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## **Review of Education and Development: Policy Imperatives for Jamaica and the Caribbean**

**By Canute S. Thompson**  
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**Reviewed by Wayne Wesley**  
*Caribbean Examinations Council*

The book *Education and Development: Policy Imperatives for Jamaica and the Caribbean* outlines the challenges characteristic to higher education systems and presents appropriate policy and governance responses to these challenges for consideration by policy makers and institutional leaders. The concept of a higher education system without borders presents pertinent leadership and policy ideas that are solution oriented. The author, Canute S. Thompson, a prolific writer on contemporary issues of governance and leadership, was largely influenced by critical review of literature and research work, and less by practical experience in the formulation and implementation of policy prescriptions. However, the efficacy of the policy prescriptions articulated is substantive for educational policy makers and leaders not only to be aware of but to address consciously as they consider the implications and/or repercussions.

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*Wayne Wesley is registrar and chief executive officer of the Caribbean Examinations Council and the former executive director of the HEART Trust/NTA in Jamaica, the largest trust fund and national training agency in the Caribbean. Email address: wwesley3@hotmail.com*

Set within the context of Jamaica and the Caribbean, the book delineates the socio-economic issues facing the education system with meaningful and appropriate references to the global realities. The book was organized to orient readers according to three thematic issues. The first thematic focus covered pertinent issues of higher education such as financing. The second thematic focus outlined the contextual reality of the state of development within which higher education must not only compete but also influence positive change. The third thematic focus described the characteristics of institutional leadership that are necessary not only for a paradigm shift for higher education advancement but to sustain positive development.

The book was published in November 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting every facet of development including education and revealing the inadequacies of the education system to respond appropriately, thus making the author's contributions highly relevant as it presents a compelling case in the introduction, outlining many of the dysfunctional complexities that are dogging the progress of higher education and development. These dysfunctional complexities formed the bases for the prescribed policy imperatives to purposefully affect transformative change to higher education and development in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Thompson's insights are expounded on in relation to higher education institutions, embracing a new paradigm of enterprise expansion requiring an entrepreneurial mindset. Three useful and necessary actions were presented that can help guide higher education institutions to overcome the negative impact of the General Agreement on Trade in services (GATS) as they reimagine higher education as a global trade in services. Further, in making the case to reimagine higher education, the author very aptly articulated a guiding framework to assist higher education institutions to capitalize on the entrepreneurial pursuit in converting the challenges faced into business opportunities. While the seven elements of the guiding framework for transforming into being more entrepreneurial are very instructive it would have been highly beneficial and gives greater credibility if the applicability of this guiding framework was demonstrated with an example.

In addition, Thompson captures the dreaded, but important issue, of financing education. He continues to build on the developing literature on financing tertiary education, particularly in the Caribbean. An insightful chronicle of plausible approaches, including the industry-aligned Chinese model, are discussed toward the development of a sustainable financial mechanism for higher education. With due regard for a balanced approach to financing higher education, the policy

perspectives outlined by the author rightly underscore the need for tertiary institutions to become more relevant through greater alignment of resource allocation with the desired output and the development of income generating activities from their research efforts. While not being definitive, in terms of an ultimate solution to the funding challenge facing the region, the author was bold enough to suggest that the Child Trust Fund model represents a promising model for the Caribbean.

Not only did Thompson highlight issues of activism, crime, poverty, management, and leadership deficiency, and political courage and vision, but he also outlined practical approaches in addressing these issues of concern to educational, political, and institutional leaders in both the private and public sectors. The book presents an informative evaluation of the role of academics in the development of Caribbean society through a critical interrogation of whether enough is being done to affect the socio-economic development of their society. The discourse, regarding the significant contributions that were made by academics in the past, is not only of historical interest but also highlights the tremendous potential for even greater contributions by current academics. In contrast, a sobering account of how failure to be assertive in an advocacy sense may impede the progress of development given the fact there are those who are willing to exploit these vulnerabilities.

The book would not be complete without addressing the crucial and perhaps central issue of sustainable economic development. The author succinctly and coherently explicates the critical elements of economic growth and its inhibitors particularly in Jamaica while carefully assessing the relevance of education in facilitating higher levels of efficiency and productivity within the economy. Additionally, a sobering account of the impact of crime on the Jamaican economy and the many attempts at addressing the root causes is presented. Some solid recommendations are presented, which those who are serious about alleviating crime and its impact on economic growth should not ignore.

Institutional development and leadership are critical foundations for advancing the regional education system. However, the difficulty is the separation of the socio-political influence, which stymie fundamental policy change to effect meaningful transformation to the education system and the reform of credible governance structures. The author creatively demonstrated that institutional effectiveness requires leaders who are cognizant of the socio-economic realities and are innovative in policy formulations and responses to combat the negative impact of such realities.

Of value is the reiteration that leadership with vision will ultimately serve society and its development. Given the context of the re-

gion's colonial pass, Thompson supported such claim with examples of regional leaders such as Eric Williams from Trinidad and Tobago, Norman Manley from Jamaica, and Errol Barrow from Barbados. A detail analysis of the state of leadership, particularly political leadership right across the Caribbean, sets the context for a deliberate and structured approach for leadership development that will provide inspirational guidance and visionary foresight to advance the collective development of society.

A shortcoming of the book is that it was narrow in its use of examples mainly referencing the University of the West Indies. Although a brief reference was made to a comparison between the UWI and the University of Technology, Jamaica, it would have been more compelling to have incorporated other universities in the region, such as the University of Guyana, University of Trinidad, and Northern Caribbean University. Further, to add to the completeness of the content of this book and to enhance the insights presented, the author could have incorporated the use of interviews of current policy makers and institutional leaders with the aim of understanding why problems continue to exist and attempts at solving same. However, these shortcomings do not detract from the general applicability of the policy considerations.

Notwithstanding, the content of the book offers significant insights towards understanding the complexities of the challenges plaguing higher education and development in the Caribbean. The book presents an incubation of ideas that are forward thinking in dealing with the problematic complexities affecting education and development. The structure and language of the book is engaging and makes it an easy and informative read for educational and institutional leaders, politicians, policymakers, and governments.

#### **The Reviewed Book**

*Education and Development: Policy Imperatives for Jamaica and the Caribbean* by Canute S. Thompson.

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