

THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN ALL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AS WELL AS CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENTS FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND BEYOND

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There is discussion in some educational settings to convert community colleges and technical colleges (institutes) into universities. This is not a good idea and should be abolished. Most community colleges offer associate degrees and certificates which allow individuals to work in supportive roles in numerous professions. It is simply not necessary to have more than a certificate or diploma in agriculture if individuals are required to work in hands on positions-lower levels-such as overseeing planting, harvesting and preparation of expenditures and receipts for auditors. In agricultural regions there is no need for everyone in supportive roles to have a four-year degree in agriculture when there is support from agriculture extension services, inclusive of universities where high-level expertise can help in crop management, harvesting, and pest control etc.

In a similar manner bookkeepers need not be trained accountants. Nursing assistants need not qualified nurses but a certificate or diploma is adequate. Trained teachers who have training in their specialties need not to have a Bachelor or Masters degree in education to perform their duties. In most instances a certificate or diploma in education with emphasis on teaching techniques would be adequate. Such certificates or diplomas are done at community colleges or teacher's training colleges. In some educational systems teacher certification is done through individual courses in education administered by personnel associated with the teaching district. Clerical staff need not be all 4-year degree personnel. The majority of clerical staff only have to have a high school certification or a certificate or diploma from a community college. Secretarial duties are usually performed by individuals by individuals who have a certificate or diploma from a community. On a somber note, community colleges and technical colleges serve a stepping stones for many students entering universities.

With regards to technical colleges (institutes) there is also training adequate for supportive roles, and in some instances problem solving. Technicians serve many roles inclusive of repairs and maintenance. There is no need to have an electrical engineering degree to repair and install air conditioning systems. A certificate or diploma in air conditioning has been shown to be effective and no higher training is required. Are we going to abolish certificates in masonry, tiling, mechanics, carpentry etc? Certainly not a good idea and is not cost effective. Skilled trained individuals need not have a 4-year degree to perform their jobs. There is no need to have a mechanical engineering degree to fix and repair automobiles. In some societies technicians, carpenters and other skilled individuals are trained by other experienced skilled individuals and there is no need for certification.

Educational assessments serve many functions in our modern society. The function of assessments to be explained is for educational placement after determining the intellectual and cognitive ability of the pupils/students as well as determining if there is a special need for the pupils/students when they are placed from one level to another that would enhance their educational performance. Continuous assessments

Essay

should be implemented throughout the all educational systems from elementary schools and beyond. Assessments allow teachers/instructors to determine if students/pupils have attained the knowledge required to move on to the next level, Assessment also make teachers/ instructors accountable for teaching the syllabus and preparing students to be competent in standardized tests.

For most educational systems there are teacher made assessments continuously and topic by topic to ensure that the students/pupils attain the required knowledge. Additionally, there are standardized tests administered to students/pupils before they advance from elementary school and before entering higher education institutions -universities and colleges. Two notable educational systems have abolished assessments and standardized tests for students/pupils going from elementary school to secondary schools. In one system there is the beginning of assessments early in secondary school and in the other system the assessments are administered before entering University. All universities and colleges use assessment and standardized tests for the purpose of admitting students into their programs.

In the system where there is no assessments or standardized tests until community college, technical college or university level there are rigorous assessments and students take years to complete the entry level requirements. This means that students entering such institutions do so at a later age than the global average. Additionally, the students in such a system does not have a known advantage over those who are educated in other systems. There is no accountability to the teachers and there is the presumed acceptance that going from one level to another students have all the necessary intellectual and cognitive skills necessary for higher education. This is not the case because all students are not academically inclined and some students turn out to be skilled workers and other workers in the society. In this system the level of intellectual and cognitive is determined after secondary school. This is disadvantageous because such students are not exposed to assessments and hence the test taking necessary to adapt to standardized testing until after secondary school. There is no conceivable benefits to such a system.

A curriculum is a plan of learning. Before a curriculum is changed or redesigned four factors must be taken into consideration. These factors are (a) How important is the proposed change to the institution, country or region? (b) How will the proposed change be received by others? (c) Whether there is enough support for the curriculum change and (d) if the necessary teacher commitment will be made to accommodate the change. A curriculum change will affect the careers of professionals involved. There must be a determinable need for the curriculum change. Before changing a curriculum there should be an evaluation of the curriculum to be changed statistically-qualitatively and statistically. The analysis should show that the curriculum to be changed is no longer effective and the new proposal would have a presumably better effect, although a limited trial of the proposed curriculum would be essential.

So far, the current system used by the majority of educational systems world wide have been proven to be effective with continuous assessments and the use of standardized tests. In the United States of America there is the development of standardized testing from elementary schools to secondary schools and within secondary schools from grade level to grade level. This development is occurring in every American state. After secondary school the standardized SAT is used by most universities for admission to their institutions. The students with the highest SAT scores are admitted to the top universities. There is even the Government Educational Diploma which is accepted by most universities. The community colleges and technical colleges use different standardized test for their admissions.

In the Caribbean the administration of standardized tests to aid in the placement of students from elementary schools to secondary schools were being done for almost 100 years. The students with the highest scores are placed in secondary schools according to the rank of the school. In Barbados, due to its colonial past the prestigious secondary schools are located near Bridgetown and other major cities. With this ranking and score achievement students from all sectors of society have the opportunity to attend high ranking schools. In recent years, the housing development has led to the movement of the affluent in regions near to the top rated schools. Zoning was then introduced following the large countries which would mean that students would attend the secondary schools closest to their home. This would clearly be advantageous to the elite.

Essay

For well over 50 years there was never the idea of zoning because the island is small and it would take less than an hour to reach its furthestmost point. Which means that some students would have to prepare for school early if their live some distance. With the size of Barbados and its transportation system and road network zoning should have never been implemented. School buses used to take students from all locations of the island to their assigned schools. There is a suggested dogma that all secondary schools in Barbados are equal. This is, and never will be the case with each school having to accept students within a specific range of scores from highest to lowest. Now-a-days in Barbados every student goes from elementary to secondary school regardless of the grade (score) on the standardized test, It is unfortunate that there is no remedial education and this is not in the best interest of some students.

Is there a need to abolish the standardized test for elementary school students transitioning to secondary schools in Barbados? No, the system has served Barbados for many years successfully. As a result of the competitive nature and streaming in Barbados educational system Barbadians are recognized for their achievements. Fortunately, there is no support from the general population in Barbados for the abolition of the elementary school standardized test and placing the emphasis on zoning. The lack of support has derailed the government from implementing such changes. There is no teacher training commitment. There was no evaluation of the current system to determine to determine the necessity for the change. The entire idea is just based on a notion,

Certainly, there is no need for Barbados and the rest of the world to follow two break away systems with the abolition of assessments or standardized tests at the elementary or secondary level. Assessments are required to determine the intellectual and cognitive abilities of students/pupils as mentioned earlier. The breakaway systems have rigorous assessments for admission at the tertiary level which seems to compensate in their system to the absence of assessments at the lower level. The absence of assessments in the two break away systems would seem to imply that there is no need to determine the intellectual and cognitive abilities of students early because of the similarity of students, that is, they are at the same level. This is certainly not in the norms of education as it is widely known that differences exists in the intellectual and cognitive abilities of students/pupils regardless of age. There is no need to delay educational assessments. It is widely accepted in educational circles that assessments should start early-as soon as brain development has reached the stage for intellectual and cognitive judgment. The elementary school is therefore a good place to start assessments.

There are now assessments for kinder garden students that determine their intellectual and cognitive abilities of the students for placement in elementary schools. Sometimes, students from Kinder Garden go directly to 2nd grade by passing 1st grade. Hence, it has been proven that assessment for students can start before elementary school. Due to the fact that all educational systems do not have fully developed Kinder Garden schooling I proposed that assessments start in the elementary schools.