experts, among them the Leys Team in 1963 and Irvine and Brooms in 1970. These groups produced reports containing important guidelines. It was the Government's White Paper on Education called Focus on the Future, 1972, however, which outlined the basic philosophy that would guide all levels of the education system in an independent Bahamas.

Both the Leys Report and the White Paper on Education recognized the narrow base of the education system prior to independence as the main drawback to national and economic development. Leys (1968) describes the system as **"narrow, selective and elitist"**, stressing academic subjects. The White Paper emphasized that such a system by its concern with educating the more academically oriented students and by-passing a large section of the school population had resulted in a legacy of economic and social inequalities. It recommended, therefore, a system of education which at all levels would address this imbalance. Like policy makers in most newly independent developing countries, the framers of the White Paper sought to eradicate the deprivations of centuries in one sweeping policy, the intent of which was to bring about radical and rapid improvements in the national education system.

At the level of higher education, the White Paper dictated two courses of action. The main thrust would be to the establishment of a College of The Bahamas **"intended to meet the special needs of The Bahamas in education, training and cultural development"** (White Paper, 1972: 10). The Government would also continue its policy of sending students abroad for education and training since it was recognized that The College, as envisioned, would not provide for all higher education and training desired or thought to be necessary for Bahamians.

It was expected that, a College of The Bahamas, as the sole institution of tertiary-level education in the nation, would be sufficiently broad in scope to accommodate many different areas of study such as hotel training, technical education, business and education studies as well as the academic arts, the sciences and creative arts. It would also function as a research centre for The Bahamas and would actively engage in the provision and operation of a national library, public archives and museums. A particular concern of the White Paper was the provision of teacher training as properly trained and qualified teachers would help to ensure the successful outcome of the national education goals.

The role of The College of The Bahamas was summed up in the 1974 Speech From The Throne as being a major force bringing about **"the social and cultural development of the Bahamian people"**. Its function was further defined by the Minister of Education in his Communication To The House of Assembly in June 1975 as **"a multi-purpose institution serving as far as possible, every important need of The Bahamas"**.

The College of The Bahamas was established by an Act of Parliament in the Summer of 1974. This Act called for an institution of **"the highest standard"**.

It should be expected that, given the all encompassing mission of the institution outlined in the Government's policy and the injunction of The College Act for standards of excellence, The College's administration would be faced with a major task in the selection of students and provision of programmes to cater to their diverse abilities and interests.

The College of The Bahamas opened its doors in September 1975, offering programmes leading to Associate Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (Academic Board Paper, AB 75-1). Its nucleus comprised the existing post secondary institutions consisting of two teacher training colleges, a technical college and the Sixth Form of the Government High School, an elitist grammar school funded by the Government.

## SELECTION ISSUES

### 1975 -1985

At the inception of The College, selection of students presented no major issues for two main reasons. Part of the student body was composed of students from the constituent institutions who had not yet completed their programmes in their respective institutions. The remainder of the student body consisted of new students whose selection was based on the minimal criteria of age (17 years) and completion of high school. This virtually amounted to an “open door” policy and was in keeping with the community college concept pursued by The College’s early administrators. No ceiling was placed on enrollments owing to the concern of the early administrators to secure viable numbers, however, a placement test in Mathematics and English was administered to all incoming students.

Quite early in its operation, it became evident that there were large numbers among the student body who required remediation at a level below that offered by The College. It was recognized that College faculty were, for the most part, not equipped to provide this level of remediation. Within a short time, the “open” door became a “revolving” door as large numbers of students failing their courses were suspended or terminated. Emerging out of this experience, the issue for The College was how to select students with the requisite level of preparation which would ensure success in College level programmes within a reasonable time.

At the same time, there was a growing concern in the Government that too large a part of The College’s annual budget was being spent in duplicating the work of the high school when, in fact, the expectation had been for The College to educate and train at the tertiary level. Another concern of the Government was the failure of the institution to produce the number of graduates needed in the country. In fact, in the first three years of its existence, The College graduated fewer students in certain key areas than the former institutions of which it was composed. While it could be argued that this should have been expected as the programmes now being offered were more demanding and of longer duration, politically this was not acceptable. It seemed to the Government that goals of the 1972 policy on higher education were being “misdirected” by The College and were incompatible with the economic realities of the country.

The Bahamian economy, traditionally based on agriculture and fisheries, by the late 1970s had undergone a transformation unparalleled among the developing countries of the western hemisphere. The phenomenal growth of tourism in the post World War II years, the development of the banking and insurance sectors together with the resultant changes in the standard of living had led to a need for a variety of technical services to be provided by engineers, technicians and craftsmen. Personnel with commercial and administrative skills were also in great demand. The increase in the school-age population called for a corresponding increase in trained and qualified teachers at all levels of the education system. Above all, the coming of independence had necessitated the Bahamianization of the top and middle management levels of the Government bureaucracy.

The College had been established to provide for these needs. Yet it seemed to the Government in the early years that the College was failing in its mission to produce the expected numbers of graduates in these targeted areas. Government’s reaction came in 1979 in the form of a re-definition of the original policy. The 1979 Proposed Policy for the Continued Development of The College of The Bahamas, not unlike its predecessor, was conceived in isolation of College administrators who were now charged with its implementation. Thus the initiative to provide a solution to the problem of student selection for higher education was taken out of the hands of The College.

According to the revised policy, The College was to contribute to national development by “**fostering a greater sense of national identity among students, but pre-eminently by functioning in a manpower training role**”. In order to achieve this, it was proposed that current programmes be replaced by ones which provided training in the areas of greatest need and which would be, for the most part, termi-

nal in nature. The emphasis was to be placed on teacher training, applied science and technical and vocational studies. The College Preparatory programme, which had been offered right from the beginning was to be phased out in a year's time. In the mean time Family Island students considered more disadvantaged educationally, were to be offered ninety places for upgrading at the College Preparatory level. The admission requirement for College level programmes would be five G.C.E. "O" level subjects including English and Mathematics. College level programmes were to be of a standard equivalent to that of the G.C.E. "A" level.

While acknowledging that the Proposed Policy articulated more clearly than its predecessor, Government's perception of the role of The College, faculty of the institution were critical of the contradictions between the policy's theoretical position and the empirical realities of the social and education systems. In fact, if followed to its logical conclusion, the policy represented a departure from the intent of the White Paper which was concerned with the democratization of higher education and a broadening of the elitist base existing hitherto. By setting the G.C.E. "O" level as the admission criterion and the "A" level as the standard for terminal programmes, it was effectively limiting higher education to a select few. The five (5) "O" level requirement would ensure that students had the requisite foundation for studies at The College level but the reality of the situation was that these students were not available in large numbers. The expansion of the school system in the 1970's had brought little qualitative change in terms of the calibre and number of graduates suitably prepared for college level work. Further, although the Government mandated the five (5) "O" levels for admissions to The College, it was not a mandatory school leaving requirement. In fact, only the top 20% of high school leavers would have taken these examinations. The number likely to be successful in five subjects, including English and Mathematics, was even less. The majority of those who achieved five "O" levels would elect to pursue higher education abroad.

According to the Proposed Policy, technical and vocational studies were to be given higher priority and were to be promoted within The College alongside the academic programmes. Since Independence in 1973, the Government had repeatedly stressed the importance of technical and vocational education to the development of the country. It was assumed, therefore, that once the necessary facilities and faculty were in place, that large numbers of students; fired by the zeal to serve their country, would flock to enroll in technical and vocational programmes. This assumption largely ignored the stigma which Bahamians attach to technical and vocational programmes and the pattern of demand for education of an academic type. Not enough had been done to bring about a shift in this attitude. In fact by setting lower admissions requirements for these types of programmes, the Government was unwittingly perpetuating the aversion to technical and vocational studies. Even those students with the lower qualifications were still opting for academic programmes despite the fact that this would mean their having to make good their deficiencies before qualifying for entry into the programmes of their choice. There were, therefore, no large numbers of students for technical and vocational programmes. If it had been the hope of the policy makers that the technical and vocational programmes would have attracted sufficient numbers to offset smaller numbers in the more academic-type programmes, this was not to be realized.

Teacher training was also a priority area in the Proposed Policy. As teacher trainees would be required to pursue the academic - type programme, they were expected to meet the five (5) "O" level admission requirement. It has already been stated that the school system was not providing students of this standard in sufficient numbers. Further, it was generally known that students with five (5) "O" levels were not choosing teaching as a career. The growth in the new business sector had created more lucrative options for persons with this kind of background.

In implementing the 1979 policy, the selection issue facing the College was how to ensure viable numbers for programmes using the five (5) "O" levels as the criteria for admission. The problem confronting The College was how to manipulate the selection procedures to reflect the intent of the policy while acknowledging the practical realities of the situation. This was an issue of considerable signifi-

cance, not to be taken lightly as, indeed, in the eyes of the institution, its very survival was at stake.

In formulating its admissions criteria, therefore, The College provided for admissions at two levels, college level and pre-college level. For entry at both levels, a college Entrance/Placement test was mandatory. The entry to college level programmes would be the five (5) G.C.E. "O" levels stipulated by the policy. This requirement could be met by combination of actual G.C.E. passes and placement at the college level in English and/or Mathematics in the Entrance/Placement test. By establishing a schedule of equivalencies, The College was able to apply the policy creatively.

Eventually there were fourteen (14) combinations by which the five (5) "O" levels requirement could be met. Entry into pre-college programmes would require much fewer "O" levels (2 or 3) or seven (7) Bahamas Junior Certificate (B.J.C.) subjects, including English and Mathematics, plus acceptable placement in English and Mathematics in the Entrance/Placement test.

The implementation of selection procedures based on the foregoing admissions criteria did result in a decrease in numbers of students for the period 1979 - 1983. Nonetheless, The College was able to attract sufficient numbers to ensure the viability of its programmes while guarding against the lowering of standards.

### 1985 -1989

In the first ten (10) years of The College's existence, issues in the selection of students were directly related to the national education policies. These sought to bring about the democratization of education generally and higher education in particular while at the same time ensuring trained personnel for priority areas of national development.

From the mid to the late 1980's, issues in the selection of students for higher education have emerged as much from The College's obligation to ensure the achievement of national priorities as from its desire to be responsive to the growing demands of an increasingly sophisticated society. Complicating this was the fact that these demands had to be met with limited resources.

A crucial issue during the late 1980's resulted from the larger numbers applying for entry to The College and the increase in persons placing at the higher levels in the Entrance/Placement tests. This suggested that the minimum criteria for acceptance should be raised. In other words the question was should the abandonment of pre-college programmes dictated by the 1979 policy become a reality?

Other existing conditions lent support to this position. The demand for higher education and training begun in the pre-independence years has accelerated steadily through the 1980's. This has been, in a measure, due to the continued growth and expansion of the economy, especially in the areas of Tourism, Banking and Insurance. In the Public Service sector also, the increasing scope and sophistication of Government operations had created the need for larger numbers of administrators and supervisors educated and trained at the highest levels. Many public officers in mid and senior management positions were being required to undergo in-service training in order to better equip themselves to function efficiently in the increasingly modernized Government ministries.

Over the past ten years the performance of the graduates of The College of The Bahamas had been such as to earn public respect for the institution. As a result of the growing credibility of The College, high school graduates who would normally have pursued post-secondary education abroad were now applying and being accepted into The College in increasing numbers.

From the earliest conceptualization of a College of The Bahamas the intent had been for The College to progress toward four year status with links with reputable institutions outside The Bahamas. The Leys Report had envisaged

**at some time in the future it (COB) would undertake the first and even second year of degree work in some fields for students entering the university, and ultimately**

would provide teaching to the first degree level and become a fully-fledged University College. (Leys, 1968, 17:42).

In recent years, with its two year programme stabilized and expanding, The College has begun to plan for development towards four year status. The growing demand from its hundreds of graduates for programmes at the first degree level would seem to indicate that the time was ripe for this. Ready support for this demand was also to be found among some Government ministries and corporations pursuing a vigorous policy of Bahamianization. National policy statements on education now openly referred to the development of The College towards university status in the near future.

In planning for its proposed future development, The College has been forced to look closely at the question of whether the attainment of university status is compatible with admissions criteria at a pre-college level. Additionally, there is the more practical consideration of whether, given its limited resources, The College can realistically add higher level programmes while continuing to support programmes at the pre-college level which already consume an inordinate portion of the budget.

An issue of equal importance emerged from The College's obligation to ensure the achievement of national priorities. To what extent should quotas be used for the purpose of channeling applicants into areas considered crucial to national development?

An examination of the distribution of students in The College, by programmes, discloses an established pattern which does not accord with the training objectives of the Government as articulated in The 1979 Proposed Policy for the Continued Development of The College of The Bahamas. An overwhelming number of students show a preference for programmes in the Business Division. This is illustrated by application statistics for the Fall Semesters of 1987, 1988 and 1989.

**TABLE 1**

**THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS  
APPLICATION STATISTICS FOR  
SEMESTERS 874,884 and 894**

Division	1987	1988	1989
Business and Administrative Studies	458	590	316
Teacher Education	153	178	113
Humanities	48	41	35
Natural Sciences	214	279	189
Social Sciences	65	174	83
Technology	221	285	187

This marked preference for business-oriented programmes is not surprising, given the availability of jobs at higher salaries and better working conditions obtainable in the Business sector.

By comparison, there are much fewer applicants opting for programmes in areas such as Teacher Education and Technology, which are considered areas of national priority. There has been a marked increase in the numbers of applications for these areas over the past several years but not enough to rival those for Business programmes.

Mindful of the fact that it has yet to fulfill its mandate to produce adequate numbers of trained personnel in the afore-mentioned areas, The College, in 1989 took the decision to establish a quota for the number of entrants into Business programmes. This was achieved by selecting for the Business programmes only those applicants qualifying at the college-level and those with deficiencies that could be made up within one semester. Applicants for Business programmes who qualified for entrance below this level were offered acceptance into programmes indicated as their second choice, especially if these were in Teacher Education, Nursing or Technology programmes.

While the use of the selection procedures in this way resulted in an increase in the enrollment of students in the programmes considered national priorities it raised some important questions. Should The College be diverting the seemingly less academically able students into professions so crucial to national development? Would it be more beneficial to the nation to produce larger numbers of mediocre teachers or a small number of excellent ones? How could The College justify admission into certain programmes of one set of students qualifying at the pre-college level while refusing entry into other programmes to those who are similarly qualified? By denying them admission into the programme of their choice was not The College limiting the freedom of choice for all students implicit in the "democratization" of higher education? These are some of the questions with which The College's administrators had to grapple.

The obligation The College has to be responsive to the needs of special groups in the society is in keeping with its general philosophy and purpose of providing equal education opportunities for all classes of Bahamian citizens. Even as it plans for future development, The College must continue its attempt to minimize the effects of traditional barriers to post-secondary educational opportunities for Bahamians. Two of these barriers, geographic and financial, have created educationally "disadvantaged" groups to which The College must cater. In establishing its admissions criteria and in selecting students, The College faced the "thorny" issues of how to ensure that Family Island students and students from the Public schools system are not further disadvantaged.

The Bahamas is a nation of islands. The archipelago of some seven hundred (700) islands and cays is strung over five hundred (500) miles of ocean from South East Florida in the North to Northern Hispaniola in the South. Of these only twenty are inhabited, many quite sparsely, with more than half the population (estimated in 1987 at 242,000) living on the capital island, New Providence. This "**territorial fragmentation**" and unevenly distributed population has made the delivery of quality education to Bahamians a "**herculean task**" (Bethel, 1989). Full-scale secondary education became easily accessible to the Family Islands only since the early 1980s.

In an attempt to ensure that Family Island applicants are given every opportunity to attend The College of The Bahamas, a later application deadline was set for them. The Entrance/Placement test was administered at various centres throughout the larger islands and a Family Island applicant qualifying at the College Preparatory level was more likely to gain acceptance than his New Providence counterpart, especially if he indicated a preference for programmes in the priority areas mentioned earlier.

The Table below (Table 2) shows the applications and intake statistics for New Providence and the Family Islands for the Fall Semesters of 1987, 1988 and 1989. These figures do not include non-Bahamians.



**TABLE 2**  
**THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS**  
**APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSION STATISTICS**  
**FOR SEMESTER 874, 884 AND 894**

Semester	Applications			Intake		
	874	884	894	874	884	894
Total from New Providence	784	777	806	443	519	647
Total from Family Islands	200	220	209	97	63	187
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>997</b>	<b>1,014</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>624</b>

Approximately one quarter of the nation's population is of school age. In the 1987-1988 school year the Secondary school population was estimated to be 29,293. This number was accommodated in twenty-nine (29) publicly-funded (Ministry of Education) schools and ten (10) privately funded (Independent) schools. There were 24,655 students in the Public school and 4,638 in the Independent schools.

It is generally agreed that students in the Private Secondary (high) schools perform at a higher standard than their counterparts in the Public schools. Each year the results of the two major examinations, the Bahamas Junior Certificate (B.J.C., taken in the 9th Grade) and the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E. taken in the 11th to 12th grades) and the performance on the Entrance/Placement test for The College of The Bahamas all testify to this fact. Yet the majority of the nation's secondary school population is in the Public school system. These are also the less financially able, many from the lower socio-economic backgrounds. The average high school student in the Public school system is at a disadvantage compared to his counterpart in the private schools for a variety of reasons, including overcrowding, lack of supplies and teacher shortages.

The 5 G.C.E. 'O' levels admissions criteria effectively restrict the number of applicants accepted into The College from Public schools. It is through entry into the pre-college programmes that many public high school graduates are afforded the opportunity for higher education. A study of the Applications and Intake statistics from public and private high schools in New Providence over the Fall Semesters 1987, 1988 and 1989 reveals that in each year those from the private schools far out numbered those from the public schools.

TABLE 3

**THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS APPLICATION  
AND INTAKE STATISTICS FOR PUBLIC AND  
PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR SEMESTERS 874, 884 AND 894**

Semester	Applications			Intake		
	874	884	894	874	884	894
Private Schools	500	507	530	393	340	368
Public Schools	293	270	276	197	190	233
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>601</b>

As the College plans for further development and moves to continue the College Preparatory programmes, it must also consider its obligations to these “disadvantaged” groups.

### CONCLUSION - A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

So far, policy issues in selecting students for higher education in The Bahamas discussed in this paper have been those confronting The College of The Bahamas under its existing operations. Initiatives now being planned by The College in response to a mandate from the Honourable Minister of Education in 1987 as well as new developments in the national education system will have implications for admissions criteria and the nature of the selection procedure to be used in the future.

The Honourable Minister’s mandate requested The College to “**review its structure and offerings with a view to adding new programmes or expanding upon existing ones in areas of perceived need**” (Bethel, 1989). The additions and/or modifications being considered will result in an increase in the number of non-traditional, non-academic or career-oriented programmes. It is anticipated that new departments in Design (Graphics and Fashion), the Performing and Visual Arts, Tourism and Resort Management, Manufacturing and Engineering will be established. The formation of some of these had been envisaged in the Government’s White Paper on Education (1972).

In its attempt to attract students with a wider range of capabilities and talents, The College will have to give more serious consideration for example, to the issue of the weighing to be given non-academic criteria in line with the general philosophy and purpose of the institution.

At the national level, a significant change introduced in the education system in 1993 was the replacement of the General Certificate of Education examination by a national examination - The Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education. In his Opening Address at the first In-country Workshop for subject specialists involved in the development of this examination, the Honourable Minister said,

**There is no doubt that we are entering upon a bold but challenging venture. It is a step which will have far-reaching consequences. The achievements of students in these examinations will become the measuring stick for their entering the world of work or further studies at The College of**

## The Bahamas or elsewhere (Adderley, 1989).

In light of this change The College was obliged to re-think its entire admissions policy and selection process. Questions concerning the issues of standards, special entrance arrangements, whether there will be additional Entrance/Placement tests, among others, have been addressed.

### NOTES

1. This paper was presented at the 15th International Conference of the International Association for Education Assessment, held in Sydney Australia, November 20 - 24, 1989. The central theme of the conference was "**Policy Issues in the Selection of Students For Higher Education**". Some minor modifications to the paper were necessary to meet the editorial requirements of College Forum and to make it more current.
2. Changing socio-economic conditions in The Bahamas demand a commensurate redefining of policy and procedures for student selection at The College. In light of this, a worthwhile follow-up to this paper might involve (1) an evaluation of the extent to which policy decisions regarding the issues discussed have had the desired outcomes and (2) a discussion of policy issues regarding the selection of students for higher education which have emerged subsequently from 1990 to the present. Chief among these would be the effect of the introduction of The Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education and four-year programmes at The College.

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## **AUTHORS**

Eleanor Thompson is a Research Fellow in The Research Unit of The College of The Bahamas. Her interest in policy studies was awakened during her ten year term in office as Vice Principal at The College.

The pursuit of doctoral studies at the Ontario Institute For Studies In Education (OISE) was instrumental in focusing that interest on the evaluation of educational policy implementation. This interest remains active through her work at The Research Unit.

Joyce Thompson is a senior lecturer in History and formerly Academic Dean at The College of The Bahamas. During her years as Academic Dean and as Chairperson of the Division of Social Sciences she was actively involved in policy development and decisions concerning the selection and admission of students to the institution.

Mrs. Thompson holds a B.A. Honours Degree in History from the University of The West Indies, Mona, Jamaica and a M.Sc. in Education (Curriculum and Instruction) from the University of Miami. She is currently on special assignment with the Ministry of Education and Training to assist in developing and implementing plans for the establishment of an Accreditation Board in The Bahamas.