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CARICOM Caribbean's HRD 2030 Strategy: Inscribing the neoliberal imaginary through social planning?

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Abstract
The globalisation's 'knowledge economy' has created a new set of human capital requirements. The guiding policy and planning document, *The CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential* document, 'serves as a roadmap for the CARICOM Caribbean's responses to these human capital demands. I conduct a critical analysis of this document's policy discourses to ascertain their core values and strategies, as well as their implications for education and development of the CARICOM Caribbean. I find that the emergent discourses and ideas – neoliberal education reform and state-led social planning – provide a cautionary tale of the potential impact of educational change driven by the neoliberal imaginary of globalisation. A chief concern is that as the discourse of *education as tool for social planning* is utilized according to a neoliberal logic of the *education system operational reform* discourse, the deep social development problems already characterizing Caribbean education and other development challenges, may very well be exacerbated

Keywords: CARICOM Caribbean human capital development; education reform; neoliberal globalisation and education; critical policy analysis; discourse analysis

Policy discourse analysis of the Caribbean's HRD 2030 Strategy: Social planning through education in the neoliberal globalisation era

Introduction

The development discourse of the twenty first century has been one defined by a global economy that is very different from the previous versions of industrialization. Globally linked economies, driven by technological innovation, have placed education and knowledge production and their application at the centre of development aspirations and planning. Thus, human capital development is taking particular forms geared towards a more complex iteration of industrialization. This new economy, often referred to as the 'knowledge economy,' due to the supposed central role that high level educational skills and training play in wealth accumulation, has created a new set of human capital resource development demands on countries' development planning (Rizvi 2017). As a result, 'Most policies and programmes of educational reform are now framed, justified and promoted on a widely held belief that aligning educational policies and practices with the profound economic, political and cultural changes that globalisation signifies is necessary' (Rizvi 2017, 2). In the CARICOM Caribbean, there has been an agenda to strategically frame human capital development to 'successful participate in this 21st Century economy and society' (CARICOM 2018, XII). The guiding policy and planning document, *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential*, is designed to 'serve as a roadmap for the CARICOM Regional Education and Training Agenda' (CARICOM 2018, XIII). But what does this document really represent in the context of a region that has experienced colonial exploitation, post-impendence/post World War II turbulence, and more recent socio-economic challenges resulting from the processes of neoliberal globalization? That is, what are the core values espoused and strategies advocated, and what are the implications for education and development of the CARICOM Caribbean particularly in the region's quest for social justice? To respond to these questions, I conduct a critical analysis of the policy discourse of the *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential.* Ultimately, the findings of these emergent discourses – neoliberal education reform and state-led social planning – and the ideas that underpin them provide a cautionary tale of the potential Regional impact of educational change driven by the neoliberal imaginary of globalisation.

The paper unfolds in the following manner. In the next section, I explore the context of the Caribbean to give a background to the history of the Region's socio-economic, political and education situation which sets the stage for the policy responses contained in the *CARICOM Human Resource 2030 Strategy*. I then discuss the critical analytic approach to policy discourse that I take to analyse the *CARICOM Human Resource 2030 Strategy* document. The sections that follow, 'Framing the policy problem,' Discourses and values' and 'discussion: cautionary tale' respectively answer questions that guide the analysis:

1. What are the images and strategies used to make the policy prescriptions seem necessary?
2. What are the discourses that emerge, and what are the values embedded in these policy discourses?
3. What are the real, expected, or unanticipated social consequences of policy in relation to inequality?

I end with a conclusion that ties the various core elements of the analysis to link the emerging policy discourses to the cautionary tale of educational policy making in neoliberal imaginary of globalization.

Context of CARICOM Caribbean development and education

The CARICOM Caribbean[1] is a region that has endured a turbulent past with constant attempts to manage, control and reform it. Starting with Columbus's first voyage, the Caribbean and its original inhabitants have been subjected to pillage and plunder in service of the advancement of others, mainly Europeans. This historical process of exploitation of the Caribbean aided the development of the Industrial Revolution and western capitalism, such that most of the original peoples are non-existent through genocide, and traces of their societies have largely been destroyed (Beckles 1997; Williams 1994). Labour exploitation continued through the transport and enslavement of Africans and indentured servitude of Asians and poor Europeans, which overtime has created one of the most diverse regions of the world (Hall 2001). As these new Caribbean societies gained independence in the post-World War II era, they set about trying to advance their own countries by adopted various modernist development ideas and practices, from the state led modernization project in 1960s, to the socialist influences of the 1970s. The debt crises of the 1980s and the resultant austerity measures of structural adjustment programs of that era set the stage for the mostly coercive entrance into the neoliberal global economy, the new development discourse under contemporary globalisation (Levitt 2005).

Throughout the history of attempts at positive social change and economic development in the Caribbean (particularly in the Anglophone Caribbean), education has always been at the centre, even while accompanied by questionable motives. In the transition from slavery to freedom, education, which was previously reserved for White inhabitants who could not go back to England for schooling, was seen as an important path to developing the right attitudes and disposition in the formerly enslaved for citizenship in a free society; in other words, education was expressly viewed and used as a form of social control (Gordon 1963; Whyte 1983). During the post-independence era, with these new societies now under the control of Caribbean leaders, education continued to be viewed as one of the most viable paths to ameliorating the socio-economic inequities of colonialism. In fact, Caribbean people had an 'almost fanatical belief in the socially uplifting role of education' (Anderson and Witter 1994, 46). As a result, using welfare state approaches to societal planning, regional governments after independence invested heavily in educational expansion such that Caribbean countries (except for Haiti) have achieved universal access to primary education and near universal access to secondary education (CARICOM 2018). Various other more recent initiatives to expand education across the region give credence to this generally positive view of education, even while it continues to be plagued by deep colonial vestiges. These long existing challenges include inequality of access to quality schooling, dual education system whereby the traditional high quality educational institutions are reserved for the privileged, plantation pedagogy that still favours a banking model of education,

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[1] [1] The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a grouping of twenty countries: fifteen Member States and five Associate Members. CARICOM Member States: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Republic of Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago. CARICOM Associate Members: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Island, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

and Eurocentrism whereby educational content continues to be of limited relevance to the region (Jules 2008; Hickling-Hudson 2004; Lavia 2006). Especially related to the deliberate focus on developing human resources supposedly fit for a changing global economy, in 1997 the CARICOM Caribbean governments pledged to increase tertiary education enrolment to 15 percent of the qualified age cohort, which set in motion several policy actions at regional and national levels (CARICOM 1997). This was partly in response to the then emerging World Bank discourse of the role of higher education, after decades of neglect, in development in developing countries (World Bank 1994). The Caribbean's overall commitment to education is evidenced by the fact that it met and exceeded many of the education-related targets set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2 and 3 that came to an end in 2015.

Much of these educational expansion efforts also come in the context of attempts at regionalism, the most recent being the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CARICOM Community's Single Market and Economy (CSME) is a Caribbean regional mechanism that aims 'to implement provisions for the removal of trade and professional restrictions' and 'facilitate the right to establish businesses, to provide regional services, the free movement of capital and the coordination of economic policies' (CARICOM 2017). Jules (2017) notes that this regional cooperation as 'mature regionalism' 'is built upon collaborative governance and encompasses multi-partner governance arrangement' (p. 1). Within the context of education, mature regionalism is giving way 'educational regionalism' defined by the movement towards structured institutional mechanism, to facilitate the deepening of Caribbean integration. Therefore, the *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy* emerges out of but also a part of the strategy of Caribbean regionalism.

Thus, the *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential* (*CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy,* hence forth) policy and planning document comes in a long history of the Caribbean regional and state-led policy agenda-setting initiatives responding to the region's aspirations and global development discourses. But what does this document really represent? That is, what are the core values espoused and strategies advocated, and what are their implications for education and development of the CARICOM Caribbean? These are consequential questions given the level of importance placed on this document and how it is described as complementing, expanding and extending other planning documents and development initiatives. I draw on the approach of critical analysis of the policy discourse in exploring these questions.

Critical analysis of the policy discourse

Critical policy (discourse) analysis is distinct from the more traditional functionalist approaches to policy analysis that rely primarily on positivist rationality in examining policy. Edmonson (2000) suggests that such functionalist approaches focus on 'what works' in a sort of sterile policy context, and generally do 'not consider historical, social, or political aspects' of education and policy (5). In contrast, critical policy analysis is skilled at 'highlighting values and teasing out competing discourses' (Taylor 1997, 27). In large part, critical policy analysis involves an 'investigation of the values embedded within' policy approaches, of the images and strategies used to 'make a policy seem necessary,' and of the 'real, expected and unanticipated social consequences of policy' (Edmondson 2004, 19). At its core, this approach is particularly keen on examining how the intersection of power relations, historical, socio-economic, and political

issues shapes educational policy. Critical policy (discourse) analysis's DNA is shaped by critical theory and Foucauldian discourse theory (Taylor 1997; Allan 2008).

Critical theory and Foucauldian discourse theory share the 'common interest in questioning policy assumptions and examining whose interests are served through the ways in which policy takes effect' (Allan 2008, 36). More specifically, critical approaches, which are often associated with the Frankfurt School and neo-Marxist theorists, advance views which aim to challenge and transform society, particularly by highlighting its oppressive features. Critical policy researchers tend to pay significant attention to the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented, and how 'programs and policies, regardless of intent, reproduce stratified social relations' (Diem et al. 2014, 1072). Given the nature of the Caribbean as societies that were formed out of processes of exploitation, remnants of which continue to haunt all social, economic and political process, the application of critical approaches to policy analysis is appropriate to examine how education policy reform may challenge or exacerbate inequality.

Foucauldian discourse theory shapes critical policy (discourse) analysis and my treatment of policy as a discourse of the state. Foucault notes that discourses are not 'a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest visible, coloured chain of words;' instead, they are 'practices that systematically form the objects [and subjects] of which they speak' (p. 49). Thus, Olssen, Codd, and O'Neill (2004) posit that in addition to language, discourse is 'the ensemble of phenomena in and through which social production of meaning takes place' (p. 68). Therefore, policy discourse not only describes what reality ought to be – it is also strategically concerned with determining social action, as it defines it. Therefore, discourse is not value neutral; it is governed by and imposes rules. Hall (1997) notes that 'Discourse…constructs the topic' and 'defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others' (p. 44). Relating to policy, then, discourse is an institutionalized way of thinking that governs state policy rhetoric and practice. As Taylor (1997) notes, engaging policy discourse analysis is 'useful in highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways – reflecting how economic, social, political and cultural context shape both the context and language of policy documents' (28). The critical analysis of the policy discourses provides a way by which policy proposals can be named and analysed to determine how they may limit and even undermine attempts to advance equity.

The intersection of critical theory and Foucauldian discourse theory inspire a set of core issues to guide critical analysis of policy discourse. One, it is important to examine the context in which policy takes place. Here context refers to the socio-political and historical settings in which educational policy texts and their supporting institutional practices emerge. Second, it's important to examine the framing of development and educational problems, and how this allows for the emergence and validation of certain solutions or policy discourses. Thus, my analysis 'aim[s] to study the construction of social problems rather than beginning with an uncritical acceptance of the problem to be addressed and ameliorated through policy' (Allan, 2007, p. 48). Or as Coffey (2014) put it, discourse analysis of a policy document asks 'what kind of reality is the document creating? How is the document accomplishing that task?' (371). Third, my research explores how policy discourses construct the normative entities or

institutional framework within which people must operate (Wooffitt 2005). Finally, given the critical component of my research, all the above research objectives are also underpinned by an interrogation of how social inequalities are present in and reproduced through particular policy discourse(s). Therefore, the following questions guide the analysis of the *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential* document:

4. What are the images and strategies used to make the policy prescriptions seem necessary? That is, how is the policy problem constructed?
5. What are the discourses that emerge? And what are the values embedded in these policy discourses?
6. What are the real, expected or unanticipated social consequences of policy in relation to inequality?

Data analysis

The main data source for this analysis is *CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential* (*CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy,* hence forth). The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* provides the framework for Member States to align their national strategies and plans. The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* was approved by the Thirty-Second Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) in March 2017, in Georgetown, Guyana, and was subsequently endorsed by the Thirty-Eighth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, in July 2017, in St. George's, Grenada. The document has two main chapters and a short conclusion. Chapter one introduces the document and outlines regional context along with a situational analysis and presentation of the issues that give rise to the importance of the document in the current era and for future development of the region. Chapter one also presents the approaches used in developing the document. Chapter presents the core strategies of the document in their design, specific goals and strategies and the implementation arrangements.

I share Prior's (2009) view that documents are not just a collection of lifeless objects, 'they have effects' because they 'enter the field as receptacles (of instructions, commands, wishes, reports, etc.)'; they enter the field 'as an agent in [their] own right' (p. 3). As Jackmore and Lander (2005) point out, documents can be seen as social texts which 'emerge out of, but also produce, particular policy discourses' (100) and, therefore, their analysis is central to understanding policy discourse(s) (see also Taylor 1997). Thus there are guidelines around the effective use of documents as policy texts for analysis. Coffey (2014) notes that 'documentary analysis should seek to locate documents within their social as well as textual context' (370), which is consistent with the use of critical theory in critical discourse analysis discussed earlier. This means that it is important to consider the Caribbean and global historical, as well as the economic and political context in which the *CARICOM HRD 2030* was developed. Coffey (2014) adds further that 'Documents are also rarely, if ever, produced and read in isolation from other documents…[thus we] can explore relationships and meanings within a text and in relation to other texts' (371). Referred to as intertextuality, this approach to analysing texts in reference to other documents is crucially important given the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* is expressly related to other regional documents, mainly *The Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015-19*, *The Regional Framework for Action for Children (2002-15)*, *The Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda (2013),* and *Regional TVET Strategy for Workforce Development and Economic Competitiveness (2013).*

The coding process was an iterative one, requiring several reads and re-reads to achieve rigor and provide deep insights. In the first phase, I sought an in depth familiarity of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* by reading and rereading the document fully to have broad understanding of its contents, contexts of its origin and its potential relationship to other documents for intertextuality (Willig 2014). This is consistent with the methodology for Foucauldian discourse theory which involves 'careful reading of entire bodies of texts' (Edwards, Gilbert, and Skinner 2002, 61). The second phase of analysis involved a much deeper re-read of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* and detailing themes that emerge from using the guiding discourse-analytic questions developed above (and listed below). This second phase of analysis is particularly keen on exploring the discourse-analytic questions in the context of power relations, historical, socio-economic, and political issues, as well as the intertextuality of the document:

1. What are the images and strategies used to make the policy prescriptions seem necessary? That is, how is the policy problem constructed?
2. What are the discourses that emerge? And what are the values embedded within these policy discourses?
3. What are the real, expected or unanticipated social consequences of policy in relation to inequality?

Results

Framing the policy problem

What are the images and strategies used to make the policy prescriptions seem necessary? In other words, how is the policy problem constructed? The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* defines human resource development (HRD) as 'all education and training (early childhood to tertiary education and skills-based learning) offered to citizens of the CARICOM Region for the development of their knowledge, skills and competencies in pursuit of regional workforce development and better citizenship' (2). In his *foreword* to the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy,* the Secretary-General and Chief Executive Officer of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), conveys the profound urgency of the documents, noting it 'is an important addition to the suite of recently developed regional strategies aimed at ensuring the repositioning of the Caribbean Community for successful participation in the 21st Century economy and society' (CARICOM 2018). He adds that this document represents a 'renewed commitment' to ensure 'an improved and acceptable quality of life for the people of CARICOM and a socially resilient Region capable of taking on the challenges of globalisation' (CARICOM 2018, XII). Being more specific, he points out that the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* targets the 'development of the "Ideal Caribbean person" … and in doing so, it addresses the development of skills and competencies, not only for the economy, but also for personal development and good citizenship' (XII). 'The Ideal Caribbean Person' constitutes eleven described characteristics that the ideal Caribbean citizen should model in areas of human relations, the environment, family, community, culture, work attitude and mentality in the globalized economy. This 'Ideal Caribbean Person' sits as a bedrock of Caribbean human capital development (CARICOM 1997; see also Jules 2017; Jules 2015). Even at this stage, there is reference to the document's four Strategic Priorities: 'Access, Equity, Quality and Relevance, and the resultant focus on a seamless HRD system…to address the significant inefficiencies and wastage in education and training systems throughout the Community' (CARICOM 2018, XII). These ideas are taken up

in the full body of the document wherein chapter one is instrumental in framing the development and policy problem and the need for the solutions that will follow in chapter two (but also within chapter one). The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy's* goals are: 'empowered people, global competitiveness in HRD sectors, and education system inefficiencies eliminated' (40), which are expected to produce the strategic priories listed above – access, equity, quality and relevance, and the resultant focus on a seamless HRD system.

Taylor (1997) points out that context 'seems to be a crucial feature of critical policy analysis, that is, the notion of thinking relationally – where theoretical frameworks are used to place cultural forms within broad patterns of social inequality and relations of domination' (32). Earlier, I described the historical context of the contemporary Caribbean, one defined by colonial exploitation, struggle but also resilience. In profound ways, research has shown that the Caribbean's past has influenced its current social, economic, and political existence (Beckles 1997). In framing the policy problem and making a case for its strategies, the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* does make reference to all the modern markers of the Caribbean's development challenges – economic stagnation, debt, poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental degradation/natural disaster, high skilled migration, gender-based challenges, etc. However, applying a critical analytic frame to this document, glaringly absent are relevant acknowledgement and interrogation of the historical trauma and oppression, especially of colonialism and its continued effects, including the unequal relations of power at the global level and their impact on development practices including trade, regional and national economic policy (see Klak 1998). In fact, the terms which could effectively convey this historical oppression, such as 'slavery,' 'colonialism,' and 'exploitation,' among others, are not used once in this document – a conspicuous omission given the weight of these historical phenomena on the region. Similarly absent are the results of past failed (externally coerced) attempts to accede to discourses of the global economy – including structural adjustment policies introduced in the 1980s that significantly impacted the region and reversed many of the hard-fought progress, including in human resource development, of the welfare state-led independence era.

As a result, when the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* discusses the region's difficulties – such as the Caribbean countries' problematic 'debt to GDP ratio and poor growth,' 'underperformance even when measured against other parts of the developing region,' and the 'significant reversal of fortunes' since the 1980s (14) – it does not acknowledge the historical challenges that go well beyond the region's own making to connect them to long historical external exploitation and power asymmetries. This can be further seen in the document's acceptance of the Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB) view that the 'lack of growth and indebtedness of Caribbean countries, relative to even the performance of other small island developing states as being a reflection not only of the region's vulnerability but also its lack of competitiveness and low productivity' (2-3). The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* posits that this negative trend will remain if the region continues in a 'business as usual scenario' (14). This notion of 'business as usual' suggests that it is the Caribbean that has failed to change course to correct its problems. The only vague acknowledgement of some of the structural problems of the region that can be attributed to broader forces beyond the Caribbean is when the document references 'other factors such as the openness and vulnerability of countries' economies to external shocks associated with changes in the global economy' (17). Yet the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* does not go further to, for example, identify the profound ways in which externally imposed economic

policies, including structural adjustment and Washington Consensus policies, as well as current global political-economic practices (such as unequal trade terms), have created and exacerbated the economic openness and vulnerabilities of the region. Instead, the document presents the region's economic development choices as existing within a closed development loop/environment over which it has full control but has not yet taken the necessary corrective steps to prosper in the modern economy. In other words, the problems of the Caribbean are placed right at the feet of the Region. The absence of engagement with external and historical anti-development forces is striking and suggests that progress has been limited primarily due to the region's inadequacies or inaction (see page 15). Even an examination of the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis (33) in the document depicts a closed development loop where no external phenomena are listed as causing or impacting HRD development, policy and practice in the Caribbean. Instead, this is where the project to reform Caribbean HRD/education is rationalized, developed and tied to the framing of the policy problem. That is, the claimed 'under-development' and 'under-performance' problems – and the need to fix them to drive development – that exist in the region are framed as, not due to the long turbulent colonial history and coercive neoliberal policies, but to the issue of insufficient or lack of relevant human resource development (education at all levels). In fact, the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy's* vision 'endorses the fact that HRD holds the keys to the achievement of high levels of personal, national and regional success' (38). This lack of adequate HRD is then framed, itself, as a problem of resources, noting:

> *Economic conditions have been affecting HRD* sectors in the Region by determining the quantum of resources governments within restrained conditions can afford to dedicate to financing education and training. *This situation in turn has had implications for the pace, amount and quality of job opportunities, which in turn determines the returns on investment in education.* These impacts are felt at all levels of the education system (italics added for emphasis).

Thus, the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* presents the Region's development problems as a function mainly of HRD problems due to educational inadequacies. In turn, the HRD problems become issues primarily of lack of resources and systemic inefficiencies rather than part of the complex economic, social, racial and ethnic remnants of the colonial past, and unequal relations of current neoliberal global economy that exacerbate the region's challenges. Thus, the region's development problems become framed primarily as a regional HRD problem, which are linked to regional inadequacies that can be corrected primarily through reforming the education system. Further, this framing of the problem is internal, education-based, and ahistorical, and makes the supposed Caribbean development problems seem more amenable to regionally manageable technical and policy fixes.

Admittedly, *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* is claimed to be not just a standalone document; it is 'an integral member of CARICOM's family of strategies which seek to address other issues and opportunities within the broader ecosystem' (8) of governance. Here the document lists eleven thematic areas that have some other guiding documents ranging from gender-based framework, TVET strategy, youth development, climate change, to economic and technological development. These thematic issues are said to be integrated in various regional frameworks described in the following documents: *The Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015-*

19, *The Regional Framework for Action for Children (2002-15)*, *The Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda (2013),* and *Regional TVET Strategy for Workforce Development and Economic Competitiveness (2013).* However, even by reading the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* intertextually with these other documents, the foci are largely on technocratic and ahistorical analytic framing of regional development problems along HRD lines. The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy*, along with other related documents, elevates education and human resource development above all other development problems, and position education and human resource development as 'the key' to overall development of the region. Rizvi (2017), identifies this newer interpretation of human capital theory that 'assumes economic growth and competitive advantage to be a direct outcome of the levels of investment in developing human capital' as a key feature of neoliberal educational policy discourse (6). He adds that it 'suggests that in a global economy, performance is linked to people's knowledge stock, skill levels, learning capabilities and cultural adaptability' (6). Thus, these perceived Caribbean HRD problems are framed primarily in reaction to the discourse of human resource needs of the neoliberal global 'knowledge economy.' Therefore, while the other documents do work in tandem in trying to address the various components of Caribbean societies, collectively the development problem framing is internal to the region, technical (more than critical) and reactive to global neoliberal change discourses.

Discourses and values

What are the discourses that emerge from the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* document, and what are the values embedded within these policy discourses? As discussed, policy discourse is an institutionalized way of thinking that governs state policy rhetoric and practice. In this context, discourses are the institutionalize ways of thinking by a regional institution, CARICOM, that aims to shape educational policy and practice of regional governments. In response to the Caribbean regional 'under-development' challenge that is constructed primarily as education/human resources problems, discourses of (1) *education system operational reform* and (2) *education as tool for social planning* emerge. These discourses convey the ideas that change for development largely dependents on a reformed education system in line with the global economy, which can be planned for and is fully internally manageable by state-led policy planning. *Education system operational reform* borrows heavily from neoliberal values of education reform under and for globalisation, and *education as tool for social planning* represents historically state led approaches to development planning rooted in ideas around coordinated societal transformation. Though implicitly framed as complementary, these discourses harbor deep contradictions with significant implications for social equality through education.

The *education system operational reform* discourse conveys criticism of the current education system that are akin to the neoliberal critique of the welfare state and its bureaucratic form of governance. The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* consistently in multiple ways discusses the normative education system in language that project values of the neoliberal framework. For example, the document aspires to create 'a seamless HRD system' … 'specifically targeted to address the significant inefficiencies and wastage in education and training systems throughout the Community (XII).' Further, in various places, the document aims for:

- 'efficient resource utilisation in HRD sectors' (2)
- a 'more agile and efficient education and training system' (2)

- resources to be used in an ‘efficient and effective manner’ (2)
- ‘seamlessness…effectiveness and efficiency in education (7)
- ‘flexible pathways in [tertiary education] TE’ (72)
- ‘learning through flexible and modular alternatives’ (31)
- a system that ‘integrates all three sectors within a single unified framework’ (3)
- ‘establish[ment] of a globally competitive seamless HRD system with 3 sectors’ (47)
- ‘eliminat[ion] of inefficiencies in planning, management and delivery of HRD sectors’ (47)

Here neoliberal ideas of efficiency, agility, effectiveness, choice, lifelong learning, competition among others dominate the normative Caribbean human resource development system as described by the document, which represent core principles of neoliberal education reform in the globalisation era (Forsey et al. 2008; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Rizvi 2017; Olssen, Codd, and O’Neill 2004). The document also pointedly notes that its approach to reforming the education system ‘is in keeping with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda’ (7) and that the ‘Community has steadfastly embraced the global development agenda and the transformations associated with it’ (17). The document also ‘embrace[s] the philosophy of education for sustainable development, SGD 4’ (17). However, this global development agenda, of which SDG 4 is a part, has come in for criticism for its commitment to free-market neoliberal development logic that is more utilitarian than transformational (Author; Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan 2009). Rizvi (2017), for example, discusses how this system ‘has spawned a demand for the purposes of education to be recast in largely economic terms,’ which ‘has either sidelined the moral and cultural concerns of education entirely, or else rendered it secondary. It has suggested that education be directed at meeting the requirements of the global economy’ (6).

The *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy’s* other dominant discourse is that of *education as tool for social planning.* I draw on a particular use of the term ‘social planning’ to describe a key component of this discourse. Social planning is seen as having its heyday in the post-World War II era that was dominated by state led governance that employed Keynesian approaches that have supposedly diminished in the neoliberal globalisation era (Madge et al. 2021). The term connotes a sense of societal planning as an ‘effort to plan for the fate of a whole society’ by the welfare state (Dyckman 1966, 67). Though social planning has several foci, social transformation and redistribution are among its most central goals. Here, Bromley (2003) notes that social planning is the ‘remodelling and transformation of society as a whole’ which involves ‘envisioning a better society, and developing and implementing a strategy to gradually transform the current society’ (821). In Kahn's (1969) perspective, social planning ‘involves a sequence of means-ends relationships’ (15) and adds that it involves determining and allocating values. Redistribution is also a central value of social planning historically where the planner seeks to ‘reduce the socio-economic inequalities as a means of reducing and even eliminating poverty,’ and ‘of stimulating economic growth’ (Bromley 2003, 822).

Importantly, then, originally social planning carried distinct social justice and social orientations with government making social and economic interventions to transform society. As a result some view social planning with some suspicion (Scott 2008). For example, proponents of free markets question the role of government and its ability to have the necessary information and knowledge to make rational decisions for optimum societal utility. In its early post-War years, ‘social planning’ was also closely linked to the bordering field of ‘social engineering’ whereby

the government manipulated human behaviour for particular social objectives (Huber 2017; Bromley 2003). Further, Madge et al. (2021) note 'the idea of comprehensive social planning has been criticized as a pseudo-scientific or "scientistic" delusion' (6). Attaching scientific rationality to social problems has historically met with some criticism, especially where new neoliberal logics question the capacity of central government to act rationally, plan comprehensively, and act efficiently (Madge et al. 2021; Webber 1983). Thus, while social planning was in vogue in the post-War era, during the neoliberal free market turn of the 1980s, it gradually lost its reformist role in international development discourse (Bromley 2003). Yet, one of the dominant discourses of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* is *education as tool for social planning*. The document is replete with language that discursively develops this discourse. For example, the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* is described as 'a Regional road map for development of people' (XVII) to which 'Collectively as a region, all Member States will move on similar pathways to implementation of a Regional HRD System within CARICOM' (13). The Secretary General and Chief Executive Officer notes that the 'Implementation of the Strategy therefore involves a "whole of government", "whole of society approach"' (XIV, 7). In various places, *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* is described as: '…a fourteen-year Master Plan' (XVII); 'a long-term regional development policy framework' that 'provides a blueprint' for development planning (2). It 'enables the region to move towards a converged approach to addressing and advancing education and training' (2). Additionally, this 'seamless HRD System is to be organized through a single unified and coordinated governance model' (6). These depictions of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* are fundamentally based on macro state led 'social planning' approaches.

Further, the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* 'targets the development of "The Ideal Caribbean Person,"' (XII) which suggests a type of transformation that goes well beyond structures and institutions into the realm of describing, shaping and developing a particular type of human being with a set of characteristics as described in a key document *Creative and Productive Citizens for the Twenty-First Century* (CARICOM 1997). As aforementioned, 'The Ideal Caribbean Person' constitutes eleven described characteristics that the ideal Caribbean citizen should model in areas of human relations, the environment, family, community, culture, work attitude and mentality in the globalized economy. This 'Ideal Caribbean Person' serves as the of Caribbean human capital development, yet given the criticisms levelled at social planning – a discourse that is 'deeply intertwined with twentieth century ideologies of the state' (Huber 2017, 6), such social transformation (some would say 'social engineering') seems contradictory to some of the core ideologies of the twenty first century's globalisation tendencies toward less-involved government, greater individualism and difference. This signals the social planning and development of subjectivities for the neoliberal economy. As I discuss below, social planning, in this discourse, is dispatched in service of neoliberal change, and largely stripped of its traditional social equity component.

Discussion: Cautionary tale of anticipated and unanticipated results

What are the real, expected or unanticipated social consequences of policies in relation to inequality emerging from the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* document? The *education system operational reform* discourse borrows heavily from values of neoliberal education reform, and the *education as tool for social planning* discourse represents historically centralized and state led approaches to development planning rooted in ideas around coordinated societal

transformation. The ideas that underpin these discourses – neoliberal education reform and state-led societal transformation – are not natural conceptual bedfellows, yet here they are occupying the same planning and policy document. From a typical functionalist policy analytic vantage point, the document looks like a people-centered comprehensive attempt at human resource development and education reform to support increased opportunities for regional development and for individuals to access the new means of wealth accumulation and prosperity of the new 'knowledge economy,' which are the expressed intentions of the developers of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* document. However, while the document advocates a certain amount regional-CARICOM/state-led control of human resource development and education reform, that should not distract us from the deeply neoliberal ends that it portends. Neoliberalism has been quite adept at not dismantling social welfare governance approaches, including those of the Caribbean, but instead reshaping them for neoliberal governmentality (Cerny 2014; Hartman 2005). This is why a critical analytic policy approach to examining *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* document is important. The critical analysis of the policy discourses provides a way by which policy proposals can be named and analysed to determine how they may limit and even undermine attempts to advance equity, and how these discourses, especially in the way they intersect, impact the very values that the policy makers aspire to advance – access, equity, quality and relevance (Taylor 1997, 28).

There are rich conceptual arguments from experience to show how the intersection of discourses of social planning and neoliberalism has a tendency for the former to merely become handmaiden to the latter. In such scenarios, 'post-war social planning technologies,' which have been historically the governance mechanisms of post-independence CARICOM countries, are used to 'extend the reach of neoliberalism into social government' (Pries 2020, 248; see also Clarke 2007). Consequently, social planning results in a 'deepening of neoliberal statecraft to also include social planning' (Pries 2020, 248). Thus, a chief concern is that as the discourse of *education as tool for social planning* is utilized according to a neoliberal logic of the *education system operational reform* discourse, the deep social development problems already characterizing Caribbean education and other development challenges, may very well be exacerbated. While the results of the *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy* may be several years away, this policy discourse analysis provides a window into, and cautionary tale of, the potential impact of these discourses and their implementation currently and over the coming years. Therefore, we may examine some specific ways in which the intersection of these discourse may affect Caribbean societies, particularly in education.

The CARICOM governments' aspiration of producing a certain type of Caribbean person, as in 'The Ideal Caribbean Person,' which lies at the heart of the Region's human resource efforts, should be seen as consequential in the context of the intersecting discourses. As Clarke (2007) notes, one of the important ways in which neoliberalism subordinates the social is in the 'construction of new subjectivities, producing individuals who think of themselves in economic terms – as entrepreneurial, calculating selves whose world is structured through contractual or quasi contractual relationships' (976-977). Woven into these (re)constructed identities are the neoliberal logics of competitiveness and individualism that, in significant ways, characterize contemporary globalisation. Thus, in the construction of 'subjects of value' fit for the contemporary capitalist knowledge economy, there must be deep concerns about what defines the 'value' of a Caribbean citizen (Clarke 2007, 977). For example, will the seemingly noble

intensions of CARICOM policy makers, in attempting the 'engineer' the Ideal Caribbean Person, be captured and rearticulated by the neoliberal logic to develop subjects that see themselves primarily as economic agents whose aim is to maximize their economic utility instead of being part of local, national and regional communities with significant interdependent duties and responsibilities? This is a particularly important question to ask, especially as the region develops and reforms curriculum to make its citizens 'work ready' (Clarke 2007, 976) for the modern knowledge economy. The ideas of education system competitiveness, efficiency and choice that are so prevalent in document's language of reform are often at odds with social equity goals especially in a region where there are deep-seated inequalities.

Another important area of concern is how the values of education to make Caribbean citizens more prepared and competitive for the 'knowledge economy' will impact curriculum change. Research has shown that education geared towards the modern global economy accentuates subjects and themes that are seemingly more 'useful' and utilitarian to economic production at the expense of social justice educational themes and subject areas (Rizvi 2017; Rizvi and Lingard 2010). As such, globally, we have seen the rise and rise of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and the whittling away of the value placed on subjects that raise critical consciousness for social transformation (Rizvi 2017). This approach would be particularly problematic to the Caribbean's aspiration for more equal societies. It has been well documented how the Region's long standing Eurocentric curriculum and plantation pedagogy have been 'more than dysfunctional for the Caribbean goals of improvement' and have 'continued to cause anguish and contribute to devastating class tensions across the region' (Hickling-Hudson 2004, 296). This is why, for example, Jules (2008) has called for a 'complete reinvention of education' systems in the Caribbean along the lines of criticality and social consciousness. Similarly, Hickling-Hudson (2004) calls for education reform where 'teachers prepare people to appraise their systems of governance, understand the implications of international and global change, address patterns of injustice, hold politicians accountable and experiment with problem-solving, both nationally and in alliance with global civic movements' (26) (see also Lavia 2006). These 'social democratic' assumptions are often displaced by neoliberal logics of education reform (Rizvi 2017; Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan 2009). As such, as Caribbean policy makers' attempt to fashion 'work-ready' citizen through educational reform as the *education system operational reform* discourse suggests, they must be watchful about how their use of social planning advances the interests of the neoliberal global economy instead of addressing historical and structure issues that plague the region.

Importantly too, the way the Caribbean's development problem is constructed – as primarily a function of human resources within the region – has laid the groundwork for myopic and simplistic views of development and positive social change. Here the problems of the region are not seen as largely the intersection of deeply complex issues involving colonial exploitation and current systems of inequity constructed under neoliberal globalisation. Instead, simplistic problem framing invites utilitarian technical solution in the form of educational reforms that are more in line with the alleged demands of a neoliberal global economy. One important result is that education is unfairly saddled with solving problems that exist well beyond its purview while leaving other political, economic and social issues at global, regional, and national levels under-addressed. Additionally, this approach runs the risk of scapegoating the very victims of historical oppression – Caribbean people themselves, by blaming them for the potential failure of ill-

conceived human capital development strategies that are ultimately incapable, by themselves, of addressing complex development problems. Further, given the historical state control of education, major global stakeholders in development, including the market, international financial institutions, are absolved of their responsibility (or blame) of 'underdevelopment' of vulnerable states such as those of the Caribbean.

Conclusion

The Caribbean's aspirations for greater participation in the knowledge economy have been marked by the development of *CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy*, along with other supporting documents. Through a critical analysis of its policy discourses, we have seen how the region's development problems have been attributed to its perceived insufficient or irrelevant human resources, which in response, discourses of *education system operational reform* and the *education as tool for social planning* have emerged. The discourses occupy competing ideas of governance and change for the current era – neoliberal education reform and state-led societal transformation. What I have presented here is a cautionary tale of how the Region's history of state led governance and control, in the form of social planning, could potentially be used to further inscribe neoliberal ideals that undermine the very aspirations contained in the document – Access, Equity, Quality and Relevance. In significant ways, the (re)making of Caribbean citizens' subjectivities into economic agents less attuned to issues of social justice serves as stark indicator of unintended consequences of the Caribbean's educational planning that is infused with neoliberal logics. Such consequences, as I have explained, may emerge as neoliberal sensibilities of reform of educational management, as well as curriculum and pedagogy in ways that elevate values that are more attuned to the functionalist and utilitarian values of the global economy while limiting the potential of critical and transformative education. Similarly important is how the discourses shift blame and responsibility of development 'failure' on education, Caribbean people and the state while positioning neoliberal reforms as technical solutions to deeply complicated problems in which external forces are complicit, currently and historically. A critically important component of further research, therefore, involves continued examination of how specific educational reforms are interpreted and implemented at national and local levels.

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