

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Assignment #4:

Do the following after reading *The Six Virtues of the Educated Person*:

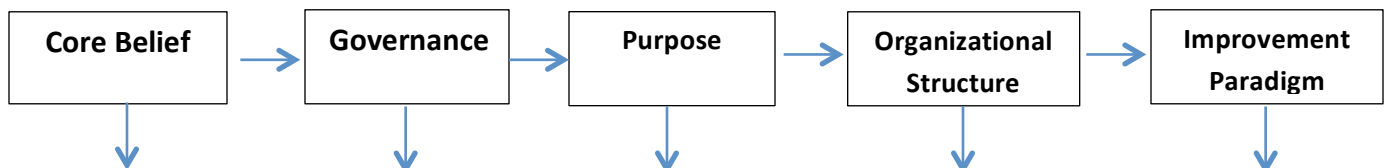
1. Draw and explain your conceptualization of the Jamaican model of education. Page 2 has my conceptualization of the American system. Your model can look totally different or similar. It is up to you.
2. List the three virtues that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled. (Virtues are defined on pp. 29-35.) List the three vices that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled.
3. I claim the Jamaican core belief is that "elected and appointed authorities are responsible for citizen welfare" (p. 40). Discuss the significance of this belief to the improvement of Jamaican education.
4. Write a critique of Chapter 8 (pp. 105-128). It is the longest and most philosophical chapter. It is the longest because I made up the concept of an improvement paradigm. I borrowed Thomas Kuhn's definition of paradigm, which he applied to natural science, and then I applied the definition of paradigm to social science and aesthetics. I explained that each of these areas of human endeavor starts with certain assumptions, each asks certain questions, and discovers certain types of knowledge by answering those questions.

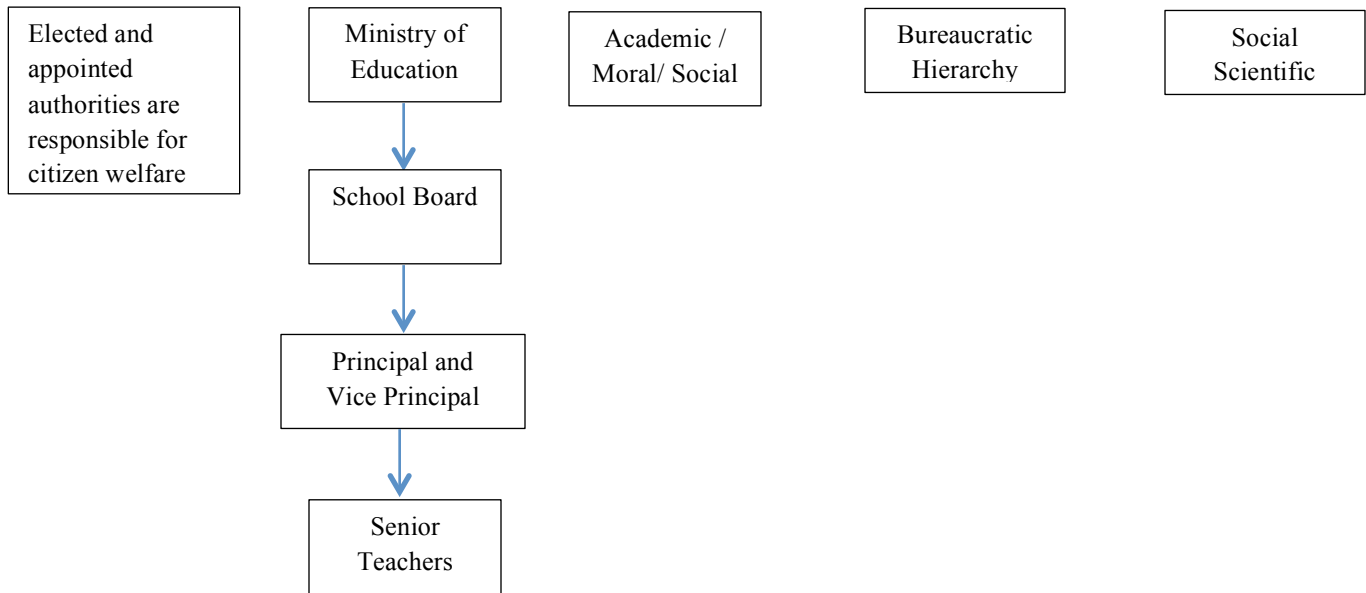
Date:

February 20, 2015

1. Draw and explain your conceptualization of the Jamaican model of education. Page 2 has my conceptualization of the American system. Your model can look totally different or similar. It is up to you.

JAMAICAN MODEL OF EDUCATION





The structure above shows my representation of the Jamaican Model of Education. The first box speaks to our core belief which is that the elected and appointed authorities are responsible for citizens' welfare. This means that in our education system, all the decisions and policies are made by the governing body for education; which is the Ministry of Education. It also means that all the issues we have in education should be fixed by these persons. I consider this our core belief because everyone expects that the ministry is automatically responsible for everything that happens in education.

And this belief drives everything that happens and does NOT happen in your schools, doesn't it?

How often do teachers NOT take responsibility for improving something because the principal is responsible for improving things?

I believe it happens ALL THE TIME. Does it?

How often has the principal not taken responsibility for improving things because the MOE is responsible for it?

Do these things ever happen?

The second box represents governance. Governance speaks to the establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the members of the governing body of an organization. The governing members as depicted by the diagram are the Ministry of Education, school boards, principals, vice principals and senior teachers.

The third box represents the purpose. The purpose of schools in our Jamaican system is to first educate our students academically to prepare them for the world of work later in their lives. Another purpose of our Jamaican education system is to build moral and social values in our children. We teach them how to get along with others as well as what is right from wrong and how to be good citizens. We know that these things should be taught at home but they are integrated in the school's curriculum.

The fourth box represents the organizational structure of our education structure. Our education structure is a bureaucratic hierarchy. This means that there are many levels in which tasks and responsibilities are delegated among individuals or different groups. The Ministry of Education which is at the top of the hierarchy has the job of holding administrators and teachers accountable for the lack of achievement or improper use of school resources.

The final box represents the improvement paradigm. The education system in Jamaica uses the social scientific paradigm. They use this paradigm to try to improve education because of the belief that researches have been done and have found these things to be effective.

2. List the three virtues that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled. (Virtues are defined on pp. 29-35.) List the three vices that are the most frequently modeled in your school community. Describe a time when each was modeled.

The six virtues are often times modeled in my school. Of course there are some that are modeled more often than the others. The three virtues that are most frequently modeled in my school are understanding, imagination and generous spirit. Often times, understanding is modeled by our teachers. For example, many times, the Ministry of Education sends documents at the last minute and expects our teachers to work overtime in meeting their deadline. One instance in particular that I can recall was when the ministry sent some documents to be filled out with students' information and they expected this to be done and returned to them over a two day period; while teachers still had to teach their classes and carry out their normal duties. One might ask how is this modeling understanding. The answer is simple. Teachers modeled the virtue of understanding because we understood that this is how the ministry is and also that this is a part of our job. Hence, even though things are thrown at us at the last minute, we still understand that this is our job and we have to do what is best for our students.

This is also modeling generosity – giving of their time.

The virtue of imagination is also frequently modeled in my school. Often times, teachers have to get imaginative in order to reach students for different reasons. These reasons could be academic, behavioral or social. I can remember many times when I have had to model this virtue. One of the times I would like to highlight is a year ago when I had a boy in my class whose behavior was so poor. He would talk back to me, beat upon the other students in the class, as well as bully them. He would also take the other students' things. I tried all the possible disciplinary actions possible and I just wasn't reaching him. Many nights while I lay in bed I thought about this boy because I know that underneath all these things there must be something special about this boy. So I became imaginative and decided that I'm going to try a different approach. I'm going to show this boy some love instead of being angry at him every time he does something wrong. I started to hug him, give him little chores around the classroom to do and praise him for doing a

good job. Eventually his behavior started to improve and he started getting along with his classmates. I realized that all he needed was a little love but I was only able to figure this out by being imaginative. He is now in grade three but he comes to look for me every day and give me a hug. What has changed this boy? My imagination.

Another virtue that is frequently modeled in my school is that of a generous spirit. Time after time I have seen teachers and administrators. Daily we show love, care and kindness to our students. Daily I see teachers go into their pockets and buy lunch and snacks for students who come to school without lunch. I have also seen where teachers have lobbied for students who are less fortunate to be given lunch on a daily basis so as to ensure that none of our students go hungry. Teachers also model their generous spirits in other ways such as buying school shoes, text books and bags for needy students. The instances of modeling generous spirit are so many it is impossible to list them all.

Just as how the virtues are modeled in my school, so too are the vices. The three vices that are most frequently modeled in my school are fear, selfishness and pride. Fear is modeled in my school especially in forums or where the staff gathers. An instance of this is when meetings are held, many teachers are afraid to voice their opinions because of the fear that they might be victimized or what they say might be held against them. Selfishness is also modeled in my school from time to time. A time that I can recall when this vice was modeled is when a particular teacher had some beautiful charts and when she was asked where she got them, she refused to give that information. The sad thing about it is that these charts would enhance other teachers' classrooms but due to this teacher's selfishness this was never to happen. The third vice that is most frequently modeled in my school is pride. There are some instances where pride has been modeled in my school. Let me be clear about one thing; not many teachers model this vice, however, the few who do, model it regularly. These teachers are conceited, their egos are big and

every opportunity they get to boasts their achievements they do. This vice I believe is modeled to often in my school. Vices are the opposite of virtues and should not be in schools as they do not contribute to a healthy school. However, they are and that's a harsh reality that we must deal with.

Good points.

3. I claim the Jamaican core belief is that "elected and appointed authorities are responsible for citizen welfare" (p. 40). Discuss the significance of this belief to the improvement of Jamaican education.

Firstly, I do agree with this core belief. This is our core belief because it is rooted in our society's traditions and history. It is also accepted because it is rarely questioned. And finally, the opposite belief is not considered a possibility. Hence, it is significant to the improvement of Jamaican education. I do believe, like many, that since the Ministry of Education (which is the governing body for education in Jamaica) makes all the rules, policies and decisions about education, they are the ones who are supposed to fix all the problems we face in education. They are also responsible for providing the funding, human and physical resources for improving the education system. Absolutely, no one question who is responsible for these things. It is a given. Not only are the authorities responsible for providing what is needed but they are also the policy and decision makers. Nothing can be done within a public school without the permission or knowledge of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, this belief is very significant in improving education in Jamaica. They are the "movers and shakers in education.

My earlier comments explain why so little is done to improve Jamaican schools. Of course some things are done, but everybody believes it is the people above them who are supposed to improve

the schools, even though the only people who can improve the schools are the people at the bottom – the ones working directly with students. If they just did things to improve the schools, instead of wait for the principal, or the MPs, or the EO or the MOE to give them permission, more things would be improved.

4. Write a critique of Chapter 8 (pp. 105-128). It is the longest and most philosophical chapter. It is the longest because I made up the concept of an improvement paradigm. I borrowed Thomas Kuhn's definition of paradigm, which he applied to natural science, and then I applied the definition of paradigm to social science and aesthetics. I explained that each of these areas of human endeavor starts with certain assumptions, each asks certain questions, and discovers certain types of knowledge by answering those questions.

An Aesthetic School Improvement Paradigm is the title of chapter 8 in the Six Virtues of the Educated Person book, written by J. Casey Hurley. This chapter is a philosophical chapter that asks many questions, answer these questions and put other ideas forward. This chapter spoke to a number of things. Firstly, it spoke about comparing the medical analogy to educators and policymakers in the education system. The writer asked if educators and policymakers should adopt the medical analogy, as suggested by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), or should they reject it. But what is the medical analogy suggested by the AERA? This analogy is that researches are done without the involvement or participation of physicians. So to go back to the question, should educators and policymakers accept or reject the medical field analogy. The writer went on to say that we should reject this analogy. I do agree with the writer on this point. First and foremost, I reject this idea because I do believe you cannot do research on an issue that concerns a particular set of people and a sample of those people are not involved. Where will the imagination and understanding come from? Having said that I do not believe that the things that research see as effective can improve schools. Hence, for this reason I reject the

medical field analogy. This knowledge I have gained from learning about the aesthetic paradigm; which I will discuss later in my critique.

Another point I must mention in my critique is that of rejecting the social science improvement paradigm. What then is the social science improvement paradigm? The social science improvement paradigm focuses on what research sees as effective in improving schools. Again the writer out rightly rejects this argument. At different points in the chapter he has alluded to the fact that educational research has done little in improving education. And again I am inclined to agree with him. I have seen this in my own school. Over and over we have tried to adopt “best practices” to deal with certain situations. Have these so called “best practices worked”? I have seen these practices fail time and time again. Teachers and administrators have had to get creative in dealing with these situations in order to get the desirable results. So like the writer, I too am rejecting the social science improvement paradigm.

Another point on which the writer spoke in chapter 8 is that the social science improvement paradigm does not improve education. Their findings cannot be directly applied to school situations with any confidence that they will improve the situation. (Hurley, 2009, p. 119). Again I am persuaded to agree with the writer. Earlier in this said chapter, he stated that “In all situations, it depends on the situation.” My understanding of this statement is that every situation is different and unique. Hence, you cannot use the same solution to solve different problems. Some might argue that, even if research findings cannot be applied directly, they are valuable because they inform understanding, which is the first step toward improvement. (Hurley, 2009, p. 120). The writer’s point here is pretty straightforward. I couldn’t have explained it better myself. In addition to all that has been said, teachers and school administrators have to get creative in solving the different problems and situations they face on a daily basis and not to apply what research see as effective to every situation, though each situation is different.

The final and what I believe is the most important part of chapter 8 speaks to an aesthetic school improvement paradigm. It frames human experience in terms of appreciation instead of effectiveness. Works of art are appreciated as expressions of what is more or less beautiful about the world and human condition. (Hurley, 2009, p. 124). Simply put, the aesthetic improvement paradigm looks at making the beautiful more beautiful and the ugly beautiful by being imaginative and creative. Throughout the writings on the aesthetic improvement paradigm, the writer spoke about how teachers and school administrators can use their understanding, imagination, strong character, generosity, courage and humility for school improvement. I am very appreciative of this paradigm for more reasons one. Firstly, I have been using this approach with my class for many years but didn't realize there was actually a name for this approach. Secondly, I have seen where this aesthetic approach has worked time and time again. It has yielded results and caused some beautiful things to happen in my classroom as well as my school as a whole. Thirdly, this aesthetic improvement paradigm has pushed me to challenge myself in using the six virtues that this approach speaks of. Truth be told, I have used some of these virtues more than others. However, gaining this knowledge has equipped and educated me to make more beautiful things happen in my classroom. Having read the book I have a better understanding of its title: "The Six Virtues of the Educated Person". I do believe that I am a more educated person having read and understood the six virtues.

In concluding, the writer put forward some salient points that I believe are relevant and necessary in our Jamaican Education System. If we are going to move forward as a country in education, we can only do so by fully adopting the aesthetic improvement paradigm and move away from the social scientific paradigm. We have been using this approach for years and it has not yielded much results. It is time to try another approach. I suggest the aesthetic improvement paradigm. Overall I think the book; especially chapter 8 is relevant and significant to education in Jamaica.

I am in total agreement with the writer as every situation is unique and needs its own solution, not some research that has been seen as effective.

If you watch my interview on Profile (on my webpage – www.sixvirtues.com) you will see that I said the same thing in the interview. When Ian Boyne asked me what I believe should happen to improve Jamaican schools, I said you ought to use the six virtues to undergird the teaching of everything else.

Good report. 4