

The role of the State in the Provision of Higher Education

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Speech delivered at Daaga Hall, UWI on Wed 2 November, 2011 at Panel Discussion on the above theme. Organised by The Accreditation Council of TT and UWI.

Panellists were: Rodney Amar – Education Projects Specialist, Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, Emmanuel Gonsalves Esq – President of the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of TT (COSTAATT), Dr. Freddy James – Lecturer, School of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Education, UWI, Gerard Frederick – Executive Public Relations Officer, Student Guild, UTT.

Moderator: Dr Sandra Gift – Senior Programme Officer, Quality Assurance Unit, UWI.

Opening remarks by Michael Bradshaw – Executive Director, ACTT. Michael Bradshaw, Executive Director of ACTT welcomed participants.

Good afternoon brothers and sisters. All protocols observed. I want to place this theme within our local context.

Recently I heard some individuals on a radio programme laughing at what they perceived to be a joke. A young boy was asked what he wanted to “be” when he grows up. He replied that he wanted to be a bandit. This is not a laughing matter. It is an indictment on all of us; it diminishes all of us when our youths see ‘banditry’ as the way forward in life. Too many of our youths are dropping out of the education system. Our Education Minister said recently that about 4,000 students have dropped out of schools. This may be only the tip of the iceberg.

Some students continue to attend school but have ‘dropped out’ really as they have become disaffected and have disengaged themselves from what is going on at school. Are we reading the signs of the times? Have we put in place early warning systems and effective intervention strategies to save our youths?

We cannot talk about Higher Education (HE) without examining **the road that leads to HE**. What are some of the unjust obstacles that have been placed in the paths of our youths/young adults that prevent them from accessing HE or from progressing successfully through HE, and what is the role of the State in removing these obstacles? We keep singing the song of free education for all; free GATE funding etc. We need to peel off the layers to see that education in TT is a lottery and success depends on a number of factors which we have not addressed effectively.

If we want our citizens to make the most of HE, then we must address issues such as crime, poverty and **social exclusion**. How are we seeking to promote social inclusion? The State has a role in strengthening family life e.g. by implementing strategies to promote good parenting and by enhancing the quality of life of families. There is no agreed definition for social exclusion. The **UK’s Social Exclusion Unit** describes it as “a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown” (SEU 1997). As Walker and Walker 1997/8 stated, social exclusion is “the dynamic process of being shut out ... from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society”.

We need a national commitment to excellence in all that we do. Of course this commitment must be nurtured in the home first. Sadly, many of our youths do not have home lives in which parents or guardians are nurturing the right kind of morals or values in them. I agree with Prof Spence, that while parents have a responsibility to assist in the education of their children, in the absence of effective parenting, the State and the school must step in to fill the gap.

HE institutions have a vital role to play in today's world. As Charles Reed, Chancellor, The California State University, said: "... higher education reaps benefits not only for the individual but also for society." Indeed, the success of our students is, in many ways, linked to the success of our nation. Therefore, our HEIs should be centres of high quality teaching, learning and research.

HEIs face many challenges and opportunities. If they are to confront these challenges and grasp the opportunities that exist, there needs to be a genuine partnership between the State, HEIs, the private sector, the community; and between HEIs themselves. The State should encourage inter-institutional collaboration in TT and abroad e.g. as a way of sharing good practice and optimizing the use of limited resources.

It is important to build relationships within and between HEIs. CREDI knows about the importance of building new alliances. CREDI was established by an Act of Parliament (Act 341 of 1997) and was launched as a tertiary level educational institute in January 2008. It is registered and approved by ACTT. Currently there are about 600 students at CREDI. We recently held our first graduation ceremony – 14 graduates of the online Masters in Educational Leadership with UD, and 5 graduates of the Certificate course in Social Justice – also with UD.

CREDI is fortunate to have Dr Vena Jules as its Principal. As you will note from Wikipedia, "Hers is an extensive career of commitment, spanning some 48 years at all levels of the education system in TT."

I am a member of the Board of Management. We are working with the University of Dayton, Ohio, and Duquesne Univ., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA on programmes such as B.Ed., Masters in Educational Leadership, Masters in Theology, M. Sc., other Masters level programmes in communication, music, counselling, business and professional development and a Certificate course in Social Justice.

Students engage through a process entitled "blended learning which is a combination of modern distance learning methodologies and local academic coaching, classroom workshops and group study which is facilitated in Trinidad by CREDI professionals." As Bishop Jason Gordon, former Chair of CREDI, said: "Distance learning will remain a key feature of CREDI. The idea is not to build a campus, where students come and sit in a classroom, but to focus on technology and deliver an education in a cost-effective, efficient way, dispersed throughout TT."

It is essential that partnership between the State and HEIs be built within a framework of an overall **vision** by the State about the kind of person we wish to develop and the kind of society/nation we wish to build. To some extent, the current global financial crisis we face is the result of corruption and greed on the part of individuals whom some would call “highly intelligent, well-educated” people. As we all know, academic achievement on its own will not necessarily equip people with the tools they need to participate effectively in society. – personal development, character development that includes morality, ethics, integrity, conscience formation are also important. A good HEI is one that embraces an holistic approach. A good HEI must also be a provider of values - educating the whole person.

The role of the State, as it seeks to promote, enhance and regulate HE, is to read the signs of the times and ensure that its vision for HE and its policies take into consideration the changing needs of our globalized society/world.

Genuine partnership between the State and HEIs is important to ensure e.g. that the interest of students are protected. As well as ACTT and other bodies, TT’s *National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE)* has a key role to play in enhancing our HE sector.

It is worth note NCHE’s mandate is “to establish a regional qualifications framework and to strengthen quality in a diverse system across the world.” The commission’s specific terms of reference, as alluded to by the minister, have been summarised as follows:

- To advise on the development of a national qualifications framework within which all education and training institutions can co-exist;
- to work with the Economic Development Board and the Council for Competitiveness and Innovation to develop an approach to the development of the national education and training system;
- to conduct an examination of international trends and practices to inform a way forward for the sector;
- to establish the principles of sustainable funding of the sector; and,
- to advise and inform the ministry of the commission’s policy agenda and all other relevant bodies within the sector.”

The State should be examining the various programmes on offer in HEIs and the qualifications of those students who are graduating from HEIs to see if there are gaps between these and the needs of society. How relevant are our courses to the needs of society today?

Is there too much overlap/duplication in our HEIs? Are we wasting human and other resources? What areas of research should our HE institutions be focusing/collaborating on? Will the NCHE be checking to see if our HEIs are giving value for money?

In the recent budget speech, we heard that of the TT \$54.6 billion total expenditure – 2012 fiscal budget projection, Education and Training will receive TT \$8,717.8 million (nearly \$8.8 billion). The Government’s Policy Statement on Tertiary Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training, and Lifelong Learning in TT (p5) states that over the past decade TT had invested US \$2 billion in tertiary education and TVET. Recently Minister Fazal Karim stated that \$3 billion have been allocated to GATE since 2005.

However, simply throwing money at Education is not enough. Are we getting value for our investment? There are justice issues that we must address. As Furlong A. and Cartmel F. (2009) asks in their book: *Higher Education and Social Justice*. Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK. ISBN 9780335223619: “Is access to higher education really open to all? How does the experience of higher education vary between social groups? Are graduate jobs harder to find for some than for others?”

What are the barriers, if any, that hinder the progress of some of our students? Do students from disadvantaged families face greater difficulties in securing jobs after they have successfully completed their courses? And, as David Blunkett, former Minister of Education in the UK said in 2000, HEIs “need to think much harder about what they offer students, and be willing to ask their graduates whether their courses could have been better - and act on the answers.” This must be part of our culture of assessment and measuring the educational value added by our HEIs.

And what about the Scholarships we offer (348 National Scholarship awardees – CAPE, 2011 – 71 open and 247 Additional Schols.)? There are a number of justice issues relating to scholarships that we can discuss e.g. Are the scholarships in areas that will help take our nation forward? What strategies are we employing to encourage graduates to work in TT – as opposed to seeking employment abroad?

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has the responsibility for the tertiary education system.

Its website lists the range of institutions under its remit: “The system consists of about three publicly funded universities/colleges; training and technical vocational institutions and a range of administrative arrangements with foreign professional bodies, technical/vocational institutions, colleges and universities largely with private tertiary education providers” – e.g. UWI, UTT, COSTAATT, Cipriani Labour College, NIHERST.

The role of that Ministry is to ensure it is data-driven so that it can effectively monitor, assess, and evaluate input, outcomes, and value for money in relation to these HEIs. With the current budgetary constraints and the call from society for accountability, there is pressure on the State to ensure that we are getting value for the money that is spent on education.

We must move from a system of ‘monitoring and evaluation by vaps’. We need effective results-based M&E systems that are ongoing e.g. at the levels of Policy, Programmes and Projects, and that takes into account not only local data but regional and international data. As Osborne and Gaebler said in 1992: “If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure...If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it. If you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it.”

We keep ploughing money into education year after year. We need effective systems in place that will tell us how well our educational institutions are doing. What about the value-added dimension of our educational institutions? Do we really know what value they are adding to the teaching and learning process? How effective are the governance structures of our HEIs? What strategies are leaders in HEIs using to create a culture of quality in their institutions?

The Government should have some idea about the extent to which our HEI are contributing to human and social development in TT. Do we have standards in HE that are widely known – even within our HE institutions? Who is checking to see whether or not our HE institutions are performing or underperforming? How effective are the governance structures of our HEIs? Is there academic rigour in our HEIs? What advice is given to these institutions to enhance their performance? All these are justice issues.

As Vice-President of the Education Discussion Group, which comprises about 20 Educationalists who have a wealth of experience and expertise between us, I know that since the inception of our group in 2004, we have been pleading for Inspection procedures to be introduced in our educational institutions - similar to the ones used in the UK by Ofsted. Our School Supervisors are not trained to evaluate the performance of schools in the way that a School Inspector is trained. Inspection procedures are a MUST if the State is to respond to 21st Century needs. As part of this process, we must develop more effective systems to collect, store, retrieve and use data at the level of Govt. Ministries, schools, universities etc.

I used to be Deputy Director of Education/Head of Quality Assurance/Chief Inspector of Schools in a London Borough and I can attest to the value of institutional inspection/performance appraisal – particularly if it is linked to an Institutional Development Plan and to the Professional Development of Teachers/Lecturers.

The process of inspection has changed somewhat since I left England. Prof Spence's son, Louis, is a Head of Dept in a Secondary School in the UK and he says that "The Ofsted inspection regime has changed in at least two ways: Firstly, schools deemed to be performing well, based on data such as exam results and value-added, are now left to their own devices without inspection for longer. Secondly, each school has to submit a **self-evaluation form** on a yearly basis. Much of the Ofsted inspection is then focused on whether the inspector agrees with the senior staff diagnosis, and is happy with the action plans on areas of weakness. This means that smaller numbers of inspectors are now employed though the number of classroom observations done by inspectors is going up in 2012 because of an emphasis on teaching and learning. Also they look to see whether members of the management team in the school are carrying out adequate observations. Please see link below.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/draft-framework-for-school-inspection-january-2012>")

If we are to improve standards in HE, we must improve standards lower down the chain - in early years, primary, and secondary schools. Far too many of our students are scoring 30% or less at SEA. And although the latest OECD research highlights the fact that "Repeat years do low-achievers no good", we still force some students to repeat a year or two at Primary level – after sitting SEA. See link below:

[**Repeat years do low-achievers no good: OECD**](#)

www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/education/repeat-years-do-lowachievers-no-good-oecd...

The State has a duty to monitor the ability of students to benefit from HE. Many students enter tertiary level institutions without the necessary knowledge and skills required to succeed at that level e.g. life skills.

If our Government is to be accountable to the people for the money allocated to Education, it is critical that the Government introduces a system for evaluating the quality of our educational institutions – including our HE institutions. Such a system will help us to determine the effectiveness of leadership and management in HEI, whether the pedagogy employed by staff and the resources available in HEI are appropriate for today's students, whether the content of the curriculum in each faculty/University is of a high standard.

I was reading comments made in an online students' room. One University student said: "I'm getting awesome grades, firsts with a few upper seconds, but I'm not convinced that the First and Upper Second's really reflect on me being an awesometastic student. Frankly, I think they were far too easy and that the marking scheme for my exams and coursework was of way too low a standard." <http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=1280339>

Is there academic rigour in our many HEIs?

See articles such as: **University standards being 'dumbed down', claim academics – UK Telegraph.** www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/4942853/University-standards-being-dumbed... Graeme Paton, Education Editor 05 Mar 2009 and **Why university standards have fallen | Geoffrey Alderman.** 10/03/2010 www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/mar/10/universities-standards-blair-target

The need for monitoring and evaluation systems is particularly important in light of the size of the private post-Secondary and Tertiary Level Education sector in Trinidad and Tobago. Only effective partnerships will assist in this process.

I have a copy of a Proposal for collaboration between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago – Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education and the Association of Post Secondary and Private Tertiary Level Institutions of Trinidad and Tobago (refer to document from Sue Carlton and team).

According to the Proposal, "Post Secondary and Private Tertiary Level Institutions of Trinidad and Tobago accounts for approximately 36 % of all Full Time students and 95% of all institutions at this level." (Statistical Digest on Post Secondary and Tertiary Education, 2010).

In our fledgling Democracy, as Catholics say, "The state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good." (http://www.osjspm.org/major_themes.aspx). Put simply, the "common good" means creating conditions that will enable each person to realise his/her potential; to live productive, purposeful lives and to contribute to nation-building.

Our people are our greatest asset. Therefore, the State should strive to ensure that the economy serves people – that it is people-centred. The first Pillar of the Government’s 7 interconnecting Pillars supporting sustainable national development focuses on People Centred Development (People, Poverty, Security, IT Connectivity, Diversified Knowledge Economy, Good Governance, and Foreign Policy).

I suggest that on its own, the Government cannot build sustainable development. Citizens, the private and public sectors, NGOs, FBOs, CBOs etc must all put our shoulders to the proverbial wheel to take our nation forward.

In its 7 Pillars the Government acknowledges that "in a knowledge-driven economy, a strong basic education system and significant participation in tertiary education make a decisive difference." The Government says it is committed “to making human development a central thrust through the education system and through the creation of other infrastructure to support lifelong learning, skills building institutional strengthening and building of a competitive economy.”

How is this commitment “panning out” in reality? The Government’s National Development Agenda for TT states: “Prosperity for all is the commitment”. Yet, we know that there are more than 300,000 squatters in TT and that the 2005 statistics of 16.7% of our people living in poverty are out of date. The figure is now much higher. Planning to meet the needs of the people must be based on a vision for society that is **inclusive** and that seeks to optimise the use of the nation’s resources since we are all stewards of the resources that have been given to us in trust by our maker.

We must develop a culture of accountability and transparency at all levels in our society. As Charles Reed, Chancellor, The California State University said: “...we need to make sure that the rest of society...believes in us. That’s why we must continue to serve students with quality and accountability.”

To be accountable, we must put quality assurance systems in place in our HEIs. As Prof. Spence said to me recently, securing accreditation from ACTT for courses in HEI does not mean that quality in the implementation of what’s on paper is assured. This reminded me of my school inspection days when, with my team of inspectors, we examined in schools the match or mismatch between **the intended, the offered, and the received curriculum**.

The State’s planning with respect to Higher Education must be underpinned by a concern to promote **justice** – a concept which conjures up images of fairness, equity, equality, and inclusion. UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) defines higher education as “a human right and as a public good”. UNESCO sees HE as the “most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development.”

HEI, however, is not about filling spaces in our HEIs or about private HEIs setting up ‘shop’ because GATE funding is available from the Government. We must be concerned about the quality of teaching, learning, research etc in our HEIs.

It is helpful to view HEI from an international perspective also. Sir John Daniel said in his presentation: *Expanding Higher Education for the 21st Century: How Can We Expand Open*

Learning? (at the Asian Assoc. of Open Universities, 2006 Annual Conference, Yunnan, China)

“...there are two trends that are contributing to the expansion of higher education and open learning around the world, first the growth of private providers operating for profit, and second the steady increase in cross-border education, that is to say the supply of distance learning courses and programmes across national borders.” At the global level, he says, a forecast of 110 million students by 2020 will likely be reached by 2010 (last year). He says:

“The challenges of the knowledge economy are raising people's aspirations for education everywhere. Better communications have put them in closer touch with the wider world so it will be increasingly difficult for governments to refuse the popular demand for better access to higher education. People will overcome obstacles and find their way to educational opportunities just like flooding water goes around an obstacle.

“A particular challenge is the great disparities in participation rates between countries. In OECD countries the age participation rate (i.e. the proportion of the 18-23 year-old age cohort getting tertiary education) is now around 50%, whereas in many developing countries it is less than 10%.

You see this in the countries represented in AAOU. Korea and Japan have some of the world's highest participation rates whereas in south Asia you find some of the lowest. There is a huge challenge of catch-up.?”

<http://www.col.org/resources/speeches/2006presentations/Pages/2006-10-14.aspx>

On 28 Oct our Minister of Education, Hon Tim Gopeesingh, said in his presentation to those gathered at UNESCO's Conference in Paris that

“...we are... making rapid strides in our quest to achieve your stated goal of Universal Early Childhood Care and Education. We already have fulfilled the mandate of universal primary and secondary education. In tertiary education, we have achieved a forty five percent (45%) fulfilment, moving quickly to sixty percent (60%).” The Policy on Tertiary Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training, and Lifelong Learning in TT (p5), aims “to achieve a targeted participation rate of at least 60% by 2015.”

The challenge for the State and for HEIs is to monitor **quality** in our institutions. Are we short-changing our students? What are the implications of recruiting larger numbers of students? P. 5 of the Ministry's Policy statement on HE... states that tertiary education participation rate within recent years have increased from 7% in 2001, to 15% in 2004 and 40% in 2008.

We need to examine the needs of our HEIs to meet increased numbers of students e.g. the infrastructural, resource needs etc.

For example, I understand that there are about 18,000 students at UWI and that about 4,000 students graduated last year. My maths tells me that about 6,000 students should have

graduated (if the courses run for 3 years). What happened to the others? How many have dropped out? Why? And what were the grades of those who graduated? What pastoral care systems exist in our HEIs to support students who are experiencing difficulties. These are justice issues. Can our HEIs cope effectively with increased numbers e.g. we may now have labs with 300 students. Do we have enough tutors/lecturers for our classes?

Justice requires that we measure the *through put* in our HEIs e.g. if some of our PhD students are taking 4 and 5 years to complete degrees that should be completed in about 3 years, are we checking to see if there is something wrong? What quality control systems exist in our HEIs? What's the quality of research, teaching and learning in our HEIs? (refer to EDG's suggestion to former Ministers that to support research at the Ministry of Ed. Etc., students at HEIs could be asked to do research on specific issues. Our research unit at the Ministry is very small. They can't do it all. Generally we need to expand research capacity in our HEIs.

What performance indicators exist in our HEIs? Who is collecting and analysing data relevant to issues such as access to HEIs, student retention, progression and achievement? Universities are concerned about this issue. As the University of Worcester's website states: "non-completion has been investigated further in order to highlight courses, the location of the courses, dates when students left and the reasons why the students left the course." This can assist "in identifying areas that the University may need to focus upon in order to improve its achievement in the areas of widening participation, progression and retention."

Does the data collected assist HEIs to improve performance and avoid waste? Newsday reported on 22 Oct. that "According to Tertiary Education Minister Dr Fazal Karim, the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) programme has been subject to rampant abuse by "programme hopping" students who get the State to fund the same courses over and over.

"These "perpetual students", he said, end up earning a steady stream of income – at the State's expense – regardless of the outcome of their studies... Students are repeating the same programme at different institutions...We cannot continue with this haemorrhage of resources in our financial system."

I agree with the sentiments expressed in a recent Guardian Editorial (Making GATE accountable – Sun 23 Nov), which suggested that "in his search for 'slackers',...the minister must be careful to keep his focus on achievement and value added to the nation...Better to spend the time investigating the results of the GATE programme in more useful ways by examining the alignment between graduates and the marketplace that the project is meant to enrich....The kind of spending designed as an investment in the people of TT, demands not only the kind of policing of student engagement that Minister Karim is advocating but also the maximisation of the focus of the post-graduation two-year contract of service and a strategy that will keep GATE graduates working productively in TT beyond that..."

HEIs have a responsibility to offer counselling/career advice to students. As COSAATT's President, Mr Gonsalves Esq. Said, the Minister has to be careful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater in his efforts to avoid waste.

As stated earlier, in total, the State has spent a total of \$3 billion on GATE from 2005 to 2011. The Minister announced that GATE will receive its largest ever allocation of \$650 million in 2012. (GATE was allocated an average of \$428 million in funding per year from 2005 to 2011)

We must view the above within the context of seeking to raise the aspirations of all our people to see that HE is not out of their reach. Our task is to get our people on the HE ladder and help them experience success. As Professor Steve Smith, President of Universities UK says: "The sector is continually looking at ways to increase participation in higher education. As we have stressed for some time now, the **key** lies in raising awareness earlier on in the education process. Universities are working closely with schools and colleges to raise aspirations and attainment levels among young people, and ensure high quality information about higher education." Are we doing this in TT?

The State, in planning for HE, must consider the development of policies, programmes and strategies that will enable citizens to participate in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of society/the world. We need policies and programmes that will prepare our people for life in our fast changing world. We live in an information age in which access to information and communications are at our children's fingertips. How is the Government planning to use e.g. ICT to facilitate teaching and learning throughout the education system?

If we agree that learning is a lifelong process, then Government planning should reflect this understanding. Age is no barrier to learning (e.g. last November (2010), 92 year old pensioner, Archie Scott, from Inverness, Scotland, passed the advanced driving test. His first driving test was in 1935). So in our planning, let's not put a ceiling on people's potential.

I have recently returned from London and was pleasantly surprised to see my 3 year old great nephew navigating the iPad adeptly to access his favourite ABC application and pictorial stories. And I am still nervous about using my iPad.

Are our educational institutions - at all levels – equipped to deal with this ICT generation? Are we engaging with our students to understand what they know and to determine whether or not we have kept up with developments that are at their fingertips?

I am reminded of the 1939 educational "parable" of **the sabre toothed curriculum** which I read about during my Masters in Education Course. Michael Flavin tells the story well

(idcharred.wordpress.com/2010/04/01/the-saber-tooth-curriculum-1939):

"The sabre-tooth tiger is a beast with unbending ferocity and an unwillingness to compromise. In this sense the title of 'The Sabre-Tooth Curriculum' embodies one of the central concerns of the piece, namely that educational systems have a tendency to think of

themselves as fixed and immutable whereas, if they are to be relevant, they have to fleet-footed, like the antelope who appear in the article half-way through.

“New-Fist’s (the main character) approach to education is utilitarian. He wants learning to have a purpose, for it to suit the needs of the society in which it operates. Hence he devises a curriculum, complete with aims and objectives:

“Having set up an educational goal, new-Fist proceeded to construct a curriculum for reaching that goal. ‘What things must we tribesmen know how to do in order to live with full bellies, warm backs, and minds free from fear?’ he asked himself.

“New-Fist, a radical in his time, devises a successful curriculum. However, over time, the radical system becomes the entrenched, conservative system. Hence, as times change the curriculum loses its relevance, and a new breed of radicals challenge with a new curriculum.

“‘The Sabre-Tooth Curriculum’ argues that education has no value if it is not relevant to what comes after education. We cannot expect students to buy-in if they do not perceive relevance in what they are learning, and how they are learning it. However, in the twenty-first century, with the advent of digital technologies, society is moving at a faster pace than we have been accustomed to in recent generations. Therefore, how can we have an education system that prepares us for society, when the complexion of that society will be different by the time the learners enter that society as, hopefully, economically, socially and culturally productive citizens or subjects? (That is the challenge the State, and all of us must face).

“One thing we can say about the twenty-first century is that our skills will need regular renewal over the course of our lifetimes. Therefore, learning to learn should be integrated into our own curriculum, to create fleet of foot learners who can respond to changing landscapes.”

* **The State’s vision** for Higher Education should be one that **promotes excellence**. If we set our sights too low, then our expectations as a nation will create roles for our people – roles that will imprison them at the level of mediocrity. The challenges of globalisation demand that the State, and indeed, all of us, strive for excellence or we will continue to be left behind.

It is important to note that HE is one of the 12 Pillars of competitiveness in the **World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2011 – 2012**. TT **ranked 81 out of 142** countries (up by 3 places. Score – 4.00) “While this represents an absolute movement 3 spots up, in relative terms we stayed constant.”

It is interesting to note that the most problematic factors for doing business in TT include: crime, poor work ethic in the national labour force (no. 2), and low productivity. These must be of concern to the State and to HEIs.

Barbados, at **42nd** place, “moves up one position in the rankings despite a severe deterioration of its macroeconomic stability. The decline in tourism resulting from the economic downturn has had a serious negative impact on the island’s general economy as well as its public finances in recent years.... Notwithstanding these weaknesses, Barbados can still leverage its strengths in terms of its stable, transparent, and reliable institutions (18th),

high-quality infrastructures (22nd), and excellent educational system (ranked 5th in terms of primary education quality, 15th for the entire system, and 10th for the quality of math and science education).”

The 12 pillars of competitiveness

Basic requirements

- Institutions
- Infrastructure
- Macroeconomic environment
- Health and primary education

Efficiency enhancers

- Higher education and training
- Goods market efficiency
- Labor market efficiency
- Financial market development
- Technological readiness
- Market size

Innovation and sophistication factors

- Business sophistication
- Innovation

The report states that “Latin America and the Caribbean will need to address some of the persistent challenges that constrain its competitiveness. While the region is vast and heterogeneous as a whole, four main key challenges that affect each country differently can be highlighted: (1) weak institutions with high costs associated with a lack of physical security; (2) poor development of infrastructure; (3) an inefficient allocation of production and human resources; and, increasingly, (4) a lag in innovation vis-à-vis more developed, but also emerging, economies...Addressing these challenges in the next decade will be crucial to ensure the economic and social progress of the region.”

* (“This year’s report findings show that **Switzerland** tops the overall rankings. **Singapore** overtakes **Sweden** for second position. Northern and Western European countries dominate the top 10 with Sweden (3rd), **Finland** (4th), Germany (6th), the Netherlands (7th), Denmark (8th) and the **United Kingdom (10th)**. Japan remains the second-ranked Asian economy at 9th place, despite falling three places since last year.” The **United States** continues the decline that began three years ago, falling one more position to **5th** place.”)

And then there is the **UNDP’s Human Development Index –B’dos = ranks 42.**
TT ranks 62 out of 184 countries in 2011 - High Human Development.

(Categories: "very high human development", "high human development", "medium human development", and "low human development" countries. “The Human Development Index (HDI) is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living for countries worldwide. It is a standard means of measuring well-being, especially child welfare. It is used to distinguish whether the country is a developed, a developing or an under-developed country, and also to measure the impact of economic policies on quality of life. From 2010 method used to calculate HID - Indices include: Life expectancy at birth, Mean years of schooling (Years that a 25-year-old person or older has spent in schools), Expected years of schooling (Years that a 5-year-old child will spend with his education in

his whole life), and Income index: Gross national income at purchasing power parity per capita.” (Wikipedia))

TT Government’s National Agenda states (p17) that one of its medium term priorities is Human Capital Development which “entails not only making strategic investments in education and health sectors but also in the areas of Poverty Reduction and Human Resource Development.” One of the State’s strategies is “empowerment of the poor through education and training...”

Sadly, there is a yawning gap between nice sounding terms used in Government documents e.g. ‘capacity building’, ‘social capital’, ‘investing in people’, ‘empowering people’ and the reality on the ground.

In the Catholic Church we use the term: “integral human development” (see Pope Benedict XVI’s Encyclical, *Charity in Truth*). Put simply, integral human development means the development of all dimensions of a person (moral, spiritual, physical, mental, cultural etc) and of each person – no one should be left behind.

* We need **transformational leadership** at the level of the State and in our educational institutions if we are to improve the quality of HE; if we are to develop critical, innovative, creative, ethical thinkers; if we are to develop the characters of our citizens and if we are to develop a knowledge-based, innovative society that can compete in our globalised world.

We need to be able to determine what the characteristics of high performing HE institutions are – See the book: *High Performing Colleges. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as a Framework for Improving Higher Education*. Volume I: Theory and Concepts [and] Volume II: Case and Practice. **Authors:** [Seymour, Daniel, Ed.](#); And Others . Prescott Publishing Co., 106 S. Main St., Maryville, MO 64468 (\$75 plus \$4 for shipping and handling). (The book emphasises the practical application of a Baldrige self-assessment to a college or university). *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*

“Research has shown that there is no silver bullet-no single thing that schools can do to ensure high student performance. Rather, high performing schools tend to show evidence of the following nine characteristics:

1. **Clear and Shared Vision and Purpose** - Everybody knows where they are going and why. That vision is shared-everybody is involved. The vision is developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistency of purpose.
2. **High Standards and Expectations** - Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and that they can teach all students. There is recognition of barriers for some students to overcome, but the barriers are not insurmountable. Students become engaged in an ambitious and rigorous course of study.
3. **Effective School Leadership** - Effective leadership is required to implement change processes within the school. This leadership takes on many forms. Principals often play this role, but so do teachers and other staff, including those in the district office. Effective leaders advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

4. **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication** - There is constant collaboration and communication between and among teachers of all grades. Everybody is involved and connected, including parents and members of the community, to solve problems and create solutions.
5. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with the Standards** - Curriculum is aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Research-based materials and teaching and learning strategies are implemented. There is a clear understanding of the assessment system, what is measured in various assessments and how it is measured.
6. **Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning** - Teaching and learning are continually adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessment are used to improve student performances and also to improve the instructional program.
7. **Focused Professional Development** - Professional development for all educators is aligned with the school's and district's common focus, objectives, and high expectations. It is ongoing and based on high need areas.
8. **Supportive Learning Environment** - The school has a safe, civil, healthy, and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff, and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.
9. **High Level of Community and Parent Involvement** - There is a sense that all educational stakeholders have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Parents, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.”
www.sje.wednet.edu/main/ninechar.html

Our presence here today highlights the fact that we recognise the importance of our mission to develop and deliver high quality, student-centred education that meets the needs of our people. As Jamie P. Merisotis, President, Lumina Foundation for Education said (2010), “we need a student-centred system—one that is flexible, accessible, accountable and committed to quality”. We must work tirelessly to promote a culture of quality at all levels in our education system in TT.

Let’s move forward with confidence in our ability to meet the many the challenges that confront us. The progress of our people and of our nation depends on this. I thank you.

END