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Research Article

Failing Schools: Or, is it a Failed Philosophy of Education?

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I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

The English-Speaking nations in the Caribbean's educational system were designed from the British colonial educational philosophy. It covers an educational philosophy that dates back centuries to when metaphysics and idealism were the dominant paradigms. The British had instituted the grammar educational system in which the teacher was the sole repository of knowledge and the students were mere vessels. This was because the dominant philosophy that frames the educational system was metaphysics in which there was an absolute reality or absolute truth. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (1991) found that in 1991 65.0% of Jamaicans have at most primary level education, with 94.5% having at most secondary level education. One decade later (2001), the Statistical Institute of Jamaica published that 70% of children in primary and all-age schools were literate. To summarize the contemporary educational dilemma in Jamaica, a national probability cross-sectional study carried out by a group of Caribbean scholars in 2007 found that 32.9% of Jamaicans had at most primary level education and 81.6% with at most secondary education. Like the general citizenry, the Jamaican Ministry of Education (2013) has joined in the call for the immediate improvement in the academic performance of students in Jamaica, particularly in the area of mathematics because of the substandard performance of pupils. In an article written by Gleaner reporter Graham (2012), he stated that Holy Trinity High School in Kingston had an uphill task to bring the below-par students who entered its gates to the level where they should have been when they left. Teachers at the secondary schools had to be teaching lower-level primary school work because some of the students who entered its grade seven were "not smarter than a seven-year-old. The Principal added that a quarter of the children who entered grade seven at Holy Trinity High School last September were reading at the grade-three level. The reality is, the Jamaican educational system has failed its citizenry and there is no denying that the present-past educational philosophy is ineffective and there must be a fundamental philosophical change with immediacy.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Educational Paradigm, Jamaica, Under-Achievement, Philosophy of Education

Introduction

The education system in many English-Speaking Caribbean was designed from the British colonial educational philosophy (Bacchus, 1994; British Council, 2017; Coates, ud; Hunte, 1976). It covers an educational philosophy that dates back centuries (i.e., 1834 Emancipation Act) to when metaphysics and idealism were the dominant paradigms. At that time the various many Caribbean islands were governed by Britain. When many of these nations got (or were offered) independence, the legacy of their colonial master, education, was not modernized in keeping with the contemporary philosophy-including new teaching methodologies. Simply put, among the legacies of imperialism in the Caribbean is the educational system, which still holds some of the philosophies of the British structure (Peters, 2001).

The British had instituted the grammar educational system in which the teacher was the sole repository of knowledge and the students were mere vessels. This was because the dominant philosophy that frames the educational system was metaphysics in which there was an absolute reality or absolute truth. Despite the advancement in knowledge, modifications and clarifications of old (or ancient) philosophies; there has not been a reconstruction of the old traditional philosophical perspective introduced by the then British system. Instead of revamping the traditional educational system-traditional teaching methodology-it became entrenched into the contemporary thinking of educators, the wider public, which is a legacy of plantation society. While this old landmark is of some value when it was first introduced, there is ample evidence that it is no longer working based on the fact that failure rate of students, illiteracy, and innumeracy are so high at the primary through the secondary level.

Critique of Issues in Schools

Mathematics achievement in the regional and local examination has been a long-standing problem. For decades in our educational system, the average at the national level, particularly in the Grade Four Numeracy Test, provides little consolation, Jamaica Observer (2012). A stratified national probability survey conducted by Powell, Bourne and Waller found that education was identified by Jamaicans as the third leading problem faced by society. There is a consensus that educators and stakeholders in the Ministry of Education must significantly improve numeracy performance among pupils at the primary to secondary levels in the educational system to safeguard its survival ability. As a nation, which strives to take a place within a fiercely competitive and highly globalized market place, our children which are the future, will need to be equipped with reasoning, problem-solving and critical thinking skills to survive in this global market place.

An article written by Gleaner reporter Graham (2012) stated that Holy Trinity High School in Kingston had an uphill task to bring the below-par students who entered its gates to the level where they should have been when they left. Teachers at the secondary schools had to be teaching lower-level primary school work because some of the students entered its grade seven were "not smarter than a seven-year-old". The Principal added about a quarter of the children who entered grade seven at Holy Trinity High School last September was reading at the grade-three level. In another testing half of the 350 students, 32 were found to be reading below the grade-two level. Further examination of the intake of 350 students revealed that about 180 had an average GSAT (Grade Six Achievement Test) mark of 40 per cent and lower. Similar results or worse were also evident in the school that I taught. Several other teachers of especially non-traditional High schools still can provide similar accounts. The Gleaner reporter and Principal of Holy Trinity concluded that the task of the teachers at Holy Trinity High was made more difficult by the lack of parental involvement. The principal in examining the lack of parental support lamented that "We sent out letters to all of the parents for the below-par students we tested and do you know how many turned up? One!" She added, "What we find is that those students who do well often have good parental support." The findings at Holy Trinity provide a glimpse of results that are obtained when parents fail to be involved in their student's education from their early years of training.

Reid (2011) in examining factors affecting the performance of students, states that limited parental support and involvement impact on students' performance. Samms-Vaughan (2004), on the other hand, states that parents who are able to pay for extra tutoring to prepare for the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) children are better prepared for the examination, which allows them to perform at a higher level than their poorer counterparts as a result, they are placed in better high schools. There is an indication from Samms-Vaughan's statements that parent's monetary support is also needed for their students' educational development.

Williams (2006) report related some views of top G-Sat Awardees. According to Bishop (2006), grade coordinator at Barracks Road Primary in St James; "The drive the students need from some parents is not there," He continued to say that "Some parents don't buy books for their children and don't assist them with homework, so the children are at a disadvantage. Although as a teacher you try to bring them along, you are not making any headway." Adams (2006), a senior teacher at George Headley Primary in St Andrew concurred that "The children in my class who succeed are the ones whose parents are behind them. They are always seeking meetings to ask what they can do to assist

their children because they know the areas where their children are weak," Bishop further added that students do poorly because they lack parental support. Students do poorly, said the veteran teacher, because they lack parental support. "They (parents) claim they don't have the time, they don't attend meetings, and so the children are left behind," he said.

In 2005, 62% of pupils who sat the 4th-grade literacy and numeracy examination attained mastery, which increased to 67% in 2009 from 50% in 2001 (Roxborough-Wright, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2009). On disaggregating the results by a typology of schools (primary and preparatory), it was revealed that preparatory schools' students had a level degree of mastery (71%) compared to primary schools' pupils (67%) (Ministry of Education, 2009). The per cent of students receiving mastery at one public school (St. Michael Primary) was as low as 31% (Ministry of Education, 2009), indicating that the Jamaican educational system has failed the pupils.

The introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Tests, as well as the Diagnostic Test, were in response to the high literacy and numeracy among students in non-traditional high school, and their high failure rate in sitting many courses at the secondary level, Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) – (CXC, 1990-2011). The dilemma in the educational system was revealed by Powell, Bourne and Waller (2007) in a cross-sectional probability national survey which found that education was the third leading national problem identified by Jamaicans. A part of the national problem of education was the high illiteracy and innumeracy among those leaving primary and secondary schools in Jamaica. An aptly fitting way to express the educational dilemma in Jamaica is the use of statistics and research on the matter. A publication by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica found that in 1991 65.0% of Jamaicans have at most primary level education, with 94.5% having at most secondary level education (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 1999). One decade later (2001), the Statistical Institute of Jamaican published that 70% of children in primary and all-age schools were literate (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2002). To summarize the contemporary educational dilemma in Jamaica, a national probability cross-sectional study carried out by a group of Caribbean scholars in 2007 found that 32.9% of Jamaican had at most primary level education and 81.6% with at most secondary (Boxill, et al., 2007).

Like the general citizenry, the Jamaican Ministry of Education (2013) has joined in the call for the immediate improvement in the academic performance of students in Jamaica, particularly in the area of mathematics because of the underperformance of pupils. According to the Ministry of Education:

Mathematics continues to be an important component in the formation of the educated person and as such, mathematics education should reflect the goals of education in a dynamic society. We must, therefore, address not only the acquisition of skills and mastery of ideas. We must address more than the accumulation of facts and principles. Mathematics education in the age of information must emphasize the higher skills of discussion, interpreting and evaluation (Ministry of Education, u.d, 4).

When the Ministry of Education offered the perspective that mathematics is important to educating pupils this has been equally purported by scholars, researchers and policymakers (Buddo, 2002; Bryan, 2017; Bourne, 2019). Buddo (2002) went further by arguing that mathematics is the foundation for learning other quantitative matters and that it is the core subject in the education curriculum around the globe. With the importance of mathematics in areas like money management, accounting, medicine, engineering, computer science, economics, and demography, it is not surprising therefore that the subject raises much concern when student underperform in the area. For decades, Jamaican candidates have been under-performing in external mathematics examinations (i.e., Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate, Grade Six Achievement Test) including the Grade 4 Numeracy and in keeping with the importance of the subject; there have been calls for intervention programmes to address this situation. Education is a global phenomenon that influences all facets of peoples' existence. The education system in Jamaica has to be a cynosure for some time, as it has experienced some challenges as it relates to students' under achievements in various subject areas especially mathematics.

Powell, Bourne and Waller's research revealed that of twenty national problems identified by Jamaicans; education was the third one. The education dilemma in Jamaica is expressed even more so in the percentage of people who sat and those who successfully wrote mathematics yearly. Statistics published in the yearly Report from the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) showed that mathematics has the least passes among all the subjects (CXC, 2000-2013). Hence, this accounts for the rationale behind scholars' willingness to investigate achievement in students in mathematics, particularly in the new millennium (Wilbert, 2008).

Mathematics is one of the subjects that are taught in the formal school curriculum, as there is a demanding need for mathematics in our society today (Curtain-Phillips, 1999 as cited in Wilbert, 2008). Thus "learning mathematics has become a necessity for an individual's full development in today's complex society" (Ignacio, Nieto & Barona, 2006, p. 16) and this increases the importance of the subject in the educational system. Despite this fact, Jamaican students have been under-performing in the area of mathematics

and this extends to the tertiary level. The deficiency of Jamaican students in the area of mathematics accounts for the reason behind the Ministry of Education's decision to implement a numeracy test at the primary level.

With mathematics being important in everyday life, in many forms of employment, in the medical field, in science and technology, the economy, the environment and even in public decision-making (Clark & Fulton), policymakers in and outside of Jamaica seek to understand and address the low performance of students in the area. Likewise, Mahanta and Islam, (n.d.), asserted that "in this age of science and technology, mathematics has permeated through the human life in such a way that, it has now become every man's everyday concern" (p. 713). Equally, in 2015 the Jamaican then Minister of Education, Honourable Ronald Thwaites declared that research has shown that achievement in mathematics is one of the most significant reliable education factors that is directly linked to economic growth and development. Therefore, mathematics is a subject that is important in all spheres of our lives and this explains many thrusts to address low performance among students in the area. The dilemma in the Jamaican educational system, especially in mathematics, accounts for educators wholeheartedly promoting strategies to improve performance in the subject area. What to do is still the driving force behind the ever-changing programmes and initiatives continuously tried by policymakers in Jamaica.

With the Ministry of Education (1998) echoing that "Mathematics plays an important role in our everyday lives as we interact in society; at the workplace, whatever our vocation might be; by developing in each individual's, the problem-solving skills that we all need and in equipping us to meet the challenges of technology" (p. 113). It comes as no surprise that programmes and strategies will always be tried to radically change the under-performance of the students in the society. Many authors have, therefore, noted the mounting significance of numeracy in our lives by declaring that very few jobs are immune from a need for mathematical sense-making (Polya, 1945; Porkess, 2012; Royal Society, 2011; Schoenfeld, 1992).

The Grade Six Achievement Test is one of the main assessment tools implemented across Jamaican schools at the primary level. It is the final examination administered primarily to Grade Six children, who would have completed the primary curriculum. It is Jamaica's national high school entrance examination. The GSAT replaces the UK's Common Entrance Examination in 1999. It is scheduled for two days in March each year, and the results are used for placing students in secondary school. Students are tested from five (5) subject areas, namely English (including comprehension), Social Studies, Science, Mathematics and Communication Task. Students are required to complete a total of eighty (80) multiple-choice items from each subject area except for Communication Task and Science, which have 60 items.

To gain a place at a traditional high school in Jamaica, students have to score very high marks in all the subject areas that they are tested on in the GSAT examination. While a teacher at the primary level, it was observed that parents in their aspirations for their children to attend one of these traditional high schools tend to become involved in the students' preparation for the GSAT examinations. From these observations, it was found that parents who played a greater role in the students' day-to-day academic performance usually saw their children being awarded a space in the school of their choice.

The reality of the situation is that students need the full support of their parents to achieve their maximum potential from schooling. Parents' involvement in a child's early education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance (Hara & Burke, 1998; Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon, 1999; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). It is believed that when parents pay keen attention to their children's academic performance, students are motivated to do extremely well in all their subject areas. Researchers have reported that parent-child interactions, specifically stimulating and responsive parenting practices, are important influences on a child's academic development (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998). It may be imperative for parents to expose their children to vicarious experiences, for example, taking them on trips and other educational activities. Based on the review, it can be stated that the importance of paying keen attention to the idea that when parents are involved - students may achieve: higher grades and test scores, better school attendance, better attitudes and behaviour and increased motivation and better self-esteem. When students are aware of their parents' high expectations and aspirations in regards to their academic performance and achievement in schools, the children may exert a lot more effort to achieve success in school. The following paragraphs highlight results that were obtained, to indicate the positive impact on students' success when parents' are involved in the children's academic performances.

The essence of Reading Comprehension is 'to construct meaning from text.' Durkin (1993) defines comprehension as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader." Harris and Hodges (1995, p.39) in discussing the definition of comprehension; highlight that it is "the construction of the meaning of a written text through a reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in a particular text." RAND Reading Study Group (2002, p.11) takes this notion of the construction of the meaning a step further, defining comprehension as "the process of simultaneously

extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and the activity or purpose for reading."

In primary schools across Jamaica, a literacy test is administered towards the end of the Grade 4 year to every student in that grade. The test is comprised of three main areas namely: Word Recognition, Reading Comprehension and Writing Task. Word Recognition tests the ability of students to identify an object when given the name and vice-versa. This section is marked out of 40 with 30 being the pass mark. Reading Comprehension tests the ability of students to comprehend various types of stimuli such as passages, documents and maps. This section is marked out of 30 with 12 being the pass mark. Writing Task tests the ability of students to complete forms requesting personal data and other information. It also tests the ability of students to use sustained writing to communicate ideas. This section is marked out of 8 with 5 being the pass mark. A student must be successful in all three areas to master the literacy test.

If a student fails the test in the first sitting he or she is allowed to re-sit the test the following year. The child must be able to pass the test before sitting the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). If the child still fails he or she is transferred into a special programme into the secondary school known as Alternate Secondary Education Programme (ASEP) that is designed for him/her to receive further assistance.

Assessment of the test takes place from an external standpoint. At least two external assessors, depending on the size of the school, are assigned by the Student Assessment Unit (SAU) of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to visit the schools and administer the test. The principals collect the sealed packages with the test papers from the MOE and hand those packages to the administrators of the test. At the end of the test, the papers are repackaged then returned to the MOE by the principals, to be marked. This test is used to rate the national literacy level of students in Jamaica.

The researcher has been an educator for the past 11 years. During these years, she has observed that almost all the students who sit the grade four-literacy test passed the word recognition section. However, the reading comprehension and the writing tasks sections were the areas, which those who have not mastered the test, failed. The former Education Minister Thwaites in the Sunday Observer dated January 18, 2015, also identified and expressed that the reading comprehension was the weakest area for the grade four students (Jamaica Observer, 2015).

The Task Force on Educational Reform (Davis, 2004) highlighted data from the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture revealed that in 2003 only 57.7% of students in Jamaica achieved mastery on the Grade 4 Literacy Test. The Ministry Paper 88 (2014), revealed an average 3% increase in the mastery level for the period 2009-2013. Besides, there was only a 1.1% increase from 2013 to 2014, which was 76.3% and 77.4% respectively. Despite these statistics, former Education Minister Thwaites expressed confidence that the 2015 Millennium Target of 85% mastery in literacy would have been achieved. Interestingly, the researcher wanted to know what miracles would have been performed for a 7.6% increase in literacy that year, as there must have been some prior research as to the contributing factors to previous failures which would have mitigated by appropriate strategies that year. If we are to find solutions for the problems our students are currently experiencing, we must first understand the contributing factors. Hence, the researcher sought to examine previous studies done to ascertain some of the contributing factors of low performance in reading comprehension.

Based on research conducted, the researcher identified that these factors: the readers' competencies, the social and cultural influences and teachers' sense of self- efficacy will determine how well a reader can construct meaning from a text. It is therefore incumbent on principals, teachers and parents to address the factors that are contributing to the low performance in Reading Comprehension at the grade 4 levels. There are many factors explaining students' achievement in Reading Comprehension. Several studies show self-esteem, motivation and interest towards reading, parents' education, socioeconomic and cultural, the situation at home as well as ethnicity being factors influencing reading literacy level (Elley, 1994; Lehmann, 1996; Lietz, 1996; Fredriksson, 2002). Denton & West (2002), also state that preschool reading activities and reading in the family have a great impact on the later reading achievement. Similarly, Waldfogel (2012) postulates that key influences on early literacy for children are the language spoken at home, parental proficiency in English and whether a child participates in preschool. Wagner (1991) points on home factor in reading literacy, is that the home should provide an environment, which stimulates or encourages reading. Several studies have proven that reading aloud to children at preschool age has a positive effect on reading literacy level at school age (Lyon, 1999; Denton, Reaney & West, 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). The 1991 International Assessment of Educational Progress results also indicated that for 9-years-old, the number of books and newspapers at home, as well as language at home, play a great role in students' reading achievement (Beller & Naomi, 1996; Taube & Mejding, 1996).

Another set of factors which correlate with success in reading is school and parent cooperation (Postlethwaite & Ross, 1992; Lietz, 1996). Lesaux (2012) asks an essential

question about the fact that children who seem to be proficient readers in a third-grade struggle to comprehend texts in later grades. From his research, his answer lies in the distinction between the procedural skills necessary for reading proficiency and the conceptual skills and knowledge necessary for reading proficiency. According to O'dea and Mugridge (2012) students of highest school socioeconomic status have higher literacy scores. In its 1998 report on literacy, the National Research Council demonstrated that families who understand the importance of supporting the literacy skills of their children and who are provided with the means to do so (that is books and techniques) are more likely to engage in effective literacy activities (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Such literacy activities have been shown to translate into cognitive gains and enhanced print awareness that facilitates school readiness. Literacy values, practices, strategies, tools and activities are "embedded in the lived realities of children's everyday experiences" (Kennedy, Ridgway & Surman, 2006, p.16). A sociocultural approach seeks to understand and draw upon the literacy perspectives and resources of families of ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds as a basis to develop strong literacy foundations (Dickinson & Tabors, 2002; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007).

The state of Jamaica's contemporary educational system has been ailing for some time and policymakers have been confused as to the direction to take to alter the current underachievement of students from the primary-to-secondary level. Many modifications and re-modifications of the educational system have been made over the years, without any attention placed on the paradigm that encapsulates the system. When Jamaica received independence on August 1, 1962, the then educational system reflected a philosophy at that time. At the time, metaphysics and idealism were the leading philosophy and as such the educational system was designed to reflect this thinking. During that era, the nature of reality was based on "what is ultimately real'-absolute truth. According to George Knight, "metaphysical questions may be divided into four subsets. First, there is the cosmological aspect. Cosmology is based on the study of theories about the origin, nature, and development of the universe as an orderly system… Second, the metaphysical aspect is theological. Theology is the part of the religious theory that has to do with conceptions of and about God. A third dealt with the study of human being… The fourth aspect addresses a matter of ontological issues. Ontology is the examination of the nature of existence or what it means to be (Knight, 2006, pp. 15-18). Such philosophical thinking explains on studying nature, sources, and validation of knowledge-epistemology (Knight, 2006, p. 20).

The epistemology of metaphysics relied on absolute truth-objectification of knowledge and that knowledge is outside of human experience. As a result of this epistemology, knowledge could only be obtained by way of 1) empiricism-through human senses and nature of human experiences; 2) reasoning-thoughts and reasoning that are logically based, and 3) authority-knowledge that have been established by experts have relied upon upon-textbook, teacher, and reference work. It is this thought that has led and impacted upon an educational system in the Caribbean-an educational system in which there is an authority of knowledge (teacher or textbook) and the pupils simply act on the request of the knowledge giver. This philosophy has broadened and impacted upon an educational system in the Caribbean through the structure of the classroom, the types of books used how knowledge is disseminated to even the teachers, how people think and how problems are solved. It should come as no surprise that this philosophy relied upon proofs, hypothesis testing, and reliance of seeking to ascertain an objective truth, and ascertain why teachers drew upon previous knowledge of pupils in the teaching process. The reality is this philosophy that has impacted upon the Caribbean educational system as its legacy in slavery and has been modified over the decades instead of seeing a paradigm shift in keeping with the development of other philosophies. The by-product of this philosophy has left the educational system in the Caribbean ailing for some time and instead of changing the present dominant paradigm, we title schools as failing institutions or things are falling apart.

One of the most profound statements read or heard today is made by Gill Gates, that high schools are 'obsolete' and that "Even when they are working as designed, they cannot teach all our students what they need to know today" (in Finn, 2006, p. 1). The matter seems to be the same sentiments echoed by Jamaicans in 2007 as a study by Powell, Bourne and Waller found that education was identified as the third leading national problem. People are dissatisfied with the quality output of secondary-educational institutions (i.e. high or secondary schools). Those schools continue to receive government funding and yet many graduates have not reached the desired expectations of the society. A term that emerged in educational literature is failing schools. This concept refers to schools that have not attained the expected standards as set out by policymakers. As a result, policymakers have come with the 'education governance' where high schools are held accountable for their results-performance of their students.

Among the expressed solution for addressing the sub-standard performance of high school students in the United States is privatization. Finns opined that "Yes, there's a problem, several problems, in fact, and that the rationale for high-school reform would seem compelling. But as we get closer to the ground, the picture loses focus. Is the problem with the high school that it is not engaging students or that it is not academically challenging enough?" (Finn, 2006,

p. 4). The forwarded position of Finn is simply saying that something must be done to understand what is occurring in those high schools and thereafter implement policies to increase students' academic achievement. Hence, Finn contended that six problems are occurring in high schools in the United States. These are "1) achievement is too low; 2) students are not working hard enough, taking the right courses, or learning enough; 3) high school is a lockstep bore, and consequently too many kids turn off, tune out, and quit; 4) one-size-fits-all, comprehensive high school is itself dysfunctional, an inefficient, outmoded vehicle for teaching young people what they need to learn; 5) the courses are too easy, pointless, and ill-matched to the demands of the real world, and 6) academic work and intellectual activity are not way to the adolescents heart" Finn said (pp. 5-7).

The perspective by Finn has not even begun to uncover some of the embedded cultural and economic issues that are present in our social system including schools. Some of the cultural and economic issues account for the reluctance and disconnect between schools and students. The reality is, students, have certain expectations and the schools' expectations are different and so the result is the low achievement among pupils. The teaching experience garnered from the high school environment in Jamaica for two decades have led to the concurrence of Finn statement that these institutions are boring, obsolete and are not keeping the demands and needs of pupils. Instead of revamping the entire secondary-educational system, the policy has been simple modifications and modernizations. Finn aptly described the situation this way "Let us acknowledge, though, that a decentralized, piecemeal approach invites its messy confusion, the more so if we have no common metrics by which to gauge progress, compare results, or define success from one place to another" (p. 8). Undoubtedly there is a need for high school reform in many nations including the US. Finn stated, "High-school reform may resemble welfare reform, where states needed to have the freedom and incentives to try various approaches before the time was ripe for a national strategy" (p. 8). The reality is, while we wait for the right time to come, the high-school system continues to fail and is not effective in socializing pupils for the expectations of society. The matter, here, is a universal one and a matter of urgent importance that continues to limp along until someone comes along and halt the process.

Jamaicans have been complaining about the poor state of the educational system for decades. Even empirical studies have shown that education is rated among the leading national problem in Jamaica the third national problem from a list of twenty identified problems (Powell, Bourne and Waller, 2007). The public's perception on the dismally low performance of the candidates is not farfetched as at most 58 out of every 100 fourth graders who wrote the Numeracy Test, set by the Jamaica Ministry of Education, successfully passed the examination (Bliss, 2004). The scores have been examined and Bliss (2004) argued that pupils from low socio-economic background responded unfavourably to classroom teaching because their home environment generally does not expose them to the kinds of materials used in schools. Such a perspective explains that parental background of the students accounts for the disparity in academic achievement. The reality is the blame about the sub-standard performance of students in Jamaica has been laid at the feet of teachers, parents and other issues, without an examination of the philosophy that impacts the educational system. Even a former prime minister has jointed into the discussion of the performance of an educational system in Jamaica and fact alluded to the structural issues that account for the current reality.

Former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Rt. Hon. Edward Seaga entitled an article 'GSAT in trouble' this speaks volume about the assessment of students at the primary level. He summarized the problem of the GSAT as follows:

The consequence of the excessive homework burden falls on the parent/caregiver who either responds by giving full assistance to the student or fails to respond, leaving the student to take on the responsibility alone. The degree of assistance received will markedly improve the success of the student. Although this is a desirable relationship between parents and children, the first part of the problem starts here (Seaga, 2011)

The GSAT is not a once-a-year problem. It is an insidious problem for the great majority of parents and caregivers, almost daily. This agitation occurs particularly with those responsible for nine and 10-year-old students approaching the dreaded GSAT exam that is taken at age 11. The heavy burden of homework in preparation for GSAT is occupying from two or three hours. This is a prime grievance (Seaga, 2011)

Like the rest of the society, Mr Seaga lamented the state of the educational system in Jamaica and ascribed its failure to the structural issues more than to examine the philosophy of education in the society and general philosophy that has influenced education over the last century. Everyone has overlooked the paradigm and as such paid much attention to the outcome-students' academic performance. The researchers concur that something is wrong with the structure of the GSAT examination; but the matter runs deeper than parental involvement, teacher's involvement, and the outcome of the students. To understand the depth of the problem in the educational system in Jamaica, it would be fitting to evaluate this more than as offered by Seaga (2011, 2012).

In Jamaica, all students who write the GSAT examinations are placed in a secondary school (i.e., traditional, newly

upgraded high or technical school) and this is based on literacy and numeracy levels. Hence, the lower literate and numerate GSAT candidates are placed in newly upgraded and technical high schools, and this explains what is stated by some administrators. Using statistics on those who successfully wrote the GSAT Language Arts, it can be deduced that many students who are placed in non-traditional high school are illiterate sixth graders. Then, the responsibility rests squarely at the feet of the administrators and teachers at these non-traditional high schools to bring them to a level fitting to write the CSEC examination. It should not be surprising that the former Minister of Education, Mr Andrew Holness, indicated that many of the non-traditional high schools including Holy Trinity, Glengoffe and Marcus Garvey Technical high schools will be used as model institutions in an effort to transform the poor performance of students at these secondary schools (Henry, 2011).

Following on the heels of comments by Andrew Holness, the minister of education in 2015 – Mr. Ronald Thwaites indicated that schools would have carried out a new assessment on seventh graders in an effort to identify the non-functional ones, the responsibility of the schools would be to make them literate and numerate before they are brought into the traditional curriculum (Cunningham, 2014). This suggestion was opposed by many administrators in secondary schools because they indicated the already strain on them to meet the existing curriculum. The reality is, there is a literacy deficiency among students at the primary level that is feeding to the secondary level and accounting for the dismally low performance of students in CSEC English A. Hence, it is not surprising that the former minister of education (then Minister, Andrew Holness) and current Prime Minister of Jamaica classified many schools as 'failing schools' (Henry, 2011) and decry principals and teachers for the dismally low performance of students instead of examining the paradigm that impacts the system. The examination scores of students are an outcome of a matter that is deeper than ascribing the blame to administrators, teachers, parents and pupils. It is the philosophy that impacts the education that must be examined to grasp when the results are as they are.

Again, when Jamaica was under the governance of Britain, the dominant philosophy was metaphysics and this impacted on the educational system and the general thinking of the society. Instead of the paradigm shift to contemporary philosophy, the nation is still linked to the navel by a metaphysical-epistemology. This deals with the validation of knowledge. In this philosophy, truth is tested in any of these three ways-1) correspondence; 2) coherence, and 3) pragmatic theories.

Correspondence theory examines (or test) ideas with the agreement to facts by way of standard judgement. Coherence theory deals with 'consistency or harmony of all one's judgement' (Knight, 2006, p. 26) -which is the validation or testing of abstract ideas. Pragmatic theory, on the other hand, repudiates 'absolute truth' and as such deals with the workability, utility or satisfactory consequences of ideas. The reality is, for decades, metaphysical-epistemology has impacted the educational system in Jamaica. The very teaching of the teacher has relied upon this paradigm; even though other paradigms have been taught. The structure of the English-Speaking Caribbean nations' educational system, therefore, is framed around the proof, authority in knowledge, and explain why the classroom is so structured, the focus is what it is, and why students are not taught to independently think and be a problem solve. Instead, accounts for why the general public is always looking for a messiah to solve their problems. The people of the Caribbean have been socialized within old paradigm metaphysical epistemology that has not worked for them. The expression of the failure of students in academic is an indication of the non-workability of the dominant educational paradigm and not the students or parents and for that matter the administrators in schools.

Rooted in the Caribbean educational system is metaphysical-epistemology and it impacts the teaching-learning process dominant teaching methodology (or the traditional teaching methodology). Such a philosophy explains why the teacher is the centre of the learning process, classrooms are so designed, textbooks are relied upon, pupils are substantially viewed as receptacles and why students rely upon the teachers for knowledge, and less experimental learning approaches are being employed by teachers. The fact is, the teachers are trained in this dominant philosophy and so they repeat what they were taught and the cycle continues like that. Even with titles as 'failing schools', examinations such as GSAT, CSEC and CAPE are structured more in keeping with traditional teaching methodology than new philosophies such as existentialism; post-modernism; feminism; constructionism; analytic philosophy; phenomenology, or educational philosophies such as positivism, perennials, progressivism, reconstructionism, behaviorism and essentialism. Based on the listing of educational philosophies, it is clear that general philosophy impacts on educational philosophies.

Knight opined that "Philosophy, therefore, is a basic constituent in the foundation of educational practice" (p. 33) and so this goes to the core of the current dilemma in Jamaica. In Jamaica, the dominant educational philosophies go back to idealism or positivism, and pragmatism. This explains why many of the educational philosophies employed in classrooms are in keeping with the aforementioned traditional philosophies that developed from the Enlightenment era, and therefore accounts for the

impact of logical analysis in thinking, solving problems and training teachers. Almost all the classrooms in Jamaica are designed where the teacher is the leader or centreatop the pyramid structure of the room and the curricula reveal this teacher-centred dominant paradigm. Both the public and private-educational institutions in Jamaica reflect a similar metaphysical-epistemology. As a result, the educational issuesnature of the students; the role of the teacher; curriculum; teaching methodologies, and social function of educational institutions are expressions of the social system. The educational system is a mere sub-system of the system and means it is impacted upon by the socially agreed structure. It follows that without a paradigm shift in the system's dominant philosophy, the educational system will continue to reflect this thinking that dates back to pre-Independence in Jamaica.

Christian education is no different in the English-Speaking Caribbean as it is by large fundamentally impacted on by the traditional philosophy of the social system. Although Christian philosophies are not in keeping with idealism, pragmatism, and metaphysical-epistemology; Christian-education equally designed around secular-philosophies with it thinking to be on the outskirt. Even the Adventist philosophy has not fundamentally fashioned their educational institutions as the secular philosophies are the core used in these schools. This perspective is brought to light by this comment made by George Knight, "What goes by the name Christian education is sometimes a program of 'pagan education with a chocolate coating of Christianity" (2006, p. 164). This can be used to explain why Christian philosophy is not the building blocks of Christian-education because of the dominance of secular philosophical perspective the social system to which religion is a subset. Like the philosophical dilemma experienced by Christian-education in the Caribbean, the wider schools are still a part of the general structure and this goes to the crux of why they are subtly fashioned into acceptance of the social system. This is done by way of the examination (GSAT; CSEC; CAPE; A'Level). The fact the Christian-educational institutions have not designed their examinations; they are still subscribed to the social system and its philosophy. This begs the question, 'What is the problem that continues to elude educators and policy-makers in the Caribbean as it relates to revert the underperformance of students in schools?'

The answer is simply the philosophy of the social system. Over the last one-half centuries, there has been the development of countless educational philosophies and philosophies that have shown their positive influence on the educational outcome, increased human motivation and yet the dominant paradigm still goes back to Enlightenment-era or 19th Century. Instead of employing modern or contemporary philosophies such as existentialism; reconstructionism; progressivism; perennials; essentialism; multiculturalism, postmodernism Caribbean societies have continued to hold steadfast to the legacy of slavery's educational system and this direct contemporary educational practices. Yearly, a new Band-Aid is placed over the ailing educational system of the English-Speaking Caribbean because the root cause, the paradigm or driving philosophy, is not correctly identified as a reason for the problem.

The question is then asked "If the past educational system is correctly designed for its time; why have we not framed one in keeping with the current era?' Instead of designing an educational system around current philosophies, the English-Speaking Caribbean has continued to lambast the system, use a traditional philosophy that is not working, and then wonder why the results are mysterious as they are. The educational system is not the failure, but it is the traditional philosophy that has died a long time ago that is being used to influence educational practices that are the failure. There are no 'failing schools', the reality is a 'failed philosophy'.

For decades, stakeholders have been lamented the status of secondary level education in the world, including the United States, and Finn aptly summarizes the reality of the situation this way:

That more and more people are discontented with today's high schools and their results is surely a good thing. This issue deserves to be on the national stage. But first it has to play in the provinces, in summer stock, and in off-Broadway theatres, where actors, directors, investors, critics, and audiences alike can come to understand it" (Finn, 2006, p. 32).

Since teenagers are animated by things with tangible rewards and sleeves-rolled-up engagement, we need to get practical. Focus on tech-prep programs, ventures that join high schools to community colleges, work-study, schedules that blend school with jobs, voluntarism and community service, and kindred ways of tapping into the "effective," pecuniary, and social sides of young people.

It can be deduced from Finn's perspective that current philosophy is not in keeping with the desires, demands, expectations, and focus of the current population in high school. The present philosophy of education surrounds the past population's desires, demands, expectations, and focus educators and this is the problem. There is a need for an effective contemporary philosophy of education at the secondary school that fits the new generation. The reality is, were are pouring wine in a dirty vessel and expects a wholesome output.

In concluding, the high illiteracy of young people, as well as innumeracy, is a summation of the continued usage of 'failed philosophy' that goes into impact on the educational

practices of the society. Hence, politicians and policy-makers in the Caribbean must be held accountable for the continued usage of failed philosophy. The traditionalists have argued that there is an 'absolute truth' and this thinking has constituted educational practices. This fallacious thinking holds the key to understanding why the educational system has failed, but the paradigm that impacts educational practices is false and as such produces the current outcomes. It should be noted that "Human beings are manipulators of abstract symbols" (Knight, 2006, p. 171) and as such the traditionalists teaching methodology should be fundamentally changed to reflect current trends in philosophies. It is reiterated that there are no 'failing schools'. What exists is a failed philosophy that has continued to dominate educational practices.

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