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AXIS 12.2 – THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

Axis 12.2 working group consultants – The future of Higher Education in the Caribbean

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Abstract

Higher education maintains a strategic and significant role, which lies in its ability to contribute to the development of knowledge-based, democratic and equitable-minded societies, which promote sustainable social and economic development, social inclusion, peace, stability, justice and decent living standards for all citizens. The future of higher education in the Caribbean region's higher education systems must be directed towards programming, research, and action that generates sustainable, contextual responses while augmenting a communicative and supportive infrastructure that brings Latin America and the Caribbean together. Thus, respective governments and stakeholders should develop and implement contextually appropriate and relevant models for the region's governance, financing and development of higher education systems. Decolonization, inclusion, equity, quality, efficiency, autonomy, participation, and accountability principles should guide these processes.

Introduction

It is urgent to assume a critical vision regarding the main organizational components and the academic and institutional, economic and political processes that occur in higher education (HE) and to formulate scenarios that can lead to a different vision of the future of HE in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Such studies must start from the recognition of what unites us and the particularities of each country and region without extrapolating preconceived recipes/solutions, which are often remote and removed from the needs and realities of each of our countries.

The future of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean is marked by a myriad of challenges that require careful examination and consideration. As the region strives to enhance its educational systems and institutions, it faces issues such as access and equity, quality of education, funding, technological integration, and the evolving needs of a globalized job market. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for the sustainable development of higher education in the region, as well as for the empowerment of its people and the fulfillment of their potential.

Pedró (2022) shared a roadmap for transformation of higher education that includes linking LAC nations, ensuring individual rights to higher education that are sustainable. Within this roadmap, students are engaged in a comprehensive education journey that prepares them for their future. The transformation should foster educational avenues that allow students to focus their multiple talents in different ways, changing the view that education is linear. Higher education can be attained at any point after secondary education; these opportunities

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must be available throughout an individual's life span, finally making the shift from loosely connected regional higher education communities but that of established, interconnected, diverse educational systems that ensure the mitigation of cul-de-sacs for individuals who engage our HE systems.

Faced with the obstacles to overcome (Pedró, 2022), it is appropriate to debate, from our realities, what the higher education of the future in the Caribbean should be? What type of institutions do we want? Furthermore, what should be the priorities that we address to achieve these perspectives?

This paper explores and analyzes the various inroads made in the LAC HE systems since the CRES Conference (2018), as well as obstacles and opportunities that are present and which lie ahead for higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean, providing insights into the complex landscape and offering potential pathways for progress and innovation. The Working Group focused on Axis 12. 2 with the theme, *Challenges for the Future of Higher Education in the Caribbean*. During the public consultation sessions, there was significant interaction on many issues associated with the other eleven axes assigned to the working groups. Therefore, the exploration, discussion and suggestions encompass facets of all twelve axes. The paper reviews the future of higher education in the Caribbean under four broad headings: socioeconomic challenges, inclusion, infrastructure and resources, and governance and policy.

Caribbean higher education practitioners engaged in public consultations on areas of importance regarding the future of higher education in the Caribbean region. A synopsis of each consultation follows in Table 1:

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Table 1. Public forum consultations

Public Consultations		
ACTIVITY	**MAIN GOALS**	**DISCUSSION SUMMARY**
Webinar 1 Introductory Public Consultation - for all HE stakeholders	• Introduction about CRES • Integration about Latin America and the Caribbean • Context, HE in the Caribbean	The Higher Education that the Caribbean requires and its necessary integration with Latin America. Importance of studying and understanding the diverse and complex context in which Higher Education is developed in the Caribbean to transform it.
Webinar 2 November 22. Focus on "Financing Higher Education."	• Identify key areas for focus and action in the development of policies and strategies to finance tertiary education in the Caribbean. • Develop opportunities for partnership with, and input by international partners in the implementation of policies and strategies to finance tertiary education throughout the Caribbean. • Indicate global trends in financing tertiary education. • Share data from research on financing education in general and tertiary education in particular. • Review lessons learnt from an educational planning perspective regarding the financing of tertiary education. • Identify the factors that contribute to successful policy development for the financing of tertiary education in the Caribbean. • Current responses to the questions that arose in the 1994 IIEP consultation in the Caribbean.	The urgency of adopting higher education financing models in accordance with the particularities of the Caribbean. Alternative routes for financing Higher Education in the Caribbean.
Webinar 3 Introductory Public Consultation - for all HE stakeholders	• Stimulate appreciation for the benefits and challenges to be derived from internationalization. • Introduce the Buenos Aires Convention on recognition of qualifications. • Understand the bases for successful internationalization. • Reviewing policy frameworks that lead to successful internationalization. • Share internationalization strategies for Higher Education. • Explore solutions to issues arising from evolving global landscape.	Importance of internationalization as an alternative to enhance integration and cooperation in the context of Higher Education in the Caribbean.
Webinar 4 "Decolonizing Caribbean Higher Education."	• Perspectives on defining the futures of higher education in the Caribbean against the background of the suffocating legacy of the colonialisms we have experienced.	Transcend the decolonization of the curriculum and move towards decolonizing processes to transform the practices derived from centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism. The search for alternatives for access, equity and reparation to vulnerable groups.
Webinar 5 "Caribbean Youth Summit"	• Youth discussing and reflecting on issues related to the futures of higher education in the Caribbean.	The necessary increase in the participation of young people in the governance of Higher Education institutions in the Caribbean. Contribution of young people to the construction of the Higher Education that we want in the Caribbean

Overview-contexts

It is worth highlighting that Latin American and Caribbean countries constitute a vital community with history, culture, traditions, potential and diverse strengths that contribute to the potential and strengths of the region in shaping a more equitable society with reduced poverty (UNESCO,2019). The region's history, including pre-colonial civilization and the struggle for independence, has shaped its diverse cultural heritage and identity. The cultural richness and a population encompassing various ethnicities and languages provide a foundation for celebrating diversity and promoting inclusivity.

When we speak of the Caribbean, it is essential to note that there are differing understandings and, thus, definitions of this region. Speaking narrowly, first, we have one understanding seen in the grouping of independent states and some territories with continuing colonial relationships with European powers. This is the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); these states and territories have a shared history of over 300 years of Spanish, British, French and Dutch colonization. CARICOM states are characterized by similarities in heritage, socio-cultural norms and values, and political and educational systems. For example, the education systems throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean are based on the British formal education model. Apart from Haiti, the Francophone Caribbean educational systems are the same, structurally, as those found in France. Again, this is similar to the Dutch-speaking territories and Suriname.

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) conveys the second understanding. This is broader and includes nations and territories whose shores the Caribbean Sea encroaches. Thus, countries along the Caribbean Sea lanes, including those highlighted in the traditional understanding of the Caribbean Archipelago, as well as those along the South American and Central American mainland.

For its part, the Caribbean, in particular, is the area of the Americas where the languages of European colonization have come together: Spanish, French, English, Portuguese, and Dutch. The linguistic history of the Caribbean tells us about the encounters of different peoples, bearers of different languages that have exerted their influence on each other. In the Caribbean, the most spoken language is Spanish; however, the fundamental culture of our islands is Afro-Antillean.

The Hispanic Caribbean is a magnificent example of unity. Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico share a Caribbean linguistic identity, along with the surrounding coastal territories. With their island status, these three countries have deployed various strategies to promote access to tertiary education and contribute to the training of human resources that the development of their respective countries demands. Such actions are reflected in

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the existence of more than 150 higher education institutions (public and private) and close to a million students who access this level, although with low graduation rates in some cases (UNESCO ELAC, 2022). Education at all levels—and higher education in particular—is essential for the region's countries to overcome the major problems afflicting them and ensure their future development.

However, it continues to be a complex challenge to address the region's dilemma of unity and diversity adequately. We are not speaking about canceling the study of common aspects. Still, it is inappropriate to think of Latin America and the Caribbean as a homogeneous block with hardly any internal differences. The needs and initiatives of Latin America and the Caribbean, although with a global vision, must be addressed from their reality. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ELAC) 2017 identified Latin America and the Caribbean as unequal regions globally. It listed, among other factors that highlighted inequality:

- The excessive concentration of wealth in a few hands, the multiple difficulties in accessing and enjoying basic fundamental rights such as education and health.
- The deprivation of fundamental freedoms and civil rights.
- The discrimination that affects Afro-descendant populations, indigenous peoples and LGTBIQ+ communities, among others.

Education is an inalienable responsibility for modern States. Most countries manage to provide education for almost the entire population at the primary and secondary levels. While Pedró (2022) argues policy makers should see higher education as lifelong, within the LAC, there remain insufficient opportunities for young people to access higher education.

It is in the institutions of higher education where the youth are molded. Within the walls of HE institutions, the leaders are responsible for training individuals who are capable and committed to developing their country and humanity, capable of handling large amounts of information, making innovative decisions and developing in various work contexts.

Statement of the problem

Gazzola (2021) articulates that we have repeatedly spoken to higher education's changing contexts. He notes that LAC nations are not aligned as a region and that we 'do not present ourselves to other regions as a bloc defending a common interest' (para. 8). The existence of inequalities outside the traditional area of wealth concentration became more latent with the pandemic. Added to this is the increase in internationalization and global

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cooperation, the break with traditional education paradigms, the massification of virtuality, and some of the transformations experienced during this challenging period for humanity.

These complex experiences reveal the current context and the urgent need to consolidate State policies consistent with the education that this new world demands while at the same time becoming aware of the need to take care of designing the future that we want and that we need and that we assert. It is no longer relevant today in "the here and now" due to the urgency of the acute problems that concern us in "every day". What we need to achieve must be supported by a multiple but convergent, diverse but cooperative scenario, and above all, we can draw attention to the fact that if the region does not become increasingly united, the future will be one of greater dependence and subordination. To the great powers, we will have to face the unfavorable conditions of the global economic and political crises that will be present in the medium and long term. We will have to plan to transform!

The CRES+5 agenda engages mechanisms that will redound to the cohesiveness and strengthening of HE services to Latin American and Caribbean people. The solutions for rectification of the problem associated with socioeconomic challenges, inclusion, infrastructure and resources, and governance related to higher education are embedded in social inclusion, with the understanding that the its climate is constantly changing with the resulting need for constant adaptation and flexibility to respond equitably to challenges (Gazzola, 2021).

Socioeconomic challenges

The global economic crisis and the effects of wars have impacted the development of our countries. The COVID-19 pandemic broke out in the middle of a systemic crisis that already existed, and aggravated the situation across the planet, claiming the lives of millions of people. It revealed the weaknesses of the great world powers and aggravated the condition of developing countries.

Latin America and the Caribbean, the region most affected by the crisis caused by COVID-19, faced, as of 2020, the worst economic crisis in the last 120 years. In this regard, López (2023) points out some of the main challenges exacerbated by the pandemic that Latin America and the Caribbean higher education systems faced in 2022. These were growing privatization, insufficient public financing, lack of access to the poorest, the weak investment in research, development and innovation (RDI), the low scientific production, the high academic dropout rate and the low enrollment rate compared to developed countries.

The Caribbean, in particular, has been a space highly permeable to the impact of external shocks, events and movements. The Region is coveted for its strategic relevance, and the focus of an intense, continuous and fruitful

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transculturation of elements from different parts of Europe, Africa and Asia. In the current international political and economic context, the Caribbean countries face a difficult situation in various areas ranging from the serious incidences of crime and social violence, the effects of climate change and natural disasters, to a scarcity of resources, complex access to financing, limitations to introduce social transformations and the weight of high debt, among other problems. All these challenges make progress towards compliance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development difficult.

An example of the serious consequences, present and future, of the health, social and economic crises, is the extent that they have worsened a set of historical problems that affected higher education in the region: dropout or dropout rates. higher education and the sharp reduction in enrollment, especially that related to the most vulnerable social groups (members of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, women, people with disabilities, individuals from historically discriminated social groups, immigrants and gender diversity, among others), for which there is no short-term solution in sight. Proof of this is the fact that many young people abandoned their university studies, due to the precarious personal and family economic situation, as well as the lack of devices and connectivity.

In this regard, Gazzola (2020) warns about the need to achieve equity and inclusion, and at the same time overcome the structural and structuring gaps in education, given that the difference in the academic trajectories of students continues to favoring those who have greater resources and socioeconomic conditions, compared to those who do not have them. This means that countries face many challenges to reduce the access gap, so they must develop strategies with this objective in mind.

For Caribbean higher education institutions, the solution is not only to reduce digital gaps, but to continue making progress in solving structural problems, reducing cultural and economic gaps that create situations of inequality, exclusion and injustice, such as the low representation of women in decision-making areas, considering that one of the functions of higher education is to contribute to social mobility and the improvement of the living conditions of the population.

Given the economic fragility of the region, the permanence of students in the system is uncertain and a high percentage of graduates migrate to other countries, due to the lack of job opportunities, extreme deprivation and poverty. The brain drain constitutes the constant loss of professionals and in turn limits the development of the workforce and perpetuates situations of poverty within each country and in the region as a whole, and even more so, limits its improvement. It is necessary to work based on the development of the workforce, by aligning training through higher education programs with the demands of the labor market and providing employability and

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entrepreneurship opportunities to graduates. (Henard and Mitterle, 2008) The status of a public university implies a clear commitment to society as a whole, to train professionals in all areas of knowledge, capable of functioning in a changing and demanding world; professionals with conscience, social commitment and critical thinking (Munck, 2023).

Along with economic disparities and income inequality in the region, another challenge facing Caribbean universities centers on economic restrictions, the permanent contraction of public resources and the limited funding they face. The higher education policy in general and the access of public universities to the financial resources they require, must ensure that in those institutions where admission is not free, tuition fees and other indirect costs decrease, in order to move from " a discriminatory elitism to well-funded equitable access."

At the same time, financial aid mechanisms should be promoted for the development of institutions, especially in the field of innovation and research, as a contribution to the development of the university institution itself and our countries, as well as support for students of low income for their permanence and graduation from higher education. There is unrelenting demand among stakeholders that the resources allocated to higher education are used optimally. There is a demand for increase in efficiency, especially in terms of the income-graduation relationship, considering that the young population in the Region will continue to be a growth sector, which translates into growing demands for access and permanence in these institutions, and the need to design diverse and dissimilar trajectories, in correspondence with demographic trends. On the other hand, the trend toward population aging in some countries requires the generation of alternatives that guarantee access without age restriction to university classrooms.

Given the complexity of existing problems, the Caribbean must be able to study its own social reality and find creative responses that guarantee:

- The universalization of higher education in the Region, in order to move towards the goal of generalizing quality education for all throughout life.
- Public policies for inclusion, particularly issues such as access, permanence and diversity. There must be an inclusion of issues of gender, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, migrants, and minority groups of any type.
- Sustainable commitment of responsibility of the States with the financing of higher education.
- Demand respect for university autonomy.

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Diversity, equity and inclusion – Transforming Challenges into Opportunities

The significance of higher education in the Caribbean for regional development and individual empowerment cannot be understated. Given the substantial social and private benefits that higher education generates, it is imperative to ensure inclusive access and success for all, to achieve both social justice and economic efficiency (Salmi and D'Addio, 2020).

Inclusive education is increasingly important worldwide. It demands changes in educational reform for both developed and developing regions, guiding strategies to address exclusion. It is defined by UNESCO as a process of strengthening the education system's capacity to cater to all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or abilities. This process should guide all education policies and practices as education is a fundamental human right.

The attainment of inclusivity in higher education necessitates a comprehensive approach that accounts for various dimensions of diversity, including cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and disability-related factors. In this regard, it is imperative to address the diverse needs of students to ensure that they have access to high-quality higher education, regardless of their backgrounds, while also integrating inclusive teaching methods into teacher training programmes to empower educators to address diverse learning needs, covering cultural competence, accessibility, and strategies for supporting students with disabilities.

To achieve inclusivity, higher education institutions must foster an environment that values diversity and promotes equity and social justice. Such an environment can lead to a more prosperous and sustainable Caribbean. Inclusivity can be facilitated by developing strategies that address the challenges and opportunities presented by the various dimensions of diversity. For instance, institutions can invest in programs that promote cultural awareness and sensitivity, provide language support for non-native speakers, offer financial aid to students from low-income backgrounds, and provide disability accommodations.

Through such initiatives, higher education institutions can create an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the needs of diverse groups of students. By doing so, they can contribute to the region's economic growth and societal advancement by providing students with valuable knowledge, skills, and opportunities to achieve their aspirations.

Socio-economic disparities

The SDG indicator, 4.3.2, indicates that globally, the gross higher education enrolment ratio has surged from 19% to 38%. Latin American and Caribbean regions exhibited the second-highest growth rate, following East and

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Southeast Asia (UNICEF, 2022). This growth, however, has unfolded unevenly across countries, and disparities appear to be widening based on a range of factors including race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and social class (López) 2015, as well as political and economic factors. Moreover, according to the region's social inequality matrix as proposed by ECLAC (2016) , certain population attributes (particularly socioeconomic status and gender, but also geographical location, ethnicity and race, as well as disability) are associated with an enormous gap in access to higher education (ECLAC, 2016).

A study by UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Instituto Internacional de la UNESCO para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe, IESALC) shows that middle- to high-income countries have had higher increases in their participation rates in higher education than lower-income countries in recent years. This is due to various factors like poverty, emergencies, high enrolment fees, entrance exams, restricted mobility, and discrimination. These barriers limit the access of marginalized communities to higher education. (UNESCO IESALC, 2020; Vieira do Nascimento, Mutize and Roser Chinchilla, 2022).

According to a study conducted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2016, a significant challenge facing the region is the high percentage of students who fail to complete higher education courses. This issue is particularly prevalent among vulnerable student populations (Barret-Adams & Hayle 2021). It is essential to address this problem to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds have equal access to educational opportunities and can contribute to the region's development.

Initiatives such as the Buenos Aires Convention aims to be inclusive of all groups of individuals seeking academic mobility, by creating more inclusive pathways. As such, the Convention seeks to embrace technological advancement to promote virtual mobility, thus eliminating geographical barriers and broadening participation to ensure equal opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds. The convention recognizes the rise of non-traditional credentials, like micro and nano-credentials, and badges, and the increasing popularity of virtual and distance programs. These advancements challenge traditional academic models and call for improved international cooperation in regulatory matters.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Further, the Caribbean, as a region, boasts of a rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity, shaped by historical factors such as colonialism, indigenous communities, and migration. This unique blend of cultures and languages has contributed significantly to the educational landscape of the region, making it an excellent place for inclusive

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higher education. Inclusive education in the Caribbean should recognize and celebrate this diversity, considering it as an asset that enhances the educational experience for all.

To achieve inclusive higher education in the Caribbean, language barriers must be addressed. The region's linguistic diversity includes various languages and dialects such as English, Spanish, French, Dutch, and Creole languages. In an inclusive educational environment, these differences should be respected and leveraged as strengths, rather than obstacles.

It is crucial to create an environment that allows students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to access quality education without any language barriers. Inclusivity initiatives in higher education should prioritize creating an environment that enables students to engage in academic discourse regardless of their primary language. By doing so, students can fully participate in their academic pursuits, thus contributing to their personal growth and the overall development of the region.

Gender equity

In most developed and transitioning nations, the demographic composition of tertiary students has shifted considerably. Women are increasingly constituting a higher proportion of the student body in this academic tier (Leathwood & Read, 2009). Despite this development, gender-based disparities continue to afflict women in higher education. Although men's access to and graduation from higher education have decreased, these inequalities have not been eliminated. Furthermore, women continue to experience a persistent income gap when compared to their male colleagues in the professional sphere. (Valenzuela & Yáñez 2022)

A UNESCO-IESALC report (2021) cited in (Valenzuela & Yáñez 2022) highlights five global inequalities affecting women in higher education: 1) lower proportion of female researchers and leadership positions, 2) increased vertical segregation, 3) wide discrepancy in academic publications, 4) lower proportion of women in high-earning STEM careers, and 5) reduction in scientific publications during the pandemic.

In order to avoid potential widening of gender gaps due to the rapid advancement of the industrial revolution, it is imperative to make swift progress in addressing gender stereotypes, unequal distribution of social roles, and professional segregation. This is especially crucial in light of the increased demand for scientific and information technology skills, as has been noted by ECLAC (2019) and Muñoz (2021).

It is incumbent upon all stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and employers, to take proactive steps to address these challenges. Such steps may include promoting gender diversity and inclusion through workforce

development programmes, eliminating gender bias in recruitment and promotion processes, and ensuring equal access to education and training opportunities.

The continued advancement of the industrial revolution presents both opportunities and challenges for achieving gender equality. Addressing gender stereotypes, unequal distribution of social roles, and professional segregation is critical to ensuring that progress is not reversed. By taking proactive steps to promote gender diversity and inclusion, we can create a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has garnered near-universal acceptance by countries worldwide, signifying a momentous achievement in safeguarding the rights of those with disabilities. However, according to Kirno and Premchaiporn (2022), despite the progress made, accessibility for students with disabilities at the higher education level remains a pressing challenge. To address this challenge, campuses and learning materials must be meticulously designed to accommodate diverse abilities, and faculty members must receive training in inclusive teaching methods.

Given the increasing prevalence of disabilities and the importance of education in promoting equal opportunity, institutions of higher learning must prioritize the development of inclusive policies. This entails creating a learning environment that accounts for the unique needs and abilities of all students, regardless of their physical or cognitive challenges. By doing so, we can ensure that those with disabilities are given the same opportunities to learn and succeed as their peers, and that we are collectively working towards a more equitable society.

Establishing an inclusive higher education system in the Caribbean is a dynamic process that requires ongoing commitment, collaboration, and innovation. Despite the persistence of certain challenges, commendable progress has been made in promoting diversity and equity within the realm of higher education. By addressing the unique needs of the Caribbean's diverse student population and embracing inclusive practices, the region can continue to foster a higher education system that enables the full potential of every individual, contributing to regional development and social progress.

Infrastructure and resources

UNESCO advocates that countries adopt policies and processes that will bring about equity, equality, and democracy in general across nations. To this end, the International Institute of UNESCO for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) continues to develop activities that support programs that reflect the

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focus of the various regions where this institution is involved. In responding to the needs of the regions supported by IESALC, there is a preoccupation with strengthening the capacity of HE institutions related to technology and research (CRES 2018). Moreover, as presented by the objectives, goals and indicative strategies in the CRES+5 2018-2028 Work Plan, a commitment to ensuring that needed advocacy and backing is realized for the Caribbean region. The issues related to infrastructure and resources in HE are not new and are perpetual in this context. International and [1]Caribbean HE institutions administrations continue to plan for and mitigate problems related to:

- Physical Infrastructure
- Technological and Data Infrastructure
- Funding
- Global Competitiveness
    - Educational Quality and Relevance
    - Research and Innovation
    - Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility

Without "infrastructure", there is no tangible support for all the plans, identified goals and outcomes of higher education institutions (HEI). Physical infrastructure is required for our buildings, and "soft" infrastructure is what carries and bolsters our governance, policy, technological, and data inputs. All resources are tangible at some point and are not only objects, but also systems and communities built to support the necessary processes required to maintain and sustain an evolving, realistic, and relevant HE institution.

Physical infrastructure

Telesford (2010) shares a vision focusing on the need to build the HE institutions of the future that will be able to support student educational needs and assist in enhancing HEIs global footprint and competitiveness. Telsford also believes that it is imperative to continue enhancing the HE facility's quality (Blair, 2021; World Bank, 2020). Despite the efforts to acquire state-of-the-art buildings for HE services, the Caribbean Region continues to face challenges of insufficient physical infrastructure and outdated facilities. This challenge has been highlighted and underscored as part of Sustainable Goal 4 (SDG4) and its target, this states that one of the three ways to implement sustainable development is to enhance educational campuses that provide safe, non-violent, and inclusive educational inputs (UNESCO, 2021).

[1] The predominate issues included in this section are further interrogated under the additional eleven axes as determined by the CRES+5 agenda and will be presented at the March 13-15 Conference in Brazil

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The Caribbean region continues to advance in the physical infrastructure of mainly historical and more considerable HEIs. This advancement can be linked to corporate partnerships, alumni investments and institutional endowments. Within the Eastern Caribbean islands, public higher education institutions and those sponsored by governments continue to receive assistance in maintaining and upkeep their campuses. However, expanding the footprint of these institutions and enhancing labs and classrooms is not forthcoming, as additional resources are needed to ensure that administrative and teaching services, equipment, and wages are available to identified stakeholders (Fay et al., 2017). Albeit with the COVID-19 Pandemic, the need for brick-and-mortar facilities was scaled down and shifted to online synchronous, asynchronous delivery and distance learning (World Bank, 2020). Even with the reopening of HEIs after the second wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic, increased investment in technological and data infrastructure versus significant physical infrastructure improvements has yet to be forthcoming. A World Bank (2017) study authored by Fay et al. noted that public spending was inadequate for the spending required for needed [2]infrastructure in the LAC region. The study also shared that future projects for infrastructure planning have been undercut by short-term budgetary pressures (Fay et al., 2017).

The Public Consultations showed that the development of physical infrastructure is important to achieve HE institutions' long- and short-term goals. An extensive effort has been focused on enhancing and aligning HE services that do not support building new or rehabilitating older campus structures but on enabling other services that allow students to see a return on investment (ROI), for example, Internship Programs, Research and Publications, Career Planning, Alumni Events and Networking and Professional Development and Certification. However, the plight of rural schools is of concern as we align what is being done with the SDG4 goals, which are focused on creating and maintaining adequate safe spaces for educational advancement.

Technological and data infrastructure

Blair (2021) discussed a solution that would assist in addressing the known inequalities in the Caribbean regions and focused on the need to upgrade technological infrastructure and develop technological capabilities among educators. The ECLAC-UNESCO (2020) promoted the need for national digital education strategies underpinned by information communication technologies (ICTs). The Covid-19 pandemic forced higher education systems in the Region to adopt distance-learning processes. Policy makers and institutions developed and

[2] Noted that infrastructure in this World Bank 2017 study included focus on physical infrastructure, transport and services required for daily living.

actualized initiatives at the HE level that helped HEIs connect to digital platforms which allowed them to support their stakeholders and kept learning and teaching going (World Bank, 2020).

Post the COVID-19 Pandemic, school leaders stated that they were uneasy and unprepared to switch the learning modalities to a hybrid or entirely online. They also stated that education material was scarcer for students from low-income backgrounds than those from higher-income backgrounds (Busso and Messina, 2020). This is a dilemma; there is a demographic of students without access to critical learning materials. This issue could be eased by giving these students access to online materials. However, a significant issue is in the Caribbean, especially the islands with topography that often limits the development of technological infrastructure that would allow these students to have online access to learning materials and teaching activities.

The IESALC, 2021 public consultation focused on *Pathways to 2050 and Beyond: Findings on the Future of Higher Education*. Respondents from LAC admitted that they saw technology as a medium that could bring hope regarding social, economic, and environmental changes. However, 7% had some misgivings about technological development. Rosenblatt et al. (2022) gap analysis mentioned that digital infrastructure and development in the LAC needed improvement and mentioned that the following gaps remain:

- Telecommunications and [3]Digital transformation.
- Access to the Internet.
- Telecommunication speed - Reflecting on the capacity of broadband and mobile platforms.
- There is a need for digital training for educators to impact their service skills considering issues faced during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Blair (2021) noted that few Caribbean countries had a digital education policy at that time. However, there are ongoing initiatives even at the primary level that are focused on equipping children, teachers and adults to transition to digital learning environments in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (UNICEF, 2022). We recognize that technology inclusive of digitalization is a challenge for the future of HE in the Caribbean region but there continues to be capacity building in this area. There is also a pressing need as presented in the various advisory briefs disseminated by UNESCO (2024) related to the CRES+5 Working Group 12.2 supports and reflects the stakeholders in the LAC region interest in supporting teaching and learning activities (Rosenblatt, et.al.,2022).

[3] Source Vaughan 2023
Digital transformation (DT) is a process that uses modern technology to improve existing products. There are four main areas to DT, Process Transformation, Customer Experience, Data and Analytics, and Business Model Transformation.

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Funding

Browne and Hong Shen (2017) describe funding as the most significant challenge to Caribbean higher education development and, like the present, cite extensive budget pressure and, at the same time, being asked to offer state-of-the-art services, which require more extensive funding of the Eastern Caribbean States. Care must be exercised in selecting relevant and viable funding models for Caribbean higher education. Several higher education funding models are available to universities and colleges. There are varying funding models engaged throughout the LAC region. The three major categories are public, private, and mixed models. These models are further deconstructed into subcategories which describe how the funding process is capitalized, distributed, reviewed and reconciled.

The panelists who shared in the public consultations on financing HE shared that no singular financing model will fit the needs of the Caribbean HEIs. (IESALCa, 2023) Choosing a suitable funding model or combination of models is a complex decision for any HE institution administration, with far-reaching implications for achieving the institutional goals set for every level of the organization. It depends on factors like the institution's mission, student demographics, program offerings, funding landscape, desired level of autonomy and the economic climate of the country in which the institution is located. If the economy is not performing well, the HE institutions that depend on government funding are likely to receive cuts in funding, making it difficult for them to operate at maximum efficiency (Tapper, 2004). Some other factors that should be considered include as presented by Iacobucci and Tuohy, (2005):

- The role of government**:** The level of funding outcomes can be influenced by whether the government plays a dominant role in funding or takes a more hands-off approach.
- The level of tuition fees: careful attention should be given to how much students are required to contribute to the cost of their education.
- The balance between equity and efficiency*:* The big question regarding funding is how institutions ensure that funding is equitably distributed while incentivizing institutions to improve performance.

It is important to note that the optimal HE funding model will vary depending on each country or region's specific context and priorities.

Global competitiveness

The United Nations Academic Impact Activity Report (2022) notes that universities and colleges operate as part of a globalized academic community striving to contribute to the global knowledge economy. The interconnectedness of institutions characterizes this globalized academic community, the exchange of ideas, and

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the pursuit of international collaborations. As part of this globalized academic community, universities and colleges aim to participate in the global knowledge economy. Several factors will determine if Caribbean universities and colleges can attract and sustain the enrolment of students who respond and enjoy what HEIs offer in the future, along with maintaining enrolment numbers of students that will support the universities' operations. The following five factors are critical to ensuring global competitiveness.

Quality education:

Strong academic programs: restructuring of pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies Students tend to select universities that offer a wide range of high-quality academic programs relevant to the global workforce's needs and allow individuals to create entrepreneurial pathways. Creating these opportunities will include providing science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), business, healthcare, and humanities programs (UNESCO, 2022; UNESCO IESALC. 2021). There is also a need to insist that quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation processes be mandated in all Caribbean countries. The quality of education is also determined by:

Effective teaching: To be competitive, universities need to employ qualified and experienced faculty who can teach students effectively and prepare them for the challenges of the global marketplace.

Student engagement: Universities must also create an environment that promotes student engagement and active learning. This can be achieved through various methods, such as small class sizes, hands-on learning activities, flipped classrooms and research opportunities.

Research and innovation

Strong research output: In today's rapidly evolving world, universities play a crucial role as the engines of groundbreaking research and innovation. They serve as fertile ground where knowledge is cultivated, nurtured, and transformed into solutions for the challenges of tomorrow. To stay ahead of the curve in their respective fields, universities must actively strive to be at the forefront of research. Universities, therefore, need to be at the forefront of research in their fields. This advancement can be created by investing in research infrastructure, attracting top researchers, and encouraging collaboration with other universities and research institutions worldwide. The future challenges discussed focus on inadequate libraries, laboratories and research facilities. There is a need for continued investment in research through the further development of collaborations between government HE and private entities (Public Private Partnerships). This research is mutually beneficial as the private sector can continue to create new products and services, and the HEI can develop opportunities for students to

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be exposed to critical knowledge markets and state-of-the-art information. Universities must actively commercialize their research discoveries and turn them into products and services that can support their operations and benefit society. The infrastructure for these partnerships would need all stakeholders to subscribe and embrace intellectual property rights and technology transfer (World Bank, 2017).

***Innovation and entrepreneurship*:**

Universities need to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among their students and faculty. This initiative can be accomplished through building ecosystems. Universities can become innovative ecosystems with thriving interdisciplinary collaboration, where mentors inspire students, and funding flows freely to initiatives, such as business incubators, accelerators, and startup competitions (Fu, Li and Chang, 2022; World Bank, 2017).

Internationalization

Gacel-Ávilla (2018) points out that faced with a heavily interconnected world, universities can no longer afford to be isolated within the confines of their national borders. Their respected halls were once synonymous with isolated scholarly pursuits, but universities must now respond to the pressing need to embrace the vigorous force of internationalization. The term internationalization is not simply a fashionable slogan but a strategic inevitability for universities seeking to survive and thrive in the globalized landscape of the 21st century. Therefore, universities must seek to attract international students worldwide by offering competitive scholarships, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, and providing programs relevant to international students' needs. The Caribbean region must continue to bolster its internationalization offerings and policies to attract more students to the region as more students leave to study abroad.

Universities need to form partnerships with other universities worldwide. The formation of strategic partnerships with peer institutions across geographical boundaries represents a cornerstone of effective internationalization. Such collaborations facilitate the exchange of students and faculty, fostering intercultural understanding and enriching academic experiences (Woicolesco, Cassol-Silva, and Morosini, 2022).

In the future, as more universities and students are attracted to the nations of the Caribbean, accreditation and quality assurance will indeed be crucial. It is essential that the programs offered by these universities undergo scrutiny not only from international surveillance bodies but also from local accreditation bodies. This ensures that the education provided meets high standards and is recognized globally. Setting quotas for the programs offered can help align them with the global workforce needs. By assessing the demand for specific fields, such as medicine,

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the number of medical schools required in the Caribbean region or on a particular island can be determined. This helps prevent oversaturation of the market and ensures that the educational institutions can effectively meet the needs of students and the job market. To effectively manage the internationalization efforts within the Caribbean, governments must develop policies to safeguard and guide the process.

These policies can address various aspects, such as accreditation standards, quality assurance mechanisms, curriculum alignment with industry requirements, and support for international collaborations and partnerships. By establishing clear guidelines and regulations, governments can facilitate the growth of reputable educational institutions in the region while maintaining high standards of education (Tight, 2022). By emphasizing the importance of accreditation, quality assurance, and policy development, the Caribbean countries can position themselves as attractive destinations for both local and international students, fostering educational excellence and contributing to the development of a skilled workforce .

Furthermore, universities can establish vibrant research collaborations through bilateral and multilateral arrangements, pooling expertise and resources to tackle pressing global challenges. Joint research projects, joint doctoral programs, and faculty exchange programs are examples of such initiatives, propelling knowledge creation and disseminating innovative solutions beyond national borders.

Caribbean HEIs must engage with the global community in various ways. They are not static knowledge repositories but dynamic agents of positive change within the global community. Engaging with the wider world takes numerous forms, each contributing to a more interconnected and empathetic world. Examples are service-learning projects that allow students to apply their academic skills to address real-world problems in diverse communities and foster global citizenship and intercultural understanding. The planning and execution of international conferences and forums provide platforms for meaningful dialogue on complex global issues, stimulate intellectual exchange and forge collaborative solutions (UNESCO- IESALC, 2019; Woicolesco, Cassol-Silva, and Morosini, 2022). Engaging in international networks and initiatives like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals allows universities to leverage their expertise and resources to address pressing global challenges. The solutions can be accomplished through international outreach programs, service-learning projects, and participation in international conferences and events.

Sustainable practices

Given limited resources, universities must manage them efficiently and effectively. This can be accomplished through various methods, such as strategic planning, budgeting, and performance measurement. By adopting

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environmental planning into the very fabric of their operations, Caribbean colleges and universities can unlock many benefits. The outcome goes beyond reducing ecological footprint; it ensures their long-term financial viability and fosters a responsible, future-oriented learning environment. To achieve sustainability, there should be an emphasis on energy conservation, where the power of renewable energy sources is harnessed through the implementation of energy-efficient infrastructure (Mallory and Aber, 2009). There should also be the fostering of conscious resource consumption across campus to minimize the carbon footprint and lower operational costs.

The HE institutions should embrace the application and use of technologies such as solar panels, intelligent lighting systems and energy-saving devices and appliances for the campus community, thereby creating an institutional sustainability ethos. The sustainability efforts ensure waste reduction, given the significant waste streams in the university landscape. Implementing robust recycling and composting programs, minimizing single-use plastics, and promoting responsible consumption can significantly divert waste from landfills and foster a culture of environmental stewardship (UNESCO, 2022).

The integration of sustainable principles regarding curricula and campus operation, ensuring the implementation and consideration of climate change and identifying processes that facilitate adaptability and resilience along with research that underpins and addresses environmental challenges in the region is also imperative for the future of HEIs in the LAC region (UNESCO- ELAC, 2022).

Governance and policy

Governance encompasses a complex network that includes the legislative framework, the characteristics of institutions, how they relate to the overall system, the allocation of funds to institutions, and their accountability for how they spend the money. Additionally, it involves less recognized structures and relationships that guide and influence behavior. This network aims to ensure that the relationships at the tertiary/HE level are both national and institutional and is resilient, adaptive, and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. Also it is via governance that all policies related to HE are created, enacted, and evaluated. (OECD, 2021; Zabalawi, et al.,2020). Governance is distinct from the managerial level, but at the same time incorporates the actors at that level in its system and processes. Governance within higher education functions at three different levels (Henard and Mitterle, 2007),

1. External. This concerns governance of higher education systems.
2. Internal or institutional. This has to do with governance at the level of higher education institutions.
3. Global. Governance of higher education systems within an international or global perspective.

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Role of the state

Notwithstanding the extent of institutional autonomy, the State plays a crucial role in higher education governance. Critically, at the ministerial level where policy and the overarching framework to regulate and guide the higher education system are set and maintained. Further, the State is the major source of funding for higher education systems. Funding controls and directs the stakeholders. The nature and models of funding are dependent on the national economic arrangements, along the continuum from libertarian market to the statist.

There are several agencies involved in external quality assurance functions, which play a critical role in system governance. These have functions that deal with regulation, accreditation, award of qualifications, among other areas. Their role is important in that they are levers that influence quality and quality outcomes. Their decisions and/or recommendations influence the flow of funding and other resources. (Ferrera et al, 2017)

The State also influences higher education institutions, as applicable, through the boards it appoints. Notwithstanding the diversity of the system, and the ownership and control of institutions, the State can exercise significant influence over these boards and their institutions through the nature and content of the legal and regulatory frameworks. (Ferrera et al, 2017; Henard and Mitterle, 2008). In addition to the State, critical stakeholders who regularly participate include students, academics, administrative personnel, and ancillary workers.

Students

Students are the focus of the higher education system. Despite this, they often do not experience meaningful inclusion in the governance processes of higher education institutions. A webinar under the theme, *Caribbean Youth Dialogue* was held to allow youth representatives the opportunity to share their experience with governance level processes. Generally, students were comfortable with the level of participation. However, some noted that in many instances students were peripheral to fundamental decision making. (IESALC, 2024b) Henard and Mitterle (p.32, 2007) note that students' "decision-making political influence" is "rather low," but that their voice is stronger given their advisory role in national policy-making processes in ministries and their capacity to generate "short-term mobilization" where they demonstrate and act on issues of critical importance.

Academic group

Members of the academic group often complain about limited power in institutional governance. There is always the distinction between having a voice in fora, and actually driving strategy and policy decisions and direction. In

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some contexts, academics are powerful voices and determine policy and direction. In many other institutions, they are at the periphery of institutional governance. The role they play tends to influence their activism and influence. One group, “academics mostly concerned with their research,” tend to be the most marginal. Another group, “academics highly engaged in academic self-governance,” are strong advocates of the rights and interests of the academic group in institutional governance, often utilizing the power of networks and/or unions. (Henard and Mitterle, 2007)

Non-Teaching staff

The role of non-teaching staff is important, and often overlooked. Ancillary staff and administrative and clerical personnel support institutional governance through their constant attention to the administrative and maintenance functions essential to ensuring that an institution is efficient and effective in executing its mandates. Global and national economic changes are affecting how they work and the nature of their relationships with institutions. Non-teaching staff often have the lowest influence on governance mechanisms within institutions.

Resilient governance

Several factors challenge the Caribbean Region. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing economic challenges associated with it, and the fallout from climate change and its social and economic impacts are significant. However, this has to be understood against the background of the vulnerability of the countries and territories throughout the Caribbean. Many reflect the unique challenges associated with Small Island Developing States (SIDS): narrow resource base, lack of economies of scale, relative openness, infrastructural costs, natural disasters, and restricted access to international capital markets. (Kattamuri, 2021 ; Martin and Bray, 2011)

These are a number of implications for higher education in the Caribbean. Higher education requires significant resources; its costs are high in comparison to secondary education, and primary education. The cost of higher education requires Caribbean political authorities to plan for governance structures that achieve efficiency and effectiveness, without sacrificing quality. Importantly, this requires actions to eliminate duplication, the levels of support applied through public funds, subsidies on tuition, and the competition environment. This is critical with regard to the size and sustainability of institutions. Within larger countries such as Cuba, and in many of the smaller ones, state controlled institutions dominate given economies of scale or clear policy directions. The smaller nations, given internationalization strategies, support foreign direct investment in the provision of higher education in narrow areas of focus such as medicine. (IESALC, 2023b).

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Martin and Bray (2011) note that Small States struggling with economies of scale in their higher education provision adopt a few governance and policy strategies in response. First, multi-level institutions collaboration; higher cost entities (universities) partner with smaller institutions to deliver elements of programs in the lower cost entities. Second, the development of multi-faceted institutions, through mergers of smaller colleges to form larger entities offering diverse programs in critical professional areas. Third, a strategy for international recruitment. This is part of a focus on internationalization. In some circumstances, institutions focus on programs in high global demand, but where many nations do not have the supporting infrastructure to cope with the demand from their citizens. Caribbean countries have developed governance frameworks to facilitate investment in the provision of offshore medical education. (IESALC, 2023b) A fourth strategy is that of regional cooperation. Fifth, countries develop institutions to serve their citizens. Technology also plays a significant role in the fifth strategy, distance education. This incorporates technology-mediated modes of delivery and allows nations to mitigate the capacity constraints associated with physical campuses and population sizes.

The issues related to vulnerability and sustainability drive the particular features of the governance frameworks and structures across the Region. During a webinar on *Sustaining Higher Education Systems in SIDS*, Dr Romina Miorelli shared preliminary findings from research conducted by the World Bank on *Post-Secondary Education in the OECS.* (IESALC, 2023c). Focusing on six (6) countries within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Dr Miorelli noted the following distinct features: difference system to compare internationally, national colleges amalgamation, challenges with data collection given the diversity of institutions and associated processes, flexibility (flexible pathways to increase inclusion of bridge programmes to facilitate access), and diversity of providers and international students. Regarding the specific governance frameworks, the research noted the presence of general education laws (national Education Acts) and specific legislation for State colleges, high degrees of institutional autonomy, the lack of national higher education strategies, and five of six nations with no unit focusing on higher education within government ministries.

Concerning quality assurance, the OECS countries have developing structures. State agencies are in the early stages of development. The Caribbean has quality assurance structures that reflect varying maturity. As noted, there is a need for improvements in infrastructure and the teaching environment, and in the use of data for evidence based decision-making. The wide variety and diversity of institutions and their student populations require sustained focus and action. Caribbean stakeholders at the governance level must contend with these issues as they advance with these issues. Strengthening the governance framework across the Caribbean will require appropriate and relevant legislative action (IESALC, 2023c).

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Jamaica agreed on a vision for higher education in 2018. This is in a process of development in a national policy. Among its central foci is the integration of the higher education system. Given the dynamic development of the system, it is fragmented with disconnected and diverse pathways, with the result being that persons with qualifications from one pathway cannot seamlessly matriculate to pursue a qualification in another. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information in 2018 declared the goal of its integration, incorporating formal, non-formal and informal dimensions such as the academic, technical, vocational, professional education and training, as well as lifelong learning. The system is coherent and facilitates articulation from one level to the other through a credit articulation and transfer system facilitated by the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF—J). (MoEYI, 2018) The multi-faceted goal of integration is an efficient and effective system, consisting of innovative institutions, developing a globally competitive environment and workforce. This is appropriate for consideration across the Caribbean.

One of the issues that emerged from the webinar on *Sustaining Higher Education Systems in SIDS* was the lack of alignment across the education system. This affects matriculation and diminishes performance as students progress. Thus, Caribbean education policy makers may consider the alignment of the system as an outcome. Higher education is not distinct and should not be appended nor developed without reference to the lower levels, nor, indeed, the other pathways of the tertiary level such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Governments and stakeholders should collaborate to develop and operationalize the alignment of higher education systems within seamless national education systems inclusive of early childhood, primary, secondary, higher education, and lifelong learning. In this way, higher education will contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives across the various levels of the national education system. (IESALC, 2023c; MoEYI, 2018)

Persons from countries with the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism have strongly advocated for the decolonization of the education systems in their nations. This is important given that the societies colonialism formed reflect the knowledge and social systems of the colonial powers. These epistemologies are powerful agents of social control. Dr Santiago Ruiz of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, UNAH strongly argued during a webinar entitled *Decolonising Higher Education in the Caribbean* that we have to understand and systematically deconstruct the philosophical underpinnings of colonialism if we are to ensure higher education systems that serve our interests. Collectively, participants agreed that Caribbean higher education systems have successfully achieved decolonization in curricula. However, there is a need for more action in a number of other areas. This includes efforts to facilitate equity and access, reform of governance structures, leadership, focus on students and learners regarding their needs and constraints, and finance

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(institutional and personal). (IESALC, 2024a)

Caribbean people suggest that regional education systems reflect on the following measures across the levels, but particularly at the tertiary level.

a) Continually review curricula to enhance citizenship and ensure relevance and alignment with national and regional socio-economic demands.
b) Institutionalize systems that ensure equitable access to its provisions and offerings.
c) Apply innovative teaching and learning processes that acknowledge the diversity of learners and students.
d) Facilitate learner success, persistence and completion.
e) Educate, train and equip persons to compete in national, regional and global labor markets in sustainable ways.
f) Implement policies and processes at institutional levels to assure agility, flexibility, sustainability and viability.
g) Establish partnerships with employers, labor organizations, youth leaders, and sector interests.

The Caribbean, across all language groupings, has discussed and declared its intent regarding these issues. Notably, the Caribbean Conference on Higher Education (CCHE) in Paramaribo, Suriname in 2010 asserted persuasively. Subsequently, the delegates at CRES in Cordoba, Argentina affirmed these principles. In keeping with the discussion on inclusion, regional higher education systems should continue to work to assure and facilitate equitable access to their provisions. Access to quality education should be a high priority, as education at all levels, but particularly at the tertiary level, represents opportunity, and a vital pathway for personal, social and national development. (CCHE, 2010; CRES, 2018)

The agenda of decolonization acknowledges that while the Caribbean systems must benchmark against global standards, Quality is multi-dimensional and embraces all functions, and diverse people and societies. There is no one perspective on quality. The Caribbean must interact with all stakeholders and particularly the people who experience the greatest impact from decisions on quality. This is an uncompromising commitment to quality**,** which we understand as being fitness for purpose, and acknowledges the need for outcomes that meet generally accepted standards. (IESALC, 2024a)

The financing models of Caribbean higher education systems also need reform, as already articulated. The decolonization agenda demands models guided by the principles of equity, efficiency, autonomy, ownership and

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participation, and accountability. Financing models must acknowledge the global and national macro environments. In doing so efforts should focus on,

a) Re-balancing budgets across the higher education systems. Very often governmental budgetary decisions favor particular institutions over others, thus diminishing the potential for greater impact through distinct channels such as TVET entities.
b) Aligning budgetary support with national imperatives. Institutions must target programming and learning development and delivery to areas that facilitate national development in sustainable ways. The imperative of the climate crisis and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic demand adopt larger visions and strategize accordingly.
c) Facilitating greater autonomy within public sector institutions.
d) Increasing learner equity, access, participation, success, and ownership of their learning.
e) Optimizing accountability and transparency in the use of Government funds.

Caribbean higher education policy makers should review the leadership and business models of public sector institutions to determine the reforms and transformation required. This process required dynamic approaches to participation of all higher education stakeholders. Participatory approaches will facilitate ownership of the goals and strategies designed to address the historic and continuing socio-economic and cultural challenges experienced by many persons across the education systems of the Caribbean.

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