MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE

LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY

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November 2001

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The unsatisfactory performance of students in language and literacy at all levels of the Jamaican educational system, and its accompanying effects on language competence and on the potential for human development in the wider society, have perpetually been matters of concern. In an attempt, once again, to provide solutions while responding appropriately to developing trends in the Caribbean region and beyond, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEY&C) has chosen to commence by formulating a national policy on language education.

Although Jamaica is described as a bilingual country with Standard Jamaican English (SJE) and Jamaican Creole (JC) being the two languages in operation, the fluid nature of language usage between these languages, as well as the peculiar nature of the linguistic relationship they share, creates difficulties for the majority of Creole speakers learning English. The magnitude of the difficulties is confirmed in a survey of learners' performance between 1998 and 2000 which shows that despite interventions by the MOEY&C, an average of 50% of learners consistently fail to achieve established passing levels, girls out-performing boys at every stage.

Informed by reviews of research on policy options, and on language and literacy acquisition in second language learning environments, the MOEY&C has adopted a policy position, which recognizes Jamaica as a bilingual country. It retains SJE as the official language and advocates the policy option which promotes oral use of the home language in schools, while facilitating the development of skills in SJE. Within this option, emphasis is placed on the employment of bilingual teaching strategies, particularly at the early primary level and again at the early secondary level where numerous language and literacy needs are also manifested.

The government of Jamaica, through the MOEY&C, will provide the human, material and institutional resources for policy implementation. Teacher training programmes should adequately prepare teachers for delivering language and literacy instruction to varying ability levels in primary and secondary schools. Language and literacy learning in schools should involve the awareness and cooperation of the school boards, learners, parents and communities. Special provision should be made for learners with exceptionalities. Spanish, in the meantime, should be regarded as the official foreign language.

1. **The Problem**

   In Jamaica there is continuing concern about the unsatisfactory performance of many candidates in English language examinations at all levels, about the inhibitions of many learners who are affected by the ambivalent attitude towards the use of Jamaican Creole in the school and society, and about the inaccurate or inappropriate use of both language forms in the wider community. There is concern too, about the persistently low literacy levels in schools. The absence of an official policy on language education from the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture has contributed to keeping these concerns alive.

2. **Rationale**

   It is increasingly being recognised that the difficulties posed by inaccurate and inappropriate language usage are having negative effects on various aspects of life. Problems of language deficiency are manifested in the media, at the tertiary level of education, and in the unpreparedness of hundreds of graduates of secondary schools for further skill development and meaningful employment each year. In the meantime the MOEY&C is involved in what could be considered a new thrust in language and literacy worldwide. Within Jamaica, the thrust is verbalised in the first of its seven strategic objectives for the new millennium:

   > to devise and support initiatives towards literacy for all,
   > in order to extend personal opportunities and contribute
   > to national development (MOEY&C 2001)

   and is being put into action through a number of literacy-focused projects, as well as through initiatives introduced to address changing views on JC. Outside of Jamaica, dictates of regional, hemispheric and global organisations concerned with education, as well as directions indicated by globalization, demand that the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture develop a policy on language education.

3.   Language Education Policy: Definition

Corson's (1990) explanation of what a language policy at national level "tries to do" offers some clarification:

> It identifies the nation's language needs across the range
> of communities and cultural groups that it contains;
> it surveys and examines the resources available; it
> identifies the role of language in general and individual
> languages in particular in the life of the nation; it establishes
> strategies for managing and developing language resources as
> it relates all of these to the best interests of the nation
> through the operation of some suitable planning agency. (p141)

He later summarises a national language policy as "a set of nationally agreed principles which enables decision makers to make choices about language issues in a rational, comprehensive and balanced way" (p 151). Using these explanations as a guide, the developers have defined the language education policy for Jamaica as

> A set of principles agreed on by stakeholders, enabling decision making about language and literacy issues in the formal education system at all levels: early childhood, primary, secondary, and the teacher education segment of the tertiary level.

4.   Goal

The Language Education Policy provides direction for the treatment of language issues in the Jamaican educational context, in order to improve language and literacy competencies.

5.   General Objectives

Consistent with the emphasis of the MOEY&C on access, equity and quality, the general objectives of the policy entail outlining the following:

- Directions that will ensure relevant educational practices and perspectives for enabling the development of confident and competent language learners.
- The application of a variety of instructional and learning modes relevant to learners' language needs.

- Provisions for access to, acquisition and maintenance of Spanish as the official foreign language.
- Provisions that ensure that the needs of learners with exceptionalities are adequately addressed.
- Provisions for assessment strategies that are current and appropriate to the learning environment and to strategies employed in language teaching.
- Provisions for the preparation of teachers to work in a bilingual environment through relevant teacher education and professional development programmes.

6   **Situation Analysis**

6.1   The Changing Language Situation

Jamaica is considered a bilingual society (Alleyne 1989; Shields 1989), the two dominant forms of language being Jamaican Creole and Standard Jamaican English. SJE, the official language, is used in formal settings. Symbolising high status and prestige, it is, however, the language of a small minority. Jamaican Creole, the language of the overwhelming majority of the descendants of slaves, has traditionally had little status, no acceptability in official and formal contexts, and is commonly referred to as Patois, the French term for a low-status dialect.

In early colonial times, attempts were made to have the coloured population acquire English, considered their native tongue, through the elementary school system. Annual school inspection reports show the abhorrence of inspectors to the persistence of Creole in schools. The reports speak of

> "coarse provincialisms... broken English... the vernacular...
> colloquialisms... forms of speech (from) the home and on the street"
> which have to be "assailed" with vigour and the "strict adherence
> to rules..." "a degenerate form of English" needing clear and connected
> speech (cited in Bryan 2000).

Similarly, colonial Jamaica regarded language forms in the society solely in terms of good and bad English.

With political independence came positive attitudes towards Jamaican Creole, as symbol of identity of its user, as vehicle of social and cultural expression, and as source of economic benefit. In the meantime, studies in Creole languages at the University of the West Indies established JC as demonstrating the characteristics of a language.

Developments in language usage in the society over time have, however, rendered distinctions between JC and SJE increasingly difficult. While a few Jamaicans move easily between JC and SJE, the majority speak neither of these in their pure forms, but utilize forms with a mixture of both, moving more closely towards JC or SJE as the occasion demands. With a new generation of educated Jamaicans has emerged new forms of SJE, a consequence of users having had limited exposure to native speakers of English (Shields 1989). Noticeable also, is the increasing tendency among educated speakers, to consciously mix JC and SJE in public and formal settings (Shields-Brodber 1997). Added to these is the outright rejection of English by groups within the society: the Rastafarians, and the younger male population who have adopted the "dread talk" of the former (Pollard 1994) for example, and communities in which the SJE being learnt in school finds little or no acceptance.

The greatest challenge, however, resides in the peculiar linguistic relationship shared by JC and SJE. Similarities, such as the vocabulary common to both, significantly mask differences, particularly in structure and idiom, and create, for speakers of JC, major difficulties in learning to speak and write SJE.

6.2   Historical Perspective on Policy

Policy directives regarding language in Jamaica go as far back as the Colonial era. The post- emancipation language policy introduced in 1847 by the Colonial Office was:

> To diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization for the coloured population of the colonies. (Circular Despatch 1847, cited in Augier and Gordon 1962).

In the last two decades of the twentieth century a number of local, regional and international initiatives emerged:

(i)   A 1990 UNESCO conference on education commissioned ministers of education to target improved learning outcomes for "an agreed percentage of an appropriate age cohort" by the year 2000. Outcomes for language and literacy are implied here.

(ii)   A 1993 CARICOM conference of ministers responsible for education and culture, committed participants to set language goals for schools in the region. The ministers were expected to
- ensure that by the age of ten, children are competent in the use of the official language (of their country) at a level appropriate to their age and experience;
- recognise all the languages in each society as equally valid and to see multilingualism and multi-dialectalism as positive attributes;
- produce secondary school graduates who would be able to
  - use the English Language with competence in different situations and for a variety of purposes;
  - use and understand a linguistically valid script for representing the Creole -related vernaculars of their communities;
- introduce the learning of a foreign language in the upper levels of the primary system;

- increase the number of candidates taking a foreign language to 50 percent of the total number of entries by the year 2000. (Antigua proposals agreed at the Standing Committee of Ministers responsible for Education and Culture 1993).

(iii) (a) At its meeting of education planners held in July and October 1997 CARICOM

- advised that emphasis be placed on improving literacy;
- agreed on identifying common desirable outcomes for the language arts, especially reading, for different grades in the primary school;
- argued that measures should be put in place to ensure that the outcomes were achieved through regular in-service teacher education workshops and a careful monitoring process.

(b) A 1998 meeting of the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development expressed the need to review policies regarding promotion in schools and blamed the low level of pupil achievement at Grade Six on the practice, common in member states, of automatic promotion through the primary system.

(iv) A Summit of the Americas Conference held in Chile in 1998 included among the objectives set for governments that of "implementing targeted sectorial education policies... that focus specifically on groups at a disadvantage in areas of education".

Locally, three policy statements have preceded this document:

(i) A statement issued by The National Association of Teachers of English (NATE 1989, 1996) reacted to public debate on student achievement in language, generated by the introduction of what was seen as a 'Remedial English' course at the University of West Indies.

The NATE policy position is:

1. to serve Jamaica well, the curriculum of the schools must embrace both languages used in the society.

2. teachers must be helped to develop approaches that will enable students to become more competent in the appropriate use of both English and Jamaican Creole.

(ii)   The Jamaica Reading Association document (1997) links reading attainment in schools with perspectives which would be reflected in a language policy.   An issue which would need resolution is

> whether or not Jamaica (Through the National Council for Education) should develop an official language policy, and as part of that policy, whether English should continue to be regarded as Jamaica's official language.

(iii)   The Ministry of Education draft policy (1996) aimed at enabling

> all students to maintain fluency in their first language and to become literate in Standard English, speaking, reading and writing at levels comparable to those of native speakers, and to acquire communicative competence in Spanish from Grade 4.

The language programmes of schools, through sensitivity to the process of language acquisition, should have used appropriate strategies to establish a bridge between the child's first and subsequent languages.

6.3   Performance in Language Across the System

The speech of Jamaican children entering school reflects the variety of combinations between JC and SJE existing in the society.   The majority are likely to use forms nearer to JC than to SJE.

Statistics on performance in language over the years 1998 – 2000, tables 1-6 below, show that many learners commence primary schooling without achieving the minimum level expected, and continue to perform below expectations throughout primary and secondary school.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Pupils Attaining Ranges 3 & 4 (Mastery Level) in the Grade One Readiness Inventory

Year	Sex	Percentage	Combined National Percentage
1998	F	56.90	50.10
	M	44.30	
1999	F	56.90	50.10
	M	44.30	
2000	F	58.30	48.50
	M	45.30	

Source: Student Assessment Unit, MOEY&C

Although over 97% of children entering Grade One are exposed to pre-primary schooling, approximately 50% fall below mastery (table 1) of at least 3 of 4 subtests in

- visual motor coordination
- visual perception
- auditory perception
- number and letter knowledge

The tests are meant to indicate pupils' " readiness to begin instruction at the level demanded by the Grade One National Curriculum" (NAP Final Report 2000 p. 38).

TABLE 2

Percentage of Pupils Attaining Ranges 3 & 4 in the Grade Three Diagnostic Test

Year	Sex	Percentage	Combined National Average
1998	F	46.24	31.52
	M	27.1	
1999	F	41.72	30.34
	M	27.06	
2000	F	41.06	30.48
	M	35.16	

Source: Student Assessment Unit, MOEY&C

Thirty percent (30%) show mastery of the skills tested by multiple choice. One could argue that these are the top 30% of pupils who demonstrate readiness in the Grade One test. Research on the literacy profiles of 20 low achieving Grade 2 pupils in a rural Jamaican community over a year, suggests that this might be the case. Over half of the group made very little progress and some even retrogressed (Roberts 2000). Alternatively, the results raise questions as to what ought, at this stage, to be reasonable expectations of learners who commence school speaking largely JC.

The communication task, a test in writing ability (Table 3), shows significant progress over the three-year period, but less than 25% of learners attain ranges 3 & 4.

Table 3

Percentage of Pupils Attaining Ranges 3 & 4 in the Grade Three Communication Task

Year	Sex	Percentage	Combined National Average
1998	F	6.70	4.7
	M	3.10	
1999	F	31.50	18.6
	M	15.80	
2000	F	31.60	23.5
	M	15.80	

Source: Student Assessment Unit, MOEY&C

Grade Four Literacy Test

This test measures pupils against the international bench mark for attaining functional literacy. It is the test on which promotion to Grade 5 is based. Pupils are categorised as "Not at Risk", "At Risk", or "Questionable". The test, as well as subsequent summer literacy camps meant to augment the literacy skills of "At Risk" and "Questionable" learners, saw approximately 42% in the year 2000 attaining the "Not at Risk" status.

Craig's (1999) observation of language and literacy education in the English Creole-speaking Caribbean extends the problem beyond Jamaica. Noting that primary school enrolment and attendance are on par with those of many high income countries, he remarks:

> West Indian countries have disproved the premise.... forming
> the basis of literacy around the world that 4 years of schooling
> would be taken as indicating the achievement of functional
> literacy. (p 23)

Craig blames "the peculiar nature of the West Indian Creole-influenced language situation" for the "paradox", and concludes from studies of literacy levels in the region that a language education problem exists at the primary school level.

Table 4

National Average Percentage Mark for Language Arts in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT)

Year	Sex	Percentage	Combined National Average
1998	F	54.84	48
	M	41.62	
1999	F	54.64	48.49
	M	41.67	
2000	F	64.03	58.10
	M	51.80	

Source: Student Assessment Unit, MOEY&C

Administered island-wide since 1997, and first used for placement in 1999, the Grade Six Achievement Test (Table 4) shows the national average percentage for 2000 improving significantly over 1999. The upward movement in the communication task (Table 5), between 1998 and 1999 is even more significant.

Table 5

National Average Percentage Mark in the Grade Six Communication Task

Year	Sex	Percentage	Combined National Average
1998	F	37.12	30.63
	M	23.13	
1999	F	60.00	52.12
	M	43.25	
2000	F	58.75	53.08
	M	47.00	

Source: Student Assessment Unit, MOEY&C

Table 6

Number of candidates sitting & passes at the
General Proficiency level in the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC)
Caribbean Examinations Council 1997 - 1999

Year	Subject	Sex	Number Sitting	Number Attaining Grades I & II	Percentage Attaining Grades I & II	Number Attaining Grade I & II	Percentage Attaining Grades I, II & III
1997/98	English Language	T	**26091**	**3728**	**14.3**	**6808**	**40.4**
*1998/99	English Language	F	10738	2460	22.9	2551	46.7
		M	6580	811	12.3	1313	32.3
		T	**17318**	**3271**	**18.9**	**3864**	**41.2**

Source: Statistics Unit, MOEY&C
* Figures for independent schools and private candidates not included

Table 7

Number of candidates sitting & passes at the
General Proficiency level in the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC)
Caribbean Examinations Council 1999-2000

Year	Subject	Sex	Number Sitting	Number Attaining Grades I, II & III	Percentage Attaining Grades I, II & III
1999/ 2000	English Language	F	16830	8221	48.8
		M	9647	3490	36.2
		T	**26477**	**11711**	**44.2**

Source: Statistics Unit, MOEY&C

*Grade III now recognised as a passing grade

At the CXC level (Table 6), candidates achieving passing grades (I - III) fall below 50%. As this figure represents less than half of the minority of the age cohort who perform well enough to enter for the examinations, it demonstrates the failure of the educational system to produce graduates who are competent in SJE. Overall, the statistics illustrate the gravity of the problem of achieving competence in the target language, particularly for males at all levels. Figures for the entire Caribbean region, again examined by Craig (1999), show entries for the CXC English A General Proficiency test being a mere 13% of the estimated age cohort and an average of 33% of these candidates attaining grades I and II (then considered passing grades) between 1993 and 1997. Craig concludes:

> It seems obvious that the Creole influenced majority student
> population of the Caribbean experiences a magnitude of
> difficulty in acquiring English Language and literacy. (p 29)

Among the constraints on efficacy he proposes are the tradition of teaching English as a mother tongue; confusion of objectives in language and literacy education; misconceptions about some methodologies adopted; misapplied philosophical positions; and the failure of educational authorities to be focused and consistent in the quest for improvement.

Bryan and Mitchell (1999) also propose some constraints on literacy acquisition in Jamaica. They refer to teachers' preference for phonics-dominated regimes, exposing children to the sounds of English as a subject before they have developed a basic meta-linguistic awareness of English as a language; to the precedence of theory over practice in teacher education; to teachers' unawareness of the linguistic needs of learners; and ask whether a sufficiently strong focus is placed on literacy in Early Childhood education. In the meantime, the researchers note the absence of a clear policy on the precise role of Creole in the literacy classroom, teachers' lack of training in diagnosing reading difficulties, and their lack of skill in addressing large classes with varying reading abilities.

Evans (2001) cites emphasis on grammar, prescriptions about corrections of English, and emphasis on drill and repetition as teaching approaches contributing to the problem.

6.4   Activities of the MOEY&C with Implications for Policy

To meet CARICOM objectives as well as to address its own internal problems, the MOEY&C:

- discontinued automatic promotion at Grade Four and made passing a national literacy test, the criterion for promotion;
- introduced a common Spanish curriculum for Grades Seven to Nine and developed a curriculum for Spanish in the primary school;
- established exit standards for the Language Arts at three levels in Grade Six: minimum intermediate and advanced;
- launched a National Literacy Improvement Initiative which researched and analysed MOEY&C literacy activities over time and established a National Literacy Committee to act on the recommendations made.

Policy is also implicit in decisions taken within the MOEY&C with regard to language and literacy.

The recognition of the home language of the majority of children entering school and its effect on language learning was addressed in the primary curriculum (1980; 1999).

The 1980 curriculum utilized a modified foreign language teaching approach. The revised document includes Language Awareness, which is a recognition of the range of language registers in pupils' speech environment, and language learning by the use of communicative strategies as well as by contrasting the characteristics of JC & SJE. The MOEY&C developed readers to support the 1980 curriculum, employing at Grades 1-3 the modified foreign language strategies proposed. System-wide, the MOEY&C has

- provided, free of cost, readers developed for Grades 1-6;

- developed, and made available for minimal rental fees, texts for slow readers at Grades 7-9, utilizing both JC and SJE in real life contexts;

- developed high interest, culturally relevant material for slow readers at Grade 4 and at Grades 7-9;

- promoted nationwide summer literacy camps for "at risk" pupils of Grade Four, thereby providing a second opportunity for attaining levels set for promotion to Grade Five;

- continued to make literacy interventions in selected schools through internationally funded projects.

In the area of assessment, a system-wide machinery for formative and summative evaluation has been put into effect, incorporating the following:

(a) Grade One readiness inventory

(b) Grade Three diagnostic test

(c) Grade Four literacy test

(d) Grade Six achievement test

(e) Junior High School Certificate (Grade 9)

6.5   Learning Language in a Second Language Environment

There is strong evidence from research that children commencing schooling from a second language type of environment learn more readily if the initial teaching and learning is done in their first, or home language.   The approach is even considered necessary, if the cognitive development of the children is not to be stifled before they acquire enough competence to start learning in the school language (Corson 1990; Craig 1999). The situations described below, in attempting to address this issue, suggest polices which could be adopted.

Eleven of sixteen studies examined by Chu-chang (1980) showed that instruction based on the first language resulted in better reading in a second language. The fact that the remaining five showed no significant difference support the findings (cited in Roberts 2000). A study conducted by Siegel (1997) among 5-6 year olds in a non-standard dialect speaking situation, produced enough evidence to refute the claim that instruction in Tok Pisin (a dialect of Malanesian) would interfere with pupils' subsequent acquisition of English (cited in Roberts 2000).

An International Association of Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) reading survey in Bryan and Mitchell 1999), conducted in 32 educational systems in which the home language differed from the target language, revealed that only Singapore seemed to have mastered the problem of achieving a high level of literacy in the target language.   Policies of investing in large school and classroom libraries contributed significantly to success in the nine year-old age group, while teacher competence and the size of school libraries were the most significant contributors of success in the 14-year-old age group.

Evans (2001) reports that the project "Operation English", conducted in a high school in Jamaica, achieved success by virtue of the stance it took towards JC.

> Creole was respected and validated, teaching/learning materials encouraged student expression, students' language and experience were respected and students were encouraged to use SJE in meaningful contexts.

Students improved their ability to speak and write SJE, but results indicated that

changes in language use from JC to SJE must be seen in the long term. (p108)

Other studies show more positive results when instruction is done in the target language. Simmons-McDonald (1996) makes reference to

(i)   a study conducted by Davis (1967) in which Filipino students instructed in English performed as creditably as those who were instructed in their home language;

(ii)   Lambert and Tucker (1972) who had similar success, but took very careful precautions to ensure that the "development of language skills (was) incidental to the educational content" and that children were enticed into the mastery of the language in "a natural manner, in their daily interaction" with teachers who were native speakers;
(quotations from Lambert and Tucker 1975.2).

(iii)   a bilingual programme observed by Simmons-McDonald utilizing French, the target language, as the dominant language of instruction. The children, who were exposed to only two hours of English daily, developed near native competence in French by the end of elementary schooling.

None of the research mentioned above deals with instruction in a mother tongue which is a language derived from the target language, as is the case with Jamaica. They underscore however the importance of policy decisions on the role of the mother tongue in language instruction. Carrington (1976 in Simmons-McDonald 1996) gives a linguist's position, stating that in situations in which a language is related to the official language, conditions are linguistically unfavourable for its use as a medium of instruction. It is for this reason that St. Lucia has begun to experiment with a two-pronged approach to the achievement of competence in English. Speakers of St. Lucian French Creole receive their early instruction in French Creole, but for speakers of St. Lucian English Creole, St. Lucian Standard English is the initial language of instruction and second dialect teaching methods are recommended.

6.6   Literacy

The MOEY&C's definition of literacy at Grade 6 (GOJ/IDB PEIP II LA in Bryan and Mitchell 1999) reads:

> A Jamaican child leaving primary school should:
> **at least** be able to read and understand simple **narrative** and
> **expository** texts and practical formatted information; and to write
> simple stories, reports and lists for a specific purpose which
> can be understood by others.
>
> **normally be expected** to be able to read and understand **narrative**
> books, books of **expository** prose, simple newspaper articles suitable for
> their age-group and more complex formats; and to write stories which
> engage the readers, explanatory reports and **sets of instructions** which can
> be understood by others.

Bryan and Mitchell also proposed the following definition of literacy for Jamaica:

> Literacy refers to a complex set of abilities to understand and use
> the dominant symbol systems/language of a culture for individual
> and community development. In a technological society the concept
> of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition
> to alphabet and number systems. Literacy includes critical understanding,
> problem-solving abilities, and oral/aural abilities.
>
> Literacy abilities are not static and will vary according to contexts and need.
> They begin with the child's acquisition of his/her first language and the
> intuitions developed about the way communication works in natural settings.
> To continue ongoing growth in literate behaviour, individuals should be
> given lifelong learning opportunities to develop all aspects of their literacy
> potential.

The latter includes, in addition to the ability to read and write, listening and speaking abilities, as well as mastery of forms of print in an increasingly technological environment. It recognises, also, the ongoing lifelong nature of literacy development.

Current approaches to reading instruction, the concept Literacy replacing Reading, have produced positive results in bilingual situations in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the USA. A strategy often applied in early literacy programmes is to immerse young readers in a wide variety of children's texts of high quality, achieving literacy through engaging with literature in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Webster and Walters (2000) conducted such a project, supplying 2,000 books to 36 basic schools in a rural community in Jamaica. Their preliminary findings show pupils demonstrating the ability to retell stories with details, use words from the stories, demonstrate knowledge of letter sound relationships and use the vocabulary of the stories in their regular speech.

A similar project conducted by the Institute of Education, UWI, (2000, 2001) in Grades 1&2 of three urban primary schools has also yielded positive results, in pupils' reading, aural/oral comprehension and writing skills.

7   Policy Options

7.1   Craig (1980) presents six models of educational policies suitable for bilingual teaching environments:

(i)   Monolingualism in school in the dominant language. The home language of the child is completely ignored.

(ii)   Monoliterate bilingualism, in which the home language is used in school only to the extent necessary to allow for adjustment to the language of school.

(iii)   Monoliterate bilingualism, in which both languages are developed for aural-oral skills but literacy is aimed at only in the socially dominant language.

(iv)   Partial bilingualism, which is aural-oral fluency and literacy developed in the home language only in response to immediate social and cultural needs and the school language utilized for all other purposes.

(v)   Full bilingualism. Skills are fully developed in both languages.

(vi)   Monolingualism in the home language. Literacy is developed only in the home language.

They are subsumed within the five likely options for Jamaica, described below

1   Declare the Jamaican Language situation bilingual ascribing equal language status to SJE and JC. Tailor instruction to accommodate this status, and permit instruction and assessment in both languages. Produce printed materials in both languages, and permit teaching in both languages using appropriate instructional strategies.

2   While retaining SJE as the official language, promote the acquisition of basic literacy in the early years (eg. K – 3) in the home language and facilitate the development of English as a second language.

3   Maintain SJE as the official language and promote basic communication through the oral use of the home language in the early years (e.g. K-3) while facilitating the development of literacy in English.

4   Continue in a bidialectal mode but pay closer attention to the methods of instruction that will facilitate competence in the official language.

5   Engage in immersion in English through exposure to literature and interactive/communicative strategies, while being tolerant of the use of Creole by students who experience difficulty communicating in the official language.

8.   <u>Policy Decision</u>

8.1   The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture recognises

- the Jamaican language situation as bilingual;
- English as the official language;
- Jamaican Creole as the language most widely used in the population;

- Spanish as the official foreign language, owing to the geographic location of the country.

While Option 2 is desirable, to facilitate language learning in Jamaica, like Option 1, it is not immediately feasible as there is no agreed orthography for Jamaican Creole. Besides, issues such as funding for an adequate supply of literacy materials, as well as political and social attitudes to Creole as a medium of instruction (Bryan 2000), particularly the latter, could present obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

The Ministry of Education & Culture therefore supports the third option, elements of which are detailed below

8.2   The Language Learner

Language learners in the Jamaican language environment need to develop positive attitudes to whatever language they speak and motivation to be able to make distinctions between JC and SJE, and to acquire competence in SJE. They should therefore be provided with

- increased exposure to English, and particularly to idiomatic English, through different types of immersion;
- guidance by linguistically aware teachers who can appreciate the importance of Creole;
- opportunities to utilize a variety of indigenous forms – songs, poems, stories;
- exposure to a significant amount of material with culturally relevant content and illustrations;
- opportunities to hear and speak the target language in a variety of situations;
- curriculum provisions sensitive to differences in maturity levels and interests of girls and boys.

Spanish should be regarded as the official foreign language. Therefore, all children should be exposed to the Spanish language.

8.3   Language Goals in schools

In keeping with the Barbuda proposals (1993), schools should

- ensure that by the end of Grade Four, all children are competent in the use of SJE appropriate to the grade level and are reading at that level;
- recognise that SJE and JC are equally valid and regard bilingualism as a positive attribute;
- produce secondary school graduates who can
    - use Standard Jamaican English for a variety of purposes;
    - use and understand Jamaican Creole in oral and written forms;
- introduce the learning of Spanish in the upper levels of the primary system, and make provision for its continuation up to Grade 11;
- consider, on a case-by-case basis, exemption of physically and mentally challenged learners from exposure to a foreign language.

8.4   Language Instruction

In the early years (up to Grade 4) teachers should

- follow guidelines set out in the national primary curriculum;
- operate on the principle of transitional bilingualism which entails
    - acceptance of children's first language;
    - flexibility; using children's first language to facilitate comprehension;
    - extensive use of communicative strategies such as role play for practicing forms (structures) of English, particularly those which differ from Creole forms.
    - comparison of JC and SJE structures (constrastive analysis) and other bilingual teaching strategies;
- employ strategies of immersion in English through
    - the wide use of literature;
    - content-based language teaching (integration across curriculum areas);
    - modeling of the target language in the classroom.
- Adapt curriculum guidelines where necessary to facilitate interests and learning styles of boys

In the later years (upper primary and secondary) teachers should

- follow guidelines set out in the national curriculum for each grade;

- maintain strategies introduced in the early years, modifying according to age and ability level;

- use the Jamaican Creole language and language situations as resources for the study of language: origins, development, characteristics etc:

- engage in more formal use of appropriate bilingual techniques;

- promote development of oral language skills in either language as appropriate, through

  - aesthetic response to literature;

  - discussion, argument, oral presentations, public speaking;

  - role play, simulations, presentations/productions utilizing multimedia formats;

  - listening, viewing, observing adult role models;

- complement hand-on/minds-on tasks across the secondary curriculum with teacher-directed and pupil-initiated writing activities;

- apply marking strategies and feedback to students' writing, showing sensitivity to learners and facilitating on-going development in the target language.

8.5   Literacy

Literacy teachers should

- keep abreast of and apply current strategies appropriate to the Jamaican learning environment;

- establish connections between reading, writing, listening and speaking

- develop approaches which recognise similarities and differences between pupils' home language and the language of texts.

- expose pupils to a wide variety of high-interest materials in the target language particularly in the early years of schooling;

- promote reading for pleasure, information and analysis at the lower secondary level, particularly in junior high and new high schools through immersion in a wide variety of high interest material across all genres and curriculum areas;

- apply, in interaction with reading material at Grades 7-9, strategies which will prepare students for reading and writing demands at CXC level and above;

- promote active use of good school, class and public libraries;

- make timely interventions where necessary and particularly in the early primary years to remediate reading and writing difficulties;

- plan and implement programmes for the identification and systematic remediation of problems of poor readers and writers at the secondary level, particularly those in junior high and new high schools.

8.6   Special Education

Working in areas of exceptionality requires specialized skills of the teacher. Adequate and appropriate programmes should therefore be available for teacher training in exceptionalities. They should include programmes for

- enabling early childhood educators to identify developmental delays and employ early intervention strategies;

- the development of competence in Braille for teachers of the blind and in codes used for external examinations, for teachers of senior students.

- the development of competence in Jamaican Signed Language (JSL) and signed English for teachers of the deaf.

- sensitizing teachers to the particular culture of each type of exceptionality, particularly in terms of communication.

- identification and treatment of language-related exceptionalities such as dyslexia.

8.7   Assessment should

- use targets and objectives outlined in the national curricula as benchmarks to guide learners' progress;

- provide ongoing evaluation to determine learners' language competencies at various intervals in their schooling;

- utilize alternative strategies for determining learners' achievement;

- ensure that allowances are made for the limitations of learners with exceptionalities.

- use information provided by assessment for inventory, diagnosis, intervention and placement, and to guide educational research, while maintaining the confidentiality of individuals;
- ensure a chain of feedback.

8.8   Teacher Education

All language/literacy teachers: primary, secondary and English options, should
- complete approved courses in
    - JC and SJE as two separate languages;
    - language learning and instruction at the appropriate level (primary/secondary), including instruction for learners with limited competencies in SJE;
    - the acquisition of literacy, particularly in a Creole-speaking environment;
    - literacy instruction at the appropriate level (primary/secondary);
    - diagnosis and remediation of reading problems at the appropriate level (primary/secondary);
- engage in regular in-service upgrading and/or refresher courses in language/literacy instruction;
- be appraised in language/literacy instruction as part of regular teacher appraisal:
- be appraised in language competence as part of teacher appraisal, or in the foreign language being taught, in the case of teachers of foreign languages;
- demonstrate knowledge of the relevant language curricula for Jamaican schools;
- have access to language/literacy centres, which provide special resources for language/literacy teaching and learning;
- engage in on-going experimenting with various approaches to language/literacy teaching and in related classroom research.

Each teachers' college should

- establish a language and literacy centre within the institution.

Courses should be available for the adequate preparation of teachers of Spanish for the primary and secondary levels.

9   Implications for Policy Implementation

9.1   The Government of Jamaica will provide the human and material resources for facilitating the process by securing for the system
- teachers, each with at least diploma level qualification, in all schools;
- teachers trained in language/literacy at appropriate levels in all schools;
- one teacher to no more than 35 students in language/literacy classes;
- adequate classroom space to avoid overcrowding and noise levels which inhibit language learning;
- reading material free of cost for Grades 1-6;
- remedial reading material for Grade 4;
- reading material at minimal rental for Grades 7-9;
- supplementary remedial reading material for Grades 7-9.

9.2   The Ministry of Education Youth and Culture will
- disseminate the policy document to stakeholders;
- sensitize stakeholders to implications of the policy: timelines, outcomes;
- provide expertise for implementation including
    - at least diploma- trained language/literacy teachers in each school;
    - one language and literacy coordinator per school;
    - at least one supervisory education officer with specialization in language/literacy at the post-graduate level for each region;
    - one all-island language and literacy coordinator.

- provide resources including

    - 2 literacy centres islandwide;

    - competency shelters in schools.

- facilitate internationally funded literacy-focused projects.

9.3   Schools and School Boards will study the policy with a view to endorsing it, and

- implement the relevant elements within their institutional contexts;

- promote language and literacy development of pupils through manipulation of multimedia formats in instruction;

- involve caregivers in language and literacy development;

- engage in small-scale research on new language/literacy initiatives.

9.4   Parents and Community will gain an understanding of the policy with a view to supporting it, and

- take active roles, negotiated with the school, in the language and literacy development of their children.

9.5   Teacher Training authorities and institutions will ensure their full understanding of the policy with a view to supporting it, and

- adopt relevant pedagogies in preparing teachers for its implementation;

- produce language teachers who are competent and linguistically aware, not only for the primary level but also for the secondary level;

- produce specialist teachers capable of addressing the problem of low literacy levels, particularly among male students at the secondary level;

- produce teachers who are sensitive to the literary, aesthetic and cultural aspects of language and the contribution of each to the language development of the learner.

9.6   Learners will

- abide by conditions agreed with school administrators for developing their competence in language and literacy;

- with teacher support, develop and utilize strategies for monitoring their progress in all areas of language learning and literacy development;

- engage with teachers in feedback to clarify difficulties and set reasonable conditions for their on-going development;

- endeavour to achieve levels, standards and outcomes set by their teachers, schools and by the MOEY&C;

- engage, at the secondary level, in discussions/debates on the language education policy, and its implications for their own personal development in language and literacy.

10   **Policy Review**

The policy will be subject to review and revision at the end of every three years, or at any earlier time when a review is considered necessary.

Glossary

acquisition: the process by which one learns a first language from
                                speakers in the environment. This process is believed to be
                                innate.

creole: a language developed through contact with one or more of the
                                European languages and which has eventually become the
                                first language for successive generations.

dialect: a variety of a language used by a regional or social group of
                                its speakers.

first language: the first language which a child acquires normally through
                                interaction with caregivers in the home environment. This
                                becomes the native language of the child.

idiom: an expression so peculiar to a language that, if
                                taken literally, may have another meaning or may
                                not be understood.

mother tongue: see *first language*.

official language: a language sanctioned by the government of a country for
                                use in official and formal contexts; education, business,
                                governmental affairs.

orthography   standardized spelling of words in a language.

register: language used in specific contexts. Vocabulary, idioms, etc.
                                are selected in order to appropriately address the listener (s)
                                eg. register to address lawyers, doctors, peers, etc.

second language: a language being acquired after one has acquired a first
                                language. Though this is not the first language of the learner,
                                it is the language of the community, which the learner lives.

standard Jamaica English: the dialect of English used by educated speakers in
                                Jamaica. The official language of Jamaica.

target language: language being acquired or learnt.

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