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Report on the status of adult learning and education in Caribbean States & the UNESCO Sub-regional preparatory consultation for the Caribbean (April 2021)

Towards the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education

This report presents the developments, achievements and challenges in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) based on interviews undertaken with ALE consultants and organisational representatives from eleven English-speaking Caribbean countries in June, 2021; the report also reflects the findings derived from the participation and presentations given by ALE representatives from 18 countries in the English-speaking Caribbean during the UNESCO Sub-regional preparatory consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII on April 28, 2021.

Education 2030

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The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to **"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."** The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

1. Introduction

Background and context

The Caribbean sub-region comprises 28 countries that border on or are fully situated in the Caribbean Sea. The focus for this report was provided by the findings on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) from the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) 18 member countries and the Human Resource Development (HRD) Commission.

The Caribbean countries are organised and managed in two distinct groups: the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) whose members are also part of CARICOM. The Member States under consideration range in size: from Jamaica with almost three million people (2,961,167) to Montserrat with fewer than 5,000 people (4,992), in 2020.[1] The education of their citizens is an important focus area for every country.

The government-funded public education systems in all other countries—except for The Bahamas that administers its own examinations by the end of secondary school—ceases at Grade 11, with regional examinations that culminate in the award of the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC). Graduates can continue on with studies leading to the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) at the end of Grade 12 or 13.[2]

In 2016, a recent illustration of academic achievement at the secondary level, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) reported,

> Sixty-six per cent of subject entries entered for the May/June 2016 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations achieved Grades I-III, the acceptable grades at CSEC. This is just two percentage points below that of 2015 when 68 per cent of entries achieved similar grades.[3]

These statistics reflect that two-thirds of those who sat the examinations were successful in 2016, marking a considerable improvement in secondary school graduation in the formal school system. However, the results also indicate that a sizeable cohort leave secondary education without academic certification.

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[1] See Appendix 1 for a complete list of the population of each Caribbean country.

[2] Successful completion of CAPE subjects is necessary for entry for some university degrees. The Caribbean Examinations Council awards Certificates (after award of 10 credits and one year of study), Diplomas (successful completion of a minimum of six units, including Caribbean Studies, achieving a minimum of 60 credits) and an Associate Degree (completion of seven CAPE units including Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies).

[3] Downloaded from https://www.cxc.org/csec-results-2016 on June 15, 2021.

The growth and acceptance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Uncertified school leavers across the region have faced serious challenges in obtaining well-paid work in their vocation of choice. Therefore, the development of formal skills training systems has been an attempt to generate alternative opportunities for those who do not wish to follow an academic construct, but are interested in acquiring skills-training that will lead to employment. TVET has become a viable way for learners to gain certification to improve their potential for employment over the course of their working lives. Students who perform poorly on the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) can opt for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the end of primary school;[4] unemployed and unskilled youth seeking certification can opt for re-training after leaving school; if, after joining the workforce, workers opt for skills upgrading when they are adult learners.[5] Learners who complete skills courses are certified through the award of national vocational qualifications (NVQs). More recently, Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs), which are growing in credibility and acceptability, especially among employers.

The case of Jamaica's educational evolution is instructive: in order to address the challenges in the educational system, and being aware of the 50 percent literacy rate in the country, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) initially established the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) in 1974. The success of Jamaica's literacy programme is reflected in the fact that literacy in 2020 stood at 88.1 percent.[6]

Over the period, JAMAL evolved into the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning, offering not only literacy training, but the High School Diploma Equivalency Programme (HSDEP). In order to broaden the reach of adult learning beyond literacy skills and increase the number of qualified skilled workers in the country, the GOJ established the Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust in 1982 and expanded it to include the National Training Agency (HEART/NTA) in 1991. HEART/NTA serves as the facilitating and coordinating body for workforce development in Jamaica, providing access to training, competence assessment and certification for all working age Jamaicans and offering career development and employment facilitation services across Jamaica.[7]

Because of the significant number of students leaving secondary school without certification in academic subjects, and the growing need for skilled graduates in the region, under the leadership of HEART/NTA Caribbean states agreed to develop National Training Agencies, where learners would be encouraged to undertake skills training: The Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA),[8] an association of National Training Agencies and

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4   TVET at Grades nine to 11 does not qualify as ALE.

5   Originally skills training (TVET) served those with limited academic inclination; however, in 2021, while skills training is still offered to learners enrolled at the secondary school level, skills training is equated with competency training and appeals directly to employers. Many workers register for skills training that will enhance their employability, and employers send workers on adult education TVET courses that will upgrade and enhance the quality of their work force.

6   Downloaded from http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/jm

7   In 2020 Jamaica's National Training Agency (NTA) was renamed National Service Training Agency. It operates in tandem with HEART Trust and is known as HEART/NSTA Trust.

8   CANTA began with three members—Barbados TVET Council, Jamaica Heart Trust/NTA and Trinidad &

other TVET apex bodies in CARICOM states established in November 2003. HEART/NSTA became the model for National Training Agencies region-wide. Currently, there are NTAs in 14 Caribbean States only: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos do not have an NTA.

As more NTAs were established, they combined resources at the regional level to establish common standards and programmes:

> The need for the coordination and rationalisation of TVET and the move to establish a Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) including proposals for the free movement of certified skilled labour prompted the National Training Agencies (NTAs) and TVET apex bodies in the region to exploit the benefits of joint and concerted efforts. The Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA) was, therefore, established with responsibility for the coordination of TVET in CARICOM states.[9]

The CARICOM states have included TVET initiatives as central in their reporting on ALE in the Caribbean. Indeed, the presentation by CANTA at the CONFINTEA VII Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation featured the role of TVET in ALE. In summarising ALE activities within the context of CANTA, the following initiatives were cited:

- Developing literacy and numeracy skills

- Creating professional development opportunities

- Strengthening overall employability and core competencies

- Developing skills in vocational areas that are important to the territory

- Accessing employment and transitioning to other programmes.

With the exception of developing literacy and numeracy skills, all initiatives listed are TVET-related.[10]

The impact of COVID on the ALE programmes in the Caribbean

It is impossible to discuss ALE in the current environment without examining the impact of the COVID pandemic in 2020-21. COVID had both positive and negative impacts on ALE and its operations in the Caribbean. While COVID was not discussed in all reporting settings, interviewees[11] had strong opinions about the impact of COVID on ALE programmes and learners.

Tobago NTA and now comprises 14 countries. For more information see: http://cantaonline.org/about-us.

9   Downloaded from http://cantaonline.org/ on June 16, 2021.

10   Adult learners also pursue CSEC subjects; however, recently there has been greater emphasis on CANTA's activities in Caribbean ALE.

11   The consultant circulated a questionnaire refined and developed with UNESCO approval to representatives of the Caribbean HRD Commission who were targeted to participate in the data collection for this report. The data from the questionnaire were combined with the data in the country reports at the UNESCO Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII.

The positive impact was:

- COVID hastened/forced shift from face-to-face teaching and learning to online and/or blended learning (86 % of respondents).

- Online class reduced travel costs for students (five of the interviewees reported this benefit for learners).

- Fewer face-to-face meetings meant budgetary savings for the Ministry.

- The ALE programmes were forced to increase the capacity for ICT in order for the programmes to operate.

- Because of increased videoconferencing opportunities, instructors and staff gained new skills.

- To address the situation, some small businesses provided equipment and 70 percent offered opportunities to "graduates" when they finished their training.

The negative impact was:

- Institutions closed (13-month closure in Belize) and learners dropped out of their courses.

- Five countries reported that TVET courses were reduced to one day per week of face-to-face classes, lengthening duration of programmes.

- Learners/prospective learners without funds to purchase data plans or lacking access to connectivity/bandwidth/devices dropped out of classes (reported by four interviewees).

- Learners were forced to get jobs to support themselves and/or their families during the pandemic and dropped out of classes (reported by three interviewees and two countries).

- Face-to-face classes were limited in size (maximum 15 learners) and number (lack of trainers).

- Six interviewees reported that it was difficult to start new programmes in atmosphere of uncertainty.

- In countries with non-English-speaking immigrants, it was challenging to entice them to join classes (Belize).

- Absence of classroom contact was challenging for kinesthetic learners (reported by two interviewees).

- Trainees reported that they were not as prepared for work as they would have wanted to be.

- Those enrolled in basic education and in basic skills courses suffered more—they perceived that they benefit from face-to-face learning (six interviewees).

- There was more negative impact on lower socio-economic groups of learners (all interviewees).

Traditional candidates for Adult Learning and Education

The current literacy rate across the Caribbean states is 88.1 percent. However, the cohort over 65 years of age and older had a reported literacy rate of 66.6 percent in 2016[12] with women's literacy being slightly higher than men's. These older adults have been the traditional target audience of ALE programmes; however, now ALE is targeting out of school youth, as well as older adults.

2. Methodology

This report is constructed on the developments, achievements and challenges in ALE that were reported in interviews between the consultant and organisational spokespersons of 11 Caribbean countries during June, 2021 and reports presented by country representatives at the UNESCO Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII on April 28, 2021.[13]

The methodology of this report included:

- Review of relevant national, regional and international publications and websites addressing ALE, lifelong learning and TVET/skills training;

- Review and analysis of country and organisational presentations made at the UNESCO Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII (April 2021) in relation to the components of the BFA;

- Analysis of responses in circulated questionnaires[14] to ALE stakeholders in the region requesting current data on ALE in Caribbean states and application of that analysis to the ALE Trends and Challenges in relation to the BFA;

- Virtual interviews with adult education managers and representatives of the CARICOM HRD Commission involved in ALE,[15] and the Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII stakeholders;

- Analysis of findings—both commonalities among countries' experiences and recommendations from the Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean

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12 UNESCO statistics downloaded August 15, 2021 from http://uis.unesco.org/

13 Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks & Caicos.

14 The two questionnaires—one interview questions and one data collection—were circulated to UNESCO for approval prior to circulation to the targeted stakeholders.

15 See Appendix 2 for the relationships between interviewees and various levels of ALE management.

for CONFINTEA VII and stakeholder interviews using the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) as the model.

The Belém Framework for Action (2009)

UNESCO's Belém Framework for Action (BFA), which was the outcome document of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Learning and Education (CONFINTEA VI) in 2009, has been used to report the status of ALE in the Caribbean in 2021. The Framework elements are:

- Definition of ALE, Lifelong Learning (LL) and Continuing Education (CE)

- Policy

- Governance of ALE

- Finance

- Participation, Inclusion and Equity

- Quality

The triennial Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) tracks progress achieved in implementing the BFA in UNESCO Member States. This report makes reference to data contained in the GRALE 1 (2009)—the foundation for the BFA and GRALE 4 (2019)—that monitored the extent to which UNESCO Member States had applied their international commitments regarding ALE into practice. The GRALE IV provided guidance for the foundational questions that Caribbean Member States addressed at the Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean.

Research gathered on the status of ALE in the Caribbean since 2009 has been organised to feature elements of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA).

3. Trends revealed in the research on the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) in Caribbean states

The following analysis arises from historical research, responses to questionnaires administered to representatives of 14 Caribbean countries, interviews conducted with 11 of them and the reports presented by six Caribbean countries at the Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean in April 2021.

Of the 11 virtual interviewees in the study for this report, eight interviewees had more than 25 years' experience with and/or working in ALE. There were a few "newcomers" (total of three) with ALE experience under five years.

The interviewees reported having the following experience with and areas of focus in ALE:

- Financing (one interviewee)

- Governance (two interviewees)

- Policy (three interviewees)

- Quality (seven interviewees)

- Participation, inclusion and equity (11 interviewees)

All of the interviewees reported having been instructors of adult learners at some point in their careers. The two areas in which they reported having the least experience were Governance and Financing.

An adequate salary is also often a way of attracting qualified ALE instructors/trainers, and many interviewees reported that the funding for ALE instructors is inadequate to attract skilled, trained teachers.

Definition of adult learning and education (ALE)

The 2015 UNESCO General Conference adopted a Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015) to replace the 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education.[16] The new Recommendation provides a more detailed definition of ALE, distinguishing three core areas of skills and learning: (a) to equip adults with literacy and basic skills; (b) to provide continuing training and professional development, and (c) to promote active citizenship through what is variously known as community, popular or liberal education.

There seem to be three accepted definitions of ALE operating in the sector currently. The definition of ALE stated in "Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education" adopted in Nairobi in 1976 and further developed in the Hamburg Declaration in 1997 and endorsed in the Belém Framework for Action (2010) is:

> ...[T]he entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society.[17]

In the interviews conducted with ALE stakeholders in Caribbean countries, the eight stakeholders who acknowledged that their country had a definition of adult learning and education (ALE) referred either to the UNESCO or the OECD definition. Adopted in 2015, the revised UNESCO definition of adult learning and education is:

> ...education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes what may

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16   https://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/AdultEducation/en/GRALE_en.pdf

17   CONFINTEA VI, Belém Framework for Action, Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010, p. 5.

be referred to as "continuing education," "recurrent education," or "second chance education."[18]

The OECD definition[19] focuses much more on literacy, lifelong and work-related learning, which is defined as "...participation in at least one job-related non-formal ...[educational opportunity] and training by gender, age group and educational attainment."

Challenges related to the definition of ALE

The adoption of an agreed definition of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) is important in order to regularise and standardise the collection of data related to it. Interestingly, six of the interviewees and three countries that participated in the Sub-Regional Consultation asserted that their country did not have a formal definition of adult learning and education and/or used none of the listed definitions of ALE: their definition of it seemed to be that the learner was over the age of compulsory school attendance (i.e. at least 15 years of age) and volunteered to enrol in a learning programme to improve their skills or knowledge in a particular field.

Lack of familiarity with the concepts of ALE and the Lifelong Learning paradigm

Almost half of the interviewees expressed frustration about the lack of recognition given to ALE, especially in formulating the annual budget. Three countries[20] participating in the Sub-Regional Consultation observed that lifelong learning was seen as an "add on," not a priority in formulating policy and assigning funds for projects.

ALE policies

The disparate definitions of ALE may arise from the lack of specific national policies related to it. When asked about these policies, interviewees either asserted that there were no policies specifically addressing ALE, or referred to policies covering other areas of education like TVET, the National Youth Policy, the Education Act or the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities. Dominica referred to the National Resilience Development Strategy as the ALE policy. St. Lucia established a division called the National Enrichment and Learning Unit (NELU) that offers programmes and courses that are geared toward adult learners, but those interviewed did not cite the establishment of the NELU as an ALE policy. Antigua and Barbuda and Belize—that participated in the Sub-Regional Consultation—asserted they had no national ALE policy. None of the interviewees could identify a national ALE policy.

Recognition of ALE in national policy

Guyana is in the process of drafting an ALE policy with UNESCO, recognising education for sustainable development. Antigua and Barbuda has embedded lifelong learning in its "Vision

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18 Downloaded from the UIS Glossary June 15, 2021: http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/adult-education.

19 Adopted by the OECD in 1996.

20 Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Belize.

for Education", and St. Lucia's National Enrichment and Learning Unit (NELU), and St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Adult and Continuing Education Unit (ACE) also recognise lifelong learning. Belize focuses on literacy through its Literacy Council.

Challenges related to the absence of a national ALE policy and/or regional ALE framework

None of the Caribbean countries has developed a framework in which ALE can be standardised. The need for a national policy and/or regional ALE framework was identified and emphasised by seven of the 11 interviewees and three of the countries reporting at the Sub-Regional Consultation.

The absence of a recognised national ALE policy and/or regional ALE framework encourages it to be an afterthought in the national education system, making planning and budgeting very difficult and often *ad hoc*. All six of the countries that participated in the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation stated that policies originated from the Ministry responsible for ALE. The absence of a national ALE framework relates directly to the absence of a national definition of it. A discrete national policy on ALE cannot exist without an agreed definition of the term.

Governance

There is a variety of responsible parties identified for governing ALE nationally. All 11 interviewees asserted that the Ministry of Education and NGOs managing ALE projects were responsible for governing them in their respective countries. Among the six countries that participated in the Sub-Regional Consultation, reports on Governance were more varied. Antigua identified two Ministries: Ministry of Education, Sports & Creative Industries and the Ministry of Social Transformation, Human Resource Development and the Blue Economy as governing ALE. Dominica stated that its Adult Education Division falls under the Ministry of Governance, Public Service Reform, Citizen Empowerment, Social Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs and works in concert with the Ministry of Education in managing ALE projects and activities. St. Lucia has a Department within the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations & Sustainable Development (National Enrichment and Learning Unit) for managing ALE projects. Three countries identified ALE as being governed under the Ministry of Education; only St. Kitts and Nevis asserted that it had no central governing entity got ALE. Two countries (Dominica and Belize) stated that other Ministries (e.g. Labour for TVET, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Social Services) participated in specific programmes that addressed the needs of youth or the unemployed and shared responsibilities with the Ministry of Education, and therefore, had joint governance responsibility. In summary, Ministries of Education, Labour and Social Sevices carry the bulk of responsibility for governing ALE.

Challenges related to governance of ALE

Governance requires a clear definition of the subject of the governance and a clear policy framework for success. The absence of a clear line of policy, the lack of a regional framework, and the multiplicity of definitions of ALE can explain the lack of clarity about its governance in the countries that participated in the Sub-Regional Consultation.

The lack of clarity in governance has clear budgetary and financing implications.

Finance

Although it is an early trend, some countries like Antigua and Barbuda have passed legislation to embed lifelong learning in the Education Act. This recognition makes granting funds to ALE directly through the national budget much easier.

The six Caribbean sub-regional-consultation-country reports identified the Ministry of Education as the primary funder of ALE initiatives. Antigua and Barbuda identified the Ministry of Social Transformation as well as the Ministry of Education as having ALE financing responsibility. Countries also referred to grants and special projects as financing ALE. Belize asserted that the government had no established funding source for ALE initiatives, but obtained funds through the Employment, Training and Education Services Unit of the Ministry of Education and through allocations to NGOs and subsidies to private providers.

Because countries offer ALE at minimal or no cost to learners who are frequently encouraged to join ALE related courses because they are unemployed, and unable to pursue any educational offering that requires their financial investment, there is no income to fund those ALE offerings from learners themselves.

St. Kitts and Nevis reported an average of 100 learners per year accessing "Training for Success," an entrepreneurship module incorporated into a variety of training experiences. It works with the private sector to target learners who aspire to begin micro-enterprises and incorporates the principles of starting a business into the curriculum. The business community provides some financing for such a programme.

Challenges related to the financing of ALE

With the exception of HEART/NSTA in Jamaica,[21] every ALE programme across the region suffers from financing challenges, especially for the revision or expansion of its offerings. The six countries reporting at the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation identified a major weakness and/or area of need in ALE, such as the financing availability for programmes and adequate salaries for trainers. The lack of sufficient funding affects the attraction and retention of qualified, competent instructors and the ability to promote ALE offerings.

There is a need to approach the financing of ALE not as a social welfare or cost with low return, but as an investment in the future for adult learners and the nation. Seven of the interviewees observed that ALE often was the lowest priority in the budget, and that budget items were not democratically determined. Even the four interviewees who did not see ALE as a low priority admitted that they had little opportunity to make the case for any increase presented for adult education programmes, resources (human and financial) and the training of professional adult educators. Budgets underpinning ALE programmes need to be carefully and thoughtfully developed and discussed with all stakeholders before they are finalised.

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21 HEART/NSTA is funded by a three percent levy on employers' wage bills.

Participation, inclusion and equity

The six countries at the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation[22] and the country representatives referred to in this report, addressed achievements that demonstrated increased participation, inclusion and equity. All countries asserted an increase in the number of programme offerings and participants (especially women). Those with TVET programmes asserted that the expansion of TVET had made more opportunities available to adult learners.

St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica each flagged their prison training programme as a major achievement. St. Kitts and Nevis reported that currently their programme is largely managed and driven by inmates who, having acquired CXC secondary and postsecondary credentials, now facilitate courses not only for fellow inmates, but also for the family members of inmates and other members of the public. The community college facilitates prisoner participation in CAPE courses and two inmates are taking UWI courses.

Grenada reported cooperation between Ministries, NGOs, faith based and civil society organisations with the aim of promoting adult education and lifelong learning. Grenada also positively flagged the offering of ongoing professional training programmes organised by the Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Social Services and financed by the state budget for the unemployed and people at risk in participation, inclusion and equity.

All of the countries flagging TVET courses as signs of increased participation in ALE cited them as providing achievement opportunities for adult learners. Antigua and Barbuda reported a focus on developing exit plans to encourage lifelong learning for students at risk and for the reduction of dropout rates. In addition to enrolling learners in TVET and academic courses, Dominica reported that community outreach has also been a major focus for ALE, conducting a number of beautification projects, feeding initiatives and community forums on climate resilience, health and safety and community development.

Four representatives interviewed reported improved collaboration with businesses in implementing ALE. A previously-identified weakness in ALE opportunities had been the lack of linkages with business and industry to ensure that training opportunities for adult learners were relevant to the workplace and likely to improve learners' possibility for employment on completion. The challenge has been to encourage companies to take ALE learners as placements and then to ensure that the training the learners received was standardised and developed their skills in specified areas. More companies have demonstrated an interest in accepting adult learners as apprentices or new employees, by certifying those that offer training for their recruits and new employees.

Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), part of HEART/NSTA since 2015, has been managing the Jamaican Government's HSDEP, a second chance certification for 17 year-olds and older learners. It is expected to improve the outcomes of the adult learner by forming

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22   The six countries participating in the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation were: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Kitts & Nevis. It is worth noting that all of these countries except Belize are OECS Member States.

the foundation for the acquisition of skills needed to make them marketable, both locally and internationally.

The Career Advancement Programme (CAP) is an initiative of the Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information to respond to the increasing number of learners who complete secondary level education, without any formal certification for employment and without matriculation to post-secondary level education.

Both of these programmes are managed by HEART/NSTA.

Establishment of National Training Agencies

HEART/NSTA developed a model early in its operation that rewarded companies for accepting learners and ensuring that they were trained according to standards that would make them employable upon the completion of the course.[23] HEART/NSTA has been assisting countries to develop a National Training Agency model that can incorporate some of HEART/NSTA's features.

Most adult learning and education in the Caribbean are targeted to young people 17-35 who have dropped out of school or are unable to obtain steady work because they lack certification or academic qualifications. Because education and training are being tied more closely to gaining employment, the focus of Caribbean governments has been on establishing National Training Agencies (NTAs) whose standards certify learners in the skills in which they are trained.

Fourteen Caribbean countries have developed National Training Agencies (NTAs) that are committed to establishing standards for TVET operations across the region. The NTAs are managed under the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities (CANTA). The association of National Training Agencies and other TVET apex bodies in CARICOM states that was established in November 2003. CANTA's objectives are: to promote the development of a competitive regional workforce and to facilitate free movement of certified skilled workers within the CSME. CANTA's primary strategies are to ensure uniform provision of competency-based training, assessment and certification by establishing a regional certification scheme—the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). The 13 countries with National Training Agencies each have their own national vocational qualifications, but these are being matched to the CVQs.

Creating linkages between NTAs and academic ALE and offering certification for skills training with National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and/or Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) in several countries have enabled adult learners to enter the work force with a certification that ensures their advancement in the workplace.

The inclusion of TVET in ALE and encouraging the entry of young people into ALE TVET courses after they have left the compulsory education system has increased their potential opportunities.

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23 See the description of HEART/NSTA on page 6.

Challenges in encouraging participation, inclusion and equity: lack of monitoring systems

Of the countries participating in the Sub-Regional Consultation, only Grenada reported "closely monitored" competency training through its National Training Agency.[24] Eight of the 11 interviewees reported that there was no monitoring of ALE programmes in their country outside of project-based data collection for externally-funded projects.[25] This absence of a national system for monitoring ALE programmes and systemised data collection means that it is difficult to prove success or the need for additional funding. Anecdotal reports on the increase in women and marginalised groups' participation is not useful for establishing that objectives were met or that funding has been well invested.

While country programmes targeting women's participation reported increased female enrolment,[26] young men declined to complete their courses.[27] Young men seemed to focus more on getting and keeping their job than attending courses unless their attendance was somehow connected to it. Greater numbers of young men also withdrew from programmes in comparison to young women, again for work-related reasons. Young men felt forced to withdraw because they had to go to work and were unable to keep up with their lessons.

Challenges in sustaining enrolment in ALE courses during COVID

All countries and individuals interviewed reported that COVID had had a marked negative impact on enrolment in programmes, while recounting their success in establishing programmes that increased women's participation and, in two cases,[28] establishing programmes especially designed to serve the needs of the disabled. Three countries[29] and six individuals reported that courses were suspended or cancelled altogether during COVID. The others reverted to course offerings online, but this meant that those without access to the internet could not take them. Six of the interviewees noted that there were fewer young men enrolled in skills programmes during COVID.

Quality

Quality is largely governed by established standards for success in existing institutionally-based courses. No interviewee or representative of a country at the Sub-regional Consultation reported unique approaches to measuring success peculiar to ALE offerings. Those countries reporting that they had a way to ensuring quality in their ALE offerings referred to TVET courses with NVQs/CVQs awards. These courses and awards are not ALE-specific, but courses offered by community colleges.

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24   It can be assumed that all NTAs as members of CANTA have close monitoring of competency development.

25   The other three interviewees asserted that they did not know whether ALE activities were monitored, as this area was not their responsibility.

26   Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation, April 28, 2021. Dominica, Belize, St. Kitts & Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda.

27   Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation, April 28, 2021.

28   Countries with programmes for the disabled mentioned at the Sub-Regional Consultation were St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica.

29   Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, St. Lucia had to close programmes or suspend classes.

Community colleges' expanded ability to certify those adult learners who completed their courses and allied workplace-based training with CVQs and NVQs strengthened their ability to serve the needs of an increased number of adult learners. The increasing legitimacy of the courses has attracted more learners and more workplaces interested in participating in the programmes. Community colleges in four countries are offering second chance programmes as an alternative to secondary education for those who do no fare well in the high school setting.

Challenges in maintaining quality: attracting and retaining qualified adult educators

Eight interviewees and four countries in the Sub-Regional Consultation[30] reported the challenge of recruiting and retaining competent adult educators. They asserted that better and more frequent training opportunities for adult educators and better remuneration was needed to attract competent instructors.

Instruction for ALE trainers has been an important advancement in the past five years, reported in four[31] of the six countries participating in the Sub-Regional Consultation. Previously, ALE teachers were recruited from the ranks of retired classroom or from the workplace. Both types of trainers had been expected to function without training in the principles of adult learning. The four countries have adapted their recruitment strategies to include short courses in teaching adults and how that instruction differs from traditional classroom teaching. The benefits of using non-traditional experiential learning strategies have resulted in a larger number of learners completing their courses.

Newly-recruited instructors should attend and participate in an induction programme to expose them to experiential learning, the principles of teaching and assessing adult learners, and the fundamentals of online learning for adult learners, as a mandatory requirement.

Many people coming to courses as adults had school experiences that made them feel inadequate, which was the reason for their not completing their schooling when they were young. They approach school with those same feelings of inadequacy that they had when they were young. Instructors cannot approach these adult learners using the same teaching and learning strategies they had already experienced at school. The shift in teaching strategies is fundamental for success as a teacher of adults.

The Belize Ministry of Education, Youth Sports and Culture partnered with COL to train its teachers in the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs), and developed policies to include International TVET certification for Belizean students. The introduction of OERs has relieved the pressure on students and the Ministry.

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30 Countries reporting challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified ALE instructors included Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, St. Lucia and Grenada. Grenada has plans to enlist help from the Commonwealth of Learning in training adult educators.

31 Countries emphasising the need for training of teacher educators were St. Kitts and Nevis, Belize, Saint Lucia and Antigua and Barbuda.

Challenges to quality created by lack of connectivity, and limited or no access to software/hardware to enable online studies

While the connectivity and hardware issues were already present, the advent of COVID-19 and the restrictions brought by it heightened these challenges, as face-to-face lessons and instruction basically stopped.

Both interviewees and countries participating in the Sub-Regional Consultation (especially when discussing the impact of COVID on their programmes) asserted that those with little disposable income, limited access to data and connectivity and an urgent need to find ways of generating income frequently had no option except to withdraw from and/or drop out of their ALE courses. Marginalised groups and those with disabilities were particularly vulnerable and susceptible to having to leave their courses.

Two interviewees reported that some ALE instructors were able to manage blended offerings (i.e. online and traditional face-to-face lessons integration), but many lessons had to be suspended.

It is critically important to pay attention to the learners' need for access to connectivity, software and hardware to pursue and/or enhance their courses in the era of digitalisation.

It is worth noting that participation is particularly difficult for those who live in rural or remote areas and lack digital access to receive online lessons or those which require online research for assignments.

Challenges to quality due to the absence of systemised data collection to monitor and inform ALE courses, its design and policy development

ALE data collection and analysis are weak in Caribbean countries. As part of research undertaken for this report, a data collection instrument[32] of one page was circulated to all countries, requesting basic statistics on enrolment, course retention and a general description of enrolled learners. The requested information could not be obtained from any of the 14 Caribbean countries contacted. Reasons related to the absence of data included interviewees noting that they "...didn't collect data that way," while others said that they were not the correct people to provide the requested data, as well as others providing no explanation. The critical absence of standardised data can be a disadvantage for the conception of well-organised courses and for monitoring and evaluating ALE in the Caribbean.

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[32]   The consultant developed two data collection instruments and refined them with UNESCO to use in virtual interviews with country representatives. The questionnaires requesting enrolment and completion statistics was not returned by any interviewee. The other questionnaire was returned by 11 of the 14 Caribbean countries. Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Suriname did not return the questionnaire or agree to an interview.

4. Recommendations

Following are the most critical recommendations to strengthen the ALE sub-sector in Caribbean countries.

1. Create a Commission that could be supported by the UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean with links to national offices to support the development of a Regional ALE Policy Framework that can be adapted for each country to implement ALE in a structured, systemised way.

The Commission could recommend a structured national management system for ALE in each country that includes basic polices and approaches to it. The policies can lead to national legislation for ALE, missing throughout the Caribbean at present. This policy framework should provide an agreed definition of ALE and articulate the places of lifelong learning, continuing education, literacy training, TVET and non-formal, community-based programmes in the ALE structure.

2. National strategic plans should incorporate and articulate specific approaches to advancing ALE systems based on an established policy framework

At present, because ALE policy and structures are missing at the national level, ALE programmes are easily overlooked or treated as an afterthought. Including ALE as a separate objective with specific assigned actions expected in national strategic plans will give it more visibility and attention and require reporting on its activities and achievements, at least quarterly throughout the life of strategic plans. This reporting will encourage adjustment to activities and anticipated achievements.

3. Enhance/introduce recognition/accreditation of ALE programmes, both formal and non-formal

Caribbean countries like Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia (through NELU programmes) are implementing certification and recognition of ALE programmes. Many TVET programmes have already established accreditation systems that recognise CVQs and standardised competencies; these should be broadened to include non-formal ALE offerings. In order to function effectively, recognition and accreditation will need to be based on updated, revised curricula related to the definition of ALE.

4. Conduct a national public relations campaign that introduces basic ALE concepts and emphasises their importance in national development

A public relations campaign should be developed by professionals from across the region with advice on content from ALE experts. This campaign should introduce a revised ALE Policy Framework, developed and designed to address the respective national cultural perspectives. National public dialogue on a Policy Framework should be encouraged as part of the public relations campaign. Such campaign can enlist more stakeholders (both

actors and beneficiaries) to ALE. Each country could produce a green paper on an ALE Policy Framework for discussion in town halls prior to passage of the legislation. Links between TVET and continuing education/lifelong learning can be highlighted to emphasise the importance of ALE in the education system.

5. Encourage the involvement of NGOs, faith-based organisations and community outreach programmes in ALE systems

At present, Ministries (of Education, Social Development, Labour) carry the bulk of responsibility for the implementation of ALE in Caribbean countries. Creating a broader ALE system less reliant on government intervention will encourage the involvement of more beneficiaries in these programmes and initiatives. The recommendation for multisectoral and multiministerial approaches to funding ALE emerged from the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation as a possible solution to ALE's current inadequate financing.

6. Develop a standardised data collection system for monitoring the strengths and challenges of the ALE system in each country so that the systems are comparable across the region.

Since accurate monitoring of enrolment, courses and learner completion/achievement are required to strengthen and improve the quality of ALE, a standardised data collection system needs to be formalised, external to national and institutional ALE operations themselves— although a senior ALE manager should oversee the data collection and analysis system.

7. Within each country's annual budget, provide funding support for ALE that addresses the challenges of the system, the strengths to be maintained and the intended outcomes of the ALE operations each year.

During the UNESCO Sub-Regional Preparatory Consultation for the Caribbean for CONFINTEA VII (April 28, 2021), participants suggested that countries should create multiple funding channels that include not only the Ministry of Education's funding, but also private sector cooperation/collaboration and community contributions. Individual focused projects could also contribute funding for specific activities e.g. training of adult educators. Part of the budgeting process should be quarterly reviewed to analyse the success and challenges of the ALE operations and consider adaptations and mid-course corrections needed to keep the annual objectives for the programmes in the public arena.

8. Establish annual training workshops for both newly-recruited and seasoned adult educators in each country where approaches and achievements are reviewed and new strategies are introduced.

Adult learning instructional methods should be the foundation for the annual training workshops. Case studies of successful teaching and learning approaches and their results should be discussed in a workshop setting, as well as unsuccessful strategies with modification recommendations that could be made to discuss and enhance the teaching and learning approaches.

9. Support semi-annual workshops on the use of IT in course design, teaching and learning processes and assessment strategies for adult learners

Since the pandemic has greatly increased the use of ICT in lesson design, implementation and assessment, these workshops should be constructed around small groups that can collaborate and then report to their peers for analysis and discussion. The workshops should employ ALE teaching and learning strategies to reinforce its modalities and strategies. These workshops should emphasise the need to ensure access to connectivity for users, especially among disadvantaged and rural learners, who often do not have ready access to internet or hardware and software.

10. There is a need for a multisectoral and multiministerial approach to funding ALE.

This recommendation emerged from the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation as a possible solution to the inadequate national financing of ALE.

At present, Ministries (of Education, Social Development, Labour) carry the bulk of responsibility for the implementation of ALE in Caribbean countries. Creating a broader ALE system less reliant on government intervention will encourage the involvement of more beneficiaries in its programmes and initiatives.

5. Summary of findings

While each Caribbean country has some form of ALE, there is no organised, legislated, regional ALE framework or system. A definition of ALE, and a regional ALE policy framework have not been agreed upon yet across the region. In some cases, even national ALE policy has yet to be agreed. The absence of national and/or regional policy means that while some countries are expending considerable energy on ALE (St. Lucia's NELU is an example), other countries are yet to focus on ALE policy or systems, and ALE definitions and operations are scant.

Although there is a definition of ALE (per the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (2015), some countries still have not accepted it as their own definition in order to establish the relevant policy or programmes. In some cases, TVET policy—which primarily addresses the operation of competency-based curricula in educational institutions—has been designed and accepted for other target groups, and ALE has been added only as an afterthought.

ALE is still not regarded as a high priority in Caribbean countries. Only two of the six countries participating in the Sub-Regional Consultation reported considering ALE as a high priority, and only two countries and four interviewees reported ALE related external financing resources.[33] Greater funding is needed to train and adequately pay instructors and support ALE programmes.

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[33] Report from Group 2 at the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation.

Learners in group discussions at the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation stated that ALE is not only a way to regain education opportunities, but to acquire skills to support themselves and a source of women's empowerment. They identified three elements that need strengthening in ALE to improve learner outcomes:

- Academic counselling and psychosocial support (to maintain motivation),

- Greater access involving more family members,[34] and

- Advocacy and awareness training to increase knowledge and awareness of available ALE programmes.

Only three Caribbean countries[35] have or mentioned the establishment of standards for ALE practitioners, indicating that adult literacy and ALE are low priorities in national education structures.

COVID 19 has hastened and strengthened the role of ICT and online learning in ALE in the region. While many learners dropped their ALE courses as a result of COVID, those who had access to internet, hardware and software were able to continue their studies through online offerings.

At the conclusion of the Caribbean Sub-Regional Consultation, Mr. Werner Mauch emphasised that women's participation in ALE is key. Dr. Faryal Khan stressed the importance of multisectoral collaboration to strengthen ALE in the sub-region.

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 34 Antigua and Barbuda recommended broadening courses/programmes to include family members that can support the targeted learners.

 35 Jamaica, The Bahamas and Belize mentioned standards for measuring the achievement of adult educators.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1. Population of Caribbean countries included in the study

Country	Population (2020)
Jamaica	2 961 167
Trinidad and Tobago	1 399 488
Guyana	790 339
Suriname	581 363
Belize	397 628
Bahamas	393 244
Barbados	287 375
St. Lucia	183 627
Grenada	112 523
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	110 940
Antigua & Barbuda	97 929
Dominica	71 986
Cayman Islands	65 722
St. Kitts & Nevis	53 199
Turks & Caicos Islands	38 717
British Virgin Islands	30 231
Anguilla	15 003
Montserrat	4 992

Appendix 2. Interviewees' relationship with ALE stakeholders

Stakeholder	Level of responsibility	Relationship with interviewees
Decision makers	• Minister • Permanent Secretary • College President • Ministry of Education Senior Managers • Head of NTA • ACE Coordinator • International Partners	• Advise on strategic planning and place of ALE in the education system • Examine/exchange policies • Meetings (monthly/quarterly) • Provide progress reports • Collaborate on ALE programmes' design/content/target audience • Submit budgets • Provide data
ALE colleagues	• TVET training project • Department of Education • Community College/University • Programme Managers	• Project organisation • Meetings • Partnerships • Data collection • Monitoring & evaluation • Training workshops Standards (M&E) • Evaluation
Learners	• Teacher/Trainer/Facilitator • Moderator • Recruiter • Conduct orientation • Manage town halls • Job placement counsellors	• Instruction • Collecting data for M&E • Feedback on/evaluation of course offerings
Instructors	• Link with industry • Supervision • Standards • Provision of materials	• Training in Adult Learning, • Competency-based instruction • Training in use of online platforms

This table illustrates how those interviewed for this report interact with various levels of stakeholder in the ALE system. Eight interviewees reported that decision makers (defined as the Minister, Permanent Secretary, President of a College, Head of the NTAs, and Department of Education Senior Managers) included them in meetings that focused on ALE and received reports written on ALE matters. Three reported being able to advise the decision makers. The other eight interviewees said they either reported to or received direction from them.

Since the interviewees were either middle or senior managers, their relationships with other ALE colleagues were with their counterparts in other institutions with whom the ALE programmes interacted.

Abbreviations

AD: Associate Degree

ALE: Adult Learning and Education

BFA: Belém Framework for Action

CBET: Competency-based Education and Training

CANTA: Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies

CAPE: Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Certificate

CARICOM: Caribbean Community

CONFINTEA: International Conference on Adult Education

CSEC: Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate

CSME: Caribbean Single Market and Economy

CVQ: Caribbean Vocational Qualification

CXC: Caribbean Examinations Council

GOJ: Government of Jamaica

GRALE: Global Report on Adult Learning and Education

HEART/NSTA: Trust Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency

HRD: Human Resource Development

HSDEP: High School Diploma Equivalency Programme

ILO: International Labour Organisation

JAMAL: Jamaican Movement for the Advancement of Literacy

JFLL: Jamaican Association for Lifelong Learning

LL: Lifelong Learning

NELU: National Enrichment and Learning Unit

NTA: National Training Agency

NVQ: National Vocational Qualification

OECS: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PLA: Prior Learning and Assessment

TVE: Technical and Vocational Education

TVET: Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UIL: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

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