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**EDUCATION FOR AN INNOVATIVE
SOCIETY
A CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE[1]**

***EDUCACIÓN PARA UNA SOCIEDAD
INNOVADORA.
UNA PERSPECTIVA CARIBEÑA***

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1   A version of this paper was presented at the Canada-Caribbean-Central America Education
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ABSTRACT

The first part of this paper analyses a given definition of an innovative society and comments on its relevance to Caribbean societies. In part two it discusses the role of education and training in meeting social and economic challenges of the Caribbean; in the third section it presents the University of the West Indies Open Campus as an innovation within the region with the potential to contribute to development in the Caribbean and it explores some specific ways in which this can be achieved.

RESUMEN

La primera parte de este documento analiza una definición sobre lo que es una sociedad innovadora y comenta sobre su relevancia en las sociedades caribeñas. La segunda parte se refiere al papel de la educación y el entrenamiento para alcanzar los retos sociales y económicos del Caribe. La tercera sección presenta a la Sede Abierta de la Universidad de las Indias Occidentales (UWI, por sus siglas en inglés) como una innovación en la región, con el potencial de contribuir al desarrollo del Caribe. Explora también algunas de las vías específicas mediante las cuales se puede lograr este desarrollo

INTRODUCTION

The organising group of the conference at which I presented briefly on this topic some months ago provided a definition of *an innovative society* which presenters were asked to use to frame the discussion of their presentations Since then I have reflected on that definition within the context of the Caribbean, in particular, and noted that there are aspects of innovation that are not overtly indicated in the definition, some of which I overlooked in my presentation but which require interrogation and comment. I therefore return to this definition as a point of departure for this paper and will then discuss issues related to the development of innovative Caribbean societies within the context of a broader reading and interpretation of the definition. An innovative society was defined as "*one that is well-governed, prepares youth both for citizenship and work, is strong in science and technology, and makes the links between education, research, industry and prosperity.*"

The definition addresses features that are characteristic of most prospering societies. By highlighting science and technology as a strong characteristic, it suggests that this is critical to innovation and to prosperity. One assumes that other critical factors fundamental to prosperity and innovation, but not specifically mentioned, are to be understood as underlying the concepts of citizenship, good governance, industry and prosperity. I speak of factors related to humanist elements that are important for moral and aesthetic development, including the development of what psychologists refer to as "emotional intelligence" and "social intelligence" both of which are as important as cognitive development (Intelligence Quotient - IQ) and the overall mental development of the human being. Emotional intelligence, referred to in 1995 as a "new concept" (Goleman 1995: 34) is described as involving the following abilities: "to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope."

When one considers the challenges that most developing societies in the Caribbean face, such as increasing crime rates that reflect a growing trend towards lack of respect for human life and consideration for the social rights of those who coexist in a community, increasing early drop-out rates from educational institutions – mostly young males – and poverty, then one has to reflect on the necessity of emphasising the humanist elements in education that are fundamental to the development of the whole person. Emotional intelligence (EI) comes from early nurturing that teaches anger management as well as ways of resolving conflict in non-aggressive ways. These are attributes exhibited by balanced individuals who contribute to the well-being and good governance of their societies. They are individuals who are "emotionally literate" and who collectively enable, through actions that reflect good social conduct, a shift from the overwhelming responsibil-

ity and cost of providing for security and policing for law enforcement, to a state of equilibrium which allows governments to focus on investments that will lead to prosperity. "Emotional illiteracy" is reported to be reflected in the following behaviours from an early age: "withdrawal of social problems", "anxiety and depression, "attention or thinking problems", delinquency and aggression (Goleman, 1995: 233). Individuals displaying these behaviours are said to be lacking emotional competence, and it would seem that increasing numbers of people are showing such a lack of competence. The increasing lack of emotional competence is considered to be a "global" phenomenon, and the specific behaviours noted above, if taken "as a group," can be considered "barometers of a sea change, a new kind of toxicity seeping into and poisoning the very experience of childhood, signifying sweeping deficits in emotional competences" (p. 233). We are also made aware that the phenomenon of emotional competence crosses ethnic and economic boundaries:

No children, rich or poor, are exempt from risk; these problems are universal, occurring in all ethnic, racial, and income groups. Thus while children in poverty have the worst record on indices of emotional skills, their *rate* of deterioration over the decades was no worse than for middle-class children or for wealthy children: all show the same steady slide (233).Good citizenship therefore depends on the ability of individuals in society to behave in ways that demonstrate emotional maturity – or intelligence- and social responsibility. For many children starting school (pre-school and kindergarten) at four and five years, the classroom is the context in which the building blocks for developing emotional maturity or, to use more traditional terminology – "character development" - and social responsibility are laid. The curriculum, from the early stages through primary (elementary) and secondary (high) school, places emphasis on academic intelligence and proficiency, and the affective factors which include motivation, self-esteem, attitude, aptitude, among others that are related to emotional competence are often left to be developed as a "spill-over" from the main business of cognitive and academic development. The literature indicates that both IQ and EI are important and both need to be given attention in our education systems. Innovative societies are, therefore, those that also take into consideration the importance of affective factors in the development of the individual and revise curricula regularly to tailor them so that they address directly critical areas of students' academic, emotional, cognitive and social needs. In developing societies, like many in the Caribbean, periodic review and adjustment of curricula are required to ensure that education responds to the needs of students, as this is one way through which such societies can guarantee attention to national development needs by successive generations.

One danger in the competitive environment introduced by trade liberalisation policies and the drive towards globalization is the entrenchment and promotion of traditional approaches in education that value aca-

demic intelligence without a concomitant focus on affect. The results can be costly to societies as the deficiencies become manifested in a disruption of the social order. The effects of social disorder and unrest can distract and hinder the ability of governments to focus on factors that promote development. This is true not only of developing societies, although the effects are perhaps more starkly evident and seem to be more keenly observed in these contexts. The deduction that these observations invite one to make is that there is an inextricable link between education and the development of good social conduct. The obverse is that the inability of education systems to foster holistic development can result in an increase in social disorder that can pose challenges for good governance.

Preparation for citizenship and work implies the development of a skilled and emotionally literate workforce as an important component for both innovation and prosperity. Making "links between education, research, industry and prosperity" which are presented in the definition as a hallmark of an innovative society requires a planned and integrated approach in which education responds to the findings of research, industry is fed and informed by research and shaped by the product of education. Prosperity depends upon the effectiveness of these factors in providing the right elements that breed success. In order to make a difference, education systems themselves need to innovate and introduce curricula that are relevant to the needs and respond to the demands of the society and nation. In the Caribbean, education has always been considered a vehicle by which an individual could break the cycle of poverty and achieve social mobility. However, in contexts in which children cannot see the relevance of what they are learning to their lives, when they also struggle to learn to use academic language for success without fully comprehending the language that is used for instruction, development of all the intelligences to which we have referred becomes a challenge. A possible result is that the educational experience becomes one of frustration for the student, and leads to resentment and dropping out of the system. Some of the statistics that represent a trend such as this give cause for concern[2] and strongly suggest that at least some of those who did not benefit academically (and possibly emotionally and socially) from the years spent in school are likely to get involved in delinquent and aberrant behaviours and thus contribute to social disorder. A similar point is made by John Daniel (2002: 3) "(T)raditional ways of organising education need to be reinforced by innovative methods, if the *fundamental right* of all people to *learning* is to be realized." An innovative society must then provide education that is learner-centred and which offers students the possibility for meaningful learning that can be applied and help to transform their lives and fortunes for the better.

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2   In the case of St. Lucia, for example, functional illiteracy after primary school was indicated at 64% in 1984 (Carrington 1984: 176) and a subsequent literacy survey supports this finding.

II. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN
MEETING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

A distinction is sometimes made in the literature between education and training. Comments made about the latter focus more on the acquisition of competences and knowledge that emerge as a result of direct teaching of practical skills through apprenticeships or in programmes at polytechnics or technical institutions. On the other hand, reference to 'education' seems to imply a lofty concept as it speaks of the "cultivation" of knowledge, skills, professions, and mental, moral and aesthetic development. [3] Two or three decades ago and prior to the expansion of the University of the West Indies in the region, university education used to be considered elitist primarily because it could not be afforded by the majority and also because of the series of examination hurdles at successively higher levels that prospective students had to clear in order to gain access. Less advanced certification would guarantee entrance to a polytechnic or technical or "training college". It seems to me that the notion of "innovation" has to be extended to education which itself requires a transcendence of such distinctions if it is to be an important catalyst for industry, prosperity and innovation in society. The introduction of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools in education has been an innovation that promises to transform education systems and the ways in which students are engaged in learning. In this section I will briefly explore the use of ICTs in education and will also focus on the sub-topics of (a) learning and the labour market and (b) lifelong learning that are both relevant to the point at issue.

Traditionally, the transmission model was considered to be the best means of teaching at university level and this method is still widely used, although a slow revolution has been taking place which is forcing an evaluation of the pedagogical approaches that are used. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in teaching and learning has resulted in a transformation of pedagogical methods used in most institutions. Universities are infusing their programmes with ICTs to make the traditional classroom environment more conducive to learning and to make the actual content more appealing to learners. This has resulted in greater flexibility in learning and teaching and it is perhaps true to say that there is a continuum with regard to the extent to which lecturers adhere to transmitting information via the means of lectures at one end of the continuum to the more flexible use of ICTs that result in offering courses in fully online format at the other end of the continuum. One thing seems to be certain, however, and that is the use of more flexible methods has led to a revaluation of learning styles and the best ways of facilitating learning.

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3   Wikkipedia definition.

Scott (2003: 66) lists key characteristics of programmes that engage students in active learning and which produce greater retention and more optimal outcomes. They include the following:

- relevance to the background, abilities, needs and experiences of students

- delivery by teachers who are "accessible, responsive, up-to-date, and effective"

- promote more 'active' than 'passive' learning

- link theory with practice and provide "guided practice-based learning opportunities, real-life learning and work place-ments"

- ensure that learning proceeds in "digestible chunks"

- include opportunities for "self-managed" learning.

The point to be noted is that these characteristics are not ex-clusive to programmes offered online or via distance; but they attest to the fact acknowledged by research long ago that individuals vary in their learn-ing styles and that successful teaching focuses more on the needs of learners and their active participation in the learning and teaching enterprise. While increased use of ICTs in education demands greater flexibility, the literature cautions about the danger of making online delivery inflexible by the means it seeks to deliver content. In this regard, Scott, in the same article, makes a distinction between more powerful ways in which ICTs can be used to en-hance knowledge and less powerful uses of IT. An examination of the lists indicate that the less powerful ways embody several of the principles of the transmission model and involve, among other things,

- the presentation of 'large amounts' of information on-screen for students to read or download

- use of web discussions that are unmediated

- lack of a broad learning system for contextualising online learning

- "infotainment" (Scott, Geoff. 2003: 70).

The more powerful use of ICT tools involve

- use of simulations – these require student engagement in "realistic representations of problems and dilemmas"

- interactive learning – providing in one platform links for access to staff, online library resources, other students

- animations of hard-to-see processes

- online videos with the possibility for discussion

- coaching by staff

- teleconferences.

Accepting that there are distinct benefits to be had from the use of ICTs in education, we can turn to the guiding question of this section, namely, how can education and training, using traditional and new modes of delivery, meet the social and economic challenges of the Caribbean?

If one is to posit a relationship between learning and the labour market, then, the role of institutions of higher learning must be examined more closely. In the past, one of the criticisms made about graduates of the University of the West Indies by employers in both public and private sectors is that they tended to be excellent at theory but needed some additional training for on-the-job performance. There was much discussion as to whether it was the business of the University to provide hands-on training for the specific jobs that its graduates were likely to be employed in after graduation. Some were of the view that it is the responsibility of the university to ensure that its graduates can be critical thinkers and solve problems. However, even these two important skills would not be enough to address the concern of employers and in its most recent strategic plan, the University has included as a component in improving the teaching and learning environment for its students opportunities for internships and attachments in areas where these are most appropriate and feasible. In so doing, the institution has accepted one of the general principles of good education practice noted earlier in this paper, which is presenting the student with the opportunity for practical experience in real-life learning situations. In this way, the University addresses the requirement of having the student relate theory to practice directly in the learning experience and as part of the education process.

Learning and the labour market. - One must admit that the needs of the labour market in most societies are broad and that the services of graduates from tertiary level institutions will be needed to fill the require-

ments of the market. That being the case, the entire process of preparing people for the workforce, presses for a reassessment of the role of tertiary level educational institutions. The spurious distinctions implied in the definitions of education and training as enterprises with specific respective focus on knowledge transmission and skills training cannot be rigorously maintained. In addition to preparing a skilled labour force, training colleges, like universities, should have as primary objectives the development of the intellectual capital of the societies in which they are located. However, the requirement for building innovative societies demands that they do much more than be concerned with the cognitive development of individuals. They must also provide the means by which the outcomes of the learning process at tertiary level must also be the development of skilled workers, critical thinkers, and problem solvers as well as the cultivation of emotional intelligence, and the cultural and creative abilities of learners. These requirements are also necessary for the development of the second requirement of an innovative society alluded to earlier in this paper, namely, that of ensuring good social conduct and orderliness that will facilitate the direction of capital into the exploration of resources that will lead to the greater prosperity of the nation. The UNESCO document on Open and Distance learning makes the following important observation in this regard:

In developing countries, human knowledge resource development through initial and continuing education is not only seen as critical for economic growth and competitiveness, but also has far-reaching social impact, for example in influencing the birth rate, increasing the independence of women, and improving standards of health and the rural environment (2002: 17).

Developing nations need adequate financial resources in order to provide the quality education that will respond to national development needs. In the current global economic climate in which the economies of individual countries are threatened by a shortage of resources, provision of adequate support for education systems becomes an issue, because the pressure on traditional education systems in developing countries to provide the knowledge base (including skills training and academic) that are required has become more intense. Caribbean countries, indeed developing countries everywhere, need to find innovative methods for improving the educational programmes offered at all levels from primary (elementary) to higher education systems, including training colleges and universities. However, the introduction of new methods will require "new organizational forms, which in turn require re-thinking of education and training policies" (UNESCO 2002: 18).

Lifelong learning - The uncertainty of economic fortunes exemplified in the collapse of the free market in the USA and other countries expose most starkly the vulnerability of the personal fortunes of individuals who invest

in these markets as well as the fragility of these markets themselves. In addition, the escalation of the cost of living world-wide has led adults who may not have originally sought higher education as an option for the future to seek opportunities for learning at tertiary level institutions. Further, the fast-paced development of information and communication technology and the opportunities this presents for learning have motivated individuals to consider education as an option for improving their quality of life. Universities and other tertiary level institutions have had to consider ways of making education accessible to a clientele for whom traditional modes of access do not apply. These institutions have had to grapple with issues such as maintaining standards traditionally held dear, providing a high quality of education and qualifications of the same currency as those of the traditional or conventional system. The issues are central to the question that universities and colleges have dealt with in providing Lifelong learning as a means of providing avenues for continuing education. This is not an entirely new issue, as the concept was promoted by the UNESCO report prepared by Delors (1996) in which he presented lifelong learning as a much broader concept to that of simply focussing on the upgrading of skill sets through continuous and technical and vocational training. The concept in the 1996 UNESCO report embraced education in the broader sense in which I am arguing for it in this paper, and exemplified in the epithets learning to do, learning to be, learning to learn, and learning to live together. The literature leans more in the direction of using the term "learning" to cover the comprehensive scope in which it applies across education systems. As Porter (2006: 3) observes, students with family responsibility and jobs benefit from the flexible access made possible by online and distance learning strategies. In the same context, Halimi (2005: 13) notes that "it clearly falls to lifelong learning to give everyone the opportunity of thinking about the gaps in their understanding and filling them in so as to keep up with progress." She further suggests (p.13) that "Lifelong learning must provide its learners with the tools necessary for 'staying in the race'...This is a race in which states know full well they need to equip themselves with the best skilled and qualified human resources possible."

In the Caribbean the rush of private companies and offshore universities to provide tertiary education to the people of the region generated much discussion about the objectives of tertiary education. Many noted that the development of human resources for the economic benefit of the region was not necessarily the primary role of these institutions. They were in the business primarily to make a profit and issues of matriculation and standards with which the University of the West Indies had been concerned for years and which dictated access to university education were not critical factors to the offer of education by these offshore institutions. I will refer specifically to the case of the University of the West Indies, which is the largest tertiary level institution in the region and which also has the widest reach to demonstrate an example of an innovative response using Distance and ICTs to meet the challenges posed by competition.

**III. THE UWI OPEN CAMPUS – AN INNOVATION FOR
EXPANDING ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

An important issue that universities have been forced to address is related to the difference between the traditional roles that they have played and the demands of developing societies. Traditionally, universities have provided a staple educational diet based on what their Faculties perceived as necessary. However, the demands of the labour force for qualified individuals to contribute to the process of economic growth led to the necessity of responding to a needs or demands driven model to provide the training of adults in the work force. The flexibility of the technology and the versatile use of ICTs would make possible the introduction of a model that could incorporate the best of the traditional university, which in its bricks and mortar manifestations could, and has been required to, continue to offer a primarily traditional slate of courses in more or less traditional mode but infused with ICTs to appeal to the younger clientele who opt to access education on a campus. As noted in the UNESCO document, "The answer to the challenge of education for development will include the use of information and communication technologies, provided the necessary organizational and policy changes can be implemented to make the technologies effective" (2002: 19).

The University, having established at its inception Centres known as Extra Mural departments to provide continuing education primarily for adults, and having experimented with Distance Education first through the UWIDITE Experiment[4] and subsequently expanding this service through the UWIDEC[5], could harness the capabilities of these entities to create an Open Campus "*to enable the University to expand the scope, enhance the appeal and improve the efficiency of its service to the individuals, communities and countries which it serves*".[6] With forty-two sites in sixteen countries across the Caribbean region, the Open Campus would allow the University to provide increased access to its programmes and make available to those to whom access had hitherto not been possible courses and programmes that would serve to provide them with continuing education and prepare them for the world of work. Through a transformation of the traditional methodologies for teaching and learning, and by broadening the range and scope of content, the Open Campus could address, in a more thorough way, government demands that it contribute to the development of human and economic resources of the region.

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4   The University of the West Indies Distance Teaching Experiment (UWIDITE).

5   The University of the West Indies Distance Education Center (UWIDEC).

6   The University of the West Indies, Strategic Plan 2007 -2012, p. 31.

The Open Campus sought to do this by

- improving service to the countries of the Eastern Caribbean and "under-served' communities in campus countries

- supporting the economic, social and cultural growth of the OECS (UWI 12) countries as well as communities within the larger countries with established campuses and

- providing the peoples of the region with equal access to education and professional development opportunities.

In these ways the Open Campus could respond by providing flexibility of access to full-time employed adults. The establishment of a Pre-University Department within the Academic Programming and Delivery Division would also allow the Open Campus to implement in a meaningful way the concept of openness by providing opportunities for those without certification to register for courses and programmes that would help them to acquire the skills and competences they would need to access successively higher levels of education. With emphasis placed on prior learning assessment (PLA) at entry and exposure to courses of study designed to develop skills and competence that ensure the learning outcomes have met the overall standards of the university at exit.

The pedagogical approaches used by the Open Campus are those which incorporate the principles described by Scott (2003) and promote most effective use of ICTs (see Porter 2006). These methods are student-centred, needs-driven and based on constructivist strategies. They cater to the needs of a wide range of clientele, including teenagers who may have dropped out of secondary school, single and working parents as well as senior citizens, through a laddered approach to education that offers a seamless transition from one level to the next through the application of Prior Learning Assessment to facilitate access and designing re-usable learning objects for building certification. These enable the learner to achieve outcomes of as high a quality as the traditional campuses and they also enable seamless transfer to these campuses.

Using a technology environment that is flexible and meets learner needs, the campus provides the learning online, onsite and on demand to its learners across the region and provides a framework through which Caribbean society can build resources and move towards innovation in the senses discussed in this paper. The existence of forty-two physical sites in different locations also allows the campus to provide selected courses and programmes face-to-face and provide additional support in these contexts for learners who may need special tutoring. By designing an innovative ad-

ministrative structure that places students at the centre of its operations, expanding the technological infrastructure and extending the modalities, methods and strategies for delivering content, the Open Campus has focused on and implemented a more student-centred approach while, at the same time, making provision for greater flexibility of access to its courses and programmes and most important, opening up possibilities for a much wider clientele to access education, particularly higher education.

Through the enhancement of its Distance Education capabilities, the Open Campus of the UWI, itself an innovative entity in the delivery of higher education in the region, seeks to contribute to the development of innovative Caribbean societies by transforming the learning – teaching enterprise to attract and engage adults and young adults seeking personal development opportunities as well as disaffected youth who may have dropped out of the education system early. The potential for an education system such as the Open Campus to transform societies and support the efforts of regional governments to develop the human capital of the region in such a way as to create societies that are ordered, industrious and prosperous are listed succinctly in the UNESCO 2002 document. Among the benefits listed with which the Open Campus can identify are the following:

- increase access to learning and training opportunities

- provide (for all who seek them) opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment

- improve cost-effectiveness of educational resources

- balance inequalities between age groups

- extend geographical access to education

- provide speedy and efficient training for key target groups

- expand the capacity for education in new and multidisciplinary subject areas

- offer the combination of education with work and family life

- develop multiple competencies through recurrent and continuing education (2002: 20-21)

In addition to the methods described for transforming the system of education provided by the Distance arm of its operations, the UWI Open Campus also promotes partnerships as it seeks to achieve its strategic

objectives. One of the critical issues is whether a framework that allows for partnerships would facilitate and accelerate growth and development. In keeping with University tradition, the campus espouses the benefits of establishing partnerships. The University has established partnerships primarily with Canadian institutions since 1998 and there are now seventeen active agreements between Canadian institutions and the University. Partnerships for Open and Distance learning with institutions need to be considered from the perspective of the mutual benefit to the institutions but possibilities for student exchanges can be accommodated.

The Open Campus also partners with established campuses of the University to promote the overall well-being and financial stability of the University. This is an enduring objective to promote the regionality of the University as well as a collaborative effort to position the institution to propel human and capital development in the region.

While partnerships with governments and non-governmental organisations in the region are important for propelling the further development of the peoples of the region, there are issues related to partnerships with other educational institutions. The Open Campus supports the concept of a network of institutions including Community Colleges with which it could partner to (i) further enhance the reach and slate of pre-university programmes to Caribbean communities and (ii) to provide opportunities for staff development through the Open Campus. Such partnerships would not only allow for extending access to University programmes through franchise agreements, they would also lead to better articulation of programmes and the further development of community colleges as affiliates of UWI. Through partnerships with UWI and its Open Campus, State and community colleges would receive assistance in strengthening their institutions to build capacity progressively and create a distinct possibility for offering programmes at higher levels. Through the application of stringent quality assurance procedures, governments would have the assurance that the UWI and other local institutions they support would be providing education of a high quality in a wide range of specialisation to as many in the population who would seek and benefit from this education. These are some ways by which education systems can themselves innovate to become more effective and in so doing contribute actively towards the creation of industrious, prosperous and innovative societies.

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