

International Organizations and their Educational Mandates: Challenges for Small Islands in the Caribbean Region

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For decades now, structural adjustment programs of international donor organisations have permeated and configured the socio-political and economic landscapes of Caribbean territories. In particular, the education-driven reform mandates of these organisations pervade discourse regarding policy articulation and implementation in systems of education across this region. This theoretical paper examines the mandates of international organisations in the context of significant socio-historical, political and geo-economic complexities unique to a particular group of islands in this region. The paper unfolds through a critical analysis of the literature on economic globalisation, internationalisation of education and Caribbean history, and against the researcher's own positioning as a Caribbean citizen, educator and researcher. The research methodology guiding this inquiry entails a vertical case study of the Caribbean region through a postcolonial theoretical framework of inquiry, using Caribbean nation states and international donor organisations as the main units of analysis. The paper argues for an ontological and epistemological reassessment of the nature and scope of international lending organisations' involvement in the economic and educational affairs of small islands in the Caribbean region.

Key words: *international organisations, economic globalisation, neo-liberalism, structural adjustment programs, international education mandates, Caribbean education reform, OECS small islands*

Introduction

This research paper aims to demonstrate the dissonance between the mandates of international organisations, with some attention to those impacting education, and the contexts of countries of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). I begin by describing the theoretical framework, research design, and main units of comparison, and also justify why this paper fits within the field of comparative and international education. A historical overview of the OECS ensues. Specifically, I situate this sub-region within its British, colonial past and highlight several socio-historical, political and geo-economic peculiarities of this particular group of small islands in the Caribbean. Next, I engage in a discussion on globalisation, juxtaposing both the Caribbean region and international organisations relative to this phenomenon and situating the latter as vehicles of global, neoliberal agenda setting. Within this discussion, I examine the nature, scope and purposes of these organizations, especially in relation to their roles in debt financing and restructuring in OECS countries. I then problematise, in theory and through the use of examples, the substance and impact of the mandates of international organisations, especially in relation to education, emphasising their incongruity given the afore-mentioned contexts of OECS. I then put forward some considerations to inform future relations between

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countries of the OECS and international organizations, and conclude with a summary of each aspect of the paper.

Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory (also termed postcolonialism) builds on the shortcomings of dependency theory to reflect a distinct ontological and epistemological shift from scholarships of “unitary and homogeneous ways of thinking” to embrace multiple, deeper, and more lateral connections and inter-connections between and across phenomena (Ninnes & Burnett, 2004, p. 182). For postcolonial theorists, vertical and/or one-dimensional explorations of the relationship between colonizing and colonized countries propagate limited, isolated, and often inaccurate understandings of the full colonial experience. Instead, postcolonial theory is concerned with the nuances and complexities of colonial and post-colonial eras, and its inherently critical core problematises Westernised principles of development. Tikly (2001) postulates that postcolonial theory is the basis for articulating “a less Euro-centric and more comprehensive account” of globalisation in developed and developing societies in this post-colonial era (p. 250).

In the first part of this paper, I draw on Tikly’s (1999) work in advancing postcolonialism as a process of disengagement of the OECS from British colonial ties. This position facilitates a more in-depth discussion of the colonial experience and emphasises the ways in which this experience continues to influence the contemporary struggle for development in previously colonised countries, including culture and social identity. I also draw on Tikly’s scholarship in situating postcolonialism as “the emergence over several centuries of the system of global capitalism” (p. 606). I apply this theorist’s assertion of three important functions of this positioning: situating colonialism as a fluid, ongoing system, the form and effects of which have been acted upon by globalisation; critiquing the experiences of the colonial era in *both* colonised and colonising countries, thus attending to the ways colonial structures and norms were intrinsic to the latter; and, highlighting the dominant role that European colonisation has played in shaping postcolonial economic development. In the second half of the paper, I engage in postcolonial theory to situate the presence of international organisations in the affairs of the OECS and problematise the neoliberal principles of development couched in the mandates of these organisations. In discussing some considerations to inform policy articulation and implementation in the OECS region going forward, and draw on (i), Ali’s (2010) conceptual framework which problematises the consumer-driven nature of Caribbean societies and advocates the creation of a contextually relevant policy research model, and (ii) Smith’s (2012) decolonising methodologies in disrupting colonial systems and ideologies and the articulation of authentic, indigenous development initiatives.

Methodological approach

There is much ontological and epistemological contention in the field of comparative education regarding the framework that should guide social inquiry (Karns & Mingst, 2010; Manzon, 2007; Ninnes & Burnett, 2004; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). Debates surround the kinds of studied phenomena that can be acceptably situated within the field of comparative research and the methods employed that can be deemed ‘comparative’ in design. The re-articulation of the field into comparative *and international* education makes it, arguably, more open to scholarships of unorthodox conceptualisations. This paper is both comparative and international in that I situate the Caribbean within global discourse and use this region in analyzing several different elements across various regional and international dimensions: systemic and historic characteristics

peculiar to a group of Caribbean islands; nature and scope of international mandates, especially those impacting education; small island nation states and international organisations; and, dissonance between small island contexts and international education policies.

The vertical case study

The vertical case study method as employed in this research paper captures the uniqueness of the Caribbean, and the local context of OECS small islands in this sub-region. This method is concerned with macro-level analysis of phenomena across levels of a given system, region or some other specified unit (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). In this way, the vertical case study not only privileges investigations into the local contexts of the phenomenon, it also focuses on both the narrow and broader impact of said local contexts. In this paper, I employ this method to generate micro-level understanding and macro-level analysis of the OECS sub-region, thereby situating the contexts of local small islands within a much broader regional - socio-historical, political, and geo-economic - framework. Individual OECS islands, the broader Caribbean region, and specific peculiarities of OECS islands all alternatively and collectively serve as point/s of departure (i.e. local contexts) for discussion. Through the vertical case study, I examine features common to particular Caribbean territories in relation to how they are impacted by economic reform mandates of international organizations, especially those with relevance to education. In this way, an integrated discussion of the wider contexts of specific small islands (i.e. narrow focus) unfolds, and I examine their interconnected structures, systems, and experiences which in turn sheds light on how certain socio-historical, political and geo-economic factors have shaped these systems and development initiatives in the region (i.e. broader focus).

Units of analysis

One of my main units of comparison is small islands of the OECS. My interest in this sub-region is highly subjective. I was born and raised in Grenada, completed my undergraduate studies in this region, and taught at the secondary level for 11 years before taking up a scholarship to complete post-graduate studies overseas. Further, relative to other fields of inquiry, the Caribbean region is under-studied in global development literature. That is, there is a paucity of empirical scholarship to inform discussions regarding regional development (Ali, 2010; Hickling-Hudson, 2000a; Melville, 2002). There are therefore many fruitful avenues for research and development in this region, particularly regarding education reform in the OECS. Also, significant homogeneity among islands of the OECS makes comparison valid and worthwhile, such as a common language, culture, political system, and monetary currency. Manzoni (2007) espouses that “a prerequisite for any comparative study is to establish the parameters for initial comparability of the chosen units of analysis” (p. 88), and Bray and Mason (2004) assert that the units for comparison must have sufficient in common to make an analysis meaningful. In this paper, I group several OECS islands and argue that, in light of their commonalities, international mandates - especially those impacting education - affect them in similar ways.

Socio-historical, political and geo-economic contexts of OECS islands

The Caribbean has a history of European colonisation, and islands of the OECS, in particular, share a history of British rule. The OECS was formed in 1981 and has seven full members and two associate members (OECS, 2015). These member islands are Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and

Montserrat; Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands remain associate members (underlined islands are the focus of this paper). Any meaningful scholarship on Caribbean development must therefore be approached with an appreciation of the heritage of colonialism inextricably woven into the cultural fabric of each island in this region. This legacy inevitably, and quite markedly, shapes the development of regional islands in this post-colonial era (Ali, 2010; Alonso, 2002; Brizan, 1998), and has created lasting impressions ranging from dependency, subservience and inanity to regional pride, patriotism and resilience. I assert that these constitutions encompass the complexities and contradictions of the colonial experience and shed light on the philosophical issues which inform post-colonial development in the region. Key socio-historical, political, and geo-economic circumstances of OECS countries include their novelty as independent states, the recent introduction of formalized education, a consumption culture, high public debt exacerbated by vulnerability to natural disasters, and membership in regional organizations. These circumstances both shape and constrain the efforts of local and regional governments towards social and economic development, and must be attended to more meaningfully when articulating and implementing policy frameworks for this sub-region.

Perhaps the most striking peculiarity of small islands in the OECS is our fairly young stint as independent nation states. Local and regional efforts towards development are thus a fairly new initiative - only three to four decades in the making. The cultural heritage of our people, and our successes, struggles and future aspirations are inescapably imbued by this historical fact. This 'newness' has revealed itself in persistent political instability, civil unrest (Hickling-Hudson, 2000a) and public corruption in the region (Naude, Santos-Paulino & McGillivray, 2009; Steele, 2003). In Grenada, the political revolution of 1979 and the government coup of 1983 are striking examples (see Brizan, 1998; Steele, 2003), seriously reversing major economic, social and educational gains of that period (Hickling-Hudson, 1988 & 2006). Hickling-Hudson's (1988 & 2006) scholarship explores how successive governments embraced a culture of eradication, abandoning developmental programs of the prior regime (even those of social and educational value) to instill their own, and ceded to Western dictates in institutionalising a 'neo-liberal' brand to local governance. The genesis of Western influence in Grenada's domestic governance was arguably with the United States' 'invasion' of Grenada in 1983, a move which catapulted the level of international aid to the state and the establishment of structural adjustment programs.

Another socio-historical peculiarity of the OECS is the relatively recent introduction of formalised schooling in these small islands. Prior to the 1940s, education was an exclusive privilege for landowners and their children (Alonso, 2002; Hickling-Hudson, 2000; Steele 2003). The colonial rulers' first steps towards formalised education were introduced during the 1940s, following the then dominant model of western schooling with one-roomed schools, outdoor plumbing and school inspectors serving localities (for a fuller account of these early patterns of western schooling and the global politics of their genesis see Allison, 1989; Gidney, 1999; Green, 1990; Hans, 1958). The system gradually grew more inclusive and sophisticated, and dwindling economic returns from the plantation system later loosened the grip of the British colonisers, who began to increasingly relinquish governance to local authorities (Rogozinski, 1999). Moreover, the Caribbean region generally lacked institutions of higher learning and did not have its first university until the mid-20th Century; a few wealthy nationals travelled to Britain to earn their degrees and then later formed the University of the West Indies in 1948 (Hickling-Hudson, 2000a). However, this university's expansion has been slow. Hickling-Hudson asserts that by 2000, less than 3% of the region's working population held a university

degree. Given that there is an analogous relationship between education and human capital, this historical trajectory points to the under-developed nature of the human capital resource in the sub-region (Melville, 2002; Wint, 2003). It also shows that OECS countries, compared to more developed nations of the world, have been slow in institutionalising a 'cultural commitment' to higher or mass education, a reality which I believe substantially impacts the quality, level and scope of education reform initiatives conceived and successfully instituted in these small islands.

With the advent of full independence of OECS territories, education became formalised as a right for all citizens, and governments assumed control of publicly-funded education. To achieve this, local governments largely built on the inherited British schooling system (Brizan, 1998; Steele, 2003; Tikly, 1999). This trajectory is significant in two important respects. In the first, it illustrates how the colonial experience dually shapes the post-colonial (i.e. post-independence) development efforts of regional governments and our people's social consciousness. That is, our norms and valued understandings of social identity, politics, and culture have been influenced by the colonial plantation reality to which we were enslaved for centuries. Ali (2010) aptly asserts that "[i]t is these contextual issues that have influenced our form of democracy, the ideals and traditions we embrace in our post-colonial independent societies and the approaches we have used to formulate and implement policy including education policy" (p. 75). This quote segues into the second significance of this trajectory: that the dependence of OECS countries on colonial systems of development nurtures these islands' positionality, from the onset of independence to the present, as consumers of Euro-centric (i.e. Westernised) policy models, a phenomenon Ali dubs 'internationally-dependent policy consumption' (p. 75). This practice extends to discourse at the local, national and sometimes regional level, and is evident in the tendency of governments, private institutions and managers to outsource contracts and personnel for development initiatives, and our people's propensity to frame their social and cultural identity around British and American preferences. Our status as consumer societies speaks to two points raised by Tikly (1999). The first is that this post-colonial, post-independence era represents a process of disengagement from imperialist ties. Within this process, colonialism is described as a fluid, ongoing phenomenon being (re)fashioned by globalisation, with OECS countries engaging it in highly nuanced and paradoxical ways. The second point alludes to the global politics of development and to the dominant role that "European colonization of countries outside of Europe has played in defining the postcolonial condition" (Tikly, *Ibid.*, p. 606). This is another important context to be problematised when assessing and implementing developmental goals for this region.

Further, the economies of Caribbean islands, and in particular those of the OECS, principally grew from the plantation system of colonialism, and this is still significantly the situation today (Ali, 2010; Naude et al., 2009). Tourism, however, is swiftly becoming the major economic earner for the region, with OECS islands having largely tourism-based, small, open economies (OECS, 2012). Taken together, the demographic and geographical dimensions of these islands amount to approximately 620 000 inhabitants over a total land mass of just under 3000 km²; figures which allude to the small economic and human resource bases of this sub-region (see Alonso, 2002; Naude et al., 2009). Moreover, many of the natural resources of these islands remain underdeveloped or unexplored due, in part, to governments' financial and technical deficiencies, including very high public debt (Alonso, 2002; Louisy, 2001; Melville, 2002). This abject reality is further exacerbated by the region's vulnerability to natural disasters including earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanoes (see Naude et al., 2009; Shotte, 2013). Islands of the OECS sit squarely in the path of annual hurricanes, and given their geographical and

topographic makeup, are particularly vulnerable to secondary natural hazards such as floods and landslides. Southeastern OECS territories (i.e. Windward Islands), especially, are continually hit by hurricanes which wreak havoc on their agrarian economies. For instance, the eruption of La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent in 1979 wiped out the island's banana industry, while continuous eruptions on Martinique's Soufrière Hills continue to frustrate developmental efforts, especially regarding agriculture and population growth (Rogozinski, 1999). With regards to Grenada, International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports indicate that "Grenada suffered damage of 200 percent of GDP from Hurricane Ivan" (IMF, 2005). United Nations figures indicate that over 80% of Grenada's infrastructure was destroyed (UN, 2015). Current public debt-to-GDP in this country is almost 110% and the current world economic recession has negatively impacted projected growth rates (Global Finance, 2015). The islands of St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Barbados were all hit by Hurricane Tomas in 2010, with St. Lucia suffering much destruction: casualties, property damages, massive landslides and flooding (Government of St. Lucia, 2012; Mail Online, 2010). Hence, the agricultural export and tourism sectors of many, if not all, OECS islands face economic crisis.

Regional agreements, though well-intentioned and of appreciable benefits to member countries, can also constrain the developmental efforts of OECS governments and add complexity to these islands' ability to satisfy the educational mandates of international lending agencies. In addition to being members of the OECS, these states also hold membership in other regional bodies including Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This institution has 15 members and five associate members (CARICOM, 2015). A 2001 agreement by this organisation, entitled the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), adds another dimension to the structure and execution of developmental programs in OECS territories (CARICOM Single Market and Economy, 2011). This agreement is closely patterned after the World Trade Organizations' General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) in that its main goal is to ensure the free movement of goods, services, and capital in CARICOM territories. Wint (2003) posits that the CSME was motivated by the self-interest of the larger Caribbean islands, with OECS small islands facing a distinct disadvantage due to their smaller economic bases and limited potential in regards to transferable knowledge and skills. This situation results in a sort of double jeopardy for OECS small islands in that they are forced to compete in the 'free trade' fracas from *both* a regional and an international arena. These regional agreements were conceived, in part, in an effort towards regional integration as part of the post-colonial enterprise, but their implementation has not been without conflict. Prominent Caribbean educator Dr. Didacus Jules asserts that "[w]e fight harder against each other than against the international forces that conspire to keep us subjugated" (The Allister Francis Memorial Lecture, Antigua & Barbuda, 2011). Dr. Jules' quote alludes to the phenomenon of globalisation, the region's vulnerable positioning within it, and the reliance of regional governments on funding from international organisations despite clear challenges in fulfilling the conditions attached to said funding.

Globalisation, education and international organisations

Globalisation has profoundly impacted many regions and spheres of the world, and is described as the increasing rate of transnational influence on national systems of government (Ball, 1998; Bottery, 2004). This paper is concerned with economic globalisation, which stresses market competition in promoting greater worker productivity and financial viability through a global economic consensus often perpetuated through neo-liberal principles (Alexander, 2001; Menashy, 2007). Neo-liberalism, then, describes a consumer-type business approach to

education that emphasises deregulation, decentralisation and privatisation, choice and accountability, and testing and assessment (Ball, 1998; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Green, 2002; Ryan, 2012). More specifically, Harvey (2005) describes neo-liberalism as “a theory of political economic activities that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong property rights, free markets and free trade” (p. 5). As Carnoy and Rhoten (2002) assert, this neoliberal agenda is ‘a major force in shaping education worldwide’ (p. 1).

In their book, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) richly capture the global politics of education, asserting that a now common tactic in promoting a global education imperative is to introduce most government reports and bilateral agreements with a framed discourse of “global imperatives” and language of how best to meet the challenges of economic globalisation (p. 37). Bates (2011) describes this phenomenon as the “internationalisation of education” (p. 9) while Moutsios (2009) sees it as the “transnationalisation of education policy making” (p. 474). Profound in the work of these theorists is a highly consistent level of congruity regarding the impact of globalisation on developing societies, and especially the role of international organisations in advancing a neo-liberal education agenda. These marketisation reforms of international organisations are spread by means of global and local networks, and exert pressure on national governments to cut public spending on education while seeking alternative capital for education expansion. Green (2002) argues that this global economic consensus serves the interests of powerful western states whose economies continue to prosper “under protectionist regimes” (p. 11) held by and through international agencies, which Green refers to as “global enforcers of ‘free-market’ globalisation” (p. 11). Green continues that a ‘free trade’ mantra is preached by western states who continue to maintain subsidies on their products while promoting it elsewhere.

Almost fifteen years ago, Anne Hickling-Hudson, Caribbean national, educator and researcher postulated that “we hover on the brink of a Global age in which the globe rather than the nation-state will be the point of reference for socio-political movements, economic patterns, and expressive culture” (Hickling-Hudson, 2000a, p. 219). A little over a decade later, Dr. Jules, in his address identified above, cautioned that the “Caribbean is now full sea on the flood of globalisation and how we navigate its perilous currents will determine whether we shape our fortunes or lose our ventures”. While the Caribbean region is the overall subject of discussion for both speakers, small islands of the OECS, especially, are today grappling with the very real, grim realisation of globalisation and their lack of preparedness for it. Within this “frontierless land of globalisation and the virtual space of information and communications technologies” (Louisy, 2001, p. 425), these small islands struggle to compete with contending countries whose political, fiscal, infrastructural and human resource capital all but obliterate their own. At the same time, their development efforts are being driven, monitored, and reprimanded by what I describe as the new, imperialist replacement to their former colonial ruler (i.e. international organisations). These international organisations, especially those giving financial aid, set the stage and pace to which borrowing OECS islands must keep.

In this paper, international organisations refer to institutions of global prominence and membership which have significant power in influencing national systems of government on global scales, and international donor organisations are described as financial lending institutions that give loans and/or grants to borrowing countries with stipulations attached to these funding agreements (Sarooshi, 2005; Schechter, 2010). I frame these organisations all as agents of transnational [education] policy making, but limit my discussion to those with the most impact in

the OECS. Using Moutsios' (2009) scholarship, I explore how, through global eco-politics, these organisations have been able to infiltrate the national political arenas of OECS borrowing countries, with their resultant educational policies being the outcome of not merely *international* but *transnational* relations in the sense that the national borders of these countries have been eroded and subsumed within this globalisation discourse. This discussion lays bare the homogenous, neoliberal nature of these policies, with central themes of deregulation and privatisation that are rooted in fundamental ideological and philosophical assumptions about the role of the state, free trade, and individual enterprise in achieving efficiency in public services and fostering economic performance (Karns & Mingst, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Sarooshi, 2005). The international organisations discussed here are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The WTO and the OECD are organisations of significant global leverage. The WTO has a membership of 153 countries (WTO, 2012), and an aim of eradicating restrictions and barriers to global trade and services, thereby opening domestic markets to capital flows (Joachim, Reinalda & Verbeek, 2008; Schechter, 2010). However, these restrictions are imposed only on *selective* domestic markets as nation states can refuse to open their markets but still negotiate access to other markets (Moutsios, 2009). The WTO's impact regarding education is such that the GATS agreement lists education as one of the services to be opened up thereby creating "a free global market in education" (Ibid., p. 468). The OECD has 34 members and alliances with many other countries and organisations (OECD, 2012); half of the world's goods and services are either made or conducted in its member states (Moutsios, 2009; Schechter, 2010). Made up of an impressive network of researchers, policy makers and consultants, the OECD is a "transnational mechanism of surveillance of economic performance and a crucial sphere of influence on the global political scene" (Moutsios, op. cit., p. 468). The OECD's influence in education in recent years has centered on the development and publication of international standardised assessments of educational programmes, with the education systems of nation states coming under intense scrutiny, and creating intense political debates in participating countries whose governments use these results to condemn or justify education policy decisions (Schechter, op. cit.).

The World Bank (the Bank), formally the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and the IMF are two other organisations of transnational and international impact. The Bank has a membership of 187 countries, and membership in the Bank is contingent on membership in the IMF (World Bank, 2015). It is the largest external loan provider for education initiatives, and thus concomitantly has the most major impact on global education policy making (Archer, 2006; Karns & Mingst, 2010; Moutsios, 2009). The central mandates of the Bank are to promote global financial discipline and develop global market economies (World Bank, 2015), mandates which are further strengthened by the powerful influence of the United States and other western states and reflected in their educational programs as well (Ali, 2010; Moutsios, 2009). The IMF is a lending organization that works to "foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world" (IMF, 2015). It has a membership as extensive as the Bank's but is not as inclusive in its funding projects. However, what unites these two organizations is the congruence of conditions attached to loan agreements to which borrowing countries must adhere if they are to be granted these loans (Klein 2007; Moutsios, 2009). Many of the Bank's initiatives are carried out in collaboration with IMF loan

programmes of structural adjustments (SAPs), and it is here that the secondary impact on education is keenly felt. What is important to note is that these conditions are mandated in *all* borrowing countries, regardless of local circumstances. SAPs, and other internationally-driven mandates, therefore tend to encourage policy consumption. This tendency to apply abstract, generic, one-size-fits-all conditions in borrowing-OECS countries is what is being problematised in this paper. This assumes that policy implementation is unproblematic and linear, when it is in fact anything but (Ball, 1998; Pal, 2010). The tendency of these Eurocentric and Westernised lending organisations to dictate loan terms and expect compliance in borrowing countries also speaks to ways in which colonialism was never a mere peripheral system that was acted upon by the colonised, but was an inherent and enduring fabric of these colonial masters (Tikly, 2001 as referencing Hall, 1996). The socio-historical, political and geo-economic contexts discussed above do not seem to weigh in, or are not assessed to any significant degree, when policy frameworks and mandates are being articulated for this sub-region.

Regional impact: Analysing the dissonance between the international mandates of international organisations and the contexts of islands of the OECS

The point has been made that OECS small islands largely constitute struggling economies and under-developed sectors and so lack the capacity to significantly engage in the market/transfer of goods and services (revisit Ali, 2010; Green, 2002; Louisy, 2001; Melville, 2002; Moutsios, 2009). Two provisions of the World Trade Organization's GATS outlined by Moutsios (2009) foster economic inequality and potentially worsen economic decline and marginalization of OECS small islands: the lack of reciprocity in the open market ideal, and the norm of holding meetings in private among delegates of powerful nations. As this theorist explains, the first almost certainly guarantees the exploitation of poorer markets (as starkly corroborated in Green, 2002; Moutsios, 2009; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008) while the second secures the exclusion of these poor countries that are best able to articulate their needs and circumstances. Moutsios (2009) continues that in practice, wealthy nations like the United States maintain tariffs and subsidies on their goods and services while demanding openness in Caribbean economies. This begs the question, whose interests are being served by the WTO's global aims of eradicating restrictions and barriers to global trade and services, thereby opening domestic markets to capital flows? The GATS mandates, in its current constitution, offer little tangible benefits to OECS small islands. Unemployment rates, sustainable economic growth, and poverty are serious concerns (CARICOMSTATS, 2014). A quick study of the World Bank and IMF websites indicates that regional governments have conceded, however, and through the GATS provision for education, there has been the introduction of distance education, e-learning and privatisation in OECS territories (see also Alonso, 2002). The St. George's University in Grenada, a world-renowned medical campus, has now extended programs to include advanced degrees in the arts and humanities. In St. Lucia, the introduction of an offshore campus of Monroe College in 2007 created much controversy, with suspicions about the integrity of their programs and claims of lost revenues for the national Sir Arthur Lewis College (TheVoice slu Online, 2010). Other foreign-based universities and virtual campuses now offer online degrees in the OECS region, a situation which has impacted local and regional colleges and universities (Hickling-Hudson, 2000a).

The heavy presence of the World Bank and the IMF in the Caribbean is visible in the structural adjustment programs that are fundamental to these organisations. Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the IMF include measures geared at abolishing restrictions,

promoting exports, and reducing the public wage bill through privatisation and straightforward cuts (Green, 2002; Harvey, 2005; OAS, 2015). The short-term effects are acknowledged by the IMF to be negative, but are nevertheless justified by supposed long-term, sustainable gains to be made from the accumulation of revenue in borrowing countries (Green, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Melville, 2002; Moutsios, 2009; OAS, 2015). These conditions then directly and/or indirectly define the parameters of education policy decisions in borrowing countries, and as with the WTO's GATS, translate to freedom of the education enterprise, privatisation of educational services, and budgetary cuts in education initiatives, among others. While the impact of SAPs in the Caribbean and other regions remains contested, there is ample evidence in the literature on the deleterious effects on the poor and overall worsened economic and social conditions (Green, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Melville, 2002; Moutsios, 2009). For example, under the IMF in the 1980s, Grenada embarked on the privatisation of national assets, retrenchments and cuts in public spending, and removal of government subsidies among other austerity measures. And similar to other jurisdictions the impact was keenly manifested in declined living conditions, high poverty and unemployment; this context is depicted in appreciable detail in the calypso of Grenadian entertainer Elwin 'Black Wizard' McQuilkin titled "IMF" (listen at Spicevibes, 2015). What is significant about this situation is that in 2015, OECS islands continue to face these same challenges (see Green, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Moutsios, 2009). The supposed long-term and sustainable gains to be made from the accumulation of revenue in borrowing countries remain elusive. Today, in the face of the persistent economic recession, fluctuating oil prices on the international markets, and natural disasters exacerbating development efforts, it becomes more difficult to analyze precisely how the IMF's aims of promoting high employment and sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty are being realized in OECS countries.

An important factor in strengthening the influence of the Bank and IMF in the Caribbean is these institutions' influence in relation to other external lending agencies, through what Rizvi and Lingard (2010) describe as a consensus strategy. Countries successful in procuring loans are seen by other potential investors and funding agencies as politically and economically credible, which in turn motivates the latter to invest and divulge [more] financial assistance (Harvey, 2005; Klein 2007). Due to fiscal deficits, high debt, poor infrastructure and low human capital articulated above, local governments of OECS countries need to entice future investors in order to secure economic capital for their development initiatives. However, in the face of this 'consensus' trend, one can appreciate borrowing regional governments' quandary in attempting to balance contextual complexities while attempting to satisfy the mandates of neo-liberal lenders. And there are negative repercussions for borrowing countries' failure to comply with loan conditions, such as economic sanctions, drying up of aid, and blacklisting on international markets (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). For governments of struggling small economies, therefore, not only are sanctions undesirable, but non-compliance paints an uninviting picture to other potential investors, a scenario which regional governments understandably are anxious to avoid.

At the same time, an important political context which adds complexity to regional governments' ability to embrace the mandates of the international organisations concerns the volatility of government tenure in democratic OECS states. The political decisions made by regional governments are significantly influenced by this reality, and this context becomes relevant especially when analysed against the policies of the IMF, for instance, with regard to the supposed long term sustainable economic benefits of short term austerity measures. Contemporary Caribbean leaders are politically-savvy people who are very in tune with the

major ideologies and wants of their citizens. In my experience, the average Caribbean national views 'progress' as manifested in tangible outcomes, such as constructions of roads, building of stadia, hotels, and schools, job creation, subsidies, and yes, cash (economic hardship is faced by many, so it is unsurprising that hard cash in a poor man's pocket remains very effective in 'securing' his vote around election time). Given that, albeit in the short term, IMF conditions include retrenchment, budget cuts, and the removal of subsidies, governments in the region, despite needing capital to fund development initiatives, are necessarily hesitant to go that route. This reality speaks to level of dissonance between the mandates of international organizations and local and regional contexts.

I turn now to examining the level of incongruity between the educational reform mandates of the World Bank and the contexts of countries in the OECS with reference to two examples of the World Bank propagating neoliberal education reform in borrowing countries. Moutsios (2009) asserts that these examples point to the self-interests evident in these mandates, and thus demonstrate how these mandates principally serve the interests of powerful member states of the Bank. According to this theorist, in the 1960s and 1970s the thrust of Western education was in the development of technical and vocational training, with the World Bank prioritising the establishment of these fields over appeals from developing countries for funding in other areas. During that same period, the government of Grenada prioritised the development of educational programs in the arts and humanities, areas which were considered 'unpopular' for international funding. Instead, Grenada successfully secured aid from Cuba and Brazil; by the early 1980s, this newly-independent state had forged close social and educational alliances with Cuba, and renowned Brazilian educator Paulo Freire worked closely with Grenadian educators during this same period to revamp the national system of education (Hickling-Hudson, 1998, 2000, 2014). (However, the results were disbanded shortly after with the government coup and subsequent United States' 'intervention' in this country in 1983 (Brizan, 1998; Hickling-Hudson, 1988, 2000b; Steele, 2003), as a new, more 'Western-tolerant' government forged new economic alliance with the US. Many neo-liberal critiques argue that Western involvement in local governance is often precipitated by economic and political interests (Green, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007), a proposition which sheds light on the United States-Grenada situation discussed above.)

Similarly, Moutsios (2009) continues, when the West shifted its emphasis during the 1980s to prioritise higher education, the World Bank took up this mantra, stressing the introduction of tuition fees in post-secondary institutions and encouraging mass attendance. Steele (2003) asserts that the then most pressing educational needs of newly independent OECS territories were to increase primary and secondary school attendance and to attend to teacher training. However, as Steele explains, regional governments were often unable to secure funding for these locally-prioritised programmes. In keeping with the World Bank's emphasis on post-secondary education, however, the T. A. Marryshow Community College in Grenada (see Brizan, 1998; Steele, 2003) and the Sir Arthur Lewis College were two institutions to receive international aid and comply with the introduction and increase of tuition fees as stressed by the Bank during that period. More recently, in keeping with the new millennium global thrust of 'Education For All' (Archer, 2006) and 'No Child Left Behind' (Cawthon, 2007) policies, OECS territories have embarked on a drive to implement universal secondary education, despite clear fiscal, infrastructural and human resource shortcomings. As a secondary school teacher in Grenada during this period, I experienced how our government's attempts towards universal education exacerbated an already tense and unflattering education climate, what with

overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, limited space, poor school structures, and increasing number of students with special needs. Local news broadcasts and my participation in regional teacher conferences lead me to conclude that the circumstances in other islands are similar.

Given the significant level of dissonance of international mandates with regional contexts, and the highly negative short term impact of programmes of structural adjustments on the social and economic livelihood citizens, especially those already disproportionately marginalised, many regional governments do not approach the IMF or other lending organisations to aid in their development initiatives. This is despite serious fiscal, infrastructural and human capital challenges, vulnerability from having open economies and limited access to external capital, and their position far outside the sphere of influence at international development symposiums. This financial aid, if reimagined, could potentially serve tremendous economic and social benefits to these struggling countries.

Considerations moving forward

The issues addressed in this paper problematise the articulation of *a* global education that purports to meet the diverse needs of different places and peoples. By the evidence, desensitised, prescriptive and standardised policies couched in western principles of governance and development result in a series of cyclical and damaging consequences for the Caribbean region. Small islands of the OECS, in particular, are better served by policies which attend to their socio-historical, political, and geo-economic reality. This requires this sub-region, and the broader Caribbean, to embark on what Smith (2012) describes as decolonisation methodologies, an undertaking of disruption of the decontextualised, neoliberal agendas pervasive in former colonised OECS countries, and (re)creation of contextually relevant indigenous policy to serve these localities. Such meaningful, sustained development is predicated on an ontological and epistemological reassessment of the *nature* of international aid and the *processes* through which such aid is implemented in these states, and thus calls for radical changes in the ideologies of both international organizations and the OECS.

A necessary preliminary step is the establishment of a more synergistic relationship between international lending organisations and borrowing countries in the OECS, in which representatives from both sides engage in more nuanced discussions of broader themes relating to policy transfer and localised challenges of implementation. While allowing for the inevitability of a highly globalised environment shaping education policy, in particular, the aim of these dialogues could be to assist OECS small islands to “draw from global development initiatives to inform indigenous educational efforts” (Swapp, 2014, p. 3). A pivotal starting point would be to examine, more meaningfully, the local context of borrowing countries, with particular attention to factors which can enable or constrain success. Applied knowledge of the history, politics and culture of regional islands and how they influence development will facilitate a more equitable and socially-just relationship between both sides and concomitantly, the mandates attached to aid would reflect financial *support* - not *censure* – of OECS governments.

Improving the research capacity of the OECS sub-region to pave the way for empirical investigations that are grounded in indigenous forethought and execution can potentially facilitate dialogues in this newly reconstructed relationship. These kinds of research can fill the current gap between international mandates and local contexts of small islands, speaking to the needs of the region and of local countries, and thus informing discussions with international partners in the implementation of policy initiatives. A clearly established research model also

earns us respect in the international community and improves our leverage at international symposia and other forums in which we are able to use empirical data to articulate our needs and contexts. This research model builds on Ali's (2010) framework of moving the Caribbean region away from a consumption type approach to policy transfer to a more "contextually relevant policy research model" (p. 75). This is an ambitious but viable decolonising initiative, one that disrupts destabilising imperial systems. In practice, this model critically assesses the nature of international aid against local needs of OECS small islands, isolates and examines contextual factors which impact or can potentially impact development initiatives, and hypothesises and investigates sustainable outcomes.

Regional governments also have a responsibility to rethink political discourses at the local level regarding financial aid from institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Small islands of the OECS stand to benefit tremendously from international aid, but the *conditions* attached to such aid are a very problematic issue. Debates surrounding future international aid for the OECS region must therefore be premised on an understanding that financial aid in itself is not an indictment against governments, but represents opportunities for growth in all sectors. Similarly, OECS citizens can play an important role in facilitating their region's development. Despite, and perhaps due to, the complexities of our colonial heritage, we are, inherently, a resilient people. Through determination, prudence and hindsight we can shake the concomitantly persistent culture of dependency and learned helplessness to make significant progress. Education about the kinds of global issues that continue to thwart local governments' effort at development is needed if social unrest and political instability in member states are to be appeased. Such knowledge can enlighten citizens to become more supportive of their political leaders, thus reducing the level of anxiety governments experience in their quest to win votes through the manifestation of tangible developmental projects and goals. The road ahead is challenging but the mandate lies with all to be responsible, moral citizens dedicated to the development of the OECS and the broader Caribbean region.

Conclusion

The level of inconsistency between the mandates of international organisations and the contexts of small islands of the OECS was the main subject of this paper. The first part of the paper described the paper's postcolonial framework of inquiry, situating the vertical case study as the overarching investigative method and OECS small islands as main units of analysis. The next sections of the paper explored several socio-economic, political and geo-economic circumstances which enabled and constrained regional development, including the newness of independence and the relatively recent introduction of formalised education, the consumptive nature of Caribbean society, and the region's vulnerability to natural disasters. An examination of the global politics surrounding economic development followed, focusing on how aid-affiliated education policies proliferated in the OECS region are the outcome of both international and transnational influences, perpetuated by international lending agencies such as the IMF and World Bank. Within this discussion, the nature and purposes of these policies were problematised; the paper argued that these policies were couched in Westernized, neoliberal principles of development and driven by the powerful member states of these lending organisations, and insensitive to the contexts of small islands of the OECS. The final section of the paper put forward some considerations rooted in an overarching ontological and epistemological reassessment of the way financial aid is conceived and implemented in these developing small islands.

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