SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS' LEADERSHIP IN GRENADA: A CRITICAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

by

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Abstract

Given current global trends such as the widening gap between rich and poor individuals, increased diversity among the populace and patterns of underperformance among certain groups and, in Grenada, the high drop-out rate among students who transition to high school, the government's intent to provide universal access to secondary schooling, and the serious lack of research on social justice leadership, an explicit focus on social justice is necessary. Since discourse provides the boundaries within which educational leaders may act, this paper analyses the Strategic Plan for Educational Enhancement & Development (SPEED II) to examine the policy framework which influences the perceptions and practice of secondary school leaders in Grenada with a view to providing them with suggestions for how they can promote social justice within their institutions and in the wider society. The paper draws on critical discourse analysis and critical social justice to explore how good leaders/teachers and quality education is conceptualised and how the treatment of social justice in SPEED II compare/contrast with current literature. It concludes that although the expressions "social justice" and "social justice leadership" are not used in the document, others such as equity, diversity, relevance, respect and tolerance are used, pointing to some degree of recognition to these issues. The dominant discourse however, is one of neoliberalism, and education for global citizenship and economic development. Educational leaders in Grenada ought to provide a more supportive policy environment, which situates social justice as central to the process and outcome of education.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research paper to memory of my loving mom, "Althie" who never doubted my ability to succeed and whose gentle, encouraging spirit guided me through from the conception of the idea for this paper to its completion.

Social Justice Leadership within the context of Secondary Schools' Leadership in Grenada: A Critical Textual Analysis

Introduction

My entire twelve years of formal teaching experience was gained as a secondary school teacher in Grenada, the latter six of which, I served as a member of the school's senior management team (SMT) under the stewardship of the last of three principals with whom I served. Having worked in varying capacities with three different principals I closely observed and evaluated each of them as they executed their roles and found interesting the variations in their modus operandi. It was through my experience as an educator and member of a school based leadership team that I became interested in educational leadership within the Grenadian context.

I noticed that, whilst each of the three principals consistently articulated their belief in teacher autonomy, the notion that teachers ought to be treated professionally and the importance of providing them with adequate support to facilitate teaching and learning, there seemed to have been a stark distinction in the manner in which they each demonstrated these beliefs. *Principal A* closely supervised teachers and attended their classes regularly. *Principal B* on the other hand, subscribed to what he/she referred to as the "open-door-policy" and literally kept the door to his/her office ajar, most of the times, as an indication/invitation to teachers that they are welcome to hold discussions about their needs, concerns, other issues or, if only to chat. His/her visits to teachers' classrooms were less frequent. Finally, *Principal C-* although few attempts were made to be visible such as sauntering the corridors, most of his/her time was spent in the office, often behind closed doors, dealing with student discipline issues or attending to meetings.

Even more interesting is the fact that despite a change in approach from a singular principal leadership to team leadership (through the SMT) there seemed to have been negligible

changes (if any) in principals' leadership practices. A source of concern among many teachers I worked with and SMT members therefore, relates to the role and performance of the SMT. So overwhelming were these concerns that many of these teachers (some of whom were themselves SMT members) vociferously articulated their confusion and discontent. Among their/our arguments- why is the greatest proportion of SMT meetings designated to the dissemination of information by the school principal, a general feeling among members that they had no genuine influence on school policies and a corresponding lack of administrative support for the implementation of policies.

An important observation which I have made through these experiences, is the fact that the variations in the leadership' approaches (singular or team) seemed to have had little noticeable effect on the overall performance of the school as it relates to student attendance, teacher attrition rate, students' performance (scores) in teacher assessments as well as in national and other high stakes standardised tests, involvement in extra and or co-curricular activities and graduation rates.

I started off my research journey wanting to find a best practice for educational leadership but after further investigation determined that to understand my three school principals I needed to first understand the parameters for what is a good education, student and leader as dictated/defined by the Grenadian Ministry of Education. FOR THIS reason I decided to conduct a textual analysis of a Ministry of Education document.

Purpose of the Study

This paper analyses discourses in the *Strategic Plan for Educational Enhancement and Development 2006-2015 (SPEED II), Volume 1: The strategic framework*. This policy document which was published by the Ministry of Education in 2006 has been touted to have been produced after "meaningful" consultation with all major stakeholders in education, and a thorough structural and operational analysis of the education system (Government of Grenada, 2006, p.4). It identifies and discusses the government's reform priorities or their overall vision for the education system in the short to medium term (2015).

I analyse this document as a way to understand the opportunities and constraints for educational leaders in Grenada. I will explore discourses in the SPEED document which may serve to influence secondary schools principals' or SMTs' leadership practices in Grenada and will zero in on how the SPEED document addresses issues of social justice and educational leadership.

I draw on the tenets of critical discourse analysis and critical social justice to examine how SPEED II frames the policies for educational reform within secondary schools in Grenada in the short to medium term (2006-2015) with a view to offering suggestions to educational leaders as to how they might facilitate the creation of more socially just institutions.

Ryan (2007); Apple (2001); and Liasidou (2011) (though not referenced specifically to Grenada) argue that neoliberal educational discourses shape institutional and individuals' perceptions and beliefs about education. Within neoliberalism these beliefs focus on lessening the role of the state and focus on individual responsibility to be productive. Systemic inequity is de-emphasized. I will also draw on this work to analyse the SPEED document.

In this regard, the paper will be guided by the following four questions:

1. How is good leadership described in the document?

2. How does SPEED II define "quality" education for students? What is absent and what is dominant in this definition?

3. How do the discourses in SPEED II pertinent to school leadership compare/contrast with existing literature on social justice leadership?

4. What recommendations can be made to secondary school leaders in Grenada to assist them in facilitating the development of more socially just schools?

Significance of the Study

SPEED II indicates that soaring drop-out rates among the 80 percent of primary school leavers who transition to secondary school continues to be a challenge for the education system (Government of Grenada, 2006). Although no official/large scale empirical research has been conducted to ascertain the demographics of those who drop-out, my own observations having been an educator in Grenada for over a decade, indicate that those who do are usually students from the lowest socio-economic status. While this particular situation has direct implication for social justice in schools given that an already vulnerable group of students are further affected, it also raises an important question namely: what possible explanation is there for the endurance of some of these challenges and leadership practices in secondary schools?

There is a glaring dearth of research which addresses issues pertinent to social justice and secondary school leadership in Grenada. Many educators and researchers have convincingly argued that current global trends such as the growing gap between rich and poor individuals and countries, increase in large multinational corporations/corporatism and the consequent economic

challenges faced by many countries worldwide, and at the micro level, factors such as changes in student demographics and the disparity in the performance of students from different socio-economic backgrounds necessitate that socially just practices within educational institutions be promoted with the hope that changes within the wider society will ultimately result. Although schools are themselves affected by these trends they are also important sites to effect changes as well.

Moreover, although educational literature is replete with research on these and other issues pertinent to school leadership and more specifically to social justice leadership, most assume a North American focus with little or no concentration on the Eastern Caribbean. Even more glaring, is the dearth of research aimed at critiquing or deconstructing the discourse which impact secondary schools' principals and teachers' philosophy and practice in Grenada particularly as it pertains to the adoption of more equitable practices in schools.

Such an issue though is one which it behoves educators and others with a stake in education in Grenada to consider with some degree of urgency especially given that the country is on the threshold of attaining for the very first time in its history (in 2012), universal secondary education. This may mean that an influx of students, many of whom are from working class backgrounds will now enter secondary school, even though they may lack the stipulated prerequisites to do so.

It is therefore my intent in this paper, through an analysis of existing literature on social justice and educational leadership and the SPEED II document, to critically examine the language surrounding secondary schools leadership pertinent to social justice in Grenada.

Given the unfortunate lack of research in the aforementioned areas specific to the Caribbean context and the plethora of research pertinent to North America, the discussion which follows is drawn largely from North American literature. It is however quite relevant and useful especially since it speaks to current global trends such as neoliberalism and the impact of international bodies such as the Worldbank, IMF and OECD and their implications on/for educational institutions and leaders. It also sheds light on the pivotal role that schools can/do play in fostering a just and equitable society, and can therefore serve to stimulate critical thought and action among educational leaders and stakeholders. The literature review is divided into four sections as follows: sections (1) Neoliberalism; (2) Social justice and education; (3) Critical theory and (4) Critical social justice.

<u>Neoliberalism</u>

Authors such as Barlow & Robertson (1994) as cited by Smith (1999), argue that three of the foremost goals of corporate leaders (in North America) *are*: to ensure students subscribe to free-market principles relating to the environment, corporate rights and the role of the government; to gain access to numerous young consumers, and "to transform schools into training centres producing a workforce suited to the needs of transnational corporations" (Smith, 1999, p.105).

As a means of promoting this view as the sole legitimate form of education, neoliberals have launched a campaign against the education system arguing that contemporary schools are adversely failing the youth and that this failure is also manifested in the state of the economy even at times in the absence of substantive empirical evidence to support this claim (Smith,

1999; Hursh, 2007). Hursh (2007) identifies *A Nation at Risk-* an educational reform proposal in the USA during the 1980's as a primary example. The authors of SPEED II also lambaste the Grenadian education system noting that too many students are failing and/or are being failed by the current system. However, are schools solely culpable for students' perceived failure; what constitutes success or failure/how is each defined?

To the former, researchers such as Apple (2001) opine to the contrary and instead argue that the notion of ascribing blame squarely on the public education system represents "part of a larger process in which dominant economic groups shift the blame for the massive and unequal effects of their own misguided decisions from themselves on to the state" (Apple, 2001, p. 416).

Tabb (2002) further explains that neoliberalism "emphasises deregulation of the economy, trade liberalisation and the dismantling of the public sector (including education, health and social welfare) and the predominance of the financial sector of the economy over production and commerce" (p.495). To facilitate the realisation of some of its lofty ideals such as eradication of social and economic inequalities; increased individual wealth and unlimited economic prosperity, neoliberal governments are to implement several measures: privatise public institutions, reduce taxes, create a positive business environment, eradicate the social welfare state and any form of social solidarity (such as trade unions) perceived to create unnecessary encumbrances to individuals and corporations unleashing unabated, their entrepreneurial expertise (Poole, 2007; Harvey, 2005; Rizvi & Lingard, 2000).

It may be worthy to note however, that although many countries have for decades subscribed to neoliberalism, a plethora of research indicate that we are yet to reach the neoliberal promised-land. Blackmore (2000) for example, argues that increased marketisation and the

competitive nature of relationships among individuals and schools have served to "reassert executive prerogative, reduce teacher collegiality, undercut teacher professionalism and autonomy, and inhibit rather than encourage the creativity and innovation critical to producing the multiplicity of pedagogical practices and curriculum frameworks appropriate to the new knowledge society" (Blackmore, 2000, p. 382).

They further observe that a monolithic, monocultural view of good schools is being promoted to the sheer disadvantage of socioeconomic, racial and ethnic minority groupings. (Schools where students attain high scores on standardised tests for example are commonly referred to in Grenada as top schools). Thus, far from being alleviated, educational inequalities are being institutionalised (Blackmore, 2000; Hursh, 2007, Apple, 2001).

Social Justice and Education

In an era characterised by intense materialism, consumerism, corporatism and individualism, and which has made even more glaring the marginalisation endured by certain groups in society, the need to advocate for and realise greater social justice is becoming increasingly evident. Educational institutions, which researchers have opined have been instrumental in promoting some of these problems, are also deemed to be just as key in solving them. Ryan (2006) for example, alludes to the increasing diversity in schools' population and communities and the apparent disparities in the performance and representation of students who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged in various areas of school such as graduation and post-secondary educational institutions. He contends that these occurrences are not random but rather demonstrates a distinct pattern which

favours certain groups of students over others; it is therefore incumbent upon schools to address this situation.

While public schools in Grenada seem to be lagging behind in terms of actively and vociferously pursuing the aforementioned mandate, throughout North American and other parts of the world, the issue of social justice has, over the years been receiving increased, explicit attention in the educational arena as indicated by the large number of teachers and university professors who have (self) identified as being social justice activists, its inclusion in many university programmes/courses, the number of related research conducted and publications in journals.

Despite its widespread use however, social justice seems elusive both in its conceptualisation and attainment (Ryan, 2006; Brown, 2004). Ryan (2006) suggests three possible reasons for this: first, the existence of and variations in the many versions of it, the unpractical nature of some of these approaches and, the fact that many of them are laced with contradictions and ambiguities. He critiques the work of early social justice pioneer, Rawls (1972) for example, who argues that social justice can only be realised if/when goods, rights and responsibilities are equally distributed among individuals. He argues however, that Rawls emphasis on individuals obscures the relationships, structures and forms which also tend to fuel inequities. How this (re) distribution will occur- who determines who gets what, and how this determination is made is quite another challenge.

Despite these areas of divergence however, Tillman (2002) concurs that "generally, social justice theorists focus their inquiry on how institutionalised theories, norms and practices in schools and society lead to social, political, economic and educational inequities"

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(p. 147). Likewise, Ryan (2006) who agrees with this deduction, notes that social justice is about fairness, legitimacy and welfare and, though not providing a precise definition, he surmises that social justice is about "searching out, understanding, critiquing, and doing something about injustices" (p.4). This aptly expresses the purpose of this study- to search out, understand and critique the language used in SPEED II as it relates to social justice and to suggest alternatives to address this situation.

Critical theory

Much like social justice, critical theory (CT) is not very easily defined. Held (1980) however, view this difficulty positively arguing that it is inherently characteristic of the critical tradition which is constantly changing and evolving and which deliberately avoids specificity to make allowance for divergent views among critical theorists.

Despite these variations however, Rottmann (2007) observes that critical theory is essentially concerned with the day to day lives of people, their cultures and the structures within which they operate. Rexhepi & Torres (2011) also agree noting that critical theory has as its foundation the needs and sufferings of the most oppressed members of our society. One of the main aims of critical theory therefore, is to seek out and to redress any form of injustice or inequality or any situation within institutions such as schools which have the effect of marginalising or dehumanising certain individuals.

Kincheloe & Mc Laren (2002) summarise it this way:

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (p. 90)

They propose a reconceptualised critical theory, arguing that it challenges the widely held assumption that many of the developed nations throughout the world (USA, Canada, Australia among others) are "unproblematically democratic and free" (p. 90). Interestingly, developing countries such as Grenada often model many of their institutions after these very nations, at times, in my view, without sufficient thorough analysis of how some of the principles adopted may oppress many (already oppressed) people.

While change within any system may be effected from the bottom-up however, much of the changes which occur within educational institutions in Grenada are formulated at the top. It can therefore be argued based on the work of Paulo Freire that the seeming lack of robust analysis is instead an effort by those in authority to maintain the status quo. Apple (1990); and Ryan (2007) also view as a fallacy, the belief that there is equal opportunity for all in a democratic society. They argue instead that education is a political process as schools are used by individuals and groups such as parents and the business community as instruments for the imposition of their beliefs and values. They assert that while the consequent harm in many instances may not be intentional, this process often lead to the marginalisation of less privileged individuals.

Critical theorists note the pervasiveness of politics in all of our interactions (Apple, 1990); Giroux (1988); Rexhepi & Torres, (2011) and Rottman (2007) and are deeply concerned with analysing competing power interest between groups and individuals within society (Kincheloe & Mc Laren (2002) and how power imbalances negatively affect individuals based on their identity -their race, social class, gender, sexual orientation among other groupings. Further, they have convincingly argued that power plays a crucial role in configuring schools and

in social reproduction and have therefore sought to analyse the inextricable link between power and knowledge, addressing issues such as what/whose knowledge is taught in schools and to what end. As Rottmann (2007) explains critical theory "pays attention to the educational ideas, policies and practices that serve the interests of the dominant class while simultaneously silencing and dehumanising 'others'" (p.78).

It is in this regard that researchers such as (Rexhepi & Torres, (2011) and Kincheloe & Mc Laren (2002) note the centrality of the notion of hegemony to critical theory. Referencing the work of Gramsci, they contend that the manifestation of power is not always overt such as through the use of physical coercion but can also be exercised through social-psychological attempts controlled/manipulated by cultural institutions such as schools, churches and the media.

Elucidated through the discussion thus far, is the convergence of critical theory and critical discourse analysis. Discourse not only expresses, but also shapes (dominant) ideologies- what is said, or not; whose voices are heard and whose are silent/silenced; what is the dominant point of view. Power relations/imbalances it seems, are inherent in discourse. Codd (1988) as cited by Liasidou (2011) summarises is this way:

> The power that is exercised through discourse is a form of power which permeates the deepest recesses of civil society and provides the material conditions in which individuals are produced both as subjects and as objects. It is this form of power which is exercised through the discourses of law, of medicine, psychology and education (p.888)

In many instances however, discourse appears to be neutral. Authors such as Apple (1990) have opined that this seeming neutrality is deliberate as they serve to obscure the power dynamics which he contends, pervade every aspect of our cultural and social lives. This obscurity is critical however, if individuals are to be socialised into the normative structures of

society. In other words, if schools are to successfully inculcate in students hegemonic assumptions, they must be viewed as neutral or normal phenomena. Apple (1990) and Giroux (1988) contend however that contrary to what it is purported to be, teaching is not a neutral enterprise and neither is discourse.

In fact, Humes and Bryce (2003) alluding to the work of Ball (1995), caution against "the dangerous and debilitating conceits of official discourse" (p.179) which they opine both constitute and is constituted by unequal power relationships. Such a warning it seems, is yet to be heeded by educators and educational researchers in the Eastern Caribbean given the obvious lack of comprehensive research which delve into educational policies/policy documents to analyse/critique these issues of power- who are privileged and who are disadvantaged. This paper, in analysing the SPEED II document, endeavours to begin to address this trend.

In conclusion, I find it worthwhile to note that critical theorists do not assume that power is inherently negative. On the contrary Kincheloe & Mc Laren (2002) note that several researchers (Fiske, 1993; Macedo, 1994; Apple, 1996; Giroux, 1997) cite the productive aspects of power- a means of empowering individuals, engaging marginalised individuals in re-thinking their socio-political role as being an important part of critical research as well. They argue however, that power can/is abused and can be extremely debilitating to some individuals as it can produce and promote inequalities. Though some of these inequalities are exacerbated in schools, they can become sites where these very inequalities are analysed and addressed. Schools can, as Giroux (1988) explains, teach forms of knowledge, values and social relations necessary for empowering or liberating young people rather than suppressing them.

Critical Social Justice

The discussion which follows is a synopsis of the work of James Ryan and Cindy Rottmann, advocates of/for social justice. They propose a critical social justice (CSJ) approach to school leadership and policy. Such an approach speaks directly to and ideally captures the framework for this paper as it synthesises the two complementary concepts of social justice and critical theory in which this study is grounded. Below are eight of the main tenets of CSJ as summarised by Ryan and Rottmann (2007).

"*Social institutions are human creation*". Ryan and Rottmann expound on three central ideas affirming the aforementioned claim. Referencing the work of Faye (1987) who proposes the self-estrangement theory, they contend that social institutions are constructed by humans although this is done within a historical and structural framework which ultimately affects their actions. They further argue that humans have persistently created conditions within these institutions which exploit some individuals while favouring others. Those who are exploited, they argue, will be better poised to address their situation providing that they become more knowledgeable about it.

The second principle of CSJ is that "*societal institutions consistently disadvantage some communities more than others*." This argument has been substantiated through the work of several other theorists such as Apple (1990, 2001); Giroux (1988).They maintain that the existence of structures within institutions associated with race, class, gender and sexual orientation entice people to behave in ways which are favourable to some and disempowering to others. They are in agreement with Ellsworth (1989) who concurs that these structures operate in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. A female student for example, may be

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simultaneously favoured because of her social class while being penalised as a result of her sex. They argue however, that a focus on these structures as opposed to individuals not only distinguishes CSJ from other approaches to social justice but it ensures that the often taken-for-granted structures which are largely responsible for the persistence of inequalities are critiqued.

Researchers caution however, that these structures or "*patterns of dis/advantage are not always visible*". So deeply embedded are they within our institutions that they are almost unrecognisable. They become in other words 'the-way-we-do-things-around-here' with little or no questioning into why, by whom or to whom 'it' is done or who benefits or who loses what as a result of "it". Moreover Kincheloe & Mc Laren (2002) makes a disconcerting observation noting that for many years numerous individuals have been socialised into accepting as normal relations of domination and subordination as opposed to equality and independence. Beyer (2001) reiterates how important critical theory is to education in this regard as it facilitates educators and researchers understanding of the normative dimensions of education and how they are interconnected with the social, structural, and ideological processes and realities in the wider society (p.152).

At the basis of CSJ also is the notion that "*social justice involves more than resource distribution and economics*". In fact, Ryan and Rottmann (2007) argue that much of the injustice meted out to certain individuals or groups occurs because these individuals are not accorded the same value or recognition as other individuals. As is argued by Fraser in her article entitled "From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a post-socialist age" therefore, CSJ holds that while equitable distribution of goods is central to social justice, recognition is just as critical thereby emphasising the fact that social justice is not merely an outcome but a process.

Additionally, "*social justice is not consistent with the idea of just desert…and favours equity over particular forms of equality*." The idea of just desert indicates that individuals should get what they deserve. In other words, those who enjoy the greatest rewards are those who work the hardest. Realistically however, intervening factors such as race or class may determine the rewards at times moreso than one's effort. Ryan and Rottmann (2007) argue that this notion is premised on the gross misconception that all individuals are on a levelled playing field and that rules and policies do not implicitly favour particular individuals over others. Given this uneven playing field however, CSJ advocates that individuals be treated equitably as opposed to equally especially when equality implies sameness. Much to the contrary, not only does CSJ value differences among individuals it also advocates difference- variation in the treatment of individuals on the basis of need.

Another important principle of CSJ is that it "*involves all aspects of education*". Advocates of CSJ note that implementing social justice measures is not an add-on (although it may require some changes) which may lead to teacher burn-out or which may detract from learning rather they can be infused in all areas of school from leadership to curriculum to instruction.

Finally, "*social justice calls for hope*". At the heart of CSJ is the belief that the oppression and marginalisation experienced by some individuals will cease especially given that other humans are responsible for the suffering in the first place. In essence, humans have the capacity to right their wrong. Advocates of CSJ maintain however, that this can only be done if closer attention is paid to the taken-for-granted rules and policies which shape individuals' behaviours. Ryan and Rottmann assert that an important mandate of advocates of CSJ is to assist others to

question these norms by developing and circulating a critical discourse so that they can critique and ultimately change them.

Methodology

Setting

The tri-island state of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique has a total of 20 secondary schools with a student population of approximately 10,000 and a teaching staff of 664 (Government of Grenada, 2010). Although the education system is highly centralised as it relates to resource allocation, each school is led by its own senior management team which has responsibility for developing and implementing its own school improvement plan and for attending to its day to day operations.

The demographics of the school population largely mirror the wider society specifically as it relates to ethnicity and social class. As such, students (and teachers) are predominantly of African descent and most are from working class backgrounds.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted for this paper is a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Referencing the work of Foucault (1980), Rottmann (2007) asserts that discourse exert significant influence on organisational and individual actions. One can reasonably assume therefore, that if language is such a powerful dictator of individuals' perceptions and behaviours by deconstructing that language one may begin to better understand the said behaviours.

As discourse carries social meanings which are often politicised (Henry & Tator (2002) and Liasidou (2011), CDA provides an avenue for educators and researchers to explore the policies and ideologies of elite groups and identify and critique the social, economic and historical dynamics and display of power between these groups and others.

Furthermore, CDA approach attempts to go a step further than conventional qualitative analyses in that it not only identifies themes and establishes the connections between them, but it enables the researcher to probe deeper into "the subtle linguistic characteristics of certain utterances and the power relationships embroiled in them and unveil relationships of domination with a view to introduce change" (Liasidou (2011) p.893).

This explicit political agenda is another strength of this methodological approach in terms of its appropriateness for the purpose of this study as it seeks to produce oppositional discourses such that organisations and individuals are provided with alternative ways of understanding and interacting with the world (Henry & Tator, 2002). I am analysing the linguistic nuances of SPEED II to better understand some of the policies which inform secondary schools leadership practices in Grenada.

I examine SPEED II to extract information/key themes pertinent to each of the research questions. I also analyse other relevant publications (books, journal articles) to situate SPEED II within a broader context and conclude by making deductions based on the proposed theoretical framework of this study.

Ethical Consideration

No human subjects will be directly involved in any part of this study, given that it entails solely analysis of discourse. Moreover, all of the documents which will be analysed have been published. As such, there are no issues pertinent to anonymity and confidentiality.

Limitations

Due consideration must be given to some of the limitations in the conceptualisation of this study. One of the limitations which is inherent in the methodology which will be used for this study is the fact that the author(s) of the document which will be analysed are not directly involved to clarify their meanings and intentions. A rigorous analysis of the document however, referencing various theories will provide rich data of different interpretations from multiple perspectives.

Reporting and Disseminating Results

This paper is expected to generate important information which will be useful to educational leaders (and others with a stake in education) at all levels as it relates to ways in which many of the taken-for-granted assumptions in educational policies may lead to the perpetual marginalisation of many individuals. Its results will therefore be formally documented and presented in a Graduating Paper which is necessary to satisfy the requirements for a Masters of Education in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy and Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Upon completion, it becomes accessible to many individuals through the UBC library. Additionally, a summary of the main findings of the study will be presented to the executive arm of the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT) and the ministry of education

Data Analysis

Textual Analysis of the: The Strategic Plan for Educational Enhancement and Development 2006-2015 (SPEED II)

SPEED II notes that education and educational policies are premised on the belief that "every individual has the right to access to education for lifelong learning", and that the overall goal of education in Grenada is "the development of the whole person leading to the production of good citizens through harnessing the physical, mental, spiritual and social power of humankind within a nation that is 'ever conscious of God'" (p. 8). Based on the aforementioned philosophy and goal of education, the document highlights the following six areas which the government of Grenada believes should be given priority: access to and participation in education; the quality of education; education and the world of work, life and citizenship; partnership and cooperation; management and administration, and financing education. The core of the document comprises broad objectives of the government's strategic plan, strategies and strategic objectives and targets as well as guidelines for the implementation and evaluation of the plan pertinent to each of the aforementioned six areas.

    <u>Research Question 1</u>

How is good leadership described in the document? Who is a good leader/teacher according to the document?

As a means of realising the articulated goals of education, SPEED II notes that improvement in the effectiveness of management and administration of education at both the ministerial and secondary school levels is critical. Comparatively however, the document deals much more extensively with specific objectives and/or areas of restructuring for administrators in

the Ministry of Education and deals rather sparingly with leadership in secondary schools. It makes mention of a few of the areas in which principals and SMTs are to be trained or to which they must attend. For example, it notes that comprehensive training in "effective management of schools" which involves writing project proposals and being aware of one's role in managing change is paramount (p. 60).

The change of which the document speaks relates to a less bureaucratic and a more participatory kind of school governance. Thus, important undertakings of good leaders involve "promoting client and service centred approaches to managing schools and engaging all stakeholders" (p.32). As this approach differs from the "traditional command and control", "a cultural transformation" is required (p.22). Good leaders should also be able to take the lead in facilitating such a change.

They should, according to the document, be able to "do more with less" (p.36), be strategic in their management, and should be able to engage stakeholders in formulating and implementing school improvement plans which are reflective of the priorities and concerns of the school community.

Additionally, SPEED II states that good leaders "emphasise instructional leadership" (p.32). Likewise, of teachers, the following is stated:

> "teachers are to deliver quality instruction and promote the overall development of every child along the learning continuum. The learning experience should be characterised by best practices in instruction, and classroom management activities that promote the dignity of the individual and a singular focus on improved student achievement" (p.26)

The document clearly and consistently defines both improved student achievement and the quality of teaching in terms of high(er) scores on national standardised (competency) tests. It explains for example:

> "There is a serious risk that the universalization of secondary education will have little impact on the overall development of young people if no serious effort is made to improve the quality of teaching and learning a critical aspect of which has to be addressing general under performance of teachers" (p.19-20)

This observation alludes to the fact that simply allowing more students to enter secondary school does not mean that they all will benefit fully or equally from the experience; other factors have to be considered as well. Although the document identifies some of these as developing the physical infrastructure of schools, enhanced teacher training, and performance management systems, the area most emphasised is teacher performance especially as it relates to the performance (in the various competency tests) of the students that they teach.

For example, one of the challenges facing the education system as identified in the document is "poor results in competency tests and other examinations especially in Language Arts and Mathematics, indicating that education delivery services, including school and teacher performance, are in need of improvement" (p. 15). The authors reiterate this sentiment on page 19 noting that: "the quality of teaching and learning leaves much to be desired at both primary and secondary level, as the results of Minimum Competency Tests, undertaken since 1999, have convincingly shown" (p.19).

In summary, according to SPEED II, good leaders are efficient; they are good managers; they possess the ability to engage stakeholders and, they are versed in instructional leadership such that they would support their teachers who should be able ensure that all students at each form level achieve the competencies specified by the Ministry of Education.

Research Question 2

How does SPEED II define "quality" education for students? What is absent and what is dominant in this definition?

Adopted from the description of the ideal Caribbean person as articulated by the CARICOM Heads of State in 1998, SPEED II cites the creation of "ideal Grenadian citizens" as being central to the process education. Such individuals will: respect human life and cultural heritage, be emotionally secure, value diversity, live in harmony with the environment, appreciate family and community, demonstrate multiple literacies, independence and critical thinking, demonstrate economic and entrepreneurial creativity, and develop the capacity to improve and maintain their physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being (p.8).

What seem to be prevalent in the aforementioned description are the educative roles of education pertinent to individuals' personal, social and spiritual well-being. Reiterated in the document is that an area that "must be of focus relates to the moral and ethical development of individuals with values such as respect, tolerance, kindness and altruism being more than mere incidental by-products of the education process" (p.49). It also maintains that students "should be equipped with the requisite perspectives, knowledge, skills and attitudes for productive engagement in national economic development" (p.9). In spite of its rhetoric to the contrary, education for employment and for economic development are what seem to be given priority.

Moreover, while the language of SPEED II may not be as strong as that of the structural adjustment programme of the early 1990's which advocated privatisation of state owned enterprises and significant cutbacks in government spending on social welfare, education and human resource development, there are several hints of neoliberalism in the text.

For example, it cites the need for individuals and countries to acquire particular skills in order to surpass the competition (which it portrays as being the natural order of the day). It states that "…the progress of the Grenadian economy and society is conditional upon a radical improvement of the quality of education and the achievement of pupils" and that "the new liberalised global economic order demands enhanced competitiveness in exports, investment promotion and marketing…It must adopt modern management practices…". Thus, in order to ensure that students possess the capacity to thrive in this globally competitive environment, the education system needs to play its role in developing in them knowledge and skills, technological savvy, enterprise, dynamism and entrepreneurship (p. 20).

The authors allude to the importance and urgency of acquiring these skills as they caution that there will be decreased employment opportunities within the public sector given the government's intent to cease hiring within the sector and to privatise state-owned entities (p. 19).

Moreover, to ascertain that schools implement some of the aforementioned changes, the authors note that the "monitoring devices" within the education system need to be improved (p. 44). This, it is believed, can be attained by tightening school supervision, establishing educational standards and, scrutinising outputs more closely and consistently based on these standards.

In the context of providing improved quality education for students this means the adoption of what the document refers to as a "competency-based approach" to the evaluation of learning outcomes. One in which there are "explicitly defined competencies" that students must attain at each grade or form level if they are to transition to the next level (p. 47). Not much

discussion is present in the document about the fate of those students who fail to meet these standards.

Research Question 3

How do the discourses in SPEED II pertinent to school leadership compare/contrast with existing literature on social justice leadership?

Although it contains language of equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, neither the expression "social justice" nor social justice leadership" appears anywhere in the document. There are however, allusions to these issues relative to the content, structure and purpose of education. For example, the document speaks of the ideal Grenadian citizen as one, who among other qualities, appreciates and values differences in sex, ethnicity, religion, and other forms of diversity (p.8). It also recognises in general terms the role of education in promoting the economic and social mobility of individuals.

> "Education must be an avenue for the empowerment of those on the periphery of the social and economic theatres of operation. It should be structured to enable the full participation of and provide benefit to all citizens, especially those who find themselves in debilitating circumstances or with disabilities" (p.9)

One way in which SPEED II indicates that this can be done is by increasing access to education (p. 8) especially at the secondary level where the government aims to make access universal. It also notes government's intent to "re/integrate previously excluded children, truants, intra-cycle dropouts and provide support for participation" (subsection 4.1.2 (a), p.41). To assist in this process, government has employed truancy officers in the various districts to collaborate with the parents and the children involved to facilitate their return to school. The extent to which

these students are "integrated" however, is somewhat questionable given that many display serious attitudinal and behavioural problems, fail to attend classes, and eventually dropout, again.

Further, although access is repeatedly equated with equity in SPEED II, the above scenario is a clear demonstration of the inadequacy of merely expanding access as a means of promoting social justice. In fact, it speaks to the misconception that all students are on a levelled playing field or that they all possess the same capacity to succeed once in the system. Ryan & Rottmann (2007) argue however, that critical social justice favours equity over this kind of equality. They argue, much to the agreement of Apple (1990) and Giroux (1988), that there are a number of intervening factors such as (in the case of Grenada) socioeconomic status which may thwart individuals efforts to succeed. Further, they refer to the deeply ingrained, sometimes subtle structures which serve to marginalise or disempower some students.

SPEED II does acknowledge the need to provide "enabling conditions and other motivating factors to engender interest in maximising the educational opportunities provided by the government and its partners" (p.40). To this end, the document notes the transportation allowance and the school feeding programmes to assist those in need as well as the provision of "alternative and rehabilitative accommodation with restorative programmes for students with severe behavioural challenges…" (p.42). These initiatives are necessary but so too might be leadership and curricular reform relative to social justice- of which the document makes no mention.

An issue, to which a number of references is made throughout the document however, is that of peace and harmony. It speaks for example of people living together in "productive harmony" (p.11) and of adopting one of the UNESCO goals of education that of fostering the

development of "a culture of harmonious relations among the diverse peoples of every society" (p.21).

While peaceful relations is undoubtedly an important purpose of education, its discussion in the document much to the neglect of any discussion of critiquing the status quo or of the treatment of topics relative to diversity such as socioeconomic status, gender and religion, the glaring absence on any mention of sexual diversity and the difficulties that may be associated with dealing with these issues or of conflicts/tension that may ensue from dealing with same seems suggestive of a quietly "glossing over" or "sweeping-under-the-rug" kind of approach. In fact, this is the precise approach which Apple (1990) believes allows schools to adopt and instil in students hegemonic views. Social justice theorists and activists, while advocating for a peaceful existence, also emphasise the need for individuals to constantly question "the way we do things around here" or taken for granted assumptions to deconstruct the ways in which "normal" school structures and practices marginalise certain students (Tillman, 2002, Apple, 1990, Ryan, 2006).

Conclusion

"… The education strategy of the Government of Grenada is defined not only in terms of economic and social imperatives, but is inspired by a vision of education that goes beyond the utilitarian to embrace the essential 'humanising' potential of education." (SPEED II, p.36)

The document is replete with this kind of rhetoric proving that although the words "social justice" is not mentioned, some degree of consideration is given to the issue. The central themes of SPEED II relevant to the purpose and structure of education in Grenada on which educators and policy makers seem to converge are: access, equity, relevance, quality and efficiency. It can be deduced however, that the means, through which each of these can/should be attained, is somewhat contentious and contradictory. For example, while the document regards as critical the need to attend to the humanising effect of education, or its role in individuals' personal development, or the importance of developing "non-academic" areas, there seem to be such a heavy focus on standardised/competency tests (in academic areas) as a quality indicator for teaching and learning. The many teachers who may not be convinced that other attributes such as ethical and moral development are valued and the students who fail to attain the stipulated competencies and who are branded failures by the system may not be too convinced of the role of education in this regard.

Moreover, despite its rhetoric to the contrary, the overall focus of SPEED II seems to be on global citizenship, employability and economic productivity. Evident is the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideals.

If SPEED II is based on expanded access, improved quality and more relevant education and if an important purpose of education in Grenada is to foster the development of values such

as respect, tolerance, appreciation for: diversity, family, community, cultural heritage and the environment as well as to ensure social and economic mobility or the realisation of social justice (as it claims), then researchers such as Apple (1990, 2001) and Hursh (2007) warn that subscribing blindly to ideals of neoliberalism may not be the best approach. They contend that contrary to what was guaranteed by neoliberalism, the achievement gap between students of different socio-economic status widened and further, students' test scores seem to correlate more with their family income than the curriculum. Research aside, my own personal experience has proven same as parents, who can afford for example, are able to purchase additional resources such as text books and past examination papers or secure private tutoring to provide additional support for their children to prepare for these tests.

An argument made by Apple (2001) to which I can testify is that middle-class parents are skilled in manipulating market mechanisms and are able to bring their "social, economic and cultural capital to bear on them" (p. 415). The situation is further compounded when one considers that the children of these parents are the same students to whom teachers sometimes give the most attention as they are considered "passers". As Blackmore (2000) explains, "advantage breeds advantage" (p. 382) and so too does disadvantage since, perhaps paradoxically, the perceived slower students as if deemed liabilities are all but ignored. Of course, all of this is counter-productive to social justice for which Fraser (1998) deems recognition or according equal value to all students to be critical.

Further, research and personal experience strongly suggest that high-stakes tests may stem teacher creativity and enthusiasm as well as reduce the meaningful learning experiences of students as many teachers are forced to teach to the test (Blackmore, 2000). Au (2007) having

conducted a metasynthesis of forty-nine qualitative studies to investigate the impact of high stakes testing on curriculum, deduces that except for a small minority of cases, in an effort to ensure full coverage of the curriculum in preparation for these tests, generally, many teachers often sacrifice genuine student engagement for more superficial learning invariably employing teacher-centred strategies such as drill and practice or rote memorisation (Au, 2007)- a Tyleristic approach which seems to be encouraged by SPEED II but which lacks dialogue and deep questioning pertinent to the history and the politics involved in knowledge construction and education in general for which both Apple (1990) and Giroux (1988) so vehemently advocate given their centrality to achieving social justice.

Additionally, although the document infers that social justice is necessary both in the process and outcome of education, from a leadership standpoint, it seems more concerned with administration and efficiency and less so with the implications for secondary school leaders in fostering socially just schools. Absolutely no mention is made of the role of leaders in advocating for or promoting social justice or of the government's intent to provide training to assist them in this regard. Such an objective is not presented as a priority area for the local government.

My analysis of SPEED II indicates that although insufficient concrete treatment is given to the issue, the government is aware of the need to structure education such that equal value or recognition is accorded to all individuals through the provision of accessible, quality education and further that individuals are imbued with related values such as fairness, respect for diversity, tolerance and honesty. Neoliberalism frames much of the text however, as the prevailing theme seems not to be on the harnessing of those skills but rather on efficiency and economic

development and the acquisition of skills such as marketing and entrepreneurship skills which are deemed to be necessary for global citizenship.

Recommendations

Mindful of the pressure that can be brought to bear on the local government from international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to implement some of the neoliberal changes discussed in the paper in educational institutions, how then do educational leaders in public secondary schools in Grenada respond to the contentions presented in SPEED II relevant to "good" teachers or leaders and "quality" education? How do/should they navigate their way through these seemingly contradictory viewpoints, and what values (ought to) motivate them to respond in the manner in which they do?

Although responses to these questions may be complex and varied, following are a few suggestions that may be worthy of consideration by secondary school leaders at the ministerial and school levels.

Revise SPEED II according greater importance to equity and social justice as a necessity in the structure, process and outcome of education. A strong policy framework highlighting these essential values is necessary if the language and practice of educational leadership in Grenada is to be transformed from one of management and efficiency to one of equity, diversity, respect, tolerance and justice (values that are already deemed important according to SPEED II). Such a framework should include a revision of the definitions of good leaders and quality education, changes in curriculum, and leadership training reflecting the importance of the aforementioned ideals. In other words, a supportive policy environment is more likely to spur

teachers and leaders into action. Blackmore (2000) concur that top-down state policies is important and so too is bottom-up activism.

Thus, *Principals and SMTs should strive to develop a culture that promotes social justice both inside and outside of school*. The prevailing teaching and leadership culture in many secondary schools in Grenada is one which has been strongly criticised by several critical theorists among them Giroux (1988) in which teaching is regarded as a neutral enterprise and teachers are treated as technocrats whose most important function is to disseminate information to students who in turn are treated as mere vessels to be filled (Freire, 1972). Such a culture will not facilitate the mandate of social justice leadership.

Principals and other SMT members can however, take the lead in revolutionising the schools' culture by first engaging in critical self-reflection, challenging their own assumptions and practices as it relates to teaching and learning- why do we educate? How are these practices educative and how are they miseducative? Who benefits and who are disadvantaged as a result of current policies and practices? How can existing policies be changed to be more inclusive/considerate of the needs of all students, and what corresponding structural and programmatic changes can be made? These are among the many questions which can inform the culture of critical inquiry and analysis. Moreover, staff meetings and professional development sessions can be revised such that the focus is not on reporting or classroom management but an examination of these issues.

Focusing solely on instructional leadership is insufficient. Therefore, *in addition to clarifying their schools' purpose and engaging staff members in developing a shared vision, principals and SMTs should give consideration to the leadership approaches that may best*

realise this purpose. These approaches may include: transformational, transformative, spiritually-based and social justice leadership. Among the overlapping themes in these approaches are: an emphasis on moral values, equity, care, justice, respect as well as the need to explore how differences such as in gender or social class impact educational outcomes (Tillman, 2002).

Finally, *there is a need for more teachers and educational leaders to engage in research to analyse how different social, political and economic forces impact their practice and the performance of students*, how they perpetuate inequities in and out of school and roles that teachers and schools in general can play in alleviating same.

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Appendix

Strategic Plan for Educational Enhancement & Development 2006-2015(SPEED II)

Volume 1: The Strategic Framework