THE ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE WORKPLACE: THE CASE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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Approval of the Thesis

THE ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE WORKPLACE: THE CASE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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Doctorate of Education (EdD)

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**Abstract**

The ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE WORKPLACE: THE CASE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

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The current Fourth Industrial Revolution and the knowledge economy have resulted in economic growth being increasingly driven by human-resource-related factors of production instead of natural-resource-related factors of the past. This has resulted in a skills gap in the workforce which the formal education system needs assistance in filling. This study explores the role and potential of youth organizations in doing this. Prior studies have focused on youth-led youth organizations, or adult-led youth organizations that engage youths in summer camps only. This study expands on research in this area by focusing on faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda. Using an exploratory, interpretivist qualitative approach, this study involves four such organizations in a multiple case study research design. Four broad aspects of the targeted organizations were examined: their functions aims and objectives, pedagogical approaches, their curricula and their training and certification protocols. Data was collected using personal interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observations and document analysis. The data was analyzed qualitatively using codes and themes. Findings confirm prior studies that these organizations are nurturing the development of $21^{st}$ century workplace skills in significant ways. New findings might be that they are in a prime position so to do and have several areas of commonalities between their curriculum and the formal curriculum. Stakeholders in the education landscape of Antigua and Barbuda and elsewhere should exploit these areas of synergies and further research can explore the most effective ways of doing so.

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated      otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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## AI Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have not used any AI tools to create, proofread or produce any text or ideas related to any draft or final versions of the thesis.

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## Copyright Page

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**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my colleagues in the Ministry of Education in Antigua and Barbuda and the education fraternity in general in Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean region with whom I have labored for decades in providing our nation's people with quality education. May some part of this work prove useful in the continuing quest to develop the Ideal Caribbean Person.

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## Acknowledgments

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## List of Abbreviations

AI            Artificial Intelligence

CASEL         Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning

CEO           Chief Executive Officer

CPS           Cyber-physical Systems

CXC           Caribbean Examinations Council

GDP           Gross Domestic Product

IoC           Internet of Things

LAC           Latin American and Caribbean Countries

LAYS          Learning-Adjusted Years

LCE           Learning Centered Education

NGO           Non-Governmental Organizations

OECD          Organization for Economic Development

PYD           Positive Youth Development

SEL           Social and Emotional Learning

VUCA          Volatility Uncertainty Complexity Ambiguity

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It was the economic historian Arnold Toynbee who described the changes in the British economy that commenced in the second half of the 1800's as an industrial revolution, when the dominance of industry and the manufacture of machines using steam power upended the dominance of agriculture and handicraft (Britannica, 2023). The term is still any major transformation in the world economy (Cowin, 2021; Kayembe & Nel, 2019). Thus, while the transformation highlighted by Toynbee is labeled the First Industrial Revolution, the period of time beginning in the second half of the 1900's to the present when rapid scientific discoveries led to rapid changes in industrial production such as standardization and mass production is recognized as the Second Industrial Revolution, while a third is the one that commenced in the 1950s with the emergence of the electronics industry, automation and digitalization (Armenta, 2021).

The present century has seen another phase of rapid changes in various technologies and although some see these changes as a culmination of the third, there is general agreement that they in fact represent a fourth industrial revolution since it is widely perceived that they facilitate significant changes in the way manufactured products and services are produced and traded, or ought to be produced and traded, if businesses today are to be competitive and (Juma & Patel, 2022; Schwab, 2023). First identified in 2016 Klaus Schwab, the Fourth Industrial Revolution was given the moniker 4IR or Industry 4.0 by him, borrowing the term coined by a group of scientists charged with developing a high-tech strategy for the government of Germany in 2011.

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Industry 4.0 is believed to involve the interchange between the digital, biological and physical innovations of the preceding and precent centuries (Schwab, 2023). Essentially, this revolution involves the adoption of mechanization and information sharing in production technologies and related processes, examples of which are Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and cyber-physical systems (Kayembe & Nel, 2019; Sony & Naik, 2020). They represent cutting-edge technologies that increase the dependability, efficiency, productivity and customer-focus of industrial processes and it is believed that their confluence and interactions with the digital, biological, and physical worlds make Industry 4.0 organically dissimilar to industrial revolutions that transpired earlier (Schwab, 2023; Sivasankaran, 2024). However, since the changes are being engineered with existing technologies, some prefer to describe them as an industrial evolution rather than an industrial revolution (Asadollahi-Yazdi et al, 2020).

Be it revolution or evolution, Industry 4.0 is characterized by the smart factory, a cyber-physical system consisting of the interconnectedness of machines, communication mechanisms and computing power, using the aforementioned cutting-edge technologies to enhance data analysis, drive automated processes and learn as it does so (Shi et al, 2020). This has enabled economic growth in the 21$^{st}$ century to be increasingly driven by the quantity, quality and accessibility of information used to inform the processes, products and services of businesses and another moniker, *knowledge-based*, has been coined to describe economies so driven, in contrast to the industrial economies of the past when more tangible production factors such as land, labor and capital predominated (Moisio, 2018; Stehr et al, 2020; World Development Report, 2019). The fourth industrial revolution is therefore connected with the knowledge economy in a manner

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that is not parallel to each other, but rather as a single entity supportive of each other in a mutual way. They influence each other, the latter described as a precondition as well as an accelerator for the former (de Menezes et al, 2021; Elana Popkova, 2019; Ragulina, 2019).

The implications of Industry 4.0 and the knowledge economy for education are therefore important considerations for all countries today. The deployment of Industry 4.0 technologies means that the tasks undertaken by humans in the workplace are changing and new skills and knowledge are needed by workers (Sivasankaran, 2024; Ukobizaba et al, 2022). According to Ukobizada et al (2022), while developed countries are at least adjusting their education systems in preparation for 41R, developing countries are at best still struggling to catch up with the Third Industrial Revolution, making them even more unprepared for the Fourth. Throughout the developing world, among the most significant challenges businesses face is a shortage of industry-ready skilled workers (Jones & Pimdee, 2017; Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2020). There is also consensus that countries differ in their level of readiness for Industry 4.0 and as a result require customized approaches for achieving their goals (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2020; Siau et al, 2019). In this regard, with special reference to Antigua and Barbuda this study explores the role and potential of certain of the country's youth organizations in augmenting the formal education system in adequately equipping graduates with relevant 21$^{st}$ century employability skills, the skills pertinent to the knowledge economy, which is the nexus, platform, precondition and accelerator of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as mentioned earlier (de Menezes et al, 2021; Ragulina, 2019; Sony & Naik, 2020).

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Antigua and Barbuda is a twin-island microstate in the Caribbean archipelago. Antigua, the larger of the two islands is 281 km$^2$, while Barbuda is 161 km$^2$. With a combined area of 443 km$^2$, the country ranks 200th in size among the world's 257 countries. Total resident population is estimated to be a little over 100, 000 in 2023 (World Fact Book, 2024). Ninety eight percent of the population live on Antigua where the capital and seat of government are located and 2 percent on Barbuda. The country's written history began with discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Britain seized control in 1632 and used the islands mainly for the production of cane sugar with the labor of enslaved Africans who were eventually emancipated in 1834. Their descendants now make up 87.3 percent of the present population (Statistics Division, 2014). British rule ended in 1981 when the country became a stable Westminster-style independent parliamentary democracy.

Like most if not all of the region's other mini states, tourism has become Antigua and Barbuda's main economic driver. In 2023, tourism's contribution to GDP and national employment exceeded 50 percent and 46 percent respectively, making the country one of the most tourism-dependent in the world (Namchavadze, 2023). The country is classified as a Less Developed High-Income country with a GDP per capita of US$18,745 (World Data Atlas, 2022). However, its Gini coefficient (measure of economic inequality in the population) of 0.48 suggests that Antigua and Barbuda is a country with one of the most serious cases of unequal distributions of income regionwide (OCHA, 2021). Together with the overwhelmingly monocultural economy and high youth unemployment of 26 percent (UNICEF, 2021), these realities feature prominently among concerns in the minds of many about the country's future economic and general wellbeing and education is considered to be pivotal in any and all solutions to these issues (Alleyne, 2017;

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Assessment FAPP, 2015; Blair & Williams, 2021; Da Costa, 2022; Glewwe, 2016; Mandle, 2016; Vaggi, 2017). This point underscores the importance of this study as shall be explained later.

The World Bank (2012) notes that education for building a knowledge-based economy involves optimizing adult literacy and gross secondary and tertiary enrollment rates. Table 1 shows that Antigua and Barbuda compares favorably with regional and developed countries in literacy and enrollment rates. For example, the state's enrollment rate at the primary education level and also at the secondary level are higher than the regional average and higher or at least equivalent to Organization for Economic Development (OECD) countries. Having achieved these high levels of access and literacy rates (99% as shown in Table 1), successive administrations have focused on improving education output by focusing more on such things as the quality of education, the inclusion of groups such as persons with disabilities who had hitherto been under-served, as well as childhood, adult and tertiary education (Hendrickson, 2023).

**Table 1**

*School Enrollment, Pupil-Teacher Ratio and Adult Literacy Comparisons*

| Country | Primary Enrollment | Secondary Enrollment | Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Primary) | Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Secondary) | Adult Literacy Rate (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Antigua and Barbuda | 99.3 | 88.8 | 12.4 | 9.3 | 99.0 |
| Caribbean Small States | 88.9 | 74.3 | 18.9 | 15.1 | 93.1 |
| LAC | 94.9 | 77.5 | 21.3 | 16.5 | 91.4 |
| OECD | 96.6 | 89.4 | 15.3 | 13.7 | 97.0 |

Source: World Bank Data (2020)

Filmer et al (2020) argue that using the average number of years of schooling in a population as a metric of education-based human capital is seriously flawed since research shows that students in different countries who attended school for the same length of time can reflect
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significant differences in learning outcomes. These authors have therefore proposed a new metric that combines years in school and quality of schooling as one metric which they call the Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS). Using this metric, the data shows that although most students in Antigua and Barbuda remain enrolled for 13 years of schooling, the country's LAYS is 8.4 years as compared with an average of 11 years for OECD countries (World Bank, 2023).

Citing the country's LAYS of 8.4, Hendrickson (2023) suggests that notwithstanding the government's endeavors towards improving the quality of education, it indicates that a notable percentage of students in Antigua and Barbuda are failing to attain an adequate level of verbal, mathematical, critical thinking, problem solving and creative thinking skills important for finding their place in the knowledge-based economy and society in which we live. These are all 21st century skills elaborated on and explored later in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. It will suffice at this point to note that their suggested deficiency in Antiguan and Barbudan students represent one of the more intractable challenges encountering the country's formal education landscape.

Hendrickson (2023) notes that another challenge formal education faces in Antigua and Barbuda is resource constraints that limit the capacity of the government to fund quality education and resilient infrastructure. Referring to the economic situation in the country he notes that

> A signal challenge is high debt burden, with debt averaging 86.8 % of GDP in the last five years and currently at 97.4 % of GD. Moreover, debt service payments account for 34 cents of every dollar creating a major liquidity constraint that impinges on the government's capacity to meet salary, goods and services and other current expenses (p. 15).

Public expenditure on education in the rest of the region compares favorably with developed countries, but not so in Antigua and Barbuda even though it is wealthier as suggested by per capita GDP (Table 2). Since 2002 public expenditure on education has been increasing on

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average 0.66 percent annually and the Ministry of Education allocated the largest share of the budget for the past several years (World Data Atlas, 2020). The current Prime Minister who is also the finance minister, continually underscores his government's determination to make youth empowerment through education one of its hallmark policies. In his 2018 Budget Speech he proclaimed, for example, that "the emphasis on educating our youth is clear understanding that by creating a well-educated, highly trained body of young people, our nation would be better positioned to compete in the global economy (Browne, 2018, p. 55). He reaffirmed his government's commitment to the education of its youths in the 2024 budget remarking that "our government's commitment to building the human capital is unmatched." (Browne, 2024, p. 19).

**Table 2**
*Average Income per Capita and Annual Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Government Expenditure 2018-2022*

| Country | Per capita income | % Expenditure on Education |
|---|---|---|
| Antigua and Barbuda | 17, 837.6 | 9.6 |
| Caribbean Small States | 10, 489.0 | 12.4 |
| LAC | 8, 988.4 | 14.9 |
| OECD | 40, 703.4 | 11.5 |

Source: World Bank Development Indicators (2020)

Other challenges to the realization of the Prime Minister's vision of an appropriately educated youth population include low education quality and relevance despite the expansions in education coverage (Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018; Griffith, 2005; Hewlett-Thomas, 2009). The legacy of colonialism has been cited as a major factor in this state of affairs, the contention being that during that time the education system and curriculum were wholesale importations from Britain, the colonizing power, and emphasized preparation of graduates for minimal participation in the

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economy and specifically as manual laborers on farms and in other industries (Brisset, 2021; Thompson et al, 2019). Soft skills such as critical thinking, innovation and creativity were not emphasized. The dominant perception of a good student during that time was one who was "capable of grasping ideas constructed by others and following instructions" (Thompson et al, 2019, p. 68).

In 1972 the "Caribbeanization" of Caribbean education to make it more relevant to the needs, goals and aspirations of the region commenced with the establishment of the Caribbean Examinations Council, (CXC), to replace the syllabi and examinations of Cambridge and London (Hall, 2013). Much attention has been paid to safeguarding the currency of CXC academic certification and keeping CXC syllabi relevant (Granston, 2014; Jules, 2016). Evaluating its performance since its inception, Gordon (2017) credits the entity with success measured by metrics such as its involvement in the development of syllabi, technical assistance, advice and training rendered to teachers and other educators of the countries it serves. CXC has therefore not only "Caribbeanized" education in the region but has also gained the level of recognition formerly ascribed to the colonial examinations boards of Cambridge and London, argues Gordon.

Since it is widely accepted that quality education meets minimum standards of achievement in cognitive and behavioral skills for all students (Hendrickson, 2023), performance in CXC examinations is used in the region as a measure of education quality output at the secondary level (op. cit.). Generally, acceptable grades in at least five CXC disciplines including Mathematics and English is the minimum academic requirement in the region for matriculation into higher education and qualifying for certain jobs. Table 3 shows that the percentage of secondary school graduates

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in Antigua and Barbuda attaining this standard over the past five years has been alarmingly and consistently low.

**Table 3**
*Percentage of Secondary School Graduates Passing 5 or more CXC Subjects Including Mathematics and English Language 2019 - 2024*

| Year | No. of Graduates | Percentage Qualifying |
|------|------------------|----------------------|
| 2024 | 1315 | 19.4 |
| 2023 | 1216 | 22.0 |
| 2022 | 1285 | 19.5 |
| 2021 | 1275 | 21.2 |
| 2020 | 1415 | 40.0 |

Smith (2024)

Griffith (2005) warned at the start of the century that the region was entering the 21$^{st}$ century with still some distance to go in education reform in the islands. George (2007) attributed this inertia at that time to policy makers' failure to make the necessary changes and innovations. This state of affairs apparently currently persists with Williams-McBean (2023) noting that notwithstanding favorable policy and perception changes, educational practices that are undesirable and ineffective have remained largely unchanged in the region, or if they have changed, only superficially or inadequately so. Making up for the substantial loss of learning in the educational realm resulting from the recent Covid-19 pandemic is also another pressing challenge facing the formal education system (Hendrickson, 2023).

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Thus, a cursory overview of the formal education sector in Antigua and Barbuda shows that in essence, although there seems to be reasonable grounds to conclude that many of the fundamentals for a strong education pillar supporting the building of a knowledge-based economy exist, there remain significant challenges in the system with respect to the quality of educational output especially in the context of Industry 4.0. This study explores how the country's youth organizations can assist the formal system in the strengthening of the education pillar in the endeavor to educate young people for a knowledge-based economy and by extension Industry 4.0.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is widespread concern among employers in Antigua and Barbuda that graduates of the formal education system are deficient in the knowledge-based economy skills defined more fully in Chapter 2 of this study. More specifically, graduates do not demonstrate satisfactory levels of proficiency in the traditional core skills of literacy and numeracy, learning and innovation skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and creativity and career and life skills such as flexibility, adaptability, initiative, teamwork and leadership (Kivunja, 2014; Hendrickson, 2023; IOE, 2024; The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, 2016). As expressed by Sir Hilary Beckles, Vice Chancellor of the leading university in the Caribbean, "We don't necessarily have a shortage of capital crisis in the Caribbean world. We have a shortage of social skills, economic and financial skills – the modern skills" (Morgan, 2021). Echoing the same sentiments, at a conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Antigua in 2024. employers presented seven key points for immediate implementation by the governments and among them was the need to monitor the skills gap and increase the human capital by among other things "improving the quality of

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education curricula particularly in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and soft skills (problem solving, creative/critical thinking, communication, collaboration" (SIDSA, 2024, p. 2).

Hence the deficiency in workplace skills by the emerging workforce is worrying because as explained earlier in this chapter a knowledge-based economy managed by knowledge-based workers is fundamental to achieving and maintaining a healthy and viable economy in the rapidly emerging Industry 4.0 environment. Kayembe & Nel (2019) suggest that in the light of present realities education planning should involve building on in-person instruction and various asynchronous educational resources developed during the preceding industrial revolution, while at the same time utilizing the various components of Industry 4.0 such as AI and IoT in order to transform the education sector into what it should be to adequately prepare graduates for the new challenges of the current industrial revolution.

These authors also underscore the need for curricula, teaching and learning to focus more on literacy (including digital literacy), numeracy and comprehension of how the world in general functions. In other words, there should be cross-sector teaching and learning. For example, natural science students should also have an appreciation for, and at least a basic understanding of relevant aspects of political science, social science and liberal arts, and vice versa for political science, social science and liberal arts students. In essence, the education system should be geared towards producing graduates endowed with the skills essential for implementing, managing and working not only with the new 4IR technologies, but also with other persons in their own and other fields. Graduates should also be endowed with skills such as adaptability; problem solving; finding and

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evaluating information, and effectively communicating it verbally, in writing, typing or on digital media platforms as demanded by the knowledge economy.

It follows, then, that in both advanced as well as in emerging economies the employability skills upon which Industry 4.0 and the knowledge economy have forced employers to place the highest premium are skills such as communication skills, higher-order cognitive skills such as complex problem-solving, teamwork skills and skill combinations predictive of adaptability such as reasoning and self-efficacy (World Development Report, 2019). Given various labels such as 21$^{st}$ century skills as explained later in this study, it is widely believed that formal education systems worldwide are struggling to equip graduates adequately with them (Barrichello et al, 2020; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018).

The formal education system of all countries is expected to be in the vanguard in the education of the emerging workforce (Eskelson, 2020; Herman et al, 2022). There is general agreement, however, that the formal education system in many if not all countries is not only struggling to equip graduates adequately with them as mentioned earlier, but is unable by itself to help young people develop the skills which are crucial not only for workplace readiness in the knowledge economy and Industry 4.0 environments, but also for academic readiness and future success in life in the 21$^{st}$ century (Borg, et al, 2019; Firsova & Azarova, 2021; Jones & Doolittle, 2017). As Industry 4.0 looms larger in reality, leaving this skills gap unfilled in the emerging workforce is inimical to any nation's progress, including Antigua and Barbuda's (Aedo & Walker, 2012; Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018).

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Jasmin Cowin (2021) borrowed the term *volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity* (VUCA) coined by the American military to describe world conditions at the termination of the Cold War, to describe the essence of the rapidly dominating Industry 4.0 as well as the background against which the future of education and work is situated. According to Cowin (2024) in this period of VUCA "the continued competitiveness and relevance of education depend on educational institutions, service providers, and learners in synthesizing and adapting to the trends of the 4IR" (p. 54). This author continues by noting that social stability, economic growth, and sustainability are features supportable in the 21st century only through systems that are prepared for the coming socio-cultural and global changes. Underscoring the role of the education sector of a country as the vanguard in this virtually existential struggle, this author also notes that "the educational quality of a nation's schools, educational institutions, and educators coupled with investments in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education directly impacts a country's economic prosperity, workforce employability, and global competitiveness" (op cit). Against this backdrop, when all of the limitations and challenges of the country and its formal education system as outlined earlier in this chapter are taken into consideration, the case is easily made that the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda should welcome any assistance it can get in preparing its emerging workforce which its young people are for an environment where knowledge and the use of knowledge will, and are already proving to be, key ingredients in the nation's recipe for its wellbeing and viability as we go further into the 21st century.

It is widely argued also that the delivery of education and training is not the sole preserve of formal education systems but is also undertaken by other entities in society that deliver

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education in a nonformal, or informal manner as will be explained later in this study (Denkowska, 2020; Ngaka et al, 2012). Research suggests that youth organizations are among these entities and their activities are conducive to the development of academic and workplace readiness (Duerden et al, 2014; Giannaki, 2015; McBride et al, 2011; Souto-Otero et al, 2013). These studies, however, have centered around youth organizations that are controlled and run exclusively by youths (Council of Europe, 2011; European Youth Forum, 2005), or have been adult-led organizations that engage youths in summer camps only (Duerden et al, 2014; Richmond et al, 2019; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). One instance of this is Richmond et al's (2019) fjnding that summer camps are conducive to the nurturing of social and emotional (SEL) competencies which in turn facilitate workplace skills.

This study focuses on other types of youth organizations, namely, faith based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations. These differ from youth-led or summer camp youth organizations in significant ways. For example, they are a part of, or controlled by, an adult-led organization such as a church or government, they have a more structured curriculum resembling that in the formal system and they maintain young members for a more extended time period. For example, a child can become of a member of Adventist Youth Ministries at age 4 and remain a member of that youth organization until he/she is 35 years old, having graduated from one class to another. What remains unknow or underexplored is the extent of the impact on workplace readiness of youths who would have spent extended lengths of time under the influence of these organizations, how closely their curriculum aligns with the formal curriculum and the potential these organizations possess for greater synergies between them and the formal school system. A

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study such as this one is especially applicable to the Caribbean region in general, and to Antigua and Barbuda in particular, where little or no similar prior research in this aspect of youth organizations has been done and there is an urgent need for improving educational output in light of the importance of achieving a knowledge economy and readiness for Industry 4.0 as indicated by many authorities referenced earlier.

Faith based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations have been part of the social landscape of Antigua and Barbuda for many years. For example, Adventist Youth Ministries, Pentecostal Crusaders and the Boys Brigades appeared with the arrival of their related faiths during the first and second halves of the 20th century. Over the years their focus has shifted from a solely spiritual or proselytizing bent to other aspects of development that may be conducive to workplace preparation as this study seeks to explore (Byers & Joseph, 2020; Regional Pentecostal Crusader, 2010). Non-denominational groups such as the Scout Association and the Girl Guides Association were founded in 1917 and 1931 respectively. Although the National Cadet Corps was founded in 1965, other state-controlled youth organizations appeared after 2005 when the Department of Youth Affairs was established as a standalone entity. These include the Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (GARD) and the National Youth Parliament in 2008 and 2019 respectively. Included in the mission of the Department of Youth Affairs is the holistic development of youths. In addition to holistic development, its stated core values include collaboration/partnership, accountability and respect. The department also has, as a distinct entity, a unit charged with the development of leadership and other skills. Its activities have included literacy development programs and workshops in workplace preparation (Antigua Nice.Com,

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2023). All of these youth development goals are incorporated in the country's National Youth Policy 2006. Hence it may be concluded that the evolution of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda appears to have kept pace with workforce demands as described later in this report.

**Purpose of the Study, Research Aims, and Objectives**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study therefore is to explore the role that faith based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are playing, and can play, in augmenting the nation's formal education system in the preparation of its young people for the 21st century workplace. Their pedagogical approaches and youth development activities will be examined under the lenses of constructivism and positive youth development theories. *Young people* are defined in this study as persons ages 5 – 18 in accordance with the age cohort catered for in Antigua and Barbuda's formal primary and secondary school systems, which is to say from kindergarten to Sixth Form or Grade 12. *Youth organizations* are defined as ones that are youth-focused, voluntary and managed by a body that is religious, civic or part of the state apparatus (Dibou, 2012). Examples in Antigua and Barbuda are the Adventist Youth Ministries, Boys Brigades and Pentecostal Crusaders which are faith-based, Junior Achievement and 4-H Club which are civic and the National Cadet Corps and Young Ambassadors which are part of the state apparatus. Greater details on some of these organizations will be presented later in this study.

With exceptions such as the National Cadet Corps that is open to youths between the ages 12 and 19, young people join most of these organizations from as young as age five and may remain members for their entire youthful life into young adulthood. These organizations are therefore seemingly in a prime position in the society to influence and shape the lives of young

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people in Antigua and Barbuda for an even longer period of time than elementary and secondary schools combined and other youth organizations such as those that engage youths in summer camps. Is this really so? Are their philosophies and practices supportive of youth development that is in sinc with 21st century realities? What learning experiences are young people exposed to in these organizations and how conducive are these experiences to nurturing knowledge economy and Industry 4.0 skills and competencies? Are these organizations flexible enough to partner with the formal education system in preparing youths for the 21st century workplace? Are non-formal education, training and certification regimes worthy of national and official recognition? These are some of the areas of exploration this study undertakes.

This study therefore can be said to have two broad aims:  1) To investigate the curricula and activities of the targeted youth organizations to garner insights and understandings of the organizations' role and potential in augmenting the formal education system in the daunting task of equipping youths with knowledge-based economy skills. 2) To explore areas of existing and potential synergies between the formal education system and the nonformal education environment provided by youth organizations, so that suggestions can be made on how both entities can be more complimentary in the development of young people for the knowledge-based economy.

The specific objectives targeted are as follows:

1. To investigate how well the purpose, activities and general culture of the targeted organizations align with best practices in the teaching, learning and development of knowledge-based workers.

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2. To identify areas of existing and potential synergies between the formal school curriculum and the curricula of the youth organizations that can be leveraged for more effective and complimentary development of workplace readiness in youths by the two entities.

3. To explore possibilities for official recognition of certificates of achievement awarded by the youth organizations.

**Nature and Significance of the Study**

Formal education is generally defined as the organized, planned educational activities conducted by public or private educational institutions, resulting in the award of certification by official educational authorities (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017; Olcott, 2013; Souto-Otero et al, 2013). Non-formal education is defined as activities conducted by institutions that are outside of, or supplementary to, the formal education system (European Commission & Council of Europe Partnership, 2011; Hafidz & Elihami, 2021). This study is an investigation of selected youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda to gain an understanding of their role and potential in augmenting formal education and training with nonformal education and training and thereby assisting with the preparation of youths for a knowledge-based workplace. The data consists of the viewpoints of relevant stakeholders, researcher observations of the activities of the organizations and analysis of the contents of their documents. The data set is therefore entirely qualitative, descriptive and mainly primary (Busetto et al, 2020; Eakin & Gladstone,2020; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Walliman,2021).

In addition to being qualitative, this study is also one conducted within a paradigm that may be described as exploratory, interpretivist, and in particular, somewhat phenomenological in

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nature, as it targets the lived experiences of participants with the hope of obtaining new and richer understandings and interpretations of the phenomenon under study (Akhtar, 2016: Saunders et al, 2019; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Data collection methods in this study include personal interviews, focus group discussions, document study also known as document analysis, and observation. Individual semi-structured personal interviews are used for persons who are in top key positions as data sources since this form of interview has been found to be most effective in such contexts (Cohen et al, 2013; Knott et al, 2022) and focus groups discussions involving youth leaders and groups of other persons in less powerful positions are used since focus group discussions have also proved to be effective and efficient in gathering rich data from small groups (Masadeh, 2012; Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

Document study/analysis involving the manuals and other publications of the organizations are used since these can be sources of valuable information and insights into organizations (Busetto et al, 2020), and a loosely structured observation schedule reputed to be a tool that best provides a researcher the chance to harvest "live" data from naturally occurring social situations and capturing what is actually happening on the ground is also used, although a widely supported criticism of this method is that researcher observation bias can undermine its objectivity (Johnson et al, 2020). This tool is used in this study to gather data on the practices, rituals and other such activities of the organizations. Field notes and analytical memos are also used in this study in conjunction with the observation schedule (Cohen et al, 2013).

When the data collection undertaking was completed, the recorded interviews in this study were transcribed and assembled for analysis along with the other data from the observation

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schedule, the researcher's field notes and analytical memos. Analysis was done by repeated reading and re-reading of the corpus to gain cognitive ownership and intimate familiarity with the content, followed by the process of identifying and developing codes and themes. Continued reflection and more systematic analyses using deduction, induction and abduction as heuristics were conducted thereafter to see how themes form patterns and categories that interact and interplay to reveal possible "truths", the ultimate aim of any reputable study (Saldana, 2011; Sgier, 2012; Smith & Firth, 2011). Document study/analysis, reputed to be similarly effective in analyzing the written materials, is used to analyze written documents (Ary et al, 2010). For theoretical analysis constructivist learning theory and positive youth development theory were used to explore how youth educational and general development is fostered by the organized program activities typical of youth organizations (Dawes & Lawson, 2011; Holt, Deal & Pankow, 2020).

At a time of high youth unemployment, youth marginalization (especially males) and much talk about positive youth development, there is a relatively scanty amount of academic recorded research on the role and potential of the types of youth organizations involved in this study in tackling these problems. This is especially so with the faith-based youth organizations even though the positive impact of religion on youth development is fairly well documented (Ai et al, 2021; Davis et al, 2023; Ebstyne King & Furrow, 2008). The particular significance of this study is that it is most likely breaking new ground in attempting an in dept exploration of the learning landscape that youths are exposed to in these organizations and how these organizations can work closer with

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the formal education system in preparing the emerging workforce for the knowledge economy and

Industry 4.0. This might be what Richmond et al (2019) mean when they note that:

> People learn, develop, and grow over their lives and across contexts and settings. Some of these settings within the learning landscape are distinct, while others inherently overlap. Settings can support lessons learned elsewhere or may offer contradictions or challenges to previous lessons.

With respect to education reform in the region, there has been a persistent and consistent

call for harnessing the resources of, and collaborating with, NGOs and the private sector entities

in the provision of education (Jules, 2000; Reza 2022). This suggests that the overlapping of

settings within the learning landscape in the region as noted by Richmond et (2019) has also long

been recognized. How learning settings in the out-of-school-time (OST) non-formal education

landscape may be leveraged has remained unclear. This study offers insights on how the learning

landscape of youths can be broadened with respect to their formal preparation for the 21st century

workplace. It highlights faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and

Barbuda and challenges educators and policy makers to look more closely at their potential to

assist the state in an area that the evidence suggests the state is in urgent need of help.

The significance and value of this study can be further argued thus: Antigua and Barbuda

and the Caribbean region on a whole are striving for the development of what the political leaders

of the region have decided to call the *Ideal Caribbean Person,* one equipped with knowledge-

based skills and competencies for the development of the self, the country and the region

(Callender, 2012). Access, equity, relevance and quality are identified as strategic educational

priorities in this endeavor (The Caribbean Community, 2022; Organization of Eastern Caribbean

States, 2012). According to Shepherd (2023), the education model extant in the Caribbean

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"perpetuates systemic segregation which continues to place barriers on societal growth" (p. 6) and this is of great concern since "access to inclusive and equitable education directly impacts [a] society's ability to innovate and actively participate in the rapidly unfolding of our globalized futures".

Antigua and Barbuda's formal education system by itself seems incapable of resolving the above-mentioned problems and producing desired deliverables, as is the case with most if not all other formal education systems in the world (Latchen, 2014; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016). Youth organizations have been found to be a viable assistant in this undertaking (McBride et al, 2022; Souto-Otero et al, 2013). Faith-based organizations, for example, are more easily accessible to youths in the lowest levels of the socio-economic hierarchy (Ebstyne King, 2019; Lerner et al, 2019). It is worthwhile therefore to explore further and identify specific ways in which the youth organizations can assist, using the major ones in Antigua and Barbuda as examples. Having identified these ways, their efficacy and possible improvements may be assessed, and the identification of even new ways discovered.

This study can therefore serve as an addition to the extant assemblage of knowledge about nonformal education and the role of youth organizations in augmenting the formal education system and should therefore be of special interest to all stake holders in education, but especially to those who are education theorists, trainers, policy makers and planners. The findings of this study can confirm the availability of a relatively cost-effective, credible and easily accessible solution to one of the most intractable challenges facing the formal education system, the preparation of the young for the job market. Insights for educators about pedagogy and learning in

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the nonformal environment that can be adopted in classrooms in the formal sector, may also be revealed. Last, but by no means least, this study may provide a basis for official recognition and certification of nonformal education in the society.

**Research Questions**

This is an exploratory study using an inductive qualitative approach to identify actual and potential ways in which youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are augmenting the curriculum of the formal education system with nonformal education and preparing youths for the workplace. The study seeks to provide answers to the research questions that follow.

**Main Research Question**

What is the role and potential of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the country's formal education system with non-formal education and training and assisting in the preparation of its youths for the knowledge-based economy workplace?

**Subsidiary Research Questions:**

With reference to youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda:

1. What do they consider to be their main functions, aims and objectives and how facilitative are these of the development of 21$^{st}$ skills in young people?

2. What pedagogic approaches do they employ and how do these approaches compare with best practices in pedagogy?

3. How do their curricula compare with the national primary and secondary school curricula in content?

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4. How do they train their youth leaders and how worthy of official recognition are the certificates they award?

5. In what additional ways can they assist schools in preparing young people for the workplace.

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# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The intent of this investigation is to build on existing research on the contributions youth organizations are making to the nurturing of 21$^{st}$ century employability skills in young people, the emerging workforce, by exploring the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the country's formal education system in readying youths for the current world of work. The study's argument is that since there is general agreement in the literature that the formal education system seems incapable by itself of accomplishing this task, it is worthwhile investigating the youth organizations under study as they appear to be in a prime position to assist, since youths can remain under their influence for an even longer period of their lives than the school. In order to properly situate the contributions of this study within the context of the corpus of existing knowledge on the topic, it was essential to conduct a comprehensive examination of available and accessible literature using pertinent related constructs as guides.

The review commences with an examination and justification of the theoretical framework used to develop arguments for the conduciveness of the organizations in nurturing 21$^{st}$ century workplace skills development in young people as revealed in the study's findings. Two theories are examined: constructivist learning theory and Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory. This is followed by a section on youth organizations in which their definition, nature and presence in Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean are examined. Other aspects looked at include their history, philosophy, activities and contributions to youth development. Next is a look at the education system focusing on conceptualizations, challenges, limitations and forms of education,

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followed by a review of learning theories and best practices in pedagogy. A review of employability skills follows, focusing on their definition and development. Finally, a look is taken at workplace expectations, youth workplace dispositions and youth unemployment. This chapter closes with a summation of the review in which an attempt is made to unify the most important theories and concepts into one framework.

The library databases accessed for this review include peer-reviewed articles and studies in the e-journals and e-books of Proquest, Journal Storage (JSTOR) and Springer. Search engines used were ma inly Google Scholar and Google and searches for the most part were restricted to the past five years. A few non-peer-reviewed publications as well as the World Bank data base were accessed for factual information such as demographic, economic and educational statistics of Antigua and Barbuda and other countries. Search terms included *youth organizations; formal, nonformal and informal education, 21st century skills, employability skills, contemporary workplace requirements, learning theories* and *skill development.*

**Theoretical Framework**

This study investigates the role and potential of faith-based denominational, inter-denominational, non-denominational and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda (See Table 8) in supporting its formal education provisions in the establishment of 21st century employability skills in young people. The theoretical lenses for this investigation are constructivist learning theory and PYD theory as mentioned earlier. The functions, aims, objectives, practices and activities of the targeted organizations under study are explored and analysed against the backdrop of these theories.

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*Constructivism*

Constructivism is one of the three broad learning theories that have dominated the pedagogical landscape throughout history, the other two being *behaviourism* and *cognitivism,* which will be elaborated on later in this review. Epistemologically, constructivism proposes that reality is dependent on individual and personal perceptions and thus knowledge is subjective and actively constructed in the mind of the learner as he/she interacts with and comprehends makes the learning experiences he/she is having through inquiry and discovery as learning strategies (Kay & Kibble, 2015). In other words, we learn about the world by experiencing, and reflecting on, the world (Saleem et al, 2021). As such, constructivism echoes *interpretivism,* which argues that reality is internal and knowledge is assembled and grounded on experiences of and in the world (Brau, 2020; Siemens, 2017).

Arising from the work of psychologists such as Bruner (1924-2020), Dewey (1859-1952) and Vygotsky (1896-1934), constructivism is grounded on cognitivism because learners are seen as constructing their own learning by maintaining an equilibrium between *assimilation* and *accommodation* (Illeus, 2018), two concepts proposed by Piaget and which will be explained later in this review under the discussion of *cognitivism*. Suffice to say at this point that essentially , these two ideas suggest that when a learner encounters new knowledge, he/she either reconciles it with prior knowledge or dismisses it as unimportant after asking questions, investigating and evaluating and in doing so creating new knowledge (Saleem et al, 2021).

From the constructivist perspective, therefore, the aim of the teaching-learning experience is for the learner to learn by constructing knowledge rather than by accessing and internalizing it

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from the external environment as proposed by behaviourism. Constructivism therefore promotes learner-centred education (LCE) in which the teacher's role involves designing the learning experience, modelling expected behaviours, providing feedback, scaffolding and motivation, and using a variety of teaching methods to ensure optimal, efficacious and deep learning (Doyle, 2023; Pritchard, 2017; Trester, 2019; Ventres, 2023).

While the teacher guides the exercise toward desired outcomes through prompts and questions and educated dialogue, learners in a constructivist classroom construct their knowledge by making meaning of events and activities they are exposed to and interact with. Thus, the emphasis is on student-centred learning, meaning that the learner's own efforts are at the core of the pedagogical process (Hoy et al, 2013; Nurhuda et al, 2023). Students in a constructivist classroom environment are immersed in practical and active methods of learning that include simulations, case studies, experiments, real-world problem solving, research projects, reflection, discussion, brainstorming, guided discovery learning and collaboration. Learning therefore becomes a self-motivated process (Saleem et al, 2021).

Some constructivist psychologists including Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner and others propose that knowledge is constructed by social forces and hence support that constructivism may more accurately be called *social constructivism* (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Factors such as language and culture influence a learner's intellectual development and the way he/she perceives his/her environment according to Vygotsky. Hence, knowledge is socially produced and constructed in collaboration and dialogue with other learners as well as with the facilitator(s). The learner's understanding is shaped by such adaptive encounters and interpersonal

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exchanges with the learner's environment and the people in it (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020). Vygotsky argued that social interaction is essential in the development of the personality and cognition. However, he notes that by him/herself a leaner may only reach a certain distance in his/her construction of understanding, a point referred to as the *zone of proximal development.* The learner's teacher then undertakes a crucial interaction in the learner's advancement by providing 'scaffolding', or support strategies to assist the learner to go beyond his/her zone of proximal development (Jung, 2019). Social constructivism as a pedagogical approach therefore utilizes the involvement of learners in discussions, sharing, working in groups or pairs, brainstorming, problem-solving and the like (Al-Qaysi et al, 2021).

Fleury and Garrison (2014) add to the discourse on the social production of knowledge by proposing that it takes place in varying circumstances and at different levels of sophistication. Lave & Wegner (1991) also expand on the notion of social learning by proposing that learning is a situated activity in which legitimate, peripheral participation occurs. In this process a learner engages with 'communities of practice', defined by Vollenbroek (2019, p. 2) as "a social network where people in an organizational context come together around a common topic, passion or interest and regularly interact on- and offline with a focus on knowledge management, innovation, learning and social networking". Effective education from Lave & Wegner's situated learning theory means that learners become embedded in contexts of practice that are authentic and engage increasingly in more complex tasks in the milieu of social communities in which they are interacting. Saleem et al (2021) underscore the need for learning communities to be therefore inclusive and egalitarian.

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Constructivism faces a number of criticisms. Taber (2019) identifies one of these as students becoming lost and frustrated in a constructivist classroom where there is typically relatively unguided or minimally guided instructions. This author cites Kirschner et al's (2006) assertion that empirical studies suggest that unguided instructions are ineffective in achieving desired learning outcomes. Another criticism of constructivism according to Alanazi (2016) is that it does not support the crucial need for learners to exhibit their acquired learning in tangible ways such as the making of artifacts, essential for continuing the shaping and the sharpening of the learner's thinking. There are also those who argue that constructivism is overly focused on cognitive factors that influence learning, ignoring environmental and technological factors such as educational resources, modern technology and learner preferences. Indeed, constructivism it is argued by some, promotes group thinking and dominant students, to the detriment of the proper development of average students (Alanazi, 2016).   -

While Piaget was a strong advocate of constructivism, one of his students, Seymour Papert (1928 – 2016) who agreed that constructivism is overly focussed on cognition, contended that the production of physical artifacts is indeed essential in the learning process to allow students to put the learning into practice as they engage in knowledge construction. Coining the term *constructionism* for this new variant of constructivism, Papert posited that the outcomes of learning can be observed visibly, critiqued and even used by others, knowledge he conceived as being constructed by practicing skills physically or tangibly. Constructionism therefore places greater emphasis on the teacher and instruction in contrast to constructivism where the emphasis is on learners (Alanazi, 2016).

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With regards to situated learning theory, critics point out that it is based on the assumption that communities of practice are acceptably steady with all learners are able to adapt to a structured, self-contained environment. However, it is argued that the real world is one in which communities are neither stable nor static and membership changes occur regularly (Stewart, 2021). Another criticism is that situated learning places insufficient emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge when compared with cognitive theories (binti Pengiran & Bisar, 2018).

Critics of LCE have also highlighted various drawbacks. For example, (Schweisfurth, 2015) notes various challenges with the adoption of LCE in developing states like Antigua and Barbuda. Included on this list are limited learning and physical resources; teachers having little training and personal experience with LCE; national, institutional and professional cultures not necessarily conducive or supportive of LCE; and a high-stakes examination culture based on the testing of fixed curricula, a situation that often encourages both teachers and students to resort to traditional approaches such as rote learning and cramming (Mahmood et al, 2020). There are also those who hold that teacher-centred education can yield more positive results than LCE in certain contexts and with certain disciplines. For example, it can be more efficient in covering a large amount of information in a short amount of time (Altun, 2023).

Notwithstanding the many criticisms, constructivism still commands overwhelming support among educators (Alanazi, 2016). Taber (2019) for example in the following quote speaks to the general agreement among science educators of the usefulness of constructivism in science education, although recognizing that more research needs to be done since the learning landscape is so wide and varied.

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> The constructivist research programme in science education has produced a great deal of research evidence relating to students' thinking and learning in science subjects. The premise that learners come to science learning with existing ideas about many natural phenomena and that these existing ideas have consequences for the learning of science are so well supported by the evidence base that these notions are now generally accepted within the teaching community and not seen as problematic (Taber, 2019, p. 29).

This study explores the pedagogical and general learning environments of the targeted youth organizations to see to what extent they reflect the foregoing characteristics of constructivism. The extent to which they do is taken in this study as an indication of the role and potential of the organizations in augmenting the formal education system in preparing youths for the knowledge economy.

### *Positive Youth Development*

Emerging in the 1990s, Positive Youth Development (PYD), a fairly recent theory in developmental psychology, is defined as "… an 'umbrella term' referring to approaches used in which youths can accrue optimal developmental experiences via their participation in events organized for them (Holt et al, 2020). This approach is grounded on positive views of these age cohorts in contrast to what many developmental psychologists have criticized as negative and deficit approaches to adolescent development that originated the 19th century. Two of the more eminent proponents of the negative and deficit view ideology were G. Stanley Hall who argued that adolescents are all inescapable victims of "storm and stress" as they invariably find themselves clashing with parents over issues, mood swings and behaviours that could put them at risk, and Sigmund Freud who proposed that adolescents are victims of their psychosexual development. Thus, essentially, deficit views of adolescent development are that adolescents are problems that warrant solutions or people with resolvable deficits (Shek et al, 2019; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019).
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Instead of focusing on the pathological, the most popular neo-Freudian views of adolescent development have focused on more positive views such as plasticity and diversity in adolescent development and the innate strengths and potentials human beings can draw on to achieve their goals and satisfy their needs (Holt et al, 2020). Carl Rogers, for instance, proposed what later came to be called humanistic theory that suggests that it is the need for self-esteem and self-actualization that drives humans. As a result, adolescents can be assisted in their development by helping them to discover and develop a desire to realize their goals and dreams.

Martin Seligman echoed Rogerian humanistic theory with his contributions to the development of positive psychology which emphasizes positivity exemplified by such constructs as flourishing, well-being and happiness. It is theorized that these states of mind can be realized through things within the reach of adolescents such as social ties with family, friends and colleagues; membership in social organizations such as clubs and youth organizations; participation in sports and other forms of physical exercise and recreation; and involvement in meditation or spiritual and religious practices (Seligman, 2019). Thus, PYD emphasizes both internal developmental assets (example, psychological competence), as well as external developmental assets (example, community influences) in the development of young people (Shek et al, 2019).

In the 1980s also, Urie Bronfenbrenner championed the ecological systems theory, which posits that the developing young person is under the influence of interconnected systems in his/her environment, ranging from as narrow as the home and family to as broad as the region of the world and the culture in which he/she lives (Antony, 2022). Although there are significant criticisms of

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his theory, Bronfenbrenner argues that managing these environments or systems translates essentially into the management of the developing child (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Essentially, then, humanistic theory, positive psychology and ecological systems theory, three pillars upon which positive youth development is grounded, are about understanding and nurturing the strengths of a young person and seeing him/her as "a promise' rather than "a risk". There are several models and approaches to PYD and Table 4 displays four of the better-known ones and their constructs: Benson's Developmental Assets, Lerner's C's, Catalano's PYD Constructs and CASEL's SEL.

Derived from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Benson proposed 40 developmental assets which he posits refer to individual strengths and environmental resources available to a young person as he/she develops (Shek et al, 2019). Benson explains that these 40 assets were synthesized from research findings pertaining to the natural process of development, the experiences of young people, social relationships, contexts and patterns of interaction discovered to be conducive to positively developing young people. The 40 are also subdivided into 20 internal assets that describe positive human traits such as skills and competencies, and 20 external traits referring to environmental resources available to an individual such as the positive influences related to their home, their school and even the community in which they live. Each of the two sets of 20 assets is further subdivided into four categories all eight of which are shown in Table 4. Research evidence suggests that the greater the developmental assets in the ambit of a young person, the greater the likelihood of that young person experience current and future well-being and success (Martin-Barrado & Gomez-Baya, 2024).

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**Table**                                                                  **4**

*PYD Models and Their Constructs*

| Developmental Assets (Benson) | The Cs (Lerner) | PYD Constructs (Catalano) | SEL (CASEL) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Devotion to learning | Competence | Bonding Resilience | Self-management |
| Positive values | Confidence | Social competence | Social awareness |
| Social competence | Connection | Emotional competence | Self-awareness |
| Positive identity | Character | Cognitive competence | Responsible decision making |
| Support | Compassion | Behavioural competence | Relationship management |
| Empowerment Boundaries and determination expectations Productive use of time | Caring | Moral competence Spirituality Positive identity Self-efficacy Recognition for positive behaviour Belief in the future | |

Source: Shek et al (2019); Brackett & Rivers (2014)

Lerner's Cs model is also grounded on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The model proposes that important indicators of PYD are labelled with words beginning with the letter "c" as shown in Table 4 (Johnson & Ettekal, 2023; Shek et al, 2019). *Competence* refers to competencies in cognition, social interactions, academics and vocational pursuits, while *confidence* is a healthy belief in self-worth and personal efficacy. *Connection* means the maintenance of positive social relationships to include members of one's own family as well as with peers and others in ones community. *Character* refers to behavioural standards such as morality, integrity and other value standards that are conducive to social functioning in human society. The last, *caring*, is about having sympathy and empathy for others (Kadir & Mohd, 2021;

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Lerner, 2009). As with Benson's developmental assets, there is research supporting that the degree of presence of these practices in the lives of young people is positively related to youth development (Kadir & Mohd, Shek et al, 2019; Wiium & Dimitri, 2019).

Table 4 above shows constructs in the PYD model proposed by Catalano (2004) and Table 5 below shows their meaning. Again, as with the other models there is much credible research that has been done supporting the effectiveness of these constructs in producing in young people positive outcomes such as academic well-being, positive identity, moral competencies, life satisfaction hopefulness and other general PYD qualities both in short and medium to long terms (Buenconsejo & Datu, 2023).

**Table 5**
*Catalano's PYD Constructs and Their Meanings*

| Construct | Meaning |
|---|---|
| 1. Belief in the future | What one hopes to achieve and how |
| 2. Bonding | Nurturing friendships with different age groups within and outside one's family |
| 3. Behavioural proficiency | Communicating well verbally and nonverbally efficient behaviour dispositions |
| 4. Cognitive proficiency | Developing cognitive skills such as academic abilities, critical thinking, solving problems, logical reasoning etc |
| 5. Emotional proficiency | Recognizing, expressing and managing one's emotions in positive ways |
| 6. Moral proficiency | Having a feel of what is right and what is wrong and recognizing and accepting the rules and the standards used in upholding justice in human society |
| 7. Social proficiency | Interpersonal skill development |
| 8. Positive identity | Having a healthy and positive self-identity |
| 9. Recognizing positive behaviour | Developing a way of rewarding behaviours that are positive and prosocial and nurturing the same |
| 10. Resilience | Developing effective and positive ways of handling and adapting to stressful situations |
| 11. Self-determination | Nurturing autonomy, the ability to reason independently |

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|---|---|
|  | as well as developing self-advocacy |
| 12. Self-efficacy | Promoting skills related to coping and mastering along with managing negative and self-destructive cognitions |
| 13. Spiritual awareness | Having a sense of purposefulness, hopefulness, and recognition of a supreme being |
| 14. Prosocial standards | Nurturing social acceptance and friendliness |
| 15. Opportunities for prosocial | Participating actively in social activities and events |

Source: Buenconsejou & Datu (2023)

Borowski (2029) defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as activities by which children and adults develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours essential for the comprehension and management of feelings, the setting and attainment of positive goals, sensitization to the feeling of others and extending empathy to them, the establishment and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships, and making decisions that are responsible. The American psychologist, Daniel Goleman, is credited with laying the foundations for SEL with the publication in 1995 of a book on emotional intelligence, which became a best seller (Elias & Moceri, 2012). Building on this foundation, CASEL further explored and articulated ways in which knowledge about emotional intelligence can be utilized by teachers and learners in schools. SEL has various labels: character education, 21st century skills, soft skills and noncognitive skills. The concept involves, essentially, learning about one's emotions and social interactions through reflexive thinking, and managing them in ways that are beneficial to self and others (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Panayiotou et al, 2019).

There is considerable research contending that SEL principles and practices redound to the successful development of young people including students in school, at the workplace, in their social relationships, as citizens of their country and the world and even in their religious

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devotedness (Jagers et al, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Mahoney et al, 2018; Ross & Tolan, 2018; Surya & Haryanto, 2023). SEL principles and practices are grounded in social and developmental theories exemplified by self-determination theory, ecological systems theory, youth development theory and emotional intelligence theory (Bracket & Rivers, 2014). Self-determination theory is a meta-theory that seeks to explain what motivates people to learn. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors according to this theory (Guay, 2022).

Other theoretical bases for SEL may be found in social capital theory and human capital theory. Social capital theory proposes that social relationships forged among persons within social groups are beneficial to group members, which can result in positive changes in their lives being realized (Hawkins & Smith, 2019). Relationships then, according to social capital theory, can be viewed as resources that can be employed in the development of human capital and the building of relationships can be seen as investments with expected returns (Lin, 2017). *Human capital* is a term coined by economists viewing education as one of the factors of production (Faggian et al, 2018; Spiel et al, 2018). Human capital theory on the other hand proposes that the more educated and trained a person is, the more they will be a productive agent in society. Thus, education can be treated as an investment in humans and its results seen as capital (Deming, 2022; Holden & Biddle, 2017).

In the United State of America several SEL programs have been devised for fostering youth development in the country's elementary and secondary educational institutions. Prominent in the provision of these is the organization called the Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). This organization has identified a list of five core competencies of

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SEL. The list includes self-management, social awareness, self-awareness, responsible decision-making and relationship management. These are depicted in Table 4 above. Details about their associated attributes are displayed in Table 6 below. It can be seen that the term *competency* is used in the table. The difference between what is considered to be a competency and what is considered to be a skill is outlined in a later section of this report.

**Table 6**
*SEL Competencies According to CASEL*

| Competency | Attributes |
|---|---|
| Self-management | - Controlling your emotions to tackle stress, control your urges and persist in dealing with obstacles<br>- monitor your progression towards your personal and academic goals; express your feelings appropriately |
| Social awareness | - Appreciate the perspective of others, be empathic<br>- recognize and appreciate that there are similarities and differences between and others<br>- recognize and use the resources of your family, your school, and your community |
| Self-awareness | - access your emotions correctly along with your values interests and strengths. Develop self-confidence |
| Responsible decision making | - when making decisions consider standards that are ethical, safe and respectful of social norms, and are cognizant of resultant probable consequences<br>- make contributions to the well-being of the community |
| Relationship management | - aim to have and maintain healthy and rewarding rewarding relationships. Be cooperative.<br>- resist social pressures that are inappropriate<br>- prevent, solve, manage interpersonal conflict |

*Source: Brackett & Rivers (2014)*

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There are also several SEL programs designed for different age groups and with the aim of developing positive social, emotional, and academic behaviours in students. Examples of these are Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Responsive Classroom Approach (RC), 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution), and the Ruler Approach. These and their attributes are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7**
*CASEL SEL Programs*

| Program | Attributes |
|---|---|
| Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) | - preschoolers and primary schoolers<br>- aimed at increasing social and emotional skill development, deter violent, aggressive, and other such behavioural challenges, nurture critical thinking skills and improve classroom climate |
| The Responsive Classroom Approach (RC) | - caters to the social, emotional, and the academic<br>- classroom practices that make students feel have a feeling of safety, are challenged and are happy |
| The Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution (4Rs) | - a curriculum grounded on literacy and includes lessons on the resolution of conflicts, on differences in culture and the value and importance of cooperation<br>- aimed at the combination of targeted instructional, skill-building strategies as well as modelling social norms that are positive |
| The RULER Approach | - skills critical to the positive development of youth being able to recognize, comprehend, label, express and regulate feelings<br>- every adult engaged in the education of children should be developed in a professional way |

Source: Brackett & Rivers (2014)

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Among the criticisms of teaching SEL in schools is that it robs schools of valuable time needed for teaching core academic skills (Elias & Morceri, 2012; Oberle et al, 2020). Payton et al (2000) had long cautioned that the integrity of educators in implementing SEL programs is critical and recommended that in addition to quality programs there must be adequate training experiences to support teachers and educators in not only effectively implementing, but also institutionalizing, SEL programs of high quality. Elias & Morci (2012) also caution that uncertainties exist about the period of time and the level of consistency that are required for the realization of positive life outcomes of SEL.

*Justification of Theoretical Framework*

Why use constructivism and PYD as theoretical frameworks in this study and not others? The American National Research Council (2012), for example, suggests a framework comprising of a variety of skills and competencies that prepare emerging adults for academic and workplace readiness. They base their work on "a large research base in cognitive, developmental, educational, organizational, and social psychology and economics for purposes of clarifying and organizing concepts and terms" (p. 2). Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) describe said framework as being robust and holistic. It incorporates inputs from eight reports and papers as well as information from O*NET, a large database of information on over 950 occupations and their desired worker characteristics and requirements among other things. The governing board of the American National Research Council is comprised of members from the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine. Thus, it is a reputable authority on 21st century skills. Its framework could have been used as the theoretical basis of this study,

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with the learning space created by the youth organizations under study explored to see the extent to which the skills and competencies listed on the framework are nurtured by them.

The literature suggests, however, that most prior studies have employed concepts of constructivism and PYD as theoretical bases for studying the impact of involvement in youth organizations. Among these are Duerden et al (2014) and Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) who used SEL as theoretical bases for investigating how being employed at a camp influences academic and workforce development in young people. Rajagopal et al (2022) note that internationally, there is empirical evidence to show that PYD interventions have resulted in reducing high-risk behaviours and the fostering of positive behaviours in youths.

Since this study hopes to offer insights on pedagogy, learning and generally rounded development of young people to educators in the formal system, in a similar way, in this study these theoretical concepts are considered preferable and are used to investigate the teaching and learning environments of the organizations under study to explore their learner-centeredness and their ability to develop the social and human capital of their young members. More specifically, this study examines the learning environment of the organizations to see how reflective their pedagogy is of constructivist learning theory exemplified by such practices as the learner being able to construct knowledge through interactions with the environment and the pedagogy is learner centred, and how reflective their youth development practices are of PYD and SEL principles exemplified by such practices as young people being assisted in their development by helping them discover and develop a desire to realize their goals and dreams, and nurturing internal and external developmental assets such as positive values, social competence and constructive use of time.

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In the section following, insights on these organizations from academic literature are presented. Their definition, categorization, nature, activities and presence in Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Caribbean are presented in that order. The nature of youth work in general, including various tensions associated with that field is also briefly examined.

**The Nature and Functions of Youth Organizations**

The age group referred to as youth varies around the world. For example, the United Nations uses ages 15 – 24 (WHO, 2022); the African Youth Charter and the Council of Europe use 15 – 35 (African Youth Charter, 2006; Council of Europe, 2022) and many Caribbean National Youth Policies use 15 – 30 (CARICOM, 2015). The National Youth Policy of Antigua and Barbuda uses 0 – 35 but notes that it prioritizes ages 12 – 30 on the basis that persons in this age category face special challenges (National Youth Policy, 2007). It is not surprising then that definitions of *youth organization* vary similarly not only by age, but also by legal jurisdiction and how they are led. Table 8 following compares definitions from different countries.

**Table 8**
*Definitions of Youth Organizations*

| Country | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Canada | A single-or multi-level organization primarily operated by youth and/or engages in activities for youth below the age of 19. (Canadian Polish Congress, 2014) |
| USA | A youth-led non-profit organization established to improve the infrastructure that fosters and promotes positive growth of youth and young adults in society. (State of Oregon, 2019). |

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|---|---|
| European Union | A youth-led, non-profit, voluntary non-governmental association, and under some circumstances, can instead be a part of the state apparatus or be youth worker-led. (Council of Europe, 2022). |
| Jamaica | Non-political community youth club, sports club, faith-based organization, uniformed youth organization, special interest youth group, or civic youth group. (Ministry of Education and Youth, n.d.) |

*Source: Compiled*

As shown in the Table the American and the European definitions seem to indicate that a youth organization is one that is fully staffed, led, managed and coordinated by young people, with the latter indicating that the leadership could be part of the state apparatus or consist of youth workers, defined by Hartje et al (2008, p. 30) as "any frontline adult staff directly working with youth (ages 10 – 18) to positively influence their development". The Canadian definition indicates that the organization may be primarily youth-led, while the Jamaican definition gives no indication of the age of the leadership. Both Dictionary.com and Merriam-Webster adopt the name *youth group* as opposed to *youth organization* in their definitions and also give no indication of the age category of the leadership.  The former defines a youth group as "an organization of young people for social purposes usually under the sponsorship of a church, political organization or the like'. The latter states that it is "a group of youth or young people forming a part or a unit of an organized social, political or religious institution". Thus, expanding on the Dictionary.com definition, the Merriam-Webster definition seems to more explicitly suggest that the purpose of the formation of youth organizations is not only for social but also for political and religious purposes. Drawing upon the foregoing definitions, for the purposes of this study a youth organization may be defined

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as any adult-led, multi-level, non-profit, voluntary organization whose main focus is the positive development of youths and young adults.

The multifaceted raison d'etre of youth organizations is often a source of tension, in especially religious youth organizations as explained later. However, there multifaceted nature means also that they engage in a plethora of undertakings that are supportive of the growth of employability skills in young people. For example, in a study involving the tasks and activities youths engage with in non-formal education in youth organizations in the European Union, Souto-Otero et al (2013) found that the list of tasks includes working in teams, planning and managing activities, supervising and managing groups, preparing and delivering speeches and presentations, living and working with individuals from other cultures, fundraising and preparing and managing budgets. Activities and specific programs include debates and group discussions, volunteering services, training and workshops, sports, seminars, retreats, field studies, exchange programs and activism involving campaigning, lobbying and advocacy. These are all linked to the development and acquisition of employability skills as will be explained later in this study.

### *Types of Youth Organizations*

The fact that there are various motivations (social, political, religious etc) behind the formation of youth organizations means that there is a consequent plethora of types and numbers that is too vast to make identification and quantification an easy task (Council of Europe, 2022; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2003). In fact, youth organizations are now a ubiquitous feature of virtually all societies and practically every religious organization and political party in every country, for example, has an affiliated youth organization (Britannica, 2022). In a study of what works in youth

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programming, Skalli & Thomas (2015) found that recent interest in youth councils and youth parliaments on both sides of the Atlantic is motivated by a desire to raise the involvement of youth in the making of political decisions and the functions of government. Table 8 is an attempt at categorization based on the literature. The youth organizations targeted for this study fall into the following categories: faith-based denominational, faith-based interdenominational, non-denominational/independent, and youth worker-led.

***Youth Organizations in Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean***

All of the youth organizations in Table 8 are found in Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean. Scouting, for example, is present in most territories having arrived in the Caribbean first in Guyana in 1909, two years after it was formed in England by Baden-Powell (Stabroek News, 2009). The Boys' Brigade arrived via Jamaica in 1894 (Birch, 1965). Faith-based denominational and interdenominational youth organizations are prevalent in the Caribbean but there seems to be very little in the academic literature on them. For example, a Google Scholar search using the term *faith-based youth organizations in the Caribbean* did not reveal any distinctly related studies. These types of organizations feature prominently in this study.

**Table 9**
*Types of Youth Organizations with Examples*

| Type | Examples |
|---|---|
| Faith-based-denominational | Catholic Youth Organization, Walther League (Lutheran), Adventist Youth (Seventh-day Adventist) World Federation of Buddhist Youth, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, North America Federation of Temple Youth (Jewish) |

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| | |
|---|---|
| Faith-based – interdenominational | Boys and Girls Brigades, Young Life, Youth for Christ |
| Non-denominational/Independent | Scouts, Guides, YMCA, YWCA, 4-H Club |
| Political | Young Republicans and Democrats (USA), Young Communist League (Cuba) |
| Service | Red Cross and Red Crescent Youth |
| Business | Junior Achievement |
| State-Affiliated | Cadet Corps, National Youth Council, Youth Ambassadors |
| Youth-led | European Youth Forum, National Youth Councils |
| Youth Worker-led | American Camp Association, Faith-based Organizations |

*Author's Compilation*

Various state-affiliated youth organizations also exist at a national level in the state of Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean as a whole. They form an amalgamated association of other national associations in the Caribbean region at the regional level. For example, the Caribbean Regional Youth Council (CRYC) was formed at the 3rd Caribbean Youth Leaders' Summit in 2013. This particular organization speaks of itself as the collective voice of National Youth Councils (NYCs), representing the voice of youth for the Caribbean. NYCs are youth-led organizations that represent youth-led community groups and social movement organizations at the national level and are found in most Caribbean countries. Membership participation, however, is low, but according to Sanatan (2019) NYCs are notwithstanding the prime and preferable youth entity with which the state should consult on youth and youth policy. Similarly, the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Program was established in 1993 and boasts of contributing

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to the increase in the knowledge and awareness of the region's issues and priorities by the region's youth, thus raising their profile at both the regional and national levels and integrating their views and perspectives into policy at the national, regional and even international levels (Caricom, 2022). There is also a National Youth Ambassador Corp at the territorial level as is the case with the NYC.

Youth organizations in the Caribbean as well as in the developing world are regarded as valuable entities in the social network that is necessary for the support of both adolescents and parents in the maintenance of good mental health in the population (Roels et al, 2022; Sanchez-Castro et al, 2024). In Haiti, for example, these organizations are noted as being invaluable to the professional as well as the personal development of young people in every social bracket in the society (Docilait, 2023). In Malaysia, Layapan et al (2022) is in agreement with these notions and add that the common goals of youth organizations include ensuring that more young people members of society that are responsible, self-independent, self-directed, self-reliant, and self-controlled.

### Youth Work

Banks (2010) note that youth work covers a wide spectrum of activities and proposes that a useful categorization might be: *youth work as an activity*, *youth work as a specialist occupation* and *youth work as a discipline.* As an activity, youth work involves volunteers and professionally qualified persons such as educators, law enforcers, coaches and social workers engaging with young people in a variety of activities. As a specialist occupation, youth work involves volunteers and part-time workers who qualify or identify as youth workers using an informal educational

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approach, and/or one that is developmental in nature. As a discipline, 'youth work' is a body of practical and theoretical knowledge that can be studied and practiced.

According to Banks (2010) the situation in the majority of countries globally is that youth work encompasses that undertaken by volunteers in non-governmental youth organizations, examples of which are the Scouting Guiding Associations, the Brigades and faith-based youth groups. Youth work also involves youth-related work undertaken by volunteers and workers who receive remuneration in professionalized and non-profit activities exemplified by the organization called Save the Children or the one known as St Vincent de Paul Society as well as others operated in various communities by local authorities. Youth work undertaken by the youth organizations targeted for this study is mostly of this description. This study proposes that the wide spectrum of youth work suggests that there could be a similar wide array of practices, mechanisms and outcomes at play in youth work which could impact the development of young people. This study explores these possibilities in the context of faith-based and civic organizations in Antigua and Barbuda.

### *Raison D'etre of Youth Organizations*

Not all definitions of a youth organization imply that their *raison d'etre* is primarily to advance the interests and personal development of young people. For example, the Dictionary.com definition states that the organization is for social purposes. The *raison d'etre* for some religious and most, if not all, political youth organizations focuses on incorporating youths into the recruitment process of adherents to the larger organization. The chief objective of the Juvenile Missionary Society now known as Junior Mission for All, for example, and founded in England in

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1841 by Joseph Blake of the Methodist church, was to provide missionary training for young people who would then go forth to spread the faith in the newly acquired colonial lands of the British Empire (Hancock, 2013). The Catholic church also founded many youth organizations in different countries in late 19th century Europe with the aim of "re-evangelizing" urban middle- and working-class youth in the face of revolutionary ideologies that were gaining ground at the time (Merino et al, 2018).  Highlighting the pre-eminence of evangelism as the driving force in the formation of the Adventist Youth Society evidenced by its initial name "Missionary Volunteer Society", Gane (2005) also notes that youth ministry was perceived as an evangelistic tool by Moody as well as the YMCA.  In a similar way the National Federation of Temple Youth and the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth have been powerful forces in maintaining young adherents to Judaism and Buddhism respectively (Pohl, 2010; Sankham et al, 2020). Even though original zeal may have waned, evangelism still remains the desired focus of many of these organizations (McFeeters et al, 2021; Tutsch, 2009).

In the political arena, youth organizations have been incubators for political and ideological activism and socialization across the world for a long time. Examples are the movement in Germany in the 1930s, the Young Communist Leagues of Cuba and China and the Young Pioneers of Malawi (MYP) which were integral to the establishment and maintenance of those regimes (Luke, 2016; Chirambo, 2004; Doyon, 2023). On the other hand, youth organizations have been credited with the peacebuilding process in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kasherwa, 2020). Terriquez et al (2020) investigated and found vibrant political militancy among Latinx youth organizations that were founded to assist newly arrived immigrant youths to the USA.

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However, although the preponderance of evidence shows that the *raison d'etre* for politically affiliated youth organizations have been primarily for recruitment of adherents, for political socialization and is based on a deficit model of youth development (Earl et al, 2017; Weiss, 2020), there is also much evidence indicating that this is not always so. For instance, there is evidence showing that youth arms of political parties have their own agenda that may even be in conflict with that of the parent party (Bennie & Russel; 2012, Hansen 2015). Also, Malafaia et al (2018) conducted a study in Portugal on collective learning processes involved in political participation of young people via youth organizations and found evidence of assets-based positive youth development experiences. According to these authors,

> We hope to have made it clear that the youth wing is a quality civic and political participation setting. Indeed, the participants are involved in personally meaningful activities in which they have the opportunity to engage in decision-making processes aimed at solving real-life problems. Importantly… access to such experiences is not contingent upon the possession of economic capital... Also, this type of participation is very much anchored in, and reinforces, bonds of friendship and commitment between members. (Malafaia et al, 2018, p. 70).

Youth organizations whose *raison d'etre* is primarily to advance the interests and personal development of young people carry out their mandates by organizing and managing various activities that cater to the requirements of youths or by advocating for the meeting of those needs. Typical activities include opportunities for personal and social development through volunteerism, non-formal and informal learning, and leisure activities such as camps (Council of Europe, 2022).

### Principles of Youth Development

Youth development is conceptualized as either the natural process of growth of a child into understanding and to acting on his/her environment, or the framework of principles,

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philosophies or approaches that emphasize dynamic support for a young individual's growth, or the application of those principles in the process of developing that young individual (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2003; Secretariat, 2016). As outlined in the Theological Framework section of this study, the literature shows that youth development may be viewed from two different perspectives, each with implications for the types of policies and programs adopted by the organization that has that perspective (Charles & Jameson-Charles, 2014). First there is what is called the deficit perspective which sees youth as problems to be addressed or managed, as they are broken or in danger of being broken and becoming perpetrators and/or victims of such things as deviant behaviours, unemployment, homelessness, health issues and the like (Benson et al, 2006; Buckhard et al, 2019).

From the emergence of formal youth organizations in the late 19th, during the 20th and up to present century in some quarters, the deficit perspective dominated youth development policies generally (Burkhard et al, 2019). However, this began to change in the 1990s with the emergence of Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory (Catalano et al, 2019; Lerner et al, 2009; Poredos, 2023). The deficit model was challenged by other developmental psychologists on the grounds that there is developmental plasticity and diversity in adolescent development (Shek, 2019). Humanistic and existential psychologists such as Seligman have promulgated these ideas which have contributed to the emergence of positive psychology since the 1990s (Seligman, 2002).

This new way of looking at adolescent development advocates that since human beings are active agents with regards to influencing their own lives and state of being, adolescents have it within themselves to be masterful, efficacious and autonomous. Hence the implications of this

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for entities such as youth organizations in undertaking the development of youths include the facilitation of the discovery, nurture and utilization of innate strengths by youths towards their own development. This is what is referred to as positive youth development (Lerner, 2005; Qi et al, 2020; Waid & Uhrich, 2020).

This strengths-based model, or asset-based perspective, then, views youths in a more positive light than the deficit perspective. Advocates of this view believe that adolescents are more plastic and diverse in their development than previously believed. They are seen as resources to be developed and key agents for such things as technological innovation, economic growth, nation building, community service and general social change (Dekkers et al, 2022; Zimmerman et al, 2008). This perspective is endorsed by the United Nations and is also the perspective evident in Caribbean literature on youth development (Charles & Jameson-Charles, 2014). In recent times therefore, many youth workers have been using the PYD approach in designing their youth programs (Johnston-Goodstar, 2020; Shek et al, 2019; Soares et al, 2019).

The question could be posed whether all youth organizations engage in youth development even though it may not be their *raison d'etre*. The evidence suggests that religious entities have combined a missionary- or evangelistic-based perspective with a deficit-based or an asset-based perspective to youth development. The Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), for example, was founded in 1844 by the philanthropist George Williams in England and dedicated to the enhancement of the general wellbeing of young men and save them from decadence of life on the street (Britannica, 2020). Urban youth ministry according to Fernando Arzola (2008) includes a "liberal" paradigm with a psychological focus, that being the felt needs of young people, and an

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"activist" paradigm with a sociological or an anthropological paradigm focusing on the issues experienced by youth.

Arzola advocates that all urban youth ministries become more holistic and dynamic in order to cater to the personal and social as well as the spiritual needs of urban youth. Seeing Arzola's paradigms as too deficit-based in perspective, Williams (2019) recommends an "accommodative" and an "adoptive" approach to youth ministries. The former focuses on including the youth in the planning of youth ministry and the latter focuses on integrating young people into the family of faith. Other faith-based youth organizations such as those of the Seventh-day Adventists, Catholics, the Lutherans, the Boys' Brigade and the World Student Christian Federation include aspects of youth development in their activities in varying degrees (Pinckney et al, 2020).

Civic and non-denominational and state-affiliated youth organizations seem to have a more strictly positive or asset-based perspective to youth development. The Scouting Movement established by Robert Baden-Powell in 1908 in England, for example, is dedicated towards the training of youths to be better citizens and providing them with non-formal education. Scouting has flourished into becoming an established feature of the curriculum of several Asian, African and Pacific countries (Lim, 2014). Another notable mention in this regard is the 4-H Club founded by A. B. Graham, an American, in 1910, and whose stated mission is to "provide meaningful opportunities for youths and adults to work together to create sustainable community change… accomplished through civic engagement and leadership, healthy living and science" (Andrews, 2020, p. 5).

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Similarly, Sankar & Margaj (2015) found that while the main goal of the training offered by the national cadet corps of India is to expose youths to basic military knowledge and skills, it also involves nurturing of core values and enhancement of awareness, which enable them to develop and increase their confidence, commitment and competence as leaders in all spheres of life. The national cadet core of Bangladesh is also described as "one of the most glorious youth-organizations involved in wide voluntary national development activities in which the training curriculum is very useful for achieving the critical indicators of national human resource development" (Huda, 2020).

**The Nature, Purpose and Challenges of Education**

Essentially, this study is about how youth organizations can augment the formal education system in providing young people with education and training suitable for the 21st century. Therefore, it was useful to take a look at what is currently known about the nature and function of youth organizations and principles involved in youth work and youth development in order to facilitate the placement of the study's findings in the corpus of knowledge on said subject. Having done that, attention is now turned to doing the same with the concept of education for the same reason. That is, the corpus of existing knowledge about education as a construct is examined, so that the significance of the findings of this study can be properly situated in it.

*What is Education?*

Dictionary.com defines *education* as the act of teaching and receiving knowledge and the actual knowledge received. Renowned physicist Albert Einstein is reputed to have quipped that "education is what remains after everything is forgotten about what was learned in school".

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Whatever education may or may not be, dissatisfaction with the quality of education offered in schools in both developed and developing countries is widespread, and there are many ideas about what quality education should look like (Care, 2018; Chalkiadaki, 2018; Friere, 2018; Jacob-son Lundeberg, 2016; Joynes et al, 2019; Petrie et al, 2021; Shackleton-Jones, 2019). The mainstream idea is that education ought to be the fostering of the increase in skill levels, abilities, values, attitudes and dispositions that facilitate full and successful participation in society and adult life (Lile, 2020; Lochner, 2021; Kern & Wehmeyer, 2021; Schultze-Kraft, 2022). In their book *Education in China and the World: Achievements and Contemporary Issues*, the authors Niancai et al (2024, p. 6) note that "the fundamental criterion for measuring the quality of education is promoting the all-rounded development of individuals and meeting the needs of society".

There is a great body of literature on more radical views about the nature, quality and provision of education. For example, Paulo Freire (1973), one of the earliest critics of traditional views of education, has argued that a good education is one that challenges learners to critically examine the power structures and inequality patterns within the status quo. In other words, learners should become critical towards their reality so that they can understand and overcome the social structures through which they are being dominated and oppressed. Dubbed *critical pedagogy*, this theory proposes that good teaching involves teacher and students learning and teaching each other through mutual dialogue. A successful educator does not simply transmit knowledge to his or her students, but through dialogue on collectively chosen topics, he or she facilitates the students' development of critical consciousness. If one views education as simply making deposits of knowledge into learners' heads, then that is the same as making deposits of money in a bank where it is left until it is wanted

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or withdrawn, Freire (1973) has argued, and the end result of this approach to education is that learners often end up being treated merely as inanimate objects and not as people to be seriously related to.

In support of Freire's (1973) caution against education as *banking* as just described, Smith (2021) also warns that if one views education as "trying to drill learning into people according to some plan often drawn up by others" (p. 1), then this is simply *schooling*. Smith (2021, p. 2) defines real education as "the wise, hopeful and respectful cultivation of learning and change undertaken in the belief that we all should have the chance to share in life" (p. 2). Shackleton-Jones (2019) also derides *banking* and *schooling* and uses the term *knowledge transfer* for the same concept, contending that if that is education, then education actually prevents learning. He supports Freire's (1973) notion of true education being obtained through healthy dialogue between teacher and learners in which the former guides the latter into discovering a sense of purpose about whatever is to be learned and making that purpose part of their working life. If no purpose can be found for learning a thing, Shackleton-Jones (2019) boldly suggests that perhaps it means that no teaching of that thing should occur, as students cannot be expected to learn things that they do not care about. In other words, true education according to Shackleton-Jones (2019) involves allowing people to learn what they care about and the teacher's task is to find a way to make them care. In critiquing Shackleton-Jones' radical ideas, Quinn (2019) remarks that though controversial, they provide much food for thought on the purpose and provision of quality education. This study's intention includes  contributing to the discussion of what education and quality education should be all about by examining the activities of the youth organizations under study.

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*Challenges Facing the Formal Education System*

Whatever the conception of education and its quality, the literature indicates a general recognition that its realization and provision are challenging (Olssen, 2020; Teiget et al, 2024). A major contributing factor is that the complex and rapidly changing world that we are living in is demanding more and more of education since it is perceived to be the vehicle most capable of effecting change and the developing and advancing of societies and economies (Niancai et al, 2024; OECD, 2022). The new technological skills and expertise that the current age is constantly demanding means that formal education even at the tertiary level has to make conscious and persistent effort to remain relevant (Denkowska, 2020; Shackleton-Jones 2019) and there is a worldwide struggle to help young people develop the concomitant 21st century workplace skills as demanded by the job market (Robinson & Winthrop, 2016).

In the Caribbean, relevance is twinned with low quality as two of the most intractable challenges facing the formal education system (Brisset, 2021; Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018). As is largely the case in the rest of the world the formal education system in the region is widely believed to be inadequate for the task at hand (Grajcevic & Shala, 2016; Winfrey, 2018). This, along with the need for life-long and life-wide learning as demanded by the emerging age, is solid justification for placing increased interest in other forms of education to compliment, supplement, or be a replacement for, formal education so that the right of access to some form of genuine education for all citizens may be guaranteed (Bogovac & Dujie, 2017; Grajcevci & Shala, 2016; UNESCO, 2015; Williamson, 2017). As Robinson & Winthrop (2016, p. 22) put it "delivering education is

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not done only by governments. Education is an ecosystem, which includes many related and co-dependent actors, both within and outside the formal system."

This study proposes that youth organizations are among the co-dependent actors outside the formal education system that are providing alternate forms of relevant and quality education and explores their role in doing the same. This squares with the thinking of Bykova et al (2020) who argue that since the need to develop competencies in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is paramount, and since the formal education system is not giving enough attention to the training of youth leaders in these skills who can in turn transfer them to other young people, "the non-formal education system has the right to compensate for this short-coming through the implementation of additional programs that form ICT competencies in young people" (p. 67).

Bykova et al (2020) are not alone in supporting non-formal education as a viable alternative to formal education. Manger and Broek (2020), for example, note that the central reference point for the formation of modern education has shifted to enabling every child to develop to his or her fullest potential. However, since we live in an age when the future is uncertain, school education faces a paradox in that since it is held that the primary aim of education is to prepare one for life in the future, with the future being uncertain it follows that education should also be an uncertain process, they add. Berezovska et al (2020) therefore underscore the need to value the propagation of new forms of education and learning in the post-modern world. The literature being reviewed for this study therefore now turns to an examination of current

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knowledge of alternate forms of education, since it is argued that the youth organizations under study are prime conduits for conveying this.

*Alternate Forms of Education*

In a paper advising on the modernization of the education system in Ukraine, Berezoyska et al (2020) advocate that in addition to the three basic and traditional forms of education which are formal, non-formal and informal, "other modern forms of education such as *distance learning* [the physical separation of teacher and learners during instruction and the utilization of a variety of technologies to assist and enable student to teacher and student to student interactions and communications]*, dual education* [intertwining classroom instruction with hand-on experiences at the workplace], *continuing vocational education* [learning carried out after initial learning and training and aimed at upskilling, retraining or reskilling] and others, should be improved and implemented into the educational process" (p.107).

Other modern forms of education that are indicated by Berezoyska et al (2020) include ones such as *second chance education* (for persons who never attended or dropped out of school or who wish to enrol in an educational program or occupation for which they are unqualified), *self-directed learning* (in which the teacher guides, but students decide what and how they learn)*, e-learning* and *on-line learning* (terms used interchangeably to refer to learning via multimedia such as the internet)*,* and *community learning* (learning collaboratively in a small group and assisted by a teacher). All of these forms of education are on a list that is still not exhaustive and includes considerable overlap resulting in difficulty in differentiation (Dogdina et al, 2021; Olcott, 2013; Wals et al, 2017).

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The recent Covid-19 viral outbreak advanced to the forefront additional forms of education including *flexible learning* which is similar to self-directed learning and *blended learning* which involves the combination of e-learning or online learning with face-to-face instruction (Dogdina et al, 2021; Ratih et al, 2021). The exploration in this study involves the extent to which youth organizations in the state of Antigua and Barbuda provide relevant and quality non-formal education using any of the foregoing formats that can augment the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda and perhaps other parts of the Caribbean region as well as globally in the preparation of young people for the 21st century workplace as we know it. Hence, for convenience the focus of this review is on formal, informal and non-formal education and the nexus between them.

### *Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education*

In 2011, UNESCO established the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in an attempt to provide internationally agreed definitions of educational concepts to accommodate international comparisons of education systems. The ISCED (2011) is thus a useful reference for defining what is considered to be formal, non-formal and informal education and its definitions are shown in Table 10 and their main elements and how they overlap are compared in Table 11.

As can be seen in Table 10 as well as in Table 11, both formal and non-formal education are institutionalized, meaning that their educational arrangements are established as part of an official organization which provides a structure and a fixed space such as a school building or an online platform. For example, there are teachers and students in a relationship designed specifically

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for education and learning in a school or club (Gonzalez & Bonal, 2021; Tarasova et al, 2020). Informal education on the other hand is not institutionalized and there is little or no organization and structure. Similarly, it can be seen from the tables that both formal and non-formal education are always intentional. The dictionary definition of intentional is *deliberately, intended* (Oxford, n.d.).

From the foregoing arguments, then, it may be said that in formal and non-formal education specific learning objectives are formulated and the deliberate or intended purpose can be said to be to achieve specific learning outcomes (Nefedova, 2017). In the formal and non-formal education systems also, targeted learning outcomes are usually outlined in a written curriculum or syllabus designed for the various age categories ranging from early childhood, through pre-primary or pre-elementary, through primary or elementary, secondary and up to the tertiary level of the education landscape. In most countries of the world, in the formal education system participation at least in the elementary and secondary levels of the education system is compulsory, while in the non-formal system participation is generally voluntary (Olcott, 2013; Tarasova et al, 2020; UNESCO, 2006).

**Table 10**
*Comparison of Definitions of Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education*

| Education Form | ISCED (2011) |
| --- | --- |
| Formal | Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned through public organizations or recognized private bodies, and in their totality constitute what is considered to be the formal education system of a country |
| Non-formal | Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. .. it is an addition, alternative and/or |

complement to what is considered to be the formal education offerings of a country.

| | |
|---|---|
| Informal | Form of learning that is intentional or deliberate, but is not institutionalized as is the case with the formal and the informal education systems. |

*Source: ISCED (2011, Section 1: 36, 39 , 43)*

As can be seen in Table 11 below, informal education is sometimes intentional although it may be also unintentional. Therefore, there may be situations where the informal learner is consciously aware of specific learning objectives that he/she is being challenged to achieve along with the expected learning outcomes. In other cases such learning objectives and expected learning outcomes or achievements may not be obvious. This means in other words that in some cases informal education is incidental or tacit, with the learner engaged in real learning but oblivious or not conscious of the fact (Kim & Dopico, 2016).

**Table 11**
*Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Education Compared*

| Characteristics | Formal | Non-Formal | Informal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Institutionalized | Yes | Yes | No |
| Intentional | Yes | Yes | Sometimes |
| Planned | Yes | Yes | No |
| Learning | Conscious | (Un/sub) Conscious | Unconscious |
| Type of learning | Information, knowledge | Competencies | Anything |
| Mistakes | Punished – classification | Allowed, appreciate being worked with | Learning experiences |

.

| Qualifications | Officially recognized | Not officially recognized | None |
|---|---|---|---|
| Continuous pathway | Yes | Sometimes | No |

*Source: ISCED (2011); Novosadova et al. 2013*

The tables also show that formal and non-formal education are planned, while informal is not. In the informal system an individual can purposefully set out to learn something that sparks interest through the plethora of learning channels available as listed earlier (UNESCO, 2011). However, there is no pre-planned course of study with clear learning outcomes to adhere to and be achieved. It can therefore be said that informal education is obtained mostly on an individual basis and at whatever times and places and scope the individual desires (Novosodova et al, 2013; UNESCO, 2006). In a study comparing two models of training curates of the Church of England, Gerhardt (2015) observed that the method involving a one-to-one training relationship between curate and trainee in a more or less informal or nonformal way creates significant difficulties with regards to stability, parity and consistency. He recommends the enhancement of clerical professionalism through a more complex training placement process involving mechanisms such as coaching and peer learning. The implication here is that one of the inadequacies of nonformal and informal education might be their inability to provide an environment structured enough to ensure efficient and optimal learning (Quinn, 2019).

The learner is definitely aware of the learning in formal education, while he/she is not so in non-formal and informal educations as shown in the tables. Learning experience in formal and non-formal systems is also often monitored for progress and subjected to quality control (Grajcevci
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& Shala, 2016). However, whereas the formal system mostly uses formal learning methods such as frontal presentations in which the teacher acts as an expert who dispenses knowledge to students who are largely if not exclusively knowledge recipients and have limited or minor influence on the teaching process, in the non-formal system the program is more often based on participants' needs, is more flexible and adjustable to feedback, is more participative and likely to be based on experiential learning and reflection, is not rigidly confined to time frames since time is defined by the learner's pace, and the role of the educator is one in which he/she is a facilitator or guide in the discovery of knowledge (Marin & Espinoza, 2021; Tarasova et al, 2020).

Non-formal education also includes conversations of all kinds, social gatherings and networking, since through information exchange, knowledge and the shaping of an individual's thinking can be provided (Boykov & Goceva, 2019; Denskowska et al, 2020). Informal education is also a lifelong process in which it is possible for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values from the educative resources and influences in the environment in which they find themselves and from their daily experiences in their families, neighbourhoods, marketplaces, libraries, mass media, work, play and so on (Alldred & Howard, 2022; Jaldemark, 2020; Novosadova et al, 2013; Rahmatullah, 2021; UNESCO, 2011). Many studies, for example, have confirmed the importance of the participation of parents in on-line learning during Covid-19 outbreak (Brata et al, 2021; Ratih, 2021; Rahmatullah, 2021; Smith, 2021). In short, informal education takes place anywhere (Johnson & Majewska, 2022).

As shown, only the formal education system awards qualifications that are formally recognized. According to ISCED (2011), an education qualification is "the official confirmation,

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usually in the form of a document certifying the successful completion of an education program or a stage of a program". The ISCED also states that the terms *credential*, *certificate*, *degree* and *diploma* are synonymous with *qualification.* Programs such as apprenticeships that take place outside of formal education institutions may be awarded formal recognition if the qualification awarded receives official recognition. Non-formal institutions may award qualifications, but recognition is often limited to the institution that awards them (Olcott, 2013).  The Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l′Europe (AEGEE) reports that it is recognized widely that non-formal education makes a significant contribution to the personal development of young persons and formal education fails to fully exhibit the actual competencies of an individual through by way of diplomas and certificates. Consequently, the various European entities that have interest in interacting with young people have resorted to the development of various tools and instruments supportive of the recognition and the genuine display of the skills and competencies that individuals develop under the auspices of non-formal education (Novosadova et al, 2013).

Table 11 shows that a continuous learning pathway is always a feature only in formal education. A learning pathway may be defined as the particular programs, courses and learning experiences that a learner has to complete in his/her education and based on which a qualification will be granted upon graduation (Elfaki et al, 2014; Glossary of Education Reform, 2013;). In non-formal education the educative experience is usually short and low in intensity relative to that in the formal system. Typically, the medium is workshops, short courses and seminars. For this

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reason, non-formal learning is often undervalued, as it is considered to be not "real" learning (UNESCO, 2006).

### *Recent Trends in the Forms of Education*

Marin & Espinoza (2021) note that the Covid-19 situation along with the normal method of evolution has made the formerly well-defined boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education less well defined. For example, formal education was forced to adopt non-formal pedagogic methods to satisfy some of the online demands of students and non-formal education is now utilizing assessing, recognizing and certifying non-formal and informal learning software (ARCNIL) to obtain certification.

In line with the widespread support for increasing the share of the provision of education pie by other forms of education, the OECD (2022) in a publication that explores megatrends affecting the future of education suggests that a rethink of the relationship between formal and informal learning as well as a reimagining of education content and delivery might be necessary in the face of the major socio-economic, technological and political trends manifesting themselves in our complex and rapidly changing world. The OECD publication envisions the provision of high-quality education that among other things forges communities whose members are cared for and supported by systems for lifelong and life-wide learning and that are robust and foster the kind of adaptability and resilience required for life apart from work. All countries are increasingly resorting to non-formal education programs to bolster the development of young people and non-formal education has become a social issue (Marin & Espinoza, 2023; Simac et al, 2021).

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Non-formal education was formulated in the late 1960s in response to the failings and limitations of formal education in developing as well as developed countries (Massoud, 2014; Sultana et al, 2019). Initially it was perceived as a tool, as well as a second chance opportunity for, empowerment, but as time went on this perception changed (Rogers, 2005). For example, non-formal education is now being used to serve political interests (Winfrey, 2018). Massoud (2014) is concerned that politics and policies have a powerful influence on non-formal education and learning and are often at odds with educators, since the learning process might not be the prime objective for the politicians and policy makers.

There is still much support, though, for the notion that non-formal education is a powerful educational force in the post-modern world (Brennan, 1997; Romi & Schrida, 2009). According to Kicherova & Efinova (2020), non-formal education is becoming the quickest and most mobile approach in the solution to the problem of persons in the current knowledge-based economy remaining competitive by fostering the development of their competencies and experience. These authors conducted a study in which they analysed the educational attitudes and motivations towards the acquisition of non-formal education among youths, adults and older persons in the Tyumen region of Russia. They found that based on intensity of educational practices involving non-formal education, across the three generations are three types of actors: the very active whom they label the "eternal student", the moderately active whom the label the "situational student", and the more passive ones whom they label the "indifferent student". These authors also found that motivational and demotivational factors to the acquisition of non-formal education include the operational updating of relevant competencies, the nurturing of personal and professional skills

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for particular professional positions and the general reduction of the qualification gap. They conclude that non-formal education significantly influences the dynamics of professionalization and the nature of social and labour transfers. Marin & Espinoza (2021, p. 3) also conclude that

> The information presented so far leads to believe that formal education must be complemented with non-formal education, to seek not only knowledge but the development of real life "in situ" skills. Since non-formal education is based on "learn by doing" it develops real-life skills by allowing participants to experience their learning, this is where active learning becomes an important factor for knowledge to take place.

In the current era where young people are deficient in motor, emotional, and social skills, and exhibiting more aggression, anxiety, dependency and less creativity, Marin & Espinoza (2021) underscore the need for young people to be submerged in extracurricular activities that will not only equip them with life skills, but will also enhance awareness of their learning process which can then be transferred to learning in a formal educational environment.

Grajcevci & Shala (2016) note that it would be a mistake for non-formal learning to lose its open character and become more imitative of the formal system. They are supported by significant numbers of young people who have indicated when consulted that non-formal learning is often perceived to be a more positive, efficient and attractive than formal learning. Nevertheless, while many see non-formal education as the ideal form of education and even superior to formal education, others do not. These people are only willing to concede that it is a "necessary evil" to be tolerated in extenuating circumstances until formal education can be restored (Rogers, 2005).

## Tensions With the Forms of Education

The literature is replete with areas of contention related to formal, non-formal and informal education. For example, is *formal, non-formal* and *informal education* synonymous with

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*formal, non-formal and informal learning*? Recent semantic shifts were noted earlier in this review (Manger & Broek, 2020). According to Mok (2011), the term non-formal education is preferable simply on the basis that it is well established in the literature. According to Fennes & Otten (2008), the construct *education* aligns with *learning,* a concept reflective of a change in terminology that has transpired with time in the literature on research and policy. These authors contend that *learning* relates to activities as well as processes that take place individually as well as in groups, whereas *education* is more closely aligned with systems and outcomes.

Manolescu et al (2018) argue that since the final objective is the acquisition of knowledge resulting in behavioural change, the three education forms may be considered to be synonymous with learning forms. One can conclude, then, that the elements of formal, non-formal and informal education are the systems that produce, and the outcomes of, formal, non-formal and informal learning. Fennes & Otto (2008) note that when all is said and done the research suggests that there is a continuum between the three forms of education and learning with no clear distinction, mutual exclusion or clear boundaries between them. They conclude that the resulting difficulty of arriving at any single clear definition for each is credible reason to question the desirability or even the possibility of having commonly agreed definitions.

Thus, the very concepts themselves are sometimes complicated to use in the discourse on education and learning (Norqvist & Leffler, 2016). The term *non-formal education* is generally avoided in the USA according to Siurela et al (2016) on the grounds that it is widely understood that the word *education* is owned by schools almost exclusively. Massoud (2014) takes issue with the spelling, arguing that while a hyphen is used extensively in the literature in the term *non-*

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*formal*, since the prefix *non-* means *absence of, or the reverse of the customary positive characteristics of the entity in question*, and since the concept is not the opposite of formal education and indeed overlaps it in many instances, the more appropriate spelling should be *nonformal* and this spelling is being used more and more in current literature.

Yet another contention is that formal education's importance may be overrated in several economies, while non-formal education may be underrated (Gonzalez & Bonal, 2021). In a study in Turkey on empowering women through non-formal education programs, for example, Ortokayla (2017) observes that generally, while formal education tends to be non-transformational, discourage critical thinking and perpetuate the status-quo, non-formal education does the opposite for women in each of these respects. Jules (2008) has long called for augmentation of formal with other forms of education in the small states of the Caribbean if they are to adequately cope with the peril and potential of globalization, and in Europe it has been posited that one way of increasing the quality of education offered by educational institutions there is for them to consider making education less formal (Bogovac & Dujie, 2017; Grajcevci & Shala, 2016; Williamson, 2017). The future of effective education, it is believed, rests on the ability to establish a transition from formal education to non-formal and even informal education (Jaldemark, 2020).

### *Non-formal Education and Learning and Youth Organizations*

There is much evidence showing that youth organizations provide great scope for non-formal education and learning for young people. Quite often this is achieved through group learning and interactive, participatory and experiential methodologies (Souto-Otero et al, 2013). The advantage that non-formal learning holds in youth organizations is that the learning activities

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are voluntary, often self-organized, flexible and allow for non-intimidatory mistakes to be made. Hence, this kind of learning is more closely linked to young people's interests and aspirations and accommodates the integration of disadvantaged youths (Novosadova et al, 2013; Ortaköylü, 2017). Norqvist & Leffler (2017) add that international work experiences which often involve travelling to another country, learning a new language as well as learning through experiences are also forms of learning highly valued among the youth.

Youth organizations can also provide opportunities for youths to expand on, or develop new skills, values and competencies apart from the ones they developed within the framework of the formal education system. These often include the so-called "soft skills" which are a wide range of competencies such as conflict management, interpersonal skills, team work, intercultural awareness, organizational skills, leadership skills, planning and problem-solving skills, building self-confidence, discipline and responsibility (Grajcevi & Shala, 2016). These authors and others also note that skills acquired by young people through involvement with youth organizations are not only assets related to employability but are also valuable for the development of one's capacity and motivation as a human being. For example, Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) examined the role of summer camps - a feature of many youth organizations – in developing academic and workplace readiness and found that they can be an important setting for young people to develop valuable competencies useful for academic and workplace success. Similarly, Duerden et al (2014) studied how employment at camps influences the development of the employability skills of emerging adults and found the same impact on those who work as staff.

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Novosadova et al (2013) provide the following summary of characteristics of non-formal education as practiced by several youth organizations and youth movements: non-compulsory and unpaid, easily attainable and reachable by all preferably, having organized procedures accompanied by clear educational aims and objectives, pedagogic approaches that are centred on the learner and involves his/her participation, and grounded upon experiences and interactions that proceed from the learning needs of individuals.

### Non-formal Education and Learning and Faith-based Youth Organizations

According to McFeeters et al, (2021) the purpose of Christian faith-based youthwork is sometimes unclear. This triggers significant tensions between youth work that focuses on evangelism and youth work that focuses on social action (Clayton & Stanton, 2008). It also sparks debate about whether informal education is even compatible with faith-based youth work (Thompson & Ballantyne, 2017). McFeeters et al (2021) conducted a review of research studies on faith-based youth work in North America and Europe which provides useful insights on informal education and learning within faith-based youth organizations in at least those parts of the world. These studies found that an informal educative approach is used in faith-based youth work, comprising of experiential learning, relationship building, conversation and dialogue as approaches. Another key feature is that in many faith-based youth organizations young people are encouraged to take responsibility for organizing activities instead of simply being participants in them. Thus, there appears to be a sufficiently strong basis to conclude that youth work involves not just evangelism but social action as well which is compatible with informal and even non-formal education.

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**The Nature of Teaching and Learning**

Since this study explores teaching and learning in the context of youth organizations it is important to examine also the corpus on teaching and learning in order to facilitate the contextualization of the study's findings in this area. The consensus in literature is that one's perspectives or conceptualizations about the nature of teaching and learning are very likely influenced by one's *epistemology* or beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Bates, 2019). Differences on this concept can be traced back to the epistemological contentions between the Platonian and the Aristotelian schools of thought in ancient Greece. The former contended that knowledge is a natural component of the mind and is gained by reflecting on the contents of the mind. The latter countered that knowledge is discovered from the sensory experiences the mind receives from the environment (Austin et al, 2001; Pritchard, 2017).

Centuries later, grounded on Plato's ideas, the Descartian school of thought, pioneered by Renee Descartes (1596-1650), proposed that the mind is free, unique to humans and able to grapple with innate ideas which constitute thinking and development of knowledge. The essence of the Descartian argument was *rationalism*: knowledge is derived from reasonings of the mind and not from experience (Markei &. Folescu, 2004; Longworth, 2009).

On the other hand, the philosophical school of *empiricism*, pioneered by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and developed from the ideas of Aristotle, argued that rather than innate ideas, the source of knowledge is sensory impressions (Markie & Folescu, 2004; Longworth, 2009). Other pioneers of empiricism included John Locke (1632-1704) who contended that humans are born with a mind that is like a blank slate - a tabula rasa - and knowledge is "written" on it with the pen

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of experience. Other early empiricists such as George Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776) expanded on the earlier pioneers' ideas and added that while knowledge is gained from sensory experience, we can never be sure about what we know, since our mind is really a string of ideas, feelings, memories, imaginations and associations that we have of the real world and as such, are based on subjective experience (Olson, 2015).

The German philosopher, Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) attempted to bridge the gap between rationalism and empiricism by proposing that there are indeed some categories of thought that are innate, and, coupled with sensory experience, result in conscious experience. In other words, knowledge is derived from both innate reasoning and what we experience through our senses. Thus, Kant twinned rationalism and empiricism. However, the Englishman John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) added a twist to the latter by arguing that not all ideas reflect sensory stimulation. Rather, some ideas are derived from the combination of ideas to form new ideas that have no basis in sensory perception (McGray, 2011; Olson, 2015).

It is also believed that religious beliefs also influence significantly the way we perceive and interpret information and may result in an impasse with science (Durr & Chalamet, 2022; Gerhardt, 2015). The targeted youth organizations in this study being Christocentric, this tension may be evident among them with regards to their provision of secular education. What is the predominant theological epistemology in the targeted youth organizations and how does it influence what they teach and the education they provide? Gerhardt (2015) proposes that a fruitful way of treating with such tensions is rather than being confrontational, a useful and healthy attitude towards religious and secular tensions is mutual respect and compromise and concession towards inter-existence,

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rather than theology adopting the customary adjudicating role. Durr & Chalamet (2022) is in agreement with Gerhardt (2015), arguing that reasoning in theology and in science is different in mode and on epistemic level, and hence should not be seen as competing. One of the tasks of this study is to explore the capacity of the targeted youth organizations in offering secular education as reflected in the formal curriculum of Antigua and Barbuda in the face of this tension.

### *Learning Theories*

The true nature of knowledge and its acquisition (that is, learning) have long been contentious issues. As Olson & Ransay (2020, p. 1) note, "learning is one of the most important topics in contemporary psychology, yet it is an extremely difficult concept to define". Before an examination of attempts at a good definition of learning, a brief review of the various theories of learning found in the literature is presented as a foundation. On the necessity of theory, Stewart (2021) notes that it helps to provide a framework and structure upon which thinking can be organized. Also, theory provides a way of seeing the world and can assist in the location of problems and the identification of solutions (Aliakbari et al, 2015; Seaman et al, 2017). With regards to the nature, process and purpose of learning, Muhajrah (2020) states that "learning theory is an attempt to describe how humans learn, thus helping us all understand the complexities inherent [in the] process of learning' (p. 1). Kivunja (2014) uses the term *learning paradigm* instead of *learning theory,* defining it as a conceptualization of reality or a world view that is representative of a mode of thinking or cognitive comprehension of the various relationships that are part of the process and undertakings of learning.

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Learning theories or paradigms are therefore useful for understanding about learning and a plethora of them can be identified in the literature. Table 12 shows 15 of the most popular ones along with their main proponent as well as examples of related concepts. In general, each can be placed under one of three domains, namely, *behaviourism*, *cognitivism* and *constructivism*. In brief, behaviourism posits that we learn through conditioning, a process of positive or negative reinforcement based on interactions with our environment; cognitivism, that the process involves our minds taking in, storing, processing and then accessing processed information; and constructivism, that learning is the construction of knowledge based on reflection upon experiences and incorporation of new information into pre-existing knowledge (Olson & Ramirez, 2020). Considered to be among the most widely used learning theories, these in addition to the following sub-categories considered to be among the most widely used, are reviewed in greater detail in this study: *social learning, humanistic learning* and *connectivism*. The main characteristics of each are outlined as well as implications for related areas of exploration in this study.

**Table 12**
*Learning Theories and Related Concepts*

| Theory | Proponent | Related Concepts |
|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Development | Jean Piaget | Stages of cognitive development |
| Social Learning | Lev Vygotsky | Scaffolding |
| Domains of Learning | Benjamin Bloom | Bloom's Taxonomy |
| Conditions of Learning | Robert Gagne | 9 levels of learning |
| Modes of Representation | Jerome Bruner | Spiral curriculum |
| Human Needs | Abraham Maslow | Hierarchy of needs |
| Multiple Intelligences | Howard Gardner | 7 intelligences |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Psychological Development | Eric Erikson | 8 stages of psychosocial development |
| Experiential Learning | David Kolb | Experiential learning cycle |
| The Peter Principle | Laurence Peter | Competence and incompetence |
| Sensory Theory | Dugan Laird | Visual prompts |
| Behaviourism | B. F. Skinner | Operant conditioning |
| Humanist Theory | Carl Rogers | Humanism |
| Assertive Discipline | Lee Canter | Positive behaviour management |
| Classroom Management Theory | Rudolph Dreikur | Goals of misbehaviour |

Source: Education Corner https://www.educationcorner.com/learning-theories-in-education/

**Behaviourism**

Behaviourism arose from the work of psychologists such as I. P. Pavlov (1849-1936), J. B. Watson (1878-1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990).  Pavlov pioneered the notion of learning by classical conditioning, a situation in which a neutral stimulus is used to elicit a particular behaviour by pairing the stimulus with that behaviour (Brau et al, 2020). For example, a dog that normally salivates at the sight of food, salivates upon hearing a bell only, after the bell is initially repeatedly sounded with the presentation of the food. Based on the same principle, Watson proposed that human behaviour is essentially the result of responses to specific stimuli. Hence learning is demonstrated by overt behaviour rather than covert cognitive processes. Skinner took these ideas still further and developed the idea of learning by operant conditioning in which a desired behaviour is encouraged and entrenched, or discouraged and eliminated, by offering rewards which serve as positive reinforcements, or by applying punishments which serve as negative reinforcements, respectively, whenever that behaviour is exhibited (Basri et al, 2020; Zhew & Browne, 2017). Thus, behaviourists subscribe to Aristotelian epistemology, perceiving knowledge to be outside of the learner and to be discoverable by him/her.

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By the same reasoning, behaviourism is linked also to *objectivism,* the idea that the mind does not create reality, but rather is a means of discovering reality (Siemens, 2017). In addition to the role of incentives and reward structures, behaviour management strategies, rote learning, the role of repetition and feedback, the importance of having clear learning objectives and contingency contracts are all associated with behaviourist teaching-learning strategies (Kay & Kibble, 2016; Bates 2019). Behaviourism remains the preferred approach in many teaching learning situations today (Bates, 2019; Hoy et al, 2013). For example, from the researcher's experience it is quite common in youth organizations where rote memorization is used for teaching such things as the motto, pledge and laws of the organizations and lectures and sermons are also common modes of instruction.

Behaviourism is criticized as being an oversimplification of the complexity of human behaviour and as simply programming learners rather than fostering creativity and discovery - important 21st century skills. Behaviourism is also considered to be teacher centred (Stewart, 2021). Kevunja (2014) notes that effective teaching in the 21st century requires a paradigm shift to learning theories/paradigms that emphasize higher levels of cognitive engagement such as critical thinking, problem solving, team working and collaborating which are the ones that are of greatest demand in the 21st century workplace. Recognizing that behaviour or learning is not simply a response to stimuli, behaviourists such as Edward Tolman have proposed that behaviour or learning is what he describes as cognitive coping with a pattern of stimuli in pursuit of a goal. That is, we learn by mentally processing signs or cues we get from our environment and developing mental or cognitive maps that lead us to something (Tolman, 2023). For Tolman, therefore, rather

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than being merely responses to stimuli, learning is always goal-directed and purposeful and involves cognition. Thus, Tolman's purposive behaviourism theory is neo-behaviourism and bridges the gap between behaviourism and cognitivism (Ziafar & Namazian, 2019).

**Cognitivism**

Whereas for the behaviourist learning is essentially conditioning, for the cognitivist, while allowing for some amount of conditioning (Stewart, 2021), learning has to do with internal mental processing (Gornham, 2019). Among the earliest pioneers of this learning theory were German psychologists such as Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), Wolfgang Kohler (1887-1967) and Kurt Koffka, (1886-1941). They posited that learning happens when the human mind, based on factual observations, hypotheses and suppositions about causal links, establishes a *gestalt* or big picture from the individual details and that big picture or whole is greater than the sum of its constituent parts (Sundaravalli, n.d; Wageman, 2015). A *gestalt* is influenced by other *gestalten* that have already formed (Olson, 2015; Sinitskaya, 2019).  Building on these ideas, Albert Bandura (1925-2021), posited ***social cognitivism***, a theory that proposes that learning can also result from vicariously observing a behaviour and the positive or negative consequences connected to it, hence the importance of modelling in the learning process (Kay & Kibble, 2015).

Jean Piaget (1896-1980), while agreeing that learning involves mental processing, proposed that it happens in a somewhat different way. Instead of developing *gestalten* from observations, Piaget proposed that the human brain develops flexible frameworks or *schemata* into which learning material one is exposed to, undergoes *assimilation*. That is, they are familiar enough to fit in with existing schemata. The number of schemata available at any given time in a brain

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comprises one's *cognitive structure* and the nature of one's cognitive structure determines one's capacity to learn (Zhou & Brown, 2015). But no learning will take place if new material is totally familiar and thus completely assimilated. For learning to take place the material must be partially familiar, and this part assimilated, and partially unfamiliar, this part requiring a slight modification of the cognitive structure. Piaget called such modification *accommodation*. (Stewart, 2021; Zhou & Brown, 2015). Thus, cognitive development proceeds with assimilation and accommodation according to Piaget.

Although cognitive development is continuous, Piaget identified four distinct stages in the process, though not strictly bounded by age: *sensorimotor* (birth – 2 years) in which gaining motor control and the nature of physical objects dominate learning; *preoperations* (2 – 7 years) in which verbal skills is the dominant learning; *concrete operations* (7- 11 years) when ways of dealing with abstract concepts and relationships begin to develop; and *formal operations* (adolescence – adulthood) when learning is dominated by logical and systematic reasoning (Barrouillet, 2015; Kose et al, 2017).

Cognitive learning skills are also ranked in a hierarchy of increasing demand by Bloom et al (1956) and modified by Anderson & Krathwal (2000). These skills range from remembering at the lowest level to understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating at the highest level. Bloom also posited three domains of learning; the *cognitive* as just explained, the *affective*, a domain that involves feelings and emotions and the division of objectives into five hierarchical subcategories ranging from *receiving* at the bottom through *responding*, *valuing*, *organization* and

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up to *characterization* at the top. The third domain, *psychomotor,* has to with how an individual uses his/her body or senses to interact with the world around them.

Siemens (2017) is of the view that how well an individual is able to use these skills to adapt to, and shape, the environment around him/her determines his/her level of intelligence. Research on individual differences in cognitive development has given rise to the theory of multiple intelligences which we all have in varying degrees, according to Gardner (1983).  He identified seven "intelligences": *linguistic*, the ability to learn and use language, *mathematical*, the ability to think logically and do mathematics, *musical* , the ability to appreciate, compose and perform music, *bodily-kinaesthetic*, the ability to use coordinated body movements in the solution of problems,  *spatial*, the ability to identify and use patterns, *interpersonal*, the ability to understand and get along with people, and *intrapersonal* intelligence which is the capacity of an individual to understand what they are feeling, fearing or being driven by.

One of the criticisms of cognitivism is that it leaves no room for feelings (McCarthy, 2016). Others perceive student-centred learning as prone to misdirection since it is unguided, and incompatible with the systematic nature of scientific enquiry (Stewart, 2021). However, learning from a cognitivist perspective implies developing skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, creating and the like, according to Hoy et al (2013). These are skills that are in high demand in many if not most or all workplaces today, as stated earlier, and will be expanded upon later on in this chapter. In this regard it can be argued that cognitivism has much to offer in the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills. A final criticism is that cognitivism focuses more on perception and memory than it does on the actual process of learning (Muhajvah, 2020).

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**Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory is one of the most widely used of all learning theories in the workplace and in human resource development in general (Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022; Navabi, 2012). Developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960s, social learning theory posits that people learn by observing and imitating or not imitating what they see others do or model. Thus, learning may or may not result in a change of behaviour (Bandura, 1971). Bandura changed the name to *social cognitive theory* in the 1980s when he incorporated into the theory the idea that there is some amount of cognitive processing in the process of responding to the influence of modelling. Bandura also outlines four conditions essential to the modelling process: *attention*, meaning that the learning pays attention to the model; *retention*, meaning that the learner remembers the behaviour that was observed; *reproduction*, meaning that the learner replicates the behaviour observed; and *motivation*, meaning that the learner has a desire to replicate the observed behaviour under the influence of reward, reinforcement or punishment (Nabavi, 2012). One criticism is that the theory places too much emphasis on observation. It undervalues the role of other forms of learning such as exploration, discovery and operant conditioning (Kattari, 2015).

**Humanistic Learning Theory**

Psychologists such as Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, and educators such as Malcolm Knowles have advocated what has come to be called humanist learning theory, since the focus is on the learner's self-development. Based on the assumption that a human being controls his/her own destiny, is inherently good, desires to improve his/her world for the benefit of his/herself and others and possesses unlimited potential for growth and development, the theory posits that a

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person's pathway, goals and objectives in life are decided by him/herself and learning is the process of achieving these (Muhajrah, 2020).

Maslow proposed that each of us as human beings has a strong desire to realize our full potential, reach the pinnacle of our growth potential called the *level of self-actualization*, defined as the process of reaching full potential through creativity, autonomy, spontaneity and a clear comprehension of one's wishes and desires (Tripathi, 2018). However, a hierarchy of lower-order needs must be satisfied before self-actualization can be reached, argues Maslow. These are physiological, safety, belongingness, love and self-esteem. In the teaching-learning context this theory suggests that learners need a supportive environment in which to learn. These should be provided by the teacher. Once the lower-order needs are met, learners will be intrinsically motivated to strive towards their full potential and learn for learning's sake (Stewart, 2021). One of the criticisms of this theory is that it focuses too much on the "self" and hence an individualistic perspective of life (Louca et al, 2021). That we as humans have a rigid order of needs like that proposed by Maslow is also questioned (King-Hill, 2015). Notwithstanding, the notion of personal development seem to fit well with the development of an accomplished worker and individual in the 21st century knowledge economy.

Self-actualization is one of the key aspects of humanistic learning theory and another is *experiential learning*. Most closely associated with the American educational theorist David Allen Kolb (1939 -), according to McCarthy (2015, p.92) it is intended to be "…a holistic adaptive process on learning that merges experience, perception, cognition and behaviour". In other words, experiential learning combines into one theory principles of other learning theories such as

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behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism. It proposes that life experiences are a central and necessary part of the learning process (Morris, 2020). In the learning process, knowledge is created from the combination of grasping experiences and transforming experiences. Each kind of experience has two polar opposite dimensions: *concrete* and *abstract conceptualization* as grasping experiences and *reflective observation* and *active experimentation* as transforming experiences.

There are thus four different kinds of abilities necessary for effective learning according to Experiential learning theory and it further proposes that these constitute a 4-stage cyclical process, each of which a learner must go through for effective learning to take place. In other words, the leaner must go through experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting with regards to new experiences fully and openly and without bias. Learning results from the resolution of creative tensions among these four modes of learning (Morris, 2020; McCarthy, 2015). These ideas have been criticized, however, on various bases including that the theory lacks sound theoretical and empirical underpinning, that the components of the cycle do not connect with each other organically or necessarily and that it does not accurately explain experiential learning (Morris, 2020). Humanistic learning theory has also been criticized for the vagueness of its concepts.

**Connectivism**

George Siemens in 2004 introduced *connectivism* to describe learning in our digital age where how we communicate and learn have been reorganized by technology (Corbett & Spinello, 2020). Based on eight principles of learning shown in Table 13, there are four key ones*: connectedness, openness, diversity and autonomy* (Tschofen & Mackness, 2012).

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**Table 13**

*Siemen's Eight Principles of the Connectivism Learning Theory*

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1. In the variety of opinions reposes the source of learning and knowledge

2. Connecting specialized intersecting sources of information constitutes the learning process

3. The repository of learning may be resident in appliances that are not human

4.  The capability of knowing more is more critical than what one knows currently

5. Developing and sustaining connections is required to accommodate continual learning

6. The capability of identifying connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a fundamental
   competency

7. The intent of all learning endeavours should be to be current (that is, to have accurate, up-to-
   date knowledge).

8. Making decision is a specific learning process. Selecting what to learn and determining the
   relevance and meaning  of  newly acquired information is perceived via shifting reality lenses.
   The implications of this attitude include the realization that an answer that is correct
   currently may be incorrect in future as a result of changes in the circumstances that are
   influencing the decision
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Source: Utecht & Keller (2019, p. 108)

Siemens (2017) argues that while behaviourism, constructivism and cognitivism theories

have been the three broad learning theories most frequently utilized in instructional environments

by educators over the past years, these learning theories face the significant deficiency of having

been developed prior to the digital age, and as such, these theories fail to capture important

elements of the current digital environment. According to him one example of these elements is

that learning is increasingly being stored and manipulated by technology instead of our brains and

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the life of knowledge has shortened considerably from decades to years, compared with the last century.

Another of the new elements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning landscape is that the explosion of information provided by the digital age and the alacrity with which information needs to be assessed by individuals to make crucial decisions in life often exceeds individual capacities, Goldie (2016) notes. In such situations being able to synthesize and recognize connections and patterns, making meaning, forming connections between specialized communities and recognizing and adjusting to pattern shifts are important skills to have. Downes (2019) concludes therefore that connectivism may be characterized as a network theory of knowledge and learning using modern technology.

These changes have influenced learning and education in several different ways, according to Siemens. For example, many learners will pursue multiple pathways and sometimes even unrelated career paths during their work life. Formal education is now significantly supplemented and often exceeded by informal learning and education is now a lifelong and all-day long process. Also, our brains are being 'rewired' and altered by technology, which now performs many of the cognitive and other learning processes we used to perform. Finally, in relation to knowledge and information it is now more important to know *where* to source, as opposed to *what* to source or *how* to source.

Like all other theories, connectivism has its own share of criticisms. Some even claim that it is not a theory at all (Goldie, 2016). Others criticize it for its inadequacy in explaining concept formation as well as the independent creation and construction of conceptual knowledge, and for

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its assumption that every learner can autonomously direct their own learning and master critical literacies (Kop & Hill, 2008; Downes, 2019). However, it has been adopted by many institutions and is credited for spawning the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) program, which itself has been credited for revolutionizing the educational landscape within a few years after its founding in 2008 (Ahmad et al, 2022).

One proponent of connectivism, Kivunja (2014), sums up the usefulness of connectivism for the development of 21st century skills by noting that what was considered to be active learning in constructivism, the learning paradigm that dominated the pedagogical and educational landscape in the recent past, will remain a quite credible strategy for learning. However, the realities of the current age demand that learning has to be directed more and more in the direction of the development of skills related to innovation, proficiency in the utilization of information, communication and technology (ICT) tools and equipment demanded in trades and professional spheres of business, career development and being generally successful in life.

By directing learning in this direction learners may be enabled to acquire higher levels of cognitive skills such as the ability to think critically and independently, and the ability to solve real-world problems. Kivunja (2014) underscores the notion that proficiency in skills associated with modern technology including ICT is one of the more vital and foundational pillars of connectivism, arguing that such skills equip graduates with the ability to leverage the innumerable possibilities and potentialities represented by these tools to assist them in tackling and surmounting real-world problems and challenges and becoming successful and productive citizens of the 21st century digital economy that is currently prevailing.

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**Other Learning Theories**

Other significant contributions to learning theories came from psychologists and thinkers such as Robert Gagne (1985), who suggested five categories of learning, each requiring its own particular set of internal and external conditions to be effective. The five are *verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, motor skills,* and *attitudes*. If motor skills are to be learned thoroughly, for example, there must be a desire to learn and opportunities for practice (Jaiswal, 2019). Certain prerequisites can also facilitate learning according to Gagne. He calls these *levels of learning* and they involve the learner paying attention, being aware of the learning objective, recalling related prior learning, interacting with the learning content, being provided with guidance, practicing, receiving feedback and having performance assessed.

*Defining Learning*

What then is a good definition of learning? Based on the voluminous body of literature available on the subject as well as the plethora of ideas about its nature and operation, perhaps it can be readily agreed that dictionary definitions are relatively simple. For example, Oxford defines learning as the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught. Social media definitions such as Wikipedia also define learning as acquisition of knowledge and skills and add behaviours, values, attitudes and preferences to the list of things acquired. These are tidy definitions reflecting what the average person, and perhaps some educators, believe learning is.

The literature as reviewed in this discourse shows that the ideas about learning are quite complex and there is such a multiplicity of perspectives, theories and definitions of learning, that there seems to be no generally agreed definition. Instead, there is a plethora of definitions based

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on different perspectives and conceptualizations of learning (Qvortrop et al, 2016; Olson, 2015; Hoy et al, 2013). Similarly, the most effective approach to learning may also depend on a plethora of factors (Mungan, 2022). As Hoy et al (2013, p.9) put it, "Different theories of learning offer more or less useful explanations depending on what is to be explained". Also, each of these theories has much to offer, but each also has advantages and disadvantages associated with them (Illeris, 2018(a), Illeris; 2018).

Olson & Hergenhahn (2012) point out five characteristics of learning. The first of these is that there is change in behaviour when learning take s place and this change may be overt or covert. Secondly, the change in behaviour is relatively permanent and becomes a part of the learner's repertoire. Thirdly, the change may not be immediately demonstrated. It may lie within the capacity and ability of the learner and be demonstrated subsequent to the actual time of learning. The fourth characteristic is that the change results from experience or practice over a period of time. The fifth and final one is that the change must be reinforced by practice to ensure permanency.

Olson & Hergenhahn (2012) caution, however, that each one of the foregoing characteristics of learning they identify may be legitimately questioned. For example, there is no universal agreement among academicians that learning results in a *change of behaviour*. For some, learning, instead is what *leads to* a change of behaviour. Thus Olson & Hergenhahn (2012) suggest that a good definition of learning may be a situation in which there is a relatively enduring change in behaviour or in behavioural potentiality that is the result of experience and is not attributable to interim conditions of the body such as those resulting from illness, fatigue, or the use of drugs.

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We conclude this section of the study with the attempt by Utecht and Keller (2019 to define and describe learning and knowledge in the current Industry 4.0 and knowledge economy environment.

> Learning is defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge through a learner's actions and personal experiences. For learning to truly occur, learners must be active in constructing knowledge for themselves…Knowledge is not a set of facts, but rather the capacity to learn, to unlearn, and to relearn information rapidly and be able to apply that new knowledge in an ever-changing information landscape (p. 108).

## 21st Century Workplace Skill Requirements

Having reviewed the literature on learning and learning theories, attention in this study now turns to a review of the skills and competencies that employers generally and in the Caribbean and Antigua and Barbuda in particular are increasingly looking for in their employees as the Fourth Industry Revolution become the increasing reality of the time in which we live. Since this study seeks to explore the role and potential of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in assisting the formal education system in equipping young people with these skills, it is important to seek to establish current knowledge of what these skills are and explore if and how youth organizations have been contributing to their development in young people. In doing so, as explained earlier for each of the other constructs in the topic, how this study has contributed or can contribute to the corpus of knowledge on this subject can be better ascertained.

Many authorities are of the opinion that the 21st century calls for workers who have more than just academic qualifications and basic and occupation-specific skills (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Germaine et al, 2017; Petrie, 2021; Tindowen et al, 2017). As Suarta et al (2017, p. 341) note, in the job market "graduates' attributes are more important than the graduate degree subjects". Of

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increasingly greater importance are *employability skills,* defined variously as skills required not only to gain employment and experience occupational success that redounds to the benefit of oneself, the community and the economy (Petrie et al, 2021), but redounds also to the development of a knowledge base, level of expertise and mindset conducive to the fostering of success within the 21$^{st}$ century workplace and business environments as well (Martin, 2018).

*Employability*, a fairly recent concept, is generally considered to be non-static and developable throughout life (Nisha & Rajasekaran, 2018; Suarta et al, 2017). Employability skills for many are synonymous with 21$^{st}$ century workplace requirements and are therefore called 21$^{st}$ century skills (Suarta, 2017). Various other terminologies are often used, though significant differences across professional, practical and even personal attributes associated with individual ones exist (Joynes et al, 2019). Other terminologies use to label these skills include *soft skills, transferable skills, core skills, generic skills, non-technical skills, key skills, foundational skills, essential skills, life skills, critical skills* (Bloom & Hobbs, 2008; Petrie et al, 2021).

The term *life skills*, for example, is used most often to refer to abilities that enable a human being to deal decisively with the demands and difficulties of life (Davis, 2021; Prajapati et al, 2017), while the more often used term *21$^{st}$ century skills* is used most often to refer to psychosocial and other skills (e.g. digital skills, literacy and numeracy skills) that are considered to be crucial for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace and more related to the current economic and social developments of the present century in contrast to the past century (Van Laar et al, 2017). It is noted also by Joynes et al (2019) that the term *soft skills* is used in contexts such as the developmental needs of emerging populations of Low- and Middle-Income countries, while 21$^{st}$ century skills is more

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often used in the more significantly inter-connected, very well resourced and universally diverse knowledge-based economies of the world. Pinieda (2011), however, prefers the term 21$^{st}$ century *competency* instead of 21$^{st}$ century *skill*. This author defines the term *competency* in this context as a human ability that facilitates learning.

At an annual meeting in 2013, UNESCO's Asia Pacific Education Research Institute Network (ERI – Net) adopted the label *transferable competencies* for these skills and noted that they included attitudes, values and beliefs and other skills and competencies as may be found germane to particular countries. In other words, recognition was given t the fact that some skills may have more relevance in particular countries than in others. Table 14 following lists names that have been used in the literature in connection with the skills in question in chronological order, evidencing that awareness of the importance of these skills have been around for a long while.

**Table 14**
*21$^{st}$ Century Skills Terminologies in Chronological Order*

| Name | Source |
|------|--------|
| Life Skills | WHO (1993) |
| Transversal skills | ISFOL(1998) |
| Generic competencies | Tuning project (2000) |
| Key competencies for a successful life | OECD (2003; 2012) |
| Key competencies for lifelong learning | UE (2006) |
| 21$^{st}$ century skills | Ananiadou & Claro (2009) |
| Future work skills | IFTF (2010) |
| Transferable skills | RPIC - VIP (2011) |
| Transferable competencies | ERI - Net |
| Soft skills for Talent | Manpower Group (2014) |
| Skills for Social Progress | OECD (2015) |

*Source: Qizi (2020)*

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### *Identifying 21st Century Employability Skills*

There is no universal agreement on the identity of employability skills in the literature (Joynes et al, 2019). However, there seems to be a fairly clear consensus across the literature of what they are. One obvious fundamental attribute is that they should be skills that businesses need (Hodge & Lear, 2011; Resource & Guide, 2008). Numerous studies have been done around the world using different strategies to identify them.

The compilations in this study of three studies from the literature may together provide a fairly comprehensive list. The first which is by Jang (2016) is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it targets the identification of  21st century competencies that are critical for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and mathematics) job incumbents, STEM being promoted as the critical disciplines for the success of  developing as well as developed economies in the 21st century (Corlu et al, 2014; Denkowska et al, 2020; McDonald, 2016; Xu & Li, 2020). As Tyler (2020) puts it,

> STEM constitutes a coherent package of subjects that cover the knowledge and skills around the [natural] sciences, applied sciences and the digital world that constitutes the driving force towards a post-industrial globalized future, and the future wealth of nations (Tyler, 2020, p. 1)

Secondly, Jang's study uses data compiled by O*NET, a comprehensive database of workers and occupational characteristics operated by the United States Department of Labor (National Research Council, 2010).

Situational learning theory as proposed by Lave & Wenger (1991) who based their ideas on the Vygotskyan theory of the zone of proximal development, posits that effective education

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involves learning that is embedded within authentic contexts of practice, meaning that learners learn by participating in tasks within social communities that become more and more complex. They also learn by interacting with other learners, interacting with their teachers and interacting with the society and the general cultural environment in which they live and operate (binti Pengiran, 2018; Buldan, 2021).

Banking on ideas borrowed from situational learning theory, Jang (2016) reasoned that skills and competencies are situational, are dependent on learning, and are the results of training in specific skills or individual attributes that are related to the quality of work performance.

The study was facilitated by focusing on two requirement domains. One was labelled *worker requirements* and the other was labelled *occupational requirements.* This was done in order to inform on the capabilities to be developed to enable performance across jobs. Jang defines *worker requirements* as "work-related attributes acquired and/or developed through experience and education" (p. 7) and occupational *requirements* as "a comprehensive set of variables or detailed elements that describe what various occupations require" (p.7).

Of 109 skills, types of knowledge and work activities identified, Table 15 shows 52 that the study considers to be related to the disciplines that are under the STEM umbrella, namely, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

**Table 15**

*Critical Skills, Knowledge and Work Activities for STEM Disciplines*

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| Skills (18) | Knowledge (7) | Wok Activities |
|---|---|---|
| -Critical thinking | -English Language | -Gathering information |
| -Reading comprehension | -Mathematics | -Making decisions/Solving problems |
| -Active listening | -Computers & electronics | -Interacting with computers |
| -Speaking | -Engineering & technology | -Communicating with others |
| -Complex problem solving | -Administration & management | -Updating, using relevant knowledge |
|  |  | -Analyzing data/information |
| -Judgement & decision making | -Customer & personal service | -Thinking creatively |
|  |  | -Identifying objects, actions, events |
| -Writing | -Education & training | -Processing information |
| -Monitoring |  | -Documenting/recording information |
| -Active learning |  | -Organizing, planning, prioritizing |
|  |  | -Inter-personal relationships |
| -Time management |  | -Evaluating information to determine compliance with standards |
| -Coordination |  | -Monitor, processes, materials or surroundings |
| -Systems analysis |  | -Communicating with persons outside the organization |
| -Mathematics |  | -Estimating quantifiable aspects of products, events, information |
|  |  | -Judging quantities |
| -Social perceptiveness |  | -Training and teaching others |
|  |  | -Scheduling work and activities |
|  |  | -Developing objectives and strategies |
| -Systems evaluation |  | -Coordinating the work and activities of others |
| -Instructing |  |  |
| -Science |  | -Provide consultation & advice |
| -Learning strategies |  | -Developing and building teams |
|  |  | -Inspecting equipment/structures etc |
|  |  | -Coaching and developing others |
|  |  | -Guiding, directing and motivating subordinates. |

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*(Jang, 2016).*

The second study on the identification of 21st century employability skills is one that was done by ModEs and was undertaken on the continent of Europe. This entity was a project that focused on the consolidation of a common European program on soft skills spanning the various academic curricula and is cited in Qizi (2020). Whereas Jang (2016) focused in his study on *skills,*

*types of knowledge* and *work activities,* the ModEs study focused specifically on the most required soft skills across various academic curricula that enhance graduates' employability in the context of the European Union. The ModEs study uses categories such as *personal, social* and *methodological* skills. Table 16 shows the most required employability skills according to the ModEs study.

**Table 16**
*Most Required Employability Soft Skills According to ModEs*

| Personal | Social | Methodological |
|---|---|---|
| Learning expertise | Communication | Customer/User Orientation |
| Professional morals | Teamwork | Continuous improvement |
| Self-recognition | Contact network | Adaptability to changes |
| Forbearance of stress | Conferencing | Results orientation |
| Dedication | Conflict Management | Analysis Skills |
| Life balance | Leadership | Decision Making |
| Creativity Innovation | Culture Adaptability | Management Skills |
| | | Research and information management skills |

*Source: Qizi (2020)*

The third study selected by this review for the identification of employability skills was conducted by Advance HE, a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom and working with higher education institutions across the world. Their study focused on the identification of *personal qualities, core skills* and *process skills* for student employability. Their suggestions are shown in Table 17.

**Table 17**

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Employability Skills According to Advance HE (Suarta et al, 2017, p. 338)*

| Personal Qualities | Core Skills | Process Skills |
|---|---|---|
| -Malleable self-theory | -Reading effectiveness | -Computer literacy |
| -Self-awareness | -Numeracy | -Commercial awareness |
| -Self-confidence | -Information retrieval | -Political sensitivity |
| -Independence | -Language skills | -Ability to work cross-culturally |
| -Emotional intelligence | -Self-management | -Ethical sensitivity |
| -Adaptability | -Critical analysis | -Prioritizing |
| -Stress tolerance | -Creativity | -Planning |
| -Initiative | -Listening | -Applying subject understanding |
| -Willingness to learn | -Written communication | -Acting morally |
| -Reflectiveness | -Oral presentations | -Coping with complexity |
|  | -Explaining | -Problem solving |
|  | -Global awareness | -Influencing |
|  |  | -Arguing and resolving Conflict |
|  |  | - Cooperation |
|  |  | -Decision-making |
|  |  | -Teamwork |
|  |  | -Collaboration |

*Adapted from Yorke & Knight (2006) "Embedding employability into the curriculum" Cited in Suarta et al (2017).*

Yorke & Knight (2004) caution that all lists exemplified by the three just described will have gaps and overlaps and not all categories will be relevant in all circumstances. In other words, the lists are by no means exhaustive. For example, digital skills and ICT skills are not on any, and these skills are widely considered to be critical in the Industry 4.0 and knowledge economy environment (Leahy & Wilson, 2014). Economists view the development of human capital as the acquisition of a mix of generic skills applicable for all jobs, occupations or industries, as well as job-specific, occupation-specific or industry-specific skills (Cunningham & Mohr, 2019). Along with these skill sets are industry-, occupation - and specific knowledge and experience which are

valuable personal assets for the workplace (Capozza & Divella, 2019). The lists are therefore also deficient in this regard.

Nothing replaces the value of experience and hands-on training in the job market according to Hodge & Lear (2011). However, these authors also note the importance of academic qualifications: a post-secondary education makes entering the workforce easier for some jobs, a college degree in others, for example. Schuele & Madison (2010) add that graduates must also be able to persuade employers that they bring value to their business enterprise. These attributes are also not reflected in the lists.

The occupation-specific skills of vocationally trained students enable them to have a smoother transition to the labor market than students with a general qualification because they are more attractive to employers, according to Foster et al (2016). These authors note, however, that this reverses after age fifty as vocational occupation-specific skills make workers more inflexible than workers with more general qualifications. By this time technological innovations would have made the vocational occupation-specific skills obsolete or inadequate for the changing job content. This is especially noticeable in countries where the vocational system provides highly occupation-specific skills according to Hanushek et al (2017).

However, this is not necessarily the case with vocational workers according to some sources (Foster et al, 2016). Table 18 therefore shows suggestions from a synthesis of studies that could represent a more comprehensive coverage of the sets of skills, competencies and attributes than shown in the three lists.

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**Table 18**

*21ˢᵗ Century Employability Skills Identified from a Synthesis of Studies*

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| Professional Attributes | Core Knowledge Areas | Personal Attributes |
|---|---|---|
| -Communication skills | -Literacy | -Physical well-being and |
| -Collaborative skills | - Numeracy | personal health |
| -Individual learning skills | -STEM-associated fields | -Social and emotional skills |
| -Individual autonomy | of knowledge | -Social citizenship |
| -ICT and digital skills | | -Cultural and creative |
| | | expression |

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*Adapted from Joynes et al (2019).*

Building on the ideas of *connectivism,* outlined earlier in this review, and considered by Siemens (2005) as the learning paradigm that best suits 21ˢᵗ century realities and workplace skill requirements, Kivunja (2014) proposes the following formulation and explanation that supposedly captures the essence of connectivism:

JR21CS = f(TCS + LIS + CLS + DLS)
JR2LICS = Job Readiness with 21ˢᵗ Century Skills
f = is a function of
TCS =  Traditional Core Skills; e.g reading, -riting, -rithmetic or basic literacy and numeracy
LIS =   Learning and Innovations Skills; e.g critical thinking, problem solving and creativity
CLS = Career and Life Skills; e.g flexibility, adaptability, initiative, teamwork and leadership
DLS =  Digital Literacy Skills; e.g technological proficiency, digital fluency, computing, media  and information literacy. (Kivunja, 2014, p. 40).

Taking all of the foregoing conceptualizations of 21ˢᵗ century employability skills into consideration, one of the most comprehensive definitions of employability skills may be one by Suarta et al (2017) who propose that these skills are generic in nature and hence not related to a particular job or industry or position on the organizational hierarchical chart, are also desirable
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qualities of an individual which are displayed together with technical skills in the execution of tasks and duties of the workplace.

***Ranking 21st Century Employability Skills***

Table 19 compares the findings of three surveys among employers cited in Hodge & Lear (2011) and a fourth by Holtzman et al (2011) that were conducted in the USA which identified the top five most desired skills employers want employees to have. The Table shows significant agreement among employers on the matter. For example, all four list communication skills and three list ethical skills, and teamwork skills.

However, Hodge & Lear compared the perspectives of employers and college faculty members in their own survey and found a greater degree of disagreement between the two groups. For example, only teamwork and critical thinking and problem solving were listed among the top six skills by both groups.

**Table 19**

*Comparison of Four Studies on Most Desired Workplace Skills in the USA*.

| Holtzman (2008) | 21st Century Survey (2008) | NACE (2009) | AMA (2010) |
|---|---|---|---|
| -Time management | - Oral communication | - Communications | - Communications |
| -Interpersonal skills | - Teamwork | - Teamwork | - Collaboration/ teamwork |
| -Communication | -Ethics/Social responsibility | - Analytical | - Critical thinking /problem solving |
| -Ethical understanding | -Professionalism | - Technical | -Creativity/inno- vation |
| -Adaptability/flexibility | -Reading comprehension | -Strong work ethic | |

*Source: Hodge & Lear (2011)*

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*21st Century Employability Skills in the Caribbean Context*

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in collaboration with the Finnish non-profit organization called HundrED conducted a study cited in Petrie et al, (2021) to identify 21st century skills relevant to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and categorized the skills they identified as *digital skills* (example, computational thinking), *advanced cognitive skills* (example, critical thinking), *executive function skills* (example, metacognition) and *socio-economic skills* (example, perseverance and empathy). Prada & Rucci (2023) in a paper entitled *Skills for Work in Latin America and the Caribbean* concur. Studies conducted in Jamaica and Belize (western Caribbean region) add *communication* and *teamwork* skills to the list (Anderson & Williams-Myers; Naslund-Hadley et al, 2020).

In their study on the difficulties and their resolutions in higher education in the Eastern Caribbean states Browne & Hong Shen (2017, p. 170) present a similar listing, arguing that "beyond certificates, employers require inter alia*: creative, critical thinkers, competencies in interpreting data; the capacity to generate and communicate knowledge; ICT skills; ability to work in teams on complex tasks;* and *demonstration of appropriate work ethics*".

In the Eastern Caribbean subregion where Antigua and Barbuda is located, Blom & Hobbs (2008) investigated the adequacy of the preparation of youth for the global economy by the education system and found that the top five 21st century skills employers in the Caribbean are looking for in employees are *honesty/integrity*, *work ethic, problem solving, communication,* and *team work* in that order.

A similar ranking of skills could not be found in the literature for Antigua and Barbuda. However, one found for St Kitts and Nevis, an Eastern Caribbean country similar in characteristics

to Antigua and Barbuda ranks the top five employability skills as *attitude to work*, *team spirit*, *cooperation skills*, *adaptability* and *appearance.* In May 2024, employers presented a paper entitled *7 Key Points from Employers for the Implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS)* at a conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Antigua which highlighted the following requirements with respect to the workforce:

> We ask for coherent social and labor policies that encourage the building of trained, skilled, prepared, and motivated workforces in SIDS, by ensuring further government investments in technical & vocational education training (TVET),  teacher training, improving the quality of education curricula particularly in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and soft skills (problem solving, creative/critical thinking, communication, collaboration (SIDS4, 2024, p. 2).

As indicated earlier, the differences according to Joynes et al (2016) are attributable to the diversity in the level of development of economies. For example, whereas in developed and rapidly developing economies such as in East Asia, STEM-associated skills may be the greatest need in those economies. On the other hand, in developing regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, non-routine cognitive and interpersonal skills may be the greatest needs in these other economies.

Souto-Otero et al's (2013) study quoted earlier shows that a comparative analysis between the list of skill development activities in youth organizations and that of the skills required by employers in Antigua and Barbuda will identify similarities. For example, the soft skills listed by employers at the SIDS 2024 conference cited above can be matched with activities in youth organizations that foster their development such as: debates and group discussions (communication skills);  working in teams (collaboration); planning and managing activities

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(creative/critical thinking) and developing humanitarian projects (problem solving).

**21st Century Workplace Skills Development**

Having explored the identity and nature of 21st century skills in the previous section of this literature review, in this section the review continues with an exploration of discourses on how these skills are best taught, developed and assessed in young people. This will facilitate the identification of pedagogical practices of the targeted youth organizations in this study that may be considered useful in assisting the formal education system in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace.

*Challenges in Teaching 21st Century Skills*

There is consensus in the literature that the task of preparing students for successful engagement with the 21st century workplace is both challenging and complicated (Taylor, 2016; Yan et al, 2019). The attributable factors are varied. For example, Saavedra & Opfer (2012) posit that education systems being resistant to change, of major significance is the persistence into the 21st century of the "transmission" model approach to compulsory education, a carry-over from previous eras when education was conceptualized as the transmission of factual knowledge to students through lectures and textbooks, and outcomes were measured through recall-based assessments.

The foregoing state of affairs is borne out in a study on the challenges of teaching critical thinking in university foreign language classrooms in Libya by Saleh (2019). He notes that introducing innovations in general into educational contexts often faces resistance and challenges and that some teachers are conservative in their educational ideology and so remain rooted in

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teacher-centered traditional attitudes, beliefs and approaches to teaching and learning that discourage rather than encourage critical thinking.

Other social, cultural and administrative barriers to the teaching and learning of 21st century skills have been identified in studies. For example, Saleh (2019) also found that in Libyan culture where children are expected to listen, obey and not question, critical thinking is significantly inhibited. Also, the Libyan education system being heavily examination oriented is blamed for teachers tending to see time spent teaching things like critical thinking as counterproductive to good examinations results. This is also found to be the case in other parts of the world (Care et al, 2018; Sparrow, 2016) along with inadequate teacher competency in teaching the skills (Shafie et al, 2019).

Assessing 21st century skills is also found to be problematic worldwide. Germaine et al (2016) note that 21st century skills are not new to the 21st century. Those such as collaboration, communication, metacognition and problem solving have long been held by researchers as the primary foundational supports of cognitive learning (Dahsih, 2012). However, in comparison with content-based knowledge, Care et al (2018) note that the assessment of 21st century skills is in its infancy and that our deficiency in fulsome or adequate comprehension of their nature and development pose challenges in their assessment. In a study focused on reviewing the availsble literature review on 21st century skills and competencies in elementary education, Chalkiadaki (2018) found a paucity of texts on the subject. Therefore, teachers often find resources on the teaching of 21st century skills limited or non-existent.

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Many concur that the tendency of educators to treat lightly with 21$^{st}$ century skills is attributable to their nebulous nature, owing to our lack of knowledge and hence confusion about them (Chen & Huang, 2017; Matterson et al, 2016; Sparrow (2017).  Chalkiadaki (2018) notes that the four recommended pillars of education published by UNESCO (learning to do, be, know and live together), even after a decade has proved difficult to understand and effectively apply in classroom practice. The confusion persists – in part at least - because each country, educational sector and even discipline defines the skills according to their individual needs (Kechagias, 2011; Tyler, 2020).

Using as example, 'critical thinking' which is frequently used in an interchangeable manner with the terms *decision making* and *problem solving* to describe a quality many educational institutions wish to develop in learners, Kechagias (2011) argues that for students of the humanities, critical thinking is more likely to be interpreted as developing a deeper understanding of  a problem through analysis and critical evaluation, rather than to be interpreted as solving a problem. Business students on the other hand are more likely to interpret critical thinking as problem solving and decision-making, since in this discipline students are frequently given case studies involving problems or potential problems they are expected to resolve in the real world.

Another contention with the teaching of 21$^{st}$ century skills is whether they should be explicitly taught as stand-alone courses or taught within the context of any discipline included in the curriculum (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).) The former is referred to as the *generalist* view, the latter is the *specifist* school of thought, and *relativists* are those who support the blending of both approaches (Moore, 2004, cited in Kechagias, 2011). Supporting this third approach Kechagias

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(2011) argues that "the explicit development of generic skills needs to be embedded into each course or subject and becomes, by extension, the responsibility of the subject specialist, albeit with the advice and support of learning specialists/developers" (p. 69).

Citing Resnick (1987) Kechagias (2011) cautions, though, that highly specific learning situations could cause learners to become bound to that setting to the detriment of transferring the learning to other situations. However, Billet (1998) is also cited as noting also that it is the variety of experiences that makes transfer successful, and not necessarily the particular environment in which the learning is taking place.

There is, notwithstanding, some support in the literature for the generalist approach to the teaching of 21$^{st}$ century skills to at least some students, since although it is generally agreed that the skills should be taught using constructivist pedagogy, there is evidence to show that they are not often clearly highlighted, or not highlighted consistently even when teachers use constructivist pedagogy (Care, 2018; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012).

For these reasons, in a discourse on the teaching of soft skills to law students at a tertiary institution in the United States, Sparrow (2017) argues that teaching the skills throughout the law school curriculum is a worthy aspiration in the ideal world but explicitly teaching and assessing them in both individual as well as large doctrinal classes is vital. In a study canvassing the views of technical students and lecturers in South Africa, Taylor (2016) found support for small groups as opposed to large groups with regards to the teaching of the skills. Banking on over two decades of experience, Jacobson-Lundberg (2016) expresses a great deal of confidence in the notion that

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21st century skills can be explicitly taught and embedded into the core curriculum of any system quite easily.

In her study on teaching 21st century skills in industry, though, Dawe (2002) found that the integration of 21st century skills and technical skill development is supported by industry because it was perceived to be closer to the real workplace environment and made transfer of learning easier. She is supported by Saavedra & Opfer (2012) who note that learning experts concur that learning should take place through the disciplines. According to these authors

> Continued learning in any discipline requires that the student – or expert – become deeply familiar with a knowledge base, know how to use that knowledge base, articulate a problem, creatively address the problem, and communicate findings in sophisticated ways. Therefore, mastering a discipline means using many 21st century skills (p. 9).

### *Pre-conditions for Effective Teaching of 21st Century Skills*

There is general consensus in the literature, then, that, inter alia, in order to improve and encourage the teaching of 21st century skills, it is necessary to give them explicit attention (Bartel, 2018; Care et al, 2018; Saavedra & Opfer, 2012; Hodge & Lear, 2011). Foundational to this focus should be a clear understanding of the skills and what competency in the skills should look like at different levels of human development, so that the curriculum can be reformed to integrate the new learning goals that the skills imply (Care et al, 2018).

This situation means there should be clear learning progressions in 21st century skill development up to the tertiary level similar to Bloom & Krathwaohl's (1956) cognitive skills development or Bruner's spiral curriculum (Shtaltovna, 2021). Bruner has famously argued that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest way to any student at any stage of

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development. This happens if the student returns to the topic several times over a period of time and the topic increases in complexity with each return, allowing the student to link new ideas with old ones and as a result allowing the student to grasp more difficult aspects of the topic.

To illustrate this learning progression, with regards to critical thinking the question may be asked concerning what can be reasonably expected of a primary school child versus a secondary school child or a youngster in college. Care et al (2018) argue that these are crucial elements in teaching and assessing the 21st century skills. Progress, though slow, has been made in this area. Care et al (2018) note that recent reforms in curricula by many countries have indicated a desire to divert from a comparatively limited range of cognitive skills and subject disciplines that dominated curricula previously, to the development of competencies geared towards the transformation and application of learning. That is to say that the development of 21st century skills lies in the development of competencies, which in turn requires reforming curricula aimed at identifying evidence-based behaviors and the related competencies that demonstrate their acquisition (Care et al, 2018, p. 14; Pineida, 2011).

Identifying and differentiating 21st century learning, teaching, professional and technological competencies is therefore absolutely necessary for the purpose of realizing improvements to the teaching learning process for 21st century skills. A *learning competency* may be defined as a human ability or habit that facilitates learning, *a teaching competency* may be defined as a  teacher's ability to use effective pedagogic strategies, *a professional competency* may be defined as one shared across professional disciplines (example, ethics, good time management),

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and *a technological competency* may be defined as having to do with the use of technological equipment, according to Pineida (2011).

This author also proposes that there is a direct correlation between a teacher's or a learner's level of each of the four competencies and their efficiency in the processes of learning and teaching. For example, teachers possessing good teaching, learning and professional competencies are likely to be the most efficient in using ICT, a technological competency. Contrariwise, students with poor learning competencies as shown by their habits and abilities are hampered in using ICT in an efficient way even though they are already technologically competent. A pre-condition for the efficient learning of 21$^{st}$ century skills, therefore, is that the focus must be on the development of the four competencies (Buckingham Shun & Crick, 2016).

The Oxford dictionary defines *competency* as the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. Velde (2009) notes that the plethora of definitions of competency in literature has led to considerable confusion around what exactly the concept means. He synthesizes the following four important facets of competencies from several definitions. According to him they:

- include overall characteristics of an individual that are related to the effective performance of a given job
- are manifested in the individual's behavior, and are therefore observable and measurable
- facilitate the accomplishment of goals and objectives
- are resources in the organization that can be fostered and nurtured (Velde, 2009, p. 140)

Competencies are therefore based on skills (Care et al, 2018). Hence not only is it essential to have clear definitions of the skills just like the competencies, but assessment tools to measure them must also be developed, along with pedagogic training that enables education assessors to interpret the execution of the skills at the different ability levels of learners (Care, 2018). It is the

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contention of this author that after a better understanding of the skills is attained, teaching and learning materials can be assembled and demonstrations of good practice using them can be made available for teachers and learners.

***Teaching 21st Century Skills***

Based on the challenges and preconditions outlined above, many conclude that 21st century skills are difficult to teach (Taylor, 2016). However, there are many dissenting voices. For example, in teaching soft skills such as critical thinking, Germaine et al (2016, p. 21) believe that "engaging students in personally meaningful critical thinking can be as simple as providing choice of a topic of personal interest within a subject area or creating models to deepen interest".

Others such as Bartel (2018) and Jacobson-Lundberg (2016) believe that 21st century skills can be easily taught and embedded into core curriculum using constructivist pedagogies. Jacobson-Lundberg (2016) bases her confidence on having consistently taught these skills in her courses for well over 20 years and creating and conducting Personal development education (PDE) workshops on embedding the skills into pedagogical practice.

Care (2018) declares emphatically that the question surrounding the teaching of 21st century skills is no longer why, but instead how. The teaching of 21st century skills has necessitated what Kivunja (2015) labels the *new learning paradigm*. New, because other and non-traditional skills, namely, Learning and Innovations Skills, Career and Life Skills and Digital Literacies Skills (21st century skills) are now part of the curriculum in addition to the Traditional Core Skills in literacy and numeracy that dominated formal learning systems in the previous century. The idea of a new learning paradigm in relation to the teaching and learning of 21st century skills is widely

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supported in the literature. The education system's ability to develop and respond to the needs of the 21st century workplace is central to its integrity in remaining the center of job readiness for future generations of workers.

Regarding best practice in teaching the 21st century skills Kechagias (2011) notes that "it seems that there is not a single best approach, but rather the most appropriate depends on the context under which the teaching is staking place… the specific goals of the program and the discipline" (p. 69). This author adds that even when there are clear understandings of the target group and goals, the options are numerous and varied depending on factors such as the actual definition of the skill(s) targeted, the learning environment and the underlying learning theory. Kechagias (2011) proposes that *experiential learning theory* and *social cognitive theory* are the two most commonly employed learning theories in competency pedagogy. As outlined earlier in this study, both of these are predicated on the notion that one is inspired to learn by one's own experience or by observing and imitating another's experience and transferring the skills learned to new contexts.

Teachers who want to engage in the teaching of 21st century skills effectively in these theoretical frameworks therefore ought to be cognizant that the task calls for exposing learners to a large variety of learning experiences so that learning can occur as described (Dawe, 2002). This approach is supported by Morris (2018) who notes that in the workplace, knowledge is found embedded in everyday routines, cultures and practices. Hence exposing learners to a large variety of experiences is beneficial.

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One form of experiential learning of workplace skills is *Work-Integrated Learning (WIL).* Used frequently as an umbrella term encompassing diverse aspects of practical-based education (e.g. cooperative education), WIL is described as a strategy of applied learning in which relevant work experience is combined with a structured educational program (Anderson et al, 2020; Reinhardt & Pobrzeba, 2016; Xia, 2020). Kay et al (2019) note that by embedding WIL into curricula, students are able to engage and connect with industry resulting in the enhancing of their employability. They engage in this and acquire the experiences by working in a real workplace related site or environment for a period of time during or after their formal classroom learning sessions. Schuster & Glavas (2019) add that outcomes in core 21$^{st}$ century skills such as digital literacy are particularly enhanced by the opportunity that technology offers in improving the accessibility of WIL.

Similar to WIL, internship programs are another form of experiential learning of workplace skills. They are short-term employment opportunities aimed at providing real world work experiences for students during their time in school or immediately after graduation. Anjum (2020) describes them as "bridges to link the theory and practice by taking part in supervised and scheduled work" (p. 1). This author adds that internships are useful for improving and polishing students' personal skills and their professional growth experience as they interact with entities in the real work environment.

Another benefit pointed out is they save companies money in providing the supervision and training that neophyte employees often need. Internships are valued globally for being an excellent source of practical workplace experience (Kapareliotis & Patsiotis, 2019; Fachelli et al,

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2021). In the Caribbean Medford (n.d.) researched the expectations of Barbadian students engaged in internship programs in the tourism and hospitality industry and found that overall, their expectations were realized. Aaron (2023) also researched and found that internships in the discipline of accounting in the Caribbean region have been found to be effective in equipping graduates with work-ready skills in accountancy. Several post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions in the region engage in internships.

Referring to the corpus of research on learning as the *science of learning,* Saavedra & Opfer (2012) support the reliance on learning theory for guidance on best practices for teaching and learning 21st century skills. On example is Hadinugrahaningsih et al (2017) who studied the development of 21st century skills of chemistry learners in secondary schools in Indonesia using the STEAM approach (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics), integrated through modification of project-based learning. The study found that students in educational institutions or programs that country developed several 21st century skills including critical and creative thinking, problem-solving skills, collaboration and argumentation, leadership and ICT skills.

Care et al (2018 ) assert that any significant reformations with regards to shifts in educational philosophy ought to ascertain alignment across not only the  curriculum, but also across the pedagogical and assessment spheres also. These authors add that this undertaking is hugely challenging. For example, there is the challenge of establishing a comprehensive or even adequate understanding of the essential competencies that goes beyond simply identifying,

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defining and describing, essential for ensuring that the new learning goals that those skills imply be integrated effectively in the curriculum.

Care et al (2018) therefore argue that teachers must be trained in relation to the teaching of 21st century skills, especially in light of the uncertainties about expected outcomes and assessment strategies. They also support teaching strategies being immersed within existing curricula and lesson plans, since it is found to be logically and practically conducive to the provision of opportunities for educators and trainers to teach the skills in tandem with the existing curriculum.

From a case study on developing interdisciplinary disciplines to facilitate the teaching of the skills, Care et al (2018) also found that most teachers were supportive of the measure since it does not override or remove the context of existing lessons. The importance of teachers having a positive mindset with regards to the teaching of 21st century skills cannot be overestimated, and teachers are the key actors in shaping student learning and the implementation of new and novel learning approaches (Anagun, 2018; Tyler, 2020).

From a study on how teachers in classrooms perceive the relationship between 21st century skills and management of constructivist learning environments, Anagun (2018) concludes that there is a positive correlation between 21st century skills and the way educators perceive the management of learning landscapes dominated by constructivism. Anagun (2018) also suggests that an inference can be made from the results of his study that whenever there are perceptions of mastery of 21st century skills proficiency by teachers, it is reflected in the way they arrange and manage their classrooms in order to enhance the cognitive and desired learning outcomes they desire.

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The importance of professors in higher education promoting 21$^{st}$ century skills through course activities is also widely advocated in the literature (Anthony & Garner, 2016; Germaine et al, 2016; Hodge & Lear, 2011). Sparrow (2017) promotes the importance of professors themselves modeling the skills in their teaching in law school as we teach not only by our words but also by our actions. Also, engaging students in complex real-world problem-solving simulations according to him is extremely helpful.

There is also a host of other learning theories that can be drawn upon to teach 21$^{st}$ century skills. For example, Peter Jarvis'(1987, 1992) ideas on reflective and non-reflective learning, cited in (Jarvis et al, 2003) advocate being critical of what is being learned (reflective learning), rather than simply accepting what is being presented by rote (non-reflective learning). Also, Jack Mezirow (1991), cited in the same source advocate *instrumental learning*, that involves determining cause-effect relationships and task-oriented problem-solving learning; *communicative learning*, which is learning to understand others and to be understood by others; and *emancipatory learning,* learning to identify and challenge distorted meaning perspectives and through a process of critical self-reflection.

### *Assessment of 21$^{st}$ Century Skills*

According to Sparrow (2017, p. 564), "It may be counterintuitive to assess and grade soft skills because of their "soft" nature, but we can and should do so".  Matteson et al (2016) note the confusing nature of the literature on, and the ambiguous nature of the term, *soft skills* and, in an attempt to clarify in a clearer and more precise way what they are, define it as  "a collection of people management skills, important to many professions and job positions…" (p. 1). Adding to

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the elucidation, Cimatti (2016, p. 98) in highlighting the difference between soft skills and *hard*

*skills* explains that

> Hard skills …indicate the specific capabilities to perform a particular job… for example, the ability of a worker to regulate and control a CNC machine to fabricate a component, while a soft skill is his capability of collaborating with the colleagues working at the same factory department.

The consensus in the literature is that not only are 21st century skills difficult to assess but

no significant progress has been made in developing guidelines to measure them (Mailol et al,

2020). Care (2018) cautions that since the intention of focusing on 21st century skills explicitly in

classrooms is that students may develop the capacity to apply them in real life situations in the

workplace and elsewhere, the tasks employed for assessment should be authentic. Assessment

tools, therefore, according to Care (2018), must be designed not just to capture factual knowledge,

but to capture cognitive and social processes as well. As Care et al (2018) contend that "These two

very different sets of learning goals – content and skills – in education require different teaching

and learning strategies to facilitate their acquisition" (p. 15). Most of the 21st century skills are

demonstrated through actions, she continues, hence an interactive pedagogic style rather than a

transmission paradigm is required.

Care et al (2018) also caution that the 21st century skills assessment is not easily adaptable

to the modes of assessment long in use for summative assessments that have dominated education

systems for ages. They contend that *formative assessment,* that is, assessment used to guide

teaching, is better accommodative of the 21st century skills learning objectives. Martin (2019) and

Sparrow (2016) are in agreement with Care et al (2018) that mainstream characteristics of 21st

century assessment should include skills-or competency-based assessment, many types of

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questions inclusive of those that are open-ended. 21$^{st}$ century assessment should also involve according to these authors observing behaviours of learners, diversity in test presentations and test items through such things as games and complex tasks in a digital environment, measuring a diverse range of human competencies, and using modern analytic assessment strategies such as item response theory and structural equation modelling.

Lai & Viering (2012) add triangulation of inferences through the incorporation of multiple measures; tasks and problems that are complex and/or challenging, open-ended and/or ill-structured, and authentic, meaningful, and contextually real-world; making student thinking and reasoning visible; and experimenting with approaches that utilize new technology and psychometric models.

## 21$^{st}$ Century Workplace Nature, Dispositions and Expectations

The general consensus in the literature is that the recent and developing economic changes in human society commonly referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution have changed the labour market in significant and even dramatic ways, epitomized by the notion that knowledge is now the king pin of economic growth and productivity (Qizi, 2020; Zilinska et al, 2020; Hadad, 2017; Syarc & Dabic, 2017). Allied with other changes in technology, international competition, migration and geopolitics, the result is that young people now face a challenging and complicated process of preparing for work, citizenship and life in general in the 21$^{st}$ century (Coetzee et al, 2015; Saavedra and Opfer, 2012).

In addition to, or among, the 21$^{st}$ century employability skills that they have to acquire, young people in the current age are increasingly responsible for discovering and developing by,

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and for, themselves successful careers in an environment that is more volatile than previously (Haenggle & Hirschi, 2020; Coetze et al, 2015). There is also a considerable amount of job dissatisfaction among graduates caused by not working in their areas of specialty (Pico-Saltos, 2021).

As noted earlier, the transformations brought by the 21st century economy have made the transition from education to employment more difficult and prolonged, requiring more complex skills for its successful navigation. Careers are now less predictable than formerly and hence increasingly, career development is a task for which individuals need to take responsibility to enhance career success (Haenggle & Hirschi, 2020; Hazenberg et al, 2016). A *caree*r is defined by Brown et al (2021) as one's evolving experience as one relates to, and interacts with, institutions and the general world of work over time.

Pico-Saltus et al (2021, p. 1) define *professional success* as "the accumulated positive achievement of people, real and perceived, as a result of their work experiences" and propose that a balance of four dimensions is necessary for its attainment: personal, professional, business and family. These authors also differentiate between *objective career success,* evaluated in terms of salary and promotions, and *subjective career success,* evaluated from one's own criteria on personal accomplishment. They support the latter as being superior to the former.

Drawing on career anchor theory which postulates that career success relates to the congruence that is perceived to exist between *career self-concept (* i.e, one's work identity and what one believes one is capable of) and the opportunities for self-expression available within the work environment, Coetzee et al (2015) contend that career development has become more

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complex since career paths have become more blurred and uncertain. "We live in an uncertain world …(and)…uncertainty is here to stay", says Ivancevich (2010, p. 440). In this regard Coetzee et al (2015, p. 2) counsels that

> Individuals must rely on their psychosocial resources in regulating their career behavior and negotiating their career experiences in order to influence and succeed in today's unpredictable work setting. Proactive career behavior supported by individuals' ability to adjust and modify their attitudes and behavior in response to their changing environment has therefore become crucial in order to realize career goals.

The array of psychosocial resources an employee brings to his/her work, referred to as *career capital* or simply *career resources* (Haenggle & Hirschi, 2020), is useful in transitioning within and between organizations along with the position and relationships the employee holds within the organization (Brown et al, 2021). Transitioning often poses challenges, as it may require physical and mental effort as well as changes in attitudes, identity, networks and even skills to negotiate successfully. Coetzee et al (2015) label this psychosocial resource *career resilience*, noting that it has become more and more significant in light of the challenges posed by today's work environment. Haenggle and Hirschi (2020) use the term *career adaptability* for the same construct and posit that it consists of four factors: *concern* about the future, *control* of one's career through self-discipline, *curiosity* about future selves, and *confidence* about choices that have to me made regarding life design.

*Affectivity,* another critical psychosocial resource, refers to the mood experienced in reaction to events and situations. High positive affectivity means bouncing back quickly from setbacks and persevering doggedly under trying circumstances. High negative affectivity is manifested in such symptoms as avoidance behavior, neuroticism and emotional exhaustion

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among other things. Arshad & Ismail (2018) examined the relationship between incivility and knowledge hiding, and the role of a particular personality disposition – neuroticism - in moderating those kinds of relationships. They found that the higher the level of incivility in the workplace, the higher the tendency for workers to hide knowledge.

Hamre et al (2020) found that workplace bullying is a major hazard to an employee's health and well-being and note that *psychological hardiness* is an individual's capacity for coping and persevering under trying circumstances such as bullying. Also known as *emotional resilience,* Hazenberg et al (2016, p. 8) note that "the development of this characteristic during the period of childhood can be a powerful mediator of success in life such as performance in job interviews or high-stress environments such as businesses". A related construct is *self-efficacy,* described by Hazenberg et al (2016) as the Bandurian concept that provides a critical link between having skills and taking specific actions to achieve targeted goals.

Essentially, the notion is that the amount of effort one puts into activities and invests into persevering when faced with challenges or failures is mediated by one's perceived self-efficacy or feeling of worth. *Self-regulated efficacy* is the capacity to remain task-focused and emotionally balanced when under pressure or stress (Schwarzer, 2016). It can be said, then, that c*ivility* and *psychological hardiness/emotional resilience* and *self-efficacy* are therefore other psychosocial resources that should form part of an individual's career capital. Research suggests that many of the contributing factors to NEET (not in education, employment or training) status are underpinned by low levels of these (Hazenberg, 2016).

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Mahipalan & Sheena (2019) found that there is a close correlation between the constructs *spirituality, subjective happiness* and *gratitude* and therefore these authors support the notion that promoting spirituality in the workplace positively influences the attitudes and behaviours of employees in areas such as job satisfaction and involvement, and organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour.

*Agency* is another resource. With reference to careers it can be defined as the ability to mobilize the psychosocial resources necessary for career development and maneuver and manipulate the environment towards the realization of career goals (Brown et al, 2021). Workplaces are now considered to be *learning spaces* where learning takes place in various ways, redounding to the personal development and social engagement of employees (Kersh, 2016). Highly agentic individuals, according to Brown et al (2021) typically exhibit the following dispositions: high aspirations, autonomy, perseverance, self-determination and the ability to learn from failures. Challenges are accepted as opportunities. In this study, the practices and mechanisms inherent in the targeted youth organizations will be explored to see the extent to which they foster the development of these traits in young people.

### Perceptions of the Dispositions and Attitudes of 21$^{st}$ Century Youths

Today's generation of young people, referred to as post-millennials, Generation Z and the Facebook generation, raises concerns in the minds of the rest of society including employers. Matei & Abrudan (2017), for example, note that while today's young people are known to exhibit positive qualities such as comparatively superior skills in areas such as multitasking and entrepreneurship, they are also known to be less focused, present increasingly difficulty challenges

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to teachers to get them involved while they are in school, and the cause of headaches to Human Resource (HR) specialists, creating the impression that they do not want to work.

Matei & Abrudan (2017) found in a study of attitudes of young people towards work in six countries (Hungary, Sweden, Romania, Italy,  The Netherlands and India ), that while in three of them work is ranked second in importance after family on a list that includes family, friends, leisure time, politics, religion and work, in the other three work is ranked third or fourth and below leisure time and friends. These researchers conclude that the importance of work is inferior for many of today's young people, although they still see work as an important part of life. Citing Filippi (2014) their impressions of Italian youths are that:

> …young people are not willing to do just any job, they prefer office jobs; they acquire bachelor's degrees and master's degrees only to find a comfortable job. They prefer work in the public sector because of the policy regarding free days and leaves, and also because  of salary security, and many young people prefer to live with their parents without getting a job. (Matei & Abrudan, 2017, p.861).

**Youth Unemployment**

It is a common expectation across the globe that as part of the natural progression in life, young people will enter the world of work either as employees or entrepreneurs and begin earning a living to support themselves or themselves and family. The reality is, though, that although there are striking differences among countries, of all the age cohorts, in most countries the difficulty of finding suitable employment is often the greatest among young people. This is so even at a time of increasing educational attainments by them (Achdut & Refaeli, 2020; Pastore, 2018; Vancea & Utzet, 2017; Yeung & Yang).

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For example, in Antigua and Barbuda, whereas the unemployment rate in 2021 for adults was 6 percent, for youths it was 26 percent. Table 20 shows that youth unemployment is similarly disproportionately high in the Caribbean in comparison with the world average. In some territories such as St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines, it is, and continues to be, far higher than the world average and among the highest in the world (Charles, 2015; Hazenberg et al, 2016; Idris, 2016). In the region also, Antigua and Barbuda included, young females and youths in the 15 – 19 age group are especially disproportionately represented in unemployment statistics (Manzanero, 2021; Camarinhas, 2019; Pastore, 2018; Parra-Torredo, 2014).

**Table 20**
*Youth Unemployment in Selected Caribbean Countries in 2021*

| Country | Youth Unemployment Rate |
|---|---|
| World | 15.7 |
| Caribbean | 21.8 |
| Antigua and Barbuda | 26.0 |
| Barbados | 27.6 |
| Guyana | 29.5 |
| St Lucia | 43.6 |
| St Vincent and the Grenadines | 40.4 |

Source: World Bank (2023), Danns & Danns (2023), Unicef (2021)

Though not unique to the Caribbean, the situation with regards to the category of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), is especially grave also, since there are numerous reports and papers claiming - though not conclusively - that youth unemployment encourages youth violence especially among this cohort (Idris, 2016). Therefore, providing employment for youth remains among the more vexing challenges facing development

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in the Caribbean. Charles (2015) concurs and advocates positive youth development (PYD) as an appropriate approach to youth employment. He argues that the fundamentals of this approach involve recognizing that access to decent work opportunities is a socio-economic right of young people, who should also be given the opportunity to participate in the creation and implementation of sustainable employment policies and decent work opportunities for themselves.

Two initiatives recommended by Charles (2015) to ensure sustainable youth employment and empowerment are strategic partnerships that are essential for enhancing the relevance, quality and sustainability of PYD initiatives, and the development and implementation of more effective National Education and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policies and programs. These ideas are echoed by Danns & Danns (2023), who are championing in Guyana the worldwide call for youth entrepreneurship as a key strategy to counter the youth unemployment and individual poverty situation. The possibility of youth organizations partnering with the formal education system in exposing youths to TVET and entrepreneurship is one of the areas this study hopes to explore.

### Causes of Youth Unemployment

The final section of this review looks at the causes of youth unemployment according to the literature. It is found that in developed countries such as those in Europe, listed among contributing factors to high youth unemployment are business cycles, insufficient qualifications and lack of experience (Dietrich & Muller, 2016). Also, of significance is lower than average human capital due to dropping out of school or simply missing out on general and work-specific experience which are key components of human capital formation (Pastore, 2018). In a paper evaluating the nature

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of youth unemployment in the Caribbean, Parra-Torredo (2014, p.11) notes that "while no empirical studies are available for the Caribbean on the individual determinants of youth unemployment, some of the factors are likely to be similar to other countries". Hence the aforementioned determinants of European youth unemployment may be applicable to the Caribbean (Hazenberg et al, 2016: Idris, 2016: Charles, 2015; Ball et al, 2013).

Lack of right skills and qualifications and lack of information are highlighted as two causes of youth unemployment that are supported by empirical evidence, according to Parra-Torredo (2014). Citing Caribbean Labor Market and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) surveys, this researcher reports that the main constraints Caribbean employers face in hiring new workers are poor or no employment skills (42 % of employers), under-qualification (33.8 %), lack of experience (28.8 %) and lack of soft skills (27.5 %).

Paucity of skills among Caribbean graduates is attributed to the low quality of education in the region as reflected in the low performance in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations, the secondary school exit examinations for the English-speaking region (Hazenberg et al, 2016; Munoz-Pogossian & Vidal, 2015; Parra-Torredo, 2014). For example, 5 or more subjects is the minimum acceptable academic performance for matriculation and entry-level employment in the region. In 2009 only 21.6 % of the total number of candidates across the region met that academic requirement (Parra-Torredo, 2014).

In 2024 the regional average remained appalling low even though it had improved to 36 %, (CXC Data Portal). Figures for Antigua and Barbuda are shown in Table 21. Weakness in Mathematics and English are clearly evident.

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**Table 21**

*CSEC Performance Antigua and Barbuda  2021 - 2024*

| Performance | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage passing 5 or more subjects | 54.7 | 47.8 | 49.8 | 48.6 |
| Percentage passing 5 or more subjects including English A | 50.2 | 43.7 | 23.3 | 44.9 |
| Percentage passing 5 or more subjects including Mathematics | 22.7 | 20.6 | 23.3 | 28.1 |
| Percentage passing 5 or more subjects including English A and Mathematics | 21.3 | 20.0 | 22.0 | 19.4 |

Source: Ministry of Education CSEC Report 2021 - 2023

With regards to lack of information about job availability being a contributor to youth unemployment in the Caribbean, Para-Torredo (2014) notes that this is so largely because in the Caribbean referrals from relatives and friends and direct contact with employers are more commonly used as informal job-searching strategies, rather than information systems and employment offices which are better market knowledge sources. This puts young people immediately at a disadvantage since they tend to have smaller networks. This is especially so for young people who are out of school, out of employment and who are vulnerable. Informal strategies such as those listed may be effective only for persons who are well-connected and have vibrant networks, according to this researcher.

The dire youth unemployment situation in the region is summed up by Munoz-Pogossin & Vidal (2015, p. 6):

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Despite the progress made in increasing enrollment and reducing dropout rates, the main challenge now is the quality of education that young people in the region receive in comparison to their peers in more developed regions. As a result, young people from the region are ill-equipped to adapt to a rapidly evolving world dominated by information and technology.

Many young persons in the Caribbean therefore approach the job market lacking appropriate skill sets or with skill sets that are not entirely relevant to the needs of the labor market. Hence there is a mismatch of supply and demand skills in the region with regards to young people. This dilemma for the young job seeker in the Caribbean is further compounded by lack of work experience since the required skills are mastered, or in some cases acquired, on the job (Camarinhas, 2019; Parra-Torredo (2014). As a result of these kinds of issues many young people in the Caribbean are therefore seriously hamstrung in their efforts to obtain meaningful employment. Many if not most persons in the Caribbean, including Antigua and Barbuda, spend some time during their youthful years as members of, or participants in the activities of, youth organizations. How can youth organizations use that time to assist the formal education system in improving the employability of young people? More specifically, how can they, for example, possibly assist or increase their assistance in the teaching of English and Mathematics or help to improve overall academic performance in school and in exit examinations? What mechanisms exist within the organizations for the teaching and nurturing of soft skills and the provision of real-life job experiences? These are the kinds of questions that this study attempts to provide answers to and to expand on what is already known about how youth organizations assist in preparing youth for the 21st century workplace

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**Summary**

The purpose of this study is to add to existing research on the contributions youth organizations are making to the development of 21$^{st}$ century employability skills in the emerging workforce by exploring the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state controlled ones in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the country's formal education system in preparing young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. The 21$^{st}$ century calls for workers who have more than just academic qualifications and basic and occupation-specific skills (Petrie, 2021). Of increasingly greater importance are *employability skills.* Building on the ideas of *connectivism,* considered as the learning paradigm that best suits 21$^{st}$ century realities and workplace skill development (Siemens, 2005), Kivunja (2014) may have best captured what these are in the following formulation: JR21CS = f(TCS + LIS + CLS + DLS). In the Caribbean context it was found that among the top skills employers look for are attitudes to work, team spirit, cooperation, adaptability and appearance (Joynes et al, 2016).

The formal system seems incapable by itself of adequately developing these skills in graduates (Barrichello et al, 2020). It is widely argued that the delivery of education and training is not the sole preserve of formal education systems but is also undertaken by other entities in the learning landscape in society that deliver education in a nonformal or informal manner (Denkowska, 2020). Research suggests that youth organizations are among these entities and their activities are conducive to the development of academic and workplace readiness (Duerden et al, 2014; Giannaki, 2015). Prior studies have centered around youth organizations that are controlled and run exclusively by youths (Council of Europe, 2011), or by adult-led organizations that engage

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youths in summer camps only (Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). This study focuses on other types of youth organizations, namely, faith based, civic and state-controlled ones as the conceptual framework for studying this problem. It is worthwhile investigating these organizations as they appear to be in a prime position in the learning landscape of youths to assist, since youths can remain under their influence for an even longer period of their lives than schools. Such a study is especially applicable to the Caribbean in general, and Antigua and Barbuda in particular, where little or no similar prior research in this area has been done and there is an urgent need for improving educational output in light of the importance of achieving a knowledge economy and readiness for Industry 4.0.

In order to ascertain the significance of the findings of this study it was necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of the literature to establish current knowledge on the topic. The review began with an examination and justification of the theoretical framework composed of constructivist learning theory and Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory. The rest of the review included youth organizations, the formal education system, other forms of education, learning theories and best practices in pedagogy, employability skills, workplace expectations, youth workplace dispositions and youth unemployment. Library databases accessed included peer-reviewed articles and studies in the e-journals and e-books of Proquest, Journal Storage (JSTOR), Springer and Google Scholar. A few non-peer-reviewed publications as well as the World Bank database were accessed for factual information.

LCE may be defined as a pedagogical approach in which the role of the teacher is shifted from that of a mere giver of information to a facilitator in the discovery and creation of knowledge.

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Students actively participate in the learning process and are allowed some amount of control over what they are learning and collaborate as much as possible, learning from, and with, each other in and outside the classroom as they navigate towards discovery and mastery (Matsuyama, 2019). The teacher's role involves designing the learning experience, modelling expected behaviours, providing feedback, scaffolding and motivation, and using a variety of teaching methods to ensure optimal, efficacious and deep learning (Doyle, 2023; Ventres, 2023). Criticisms of LCE in a developing country such as Antigua and Barbuda include limited learning and physical resources; teachers having little training and personal experience with LCE; national, institutional and professional cultures not necessarily conducive or supportive of LCE, and the high-stakes examination culture (Schweisfurth, 2015). Overall LCE is held to be superior to teacher-centred pedagogy in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace since it better allows for the development of skills such as critical thinking and problem solving and the fostering of student engagement with, and motivation for, learning (Altun, 2023; An & Mindrila, 2020).

SEL, defined as the experiences by which children and learners in general develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes essential  to the comprehension and management of feelings, establish and attain desirable and acceptable objectives, experience and exhibit empathy towards their fellow men, set up and sustain desirable and acceptable relationships, and make decisions that show awareness of responsibility (Borowski, 2019), involves, essentially, learning about one's emotions and social interactions through reflexive thinking, and managing them in ways that are beneficial to self and others (Panayiotou et al, 2019).  Among the criticisms of teaching SEL in schools is that it robs schools of valuable time needed for teaching core academic skills (Elias &

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Morceri, 2012; Oberle et al, 2020). Overall, the literature contends that similar to LCE, SEL redounds to the success of students in school, at the workplace, in their social relationships, as citizens of their country and the world and even in their religious devotedness (Jagers et al, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Surya & Haryanto, 2023).

The literature also suggests the same strong support that PYD, defined as an umbrella term referring to the manners in which youngsters and those who have not yet attained adulthood may accrue optimal developmental experiences through their participation in organized events (Holt et al, 2020), is a valuable tool in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in young people. This approach is grounded on positive views of young people in contrast to what many developmental psychologists have criticized as negative and deficit approaches to adolescent development that originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of focusing on the pathological, the most popular Neo-Freudian views of adolescent development have focused on more positive views such as plasticity and diversity in adolescent development and the innate strengths and potentials human beings can draw on to achieve their goals and satisfy their needs (Holt et al, 2020). Thus, humanist theorists such as Carl Rogers and Urie Bronfenbrenner posit that adolescents can be assisted in their development by helping them to discover and realize their goals and dreams. That is, they are to be treated as "promises" to be kept rather than as "risks' to be managed (El Zaarteri & Maalouf, 2022).

The literature contains prior studies that have employed concepts of LCE, SEL and PYD theories as theoretical bases for studying the impact of involvement in youth organizations (Milosevic Zupancic, 2018; Souto-Otero, 2016; Souto-Otero et al, 2013). Since this study hopes to offer insights on pedagogy, learning and generally rounded development of young people to

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educators in the formal system, in a similar way, in this study these theoretical concepts are considered preferable and are used to investigate the teaching and learning environments of the youth organizations under study to explore their learner-centeredness and their ability to develop the social and human capital of their young members.

The age group and definition of youth organizations vary around the world. For the purposes of this study a youth organization may be defined as any adult-led, multi-level, non-profit, voluntary organization whose main focus is the positive development of youth and young adults and the age ranges from 5 – 18 in accordance with the age range of primary and secondary school in Antigua and Barbuda. The fact that there are various motivations (social, political, religious, for example) behind the formation of youth organizations means that there is a consequent plethora of types and numbers that is too vast to make identification and quantification an easy task (Council of Europe, 2022). Those present in Antigua and Barbuda include faith-based denomination, interdenominational and non-denominational; political; service; business; state-affiliated; youth-led and youth worker-led.

Youth work covers a wide spectrum of activities and purposes and a useful categorization might be: *youth work as an activity*, *youth work as a specialist occupation* and *youth work as a discipline* (Banks, 2010). The *raison d'etre* of youth organizations is not always primarily to advance the interests and personal development of young people. Other emphases include religious or political (Merino et al, 2018; Sankham et al, 2020). Youth organizations whose *raison d'etre* is primarily to advance the interests and personal development of young people carry out their mandates by organizing and managing various activities that cater to the needs of young people or

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by advocating for the meeting of those needs (Council of Europe, 2022). This study proposes that the wide spectrum of youth work suggests that there could be a similar wide array of practices, mechanisms and outcomes at play in youth work which could impact the development of young people, and so this study explores these possibilities in the context of faith-based and civic organizations in Antigua and Barbuda.

There are varying conceptualizations of what quality education should look like (Joynes et al, 2019; Petrie et al, 2021). The mainstream idea is that it ought to be the fostering of the development of skills, abilities, values, attitudes and dispositions that enable full and successful participation in society and adult life (Lile, 2020; Schultze-Kraft, 2022). Whatever education may or may not be, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of education offered in schools in both developed and developing countries (Joynes et al, 2019; Petrie et al, 2021; Shackleton-Jones, 2019). There is also widespread recognition that its realization and provision are challenging (Olssen, 2020; Teiget et al, 2024), with a major contributing factor being the complex and rapidly changing world that we are living in and the new technological skills and expertise that the current age is constantly demanding (Denkowska, 2020; Shackleton-Jones 2019). In the Caribbean, relevance is twinned with low quality as two of the most intractable challenges facing the formal education system (Brisset, 2021; Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018). As is largely the case in the rest of the world the formal education system in the region is widely believed to be inadequate for the task at hand (Grajcevic & Shala, 2016; Winfrey, 2018).

Formal education is offered in established institutions while non-formal and informal are acquired outside of them such as in youth organizations. Non-formal education is given much

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recognition since it not only mirrors formal education in some aspects, but unlike the formal system that mostly uses formal learning methods such as frontal presentations in which the teacher acts as an expert who dispenses knowledge to students who are largely if not exclusively knowledge recipients and have limited or minor influence on the teaching process, in the non-formal system the program is more often based on participants' needs, is more flexible and adjustable to feedback, is more participative and likely to be based on experiential learning and reflection, is not rigidly confined to time frames since time is defined by the learner's pace, and the role of the educator is one in which he/she is a facilitator or guide in the discovery of knowledge (Marin & Espinoza, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has brought new approaches to the provision of education such as online learning and this has made the formerly well-defined boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal education less well defined (Marin & Espinoza, 2021). There is therefore much support for non-formal education as a powerful educational force in the post-modern world and it is becoming the quickest and most mobile approach in the solution to the problem of persons in the current knowledge-based economy remaining competitive by fostering the development of their competencies and experience (Romi & Schrida, 2009).

It was necessary also to explore the literature on best practices in teaching and learning in order to be able to evaluate the potential of the targeted youth organizations in this study in providing non-formal education. Philosophical ideas about knowledge were explored since what is taught or learned can be influenced by what knowledge is perceived to be (Bates, 2019). Education of any kind involves the acquisition of knowledge or epistemology. Platonian epistemology contends that knowledge originates in the mind, while Aristotelian epistemology

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argues that knowledge is discovered through sensory experiences. Stemming from these original ideas have developed other schools of thought on the nature and origin of knowledge such as rationalism associated with the former and empiricism with the latter. These ideas have spawned a plethora of learning theories. Six of the main ones were explored in some detail, namely: behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, social learning theory, humanistic learning theory and connectivism. Their merits and demerits were noted. Connectivism was seen to be the most efficacious since it draws on the tenets of several of the other learning theories and combines them with the realities and possibilities occasioned by the digital age in which we live (Downes, 2019; Siemens, 2017). Combined with the possibilities offered by non-formal education, the possibilities this offers for teaching and learning 21$^{st}$ century skills in the context of youth organizations are explored in this study.

Having reviewed the theories of learning, an attempt was made at a useful definition of learning. Olson and Hergenhahn (2012) point out five characteristics of learning: there is change in behaviour which may be overt or covert, the change is relatively permanent, the change may not be immediately demonstrated, the change results from experience or practice and the change must be reinforced by practice to ensure permanency. Based on these ideas they suggested that a good definition of learning is an alteration in behaviour that is relatively stable and unchanging, or has the potential to be so and resulting from experiences that are not necessarily attributable to short-term conditions of the body such as ones brought on by sickness, fatigue, or related to medications.

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Challenges facing the teaching of 21st century skills were also explored. Chief among these are the nebulous nature of the skills and the inadequacy of training on the part of teachers and difficulties with assessment. Some claim they are difficult to teach and assess (Mailool et al, 2020; Taylor, 2016) and some claim they are easy to teach (Jacobson-Lundberg, 2016; Germaine et al, 2016). Effective teaching of the skills should involve giving them specific attention and the teacher being clear of what they are (Bartel, 2018). A number of teaching strategies were reviewed including various forms of experiential learning including work integrated learning and internship programs (Aaron, 2023; Kay et al, 2019; Morris, 2018, Schuster & Glavas, 2019). This study explores the extent to which the environment of the targeted youth organizations accommodates or can accommodate these kinds of teaching and learning approaches.

Current workplace dispositions and expectations were reviewed. It was noted that youth unemployment is disproportionately high in the world and especially so in the Caribbean (Achdut & Refaeli, 2020; Charles, 2015). Contributing factors include business cycles, inadequate qualifications and lack of experience. The poor quality of education in the region is flagged as a prime underlying cause (Munoz-Pogossin & Vidal, 2015; Parra-Torredo, 2014). The world of work today demands not only being adequately equipped with 21st century skills, but also the capacity to deal with a fluid work and business environment and carve out a career path and existence largely on one's own initiative, drive and acumen (Hadad, 2017; Coetzee et al, 2015). Many employers view the youths of today as lacking in the aforementioned competencies and attributes (Matei & Abrudan, 2017). Youths need to increase their career capital or career resources, which includes assets such as career resilience, career adaptability, affectivity and self-

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efficacy (Arshad & Ismail, 2018; Hazenberg et al, 2016; Schwarzer, 2016). They need to realize also that workplaces are also learning spaces where learning takes place in various ways and that this learning is accessible to those who have the drive and other attributes to tap in (Brown et al, 2021).

The literature reviewed shows that the task of providing young people with the kind of knowledge, competencies and skills that the contemporary world of work is demanding is huge. Many, if not most, countries in the world including Antigua and Barbuda are finding it daunting. However, because it is so important to educate the upcoming generations since the very survival and viability of a nation depends on this (Camarinhas, 2019), it is incumbent on all stake holders to lend a hand (UN General Assembly, 2015). There are gaps in the research literature on how youth organizations can assist in this endeavour. This study aims to contribute to the filling of those gaps by exploring and documenting how youth worker-led, faith-based and civic organizations in a developing microstate can complement the formal curriculum in the education of its youth for life in the 21$^{st}$ century.

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## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The culture of innovation sparked by the technological shifts in industry that occurred towards the end of the 20th and into the 21st centuries has spawned what many are calling a Fourth Industrial Revolution also known as 4IR or Industry 4.0 (Schwab, 2023). This new revolution is believed to involve the interplay between the digital, biological and physical innovations of the preceding and precent centuries and essentially involves the adoption of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies and related processes, examples of which are Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and cyber-physical systems (CPSs). These technologies represent cutting-edge technologies that enable producers to increase dependability, efficiency, productivity and customer-focus of industrial processes and it is believed that their confluence and interactions with the digital, biological, and physical worlds make Industry 4.0 fundamentally different from previous industrial revolutions (Schwab, 2023; Sivasankaran, 2024; Stehr et al, 2020).

Industry 4.0 has enabled economic growth in the 21st century to be increasingly driven by the quantity, quality and accessibility of information used to inform the processes, products and services of businesses and another moniker, "knowledge-based", has been coined to describe economies so driven, in contrast to the industrial economies of the past when more tangible production factors such as land, labor and capital predominated (Moisio, 2018; Stehr et al, 2020; World Development Report, 2019).

Industry 4.0 and the knowledge economy have also necessitated the development in workers of new workplace and life skills referred to generally as 21st century skills (Sanabria &

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Aramburo-Lizarraga, 2017). However, the sentiment is widespread that many graduates of formal education systems across the globe - and especially in developing countries like Antigua and Barbuda - are significantly deficient in these important skill sets that are considered vital for efficient and effective engagement in the current workplace (Akinbode & Oyelude, 2020; Browne & Shen, 2017; Jang, 2016 Rios et al, 2020; The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, 2016). Many also are of the view that the formal system is struggling, or simply unable, to develop these skills in young people effectively (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Latchen, 2014; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016; Tindowen et al, 2017). Known by various names but generally as 21st century employability skills as outlined in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, these skills are considered vital not only for employability, but also for academic achievement and future success in life (Borg et al, 2017; Firsova & Azarova, 2021).

Given the limitations of the formal education system, there is much support for the promotion of alternative forms of education such as informal education and especially the non-formal education provided by institutions that are outside of traditional formal academic settings (Greenlow & Lewin, 2016; Rogoff et al, 2016; Sanabria & Aramburo-Lizarraga, 2017). Not that alternative forms of education are a panacea for the maladies of the formal system. In fact, research suggests that nonformal educational institutions also struggle with the teaching and development of 21st century skills.

For example, Prasetyo et al (2021) found that most non-formal educational institutions in India concentrate far more on providing skills such as how to use equipment for work than on developing thinking skills and life skills in their students. In other words, they focus more on

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efforts to improve *hard skills* rather than *soft skills* (Cimatti, 2016; Sopa et al, 2020). Nonformal education is advocated strongly by many as an effective augmentation of formal education, notwithstanding (Affeldt et al, 2017; Alif et al, 2019; Debarliev et al, 2022; Latchen, 2012; Ngaka et al, 2012; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016).

Research also suggests that youth organizations in particular engage effectively not only in general nonformal educational and youth development activities, but also in providing opportunities for the development of employability skills ( Duerden et al, 2014; Grajcevci & Shala, 2016; McBride et al, 2012; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Prior studies, however, have centered around youth organizations that are controlled and run exclusively by youths (Council of Europe, 2011; European Youth Forum, 2005), or are adult-led organizations that engage youths and young adults mainly, if not exclusively, in summer camps or other events that occupy a few days of weeks in a calendar year (Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018).  Additional research involving other types of youth organizations may be able to provide more insights into the worthwhileness of their activities to young people and how they are augmenting, or can augment, formal curricula in an optimal way.

This study focuses on these other types of youth organizations as just described, namely, faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations. Although the definition of what is the age category that encompasses youths, in this study youths are defined as persons ages 5 – 18 in accordance with the age cohort catered for in Antigua and Barbuda's formal primary and secondary school systems. A *faith-based youth organization* is defined as a youth organization that usually operates within the ambit of, and whose decisions are influenced by, the mission and vision of a

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particular faith or religion (McFeeters et al, 2022). A *civic youth organization* is defined as a youth organization with voluntary membership and established to advance the educational, charitable, religious, cultural, or local development of its members (Adams & Kuhns, 2020), while a *state-controlled youth organization is* defined as a youth organization that is under the direct control of the state (Aliyev, 2020).

A study such as this is especially applicable to the Caribbean in general, and Antigua and Barbuda in particular, where little or no similar prior research in this area has been done. Additional research may also be able to provide more insight into exactly how youth organizations can, and/or are, actually augmenting formal curricula and assisting in the preparation of young people for the 21st century workplace. The educational content provided by youth organizations, for example, can be identified and its alignment with the content of formal curricula in primary and secondary education established.

The teaching and learning approaches and philosophies employed by youth organizations can also be identified and explored and their alignment with those used in the formal education system also established. Possible similarities and synergies between the formal education system and nonformal and even informal systems may then emerge from such explorations, resulting in new knowledge about the role, function and value of youth organizations in modern society. Expanding research in this direction is also useful since involvement in youth organizations is part of the life experiences of many young people as they grow up (Dawes & Lawson, 2011). Again, this kind of study is especially applicable to the Caribbean in general, and Antigua and Barbuda in particular, where there is great concern about the quality of formal education as outlined in Chapter

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1 of this study and where little or no similar prior research has been done as far as this researcher has been able to ascertain.

The purpose of this study therefore is to expand on existing research on the contributions of youth organizations to the development of 21st century employability skills in youths by exploring the role that faith-based, civic and state-controlled ones in the state of Antigua and Barbuda are playing, or can play, in augmenting the nation's formal education system in the preparation of its young people for the 21st century workplace. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate the educational and pedagogical artefacts and activities of the targeted youth organizations and identify their actual and potential capacity to augment the  formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda in the education of youths and enhance their employability in a 21st century context.

This study is also oriented within an interpretivist /constructivist paradigm involving an epistemology that is subjectivist, an ontology that is relativist, a methodology that is naturalist and an axiology that is balanced. That is to say, that it is assumed in this study that whatever truth sought and found is relative and socially constructed from the researcher's personal interactions with participants in interviews, discourses, reflective sessions and in reading and gleaming information from their publications.

Put more plainly, the findings of this study reflect the researcher's cognitive processing and meaning making of information garnered from the researcher's interactions with the study's participants in their time and space and is grounded upon acceptable ethical standards and balanced reporting (Gaus, 2017; Kivunja & Kiyini, 2017; Saunders et al, 2019). Insights into the variables

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of this study will therefore be sought from an analysis of the views of the stakeholders, observations of the activities of their clubs and analyses of the documents of their organization and the reflections of the researcher.

This study therefore has two broad aims:

1. To investigate the curricula and activities of the targeted youth organizations to gain an understanding of their role and potential in augmenting the formal education system and equipping youths with knowledge-based economy skills.

2. To explore areas of existing and potential similarities and synergies between the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda and the nonformal education environment of the targeted youth organizations so that suggestions can be made on how both entities can be more complimentary in the development of young people for the knowledge based economy.

The specific objectives targeted are as follows:

1. To investigate how well the curriculum and activities of each of the targeted youth organizations align with best practices in the teaching, learning and development of knowledge-based workers.

2. To identify areas of similarities and synergies between the content of the formal curriculum and that of the targeted youth organizations and explore the possibility for other areas of synergy.

3. To explore possibilities for official recognition of certificates of achievement awarded by the youth organizations.

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Having restated the research problem and purpose of this study with the foregoing introduction, this Chapter will proceed with an explanation and justification of the particular research approach and research design adopted for the study. Following this will be a description of the population that this study drew on and an explanation of the sample selection process. The research tools selected will next be identified, described and justified, followed by the same being done for the processes of data collection and analysis. The chapter will end with a summary of what is presented.

**Research Approach and Design**

Credible researchers concern themselves with the issue of what research methodology can produce long lasting, credible and transferable research findings (Alase, 2017; Gaus, 2017; Johnson et al, 2020). This study adopts this attitude and has similar intentions. As stated earlier, this study is oriented within an interpretivist/ constructivist paradigm. That is to say that in this study what is considered to be knowledge is based on the actions and thoughts of the participants grounded upon the beliefs, norms and values of the culture in which they operate (Brau, 2020). The researcher sought to obtain a rich and deep understanding of the truth of the phenomenon under study (viz, how youth organizations can augment the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda in preparing youths for the 21st century workplace) by observing, questioning and reading about the participants' thoughts, actions and publications. The researcher therefore sought for a research approach and a research design that each facilitates this paradigm and produces long lasting, credible and transferable research findings. The ultimate objective of this study is therefore to add to the corpus of knowledge on the topic under investigation.

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*Research Approach*

A *research approach* may be defined as the overall plan of action used by a researcher in conducting a study (Sileyew, 2019). Of the three main research approaches used by researchers, namely, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, the qualitative approach was the one chosen in this study for the following reasons. Firstly, the qualitative approach is described in the literature as one that involves studying things in their natural settings in an effort to make sense, or arrive at interpretations participants make, of the social milieu in which they operate (Johnson et al, 2020). In other words, as Sutton & Austin (2015) explains that qualitative research enables researchers to tap into the sentiments and thoughts of those participating in the research. In this way, a clearer understanding of the real meaning that individuals give to their experiences is enabled.

Creswell (2007) agrees with Sutton and Austin's explanation of qualitative research, arguing that qualitative research is useful for exploring complex issues for which detailed understanding of the context or setting in which participants operate is needed. We fill gaps in our knowledge by reasoning inductively, notes Goswani (2010), and so inductive reasoning is ubiquitous in human thinking. Tuffour (2017, p. 1) describes qualitative research as "inductive and share similarities in exploring 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions, as opposed to 'how much' and 'how many' preferred by quantitative studies". These characteristics of qualitative research align with the research paradigm of this study since this study seeks to investigate the role and potential of targeted youth organizations in doing something, namely, augmenting the country's formal education system in its mandate to prepare youths for the 21st century workplace, and since in

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accomplishing this task the thoughts and feelings of research participants are sought in assisting the researcher in determining how this can be done.

Another justification for adopting a qualitative research approach for this study is that this study is an investigation into the role and potential role of an entity in the execution of a task and other studies have investigated a similar phenomenon and adopted a qualitative approach. For example, Nijs et al (2014) explored a similar issue in relation to identifying and measuring talent among employees. They note that while quantitative tools such as achievement tests and ratings may be used, talent identification and assessment are subjective in nature and as such are better measured by qualitative methods.

In this study, while it is acknowledged that some sort of measurement tool could be developed or adopted to assess the capacity of the targeted organizations in assisting the formal education system with its mandate, it is argued that investigating the role and potential of the entities under study is similarly subjective and thus more suited to qualitative investigation and analysis as opposed to quantitative investigation and analysis. The data collected are the observations of the organizations' activities, analyses of their documents and the viewpoints of their leaders and members, and as such are dependent on specific contexts, viewpoints and values. The researcher is the lens through which the data are identified, interpreted and analyzed and all of this is in line with the practice of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms outlined earlier. Thus, the data is distinctively qualitative, and the researcher embraces this kind of subjectivity, functioning as part of the data gathering instrument itself and greatly influencing the generation of findings in the manner of qualitative researchers (Haven & Grootel, 2019).

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A qualitative approach is also chosen for this study instead of a quantitative or mixed methods approach grounded on the fact that this research explores human interactions as they are within youth organizations, in contrast to the assessment of an objective theory involving human variables or using experiments (Morse, 2020, Rehman & Alharthi, 2018). In other words, the researcher is interested in how the lives and the learning of young people in the targeted youth organizations are, or can be, influenced by the nature and culture of the organizations as they are. A qualitative approach facilitates the gathering of credible data to support such findings. The data in this case consisting of words that can be subjected to analysis inductively and supply rich descriptions, in depth explanations and chance findings with adequate levels of credibility as long as the analytical process is one of rigor and is also logical (Gray, 2013).

In other words, the qualitative data collected in this study can be analyzed and interpreted inductively in order to provide further understanding and meaning of what the people in this study do or say, which is what this study aims at. A quantitative approach provides data in the form of numbers and statistics that lack the capacity to be treated in this way. As Tuffour (2017) puts it, qualitative research is aimed at studying the life experiences of individuals and intentionally avoids the kind of engrossment typical of quantitative research methods with taking measurements, enumerating and making predictions, but employing instead methods such as descriptions. Explorations and comprehending and giving interpretations to the phenomenon under study.

Tuffour (2017) also notes that though the epistemological roots for qualitative research are numerous and diverse, they all focus on making meaning out of experiences. Thus, qualitative research is accurately described as emic and idiographic since qualitative researchers aim at

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studying phenomena in their natural settings and capturing as accurately as possible the meanings people make of their experiences from an inside perspective and expressed in their own language. The qualitative researcher therefore employs curiosity linked with open-mindedness, empathy and flexibility as he/she communicates with human participants as they share their stories in their own natural environments and can thereby engage participants in the conduct of the research study (Kozleski, 2017). The qualitative researcher then draws conclusions of how the experiences and behaviors of participants of the study are influenced by their social, cultural, economic and historical contexts.

Qualtiative research according to Kozleski (2017) is therefore uniquely able to provide an experiential understanding of the complex relationships - both anticipated and unanticipated - that typically exist among things, as well as interpreting events directly. Qualitative researchers accomplish this type of meaning-making by using subjective judgement coupled with clear explanations of how personal preconceptions influence the knowledge produced, according to this same author. Clear explanations are provided by qualitative researchers using personal reflexivity involving self-analysis and self-evaluation during the research process as a tool and is critical for the rigorousness of the research (Johnson et al, 2020). It is argued therefore that a qualitative approach is the most suitable for this study as it allows the researcher to get a clearer and truer picture of the capacity of the targeted youth organizations in terms of what is proposed of them in this study.

This study also acknowledges that qualitative research approach has its criticisms. For example, Edwards & Brannelly (2017) explain that some see the need to 'democratize' qualitative

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research as currently conducted, since it positions participants in a study as simply 'subjects' and researchers as 'experts' in the analysis and evaluation of their thoughts and actions. Other criticisms are that the process of data collection in qualitative research is time consuming; the collection process requires skills such as effective interviewing; observations and conclusions are subject to being influenced by the personal experience and knowledge of researchers; participants have significant control over data collected since qualitative inquiry is generally open; and the data analysis process is labor intensive and yet cannot be verified objectively (Choy, 2014).

These criticisms are countered by qualitative researchers, however. For example, qualitative methods such as narrative style interviews, life histories and autobiographies where participants are essentially co-creators of the new knowledge are offered as counters to the argument about participants being treated as 'subjects' and researchers as 'experts' ( (Dillard, 2018; Hewitt, 2017; Mueller, 2019). Morse (2020) is confident that qualitative research remains strong currently and even experiencing a surge of popularity.

However, this author also expresses some concerns worthy of note. According to him, changes related to methodology are taking place with alacrity. Hence, ultimately, there are consequent changes on what research focuses on, which can range from the in-depth, profound and theoretical, to the trivial and minutiae, wide and well-thought-out investigations to content that is evident and apparent, resulting in no real new knowledge, and meticulous conceptual and theoretical expansion to descriptions that are superficial and do not go into any meaningful depth of the top under discussion.

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Thelwall & Nevill (2021) also warn that qualitative research could decline in importance as a result of big data methods being used more and more to achieve comparative or even deeper levels of insights into collected data using algorithms. For example, with reference to the health care industry, Dash et al (2019) argue that managing, analyzing and interpreting big data efficiently can be revolutionary in opening up new avenues for modern health care. They contend that all that is required is appropriate infrastructure. However, many in academia remain confident as Morse (2020) that qualitative research remains vivacious and evolving and encompasses even considerably untapped potential for the making of theoretical contributions to the field of knowledge ( Fisher & Guzel, 2023; Yadav, 2022).

*Research Design*

The research design of a study is the particular framework of methods and techniques within a research approach that is used to conduct a study. The one used in this study is *case study*, noted as one of the most popularly used qualitative designs and defined by Mfinanga et al (2019) as a rigorous study of an individual, group of individuals or an entity, that is targeted at making generalizations about many other such individuals, groups of individuals or entities. Creswell (2007), Merriam & Tisdell (2016) and others also define case study as involving in-dept description and analysis and contend that case studies are appropriate for investigating the knowledge, views and experiences of people.

However, these authors caution that the effectiveness of case studies is in the fact that they focus on a bounded system, (for example, the study of youngsters in  high school of a particular school is a case study, as opposed to the study of  youngsters in high schools in general) and the

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collection of data through multiple sources that include interviews, observations, audio-visuals and documents. Case studies are also often used to inductively explore phenomena that are yet unknown, leading to the elaboration, generation or falsification of theory (Gammelgaard, 2017). A list of strengths and weaknesses of case studies is shown in Table 22.

**Table 22**

*Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses of Case Studies*

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| -may reveal greater details about the phenomenon | -unscientific to generalize on the basis of an individual case |
| -others' social experience be shared and understood | - data is subjective |
| -provides a holistic interpretation in a social context | -less suited to hypotheses testing and theory building |
| -no treatments, experiments or manipulations of the social context required | -tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions |
| -usually low budget | -evidence limited in comparison with quantitative research |

*Source: Mfinanga et al (2019)*

As shown in the table, notwithstanding the statement about generalizing over several units in the Mfinanga et al (2019) definition of case studies just cited, one of the main criticisms of case studies is that their results cannot be used to generalize across populations since it would be unscientific to generalize on the basis of only one case. Most researchers allow, though, that case study results may be applicable to similar situations and similar contexts in which the study was conducted. In other words, the argument is that the results of case studies may be transferable, but not generalizable as is the case in quantitative studies (Younas et al, 2023). That they are subjective, biased and lacking in rigor are other major criticisms of case studies. The reasoning

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behind these criticisms is that case studies are over-reliant on the selection and interpretation of data by the researcher. Hence, the researcher's personal perspectives, preferences and assumptions could easily be inserted into the study vis this avenue (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Difficulties in reconciling these issues have forced qualitative case study researchers to admit that the qualitative case study method is not completely understood (Gustafsson, 2017).

Notwithstanding the weaknesses, case study was chosen as an appropriate research design for this study as the characteristics of case studies as outlined in Table 22 align well with the the study's philosophical, theoretical and contextual bases. For example, the focus of this study is on faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in a microstate and how they are, and can, augment the formal system with its mandate. It is common knowledge that these organizations are replicated and found worldwide. Thus, it can be argued that the organizations in this study constitute a group that can be studied as a single case and findings generalized over other similar groups as suggested by Mfinanga et al (2019).  It can also be argued that the study conducted in the context of Antigua and Barbuda constitutes a study in a bounded system characteristic of case studies. However, since several individual and distinct entities are involved, viz, various youth organizations, the type of case study which this study is may best be described as a *collective* or *multiple* case study (Creswell, 2007; Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018), since qualitative case studies are classified by the size of the bounded case. Thus, in this study the research design involves the studying of multiple cases using the same methodology. Similarities and differences between the cases may emerge, but the findings will be amalgamated to represent a single case, the case of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda. Thus, the case study approach makes possible the

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focusing of research on a specific case within the confines of space, viz, Antigua and Barbuda, and time, which is currently.  The outcomes of study like this can therefore include a comprehensive understanding of how the targeted youth organizations can augment the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda in the workplace preparation of youths, and how the same organizations in countries of similar size and context as Antigua and Barbuda may be able to do the same (Mfinanga et al, 2019; Schoch, 2020).  This this study hopes to capitalize on the high accuracy though low generalizability that characterizes case studies (Wikfeldt, 2016).

The 'phenomenon yet unknown' which is another requirement of a case study (Gammelgaard, 2017), can be described as the extent to which the targeted organizations in this study are augmenting or can augment the formal education system in its mandate of preparing youths for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. The findings will elaborate on existing theory that posit that participation by young people in the activities of youth organizations contribute to the development of academic and workplace readiness (Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018), which is another characteristic of case studies. The generation of new theory may also occur since studies involving the targeted youth organizations in this study have never been done in the context proposed in this study as far as the researcher is able to ascertain.

The role of faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the country's formal education system in its mandate to prepare young people adequately for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace is therefore new frontier to explore. Five of these organizations in the country were selected to constitute the case of Antigua and Barbuda. (The rationale for the number is presented later on in this chapter). Four were selected on the basis that

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they are connected with the four denominations with the largest followings in the country as shown in Table 23.  The fifth is a state-controlled youth organization that is perhaps the oldest of such organizations in the country.  However, only four of the targeted organizations participated in the study. The fifth did not participate for reasons which will be explained in a later section. It can be noted, however, that according to Schoch (2020), in multiple-case studies such as what this one is, three or four distinct cases is perhaps the most cases that a researcher can realistically handle.

**Table 23**

*Religious Denominations and Affiliated Youth Organizations in Antigua and Barbuda.*

| Denomination | Population % | Youth Organization |
|---|---|---|
| Anglican | 17.6 | Anglican Youth Fellowship |
| Seventh-day Adventist | 12.4 | Adventist Youth Society |
| Pentecostal | 12.3 | Pentecostal Crusaders |
| Moravian | 8.3 | Moravian Youth Fellowship |
| Catholic | 8.2 | Catholic Youth Ministry |
| Methodist | 5.6 | Methodist Youth Fellowship |

*Source: Statistics Division 2017*

Citing suggestions from Pedrosa et al (2012), Gammelgaard (2017) also notes that the quality of case-based research is determined not only by the validity and reliability of the results, but on the entirety of the research process. Table 24 shows a number of strategies that qualitative researchers using a case study design can employ to enhance the credibility of their case study. These strategies constitute another reason why case study design was selected for this study. It is argued in this study that these strategies are well within the capability of the researcher to undertake to enhance the credibility of the study, which is of prime concern to the researcher, who strove to observe as many of them as possible. According to Schoch (2020), the key to successful case

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studies is ensuring that the researcher has a good understanding of the "case" and has constructed

research questions that support case study design. This author adds that a final caution could be

that a researcher has to exercise care in the avoidance of bias, or the inclination to be influenced

by prejudice or undue interference in processing the findings of the study. Also, this author warns

that the researcher must be aware at all times of his/her sentiments, opinions and biases, and ensure

that an attitude of openness to the collected data is maintained even though such data contradict

the researcher's expectations or preconceived perceptions of what is found. A researcher should

not, says Schoch (2020), undertake a case study research to establish or show a position previously

established or shown to be that which obtains, or undertake the study simply to promote a particular

position on a matter. The researcher according to Schoch (2020) can employ strategies that all

qualitative researchers employ for the mitigation of potential biases. These include the use of

journals, cross-referencing and participant validation.

**Table 24**
*Credibility Enhancing Strategies in Case Studies*

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-Data collection procedures are explained and transparency should be foremost
-Collected data are displayed and made ready for reanalysis
-Negative instances are reported and biases acknowledged
-Fieldwork analyses are documented
-Relationships between assertion and evidence are clarified
-Distinction between primary and secondary evidence, description and interpretation
-Information on coding procedures, comparisons, iteration and refutation should be used to
  establish truth values
-What is done tracked by diaries or logs
-Methods are devised to check data quality

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*Source: Pedrosa et al (2012),  Gammelgaard (2017), ( Gioia, 2021).*

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It is argued in this study that conducted along the foregoing guidelines, this study's design adequately qualifies as a credible case study and specifically as a credible collective/multiple case study as described by Creswell (2007) and other supporters of qualitative research. This design is superior to other possible designs such as grounded theory, which, though suited for contexts in which little is known about the phenomenon in question (Mfinanga, 2019), as is the case in this study, its use is best employed for addressing issues about how something changes over time. That is, issues that have to do with process (Merrian & Tisdell; 2016). This study seeks to discover what is, or what can be, rather than discovering a process which is dynamic. Hence, it can be argued that on that basis grounded theory as a research design is less suitable for this study than a case study.

Similarly, this study involves gathering the lived experiences of people in the search for and development of new knowledge. On this basis it could also be argued that this study could have adopted a phenomenological research design. However, Merriam & Tiswell (2016) note that this design is best suited for studying affective, emotional and intense human experiences in the context of a single phenomenon. It is argued in this study that the issue of youth organizations augmenting the formal education system is more multifaceted and thus better suited to be studied as a case study rather than a phenomenological study. Adams and Minton (2022) note that while Merriam (1998), one of the top three major contributors to the literature on case study, believed that any data collection and analysis method is appropriate, if the research objective is deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, qualitative case study is typically the methodology of choice by researchers. "From this perspective" concludes Adams and Minton (2022), "the

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uniqueness of case study as a methodology is not necessarily in the methods of data collection and analysis, but in the questions that are asked about the case and their relationship to the end product" (p. 7).

The potential biases in data collection in qualitative case study research can be summarized as follows: on the researcher side the process involves an over-reliance on the selection and interpretation of data by the researcher, thereby allowing for the researcher's personal perspectives, preferences and assumptions to be inserted into the study (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Also, there is the tendency for the researcher to engage in what is referred to as *confirmation bias*, which is to search for information that supports the researcher's beliefs and opinions and overlook or misrepresent information that does the opposite (Peters, 2022). On the participants' side biases can include: the *observer-expectancy effect* that involves participants changing their responses and behaviors to satisfy what the researcher wants to see (Tenney et al, 2017), the *Hawthorne effect* that involves participants changing the way they behave when they are aware that they are under observation (op cit), and *social desirability bias* that is the tendency inclination of participants to represent themselves and their social conditions in a manner that is considered by them to be socially acceptable although not really representative of their reality (Bergen & Labonte, 2020).

In this study mitigation measures to treat with the foregoing potential biases may be summarized as follows: First of all, being a multiple case study, this study has built in a triangulation mechanism that makes possible the comparison of data and the identification of patterns from the different cases (Schoch, 2020). Triangulation is also achieved through the use

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of multiple data collection instruments, namely, personal interviews, focus group discussions, observations of activities and interactions among participants and document analysis (Gioia, 2021). In addition, a detailed audit trail was kept using a diary and field notes and is presented showing what was done every step of the way from the initial data collection stages to the coding procedures and findings were presented to participants and peers for their criticisms and general feedback.

**Population and Sample of the Research Study**

As stated previously this study is qualitative and exploratory with respect to the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the formal education system in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace or more adequately equipping them with essential 21st century employability skills. There are approximately 30 such youth organizations in the state of Antigua and Barbuda as will be elaborated on in this report in a section following. As also stated previously, findings will be based on data garnered from their literature, viz, policy documents, manuals and other related literature of the organizations, observations of activities that are undertaken in their regular club meetings at their meeting places, and the views of their stake holders, viz, their youth directors and youth leaders.

*Population*

Table 25 following shows that religious denominations in the state of Antigua and Barbuda with at least one physical congregation in the country number around 17 (Statistics Division, 2014). Since these religious organizations normally cater to the needs of their youths through a

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youth organization of some sort according to Pinckney et al (2020), it was reasoned for the purposes of this study that there are correspondingly at least 17 faith-based denominational youth organizations in the state of Antigua and Barbuda. The percentage of the country's population that is affiliated with these religious organizations is approximately 84 percent of the total population as shown in Table 23 and based on the last census conducted in 2011 prior to the undertaking of this study.

The data from the 2011 census also show that roughly the same percentage of people below the age of 35 are religiously affiliated with these religious denominations (Statistics Division, 2014). That is to say that approximately 84 percent of young people in Antigua and Barbuda's population of approximately 85 000 in 2011 indicated that they are affiliated with these religious organizations. Hence it can be argued that the majority of young people in Antigua and Barbuda come under the influence of at least one faith-based youth organization during their youthful years, since church attendance among Caribbean people is considered to be relatively high (Candelon, 2017).

**Table 25**

*Religious Affiliations in Antigua and Barbuda*

| Affiliation | Total Affiliates | % Population | Approximate No of Congregations |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total population | 84, 816 | | |
| Anglican | 14, 836 | 17.6 | 20 |
| Seventh-day Adventist | 10, 489 | 12.4 | 32 |
| Pentecostal | 10, 345 | 12.2 | 20 |
| Moravian | 7, 015 | 8.3 | 15 |
| Catholic | 6, 915 | 8.2 | 7 |
| Methodist | 4, 739 | 5.6 | 12 |
| Wesleyan Holiness | 3, 795 | 4.5 | 8 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Church of God | 3, 510 | 4.1 | 20 |
| Baptist | 3, 023 | 3.6 | 17 |
| Evangelical | 1, 933 | 2.3 | 8 |
| Jehovah's Witnesses | 1, 283 | 1.5 | 4 |
| Nazarene | 1, 566 | 1.8 | 8 |
| Rastafarian | 949 | 1.1 | 2 |
| Salvation Army | 365 | 0.43 | 2 |
| Islam | 208 | 0.25 | 1 |
| Mormon | 127 | 0.15 | 1 |
| Baha'i | 54 | 0.06 | 1 |
| **Total** | **71, 096** | **83.8** | **178** |

*Source: Statistics Division Housing Census Book of Statistical Tables 1(2014)*

Faith-based denominational youth organizations like other youth organizations in human society usually have branches, clubs or sub-units operating under the auspices of the local church or congregation in dispersed geographic locations of a country or region, with oversight from a central body, which might itself be subject to higher authorities in the denomination's organizational structure.

Table 26 below shows the organizational chart for Seventh-day Adventists Pathfinders to illustrate this point. The chart shows up to four tiers of authority above the local club. Since the researcher could not source information on the total number of religiously affiliated clubs in the country, it was reasoned that with the 17 religious groupings operating a combined total of approximately 178 congregations countrywide as shown in Table 25, it can be argued that a combined total of approximately that same number of branches, clubs, or units possibly exist across the territory Antigua and Barbuda, since congregations typically cater to the needs of their youths by organizing them into youth groups.

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**Table 26**

*Organization Chart for Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinders on Antigua*

| Entity | Description | Head | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| Club | Pathfinder club of a single church | Pathfinder Director | Local church |
| Area | Clubs of 3 – 4 churches | Area Coordinator | Parish/Zone |
| Conference | A number of Areas | Conference Pathfinder Director | Conference Office on island |
| Union | A number of Conferences | Union Pathfinder Director | Union Office in Trinidad |
| Division | A number of Unions | Division Pathfinder Director | Division Office in Florida, USA |
| General Conference | All the Divisions | General Conference Pathfinder Director | General Conference Office, USA. |

*Source: Adventist Youth Ministries https://www.gcyouthministries.org/the-team/*

Table 27 shows other youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda that can be classified as faith-based interdenominational, nondenominational, civic or state-controlled. These groups also have organizational structures similar to the faith-based ones mentioned earlier, but with varying levels of complexity or sophistication. They also operate far fewer branches, clubs, or units, with some having as few as one or two. Hence, including the 17 faith-based denominational youth organizations mentioned earlier, in the absence of any credible source to be used as authority, it is

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argued in this study that 30 may be a workable approximate total number of youth organizations currently operating in Antigua and Barbuda.

Again, with the 17 faith-based denominational youth organizations in the state operating approximately 178 branches/units/clubs  countrywide, this study posits that there is a combined total of approximately 180 – 190 branches/clubs/units of youth organizations currently operating in Antigua and Barbuda's geographic space.  The population of this study can therefore be described as comprising of approximately 30 youth organizations operating in Antigua and Barbuda, the local Youth Director of each of these groups, approximately 180 – 190  individual branches/clubs/units, the youth leaders connected with each of these units which may number several hundreds. They represent the entity that this study is exploring as an assistant to the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace

**Table 27**

*Interdenominational, Non-denominational and Civic Youth Organizations in Antigua and Barbuda*

| Type | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| Faith-based – interdenominational | Boys and Girls Brigades, Youth for Christ, Interschool Christian Fellowship |
| Faith-based Non-denominational | Scouts, Guides, YMCA, YWCA |
| Civic | Junior Achievement, 4-H Club |
| State-controlled | Cadet Corps, National Youth Council, Youth Ambassadors. National Youth Parliament |

Source: Compiled by Researcher

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*Sample*

It is generally accepted that depending on one's research objective, in most qualitative research it is either too difficult or costly to study the entire population related to a phenomenon (Asiamah, 2017; Sharma, 2017). Hence a qualitative researcher like other researchers resorts by necessity to selecting a sample of the population to study, since it is not necessary to collect information from an entire population in order to ensure the credibility of findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The available literature on sample size in qualitative studies is sparse according to Boddy (2016) who also contends that sample size in qualitative research is contextual and dependent to some extent on the particular research paradigm upon which the study is grounded. Defining saturation as that point in the collected data that shows that no additional issues or insights are emerging, resulting the redundancy of additional data collection.  Hennink & Kaiser (2022) note that saturation is the most frequently used guiding principle used by qualitative researchers for determining how adequate a  purposive sample is. However, they also note that guidance in the literature on how it is sone is vague.

It is also generally accepted that sample size in qualitative research is small in comparison with quantitative research, although some researchers caution that it should not be so small that it weakens the credibility and dependability of the study's conclusions (Asiamah, 2017; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Others also caution that in case studies, cases must be selected for the richness of the data they can provide rather than for generalization properties, since it is not the number of cases per se included in a study that matters, but rather, the information captured and the analysis

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of that information (Mfinanga et al (2019). Indeed, a single case may be appropriate for a credible study in certain special circumstances according to some authors (Boddy, 2016; Creswell, 2016).

Creswell (2007) has long argued that the answer to how many cases are adequate in qualitative case study research is that there is no set number, but that four or five cases is the norm. He also cautions that "the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis: the more cases an individual studies, the less depth in any single case" (p. 76). Hennink & Kaiser (2022) did a methodical review of works that researched the empirical assessment of the point of saturation when doing qualitative research, recorded strategies in the assessment of saturation, identified sample sizes for the same, and also found that sample size at which saturation point is reached in qualitative research can be as low as five interviews with a mean of 9 - 17 and focus group of 4 – 8. Sim et al (2018) contend that it is inherently problematic to determine sample size a priori in inductive, exploratory qualitative research. According to them the decision about the constitution of what is considered to be an acceptable number of units for a sample to satisfy the aims and objectives of one's study, is a decision that by necessity must be one taken though iterative interpretations on the part of the researcher. This will be revealed as the researcher through this repetitive process begins to get a comprehensive overview of developing themes, the inter - relationships, interplay and demarcations between them.

The foregoing arguments from the literature provided the basis for selecting five as the number of cases in this study which can be classified as a collective/multiple case. Specifically, five cases were selected based on that figure being among the norm for qualitative research. Five also allowed for the inclusion of the variety of types of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda

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as reflected in Tables 23 and 25 and in accordance with principles of maximum variation sampling (Suri, 2011) and purposeful maximal sampling (Creswell, 2007) as explained in the paragraph following. Of the five selected organizations therefore, two can be classified as faith-based denominational, one as faith-based interdenominational, one as faith-based nondenominational and one as state-controlled.

The most popular sampling methods used by qualitative researchers include convenience sampling, theoretical sampling, quota sampling and purposeful sampling, with purposeful sampling being the most widely used (Mack et al, 2005; Oppong, 2013). This sampling method involves the researcher using his judgement in selecting subjects believed to have good experience or real-world knowledge of the issue under study (Grossoehme, 2014). This method is therefore suitable for this study since it is not only a qualitative study, but it is a case study and as such, according to Robson & McCartan (2016), involves an empirical investigation of an issue within its real-world context using a plurality of sources of qualitative evidence. In the context of this study the issue is the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state-controlled organizations in augmenting Antigua and Barbuda's formal education system. The targeted sources of evidence are the documents of a sample of youth organizations, the views of their stake holders and members and observations of the activities at the regular meetings of their clubs.

Thus, aiming for the most experienced and knowledgeable participants and cognizant of the limitations in the resources available to the researcher at the current time, the organizations listed above were selected. In addition, the researcher is best acquainted with these five. Hence it was felt that familiarity with those organizations enhances the chances of mining rich and credible

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data in the context of this study. The researcher reasoned that a sizable portion of the youth population in Antigua and Barbuda is thus represented in the sample by the five. Lastly, and as explained earlier, the sample was chosen to reflect variety in the type of organizations represented. Hence the sampling method can be described as *purposeful maximal sampling* according to Creswell (2007) or *maximum variation sampling* according to Suri (2007). *Purposeful* because as Emmel (2013) cited in Staller (2021) notes, cases are chosen on the basis that they contribute to the creative solution of the problem under study and present as convincing a case as possible with the existing resources available to the researcher and *maximum variation* because the aim is for cases that maximize a range of perspectives and differences.

### *Participant Recruitment*

The researcher contacted the head of the targeted organizations by telephone, introduced himself and informed him/her that the researcher was undertaking doctoral research on how youth organizations in the country are, or can, augment our country's formal education system in preparing youths for the workplace, and would like to include his/her organization in his study. The researcher then requested an interview. Upon securing consent the researcher then asked the participant to set a date, time and place convenient to him/her.

An interview, time and place were granted within a few days by the head of three of the organizations and an official representing the head of the fourth was interviewed virtually a few weeks later. Anecdotal evidence and the researcher's own reflection suggest that the recent Covid-19 pandemic and other factors have severely disrupted the functioning of the fifth organization and that they were in a process of rebuilding and were not comfortable with being investigated at

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that time.   The operations of all of the targeted youth organizations in this study have been significantly affected by the current Covid-19 pandemic as have other youth organizations such as those in sports and other youth developmental pathways (Ettikal & Agans, 2020; Teare & Taks, 2021).

The head of each of the four participating organizations was asked to recommend and give the researcher the contact information for five of their youth leaders at the club level who would be likely to agree to participate in a focus group discussion on the topic. The number five in this case was chosen on the basis that it is considered a reasonable number for focus group size (Guest et al, 2017). Suri (2011, p. 66) contends that "purposeful sampling requires access to key informants in the field who can help in identifying information-rich cases". It was reasoned that the heads of the organizations were in a very good position to identify the most appropriate youth leaders in his/her organization to assist with this study in this regard. However, of the four heads, three did so and one indicated that he was leaving the selection to the researcher who could simply contact any club and get names. The researcher also gave the leaders an electronic copy of an Informed Consent form and the focus group discussion questions and asked them to forward the same to the selected youth leaders at the club level ahead of the focus group discussion date.

The researcher encountered significant difficulties with the logistics of getting the focus group discussions organized and executed. For example, commitments to work, family and other personal pursuits made agreement on a date, time and place for a meeting of all five an insurmountable challenge. In the end three of the focus groups consisted of three participants each and one consisted of only two.  There are researchers who suggest that although six to eight are

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optimum sizes, focus groups can work successfully with as few as three individuals (Gill (2008; Guest et al, 2017). There are also those who suggest that since meaning is generated through interpretation of, rather than excavation from, data, one cannot escape the fact that the number of data items is situated and subjective and often cannot be determined in advance of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Later in this study the researcher will reflect on how these ideas played out in this study.

**Materials/Instrumentation of Research Tools**

This study collected data using four different research instruments: an interview schedule consisting of nine open-ended questions composed by the researcher and used in conducting a semi-structured interview with the CEO of each of the organizations, a list of eight open-ended discussion questions composed by the researcher and used in a focus group discussion involving youth leaders at the club level each of the organizations, an observation checklist borrowed from Compte and Preissle (1993) used to assist in making non-participant observations of the regular meetings of a sample of clubs, and a document analysis tool borrowed from Cardno (2018) used to assist in reviewing policy documents and manuals of the organizations. The information collected by the interviews, focus group discussions and document analyses were filtered to identify what the participants considered to be the youth development and pedagogical approaches of their organization and youth organizations in general. These were then classified by the researcher as conforming or not conforming to constructivist or PYD theories. The information collected by observations was used to identify what happens in practice. This approach provided

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a basis for concluding statements made about the role and potential of the organizations in developing 21ˢᵗ century skills and preparing young people for the workplace.

Moser & Korstjens (2018) note that interviews, focus group discussions, observations and documents are the main data collection methods in qualitative research. These methods of data collection were also considered by the researcher to be low budget with no major requirement for treatment, experiment or manipulation of the social context in which the participants are found.

### *Trustworthiness of Instruments*

Confidence in the robustness of a piece of research is generally understood to be reflected in constructs such as the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments (Drost, 2011; Grossoehme, 2014; Kimberlin & Winstein, 2008; Mohanjan, 2017). *Validity* is about how well an instrument measures what it is designed to measure, and *reliability* has to do with the level of faith one is able to repose in the data gathered using that instrument (Mohanjan, 2017). Some researchers hold that validity and reliability are less useful in the context of qualitative research than in quantitative research. Some contend that this is so to the extent that the term *trustworthiness* should replace *validity* and *reliability* in qualitative research, being a more appropriate construct (Stahl & King, 2020). Overall, there is general agreement in the literature that there is no universally accepted set of criteria to assess validity in qualitative studies and even the construction of trustworthiness itself is far from being an exact science (Hayashi et al, 2019; Rose & Johnson, 2020; Stahl & King, 2020).

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Even though he admits that there are no recipes for writing good semi-structured interview questions, Bearman (2019) notes that novice researchers often make the mistake of asking questions in an interview that are interrogative rather than generative and that even if designed by a seasoned researcher, a semi-structured interview schedule (that is, the list of topics and associated questions that the researcher asks the participant) can impede a study by collecting the wrong data. This qualitative researcher advises that effective interview schedules make use of meaningful prompts generative of sentiments that are that complex and nuanced along with general descriptions of the phenomenon under study. As such, whatever prompts utilized should by necessity be of relevance to the participants as individuals. In this way, participants will be encouraged to produce their most appropriate responses since they are at ease and are comfortable with the environment thus created, in contrast to feeling threatened or defensive

Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) point out that open-ended questions are often considered to be the most suitable for eliciting generative responses in the participant's own words. This is desired in qualitative data gathering since the aim is to reduce as much as possible the imposition of predetermined responses. Citing McNamara (2010) they suggest eight principles that should guide the preparation stage in the conduction of interviews:

1. Select a location that has minimal distractive elements
2. Explain to the participant the purpose for which the interview is being conducted
3. Describe to and reassure the participant procedures for ensuring confidentiality
4. Explain to the participant the particular format adopted for conducting interview
5. Instruct the participant of the approximate length of time the interview might take
6. Inform the participant how to get in touch with the researcher later on if they desire so to do
7. Before the interview begins ask the participant whether or not he/she has any questions.
8. The researcher should not rely on his/her memory to recall participants' answers

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In an attempt to enhance the trustworthiness of the semi-structured interview schedule used in this study, the researcher implemented the foregoing guidelines and suggestions. For example, the researcher used open-ended questions and tried to create and foster a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. To reduce distraction, as mentioned earlier, interviews were conducted mostly in office spaces, participants were given a copy of the questions beforehand, and the expected duration stated. A similar approach was adopted for the focus group discussions.

Observation in qualitative research involves the examination of settings and events in a systematic way, is time-consuming and resource-intensive since the observer has to be monitoring what is going on as well as logging or making notes simultaneously. At the same time also, as a non-participant observer, while being there in the setting, the researcher has to minimize if not eliminate entirely the influence of his/her presence on the subjects being observed (Busetto et al, 2020; Shelton et al, 2014). However, it is believed that observations facilitates the collection of rich research data since participants are seen in their natural environment (Sirris et al, 2022). In addition, observations minimize the distance between researcher and participants and facilitates the discovery of issues that the researcher did not initially deem to be relevant (Busetto et al, 2020). In this study, the tips garnered from the literature about conducting good observations were used as guides in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the observations. In addition, observation guidelines developed by Le Compte & Preissle (1993) was used as a tool to assist in making observations of the activities of clubs.

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Document analysis involves reviewing and evaluating documents in a systematic way to obtain data (Bowen, 2009). It is a valuable, but underused data-gathering tool in qualitative research according to Morgan (2022) but has advantages and limitations that a researcher must be aware of. For example, it avoids some of the ethical concerns related to human participants except in the case of sensitive or confidential documents, is less-time consuming than other data collection tools such as observation, it is cost-effective, and documents are often in the public domain. On the other hand, document analysis is subject to *biased selectivity*, meaning that the content may be is or likely to be aligned with the views and agenda of the organization. Karppinen & Moe (2012) also advise that documents ought to be placed in proper contexts for analysis. For example, documents may be treated as sources or as texts and the borders between them and literature are inevitably blurred. There may also be issues with the currency, accuracy and authenticity of documents, especially those sourced from websites (Cardno, 2018).

Cardno argues that research that targets problems in education can utilize policy documents in order to understand the nature and source of such problems including complex ones. However, the researcher must be knowledgeable about the purpose and function of policy documentation for the process to be effective. She explains that the policy document analysis research instrument examines the nature of the document of policy in question for the purpose of examining what its fundamentals are as well its contents. As such, Cardno (2018) considers policy document analysis as especially suited to qualitative research.

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This author also suggests that practices in the process of analyzing policy documents may be enhanced with the use of tools used to guide the analysis. She constructed one centered around five aspects that are considered by the literature to be fundamental to policy documents: how they are produced and the where they are located, their authors and intended readers, their intended context, the actual text of the policy, and lastly, consequent outcomes of the policy. In this study the researcher decided to seek some assistance in analyzing the policy documents of the organizations under study by using this policy document analysis tool developed by Cardno (2018), a copy of which is in the appendix.

Among the other methods of enhancing validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research are *member checking,* which involves showing findings to some or all of the participants in the study and inviting their feedback on the accuracy of the same (Candela, 2019; Grossoehme, 2014), and *triangulation,* which is the convergence of information from a variety of sources (Denzin, 2012; Fusch et al, 2018). These two methods are employed in this study. A sample of participants were shown a copy of the findings and asked to comment on their accuracy and adequacy. Information from the four different data collection methods, namely, interviews, focus group discussions, observations and documents, is compared for the convergence or similarity of information as will be seen later in this study.

**Study Procedures and Ethical Assurances**

In this study the researcher aims to present findings that are evidence-based and of benefit to the society of Antigua and Barbuda and to human society in general. The accepted

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standard in research especially in higher education today is that unethical practices should never be tolerated. Researchers are expected to seek permission from an institutional ethics body and to abide faithfully by ethical standards throughout the study (Bell & Waters, 2018; Sanjari et al, 2014; Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Ethical issues are most likely to occur during the research design, the data collection and analysis, and the publication of the results stages (Drolet et al, 2023). Therefore, prior to the collection of any data for this study, approval was sought and received from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) as part of the process of avoiding ethical issues in this study. As Fleming & Zegwaard (2018, p. 212) caution, issues related to ethics should be taken into consideration in the early stages of the design of the research project and approval sought and secured from the relevant ethical committee before data collection commences. Thus, ethical issues such as informed consent, risks that could result in harm, confidentiality, anonymity of participants, conflicts of interest and so on must be considered and a plan presented of how these issues will be handled according to accepted ethical standards.

### *Ensuring Confidentiality and Anonymity*

Participants in this study were involved in interviews, focus group discussions and some were unknowingly observed as outlined earlier. Thus, human subjects were utilized, but with minimal risk. Measures to ensure confidentiality included the researcher restricting assistance in recording and transcribing interviews and focus group discussions to a single other individual, who was asked not to disclose any of the information to anyone at any time. The recordings were kept as audio files and the transcriptions as word files on the researcher's laptop that is password protected. Notes from observations and reflections were kept among the researcher's personal

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documents to which only the researcher had access. Hence all data were always only accessible by the researcher. All the data files are to be erased or destroyed at an appropriate time after the study is completed, in accordance with the UREC protocol. Anonymity is achieved in this study by referring to the organizations in the transcription and the report by the numbers 1 – 4. The head of each organization is referred to as Head of Organization 1, Head of Organization 2 and so on. The club leaders are referred to as Club Leader 1 Organization 1, Club Leader 2 Organization 1 and so on. The clubs are also referred to as numbers.

*Data Collection Steps*

In conducting qualitative research interviews, in addition to the advice on enhancing the effectiveness of an interview from McNamara et al (2010) mentioned earlier, McGrath et al (2019, p. 1003) also recommend that interviews be conducted "at a time and place of the respondents' convenience, in a comfortable setting, free from any potential disruptions and noise". In this study the head of each organization was contacted and a time and place for the interview was arranged. The place was the researcher's office in one case and the participant's office in two cases and by zoom in the fourth case.

The dates were March 01, 03 and 08, and August 09, 2023. Two lasted 29 minutes, one 26 minutes and the last about 20 minutes. The focus group discussions took place on March 15 and 30 and April 19, 2023 and July 31, 2024. Three took place at the meeting place of a club and one at a venue secured by the researcher. Their durations were, 26, 25, 20 and 50 minutes. In both the personal interviews and the focus group discussions, in addition to the use of open-ended questions as mentioned earlier, efforts were made by the researcher to keep the atmosphere informal so that

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the participants experience a greater degree of comfort in answering the questions and hence making the answers more authentic (Elhami & Khosnevison, 2022). Each participant had a copy of the questions which were numbered and the researcher posed the questions in that order. Additional questions were asked by the researcher to clarify answers or aid proper comprehension of the questions. Recordings were captured on the researcher's laptop and an assistant was employed by the researcher to manage this process. This was the case for three of the personal interviews and two of the focus group discussions. The researcher handled the process himself the other personal interview which was done via zoom and the other two focus group discussions as the assistant was unable and another could not be sourced.

Observations were done at the clubs meeting places and documents were received by the researcher by email from the head of each organization. The researcher secured permission from the head of each organization during the personal interviews to visit and observe the activities of their clubs. The number of clubs visited was originally intended to be dependent on data saturation. That is to say that clubs were to be visited and observations made until no new information was emerging from the observations (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Johnson et al, 2020). However, it was discovered through questioning of the club leaders that the activities of most if not all clubs had been significantly scaled down by the Covid-19 pandemic and had not yet returned to pre-pandemic conditions. That is, club meetings were not being held as regularly as before the pandemic and activities were fewer. Hence only two observations were made for clubs of three of the organizations visited. Notwithstanding the small number of observations, a degree of data saturation was noted across the organizations since the clubs of each organization follow similar

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manuals to guide their operations and activities. Fusch & Ness (2015) underscore the importance

of data saturation in ensuring content validity and the overall quality of a study, but they also note

that small studies attain data saturation more rapidly than larger studies. The observations in this

study lasted for the duration of the meetings which in most instances was approximately one and

a half hours. They were useful in that they added to the number of  methods of data collection

which helped to provide triangulation (Denzin, 2012; Fusch et al, 2018).

The researcher selected for visit clubs that were geographically closest to his residence.

The researcher simply turned up without prior announcement and observations were made by

simply answering the applicable questions on the observation guideline adapted from Compte &

Preissle (1993) based on activities taking place at the club meeting, as well as making notes of

other things deemed to be worthy of note. As explained earlier, the researcher was a non-

participant observer and endeavored to adhere to rules for conducting good observations. For

example, the researcher did not announce his visit beforehand and sat or stood in a position at the

meetings that was as unobstructive as possible while allowing for maximum view of all the

activities. Notwithstanding these precautions, on one occasion attention was drawn to the presence

of the researcher and he was even asked to address the club.  In his address the researcher explained

the purpose of his visit and asked the club members to pretend he was not there and carry on as

normal.

The organizations' documents accessed by the researcher were their handbooks and policy

documents. Having been a youth leader in a faith-based youth organization for many years, the

researcher is of the opinion that these publications are good documents sources of the

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organization's tenets and practices. The documents of two of the organizations were accessed from their website and those for the other two were obtained from the organizations by email from the heads of the organizations.

*Ethical Assurances*

This study involved engaging the leaders of the organizations under study in personal interviews and focus group discussions. These participants were persons of adult age. Observations were made of club meetings which involved these adults engaging in various activities with club members who were below adult age. There was no interaction by the researcher with club members other than observing them at their club meetings. Drolet et al (2023) define an *ethical issue* as any circumstance that may endanger, entirely or partially, the acceptance and honor of even a single ethical principle of morality is accepted as being socially permissible and respectable. They note further that since problematic ethical issues in research are potentially undermining to the credibility of research with resultant negative consequences not only for the researcher and the research participants, but also for academic institutions and the society, it is incumbent upon the academic community to engage in vigilant risk reduction management by steadfastly upholding ethical standards and protocols in research. Although the researcher tried to remain as inconspicuous and unobtrusive as much as possible as indicated earlier, the possibility existed that his presence was detected and could have compromised the right to privacy of club members. This as Drolet et al (2023) indicated is an ethical issue with incumbent ethical assurances.

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In addition to approval from UREC prior to the commencement of the data collection process as indicated earlier therefore, in order to ensure proper ethical assurances approval was sought from the Institutional Review Board of Antigua and Barbuda, the administrative body set up for the protection of the rights, wellbeing and privacy of human research subjects who are recruited to participate in research activities in the country. However, when contacted the Chairman indicated that the Board was not in a position to issue such approvals at that time since some of its members were overseas and would be there for an undetermined period of time. Because of this uncertainty as to how soon the board was able to meet to deliberate on the researcher's application, an appropriate alternate national authority from which permission could be sought according to the guidelines of the academic institution under whose supervision the researcher was conducting the study was sought. The alternate entity contacted was the Ministry of Education of Antigua and Barbuda that has jurisdiction over all persons below 16 years of age in the country. Approval in writing was sought and secured from this entity for conducting the study in the state of Antigua and Barbuda.

Approval in writing for involving the selected youth organizations themselves was sought and secured from the head of each of them as well as approval for engaging their club leaders in focus group discussions and observing their club meetings. The researcher also explained the importance of securing informed consent during the initial interviews and asked the participants for an email address to which the interview and focus group discussion questions and documents granting informed consent could be sent for the participants to preview in their own time. Thus time was allowed for them to get acquainted with, and reflect on, the study and the questions to

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which they would be expected to supply answers and ensure that they were comfortable with everything. This is considered good practice in conducting interviews and focus group discussions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In the planning stages of the study the researcher had intended to secure gate keeper approval in writing from the local head of each of the clubs visited. However, the overall head of the organizations indicated that their letter of approval could suffice.

Notwithstanding all of the foregoing precautions, it is generally recognized and accepted that guaranteeing confidentiality, anonymity and absolutely no harm in research studies is elusive or well-nigh impossible. For example, with regards to focus group discussion, Sim and Waterfield (2019) warn that the main challenge in getting consent has to do with presenting a pellucid account of the activities that will be undertaken in the group. This is because what will actually be discussed in the group and the interactions that will take place are virtually impossible to guarantee. Since consent is essentially the creation and guarantee of appropriate participant expectations, this author adds that the achievement of adequate guarantees may be extremely difficult. In essence, according to Sim & Waterfield with regards to focus group discussions, a researcher has little to no control over what group members communicate to others outside of the group. These authors add that harm can result from engaging in sensitive topics amplified by the public nature of the discussion in focus group. They therefore advise that the researcher engage in pre-briefing before the discussion, moderation of the actual discussion and debriefing after the discussion employed in a synergistic way so that the three strategies reinforce each other.

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According to Unluer (2012, p. 1) "It is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researchers' roles especially for those utilizing qualitative methodology to make their research credible". Raheim et al (2016) contend that notwithstanding the fact that qualitative methodology is already loaded with ambiguities, the absence of critical cognizance of the influence of circumstances surrounding the research, the particular perspectives adopted, the selections made with regards to methodology, and the mere presence of the investigator might seriously hamper the knowledge claims the researcher makes. Being a former member and youth leader and currently an advisor to the governing body at the club level of one of the faith-based youth organizations under study, the researcher is aware of the need to guard against bias and subjectivity.

In this study the researcher endeavors to be strictly guided by the ethical principles outlined above in order to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of this study. In this study also it is acknowledged that this poses a challenge since being a qualitative study the researcher played such a direct role in the main data collection processes of interviewing, moderating focus group discussions, conducting observations and analyzing documents. Thus, the researcher was less distanced from the objects involved in this research than would have been the case if the study had used a quantitative approach (Schoch, 2020). Having been a member, club leader and an advisor to the board of one of the organizations under study, it is acknowledged in this study that this has the potential of influencing the researcher's perceptions of information collected in this study. For example, the researcher became a club leader at the age of 17 and remained as one for several decades. He attributes his positive development to a large extent to the influence of the

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organization. As stated earlier, Schoch (2020) cautions researchers like me not to enter case study research to demonstrate a position held previously or to support a particular viewpoint. The challenge of the researcher in this study, therefore, is to remain as objective as possible in the analysis of data collected and conclusions drawn. In order to accomplish this the researcher endeavored to be guided in all aspects of the study by the extensive council on conducting qualitative research and in particular case study research found in academic literature.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This study explores the role that faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are playing or can play in the preparation of young century workplace. Thus the constructs to be explored and make judgements about include each organization's curriculum to see how closely it aligns or can align with the national curriculum used in the country's primary and secondary schools, their functions, aims and objectives to see how well they support and promote 21st century employability skill development in young people, their pedagogical practices to see how closely they conform to 21st century best practices, their general environment to see how conducive and supportive it is to 21st century skills development and their training and certification methods and standards to see their worthiness for consideration for formal recognition.

This study is qualitative in nature and hence a qualitative data analysis approach is used. Thorne (2000), cited in Kiger and Varpio (2020), describes data analysis as "the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of a qualitative project, and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature". Kiger and Varpio (2020) list among the factors that lead

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to this perception of qualitative data analysis the tendency of qualitative researchers to lack explicit description of data analysis methods in their papers or describe said methods imprecisely or entirely wrongly. Mezmir (2020) defines qualitative data analysis as the categorization and explication of verbal or visual material for the purpose of making pronunciations concerning implied and obvious elements and formations of meaning-making in the assemblage of verbal or visual material and what is represented by them. Three categories of qualitative data approaches can be identified according to Smith & Firth (2011): socio-linguistic approaches such as discourse analysis that explore the use and meaning of language; theory-building approaches such as grounded theory that aim, as the term suggests, at building theory; and approaches such as thematic analysis that focus on describing and interpreting the views of participants.

Since the new knowledge sought by this study is held to be in the views of participants, this third approach (thematic analysis) was deemed the most suitable for this study. Thematic analysis is described as an interpretive process in which the data is searched in a systematic and explicit way for the purpose of identifying patterns and themes which may provide the basis for theory building (Sgier, 2012). It is "a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns" according to Kiger and Varpio (2020, p. 3). These authors add that while it is a method for the description of data, it is also a method of interpreting data using the processes of code selection and theme construction. They conclude that the flexibility of the method makes it useful within a broad range of theoretical and epistemological frameworks and applicable to a wide range of research questions, designs and sample sizes. Thus, they contend that thematic analysis is not tied to any particular paradigm and

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that it is an adequate starter method of analysis for neophyte qualitative researchers but add that it is arguable that the selection of the employment of  thematic analysis ought to be more grounded on the aims and objectives of the research itself, than simply on a wish to choose an easy-to-follow approach to analysis.

However, it is acknowledged in the literature that there are drawbacks to thematic analysis worthy of note. For example, its flexibility contributes to the perception that the method is not a rigorous enough one, especially if manuscripts are unclear as to the paradigmatic orientation of the study and the role of theory in the analysis of the results (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). There is also varying opinions on the number of steps or stages in the process. For example, Mezmir (2020) suggests four: familiarization, data reduction, data display and report writing.  Underscoring the importance of structuring data analysis in ways that provide transparency for both researcher and reader, in undertaking thematic analysis of qualitative data, Lester et al (2020) propose handling the data in seven phases during which the researcher aims at producing broad descriptive statements reflecting the researcher's overall understanding of the data in light of the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) cited in Kiger and Varpio (2020) suggested six and these have been adopted in combination with those of Lester et al (2020) for the analysis of the data in this study.

Phase 1 involved the preparation and organization of the data corpus for analysis and for possible importation into a qualitative data analysis software package such as NVivo or ATLAS. Hence in this phase the data for transcription were assembled in one location as suggested by Lester et al (2020). This was the researcher's laptop and consisted of all the audio-recorded

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interview and focus group discussion files. Also assembled on the lap top were the files of the policy documents and manuals gathered from the organizations in electronic form. Observational note and notes from the reading of the policy documents and manuals were recorded on paper and assembled in a folder and labeled according to the organization. Lester et al (2020) also recommend a organized naming convention for each of the data files, as well as a master data list of data sources with their dates of collection. Based on these ideas, in this study a simplified naming protocol was used and consisted of: name of youth organization, file type (audio, pdf, word), data collection tool (interview, focus group discussion, document acquisition; observation), data source (Youth Director, Youth Leader, document, club meeting), date of collection.

Phase 2 involved transcription of the audio files. Lester et al (2020) encourage qualitative researchers to utilize available technological transcription innovations such as Trint and Temi. Trint was tried to transcribe one of the audio files but the transcription was so inaccurate possibly due to perhaps differences in accent that this was abandoned. The researcher then resorted to manual transcription, which was verbatim initially, but changed to adjusting for syntax later on. Bailey (2008) notes that manual transcription provides close observation of data since careful and repeated listening is involved, an important initial step in data analysis. The researcher received assistance with the manual transcription of one of the audio files.

Phase 3 involved becoming more familiar with the data beyond that obtained during transcription. That is, the researcher began to pay attention to emerging patterns in the data that are relevant to the aims and objectives of the study. Mezmir (2020) suggests that familiarization be done before filtering and sorting the data. However, in this study it was done as this stage and

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accomplished through reading and re-reading of the corpus and chronicling early reactions during the process. According to Lester et al (2020) these initial understandings may prove quite useful in later stages when more detailed analysis is being done and as familiarization increases, limitations or gaps may become apparent and may require the researcher to seek further information. This was the case in this study. Thus, as the researcher read and re-read the data corpus, notes were made of gaps and clarifications to be dealt with by returning to the data sources.

Phase 4 was the coding phase. According to Adu (2021, p. 3) " Simply put, qualitative coding involves: extracting relevant information from the data, labeling the extracts (i.e, developing codes), generating themes from the codes [and] addressing the research questions) with the themes". Qualitative researchers draw attention to technological data coding innovations software such as NVivo to obtain greater rigor in dealing with qualitative data (Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Lester et al, 2020). However, Hilal & Alabri (2013) also warn that a researcher needs to have thorough knowledge and skills of applying such software. Being deficient in such knowledge and skills the researcher decided to resort to manual coding in this study. The literature shows that there are a plethora of ways of transforming qualitative data into meaningful findings (Adu, 2021). However, Braun & Clarke (2006), Stuckey (2015) and others suggest that the initial approach to coding should be to first get a general overview of the data. This can be accomplished by adopting an approach that is deductive in nature, using a priori codes that reflect the aims and objectives of the study, and serve as broad theoretical areas that can be used to organize the data. Using this advice, in order to get a general overview of the data corpus the transcribed text for each organization's interview and focus group discussion was coded using the a priori codes shown in

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Table 28. Each code assigned a particular color and a meaning. Adu (2019) advises on the importance of using a detailed code book to keep track of the meaning of codes from the outset, to ensure consistency in the application of codes, in addition to keeping the research aims, objectives and questions foremost in the mind throughout the analysis process in order to avoid directional drift. The a priori coding was done by highlighting portions of the text in the color assigned to that code. These codes, the assigned color and meaning are displayed in Table 26. Then by using the cut and paste function of Microsoft word, texts of the same color were placed contiguously for the next stage of coding.

**Table 28**
*Initial A Priori Codes and Meanings*

| A Priori Code | Color | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Tenet | Red | Reflecting the philosophical beliefs of the organization. |
| Activity | Bold red | Regular/organized undertakings of the organization |
| General culture | Sky blue | Reflecting customs and social behaviors of the organization |
| Learning approach | Purple | Reflecting how members learn in the organization |
| Teaching approach | Green | Reflecting how teaching is done in the organization |
| Curriculum content | Brown | Reflecting what is taught and learned |
| Potential | Yellow | Reflecting new areas of national curriculum augmentation |
| Certification | Black | Reflecting training that could result in certification |

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The next stage of coding aimed at delving deeper into the data using as much as possible line-by-line in vivo coding, the actual words of participants. Manning (2018) notes that in vivo coding is widely supported as an effective way of getting participants themselves to give meaning to data. To accomplish this next stage of coding, for each of the color-coded transcribed files, using the comments function in the Microsoft word document, in vivo codes were attached to segments of the data, each segment consisting of one or more lines of text. This was done because as Christou (2023, p. 6) notes "Thematic analysis is not a straightforward process as it requires going back and forth between the entire data set, constantly searching for meaning in patterns. Hence, it is regarded as a more recursive rather than a linear process." This author adds that in contrast to statistical analysis, in thematic analysis writing commences as early as the first stage of the analysis process by taking note of initial ideas, as opposed to at the end of the whole process. Thus, the researcher in this study began to make note of patterns that were seen to be emerging at this stage. Examples of the in vivo codes extracted from the text are shown in Table 29.

**Table 29**
*Examples of In Vivo Codes Extracted from the Text*

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Developing young people.
Witnessing for Christ.
Impacting humanity positively
Wholistic development
High quality relationships
Role modeling
Teaching life skills
Developing the ability to speak

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In stage 5 of the data analysis procedures adopted by the researcher in this study, the movement towards the formation of categories and themes began. Kiger and Varpio (2020, p. 4) describe a theme in thematic analysis thus "a patterned response or meaning derived from the data that informs the research question." Varpio (2020) adds that as opposed to a what is termed a *category* (which provides description and content related to a data set), a *theme* is more abstract an entity in nature and involves to a larger extent the interpretation and integration of a set of research data.

While conceding that there is no consensus on the definition of what constitutes a theme, Mishra and Dey (2022) note that, notwithstanding, for all the definitions of theme as a construct, the underlying meaning remains the same; and this is that themes are not concrete but rather, they are indirect articulations or arrangements or processes that serve to elucidate the meaning and understanding of a phenomenon under study. The generation of the themes in this study involved another cycle of coding. Lester et al (2020) suggest at least three. The aim was to reduce the number of in vivo codes through grouping and categorizing until the themes began to emerge, leading to the research questions being answered by this process of data reduction (Rehman et al, 2016).

Each in vivo code adopted in the analysis of the data in this study was placed in one of the following categories used as anchor or a priori codes once again and reflecting the study's aims, objectives and research questions: current augmentation, further augmentation, pedagogical practice, learning practice, possibilities for formal recognition. The meaning of each of these codes is shown in Table 30 following.

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**Table 30**

*Anchor Codes and Their Meaning*

| Code | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Current augmentation | How organizations are assisting the formal system in preparing youths for the workplace. |
| Further augmentation | How the organizations can further augment the formal system in preparing youths for life and the workplace. |
| Pedagogical practices | Indications that reflect pedagogy |
| Learning practices | Indications that reflect how members learn what is taught in the organizations. |
| Possibilities for formal recognition | Expressions of willingness for recognition of training and certification. |

Having coded the data from the four organizations and noting the very close similarities in the themes that had emerged from them as seen in Table 29 above, the researcher concluded at this stage that a reasonable point of saturation had been reached, notwithstanding that a fifth organization was targeted but had not participated for reasons outlined earlier. Evidence of data saturation is offered in responses to the question to the heads of the organizations about identifying the main reason for the existence of their organization. The response from each of the four was as follows:

> [Our organization] exists for the super goal of developing young people. And if you ask me what is the most important reason to exist, we exist to equip youth to have their lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world and also for impacting humanity in a positive way. But again it is a wholistic development approach of ….that we patternize. (Head of Organization 1).
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> .

Total development of the man. We cater to the spiritual person, the physical person, the intellectual person, the social person even (Head of Organization 2).
To train young people for all aspects of their lives, both the physical, social, spiritual and educational. We cater to holistic development (Head of Organization 3).
To provide holistic training to young people (Head of Organization 4).

The final stage of qualitative data analysis according to Lester et al (2020) is about making the process of data analysis transparent, by presenting information about the process in a way that is transparent and verifiable. Such a thing can be undertaken in a number of ways including creating a map of the process, developing a detailed audit trail and reporting coding usage and frequencies. In this study attempts were made to utilize these where possible. For Mezmir (2020) the last stage of coding is drawing conclusions, which is about making meaningful statements about how the data is supportive of the topic under study. For Christou (2023) the final stage in thematic analysis is the communication of the complicated research story in such a way that it convinces other investigators of the validity and trustworthiness of the analysis. This author adds that

For this to occur, sufficient evidence of the themes should be provided from the data. Extracts (such as in the form of direct quotations from interviewees) may also be used as vivid and relevant examples to demonstrate the essence of each theme and the story in general. One or two examples (such as extracts) may not be adequate or convincing. In such cases, the researcher may run the risk of their qualitative study being perceived as 'anecdotal', where the impression of a theme is reified by a few instances of a phenomenon (Christou, 2023, p. 12)

In concluding this section it might be worth restating that thematic analysis is not without its limitations. For example, Attride-Stirling (2001) is of the view that this method of analysis is subjective, lacks depth and transparency in theme development, resulting in fragmentation of the

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phenomena under study. However, the approach has had much support in recent times and highlighted, inter alia, for its flexibility and user-friendliness especially for inexperienced researchers (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Lester et al, 2020). A final word from Christou (2023) is that while thematic analysis remains a "fascinating, flexible and intriguing analytical method" modern computer technologies such as analytical software programs have created dilemmas in regard to its application. This author therefore encourages future qualitative researchers to explore this area further in order to enhance further the flexibility and usefulness of thematic analysis.

The data analysis plan for this study involves the data gathered on these constructs being first coded, that is, organized and sorted for analysis (Saldana, 2021; Stukey, 2015). It is generally agreed that coding qualitative data is most efficiently undertaken iteratively (Keger et al. 2020; Lester et al, 2020; Saldana, 2021; Sgier, 2012). Hence, the coding scheme used in this study involves initial coding using a priori codes, followed by iterations of in vivo coding. The constructs listed above are used as priori codes. The use of a priori coeds this way is supported in the literature by Lester et al (2020, p. 100) for example, who explain that the main goal of this first iteration of coding is "priming the data set and seeking to reduce the size of the data corpus by denoting those statements, experiences and reflections that are of analytic importance". In subsequent iterations of coding, the use of in vivo coding, that is, using as codes the actual words of the study's participants, is used to provide deeper insights into the data (Manning, 2017). The data collected by the various methods in this study are examined and analyzed to see if the pedagogical approaches identified conform to constructivist norms, and the functions, aims and curricula

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content are supportive of PYD and the preparation of young people for the workplace. An attempt

at a visual representation of the coding framework is shown in Box 1 below.

**Box 1**

*Visual Representation of Coding Framework*

| | |
|---|---|
| Main Category (A priori/Parent Code): | Example: Organizations' Current Augmentation of the Formal Education System. |
| Sub-category (A Priori/Child Code): | Example: Organizations' Tenets |
| Sub-subcategory (In vivo/Grandchild Code): | Example: Belief in holistic development Representative quote: "To train young people for all aspects of their lives, both the physical, social, spiritual and |
| educational." Sub-subcategory (In vivo/Great Grandchild Code): Example: | |
| | Representative quote: "Honors are designed to be courses of study that introduce the club member to a subject which should have practical value to the pursuer as well as be able to enhance the pursuer's lifestyle and personal |

**Summary**

The world is currently experiencing what many are calling a Fourth Industrial Revolution

engineered by technological shifts in industry that occurred towards the end of the $20^{th}$ century

and into the $21^{st}$ (Schwab, 2023). The new revolution is believed to involve the interplay between

recent digital, biological and physical innovations and the adoption of automation and data

exchange in manufacturing technologies and related processes such as AI, IoT and CBS. These

work together to increase dependability, efficiency, productivity and customer-focus of industrial

processes to levels never seen before. Hence economic growth is presently more driven by

quantity, quality and accessibility of information used to inform the processes, products and

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services of businesses more than the more tangible production factors of land, labor and capital of the past. In short, we now live in a 'knowledge economy' which is the nexus and platform for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Stehr et al, 2020).

As a consequence of the rapidly changing industrial and economic landscape, a significant gap has developed in the skill sets of workers in virtually all countries, but especially those on developing ones such as Antigua and Barbuda (Rios et al, 2020). The skills now mostly in demand are known by various names but mostly by the moniker 21st century skills. Recognizing graduates of the formal education system in developing countries in particular are deficient in them (Akinbode & Ovelude, 2020; Rios et al, 2020), and that the formal education system is struggling in its mandate to equip graduates adequately with them (Tindowen et al, 2017), this study contributes to existing research on the contributions youth organizations are making and can make in developing them in young people. The youth organizations in question are faith-based, civic and state-controlled ones in Antigua and Barbuda.

This look at youth organizations for the above stated purpose is predicated on the knowledge that youth organizations have been known to engage effectively not only in nonformal educational and youth development activities, but also in providing opportunities for the development of employability skills (Duerden et al, 2014). Prior studies have centered on youth organizations that are controlled and run exclusively by youths or are adult-led and engage with youths mainly in summer camps. Additional research into other types of youth organizations as listed above may be able to provide more insights into their capacity to augment the formal

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education system with nonformal education and training and the more adequate preparation of the emerging workforce for the 21st century workplace. This is the purpose of this study.

A research approach is defined as the overall plan of action a researcher uses in conducting a study (Sileyew, 2019) and the one used in this study is qualitative. The study is also oriented within a research paradigm that is interpretivist/constructivist meaning that the findings are based on the beliefs, norms and values of the participants in the study. In other words, participants determine the meaning and truth of what is discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Johnson et al, 2020). This approach was adopted as it facilitates, inter alia, exploration of the thoughts and feelings of participants and uses inductive reasoning in the answering of the "what". 'why" and "how" questions explored in this study (Johnson et al, 2020; Tuffour, 2017).  It is acknowledged also that the qualitative approach has drawbacks and is criticized among other things for treating participants as 'subjects' and the researcher as 'expert' and requires skill in its data collection methods such as in conducting interviews and focus group discussions and doing observations (Choy, 2014).

This study also adopts a case study research design. A research design is defined as the particular framework of methods and techniques within a research approach that is used for conducting a study (Sileyew, 2019), while a Case study is an intensive study about am entity or group of entities in a bounded system (Gammelgaard, 2017; Mfinanga, 2019). Case study design was deemed a suitable one for this study since it allows for treating Antigua and Barbuda as a bounded system and the inductive, in-depth exploration of a phenomenon that is unknown within that bounded system (Mfinanga et al, 2019). In this study the phenomenon unknown is the role

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and potential of faith-based, civic and state controlled youth organizations in augmenting

the formal education system in Antigua and Barbuda in preparing young people for the 21st

workplace. Another reason why case study was selected as the research design is that credibility

enhancing strategies in case studies such as transparency in data collection and triangulation were

deemed to be within the capacity of the researcher to undertake (Gioia, 2021). Triangulation in

this study is provided with the collection of data from four sources: personal interviews, focus

group discussions, observations and document analysis.

As with qualitative research approach, it is also recognized that a case study as a qualitative

research design is also criticized for its weaknesses. For example, there is a tendency to conform

the researcher's preconceived notions in case studies, and a case study is less suited to hypothesis

testing and theory building (Mfinanga et al, 2019). That is, results from case studies may be

transferable to similar contexts and situations but not generalizable across populations (Younas et

al, 2023). As noted by Wikfeldt (2016), when a researcher draws a conclusion from a case study,

instead of inferring things "from" the case under study, the researcher imposes a construction or

pattern of meaning "onto" the case under study. Thus, case study inference is not synonymous

with statistical inference.

With approximately 30 youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda, this study can be

described as a multiple case study, since it targeted five of these organizations to participate in the

study and they are separate entities. This number allows for maximal variation purposive sampling,

meaning that a sufficiently wide selection of organizations that represent most of the population

and can give rich data are included (Asiamah, 2017). Purposive sampling is the most widely used

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sampling method in qualitative research and it allows the researcher to use his/her judgement in selecting subjects who are deemed able to provide rich data (Oppong, 2013). Schoch (2020) notes that in multiple-case studies such as what this one is, three or four distinct cases are perhaps the most cases that a researcher can handle in a realistic way.

The population in this study therefore consists of approximately 30 youth directors and possible hundreds of youth leaders at the club level, although the exact number is unknown. Participants were recruited following ethical procedures outlined by UREC and should have consisted of five youth directors and five youth leaders at the club level of each of the five targeted youth organizations. However, the researcher was able to secure the participation of only four of the targeted organizations, four youth directors and eleven youth leaders at the club level. There were four personal interviews, and four focus group discussions, three of which had three participants and the other only two. There is concern that although sample size in qualitative research is small in comparison with quantitative research, it should not be too small that it weakens the credibility and dependability of the study's conclusions (Asiamah, 2017). Others argue that since in case studies emphasis is on richness of data rather than on making generalizations, it is not the number of cases that matter, but rather the information captured and the analysis of the information (Mfinanga et al, 2019). Documents which consisted of the manuals and policy documents of the organizations were obtained from their websites or by email from their directors. Of the four participating organizations two can be described faith-based denominational, one as faith-based inter-denominational and the fourth as state-controlled. Census

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figures show that these religious denominations represent a significant percentage of the country's population.

Ethical guidelines such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were observed (Wa-Mbalika, 2019). For example, permission was sought and obtained from UREC prior to the start of data collection. Also, permission was sought and obtained from a national body with the authority so to do. This was the Ministry of Education. The head of each participating organization was contacted first and permission sought for participation in the study and for organizing focus group discussions with youth leaders at the club level and for observing club meetings. Signed Informed consent was also obtained from each participant. The research data collection tools are semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with open-ended questions composed by the researcher, document review using a policy document analysis adapted from Cardno (2018) as a guide, and an observation checklist adopted from Compte & Preissle (1993) as a guide for non-participant observation.  Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by restricting access to recordings, transcriptions and all data to the researcher only in almost every situation. The data files will be destroyed within stipulated times after the study is completed in accordance with UREC guidelines. The organizations and participants are assigned numbers and referred to as such in the write up of the study to ensure complete anonymity. For example, Youth Director Organization 1, Youth Leader 3 Organization 1 and so on.

The data analysis of this study was undertaken using thematic analysis which involves generating codes and by the process of data reduction leading to the identification of themes which serve as the basis for answering the research questions (Lester et al, 2020; Vaismoradi et al, 2013).

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Thematic analysis is also an iterative process. A priori coding is used as initial coding followed by line-by-line in vivo coding. Transcription and coding were also done manually. Of the many variations in the number and steps in analyzing qualitative data (Mezmir, 2020), the one used in this study was suggested by Lester et al (2020). It involves seven phases or steps of which six were sued in this study. They range from preparation and organization of the data through making the whole process transparent. Mezmir (2020) summarizes these stages as familiarization, data reduction, data display and reporting.

The researcher endeavored to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collection instruments by ensuring that the interview and focus group discussion questions were ones that elicited generative, deep responses (Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022) and increasing the effectiveness of the interviews by following the eight principles that should guide interview preparation (McNamara, 2010 cited in Turner III & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). Attention was also paid to minimizing the effect of researcher presence during observations (Busetto et al, 2020), and biased selectivity in the document analyses ( Morgan, 2022). Other methods of enhancing validity or trustworthiness were member checking and triangulation (Candela, 2019). Attempts were also made to enhance the effectiveness of interviews and focus group discussions by ensuring that the time and place were comfortable to the participants (McGrath, 2019). Thus, interviews and discussions were conducted for the most part in air-conditioned offices and meeting places of clubs and lasted for more than 30 minutes on only one occasion.

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# CHAPTER 4:  FINDINGS

It is now widely believed that dynamism in the global economy of the current age has shifted from physical inputs and natural resources towards a greater reliance on the intellectual capacities of humans (Sanabria & Aramburo-Lizarraga, 2017; van der Broek, 2021). We are living in what is called the Fourth Industrial Revolution also known as Industry 4.0 and 41R and its nexus and platform, the *knowledge* economy and society, which is believed to be increasingly predicated on knowledge of various types. For example, Liebowithz & Beckman (2020) identify five types of knowledge that organizations are seeking to capture, harness and apply for success in the business world. First there is *procedura*l or "how to"  knowledge; *declarative* or "what to do" knowledge. Then there is *episodic* knowledge or the application of appropriate previous knowledge to new situations. *Heuristic* knowledge or rules of thumb is that developed through experience. Finally, *meta-knowledge*  is knowledge about the source, applicability and usefulness of knowledge.

The ability of employees within a company to attain, amass and leverage the different kinds of knowledge enumerated above is seen as a key competitive advantage in today's marketplace (Bejinaru, 2018; Hislop et al, 2018; Liebowithz & Beckman, 2020). Hence, even while artificial intelligence and other technologies are being employed to accomplish an expanding range of tasks, humans are also seen to be increasingly needed to undertake the various knowledge-related tasks such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, personal interaction, team work, finding solutions to problems and serving others with empathy (Edmonson, 2012;  OECD, 2021). The recent Covid-19 pandemic has added new and increasing pressures on employees to perform tasks such as

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working remotely, working more collaboratively and working in an environment that is increasingly digitalized (Brystrom et al, 2016: Korn Ferry, 2023; Lewis, 2020; Mushtaq et al, 2017).

It is believed that labor forces worldwide are struggling to equip themselves adequately with the relevant skill set that the emerging - or emerged – knowledge economy and the Industry 4.0 society are demanding (Meritosis, 2021; Sanabria & Aramburo- Lizarraga, 2017). Graduates of the formal education system of most if not all countries have also been found to be deficient in these new workplace and life skills, referred to generally as 21st century skills and considered to be the gold standard for academic achievement and success in the workplace and life in general (Kim et al, 2019; Marginson, 2023; Rios, 2020). Hence, many have logically concluded that the formal education system in the present age is failing to prepare new and upcoming generations adequately for the 21st century workplace (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Robinson & Winthorp, 2016; Sanabria & Aramburo-Lizarraga, 2017; Tindowen et al, 2017). Nations who choose to ignore or remain oblivious to these realities are warned that they do so at their own peril and are advised that they should be making strenuous efforts to bridge what is called "the skills gap" in order to enhance their economic viability in the current economic landscape (Korn Ferry, 2023; Merisotis, 2021; OECD, 2021).

The skills gap situation is particularly grave in developing countries including those in the Caribbean (Akinbode & Oyelude, 2021; Browne & Shen, 2017; Malik, 2018; Robertson & Paul, 2023; The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, 2016).  For example, in a study of the skills gap across the Caribbean region, Robertson & Paul (2023, p. 2) surveyed a number of employers

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who suggested that many new employees simply, as they put it, "lack the understanding of how the workplace functions." During the Caribbean Future Summit 2021 meeting held in New York USA, University of the West Indies Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hillary Beckles, opined that "we don't necessarily have a crisis of capital shortage in the Caribbean world; we have a crisis of social skills, entrepreneurial skills, economic and financial skills – the modern skills" (Morgan, 2021). The need to narrow the skills gap is therefore crucial and urgent in the developing world as it is in the developed world, or even more so, in light of significant and continuing poor performance in these countries in achieving targeted educational outcomes (European Commission, 2022; Kim et al, 2019; Morgan, 2021; Robertson & Paul, 2023;  United nations, 2020).

Many scholars and commentators in both developed and developing countries have declared on how the skills gap problem can be tackled. For example, Van den Broek (2021) advocates forward-thinking and progressive policies to deal with the problem. The European Commission (2022) suggests cooperation with social partners and other stakeholders in the society. Kim et al (2019) call for the training and retraining of teachers in the formal education system  on the teaching of 21st century skills specifically. In general, education is seen by all as a key element in these endeavors (UNICEF, 2022).

Malik (2018) argues, however, that especially in the developing countries of the world, the situation requires a radical change in the way in which education is delivered to 21st century young people. But since the formal education system is struggling, or simply unable, to develop 21st century skills in young people effectively, there is therefore much support for augmenting the

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formal education system with alternative forms of education such as nonformal education, defined as legitimate education obtained outside of traditional formal academic settings and normally do not result in the award of certification as in the formal system (Greenlow & Lewin, 2016; Rogoff et al, 2016).

There is much convincing evidence in the literature suggesting that youth organizations have long engaged effectively in providing non-formal educational experiences that redound to the positive development of young people, including the acquisition of employability skills. For example, the involvement of young people as employees in youth summer camps has been found to positively benefit their academic and workplace readiness, since they learn skills such as relationship skills, teamwork, self-confidence, problem-solving and leadership among others (Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Once becoming involved in youth organizations, youths of varying socio-economic backgrounds have been found to experience such positives as personal growth, learning enhancement and the ability to find and use their voice (Ardizzone, 2003; Balbridge, 2020).

Prior studies, however, have tended to focus on youth organizations controlled or run almost exclusively by youths and adult-led organizations that engage youths once annually as is the case with youth organizations that operate summer camps (Council of Europe, 2011; Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Additional research focusing on other types of youth organizations such as faith-based, civic, and state-controlled ones may be able to provide deeper insights into the contributions that youth organizations can make in not only general youth development, but in actually augmenting the formal education system's curriculum in better

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preparing youths for the 21st century workplace. For example, the Scouting Movement founded in 1908 has been known for its contributions to the development of leadership skills, creativity, patriotism and nobility of character in boys and girls worldwide (Mahmoud & Manda, 2016; Mills, 2016).

The purpose of this study is to expand on existing research on the contributions of youth organizations to the development of employability skills in youths by exploring using a qualitative multiple case study methodology the role and potential of faith-based, civic, and state-controlled youth organizations such as the Scouting Movement in Antigua and Barbuda in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace. More specifically, this study examines four broad aspects of the activities of youth organizations under study in order to make suggestions on how they are augmenting the formal education system of the country, or can improve on their capacity to do so.. These four areas are their:

1. Purpose, activities and general culture to see how well they support and promote 21st century employability skill development.

2. curricula content to see how well they align or can align with and augment the national curriculum.

3. pedagogical approaches to see how well they comport with what are considered in the literature to be best practices in pedagogy.

4. training and certification protocols to see how worthy they are to receive formal recognition.

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The main research question inquires about how youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are augmenting or can augment the formal education system with non-formal education and training and assisting in the preparation of youths for the workplace in the current knowledge-based economy.  Subsidiary questions ask:  With reference to youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda:

1.  What do they consider to be their main functions, aims and objectives and how facilitative are these of the development of 21$^{st}$ skills in young people?

2.  What pedagogic approaches do they employ and how do these approaches compare with best practices in pedagogy?

3.  How do their curricula compare with the national primary and secondary school curricula in content?

4.  How do they train their youth leaders and how worthy of official recognition are the certificates they award?

5.  In what additional ways can they assist schools in preparing young people for the workplace.

Having outlined the context in which this study is conducted, along with its rationale, purpose, scope, aims, and research questions, this chapter next presents the argument for the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the information gathered. This is followed by a report on the audit trail, aimed at presenting a comprehensive and transparent documentation and account of the entirety of the whole data collection process, so as to facilitate the tracking of the researcher's research related decisions and actions. The potential weaknesses of the data collection process are

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also presented and discussed. The results follow this section, with the study's demographics presented first, followed by the analyzed responses to each research question in numerical order and by the two groups of participants, viz, the heads of the organizations and the youth leaders at the club level.

**Trustworthiness of Data**

This study used a naturalistic qualitative approach to the exploration of how youth organizations are, or can, augment the formal education system, which is to say that in this study the researcher sought understanding through observing, describing, listening to, and interpreting the experiences and actions of the sample population in their societal and cultural context (Armstrong, 2010). The researcher also strove to ensure that this study was undertaken with trustworthiness and rigor, the former being the preferred term for the concept of validity in qualitative studies (Mandal, 2018; McKim, 2023), while the latter according to Johnson et al (2020) may be defined as "ensuring that the research design, method, and conclusions are explicit, public, replicable, open to critique, and free of bias" (p. 145).

Qualitative researchers generally reference Lincoln & Guba's (1985) four intertwined and interdependent strategies as the criteria for trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research (Tenny et al, 2017). The four strategies are *credibility*, which is the development and articulation of a certain level of confidence in the findings of the study by the researcher; *transferability*, the extent to which the study's findings could apply to other contexts and settings; *dependabilit*y, the extent to which the study could be replicated and reveal similar results; and *confirmability*, the level of certainty that the interpretations of the findings are the lived experiences of the participants and do

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not reflect researcher biases. Together with an audit trail whose details are outlined below, this study employs these guiding principles as the basis for the trustworthiness of the data that was collected.

Four techniques were utilized in this study to establish credibility. One was *triangulation*, which may be defined as the convergence of information from a variety of sources and a way of ensuring *descriptive validity,* defined as the factual accuracy of the researcher's account, and *interpretive validity*, which is the accuracy of the viewpoints, thoughts, and experiences of participants (Denzin, 2012; Fusch et al, 2018; McKim, 2023). Thus, in this study, for each organization, the researcher conducted a personal interview with its Director or head, organized a focus group discussion with youth leaders at the club level, made observations of the proceedings of club meetings, and read and analyzed the organization's policy documents and manuals. Information collected from each of these sources was compared for convergence of the information during the data analysis process and a significant degree of convergence was noted. The information for each organization was also compared for convergence and a similar level of consistency was also found. The type of triangulation used in this study can therefore be more accurately described as within-method methodological triangulation since the study employed a single design, (a qualitative multiple case study) using multiple sources of data as outlined in previous sections (Fusch et al, 2018).

A second technique was *thick description,* defined as a detailed and thorough description of the setting involved, along with quotes from the study's participants which help to give a sense of what was said, thus strengthening trustworthiness (McKim, 2023; Tenny et al, 2017). Thus, in

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reporting the findings generous use is made of quotations from the transcribed personal interviews and the focus group discussions. Tenny et al (2017) note that "thick" or "rich" description is a strength of qualitative research since it enables a researcher to create a cohesive story or narrative by weaving together a sequence of events reported by a small number of individuals. In this study, attempts are made at creating a cohesive and authentic narrative that reflects the usefulness of youth organizations as seen in the eyes of the study's participants and giving the reader sufficient information to make judgements about the trustworthiness of the findings in determining applicability to other settings or their *transferability*, which is described below.

The third technique is *member checking,* which involved the researcher presenting the findings of the study to one or more of the study's participants and soliciting their opinion on the accuracy of said findings (Creswell, 2005). The following four questions adopted from McKim (2023) were used to guide the feedback from the selected participants: 1) read through the findings and indicate your general reflections on the study; 2) indicate in accordance with your estimation how precisely the findings encapsulate your personal thoughts and experiences you have encountered; 3) indicate also any additional information to the findings such that your experiences may be more accurately presented; 4) indicate any part of the findings that in your estimation ought to be deleted from the study and please offer a reason why.

Each of the Directors and one member of each of the focus group discussions was sent by email the transcribed script and the findings as presented below for their comments and feedback. McKim (2023) notes that member-checking has certain drawbacks including

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participants not having the interest or time to respond. This was noticed in this study in that only two responses were received up to the time of writing this report.

The final method was *peer review,* or *peer debriefing* which entailed inviting a colleague who was impartial and qualified to critique a detailed audit trail maintained by the study's author (Daniel, 2019; Johnson et al, 2020; Zahari & Osoian, 2016). Two persons with whom the researcher is well acquainted and who had completed a doctorate program during the past ten years were given a copy of the study's purpose, research questions, audit trail as presented below and the study's findings to critique and provide feedback. Their comments which were minimal were incorporated in the report.

In addition to credibility, *transferability*, a second method according to Guba & Lincoln (1985) for establishing trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research, suggests that the findings of a particular study in a particular setting and with a certain group of participants may be applicable to other settings or groups of people (Daniel, 2019; Younas et al, 2023). This is not the same as *generalizability* as understood in quantitative studies. Rather, transferability suggests that valuable lessons may be had in a similar setting from the findings of one study that was conducted in another setting. Transferability thus provides a reader with another piece of evidence supporting the trustworthiness of research outcomes (Younas et al, 2023). In this study, attempts are made to compare findings with other studies and reports found in the literature, thus enhancing the transferability of the findings of this study.

As noted by Chowdhury (2015), the quality of qualitative research cannot be ascertained by any one method constantly employed, but rather, this author suggests that a combination or

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aggregate of methods is essential and advisable . In addition to credibility and transferability, this study therefore tries to ensure the two other methods recommended by Guba & Lincoln (1985) and mentioned earlier in the introduction to this section, *dependability* and *confirmability,* were employed. Seen as equivalent to reliability employed in quantitative research, the former has to do with consistency of findings if a study is repeated, while the latter speaks to the degree to which the study's findings can be authenticated by other investigators. In qualitative research this is ensured by using overlapping methods, in-depth methodological description, audit trail and member-checking (Chowdhury, 2015; Janis, 2022; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, the use of multiple sources for the same data as described earlier, the audit trail described below, as well as the details in the chapter on methodology, are the strategies used in this study to increase dependability.

### *Audit Trail*

Johnson et al (2020) contend that it is essential that qualitative researchers maintain a well-documented audit trail to demonstrate the application of standards of rigor and adherence to systematic processes. For Daniel (2019) this is one of the critical dimensions for establishing rigor in qualitative research and he used the term *auditability* for the process instead of *audit trail*, the term used by Guba & Lincoln (1989). Internal auditability according to Daniel (2019) has to do with clarity in the research questions and the data gathering and analysising methods. To achieve this the researcher needs to describe in detail his/her engagement with the entire research process, illustrate information that is presented as evidence pellucidly and record what thinkings and reflections link to the conclusions that are arrived at in the study.

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In this study efforts are made to optimize auditability. Hence, it is necessary to indicate that it was repeatedly stated that the sample originally selected for study consisted of three faith-based, one civic and one state-owned youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda making a total of five. Therefore data collection originally included five personal interviews, one each with the head of each of the targeted youth organizations or someone designated by them; five focus group discussions, one each with a group of five youth leaders at the club level of each of the five organizations; non-participant onsite observations by the researcher of an undermined number of club meetings of each of the organizations until saturation was noted; and document collection, namely, the policies and manuals of each of the organizations. As it turned out, the researcher was able to secure the participation of only four of the five targeted organizations.

The researcher contacted the head of three of the organizations that participated by telephone, introduced himself, briefed them about the study and invited their participation. Each readily agreed and the researcher requested a date, time and place for an interview and informed them that prior to the interview, and for familiarization purposes, he would drop off at their office the study's ethics documents: a Cover Letter, Informed Consent Forms, personal interview and focus group questions. This was done and the interviews were undertaken at the given date, time and place the participants suggested. Each interview was digitally recorded, manually transcribed and coded, and a summary of the content prepared and sent for member checking by the interviewee. The coded transcripts were subjected to analysis using the thematic approach.

The researcher was unable to contact the head of the fourth organization even after repeated attempts. After the time for data collection had expired, the researcher contacted a subordinate

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who agreed to be interviewed with the permission of the head and on the head's behalf. This interview was conducted by zoom, the participant being in another country at the time. The researcher was unable to secure the participation of the fifth organization as stated earlier, even after repeated attempts. The head was contacted by telephone and agreed to participate. The study's documents were dropped off at the head's office for familiarization purposes. However, the head kept postponing the date until the researcher could wait no longer and made the decision to proceed in the study without that organization.

The focus group discussions were undertaken with youth leaders of the four participating organizations. Getting each focus group to be five in number of participants proved to be an insurmountable logistical challenge. Hence, of the four focus group discussions conducted, three consisted of three members and one consisted of two. Like the personal interviews, the participants appeared open and cooperative during and after the discussions. Like the interviews also, each focus group discussion was digitally recorded, manually transcribed and coded and a summary of the content prepared for member checking by the participants. The coded transcripts were also analyzed using thematic analysis.

The researcher accessed the policy and curriculum documents and manuals of two of the organizations from their websites and those of the other two by email from the heads of the organizations. Analyses were done with the assistance of Cardno's (2018) policy document analysis tool, and general document analysis procedures found in the literature. Bowen (2009) describes a document analysis process as reading the documents several times and finding, choosing, judging and synthesizing the information present in the assemblage of documents.

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Observations of at least two meetings of each of three of the organizations were conducted using Compte & Preissle (1993) guidelines. The researcher was a non-participant observer in all of the meetings, although for one of them he was asked unexpectedly to address the meeting. On that occasion the researcher explained his presence and asked the attendees to carry on as if he were not there. The meetings were an hour and a half long on average. The researcher observed and after each meeting made notes of his observations as answers to the questions on Compte & Preissle's (1993) observation guidelines. Observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. The audit trail of this study therefore consists of the following: the digital and transcribed recordings of the interviews and focus group discussions, policy and curriculum documents of the organizations in electronic format, observation notes of club meetings and coded versions of all of these documents.

### *Possible Methodological Shortcomings*

Notwithstanding the above efforts and measures inputted to optimize trustworthiness and rigor, the researcher acknowledges the following potential weaknesses in the data collection and management processes of this study, which may have implications for its *descriptive validity* or accuracy in the reporting of descriptive information and the study's *interpretive validity* or accuracy of the researcher's capturing of the meaning participants gave to events, objects and behaviors (Craig et al, 2020; Johnson et al, 2020).

1. There were many instances of inaudibility in the interview and focus group discussion recordings, especially with the ending of sentences. For one of the focus group discussions the technical assistant whom the researcher had contracted to manage and monitor the

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recordings on the researcher's laptop was not present and the researcher had to undertake that task while at the same time moderate the focus group discussion. The discussion took place in an open area and the researcher did not realize that the audibility was so poor on the recording that the no transcription of that recording could be made. The researcher therefore had to rely on notes he had made during the discussion and the written materials provided by the organization to him. During transcription of the audible recordings, which was manual, insertions of the transcribers' own words were used to complete what the transcriber considered to be most likely the participants' thoughts. These instances are indicated by the use of square brackets to indicate words which were inserted. However, member-checking and consistency of responses did not indicate any misinterpretations.

2. The researcher was assisted by another person in one of the transcriptions. This was the same person the researcher contracted as a technical assistant. There is the possibility that that person's bias may also be reflected in the transcription. Craig et al (2021), for example, note that among the disadvantages of coding audio recordings is that it requires the coder to have a high degree of aural comprehension and frequent pausing and rewinding of the data to fully code. The tediousness of this process could have led to some inaccuracy in the capturing of the participants' thoughts by the assistant as it could also have been for the researcher. Here again, however, member-checking and consistency of responses did not indicate misinterpretation as an area of concern.

3. The task of keeping participants focused on the intended understanding and answering of questions during the interviews and focus group discussions was quite challenging for the

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researcher. Participants frequently strayed and in an effort to stick to the agreed time limit some questions were omitted or combined with other questions, resulting possibly in muddled answers.

4. The data collection processes in this study could have been influenced by any of the following common drawbacks accompanying qualitative data collection:

a) *Observer-expectancy effect* described by Tenney et al (2017) as a change in the responses or behaviors of participants to satisfy what the researcher wants to see. That is, being aware of the study's aims and wishing it to be positive, participants may have tuned their responses in that direction.

b) *The Hawthorne effect*, defined by Tenny et al (2017) as a change in the way participants behave when they are aware that they are under observation.

c) *Confirmation bias* which is the tendency of a researcher to search for information that supports, and overlook or misrepresent information that contradicts, the researcher's beliefs or opinions (Peters, 2022).

d) *Social desirability bias* has to do with the tendency by participants to exhibit themselves and their social context in a way that is perceived to be socially acceptable, but not entirely reflective of the participants' reality (Bergen & Labonte (2020).

To mitigate against the observer-expectancy and the Hawthorne effects first noticed in the initial observation, subsequently, the researcher chose observation points that were as unobtrusive as possible and, in some cases, completely unnoticeable. Gunawan (2015) posits that a study is trustworthy based solely and squarely on if one reading the research report determines that it is.

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In addition to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, many qualitative research authorities also add *reflexivity* to the list of the key criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research, this fifth concept is defined by Stenfors et al (2020) as "a continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research" (p. 3). In this study, the researcher, having been a youth leader in a faith-based youth organization for many years tried to exercise constant reflexivity by endeavoring to remain conscious of the influence that his experiences, assumptions and beliefs could have on the research process. Thus, the researcher made every effort to maintain objectivity as much as possible.

## Results

### Demographics of the Participants

Table 31 below provides a brief overview of the demographic data of the participants of this study. It can be seen from the table that the sample consisted of mostly males and the same is true for both head of the organizations and club leaders. The age range is also quite wide, ranging from as young as 19 to as old as 60.

**Table 31**
*Demographics of Participants*

| Position | Males | Females | Age Range | Average Years in Youth Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Head of Organization | 3 | 1 | 40 – 60 | over 20 |
| Youth Leader | 8 | 3 | 19 – 50 | over 15 |
| Total | 11 | 4 | | |

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*Research Question 1*

*What do they consider to be their main functions, aims and objectives and how facilitative are these of the development of 21$^{st}$ skills in young people?*

**Primary Objective**

Reflecting upon the widely held view about the impact of school culture and school climate on the performance of students in school (Abdullah, 2019; Schipper et al; 2020), the researcher sought to explore this study's Research Question 1 by first seeking to identify what the participants considered to be the most important purpose or the raison d'etre of their particular organization since, in the researcher's opinion, that could similarly possibly influence the organizations' ability to support and promote 21$^{st}$ century skill development and the preparation of young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. Responses to this question was sought from both the youth directors as well as leaders at the club level.

Table 32 following presents the thematic analysis undertaken by the researcher for this construct from the standpoint of each of the heads of the four organizations in personal interviews.

As can be seen in Table 32 the heads of all of the organizations are in agreement that the primary objective or raison d'etre of these youth organizations includes spiritual guidance as well as proselytizing, described variously by them as: equipping youths "to have their lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world" (Head of Organization 1), "to lead boys and girls to Christ"(Manual of Organization 2), and "the advancement of Christ's kingdom among [members]" (Head of Organization 3).

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An expansion of the foregoing responses is presented in the following direct quotes taken from the interviews.

> Interviewer: If one were to ask you what is the raison d' etre of your organization what would you say?

> [Our] youth ministry exist for the super goal of developing young people. And if you ask me what is the most important reason to exist, we exist to equip youth to have their lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world and also for impacting humanity in a positive way. But again it is a wholistic development approach … that we patternize. (Head of Organization 1).

> To train young people, training them for all aspects of their lives, both the physical, social, spiritual and educational aspects. We cater to the wholistic development (Head of Organization 2)

> Well if I were to answer that in one word I would say object … is the advancement of Christ's kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect and all that tends towards true Christian manliness (Head of Organization 3)

It can seen from the above quotes, however, that the leaders of the different organizations also indicated that their raison d'etre includes other dimensions such as: "wholistic development" [Head of Organizations 1 and 3], "developing young people" (Head of Organization 1), "to train young people … for all aspects of their lives, both the physical, social, spiritual and educational (Head of Organization 2), and "the promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect" (Head of Organization 3).

The Representative of the head of Organization 4 suggested the raison d'etre with the narrowest focus, describing it as providing "extra curricula activities" for young people and keeping them "occupied". The response from the head of this organization did not indicate that a

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spiritual component of that organization's conceptualization of development featured prominently in that organization.

**Table 32**

*Primary Objective of the Organizations According to Heads*

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| 2 Themes | Sub-themes | No. of References |
|---|---|---|
| Proselytizing | | 3 |
| | Witnessing for Christ | 1 |
| | Spreading the gospel | 1 |
| | Advancement of Christ's kingdom | 1 |
| | | |
| Spiritual guidance | | 4 |
| | Providing a faith-based perspective | 2 |
| | Instilling a Bible-based philosophy | 1 |
| | Nurturing true Christian manliness | 1 |
| | | |
| Wholistic development | | 4 |
| | Promotion of positive habits | 2 |
| | Social, spiritual, physical and intellectual development | 2 |
| | | |
| Extracurricular activities | | 1 |

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As stated earlier, the question about the primary objective or raison d'etre of youth organizations in general was posed to the youth leaders at the club level of each of the organizations for discussion in their focus group. In Table 33 below their responses to the question are displayed. As can be seen from the table most of their responses centered around aspects of positive youth development and youth recognition such as molding and building young people and giving them a voice.

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**Table 33**

*Primary Objective of Youth Organizations in General According to Club Leaders*

| Themes | Sub-themes | No. of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Positive youth development | | 7 |
| | To develop young people along certain lines | 4 |
| | To mold young people | 1 |
| | To build up young people | 2 |
| Youth recognition | | 3 |
| | Giving youth a purpose | 1 |
| | Giving youth a voice | 1 |
| | Giving youth a philosophical reference point | 1 |

The club leaders reported unanimously that from their perspective the raison d-etre of youth

organizations in general involves the positive development of youths as can be seen in Table 31.

Their responses ranged from "giving youths a purpose" and "a voice" (Youth leader 1

Organization 1); to "building character" (Youth leader 1 Organization 2) and "developing young

people along certain lines and with a particular purpose" (Youth leader 1 Organization 3). The

club leaders also agreed that positive youth development is the raison d'etre of both faith-based

and non-faith-based youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda:

> It doesn't have to be church-based but church-based is also good in the way you
> want them to go having certain Christian beliefs, but there are other organizations out
> there that are not church-based, but still the best organizations to grasp youths from
> young to lead them where they should go (Youth Leader 2 Organization 3)

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I think that establishing youth organizations gives a voice. In other words, in the olden days we would say, "when people talk, we hush, you can't say anything else", so now it gives them a voice, so I think that's one of the reasons (Youth Leader 1 Organization 1) And then it also helps to build comradery, because they are going to be adults, the parents and the teachers and so on, so the youth organizations help to mold them in that way (Youth leader 2 Organization 1).

**Other Objectives**

Continuing the quest of exploring how well the perceived functions, aims, objectives of the targeted youth organizations support 21$^{st}$ century skill development, the respondents were also asked to indicate the philosophical foundations or guiding principles governing youth organizations in order to identify their other objectives. The heads of the organizations were asked this question in relation to their organization specifically, while the youth leaders were asked the question in relation to youth organizations in general. Table 34 shows the themes that emerged from analysis of the responses of the heads of the organizations to this question during the personal interviews. It can be seen here also that the philosophical bases of the organizations go beyond spiritual development and proselytizing. Each of the four heads indicated that a fundamental philosophy of their organization is that their adherents must be equipped with the highest level of preparedness possible, not only to benefit themselves and the organization, but also for the benefit of their home and their country. Hence, they aim among other things for efficiency, excellence and well-roundedness in training as shown in the table. As explained by the Head of Organization 1:

We base our philosophy and all that we do on principles like these that help us to understand if our young people are going to amount to anything good in society, they must be trained and not only trained, but well trained …wholistically trained. (Organization 1)

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We teach or we train in the line of discipline, and we think it is a big deal because whereas the main education system concentrate on education and sometimes concerned with the total upbringing of the man, as it relates to discipline and so on, we sort of take up the slack and take it up in a broad way to cater to the spiritual person, the physical person, the intellectual person and socially even (Head of Organization 3).

The Head of Organization 4 suggested that good discipline is part of their philosophy because they believe that it enables the young person to "excel at anything we have to offer … and see it through". Biblical teachings and "generally accepted principles … especially a Christian perspective" were similarly offered as fundamental philosophies by the leaders of Organizations 1 and 2, since according to them the Bible does not speak to every physical and social situation. In situations where the Bible is silent they resort to principles that are generally accepted in society as proper. The Head of Organization 3 indicated core values such as honesty and leadership

**Table 34**

*Guiding Principles According to Heads*

| Themes | Sub-themes | No. of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Efficiency and excellence | | 4 |
| | Good training | 1 |
| | Well-roundedness | 2 |
| | Excellence through discipline | 1 |
| Proselytizing | | 3 |
| | Spreading the gospel message | 1 |
| | Faith-based value-led lifestyles | 2 |
| Good moral and ethical values | | 2 |
| | Core-values (eg, honesty, integrity, strong character) | 1 |
| | Generally accepted principles | 1 |

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The themes emerging from analysis of the responses of the club leaders during their focus group discussions are shown in Table 35 below. In reflecting on the guiding principles that govern youth organizations in general, the club leaders expressed ideas similar to those expressed by the heads. Although a commitment to God is fundamental to all the organizations, living by a code of honor that includes values such as integrity, respectfulness, commitment and obedience are offered by these participants as equally fundamental guiding principles as can be seen in the Table 35 following.

**Table 35**

*Guiding Principles According to Club Leaders*

| Theme | Sub-Theme | No. of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Living by a code of honor | | |
| | Respectfulness to all persons | 5 |
| | Being trustworthy and loyal | 5 |
| | Commitment and discipline | 2 |
| | Obedience | 2 |
| Strong religious faith | | 3 |

According to the club leader in one of the organizations, "Some [youth] organizations I have been a part of… they really focus on discipline, integrity and loyalty and then the main focus is Christianity (Youth Leader 1, Organization 1). Another youth leader at the club level agreed with this individual, saying, "leadership, loyalty, trustworthiness, honesty: all of these are a part of the focus in terms of what governs … organization and as long as these are developed,

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we know that a person can become a contributor to society as a whole (Youth Leader 2, Organization 1).

The discussion of this question in the focus group of the youth leaders of Organization 3 went as illustrated below:

The policy documents which included manuals, handbooks and other publications of each of the organizations including those published on their websites reflect the foregoing sentiments. For example, they all speak of creating responsible and loyal citizens of the country and emphasize character development qualities such as discipline, courage, loyalty, honesty and civic responsibility. It was observed at their club meetings that part of the rituals as they begin their meetings is for members to recite their motto, aim and pledge which also echo these principles.

On special occasions when the clubs met it was observed also that the rituals developed by the organizations also include demonstrating respect for, and knowledge of, national symbols such as the coat of arms, the national flag and the national anthem. Youth leader 2 of Organization 1 explained:

> You have [youth] organizations [that] teach Civics, what it means to be a citizen, because I know a lot of young people out there that they know they are Antiguans, but they don't know what that means, so some of the youth organizations help to instill this in you; like, you're not just here to exist, but you have a greater role to play.

**Positive Youth Development Activities**

In addition to their tenets and philosophical bases or guiding principles, if youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are assisting, or can assist, young people in 21$^{st}$ century skill development and preparation for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace, it is reasoned in this study that this
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potential must also be evident in their routine activities. Hence the heads of the organizations in the personal interviews and the club leaders in the focus group discussions conducted during this study were asked to comment on how youth organizations including their own contribute to the positive development of young people.

The responses of the participants seem to indicate a widespread belief among them that youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda engage significantly in the positive development of young people. The head of Organization 1 pointed to their practice of fostering and maintaining a "high-quality relationship" between youths and a mentor, educator or "someone who is responsible."

This participant contended that "that is really key if you are going to develop positive young people.

> The first thing I would say is high quality relationship with a mentor, teacher or educator. I think that is really key if you are going to develop positive young people. If you do not have a guide, if you do not have a copy from which you're going to guide young persons I think that is important. So first of all the high quality relationship that exists between the mentor or teacher or someone who is responsible (Head of Organization 1)

This participant also indicated that they teach their young people important "life skills" that will help them to become "good children and community members as they develop and grow" and explained that the skills are taught in "value context ways" and are transferable to other areas of life, including the workplace.

> We teach them life skills that will help them to become good children and community members as they develop and as they grow. You know oftentimes we are more interested in young people developing in athletics because they are young. We think that athletics skills are the most important but from a very tender age children can learn life skills that can help them to be the great men and women that we have seen through so many of our leaders. They can learn the life skills that they can transform
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that even from teaching them the athletics they can transfer that to every area of life. (Head of Organization 1)

The head of Organization 2 indicated that they engage in positive youth development by teaching their young people how to socialize "according to religious values" as they expressed it. This head explained also that "the school and society teach them [young people] how to socialize one way, we want to put our little bit into it, especially from a faith-based perspective with the backing of the biblical truth if you want to call it that."

The head of Organization 3 described their approach as teaching and training young people to be well-disciplined spiritually, physically, intellectually and socially. Underscoring the importance of broad-based discipline, this participant identified this area as an example of a youth organization explicitly augmenting the formal curriculum:

> So, we, in a broad sense though not in a formal sense as it relates to the educational syllabus, take on that other side of it which may help to make the entire man. So along the line of discipline, good upbringing.

To illustrate positive youth development in their organization the representative of the head of Organization 4 pointed to the teaching and training in career and occupational skills in that organization that enable youngsters to explore careers that they might not otherwise have been able to explore. As this participant put it, being a part of that youth organization gives youths the opportunity to "spread your wings, to explore and get different skills and the activities are just endless."

The suggestions of the club leaders echoed those of the heads of the organizations. For example, the youth leaders of Organization 1 highlighted the nurturing good morals, the providing of opportunities for young people to work in groups, and the nurturing leadership skills in young

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people. Those of Organization 2 pointed out catering for wholistic development, while those of

Organization 3 suggested "promoting discipline" and teaching "self -respect".

Youth leader 3 of Organization 3 shared a personal testimony of how youth organizations

have helped that participant's development as a leader:

> I started … as an officer and started from there coming up. I went to camp and at the camp too, they kind of mold me. They put me in charge of a group, a bigger group that I control and they see that I worked good so they ranked me up.

This youth leader also shared how involvement in the youth organization continues to assist

this individual in the development of essential characteristics of a leader of young people and as a

more confident person generally:

> I'm still working, and it teach me personally a lot. For example, patience: you have to have patience with [the youths] and listen because before that I didn't listen to nothing but as an officer I must sit down and listen to the [youths], what they need, what problem they have.

This participant adds that working in youth organizations is mutually beneficial: "So I'm

teaching them and they are teaching me." The youth leaders also indicated that youth organizations

assist in the schooling of youths by providing financial and other educational resources for youths

whose families may be struggling so to do:

> We have over the years given quite substantially, financially and resource in relation to other resources to the schools… children from the community benefit substantially in terms of schoolbooks, in terms of uniforms, those things (Head of Organization                                                                                    1).

The head of Organization 4 reported that young people in youth organizations are provided

with opportunities for contributing to community involvement:

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 They are able to go out there into the community and use the skills they learn like using a handheld radio to help their community in times of disaster (Representative of head of Organization 4).

The researcher was a non-participant observer at a number of club meetings of the organizations and made the following observations of their activities, which are analyzed thematically and presented in Table 36 below.

As can be noted from the table, young people were observed engaging in a variety of activities which have the potential of nurturing and developing in them a number of skills which can be classified as life skills and transferable skills and skills that employers indicate are desirable in employees. Meetings were mostly held in churches, but also outdoors and under a big canvas tent in an open field on one occasion when several clubs met together. Hence it was a large gathering which was estimated to a little over fifteen hundred and included persons of all ages. Approximately sixty percent of those gathered fell within the age range of youth as defined in this study. That is, around sixty percent were young people up to the age of 35.

**Table 36**

*Thematic Analysis of Observations of Club Activities at a Meeting*

| Codes | No. of Occurrences | Theme |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Discussion between club member and leader on progress towards earning a badge. | 5 | Mentoring |
| Organization head lecturing club members on representing the organization well | 2 | |
| Club leader coaching members on drilling | 1 | |
| Club members managing sound system during the meeting | 3 | Acquiring technical skills |
| . | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Club members managing video system during the meeting | 3 | |
| Club members engaging in a formal debate before a live audience | 1 | Developing communication skills, critical thinking and teamwork |
| Club members asked to listen to a debate and who is the best debater | 1 | Developing listening skills |
| Club member singing before a live audience | 3 | Exposing and nurturing talent |
| Club members chairing and managing the meeting | 6 | Developing leadership and management skills |

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### Preparing Youths for the Workplace

The heads of the organizations were also asked to indicate specific ways in which their organization is preparing youths for the workplace. The head of Organization 1 pointed to their wholistic development program and multidimensional courses, which according to this head:

We not only train people in terms of the spiritual, but we are also training people how to handle themselves at the workplace, how to go about an interview… how to prepare yourself for life, for life's work and every area of their life.

This participant added that young people in his organization are also taught "things about relationships," "how to work with individuals" and are "trained for leadership in the world." This participant also indicated that because graduates of their youth program tend to be well-rounded, they often "get the best jobs" and concluded, however, that much of this success depended on how seriously the training provided by his organization is taken. "Once you take the training seriously and you enter any sphere after that training, you are well prepared to handle the rigors and the challenges."

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The head of Organization 2 stated that evidence of workplace preparation in this particular organization is seen in the emphasis his organization places on acquiring academic qualifications to enhance competitiveness in the workplace. Referring to the youths this head explains:

> We think that we have to make sure that all of them must have a good performance in [high stakes examinations]. In order for you to look about the entire life in which work will eventually be one, we are saying to them that schoolwork comes first. After God, schoolwork comes second because without an education right now you will struggle in the world.

This official added that their organization also provides training in a number of areas that are germane to workplace readiness. These include public speaking, which they think is extremely important for developing confidence; proper dressing, important for job interviews and the workplace; and managing one's social media portfolio, important for avoiding embarrassment in background checks in job applications. As expressed by the head or Organization 2:

> I think that potential employers are looking at those things when they interview you, not only the paper, but sometimes even before you come into the interview they are already on your Facebook and your Instagram profile and have already formed an opinion of you. So, to prepare yourself for the workplace we look at those areas: how you speak, how you dress, your educational achievements, what you bring to the table, the certificates that you are getting.

The head of Organization 3 expressed great confidence that that organization is preparing youths for the workplace: "We prepare people for the workplace not in a formal sense because people don't know that we do that because we just do that." This head pointed to their organization's emphasis on discipline (which the participant described as "just a little milder than the military" on ethics and on honesty, as specific examples of workplace preparation.

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Interviewer: In what specific ways would you say that your organization helps in preparing young people for the workplace?
So if I may even start by saying that sometime ago I actually wrote to the Governor General … and suggested to him that because of the philosophy of [our organization] and what it stands for, we prepare people for the workplace. Not in a formal sense because people don't know that we do that because we just do that (Head of Organization 3).

The representative of the Head of Organization 4 pointed to exposure provided for learning a very wide range of career-related skills and gaining real-life experiences from travelling to other countries as contributions to workplace preparation. "Our activities … give you an opportunity to spread your wings, to explore and get different skills." Referring to the kinds of activities and experiences youths are exposed to in that organization, this official added that youths are able to develop their leadership and communication skills: "Another thing is that it hones their leadership skills. It encourages them to communicate."

The youth leaders of Organization 3 suggested that in their organization there is a very wide range of educational, social and spiritual activities and these activities "are not fixed meaning that each group can have their own set of activities which can be based on the skills or skill sets of the leaders." Hence specific activities that prepare youth for the workplace are likely to be included in the activities of the various clubs, they opined, and mentioned as examples the teaching of life skills, grooming, proper dressing, volunteerism, teamwork and community service.  As low Youth leader 1 in organization 2 explained

We teach them …how to tie a shoelace, how to tie a tie because that prepares you for the workplace if you have to wear a tie. A lot of things we do they don't teach them at school. For example, we teach them camping, how to light fire, how to pitch a tent, how to cook at least a simple meal.

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Youth leader 2 of Organization 2 added that youth organizations like theirs provide a structured

environment in which youths can learn to follow orders, respect for authority and how to handle

challenges with power relations. According to this participant

> We are also structured. So we have a chain of command that we have to follow, as in the [youths] know that there is somebody in charge above them, so there are rules that they would have to go by and this prepares them for the workplace so they know who is boss and they do as they're told and if they have a problem with what is being said they can take it up after they've done what they are supposed to do.

The head of Organization 1 also shared how youths are given the opportunity in the

organization to plan and develop projects:

> We want to get involved with … understanding how to do a community project. So sit down put a plan together, put a budget together, … you can see how that translates in [real life] where you sit down, you draft up a plan, a proposal, you take it to a government institution, ... So when you leave the church and you go out there you are well rounded, you know what you're dealing with.

### Assisting With Schooling

The Head of Organization 1 is of the belief that the curriculum content of his organization

and that of the school are identical in some areas:

> So the curriculum of the school and the curriculum of the church are one and the same as I see it. We teach on amphibians, we teach on reptiles, we teach … in relation to stars … shrubs, and all the other things that children would learn in biology, chemistry, physics …We talk about choosing a career, moral behaviors, sex and dating, … choosing your life partner. And the list can go on and on.

This participant is also of the opinion that their curriculum has substantial depth: "…when

you get the curriculum you will see how in-depth it is with regards to what we train on, what we

expose our young people to [and what] they have to interface with."

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The Heads of Organizations 2 and 3 indicated that they assist with the schooling of young people by going into schools and lecturing on core values and ethics (Head of Organization 3) and conducting devotions (Head of Organization 2). These two heads also indicated that they assist the school by reinforcing and complimenting what was learned in school:

> We don't interact directly with the school. We just try to repeat, reinforce, clarify. When there are specific celebrations or activities… like arbor day we use the opportunity to reinforce or to teach that. So we compliment just what they are teaching in school (Head of Organization 2).

> We direct the energy in a more direct way to those parts which are not so much looked at in the formal setting, not that they are not looked at but we compliment (Head of Organization 3).

Youth leader 1 of Organization 1 suggested that youth organizations are assisting schools in the reduction of delinquent behaviors such as joining gangs, by providing a positive alternative outlet. This participant explained:

> You realize they have a kind of thing going on in the schools right and I don't even know what it is about, but for what I've seen it's not any of the [members of my youth organization] or anybody who's actively engaging in the organizations. It's usually the people that generally do not have anything to do that gravitate to the gangs and so on, or the gangs recruit them. I'm not sure exactly. And they end up in problem. If they were a part of these organizations, they would have been engaged in some meaningful activity.

Several of the youth leaders (as well as the heads of the organizations) also pointed to the system of earning honors or badges in their youth organizations as greatly assisting the school since many of the things the young people learn or are ex2posed to in earning the honors or badges, are part of the school curriculum. Youth leader 2 of Organization 1 indicated that this is explained to young members of the organization thus:

> .

> Some of these things are things that you do in school. So what happen is that if you're learning about insects or anything, when you do an honor you learn a lot more and you can transfer the knowledge to the students who are doing Science.

The youth leaders also suggested that youth organizations assist the school in instilling virtues of honesty and integrity that result in the reduction of negative behaviors:

> And yes, honesty. Again, for instance, when you are participating or when you're doing a test, even though when it's very hard you keep your guard. So all of that cheating and so forth will be reduced (Youth leader 2 Organization 1).

Youth organizations according to the youth leaders also assist the school by teaching public speaking, real world use of maps and compasses, auto mechanic and handicraft skills. For example, one reported that "we teach you to speak in front of a group… we do map reading, learning how to use a compass…we go as far as teaching how an engine works … we've done craft, different craft" (Youth leader 1 Organization 3). Other subject areas where content is covered include math: "we have a teacher that teach math, count money, all that kind of stuff we help them with" (Youth leader 2 organization 3), geography and current affairs: "we talk about countries, capital of countries, current affairs in countries,... local information on Antigua, knowing places in Antigua, these sorts of things" (Youth leader 1, Organization 3), and ecology and environmental protection:

> We do a lot of things like … learn about all the lizards [birds and racer snakes] in Antigua. In fact, our group is part of the EAG [Environmental Awareness Group]. So we are one of the ones that go when they are clearing, go and check racer snakes. We are the ones that go to the different islands (Youth leader 1, Organization 3).

Recognizing that the attention spans of today's young people appear to have gotten shorter, the youth leaders also indicated that they provide training in this regard:

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We try to get them to do things where they can learn to focus in school and pay attention because paying attention is a big problem in school for young people (Youth leader 1 Organization 3).

The representative of the head of Organization 4 reported that their organization assists the school in the areas of self-discipline and time management:

Discipline doesn't mean that you just learn to keep quiet or not to misbehave. The discipline is ingrained whereby you know that you have some activities you have to study, the time management, these are the things that should be transferred into the school system to assist the individual going through.

The representative of the head of Organization 4 also suggested that the school benefits when skills young people learn in their organization are resorted to in school:

Another thing is that those who are able to do the first aid, they are able to assist like in the Physical Education program at school because as you know they have the SBA and whatever it is. Or if something happens at the school, they are able to assist. So these are things that can be transferred into the school system.

One of the meetings observed by the researcher featured a trained official of the National Emergency Response Unit of the government who presented on the application of CPR and Heimlich maneuver. A lecture on the same was presented to the young people followed by demonstrations on dummies. In assessing the effectiveness of the teaching of these skills the presenter invited a number of youths from the audience to demonstrate using the dummies how well they had learned the application of the skills. The activity lasted about an hour and most of the youths when called upon demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the skills. Much excitement in the meeting was sparked by the activity and the presenter offered to return subsequently to present in another session more on first aid. The policy documents or manuals of the organizations also indicate that members could earn badges or pins in First Aid training.

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**Research Question 2**

*What pedagogic approaches do they employ and how do these approaches compare with best practices in pedagogy?*

**Pedagogic Approaches**

Respondents were asked to identify and describe specific learning and training activities utilized in their organizations. Traditional methods such as lecturing and rote learning were suggested and observed by the researcher to be quite common. For example, according to one participant "When actually in these organizations you have to actually learn and recite them," meaning that many things are committed to memory by rote (Youth leader 2 Organization 1). Another participant indicated that "We reinforce the same things [taught in school] in our presentations," (Head of Organization 2). By presentations the participant meant a lecture presented from a podium before an audience. The researcher observed one of these "presentations" at a club meeting. His observations of that meeting are analyzed and presented in Table 37 below.

**Table 37**

*Thematic Analysis of Observations of Pedagogy*

| Code | No. of Occurrences | Theme |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Presenter stands at lectern speaking while club members sit and listen | 1 | Traditional pedagogical approach |
| Club members yawning | 5 | Boredom/loss of |
| Club members fidgeting | 10 | interest |
| Club members asked to memorize facts | 1 | Rote learning |

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It was held in a church affiliated with the organization and lasted about 20 minutes. It was a lecture presented by the organization's head to a group of 20 club members of a particular club located in a suburban area. There were 12 females and 8 males and averaging around 12 years in age. The presenter stood at a podium a couple of meters in front of them, while the club members sat in two orderly rows in the pews. The topic had to do with completing the requirements to earn a particular award. There was very little interaction between the presenter and the audience other than their listening. Although mostly paying attention to the presenter, there were many occasions when they appeared to lose interest.

More constructivist methods were also suggested and observed. These include: role playing and drama: "We like to do role plays," (Head of Organization 2 with reference to the teaching of conflict resolution to young people in his organization); project-based learning: "They are taught in the clubs through the [earning] of honors and other things," (Head of Organization 1); group discussion: "So stars, when we look at the stars … we talk about the stories behind of the stars… We talk about choosing your career" (Head of Organization 1), using games, described as "a happy way of teaching;" observation walks; field trips and tours.

The researcher observed club meetings where constructivist approaches were demonstrated. At one meeting, the main activity was a debate on a topic of interest to young people before an audience consisting of people of all ages. Each of the two teams in the debate consisted of three youths of the same gender, male and female, averaging about 18 years in age. While awaiting the results of the debate from the judges, there was a lively discussion about the merits and demerits of the proposals advanced by each side in the debate and many youths participated.

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Youths were seen undertaking other activities to facilitate the debate as it took place, such as controlling the audio and video equipment and providing entertainment. The researcher's thematic analysis of this meeting is shown in Table 34 above.  At other meetings youths were observed working in groups to complete activities related to earning honors or badges. They were free to move around and interact with members of other groups as well as the youth leaders who were in control of the meeting.

Respondents also suggested that their organizations engage in vicarious learning on a large scale, since their young members are exposed to a wide range of experiences. For example, with reference to ways in which his youth organization assists in the preparation of young people for the workplace, Youth leader 1 or Organization 3 explained:

> We have a wide variety of activities taking place in our [organization]… centered around educational, social and spiritual activities and these activities are not fixed, meaning that each group can have their own set of activities which can be based on the skills or skill sets of the leaders. So basically, with regards to activities that will assist young people in the workplace there might be specific activities that we do that.

Also, in teaching young people about their responsibilities as citizens in nation building, Youth leader 2 of Organization 1 said: "Youth organizations they would tell you, but just being a part of it you eventually learn that." Partnering or collaborating with outside entities such as the government to provide training was mentioned by all the respondents:

> [We have] been well known over the years for working in close unit with the government institutions and any institution for that matter (Head of Organization 1).

**Research Question 3**

*How do their curricula compare with the national primary and secondary school curricula in content?*

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The curricula of the youth organizations in this study include the earning of a wide range of honors/badges. Each is carefully designed as a course of study in which knowledge and experience is gained. Club members are free to choose to earn any badge or honor that sparks their interests and work towards the completion of the requirements at their own pace. Table 38 displays the requirements for earning an honor in Alternative Fuels by 10 – 15-year-old club members of one of the organizations in this study. The preamble to the list of requirements stipulates that all honors awarded by that organization are designed to be courses of study that introduce the club member to a subject which should have practical value for the pursuer as well as be able to enhance the pursuer's lifestyle and personal wellbeing.  In essence, the pursuance and earning of the honor should assist the youngster in his/her personal development as a well-rounded Christian by directly influencing the social, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of the youngster's life.

**Table 38**
*Requirements for Honor in Alternative Fuels*

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- Differentiate between conventional fossil fuels and alternative fuels
- Give a short description of each of the following alternative fuels along with their potential benefits: algae-based fuels, bio-alcohol, biodiesel, hydrogen, ethanol, hydrogen, electricity, liquid nitrogen, methanol, natural gas, non-fossil methane, nuclear power, propane.
- Explore a minimum of  three reasons that can explain the importance of alternative fuels.
- Pros and cons of alternative fuels
- Use drawings, sketches or photographs to show the elements that comprise natural gas.
- Explain how compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas differ.
- Use drawings to show the stages, or watch an electronic animation on an appropriate device, that illustrates the alternate fuel conversion process as used in the automobile industry.
- Give a description of how a vehicle that uses propane as a fuel operates.

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- Engage with others in a discussion on the importance of finding alternative fuel sources.
- Use group work to accomplish any two of the following activities: visit an alternative fuel producing facility of your choice and give a verbal report on your visit; create a science project involving the use of an alternative fuel; organize a visit to your club by a worker in the alternative fuels industry in which he/she presents a lecture, show through calculations and demonstration the savings in costs associated with modern alternative fuel/hybrid vehicles and present what you find in a display or verbally to the club
- Have an open discussion with some club members the following texts related to alternative fuels. Note: The discussion should allow free thinking with guidance of an instructor: Psalm 24:1; Colossians 1: 16-17; John 1:3

There is considerable similarity among the badges/awards offered by the four organizations in this study. Table 39 below is a representative list of these badges/awards and attempts to match them with disciplines on the school curriculum at the secondary level of the education system of Antigua and Barbuda. As can be seen in the table the 47 badges/awards on the list may be matched with a total of 15 distinct subject areas (example, Visual Arts, Social Studies, Geography, Mathematics), with Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Human and Social Biology and Agricultural Science group together and listed as science.

**Table 39**
*Badges/Awards/Honors Matched with School Disciplines*

| Badge/Award/Honor | School Discipline |
| --- | --- |
| Animal Care | Science |
| Artist | Visual Arts |
| Athlete | Physical Education & Sports |
| Bird Care | Science |
| Bird Watching | Science |
| CARICOM | Social Studies, Geography |
| Carpentry | Industrial Technology |
| Chef | Home Economics |
| Child Care | Home Economics |

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|---|---|
| Cleanliness | Home Economics, Science |
| Craft | Visual Arts |
| Computer | Information Technology |
| Conservation | Science, Social Studies, Geography |
| Cyclist | Physical Education & Sports |
| Drama | Theatre Arts |
| Drawing | Visual Arts |
| Embroidery | Visual Arts, Home Economics |
| Figures and Finances | Business, Accounting, Mathematics |
| Family Focus | Social Studies |
| Fitness | Physical Education & Sport, Science |
| Friendship Factor | Social Studies |
| Ganes | Physical Education & Sports |
| Gardener | Science |
| Gymnastics | Physical Education & Sports |
| Hiking | Physical Education & Sports |
| Home Maintenance | Industrial Technology |
| Horsemanship | Physical Education & Sports |
| Interpreter | Modern Languages |
| Journalist | English Language, English Literature |
| Leadership | All disciplines |
| Library | English Language, English Literature |
| Mathematics | Mathematics |
| Mechanics | Industrial Technology, Science |
| Music Maker | Music |
| My Country | Social Studies, Geography |
| Needle Craft | Home Economics, Visual Arts |
| Orienteering | Geography, Science |
| Photography | Science, Visual Arts |
| Puppetry | Visual Arts |
| Poetry | English Language, English Literature |
| Public Speaking | English Language |
| Puzzles | Mathematics |
| Recycling | Science, Social Studies, Geography |
| Scholar | All disciplines |
| Singer | Music |
| Skipping | Physical Education and Sports |
| Weather Watch | Science, Geography |

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Figure 1 following shows that if the subject disciplines are categorized into four areas, namely, science, Technical Vocational Education and training (TVET), Physical Education and Sports and Humanities, and that the highest percentage of the badges/honors falls under TVET followed by the humanities then science and then the humanities and physical education and sports in that order.

**Figure 1**

*Percentage of Honors/Awards According to Subject Categories*
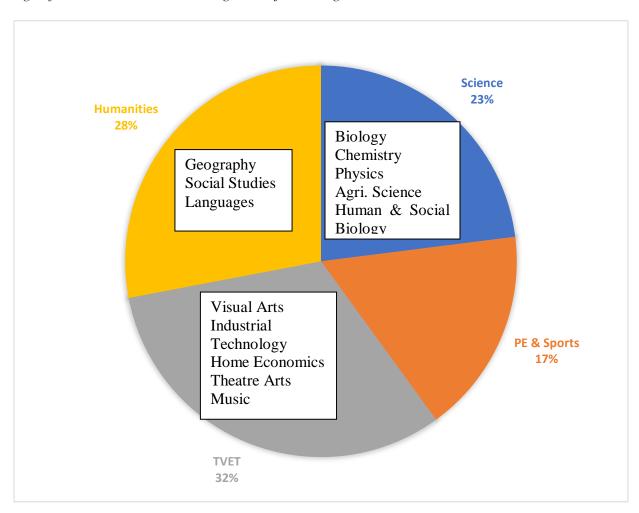


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Figure 2 following shows the honors/badges grouped according to the four subject categorizations. Not included in this illustration are badges/awards in Mathematics, Bird Care, Child care, Cleanliness, Figures and Finances, Family Focus, Friendship Factor, Leadership, My Country, Orienteering and Puppetry.

**Figure 2**

*Honors/Awards According to Subject Categories*



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Mirroring the comparison between the curriculum of secondary schools and that of the youth organizations under study as just shown and described, Table 40 attempts to show how the four strands and accompanying themes of Antigua and Barbuda's Science Primary School curriculum similarly align with awards of honors and badges that can be earned in the curricula of the youth organizations. For example, it can be seen in the table that by earning a badge or honor in astronomy, weather, water purification, or conservation, a member of the organizations would be exposed to similar material in the study of earth's resources, weather and the solar system which are themes within the earth and space science strand of the school science curriculum.

**Table 40**

*Alignment of Honors/Badges with Primary Science Curriculum*

| Strand | Theme | Honors and Badges |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Life Science | Ecosystems<br>Structure and Function<br>Diversity and Classification | Ecology, habitats, animals.<br>insects, trees, seeds, pets<br>naturalist, gardening |
| Physical Science | Energy<br>Forces, motion and structures<br>Matter and materials<br>Experimental skills | maps, compass, electronics<br>mathematics, painting,<br>drawing, photography,<br>basketry, handicraft<br>magnets, computers |
| Earth and Space Science | Earth's resources<br>Earth's weather<br>The solar system | astronomy, weather,<br>water purification,<br>conservation, |

*Source: Science Primary School Curriculum – Antigua and Barbuda (2019) and Curricula of Youth Organizations.*

The rationale of the national Social Studies Primary School curriculum lists three types of education the curriculum should foster: values education, character education and moral education. Table 41 shows the 10 themes to be covered in the Social Studies Primary curriculum that should provide the three education types.

**Table 41**
*Social Studies Primary School Curriculum Themes*

| Theme | Focus |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Culture and heritage | - learning experiences involving studying culture and cultural diversity |
| 2. Time, continuity and change | - learning experiences involving the ways we view ourselves through the ages |
| 3. People, places and environment | - learning experiences involving people, geographic locations and environments. |
| 4. Individual development and identity | - learning experiences involving one's growth and identity. |
| 5. Persons, groups and organizations | - learning experiences involving the following interactions: persons, groups, organizations |
| 6. Power, control, management | - learning experiences involving how we create. interrelate with, and substitute structures |
| 7. Production, distribution and consumption | - learning experiences involving how we organize to produce, distribute and consume |
| 8. Scientific technological and social concerns | - learning experiences involving scientific, technological, and societal relations. |
| 9, Global connections | - learning experiences involving global interactions and interdependencies. |
| 10. Civic models and practices | - learning experiences involving ideals, concepts, and practices of citizens in democracies |

*Source: 2015 – 2021 Social Studies EDC Grades K - ^ Antigua and Barbuda*

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The Social Studies curriculum used in upper secondary school of Antigua and Barbuda (Grades 9 – 11) is the Social Studies syllabus of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), the examining body that administers school leaving examinations for most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean region. The aims and objectives of this document are shown in Table 42.

**Table 42**

*Social Studies Secondary School Curriculum Aims and General Objectives*

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AIMS
1. develop an appreciation for self as active, responsible and reflective members of society
2. encourage respect and tolerance for the differences that exist among us
3. develop an appreciation for one's own culture and the cultural heritage of others
4. develop social and life skills important for social interaction in the 21st century
5. develop an appreciation for the environment and contribute towards its sustainability
6. develop spatial and geographical awareness of the region and the world; and,
7. develop the ability to adapt to and solve issues related to the social, economic, political and technological challenges in the country, region and the world.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES: On completion of this syllabus, students should:
1. understand himself or herself as a social being, his or her relationships with his or her family, community, nation or state, the Caribbean region and the wider world.
2. demonstrate the ability to critically appraise the prevailing societal attitudes, norms and values related to diversity among people
3. become aware of the origins of their cultural identity and that of the region
4. demonstrate the ability to use coherent and conscious processes as the principal means for social participation and social action
5. appreciate the human and natural diversity of the region and how this can be harnessed to promote its sustainable development through regional integration
6. develop an awareness of the geographical environment of the region
7. respond to the global changes that influence the society and environment of the region
8. appreciate the importance of being tolerant, respectful and considerate of different talents, abilities and capabilities that may exist among individuals; and,
9. value the importance of utilizing the various forms of communication and technology for collaborating to achieve shared goals

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*Source: CXC Social Studies Syllabus (2022)*

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The curricula of the youth organizations in this study show areas of alignment with the Social Studies curricula of the schools of Antigua and Barbuda. Table 43 attempts to highlight some areas of such alignment, drawing upon aims and objectives from the manuals and curriculum documents of the youth organizations. The table shows, for example, that the curricula of the youth organizations have as part of their content, character and personality development and national and regional awareness in the form of knowledge about Antigua and Barbuda as well CARICOM, the acronym for Caribbean Community, the geopolitical regional organization of which Antigua and Barbuda is a part. This content is reflected in the school's curriculum in the form of understanding oneself as a social being and as a member of a family, community, country, region and the wider world.

**Table 43**

*Alignment of School Social Studies and Youth Organizations' Curricula*

| Youth Organizations Curricula | School Social Studies Curriculum |
| --- | --- |
| Character and personality development CARICOM, my country | understand himself or herself as a social being, his or her relationships with his or her family, community, nation or state, the Caribbean region and the wider world. |
| To develop in [members] a sense of pride, patriotism and courage. | become aware of the origin of their cultural identity and that of the region. |
| To instill virtues of good citizenship and strong moral principles | Civic ideals, and practices |
| To demonstrate the value of an alcohol free, drug free and gang free lifestyle | develop social and life skills important for social interaction in the 21st century. |

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|---|---|
| To foster positive social relations and inter-actions, exercising sound judgement, accepting personal responsibility for actions and proper handling of interpersonal conflict | demonstrate the ability to use coherent and conscious processes as the principal means for social participation and social action. |
| To enlarge their windows on the world | develop an awareness of the geographi-cal environment of the region. |

*Source: Youth Organizations and School Curricula Antigua and Barbuda*

**Research Question 4**

*How do they train their youth leaders and how worthy of official recognition are the certificates*

*they award?*

**Table 44**
*Training and Certification Characteristics of Organizations*

| Type | Mode | Trainer | Certification Provided ? | Certification Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth leadership | Formal | Organization personnel | Yes | Organization |
| | Informal | Vicarious experiencing/ Observation | No | |
| | | Following manuals | No | |
| Specialized | Formal | Outside agency | Yes | Outside agency |

Respondents indicated two types of training provided by their organizations: training as

youth leaders and training in specialized areas such as first aid (See Table 44). Training as youth

leaders appeared to be formal in some organizations and less so in others. For example, the head

of Organization 1 explained that in his organization training of youth leaders is done annually and

the rationale for this is that "the world is a changing world and we continue to learn every day."

In Organizations 2 and 3 the leaders indicated that there is no formal training of youth leaders.

Rather, training is obtained vicariously through participation in the activities of the organization

and by following the organization's manuals:

> The training takes place through the process of joining and participating in the activities of the [organization]. So the training is embedded (Head Organization 3)

> Your training [is] from the biblical perspective from a general church environment. But there is also in terms of our programs because we have our own [manual] where you get the training (Head Organization 2).

> The training is more ad hoc, meaning that you don't necessarily do a specific training program that you have to fulfill before becoming an officer. While you get you then are given training opportunities. We have training sessions and these sorts of things in different formats… I think that is because of our lack of resources and the lack of critical mass why we are like that (Youth Leader 1 Organization 3).

Box 2 below shows responses by the heads of the organizations on how specialized training

such as in First Aid is provided in the organizations. The illustration also shows that the responses

of the Heads on how training is provided within the organizations are corroborated by the club

leaders.

**Box 2**

*Participants Responses on How Training is Provided in the Organizations.*

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**Heads**

Organization 1

> Anybody who invest in one of our youth leadership program they must…have a basic first aid certificate from the government. So the government work in tandem with us with that,

Organization 2

> We rely on experts in that particular field [first aid] to do the training

**Club Leaders**

Youth      Leader      1
Organization 3

> Training is ad hoc.

Youth      Leader      1
Organization 1

> Training consists of seminars and different club meetings.

Youth      Leader      1
Organization 2

> Training is acquired coming up through the ranks.

Youth      Leader      2
Organization 2

> Training is done with the use of training manuals.

Specialized training such as in first aid is provided in tandem with government agencies or other entities: "We rely on the experts in that particular field [first aid] to do some training," (Head Organization 2). "Anybody who invest in one of our youth leadership programs they must … have a basic first aid certificate from the government. So the government work in tandem with us with that." (Head of Organization 1). Youth leaders corroborated the leaders' report on training, describing the training provided as "ad hoc," (Youth leader 1 Organization 3), consisting of seminars and different club meetings (Youth leader 1 Organization 1), acquired vicariously "coming up through the ranks", (Youth leader 1 Organization 2), and the use of training manuals (Youth leader 2 Organization 2).

In Organization 1 all leaders are expected to be trained and certified and all training programs lead to a certificate. The head of this organization stated, for example, that: "anybody who invest in one of our youth leadership programs they must know basic first aid and they must have a basic first aid certificate from the government." This head also stated that certificates awarded by the organization are given some recognition by employers:

> And let me just say since you ask that: many of the leaders in our church when they take a certificate from the church and they see the extensive training that was done, a lot of times people are given jobs based on the certificate (Head Organization 1).

The head of Organization 1 also indicated that efforts are made to ensure that the training is relevant to the needs of the trainee's environment: "Our training is focusing on areas of relevance to the territory that we serve." The unanimous indication from all the youth leaders as stated by the Head of Organization 1 earlier, is that while there is no official recognition by government or Ministry of Education of certificates awarded by the youth organizations, holders of such

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certificates are advised and encouraged to include them in their resumes since employers give

credit to them. None of the organizations indicated that they have sought such recognition which

can only be obtained through the country's Accreditation Board. The Accreditation Act, 2006 in

Part 1 Section 14 1 (q) and 2 (a) respectively empowers that body to  "provide the public with

information on the quality and recognition of programs of study and institutions in order to protect

the public,' and to "examine and verify certificates of recognition of Community nationals seeking

to engage in employment in Antigua and Barbuda pursuant to Article 46 of the Treaty." (Treaty

meaning the Treaty of Chaguaramas that established CARICOM, the regional integration and

trading bloc of which Antigua and Barbuda is a member).

### Research Question 5

*In what additional ways can they assist schools in preparing young people for the workplace?*

The head of Organization 1 believes that there is scope for a greater level of collaboration

between youth organizations and the government and that this would be mutually beneficial:

> If I were to say anything maybe we can collaborate on a more greater level … because I think that the government has a lot to offer the church and the church has a lot to offer the government.

This participant suggested that one possible area of greater collaboration is in establishing

branches or clubs of youth organizations in areas where there are none:

> I think we have not been able to really and truly penetrate areas that we need to penetrate with clubs and so on because of a lot of other things. If we work together cohesively … I think we can do a lot more in helping our children (Head of Organization 1).

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The youth leaders of Organization 4 indicated that branches of their organization have already been established in schools and a vigorous campaign by that organization is in progress to establish others.

The youth leaders of Organization 3 suggested another area of possible collaboration with the government is in dealing with the competition for children's time between schools and youth organizations. These youth leaders complained that schools are having a negative influence on attendance at club meetings which take place once a week on a weekday, shortly after the end of the school day for some of the youth organizations. The youth leaders explained that schools are scheduling too many extra classes and other extracurricular activities after regular school hours and have made it mandatory for students to attend. Hence club members who attend these schools are reaching meetings late or missing meetings altogether because of tiredness.

> …I think the school is actually taking away the time from the uniform voluntary organizations…With the after classes and all the different things that they want to engage the children with, the children will tell you now that they are so busy we have problems getting here to be involved in doing anything because they are so tired (Youth leader 1 Organization 3).

The youth leaders believe that this situation is a significant and even an existential challenge for youth organizations in the country: "To me it's a challenge… and so I think we are actually losing." (Youth leader 1 Organization 3). This sentiment was supported by his colleague who said simply, "We are losing." (Youth leader 2 Organization 3).

Youth leader 2 Organization 3 suggested that if schools are unwilling or find it difficult to adjust the timing of their extracurricular and after-school activities to better accommodate youth organizations, an alternative could be "having the different organizations go into the school at least

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like once a month to engage the youths in different activities." Youth leader 1 Organization 3 agreed with this suggestion and indicated that that approach has been adopted successfully in Singapore. He cautioned, however, that cultural differences might mitigate against its success in Antigua and Barbuda:

> Now that is something that might be difficult in these parts because Singapore people tend to be a culture of all for one meaning is not the interest in just one person. So taking Singapore and dropping it in Antigua it might be crazy right? Because we do not have that mind set. (Youth leader 1 Organization 3).

Nevertheless, Youth leader 1 Organization 3 suggested that youth organizations "working within the schools where it's like an arm of the school" is a worthwhile idea and government could possibly enhance the success of this initiative by extending greater recognition to persons working in youth organizations since very little is given. Greater recognition would make working with youth organizations more attractive to persons with the relevant qualities to be trained as youth leaders and thus improve the organizations' effectiveness:

> I'm just saying we are not recognized so you would not find people gravitate to it as easy because there's nothing financial in it per se. So to me recognition could be one of the things (Youth leader 1 Organization 3).

The leader of Organization 2 also suggested a "formal arrangement" between the schools and youth organizations. However, in his conception, leaders of these organizations would be invited into schools at set times, such as "every Monday, every Tuesday" and "in times of trouble" to speak to students in order to instill biblical values which could help to discourage delinquent behaviors:

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> Whether it be small groups, large groups, I think the school needs to rely on the church and leaders of groups like us to come and make some of these speeches to the children because as a Christian I believe that the advice that we give will be based on a biblical platform.

The leader of this organization indicated also that the practice is not entirely new since he had invited into schools in the past. He also suggested that the intervention could also include "counselling for teachers." Youth leader 1 and 2 Youth Organization 1 echoed the sentiments of the Leader of Organization 2 in relation to reducing delinquent behavior, suggesting that troubled youths could be encouraged to join youth organizations so that they may come under these organizations' positive influence and "develop their self-esteem" (Youth leader 2 Organization 1), or learn by peer influencing. He explained this by saying that in joining the youth organization the delinquent could

> understand and see how people do things differently and as a result of that they might start to learn coping skills and be more co-operative and … change their mindset and allow them now to become more rounded, more tolerant and so maybe start to change certain ways (Youth leader 1 Organization 1).

Youth leader 2 Organization 1 suggested that youth organizations could share aspects of their curriculum with schools, since according to him, "some of the stuff that we do in [our youth organization] actually can be transferred over to the schools' curriculum." The youth leaders of Organization 2 suggested that they could do more in "encouraging or undergirding" academic performance in school. Examples of this include encouraging members to bring their termly reports to club meetings for their youth leader to see and discuss with them, and the awarding badges for outstanding academic performances in weak or key subject disciplines such as mathematics.

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**Evaluation of Findings**

This study explores, the role and potential of faith-based, civic, and state-controlled youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the country's formal education system in preparing its young people for the 21st century workplace. Four broad areas pertaining to the work of the targeted youth organizations were examined, each encapsulated in a subsidiary research question that guided that part of the investigation. In this section of this study's report, an evaluation of the findings in light of constructivist learning theory and Positive Youth Development (PYD), the theories comprising the theoretical framework adopted for this study, is presented.

*Research Question 1*

*What do they consider to be their main functions, aims and objectives and how facilitative are these to the development of 21st century skills in young people?*

Adequate preparation for the workplace can be considered an outcome of PYD (Holt et al, 2020). Given that the formal education system is apparently unable by itself to adequately prepare graduates for the 21st century workplace (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Sanabria & Aramburo-Lizarraga, 2017), identifying the suitability and capacity of an alternative like youth organizations to augment the formal system is important. The perceived functions, aims, objectives and general culture of the youth organizations selected in this study were examined toward this end. According to organizational theory, examining an organization's climate and culture can provide insights about the capabilities of the organization, *climate* being employees' perceptions of what the organization is like with regards to such things as practices and policies, and *culture* referring to the

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organization's fundamental ideologies and assumptions (Zohar & Hoffman, 2012). Thus, utilizing organizational theory may be suitable for justifying the selection of the perceived functions, aims, objectives and general culture of the youth organizations under study in exploring their conduciveness for workplace skill development in young people.

Insights into the character of the main functions, targets and intentions of the youth organizations were obtained from what the organizations presented as their raison d'etre or primary objective along with subsidiary objectives. This study found that their main goal or raison d'etre is to provide extra-curricular activities as indicated by the non-faith-based organization in the study and wholistic development as indicated by the three faith based ones and exemplified by the following response by the leader of Organization 1:

> We believe in the wholistic development of the human being, which is spiritually, physically, socially and mentally.

The finding that the main goal of the faith-based organizations centers around wholistic development of youths is consistent in some respects with the position of the National Youth Agency of the UK (2020) that outlines that youth work is

> An educational process which takes place in a range of contexts and settings to support a Young person's personal, social and educational development and focusses on improving well-being not just through the consideration of an individual's physical, mental or emotional health, but also the surrounding contextual influences that affect a young ability to achieve their goals (p. 2)

It should be noted though that the National Youth Agency's description of wholistic development does not include the spiritual dimension as is the case with faith-based organizations. This finding is also inconsistent with Thompson & Ballantyne (2017) who identifies it as the development of relationships between youth workers and young people, De

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Kock (2015) who suggests that it is not for young people to become members of faith communities but rather to have experiences of finding meaning and beliefs in life, and Stanton (2012) who argues that most often the objective of faith-based work targeted at youths is to maintain a connecting influence with young people and the church.

This study also notes a struggle to maintain equal emphasis and focus on proselytizing and social action in the wholistic development model championed by the faith-based organizations under study and reflected in the description of their raison d'etre by the head of Organization 1:

> [My Organization] exists for the super goal of developing young people. And if you ask me what is the most important reason to exist, we exist to equip youth to have their lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world and also for impacting humanity in a positive way. But again, it is a wholistic development approach… that we patternize.

This finding is consistent with what McFeeters et al (2022, p. 451) label "the core tension in defining Christian faith-based youth work." From their review of research on Christian faith-based youth work, McFeeters et al (2022) report that the purposes of faith-based youth work are perhaps best expressed as being on a continuum ranging from evangelism at one end to social action on the other. However, they conclude that the evidence suggests that faith-based youth workers' social actions (which include such things as assisting youths in building awareness through trusting relationships and engaging them with important issues that are societal, personal and spiritual in nature) dominate their activities. Participants of the faith-based organizations in this study indicated that their organization tries to maintain a balance between the two goals. However, evangelism as an ultimate goal appears to be implicit in the descriptions given of their raison d'etre even though it is not always explicitly stated. For example, their descriptions of their

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raison d'etre include phrases such as "the advancement of Christ's kingdom" and "to equip youth to have their lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world."

Assuming that the prime goal of the faith-based youth organizations in this study is to convert young people to become active adherents to the associated religious faith, in the context of this study a question that could be asked is how does significant involvement in religion influence PYD and specifically workplace readiness. A good answer might include that there is a substantial amount of research evidence suggesting that across the globe there is a positive correlation between religious involvement and many desirable developmental attributes in young people. For example, in exploring the role of faith-based organizations in addressing adolescent relationship abuse in America, it has been found that religious involvement can promote psychological well-being for those who had experienced relationship abuse (Lie & Freedman, 2016), and there is support for the constructive role of religion as a developmental resource, providing a source of ideological grounding as the young person matures, potentially resulting in the development of a sense of meaning and commitment to the common good (Benson et al, 2019; Furrow et al, 2004). In Indonesia, religion is found to be instrumental in the role of social control and spiritual agency, providing mental defense for adolescents in an era when modernization and globalization have contributed significantly to their moral degradation (Jaafar, 2020).

While it has been established that spirituality and religiosity are positive predictors of subjective well-being, it has been found that this is not altogether consistent across studies (Villani et al, 2019). For example, using the Netherlands as a case study, Ten Kate et al (2017) explored the association of religion with life satisfaction and found mixed results. They suggested that this

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could be explained by what existing literature had suggested prior, namely, that religiosity may have positive and negative consequences for mental well-being for various reasons. For example, as illustrated by the Biblical story of King David's adulterous and scandalous affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11 and 12), one may experience extreme mental anguish if one believes that he/she has sinned as is being punished by God.  There is also research suggesting that religious involvement by young people is not without concerns. For example, with regards to special needs youths, Crawford Sullivan & Aramini (2019) found some religious environments to be helpful and some were found to be not, while Gibbs & Goldbach (2015) found that LGBT youths who grow up in religious contexts exhibit higher incidences of chronic suicidal thoughts and actual attempts compared to those who did not. Purser & Hennigan (2016) also conducted a study on the effects of a faith-based job-readiness program on potential employees who attended and warned that the program's use of biblical teachings and principles combine proselytization with social intervention to create workers who are "Christ-like' in character, but compliant, flexible and exploitable as workers. In other words, devout religious adherence may make workers, to their detriment, better able to cope with poor work conditions.

Thus, there may be potential drawbacks to the influence of religion not only on personal development, but also on the development of workplace readiness. On the positive side, however, Table 45 below shows results from research showing how some of the developmental attributes attributable to involvement in religious programs and activities closely correspond to SEL competencies and some of the 21$^{st}$ century skills as discussed and presented in this study. For example, it is shown that religious influence can lead to a person being more disciplined. Self-

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discipline is one of the intra-personal workplace skills listed in the UNESCO Framework for Transversal Competencies (Suarta et al, 2017) and part of the development of self-management in SEL programs (Brackett & Rivers, 2014).

Table 45 also shows that religious influence may also engender care and concern for one's society. In this way an individual may develop respect for diversity, a 21$^{st}$ century attribute, as he/she tries to live out principles such as "love thy neighbor as thyself". This is also an example of social awareness, a SEL competency. Thus since at least there is considerable research supporting SEL as conducive to success in school, the workplace and life in general (Jagers et al, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Mahoney et al, 2018; Ross & Tolan, 2018), one may perhaps conclude from Table 45 that in this study the religious agenda of the faith-based organizations in and of itself can be a positive influence not only on personal development, but also on the workplace readiness of youths..

**Table 45**

*Comparison of SEL Competencies, 21$^{st}$ Century Skills and Influences of Religion on Behavior*

| SEL Competency | 21$^{st}$ Century Skills (UNESCO) | Qualities Developed Under Religious Influence (Ferguson et al, 2007) |
|---|---|---|
| Self-awareness | Reflective thinking | Increased level of well-being Feeling of peace and caring Increased self-esteem |
| Self-management | Self-discipline | Less disciplinary problems |
| Social awareness | Respect for diversity | A felt need to give back to society |
| Relationship management | Teamwork | Increased social capital |
| Responsible decision making | Reasoned decision-making | Improved self-confidence |

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Turning to the guiding principles of the organizations, this study found that they include the instilling of good discipline, upholding codes of honor, striving for efficiency and excellence, ingraining loyalty and obedience, fostering high quality relationships between adults and youths, leadership training and the teaching of life skills. These findings again align with much of the existing literature on the guiding principles youth organizations follow in their efforts to contribute to PYD and preparation for workplace. For example, Pohl (2010) found that the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) has what he describes as "powerful effects" on Jewish young people , equipping them with leadership skills and positive experiences that they can absorb into their everyday lives and can share in their homes, communities and workplaces. Also, in commenting on the importance of youth development organizations in America, Neff (2021) notes that they consider it important to provide opportunities for young people to learn skills which may include specific ones such as learning to dance, or general life skills such as responsibility, decision making, caring for others and leadership.

Sanchez-Castro et al (2024) in a scoping review of the literature on the nexus between mental health among adolescents  and social inequality in LAC found that many studies highly recommended youth organizations to be part of social support networks that are trustworthy to adolescents and their families in improving adolescent mental health care, since youth organizations can "motivate then to optimize the utilization of leisure time and achieve social inclusion removing discrimination of all kinds"(Sanchez-Castro et al, 2024,  p. 7).  In the Caribbean region youth organizations are regarded in general as being consistently on the forefront

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of engaging with the most vulnerable communities and the ones with passion, energy and developmental ideas and solutions (ECOSOC Youth Forum, 2022).

As mentioned earlier, the raison d'etre and guiding principles of the organizations under study are reflective of PYD principles, and thus, by extension, are in line with practices that nurture the proper preparation of young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. For example, as outlined in the literature review of this study, SEL theory posits that nurturing social and emotional competence in young people involves the acquisition by them of knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to understand and regulate their feelings and interactions in manners that redound to the benefit of themselves and others, thereby enhancing their chances at academic and workplace success, as well as success in their social relationships and as part of citizenry (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Elias & Morceri, 2012; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Schonert – Reichl, 2017).

This study's literature review highlighted also the five basic competencies that encapsulate the essence of SEL as identified by CASEL: being aware of the self, managing the self, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision making. Table 46 below attempts to match these SEL competencies with guiding principles of the organizations as summarized above. For example, the SEL competency *self-awareness* is about an individual accurately assessing his/her values, emotions, attractions and strengths, and sustaining a well-grounded attitude of confidence in one's self.

Practices in the organizations such as developing in youths a sense of purpose and giving them a voice are suggested as reflecting this competency. Similarly, the training in discipline,

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loyalty and obedience provided by the organizations can be aligned with self-management and self-discipline, a SEL competency and a 21$^{st}$ century skill respectively as shown in Table 46 following.

**Table 46**

*Matching of SEL Competencies, 21 Century Skills and Organizations' Guiding Principles*

| SEL Competencies | 21$^{st}$ Century Skills (UNESCO) | Organizations' Guiding Principles (Indicated by Participants in this Study) |
|---|---|---|
| Self-awareness | Self-awareness | Developing in youths a sense of purpose Giving youths a voice |
| Self-management | Self-discipline | Teaching discipline, loyalty and obedience |
| Social awareness | Teamwork Collaboration | Holistic development including social development, nurturing high quality relationships between youths and adults |
| Relationship management | Tolerance Openness | Socializing according to spiritual values Observing a code of honor, fostering loyalty |
| Responsible decision making | Reasoned decision-making | Teaching life skills, Teaching values, holistic development, following biblical teaching and generally accepted principles |

Moving from an international perspective to a regional and local one, Table 47 attempts to compare the skills and competencies that the youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda indicate that they strive to develop in young people, with workplace skills desired by employers in the region and locally. Again, it can be seen that there is some amount of alignment. For example, on

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the regional and local levels digital and ICT skills respectively are sought after by employers. The youth organizations under study engage in activities such as large meetings where club members get an opportunity to be exposed to related equipment and technologies and learn by hands on experiences.

The religious influence of the youth organizations in this study may be also considered positively influential for the nurturing of good work ethics, honesty, integrity and discipline, skills that employers regionally and locally desire to see in employees as shown in the Table 47 following.

**Table 47**

*Comparison of Desired Workplace Skills Regionally and Locally With Organizations' Guiding Principles and Practices*

| Regional (Petrie et al, 2021) | Local (Blom & Hobbs, 2008) | Guiding Principles and Practices (Indicated by Participants and Observed by the Researcher in this Study) |
|---|---|---|
| Digital skills | ICT skills | Acquiring technical skills (e.g. operating multimedia devices at meetings) |
| Advanced cognitive skills | Critical thinking Problem solving Creativity | Critical thinking (e.g engaging in debates) Good listening skills (e.g judging debates) Earning badges or pins |
| Executive Function Skills (e.g metacog-nition) | Teamwork Communication skills | Teamwork (eg. Working in units) Communication skills (e.g public speaking and debating competitions) Leadership and management skills (e.g leader of a unit within a club) |
| Socio-economic Skills (e.g. empathy and perseverance) | Good work ethics Honesty/Integrity | Teaching discipline, loyalty and obedience, code of conduct |

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To situate the findings of this study in the research literature on the main functions, aims and objectives of youth organizations, Box 3 shows a list of the prior studies mentioned in this study and that are consistent and non-consistent with this study. As can be seen, the findings of this study on Research Question 1 are consistent with the majority of the studies examined and presented in this study.

**Box 3**
*Studies Consistent and Non - consistent With This Study's Findings on Raison D'etre and Guiding Principles of Youth Organizations*

| **Consistent** | **Non- Consistent** |
| --- | --- |
| National Youth Agency (2020) | De Kock (2015) |
| Gane (2005) | Thompson & Ballantyne (2017) |
| Pohl (2010) | McFeeters et al (2021) |
| Neff (2021) | Stanton (2021) |
| Neff (2021) | |
| Ecosoc Youth Forum (2022) | |

*Research Question 2*

*What pedagogic approaches do they employ and how do these approaches compare with best practices in pedagogy?*

In investigating the role and potential of the targeted youth organizations in augmenting formal education is preparing young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace, this study includes an inquiry into the pedagogical approaches and practices of the organizations under study on the premise that a suitable partner for the formal education system should be one that upholds, inter alia, best practices in pedagogy and learning. The available literature also suggests that the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills in young people is best achieved with best practices in pedagogy

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and learning (Jagers et al, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Mahoney et al, 2018; Ross & Tolan, 2018).

In the youth organizations in this study, as shown in Table 37 the learning and training activities identified by participants and observed by the researcher included lecturing and rote learning which are traditional behaviorist methods, and role playing, drama, project-based learning, games, observation walks, field trips, tours, debates, discussions, vicarious and experiential learning which are constructivist approaches. Lecturing and rote learning are considered to be behaviorist pedagogical approaches and not reflective of best practices according to most educational theorists (Abdel Meguid & Collins, 2017; Andresen et al, 2020; Bates, 2015; Illeris, 2018).

Lecturing and sermonizing were found to be the preferred methods of pedagogy in plenary sessions at club meetings of the organizations that were observed. These sessions seemed to be dedicated to teaching mainly the fundamental beliefs, practices and rituals of the organization which all members should know and be able to do. Examples are drills and the meaning of symbols and rituals. In these sessions the youngsters were observed to be extremely passive and only spoke when asked questions by the presenter. Many exhibited signs of boredom and disinterest such as frequent yawning, drowsiness and restlessness, especially the boys.

The mix of traditional and non-traditional pedagogy is in line with previous work by McFeeters et al (2022) and may represent another tension in the faith-based organizations similar to the tension between youth work as proselytizing and social action. In their paper reviewing studies on Christian faith-based youth work McFeeters et al (2022) note that the Christian-

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discipleship style was fundamental to programs for young people where they are related to as followers or pupils who follow the tenets and in the footpaths of others further along in their faith. This, of course, is suggestive of traditional pedagogy. McFeeters et al (2022) add that models that have proven success are those that employ a 'hands on' approach that facilitates ownership by youths as well as provide opportunities for them to design content. In this way talent and leadership are consequently developed.

That is to say that successful models of youth work employ non-traditional or more constructivist pedagogies and methods of learning. This is consistent with what McLaughlin (2000) had also found, namely, that in many youth organizations there are multiple teachers and so multiple pedagogies that can range from a basketball coach giving a lecture on sportsmanship, responsibility and teamwork before and after a game, to giving young people a voice and an opportunity to participate in the choice and execution of a community project.

Other researchers have not indicated a finding of mixed traditional and constructivist pedagogic approaches in youth work. Webber et al (2010), for example, indicate that a notable feature of youth work in Australia where they conducted a study is that much of Christian youth work was the practice of encouraging juveniles to actively take part in activities and even to shoulder responsibilities for organizing them. Similarly, Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) found that mechanisms of learning at youth summer camps and found a range of constructivist pedagogies such as experiential learning, communal living and diversity of people.

Constructivist learning mechanisms in the organizations also include book reports and doing research using secondary sources on topics of interest for the earning of badges, pins and

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honors. An examination of the requirements for the award in alternative fuels displayed in Table 38 above reveals that the requirements draw upon at least five possible levels of learning on the Blooms taxonomy of cognitive skills as can be seen in Table 48 below.

Elements of constructivist approaches suggested in the activities include, for example, the requirement to visit a facility that deals with the production of an alternative fuel and make an oral presentation on the visit suggests experiential learning and the one where the club member has to engage in the creation of a science project demonstration illustrating how an alternative fuel may be effectively utilized suggests project-based learning.

It can also be deduced from the table that some skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and teamwork may not be explicitly taught but learnt experientially. For example, observations were made of a club at camp. As is typical for camps, the youths were organized into units and had to work together to do things like deciding where is best to pitch their tent, putting up the tent and engaging in various other activities that required cooperation.

These findings are consistent with prior studies on the contributions of camps to the development of workplace skills in young people (Duerden at al, 2014; Richmond et al, 2019; Warner, 2022; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Findings from these studies are that learning outcomes include skills in building relationships, living with peers, regulating emotions, teamwork, perseverance, handling responsibilities and developing self-confidence.

Learning mechanisms were found to include experiential learning, the schedules followed at camps, the part played by counselors and communal living, inter alia. The youth organizations in this study conduct summer and/or easter camps on an annual basis. Hence, in addition to

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benefiting from the regular activities of the organizations, young people stand to benefit a great

deal from camp experiences organized by these organizations also.

**Table 48**
*Requirements for Badge in Alternative Fuels Matched With Blooms Taxonomy*

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| Requirements | Learning Level |
|---|---|
| • Differentiate between conventional fossil fuels and alternative fuels | Understand |
| • Give a short description of alternative fuels and their benefits | Remember |
| • Explore a minimum of three reasons explaining the importance of alternative fuels. | Evaluate |
| • Pros and cons of alternative fuels | Remember |
| • Use drawings, sketches or photographs to show the elements that comprise natural gas. | Understand |
| • Explain how compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas differ. | Understand |
| • Use drawings to show the stages in the alternate fuel conversion process as used in the automobile industry. | Understand |
| • Give a description of how a vehicle that uses propane operates. | Understand |
| • Engage in discussing importance of finding alternative fuel sources. | Understand |
| • Use group work to accomplish any two of the following activities: *visit an alternative fuel producing facility of your choice and give a verbal report on your visit | Remember |
| *create a science project involving the use of an alternative fuel | Create |
| *organize a lecture to your club by a worker in the alternative fuels | Remember |
| *show through calculations and demonstration the savings in costs associated with modern alternative fuel/hybrid vehicles | Evaluate |
| • Have an open discussion with club members how the following texts related to alternative fuels. | Application |

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*Source: Handbook of One of the Organizations*

As was done for Research Question 1 in Box 3 above, Box 4 following situates the

findings of this study on the pedagogical approaches of the youth organizations in this study

with the literature.

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**Box 4**

*Studies Consistent and Non - consistent With This Study's Findings on the Pedagogical Approaches of Youth Organizations*

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| Consistent | Non – Consistent |
|---|---|

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| | |
|---|---|
| Mcfeeters et al (2022) | Webber et al (2010) |
| McLaughlin (2000) | Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) |
| | Duerden et al (2014) |

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*Research Question 3*

*How do their curricula compare with the national school curricula in content?*

      In this study it was reasoned that if the youth organizations under study are viable assistants to the formal education system in its aforementioned mandate, in addition to their raison d'etre, guiding principles and pedagogical approaches, their curriculum should also demonstrate this viability. The literature shows that the potential of non-school institutions to contribute to the attainment by students of the instructional objectives of the school has long been recognized. For example, Sesow (1985) noted that the 4-H Club was actually started by schools at the beginning of the 20th century to supplement the school curriculum. Hence its curriculum goals listed in Box 5 below were designed to do just that. Even a cursory examination of these goals may be enough to reveal how conducive they are to PYD and by extension, 21st century workplace skill development. For example, the goal 'to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming dispositions that will aid them in becoming self-directing, productive, and contributing member of society'  and the goal 'to cooperate and work with national and

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international institutions throughout the world in using cooperative extension systems' concept of

education' can be said to be reflective of such principles.

**Box 5**
*Goals of the 4-H Club (Sesow, 1985)*

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To develop efficient agricultural, forest and rangeland production systems
To enhance the processing, marketing and distribution of high-quality food and fiber products.
To bolster the conservation and wise use of natural and renewable resources
To strengthen the family and home through the attainment of knowledge, human skills, and technology needed to create a satisfying quality of life within available resources
To assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will help them in becoming self-directing, productive, and contributing member of their societies.
To strengthen the capacity of state and local governments to deal with public issues and problems.
To cooperate with agencies and institutions federally, at state level, and local governments and the private sector in developing and conducting educational programs
To cooperate and work with national and international institutions throughout the world in using cooperative extension system's concept of education.

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The curricula of the youth organizations in this study were found to include the earning of

a wide range of honors/badges as stated earlier. Each is carefully designed as a course of study in

which knowledge and experience is gained while pursuing and completing the requirements for

earning them as explained earlier also. As shown in Tables 41 - 43, the curricula of the youth

organizations in this study reveal that the honors/badges seem to be reflective mostly of disciplines

in the formal curriculum such as Sciences, Physical Education and Sports, the Arts, Social Studies

and Geography. Expanding on Social Studies and Science as examples, it can be seen that included

in the "social studies" curriculum of the youth organizations are emphases on: character and

personality development; developing pride, patriotism and courage; adopting a drug free and gang

free lifestyle; encouraging positive social relations and interactions; accepting personal

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responsibility for actions; and enlarging one's worldview. These are reflective of the three types of education (values education, character education and moral education) in the formal Social Studies curriculum as well as reflective of PYD principles as presented in the literature review.

Included in the "science" curriculum of the youth organizations are emphases on earning awards and badges by studying at age-related levels various topics in the sciences as well as in related disciplines such as mathematics and geography. These are reflective of the science national curriculum with its focus on life science, physical science and earth and space science. An examination of the requirements for the earning of an honor in Alternative Fuels, for example, displayed in Table 38 above, reveals the wide scope of learning experiences that the activity engenders. A youngster aiming to earn this honor seems likely not only to increase his or her content knowledge in disciplines such as science, mathematics and electronics, but will also learn and develop skills in research, making presentations, illustrating, critical thinking and teamwork. This activity seems also to facilitate STEM education, which is the integration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in learning activities (English, 2016).

There is much support in the literature for the positive contribution to education of the earning of camp badges and digital badges, the latter being digital credentials of one's competencies and earned in a similar manner as the earning of camp badges and badges issued by youth organizations (Barker, 2013; Essig et al, 2020; Gibson et al, 2015; Scout & Resident, 2022; Yamada et al, 2021). For example, in her paper on how she developed a program to teach Girl Scouts about Girl Scout Traditions, Schreiner (2020) notes that the earning of the related badge not only helped the girls to be more knowledgeable in the traditions and qualities of Girl Scouts,

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but also equipped them with knowledge that they can apply to tough situations throughout life. The Partnership for 21$^{st}$ Century Skills (2016) notes the importance of the development of core academic subject knowledge and skills to provide the bases for the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills. In this way, it may be argued that the 'science" curriculum of the youth organizations is supportive of the teaching of 21$^{st}$ century skills. Together with the "social studies" curriculum with its emphasis on PYD principles, they seemingly provide an argument that the curriculum of the youth organizations in this study has at least the potential to support the preparation of young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace.

Sesow (1985) opined that one of the significant advantages that small schools have over larger schools is the close working relationship that usually exists in these scenarios between school personnel and members of the community where the school is situated. Teachers may even be leaders in youth organizations that have a presence in the said community, in which case, they could be co-opted into the curriculum planning processes of the school. The reasoning behind this is that if teachers who are leaders in youth organizations have a better understanding of the schools' objectives and curriculum, they would be in an ideal position to enable the curriculum of the school to be reinforced by their youth organization. Antigua and Barbuda, a tiny nation of approximately 100, 000 people and a total land mass of 440 square kilometers (160 square miles), have relatively small communities and small schools. For example, of its six parishes, five have a population size of below 10 000. The majority of the schools are located in those parishes and no school has an enrollment exceeding 600 with many below 300.  Many teachers in the school system are also youth leaders in the organizations in this study. Hence, they are positioned to facilitate the

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augmentation of the curriculum of the formal education system by that of their youth organization as described by Sesow (1985). Studies consistent and non-consisting with this study on the efficacy of the curricula content of youth organizations are displayed in Box 6.

**Box 6**
*Studies Consistent and Non - consistent With This Study's Findings on the*
*Curricula Content of Youth Organizations*

| Consistent | Non-Consistent |
| --- | --- |
| Sesow (1985) | Nel & Moser (2019) |
| Schreiner (2020) | Devries (2004) |
| Barker (2013) | Candelon (2017) |
| Essig et al (2020) | Galbraith et al (2020) |
| Gibson (2015) | Nguyen et al (2016) |
| Scout & Resident (2022) | |

### Research Question 4

*How do they train their youth leaders and how worthy of official recognition are the certificates they award?*

This study found that both formal and informal training of youth leaders occur in the youth organizations under study. However, formal training in general was found to be frequently ad hoc and, in some cases, non-existent in some of the organizations. Formal training was also found to be conducted by senior youth leaders or the head of the organizations through lectures presented in seminars and at club meetings and leads to certification provided by the organization, while informal training is acquired by reading and following manuals and by vicarious experiencing as shown in Table 44 above. For training in technical skills such as first aid, training is provided by

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experts in the field who are invited by the organizations to provide those services. It was noted too that certificates receive credits from some employers who are acquainted with the awarding youth organization.

The findings about informal experiential training are consistent with some sources in the literature. Duerden et al (2014), for instance, note that by simply being put in charge of younger campers, older youths develop leadership skills which they transfer to non-camp contexts. However, Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) in a similar study on the contributions of summer camps in facilitating the development of academic and employability readiness found that leadership development did not occur in the data with enough frequency to merit recognition as a significant theme related to academic and workplace readiness in their study. Supporting Duerden et al (2014), Anderson (2007) notes that experiential learning, that is, learning by doing, is considered by scholars to be an important component of leadership growth and maturation, as it combines participation in the learning experience with opportunities to engage in sharing, discussing, and processing thoughts and feelings which are relevant and which can then be generalized into life skills, which are principles and guidelines for living. Ultimately, these learned behaviors can be applied to other situations. Anderson (2007) opines that the most important distinction between youth leadership programs and other youth empowerment programming is that firstly, the former offer youngsters opportunities for active participation in the designing, decision-making and execution of the activities they participate in. Secondly, youths participate in frequent and regular interactions with adults who not only model behaviors deemed to be responsible and acceptable in society but also provide continuing validation and support for the active involvement of youths in

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various affairs. Thirdly, youth leadership programs contribute to the development of a list of skills that includes brainstorming, making decisions, establishing goals and working collaboratively with others.

Ngai et al (2018) supports Anderson (2007) and defines youth leadership training as a systematic learning procedure and encounter utilizing an organized activity or series of activities structured to assist young people develop and mature, make modifications to their set of values, their attitudes as well as their behavior, assimilate knowledge and important skills, develop competencies and make improvements to their performance.   It may be concluded therefore that youth leadership training executed this way is reflective of PYD theory. Other scholars such as Arshad et al (2021) emphasize the significance and importance of this kind of mentoring in raising the competence of youth leaders, noting that "youth leadership development requires participative learning and role models that can be emulated" ( p. 2).

Ngai et al (2018) also note that youth leadership training can be executed via several different modes which are not mutually exclusive and can include adventure-based learning and service learning.  Thus, mentoring and role modeling may be implicit among the training activities of the youth organizations in this study, while the acquisition of training informally through reading and following manuals and vicarious experiencing may be reflective of constructivist learning theory. Bandura, for example, contends that learning can occur by observing the behavior of others (Mayes, 2015).  The finding in this study that some employers give recognition to certificates awarded by the organizations may explain why that those employers have come to equate holders of those certificates with attractive employability qualities as indicated by

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participants. The consistency and non-consistency of this study with others in the literature is shown in Box 7.

**Box 7**

*Studies Consistent and Non - consistent With This Study's Findings on the Nature of the Training and Certification in Youth Organizations*

| Consistent | Non-consistent |
|---|---|
| Anderson (2007) | Arshad (2021) |
| Ngai (2018) | Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) |
| Duerden et al (2014) | |

### Research Question 5

*In what additional ways can they assist in preparing young people for the workplace?*

As shown in the responses to this question in the data presentation section of this study, respondents reported that there is scope for greater and mutual collaboration between youth organizations and the government and one area of such collaboration could be in the establishment of clubs in areas of the country where there are none, or establishing branches in the schools themselves. Other areas could be cooperating with schools to avoid competing for students' time, youth leaders going into schools in a formal arrangement to conduct counselling sessions assist generally with managing student delinquent behaviors and sharing curriculum content.

It is noted widely in the literature that adult involvement in PYD programs is vital to the success of such programs (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). The importance of the integration of family, school and community in the success of PYD is also noted (National Research Council, 2002; Shek et al, 2019), as well as the role of faith-based programs in offering an environment of caring adults, structured activities and other identifiable
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outcomes that are conducive to PYD (Pinkney et al, 2020). Hence, the interest of the youth organizations in this study in fostering greater cooperation and collaboration between them and the government and schools seem to find support in literature as being advantageous in augmenting the formal education system in equipping youths with PYD skills which are pivotal in preparing them for the workplace.

The highly optimistic and positive sentiments about their capacities and willingness to further assist the school in youth development are not shared by some sources, however (Box 8). The reason is that as noted earlier, skeptics point to the global trend towards secularization and decreased church attendance especially among young people, although religious involvement is still relatively high in the Caribbean (Candelon, 2017; Galbraith et al, 2020; Nguyen et al, 2016). They also point to declining involvement of youths in youth organizations including faith-based ones globally, regionally and locally (Cadano, 2023; Devries, 2004; Nel & Moser, 2019).

**Box** *8*
*Studies Consistent and Non - consistent With Participants' Views on How Youth Organizations can Further Assist the School in Preparing Youths for the Workplace*

| Consistent | Non-consistent |
| --- | --- |
| Brackett & Rivers (2014) | Candelon (2017) |
| Jones & Doolittle (2017) | Galbraith et al (2020) |
| Schonert-Reichl(2017) | Nguyen et al (2016) |
| National Research Council (2002) | Devries (2004) |
| Shek et al (2019) | Nel & Moser (2017) |
| Pinckney et al (2020) | Cadano (2023) |

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**Summary**

With the purpose of adding to the compendium of knowledge of how nations can ensure that new entrants to the labor force are furnished with the relevant skills for the 21st century knowledge economy that is current reality, the main intention of this inquiry was to build on existing research on the contributions of youth organizations to the attainment of employability skills in youths by exploring, with the use of a qualitative multiple case study approach,  the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state controlled ones in augmenting the formal education system of a small micro state in the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda, toward this end.  The tenets and general culture, curriculum, pedagogical approaches and training and certification protocols were examined for revelations. The study is oriented within an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm involving an epistemology that is subjectivist, an ontology that is relativist, a methodology that is naturalist and an axiology that is balanced. That is to say that the study's findings reflect the researcher's cognitive processing and meaning making of information gathered from the researcher's interactions with the study's participants in their time and space and done within a highly ethical and balanced paradigm (Saunders et al, 2019).

The research approach adopted is qualitative as it accommodates the use as data the interpretations participants make of the social milieu in which they operate (Johnson et al, 2020), and uses inductive reasoning to explore the "what", "why" and "how" questions the study seeks to answer (Tuffour, 2017). A qualitative approach has been supported as most appropriate in similar studies (Nijs et al, 2014). Notwithstanding the positives, the study acknowledges drawbacks with the qualitative approach such as relating to participants as simply "subjects' and

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the research as 'expert' in the analysis and evaluation of their thoughts (Edwards & Brannelly, 2017).

The study uses a case study research design since its characteristics align well with the philosophical, theoretical and contextual bases of the study. For example, it allows for in-dept narration and investigation of a delimited system (Merriam & Tisdell (2016) and it can be argued that studying the targeted youth organizations within the geographical boundaries of Antigua and Barbuda can be considered a bounded system. In addition, case studies allow for a number of credibility enhancing strategies that are well within the capacity of the researcher to be put in place (Gammelgaard, 2017; Gioia, 2021).

The study's population is estimated to be comprised of approximately 30 youth organizations operating an estimated 180 – 190 branches, clubs or units across the study area. This means that there are about 30 youth directors of heads of youth organizations and hundreds of youth leaders at the club level. The sample targeted consists of five of the organizations, five youth directors and five youth leaders at the club level of each of the five selected organizations. The number five was selected on the basis that it is the norm for qualitative case studies (Suri, 2011) and it allows for maximum variation purposive sampling. However, the researcher was able to secure the participation of only four organizations. The targeted number of five per focus group was also not achieved. Hence, instead of a total of 30 participants engaged in personal interviews and focus group discussions, there were 15.  Difficulties were also experienced in conducting interviews and the discussions. The difficulties included keeping answers on track and making discussions being discussions and not interviews. There were also problems encountered with the

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transcription of the audio-recorded data. For example, audibility and incoherency led to uncertainty of what was said and in one instance the recording was completely inaudible to the point that it could not be transcribed.

Nevertheless, efforts were made to assure optimum trustworthiness and rigor by application of Lincoln & Guba's (1985) four intertwined and interdependent strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The four commonly used strategies to ensure credibility were employed: triangulation, thick description, member checking and peer review. Transferability, dependability and confirmability were attempted through the use of overlapping data collection methods and comparison with prior studies. A detailed audit trail was also presented as recommended in these kinds of studies. Finally, the researcher constantly engaged in reflexivity to minimize or eliminate bias and possible shortcomings with the study are acknowledged and presented. These include observer-expectancy bias, the Hawthorne effect, social desirability effect and confirmation bias.

The findings of this study on the conduciveness of the purpose, activities and general culture of the organizations under study to the development of 21st century workplace skills align with findings of prior studies that found that the engagement of youth in summer camp activities enhance the development of employability skills. Organizational theory was called upon to justify the examination of the climate and culture of the youth organizations in order to garner understandings about their ability to influence youths in the development of employability skills. Hence, their raison d'etre was examined and found to be on a continuum between evangelism and social action, leaning more towards the former with the faith-based ones as found in prior studies.

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Their guiding principles were also examined and found to be much less ambiguous, with all the organizations subscribing and aspiring to a holistic youth development philosophy, which for them includes the social, physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions.

The guiding principles along with the raison d'etre of the organizations were also found to be in sync with PYD principles and practices, which in turn are conducive to 21st century workplace skill development. The organizations were found to engage in some of these skills directly and include PYD principles such as wholistic development and the core SEL principles of self-assessment, self-management, self-awareness, relationship management and responsible decision making. This together with their religious influence, guiding principles and practices and the fact that they cater to youths of all ages and for a period of time that exceeds that of the school, places these organizations in a pre-eminent position to not only augment the formal education system in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace, but to fill a void in youth advocacy in the Caribbean -including Antigua and Barbuda - that seemingly currently exists, as the established national youth organizations have been criticized as being non-functioning in this task that was traditionally assigned to them.

Additional support for the suitability of these organizations in augmenting the formal system may be found in the fact that their pedagogical approaches and practices seem to reflect best practices, even though traditional approaches are still commonly utilized. For example, rote learning and lecturing are common, but learning also takes place through projects, debates, discussions and role playing and various other experiential activities. Their curricula also appear to be aligned well with the formal school curriculum in certain aspects of several subject

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disciplines including social studies and science. While no direct teaching of curriculum content in the subject disciplines is done, youths can engage in the earning of badges and honors by completing requirements that fall under various content areas of the school curriculum and thereby acquire coverage of those content areas.

Training for young people to be youth leaders and to acquire specialized skills such as administering first aid is conducted formally as well as informally, consistent with what is espoused in the literature as the common case in many youth-oriented organizations around the world. Training in youth leadership and in pedagogy, however, is experiential, ad hoc, informal or even non-existent in some cases. The certification awarded for the completion of formal training seem to have some amount of merit in the eyes of some employers. This along with a seeming preference for graduates of the institutions is considered by some youth leaders to be a testimonial of the efficacy of these organizations in preparing youths for the workplace. The organizations believe that they are assisting the formal system in many ways including providing needy youths with school supplies and offering remedial classes in mathematics. They also believe that they can do even more in augmenting the formal school system by collaborating with schools in establishing new clubs and avoiding harmful competition between clubs and schools for the after-school time of students who are members of clubs. Also, the organizations express willingness to go into schools and collaborating with them in areas such as counselling of both teachers and students, developing and sharing curriculum and reinforcing what is taught in schools.

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## CHAPTER 5:  IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The 21$^{st}$ century has ushered in what has been dubbed the knowledge-based economy and society, where the ability of businesses to leverage different types of knowledge to advance themselves in the marketplace is a key competitive advantage (Liebowithz & Beckman, 2020). Hence, employers are increasingly seeking workers who are equipped with the relevant skill sets that enhance high productivity in the current knowledge-based economy workplace and business environment(bin Nordin et al, 2022; Gonzalez-Salamanca et al, 2020). Adequate workplace readiness nowadays is considered to be a function of the traditional core skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy), digital literacy skills (e.g. computing and media/information literacy), learning and innovation skills (e.g critical thinking/problem solving and creativity), and career and life skills such as teamwork, leadership and adaptability (Kivunja, 2014; McManus & Rock 2021; Shariff, 2021; Siddique et al, 2022).

An individual who is workplace ready in the current knowledge-based economy is one equipped with these *employability* skills, defined as an assemblage of generic skills and personal characteristics employed alongside the use of technical skills in the employment landscape. Such work skills are tied to any particular job, they spread laterally across virtually the entire industrial landscape. They also spread vertically across the organizational charts of businesses reaching the very highest level (Suarta et al, 2017).

Employability skills for many are essentially synonymous with 21$^{st}$ century workplace requirements and are therefore called 21$^{st}$ century skills (Suarta, 2017). Known also by various

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names (e.g soft skills, transferable skills), they are widely believed to be deficient in the emerging workforce in most, if not all, countries. Most people attribute this skills gap to a failure of the formal education system to adequately equip graduates with them (Lavi et al, 2021; Marginson, 2023; McGunagle & Zizka, 2020; Qizi, 2020).

Research on the challenges that the formal system of most countries might be facing in this regard include a continued emphasis on subject content and a knowledge-based approach to teaching and learning using traditional pedagogic methods, uncertainties about the nature of the skills themselves, uncertainties about learning progressions of the skills and how to assess them, the negative influence of high stakes testing on their teaching, and the prevalence of inadequate teacher competency in handling all of these (Care et al, 2018; Saavedra & Opfra, 2012; Sparrow, 2016).

With respect to the Caribbean context in which Antigua and Barbuda is situated, low education quality and relevance as well as inertia in policymaking are additional challenges said to be faced in the formal education environment (Brisset, 2021; Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018; George, 2007). In a paper on the future of education in LAC, Fiszbein & Stanton (2018) argue that the region is rich in human capital, but poor in adequate education and skills training, resulting in significant underdevelopment of the human resource.

Referring to the English-speaking Caribbean specifically - Antigua and Barbuda being a part - these authors highlighted the inadequate levels of learning in Mathematics and English in 2016 in relation to meeting requirements for matriculation into higher levels of education and the attainment of certain jobs. In that year, almost 60 and 38 percent of students respectively did not

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attain minimum satisfactory scores in Mathematics and English Language in the annual CSEC school leaving examinations conducted by the region's examinations body, CXC. The figures for the year of writing of this study (2023) improved somewhat but were still alarming: 57 percent of the cohort did not receive satisfactory scores for Mathematics and 23 percent did not for English (SEC Working Document, 2023).

For Antigua and Barbuda specifically, with minimum academic requirement for matriculation into higher education and qualifying for certain jobs being acceptable scores in at least five CSEC disciplines including Mathematics and English, only 22 percent of the 2023 cohort met that standard (Smith, 2023). This may at least partially explain why local employers along with their counterparts in the region are complaining that the emerging workforce is deficient in especially advanced cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, executive function skills such as metacognition, and communication skills (Browne & Shen, 2017; Petrie et al, 2021). Recognizing that a properly educated population is quintessential in ensuring sustained growth and continuing prosperity, in light of the unsatisfactory educational outcomes they conclude that the region's education system is not responding adequately to labor market demands (Fiszbein & Stanton, 2018).

It was noted earlier in this study also that there is global consensus that the delivery of education and training need not be the sole preserve of formal education systems (Grajcevci & Shala, 2016; Harris & Wihak, 2018; Souto-Otero, 2021). Other entities in society have been recognized as capable of delivering quality education, albeit in a nonformal or informal manner. Among these are youth organizations, whose activities have been found to be conducive to the

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development of academic and workplace readiness among young people (Denkowska, 2020; Duerden et al, 2014; Giannaki, 2015). Prior studies, however, have concentrated on youth organizations that are controlled and run exclusively by youths (Council of Europe, 2011), or by adult-led organizations that engage youths only in summer camps (Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). The primary intent of this inquiry was to build on existing research on youth organizations by exploring, using a qualitative case study methodology, the potential of faith-based, civic, and state-controlled youth organizations in the state of Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the formal education system in its mandate to prepare young people for the 21st century workplace.

The research investigation was a qualitative collective or multiple case study and five was justified as a credible number of cases (Creswell, 2007). However, of the five youth organizations originally identified and approached for participation in the study, only four consented to participate. Empirical evidence to inform the purpose of the study was sought in the form of the views of stake holders in the organizations, the contents of the organizations' published documents on the nature and functions of the organizations, and the researcher's observations of activities that take place during club meetings of the organizations.

The stake holders approached for participation were the individual at the top of the leadership hierarchy locally for each organization (identified as the Youth Director in this study) and leaders at the unit or club level of each organization (identified as Youth Leaders). The published documents were the organizations' manuals and web pages. The instruments used for the collection of information were personal interviews with the Youth Directors, focus group

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discussions with the Youth Leaders, an observation checklist borrowed from Compte & Preissle (1993), and document collection. The personal interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed manually and along with the published documents and observation notes were analyzed using codes and themes. The themes were then used to supply the answers to the research questions of the investigation.

In qualitative studies, the tendency is that the trustworthiness of findings rests significantly, inter alia, on the sufficiency of the evidence accrued to answer the study's research questions (Guest et al, 2020; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022, Mwita, 2022). Trustworthiness and rigor in this study were sought by trying to faithfully apply to the study the four suggested intertwined and interdependent Lincoln & Guba (1985) principles of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative studies, namely, *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability*. Thus, the study made use of triangulation (four different data sources), thick descriptions, member checking, alignment with prior studies, peer review and an audit trail.

Notwithstanding the foregoing measures to ensure trustworthiness and rigor, this study still acknowledges possible limitations. For example, as mentioned earlier, only four of five of the targeted organizations participated in the study. Hence, only four personal interviews were conducted. Owing to unsurmountable challenges in bringing youth leaders together, only four focus group discussions were obtained also, with group sizes of three for three of the focus groups and two members for the fourth, instead of the targeted five. Analysis of the documents and observations of the activities were also done for only four of the five targeted organizations. Thus, the number of cases and data sources in the sample ended up being smaller than initially planned.

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Although the literature does not clearly address how saturation point is reached in qualitative studies, from a study of journal articles on the subject, Mwita (2022) notes that the implication in the literature is that in using interviews and focus group discussions as data collection tools, saturation is reached by the 13th interview and 6th focus group discussion on average.

In this study there were four interviews and four focus group discussions, which could elicit the legitimate question in the researcher's estimation of whether saturation point was reached. That is, was enough data collected to support legitimate and credible findings and conclusions in this study? Mandal (2018) underscores the need for qualitative researchers to justify their research if they want academicians to regard their research as not merely subjective assertion unsupported by scientific methods. Therefore, the researcher feels compelled to acknowledge this possible weakness and justify the study's trustworthiness notwithstanding.

In the discourse on the methodology in Chapter 3 of this inquiry, justification of the sample size was presented using arguments such as: no set rules for sample dimension determination in qualitative research, saturation in qualitative research can be reached at any sample size, and cases are selected for richness of data as opposed to number of cases (Creswell, 2007; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Mfinanga et al, 2019; Mthili et al, 2021; Mocanasu, 2020; Sim et al, 2018). In the researcher's estimation, these arguments can still be proffered to support the legitimacy and credibility of the reduced sample size and number of sources of data in this study.

With regards to saturation in relation to observations and document analysis, the two other data gathering methods adopted in this investigation, in the literature how the former can be done empirically is yet to be addressed, and the latter is seen as simply supplementing other methods

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(Fusch et al, 2018; Mwita 2022; Vasileiou et al, 2018). From the study of journal articles, Mwita (2022) highlighted five factors that affect data saturation: the magnitude of the sample, the tally of methods of research used, pre-determined codes and themes, the length of the data gathering sessions, and the relevancy of the respondents. In this study, transcription and analysis commenced immediately after each set of data was collected. In this way, consistency in the data gathered from the different sources was noted quite early in the data collection process, indicating perhaps that at the very least, a reasonable level of saturation was reached even with the reduced sample (Saunders et al, 2018).

Other possible areas that may indicate the need for caution in accepting the discoveries of this inquiry include the manner whereby inaudibility, especially at the end of sentences, was dealt with in the transcribing of the recorded audio files of the interviews and focus group discussions, which was done manually by the researcher and an assistant. In such cases the transcribers' own words were used to complete what they considered to be most likely the participants' thoughts. These instances are indicated in the transcript by the use of square brackets to indicate the words which were inserted and may be reflective of transcriber bias. However, no instances of misinterpretation were pointed out during member-checking. In addition, the consistency of participants' responses helped to assure the accuracy of interpretations.

Keeping participants focused on the intended understanding and answering of questions during the interviews and focus group discussions was quite challenging for the researcher. Participants frequently strayed and in an effort to stick to the agreed time limit some questions were omitted or combined with other questions, resulting possibly in muddled answers. The

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interviews and focus group discussions could also have been influenced by the observer-expectancy effect, described by Tenney et al (2017) as a change in the responses or behaviors of participants to satisfy what the researcher wants to see. That is, being aware of the study's aims and wishing it to be positive, participants may have tuned their responses in that direction. Observations may also have been influenced by the Hawthorne effect, defined by Tenny et al (2017) as a change in the way participants behave when they are aware that they are under observation.

In addition to issues of trustworthiness, rigor and the acknowledgement of limitations, adherence to accepted ethical standards and practices in carrying out research is also crucial for the acceptance of research work in academia (Bell & Waters, 2018; Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). In this regard, this investigation was carried out under proper direction and oversight at all stages. For example, the plan for the management of relevant ethical issues related to the study received approval from UREC prior to the data accumulation process. Participants were subjected to minimal risks such as being a contributor and member of the focus group discourses that some believe carry the risk of psychological scarring from engaging in the discussion of sensitive topics (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

Informed consent was sought and obtained from gatekeepers and from each participant by them signing and returning to the researcher the relevant Informed Consent Form. Assurances of privacy, concealment and anonymity were given to the participants and effected by the researcher restricting access to the raw data to himself and a single assistant during the recording and

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transcribing processes, keeping the assembled data restricted to access by the researcher only, and using pseudonyms for the partakers in the inquiry's report.

Having presented brief reviews of the problem statement, purpose of the study, the methodology, limitations and ethical dimensions of this study, the rest of this chapter will be dedicated to the presentation of the implications of the findings of the study, followed by recommendations for application of the findings and then recommendations for further research related to the topic and area of focus of this study. The chapter will end with conclusions that were drawn from the results of the study, what these results mean with respect to theory and prior research and how they might contribute to existing literature and to practice and the topic of the contributions of youth organizations to the development of upcoming generations.

## Implications

### *Research Question 1*

*What do they consider to be their main functions, aims and objectives and how facilitative are these of the development of 21ˢᵗ century skills in young people?*

Three of the four youth organizations in this study were faith-based. Hence it did not cause surprise to find that those who participated in this study overwhelmingly indicated a belief in holistic development that they described as involving the physical, mental, social, moral/ethical and spiritual dimensions, with the spiritual dimension involving respect for God and proselytizing. This discovery exhibits consistency with previous studies that also noted the tension between evangelism and social action in defining the expressed intent of faith-based youth work that the spiritual dimension creates (Green, 2010; McFeeters et al, 2022; Thompson, 2019). However, this

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dimension may also differentiate the holistic development envisioned by the organizations under study from that of other entities engaged in youth work. For example, holistic development of young people is described by the National Youth Agency of the UK as having a personal, social and educational dimension (National Youth Agency, 2020), and youth work in the European Union is understood generally to be based on the promotion of values, peace, democracy, diversity, social cohesion and human rights (Merino et al, 2018).

There is an enlarging accumulation of research evidence that support the positive influence of religious involvement and spirituality on youth development (Benson et al, 2019; Jaafar, 2020' Li et al, 2016; McFeeters et al, 2022). This is germane to the Caribbean region where studies have also confirmed the positive relationship between religiosity and positive behaviors among youths (Mustapha, 2013; Santiago, 2014), and where religious involvement is still relatively high notwithstanding global trends towards secularization and decreased church attendance (Candelon, 2017; Galbraith et al, 2020; Nguyen et al, 2016) and declining involvement of youths in faith-based youth organizations (Devries, 2004; Nel & Moser, 2019).

Adherence to ethical standards which feature prominently in both religious and humanist value systems is recommended as one of the bases of the development of a developing knowledge economy (Andrusiv & Simkiv, 2020). Thus, if the goal is the production of graduates from the formal education system who possess skills, competencies and values many of which are nurtured by the youth organizations under study, then perhaps it can be argued that their religious or spiritual dimension with its proven positive offerings makes them even more ideally suited to augment the formal education system in the development of young people.

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Another possible implication of having this philosophy of holistic development involving a religious dimension is that, as a result, the organizations nurture elements of social and emotional learning (SEL), held among educators as one of the most efficacious developmental processes that can be employed to enhance the development of 21st century skills in young people (Dahsih, 2017; Matsuyama,et al, 2019; Moate & Cox, 2015; Trester, 2019). For example, akin to emotional intelligence, self-awareness is a key SEL competency that involves, inter alia, the capacity to regulate one's feelings and handle everyday challenges with confidence and optimism (Bracket & Rivers, 2014). The aims, mottos and pledges of the youth organizations in this study seem to reflect these SEL attitudes. For example, in handling everyday challenges, the motto of one of the organizations, "the love of Christ controls me" (2 Corinthians 5:14, NASB), implies that the young person subjects him/herself to be driven, motivated and guided by a love for God which then becomes a powerful influence that can impel the youngster to make the right decisions in life according to Hoehler (2015).

Other SEL nurturing mottos of the organizations are "I will be pure, kind and true" and "I will keep a song in my heart." It perhaps can be argued that these have the potential to encourage optimism and a regulation of feelings. Research strongly suggests that the level of SEL acquired by youths is a significant determinant of important life outcomes such as academic, workplace and career success (Jones & Doolittle, 2017; Paolini, 2020; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Similarly, it could be argued that theoretically, the degree to which young people are faithful to the mission, aim, motto and pledge of their youth organization has a similar influence on their life outcomes, including commitment to their job and place of employment.

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SEL is grounded on positive youth development (PYD), a theory that posits that the creation of environments that are conducive to creditable school achievement, to adult and peer relationships that are mutually supportive, to problem solving and to civic engagement, is critical for proper youth development (Shekel et al, 2019). Again, it can be argued that the holistic development environment aspired to by the youth organizations in this study is reflective of such environments. For example, it was found in this study that the youth organizations place high value on quality adult-youth relationships and provide support for improving academic learning such as offering remedial math classes and awarding badges or pins for the study of academic subjects and community work.

Also, among the positive traits identified by proponents for PYD are positive values, examples of which are strong guiding principles which help youths make healthy life decisions and social competencies or skills needed for establishing effective interpersonal relationships and adapting to novel or challenging situations (Shekel et al, 2019). These appear to be reflected in the missions, aims, mottos and pledges of the organizations such as, "I will be a servant of God and a friend to man", "I will be courteous and obedient", "I promise to be loyal to God, to my country, to my church, to my parents and to all [members of my organization], and to keep the Honor Code".

The principles and sentiments of the missions, aims and mottos of the organizations can arguably be said to be aligned with the transferable competencies listed in the category "Global Citizenship" in the UNESCO Framework for Transversal Competencies assembled by ERI-Net. The skills listed include concepts such as consciousness, forbearance, openness, effective and

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efficacious management, appreciation for diversity among peoples and cultures, understandings about ethics, understandings about cultural diversity, capacity to settle conflicts, democratic participation, respect for the environment, national identity and sense of belonging (Suerta et al, 2017). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude from this evidence that this is another indication that the tenets and general culture of the youth organizations under study encourage an atmosphere that is favorable to the development of 21st century workplace skills in young people.

In their study on the extent to which school plans and philosophies incorporate transversal competencies in classrooms in ten Asia-Pacific countries, ERI-Net similarly studied the vision, mission and motto statements of schools to find this out, noting that it is either stated at the school level or directly implied in school vision and mission statements, which are in turn reflected in school mottos and/or the philosophies of school leaders (UNESCO, 2016). For example, the motto of a school in Shanghai, China that was quoted in the ERI-Net study as reflecting the incorporation of transversal competencies was "All round development, human well-being and exploring the truth bravely."

There is much support in literature for the efficacy of holistic development environments. For example, Saavedra & Opfer (2012) note that given what is known about how students learn, fostering a learning atmosphere across each of the levels of a learning institution, and investigating foundational and implied values, assumptions and beliefs upon which institutional practices are grounded, are two critical practices that substantial research has found promote conditions for learning 21st century skills. The holistic development philosophy of the youth organizations in this

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study, along with their emphases on core values and beliefs seem to make them credible learning environments at all levels in a similar way.

Zeldin et al (2018) reinforce this point, noting that community-based youth organizations have had notable success in creating environments in which the embedded values, relationships and roles situated in institutions in society provide youths with the predictability and emotional safety essential for engagement and agency. Other studies have shown how religious environments can promote psychological well-being of persons in abusive situations (Li et al, 2016). It was also noted earlier in this discourse that attitudes, values and beliefs are also included in the list of desirable transferable skills according to UNESCO's ERI-Net. Holistic development as envisioned and practiced by the organizations may therefore be significantly efficacious in youth development.

With respect to augmenting the formal education system in its mandate to outfit the young for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace, the second important potential of the youth organizations in this study implied by their holistic development philosophy is that coupled with the length of time they maintain regular contact with, and influence on, young people as active members (one's entire life as a youth in most cases), this philosophy places them in a superior position relative to other nonformal educational organizations in the country in accomplishing that goal. Indeed, it can be argued that theoretically and practically the organizations maintain direct influence over the lives of young people longer than the school.

Compulsory school age in Antigua and Barbuda is ages 5 – 16. Membership in the organizations in this study can start from as young as four to as old as 30 years of age as can be

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seen in Table 49. Meetings can be as regular as at least once weekly in most cases for most of the year. On the other hand, youth organizations that engage young people in summer camps, for example, only do so for a few weeks during the summer.

**Table 49**

*Age Categories of Two faith-based Youth Organizations*

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| Organization A | Organization B |
|---|---|
| 4 - 9 | 4 – 7 |
| 0 – 15 | 7 – 11 |
| 16 – 21 | 11 – 15 |
| 21 – 30 | 16 + |

*Source: The Organization's Manuals*

Involvement of young people in other youth organizations has been found to nurture the development of academic and workplace skills. Examples of these are organizations that organize summer camps for youths and national youth councils (Bowers et al, 2019; Duerden et al, 2014; Pharr et al, 2018; Whittington et al, 2017; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Table 42 compares the findings of two studies of the impact of camp employment and involvement on academic and workplace readiness of young people. It can be seen that both studies found several 21st century skills that young people learn though this medium. However, these other organizations do not maintain direct contact with their members as frequently and for as long as the organizations in this study. For example, summer camp youth organizations maintain direct influence on youths

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only during the summer camp. In contrast, faith-based youth organizations such as the ones in this study not only operate summer camps that yield similar developmental results as other summer camps, but they maintain influence over their young charges longer. Hence, one might reasonably argue that the organizations are even better placed to develop these skills in young people.

**Table 50**

*Employability Skills Learned at Summer Camps*

| Wilson & Sibthorp (2018) | Duerden et al (2014) |
|---|---|
| Relationship skills | Interpersonal interactions |
| Teamwork | Communication |
| How to live with counterparts | Problem solving |
| Personal confidence | Leadership |
| Administration and management | |
| Authority and influence | |
| Independence | |
| Persistence | |
| Career guidance | |
| Emotion regulation | |

### *Research Question 2*

*What pedagogic approaches do they employ and how do these approaches compare with best practices in pedagogy?*

The findings of this investigation seem to indicate that the youth organizations under study employ both traditional approaches such as lectures and rote learning, and non-traditional approaches such as role playing, discussions and project-based learning in their pedagogy. This finding aligns well with existing research on learning in youth organizations, which has shown that experiential learning is one of the most popular learning mechanisms in the pedagogical

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activities of youth organizations (Mcfeeters et al, 2022; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). Webber et al (2010) found that encouraging youths to organize and participate in activities is a key and popular feature of Christian youth work and McFeeters et al (2022) note that successful models of youth involvement employ a 'hands on' approach.

One implication of this finding is that it enhances the pre-eminent suitability of the youth organizations under study to augment the formal education system in its mandate. It has already been outlined in this study the pre-eminent suitability of learner-centered pedagogical approaches such as experiential learning for the teaching of 21$^{st}$ century skills. Saavedra & Opfra (2012) perused decades of empirical research on learning and identified best ways of teaching 21$^{st}$ century skills. One of these is to make the curriculum relevant with generative topics (meaning ones that are important to learners), so that they resonate with the learner and create an intrinsic motivation to want to learn.

It has been highlighted in the findings of this report that the curricula of the youth organizations in this study include a wide variety of generative topics that youngsters can choose from to study for the earning of badges and pins. Thus, theoretically and practically this encourages the kind of deep learning that facilitates the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills since the youngsters are learning what is of interest to them, as opposed to the surface learning that occurs when students are forced to learn compulsory things that are prescribed in formal curricula and in which they have little or no interest. Saavedra & Opfra (2012) note that this situation is inimical to the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills as it encourages learners to memorize information for examination purposes only. They will quickly forget the information relatively shortly after the

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examination and then simply look it up on the internet or return to their textbook for a refresher when they need it.

### *Research Question 3*

*How do their curricula compare with the national school curricula in content?*

While little is found in the literature on how closely subject-specific curriculum content of the nonformal education system aligns with that of the formal system, as outlined in the literature review of this report, a great deal can be found confirming that non-formal education exists in many forms and is a credible compliment to formal education in all societies. (Denkowska et al, 2020; Duerden et al, 2014; Gonzalez & Bonal, 2021; Olcott, 2013: Siurala et al, 2016; Williamson, 2017).

Areas of alignment of subject-specific curriculum content of the youth organizations under study and the primary and secondary school curriculum content of Antigua and Barbuda was found in this study. The subject areas include science and social studies in addition to several other subject areas.  This finding not only suggests another piece of evidence supporting the pre-eminence of the youth organizations under study in augmenting the formal education system in its mandate to help young people develop 21st century skills, but it also suggests that other subjects that are especially challenging to students but important for 21st century education could be involved.

For example, the results of the high stakes May-June 2023 CXC CSEC examinations reveal continuing declining numbers of students sitting the sciences and continuing low numbers passing mathematics (Preliminary CSEC June 2023 Results Antigua and Barbuda). High stakes assessment

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has been identified as one of the factors mitigating against learner-centered education and by extension the learning of 21$^{st}$ century skills as outlined in the literature review of this study. The nonformal education environment is described as more flexible than that of the formal environment and allows a greater degree of freedom of space and time for learning since there is no looming high stakes examination to exert pressure on learner and teacher (Grajcevci & Shala, 2016: Kim & Dopico, 2016). Hence, a more deliberate attempt by the youth organizations to stimulate interest in science and performance in mathematics may be a possibility.

### *Research Question 4*

*How do they train their youth leaders and how worthy of official recognition are the certification they award?*

It was found in this study that some form of formal training of youth leaders as youth leaders is provided by the organizations under study in seminars and club meetings. Youth leadership training is conducted by the organizations themselves and technical training such as in first aid is conducted by outside agencies. Informal youth leadership training is obtained by reading manuals and by vicarious learning. These findings are consistent with the UNESCO (2016) ERI-Net study that found that methods of training for teachers in the teaching of transversal skills included model classrooms, mentoring and the distribution of guidelines and materials in addition to lectures by specialists and online learning.

However, these findings may also suggest that training of youth leaders to deal with young people in the organizations under study is not as structured and formalized as in the formal education system with the teaching of teachers in teachers colleges, for example. In fact, proper

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training could be ad hoc or even absent. This may represent one of the most significant limitations of these organizations in augmenting the formal education system with its mandate. Earlier studies have also indicated that adequate training for youth workers can be difficult to achieve (Akiva, 2005; Pitkanen, 2021) and that staff training and personality are among the key elements in the overall effectiveness of positive youth development (Hartje et al, 2008).

It was found in this study that certification is often awarded by the organizations themselves for the completion of formal training of youth leaders, and by the outside body (usually the government) for technical training, specifically in first aid. These certificates are often credited by employers. This finding aligns with previous calls in academia and elsewhere for greater recognition of nonformal learning/education (Council of Europe, 2011; European Youth Forum, 2005; Harris & Wihak, 2018). However, obstacles exist. Bowie (2004), for example, note the lack of common course content on training among training providers and the difficulty this causes for accreditation.

Souto-Otero et al (2013) report also that employers have indicated that they are insufficiently aware of the goings on in the youth sector and that this lack of knowledge could jeopardize the recognition and acceptance given to experiences in youth organizations presented by job applicants. According to these authors, employers are known to look favorably on young applicants who indicate involvement with youth organizations on resumes or during interviews, believing that the experience is not only a positive one for youths in terms of certain skills acquired, but also provides insights into the applicant's level of motivation and potential fit with the organization. It seems therefore that since at least some employers recognize the valuable

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contributions youth organizations are making towards youth development and preparation for the workplace, that the organizations could do more to formalize their certification process and publicize their activities and achievements in order to enhance if not official recognition, then recognition by employers.

### *Research Question 5*

*In what additional ways can they assist the schools in preparing young people for the workplace?*

Participants in this study believe that there is scope for greater and mutual collaboration between youth organizations in the society and the country's formal education system in the development of the young people of the nation. They also express an eagerness and willingness so to do. This finding implies that the youth organizations under study are flexible notwithstanding that they are faith-based and may be willing to reduce the tension between evangelism and social action with regards to their purpose as prior studies have found with some religious organizations (De Kock, 2015).

Cooperation and collaboration between youth organizations and government in the interest of positive youth development is encouraged (Camarinhas, 2019). Given the global consensus that the formal education system is struggling to effectively prepare young people for the 21st century workplace (Barrichello et al, 2020; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018), there should be a willingness by policy makers in education to embrace viable and credible assistance regardless of the source. There is also global consensus that nonformal education is a viable and credible complement to formal education (Ishali & Nasrin, 2022; Latchen, 2018; Olcott, 2013).

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Among the actors in nonformal programs are faith-based organizations (Britto et al, 2014), whose activities have been found to be conducive to the development of academic and workplace readiness among young people (Denkowska, 2020; Duerden et al, 2014; Giannaki, 2015; McBride et al, 2011; Ngaka et al, 2012; Souto-Otero et al, 2013).

Thus, from the findings of this study, it can be concluded that faith-based youth organizations appear to be ready and willing to collaborate with the formal education system in the state of Antigua and Barbuda the preparation of youth for the workplace. The major areas of concern about the suitability of the organizations under study for the task adumbrated in this study may have to do with the religious influence they exert which research shows may not be always positive and their training practices which are largely ad hoc and acquired experientially. This may be enhancing the organizations' vulnerability to negative youth development practices instead of enhancing the opposite.

In concluding this section then it seems reasonable to suggest that the implications of this study's findings  on the efficacy and agency of wholistic development with a spiritual dimension of some sort should be acknowledged and actioned by educational institutions and stakeholders such as curriculum development policy makers in the Ministry of Education, school leaders such as principals and school counsellors, juvenile correctional and rehabilitation facility administrators, and all other groups or organizations in the society engaged in youth work. Education officials at all levels may be also well advised by the finding of this study on the nature of the curriculum, leaning environment and positive attitudes toward cooperation in youth

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organizations, that these organizations represent an underutilized resource from which greater leverage could be sought.

**Recommendations for Application**

This study aimed at investigating the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state controlled organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting its formal education system in preparing young people for the 21st century workplace. Key findings reveal that the organizations subscribe to a holistic development philosophy, accommodate membership for virtually one's entire life as a youth, have pedagogic practices that reflect constructivism and hence the development of 21st century skills, have curricula that share similarities in content with the national curriculum and are willing to collaborate with other entities including the state in the education and general development of young people.

It is argued in this study that the key findings as outlined above imply that the youth organizations in this study are pre-eminent among entities that provide non-formal education to young people in Antigua and Barbuda and hence are ideally suited for the purpose of augmenting the formal education system in preparing the nation's youths for the 21st century workplace. The state or the country's Ministry of Education could therefore recognize this pre-eminence and capitalize on it accordingly. According to Sonatan (2019), traditionally, National Youth Councils (NYCs) in the Caribbean have been seen as the prime and preferable youth entity with which the state should consult on youth and youth policy. However, they have been criticized as suffering from institutional weakness, low membership participation and a disconnect from national movements for social and political change (Cover-Kus, 2016; Sonatan, 2019; Taft & Gordon,

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2013). Furthermore, while being the central, Sonatan (2019) advises that NYCs should not be the sole, entity for meaningful communication and collective action in the youth movement.

Based on its findings, this study suggests that Antigua and Barbuda's youth organizations, especially its faith-based ones, are uniquely positioned to fill this void that seemingly currently exists in the milieu of youth organizations partnering with the state in youth development, justifying their co-option by the state in efforts to more effectively prepare young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. They do so by providing non-formal educational and training environments that are not as rigidly structured and planned, nor encumbered with pressures such as the attainment of curriculum goals and expected levels of performances on high stakes examinations. Their tenets - including a strong emphasis on religious influence – along with their guiding principles, pedagogical approaches and curriculum allow them to be pre-eminent in this undertaking. Specifically, then, membership of the NYC should be expanded to include representatives from these organizations.

In addition to what they are currently doing, the youth organizations under study can be encouraged by the state to further their augmentation of the formal education system in two main ways. One is to increase their focus on the development of 21$^{st}$ century workplace skills in their curriculum and pedagogy. The other is to encourage or strengthen the formation of partnerships between them and the schools. With regards to the first recommendation, it is well documented in the literature how the pressure to prepare students for high stakes examinations mitigate against the time and efforts essential to the effective teaching and learning of 21$^{st}$ century skills (Care, 2018; Care et al, 2018; Ilhan et al, 2021; Putwain et al, 2015; Saleh, 2019; Sparrow, 2016).

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Youth organizations are not faced with the challenge of high-stake examinations, although their curriculum calls for the completion of certain requirements per year. Hence, they can devote more time to the development of skills. Twenty-first century skills development could therefore become a more targeted outcome of their curriculum, and their pedagogic mechanisms including training of youth leaders could be honed more towards this end. The efficacy of this endeavor is supported by the UNESCO (2016) ERI-Net study, which describes how transversal competencies are explicitly and implicitly promoted in policy and curriculum document as well as in school vision, mission and motto statements.

The development of foundational skills (that is, literacy, numeracy) is also crucial to the effective development of 21st century skills (Kivunja, 2015; Obiakor, n.d.). The curriculum and teaching and learning activities of the youth organizations could also be further aligned towards enhancing these learning outcomes. The organizations indicated, for example, that they provide remedial classes and offer the possibility of offering badges or pins for projects in Reading, English and Mathematics, a discipline in which poor academic performance at the secondary school level has been of alarming concern for many years. The requirements for earning the badges could reflect the contents of the school curriculum in the specific discipline.

Training and practice in public speaking, debates and other activities to develop literacy and communication skills are also regular activities of the organizations. Such activities could be increased along with increasing the acquisition of learning in other subject disciplines such as science and social studies that are already present in their curriculum. Thus, the overall academic

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achievement of the young people who are members of these organizations could be improved, and their employability prospects enhanced by extension.

In the task of  the adequate development of 21$^{st}$ century workplace skills including foundational skills of literacy and numeracy among the nation's young people, a specific, realistic and measurable way in which the government could leverage the underutilized resource that the youth organizations in this study represent, could be for a pilot project involving two or three of the organizations to be implemented in which first of all the curriculum policy makers in the Ministry of Education meet with the leaders of the organizations and discuss with them the establishment and addition to their curriculum of  an honor/award in literacy and/or numeracy. In addition to requirements to earning the award, supporting pedagogic resources, training needs, supervision and authentication can also be identified. The certificate awarded could include endorsement by the Ministry of Education to enhance legitimacy. Further roll out of this project would be influenced by its refining in the piloted clubs.

The second way in which the youth organizations under study can be encouraged by the state to further their augmentation of the formal education system in the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills in young people is to strengthen the formation of partnerships between schools and the organizations. Youth leaders could be invited to be members of school boards or PTA's . The potential of faith-based organizations to facilitate positive development in society is also well established in the literature. For example, it is reported that in matters of public health they have been described as longstanding but underutilized resources (Idler et al, 2019; Levin, 2012). In education, they have been linked with occasioning positive behavioral and academic outcomes in

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partnerships with schools (Connelly, 2012; Ford, 2015; Henry & Bryan, 2021; Henry et al, 2017). Faith-based entities have also been involved in the provision of education in many countries around the world including Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean region for a long time (Bacchus, 2018). Based on the findings of this study it can be argued that their progenies, the youth organizations, are positioned to do the same.

Of major concern with faith-based entities collaborating with the state is, of course, the violation of the principle of the separation of state and religion. This study found that faith sharing and proselytizing are at the top of the agenda of participating faith-based youth organizations and creates tension in defining their raison d'etre as evangelism or social action, confirming what has been found in prior studies (Clyne, 2015; Davis, 2020; Fagg, 2023; McFeeters, 2022). However, it should be acknowledged that there are some who argue that there have been cases where collaboration between school and faith-based entities have not resulted in any explicit proselytizing (Henry & Bryan, 2021).

Henry et al (2017) note, for example, that some counselors may lean towards the avoidance of partnerships with faith-based organizations for reasons such as the principle of church and church separation, differences with respect to visioning and disapproving feedback from the general public. These authors note further, however, that the literature supports the notion that heads of schools that are in partnership with faith-based organizations do not complain about issues of proselytizing or the violation of established regulations governing faith-sharing in educational government institutions. On the contrary, many principals indicate that such partnerships have resulted in results that the term as compassionate.

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The organizations in this study expressed their willingness to collaborate with schools in providing mentoring and counselling services, especially in times of crisis. They noted that their leaders have been called in by schools on occasions. However, they indicated that they prefer a more structured and formal arrangement in working with the schools. The Ministry of Education could therefore meet with the leaders of the organizations and craft such an arrangement. The organizations could center their interventions on the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) and other positive youth development (PYD) competencies in students, thus contributing to their workplace preparation.

Other areas of collaboration could be resolving the issue of schools extending their mandatory activities beyond the regular school day to the detriment of attendance by youngsters at club meetings that are scheduled to begin on weekdays shortly after regular school hours end. The youth organizations indicated that this is of serious concern to them, even an existential threat. Resolving this conflict in the interest of both school and youth organizations is therefore worthwhile pursuit.

The value of youth camps in developing academic and workplace readiness is also well established in the literature (Duerden et al, 2014; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). The youth organizations in this study are well established in operating youth camps. The state could collaborate with them in hosting youth camps for disadvantaged youths such as those from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas who may not be able to afford the cost of attending camps. The state could also incentivize youth participation in youth camps or youth organizations

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in order to encourage more youths to be involved. For example, persons who as youths attend a certain number of summer camps or who remain active members of youth organizations for a certain number of years could be awarded with certificates that are given credit by employers or agencies in the society that award academic or other scholarships.

Like most places in the world, the deficiency in 21st century workplace skills among young people in the Caribbean including Antigua and Barbuda is disconcerting. Realizing that the formal education system seems to be unable by itself to remedy the situation, policy makers can use the findings of this study to realize that faith-based youth organizations in particular represent a viable partner in the educational and general developmental context of young people. The tenets and guiding principles of these organizations not only align well with PYD principles, but the spiritual or religious dimension of their concept of wholistic development may add greater potency to the developmental experiences youths are exposed to in these organizations (Benson & Freedman, 2016; Lie & Freedman, 2016, Ten Kate et al, 2017; Villani et al, 2019). When the benefits of involvement in summer camps which these organizations also operate - and in most cases at least once annually - are added to these experiences, faith-based youth organizations may be considered to be pre-eminent among youth organizations in their potential in preparing young people for the workplace.

Although this study does not claim generalizability, Antigua and Barbuda being a microcosm of the Caribbean region (Hendrickson, 2023), the findings and recommendations of this study are applicable to other countries in the region. It is recommended therefore that the relevant authorities in the other countries seek also to exploit in a greater way the resources and

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expertise found in youth organizations in their quest to equip the emerging workforce adequately. For example, a formal and nonformal education council consisting of educators and other stake holders in each sector could be set up to act as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education and charged with monitoring, evaluating and prescribing policies and practices in all forms of education in the country.

A roadmap for integrating youth organizations into national workforce development policies could involve first of all a sensitization or education program on the role and potential of youth organizations highlighted by this and other studies. This could be targeted at the society in general, but members of youth organizations, education officials at all levels and employers in particular. The next step could be a meeting between the leadership of the youth organizations and curriculum officers in the Ministry of Education and other relevant entities in the education landscape to identify areas in the national curriculum that youth organizations could give special or greater focus in their augmentation role.

Perhaps two priority areas education authorities should consider could be literacy and numeracy since these areas are so important in a 21$^{st}$ century educational curriculum as highlighted in this study. The dialogue between the youth organizations and the education officials should include a discussion of constructivist pedagogies and the importance of the organizations placing emphasis on the development of higher order cognitive skills and not emphasizing high stakes testing. The provision of relevant pedagogic training for youth leaders would also be discussed and worked out. A mechanism for maintaining regular dialogue between the youth organizations and relevant Ministry of Education officials on the progress and efficacy of the initiative could

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also be established. For example, the youth organizations could be provided with grades and feedback on performance by the schools.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study attempts to present credible evidence supporting the argument that youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are ideally placed and even pre-eminent among the country's nonformal education providers to augment the formal system in the preparation of young people for the 21$^{st}$ century workplace. This study does not claim generalizability, but rather transferability as indicated earlier. Hence, since there are significant similarities between Caribbean nations, this study could be replicated, or comparative studies could be conducted, in other parts of the Caribbean to see how consistent the findings of this study are.   Further investigations in a number of related areas will also provide more information that could help to shape the argument for the utility of youth organizations for this purpose. For example, quantitative studies can be done on participation of young people in youth organizations across various divides such as gender, ethnicity and religion.

It was revealed in this study that holistic development is one of the fundamental philosophies of the youth organizations and is described by them as consisting of physical, intellectual, social and spiritual dimensions.  It was argued earlier also that one of the implications of having this philosophy is that the learning experiences of the youth organizations are aligned with social and emotional learning (SEL) and positive youth development (PYD), two theories popularly supported  as underpinning best practices in general youth development, including the development of employability skills (Dahsih, 2017; Matsuyama,et al, 2019; Moate & Cox, 2015;

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Trester, 2019). Currently, though, there are widespread concerns about how the physical condition of youths may be impacting their development.

More specifically, childhood and adolescent obesity and overweight have been steadily rising and have become major public health issues everywhere including the Caribbean region (Ooi et al, 2022; Traboulay & Hoyt, 2015). Contributing factors to this condition are believed to include physical inactivity and sedentary behavior which are highly prevalent among adolescents across the world (Aguilar_Farias, 2018). In Latin America and the Caribbean region, it has been found that only 15 percent of adolescents meet the recommended level of physical activity and only a third reported participation in physical education classes three days or more per week (op. cit.).

Moderate-vigorous physical activity has been proven to be positively associated with physical fitness in young people (Judice et al, 2017), and physical fitness is considered to be not only a construct of physical and mental health but has been associated with academic performance in youths (Esteban-Cornejo et al, 2014; Santana et al, 2017; Silva et al, 2020).  Schools are seen as ideal settings for the promotion of physical activity and exercise among children and adolescents. However, it has been found that the competitive requirements of the curriculum often impact negatively the recommended amount of time that should be devoted to physical activity (Garcia-Hermoso et al, 2020). Walwyn (2019), in a study that explored physical activity opportunities for adolescents in secondary schools in Antigua and Barbuda, found that the negative impact was significant enough to call for an immediate increase, enhancement and encouragement of physical activity in schools.

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A study by Thomas-Venugopal et al (2023) in Barbados and a few other islands in the Caribbean produced similar findings. What role can youth organizations play or are playing in this scenario? Similar research to that of Walwyn (2019) and Thomas-Venugopal et al (2023) can be conducted with the youth organizations of Antigua and Barbuda since youths spend a significant amount of time in their space and physical development of the person is part of their philosophy. Thus, for example, research focused on the following questions could help to identify the potential of these organizations to augment the school in ensuring adequate engagement by youths in healthful physical activity:

- What is the level of physical activity young people are exposed to in youth organizations and how does it compare with schools?
- Are school students who are active members of youth organizations more physically fit than those who are not?
- How can youth organizations increase, enhance and encourage more physical activity among youths?
- What is the potential of youth organizations in reducing obesity and overweight issues among youths?

This study also revealed that the curricula of the youth organizations studied align closely with the formal school curriculum in various disciplines including science and social studies. Youths were found to be exposed to a wide variety of learning experiences through the activities and general learning environment of the organizations. One organization reported that high academic performance in school is encouraged by providing remediation in weak areas such as mathematics and members are asked to show their school reports to their youth leaders for feedback. Outstanding academic performance is lauded and rewarded.

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Research into the role of youth organizations in education could extend into exploring the correlation between the level of participation in youth organizations and academic performance in school or in high stakes examinations in Antigua and Barbuda such as the Grade 6 National Assessment examinations to determine placements in secondary school and the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) examinations at the end of secondary school.

This study was conducted largely from the perspective of youth directors and leaders. Another area of further study can therefore be from the perspective of the rank and file members of the organizations, the youths themselves. For example, what do youths like and dislike about youth organizations? Do they believe the organizations are augmenting their formal education? If so, how can the organizations be more effective in augmenting their formal education and helping them to develop generally? One youth leader noted that young people who are members of youth organizations tend to involve themselves in fights and other delinquent or deviant behaviors in school less frequently than young people who are not. This aligns with similar findings in the literature.

What mechanism or mechanisms in these youth organizations are mostly responsible for influencing the behavior of young persons? For example, is it codes of honor, adult-youth relationships, religious influence, fear of losing badges or pins, emphasis on discipline? Answers to this question might offer helpful suggestions for handling deviant behaviors in schools and the society in general.

A final area of further study could involve the exploration of the views of employers on the workplace readiness of employees who spent significant periods of time as members of youth

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organizations. As indicated in other sections of this study, the literature indicates that the involvement of young people in summer camps enhances their employability skills (Duerden et al, 2014; Richmond et al, 2021; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). One of the youth directors in this study noted that certificates awarded by his youth organization are recognized to be of some value by employers.

Do employers in Antigua and Barbuda, the region and elsewhere recognize differences between employees who spend significant time as active members of youth organizations and those who do not? If so, what are those differences? How do employers feel youth organizations can contribute more to the preparation of young people for the workplace? Answers to these questions could provide more information on how youth organizations can optimize the augmentation of the formal education system in preparing youths for the workplace. Longitudinal studies could be done on the persistence into adulthood and work life of skills acquired during youth as a member of a youth organization.

**Conclusion**

The rationale for this study was premised on four widely recognized realities. One, in sharp contrast to the industrial economies of the recent past, economic growth in the 21st century is increasingly driven by human-related factors of production such as the ability to generate ideas and accumulate knowledge (Hadad, 2017; Moisio, 2018; Sagiyeva et al, 2018; Skrodzka, 2016). Two, the change has created a skills gap in the workforce and the formal education system is struggling and even unable by itself to effectively equip graduates with these newly required skills (Barrichello et al, 2020; Marginson, 2023; Robinson & Winthrop, 2016; Wilson & Sibthorp,

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2018). Three, the newly required skills, generally referred to as 21$^{st}$ century skills are challenging to teach (Hadinugrahaningsih et al, 2017; Joynes et al, 2019; Kivunja, 2015; Laar et al, 2020; Pineida, 2011; Taylor, 2016; Yan et al, 2019). Four, because of its limitations the formal education system needs to be augmented by alternate forms of education in order to optimize the effective training of the workforce (Denkowska, 2020; Ngaka et al, 2012).

Alternate forms of education include nonformal education such as that provided by the activities of youth organizations. Prior studies have highlighted the positive impact that involvement of youths in youth organizations and youth work can have on the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills (Badr & Elsa, 2023; Duerden et al, 2014; Foster, 2017; Giannaki, 2015; Henry et al, 2015; Martinez et al, 2017; McFeeters et al, 2022; Smith, 2017; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018). The purpose of this study was to expand research in this area by exploring the role and potential of faith-based, civic and state-controlled youth organizations in augmenting the formal education system in developing these skills in young people.

An exploratory, interpretivist qualitative approach was adopted using Antigua and Barbuda as a collective or multiple case study. Four broad aspects of the organizations were examined: their tenets and general culture to see how well they support and promote 21$^{st}$ century skills development and preparation of youths for the workplace; their pedagogical approaches to see how well they reflect best practices in pedagogy; their curricula to see the extent to which they align with the formal curriculum; their training and certification protocols to see possibilities for official recognition.

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The aim of this research undertaking was to gain an understanding and appreciation of these organizations' role and potential role in augmenting the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda in employability skill development by identifying existing and potential synergies between the formal system and the nonformal education environment they represent. The study was relatively small in scale. However, it has at least three factors that enhance confidence in the generalizability of its findings: there is a high level of consistency in the findings, multiple methods were used in the collection of the data and there was a significant level of consensus among the participants.

This research investigation study seemingly unveiled that the youth organizations believe in holistic development, defined as involving the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual dimensions. Their guiding principles are grounded upon Biblical as well as generally accepted principles such as the upholding of the core values of honesty, integrity, loyalty and trustworthiness, respectfulness, commitment, obedience, strength of character and living by codes of honor. They strive to develop and nurture various skills, to include leadership skills; transferable, values-based life skills; communication skills such as public speaking and debating; and technical and occupational skills.

This research study also discovered that youth organizations provide opportunities for healthy and ethical socializing, group and community work, lessons in civics, and the development of good morals. They foster other skills more directly related to the workplace such as proper dressing and grooming, developing confidence and attitudes for job interviews and managing one's social media portfolio. Social and emotional learning (SEL) and positive youth development

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(PYD) theories support these practices as being conducive to the development of the 21st century skills (Brackett & Rivers, 2014; Jagers et al, 2018; Jones & Doolittle, 2017: Mahoney et al, 2018; Ross & Tolan, 2018).

Both traditional and constructivist pedagogic approaches are engaged in by the organizations along with the provision of numerous vicarious learning experiences. Their curriculum aligns well with the school curriculum in several disciplines including science and social studies and many badges and honors earned expose students to learning that is part of the school curriculum. They are also willing to partner with schools in the teaching and training of young people in core values and ethics and reinforce and complement what is taught in school. Training is ad hoc and provided through experience and longevity in the organization and is provided internally and by external entities. Certification is also provided internally and by external entities and certificates are worthwhile to some employers.

Thus, this study has provided deep insights into the nature of the nonformal educational environment provided by the targeted organizations. It has found that this environment is not only conducive to the development of 21st century skills confirming prior studies (Duerden et al, 2014; Henry et al, 2015;  McFeeters et al, 2022; Wilson & Sibthorp, 2018), but that this environment, coupled with the positive influence of religion on youth development (Ferguson et al, 2007; Henry et al, 2015; McFeeters et al, 2022) and the relatively long period of time that youths remain under their direct influence, suggests that the youth organizations under study are pre-eminent among entities in society that cater to the needs of youths and are uniquely positioned to fill a void that seemingly currently exists in the milieu of youth organizations partnering with the state in youth

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development (Cover-Kus, 2016; Sonatan, 2019; Taft & Gordon, 2013). The organizations can therefore also be encouraged by the state to further their augmentation of the formal education system by increasing their focus on the development of 21$^{st}$ century workplace skills in their curriculum and pedagogy, since they are less pressured by the exigencies of high stakes examinations as the formal system is (Care, 2018; Care et al, 2018; Ilhan et al, 2021; Putwain et al, 2015; Saleh, 2019; Sparrow, 2016).

This study's contribution to academic discourse can be explicitly stated as helping to fill the gap in the literature on the contributions of the various types of youth organizations that exist in the development in young people of 21$^{st}$ century workplace readiness skills. Whereas prior studies focused on youth organizations that are youth-led or engage with youths once a year in summer camps, this study focused on youth organizations that are adult-led, faith-based, state-controlled and/or engage with youths for several years of their lives and its findings suggest that these types of youth organizations are pre-eminent among entities in society in augmenting the formal education system.

The pre-eminence of these organizations is occasioned by the spiritual dimension of their wholistic development practices and the length of time they remain in direct contact with youths. They represent an under-utilized resource that can be leveraged more directly by the formal education system in the development of 21$^{st}$ century workplace readiness skills in young people.

Table 51 following shows a synthesized summary of the key findings of this research investigation with illustrative quotes from the study.

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**Table 51**

*Summary of Key Findings With Illustrative Quotes*

| Finding | Illustrative Quote |
|---|---|
| Wholistic youth development is a main objective. | [Our raison d'etre is] "to train young people for all aspects of their lives, both the physical, social, spiritual and educational." (Head of Organization 2). |
| Proselytizing is a main objective. | "To have lives transformed to witness for Christ in the world (Head of Organization 1). |
| Guiding principles reflect PYD | "Promotion of habits of obedience, reverence, discipline, self-respect." (Head of Organization 3) "…high quality relationship with a mentor, teacher or educator. I think that is really key if you are going to develop young people." (Head of Organization 1) |
| Pedagogical approach is a mix of behaviorism and construtivism | "When actually in these organizations you have to actually learn and recite them (Youth Leader 2) "They are taught in the clubs through the earning of honors and badges." Head of Organization 1)" |
| Curriculum content overlap and augmentation | So the curriculum of the school and the…church are are one and the same." (Head of Organization 1) "So in a broad sense though not in a formal sense as it relates to the education syllabus we take on that other side of it that helps to make an entire man." |
| Training is mostly ad hoc and informal | "Training takes place through… joining and participating in the activities of the club. So the training is embedded (Head of Organization 3). |
| Additional ways of assisting the school includes more collaboration | "We can collaborate on a greater level because the government has a lot to offer the church and the church …the government |

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Personal Interview Questions**

Dear Participant

As part of the requirements for the completion of my course of study leading to the award of a Phd in Education from UniCaf University of Zambia, I am conducting a research study for a dissertation entitled *The Role of Youth Organizations in Augmenting the Formal Education System: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda.* The data that inform this study include the views of stake holders such as yourself obtained in interviews. Since all participants in this study will remain anonymous to readers, I therefore invite you to answer my questions as fully, frankly and as honestly as you can. If you agree to participate in this study under these conditions, please indicate the same by placing a tick (√ ) in the box that follows the following statement.

*I agree to participate in this study of my own free will and hereby give my informed*

*consent for participating*

1. How do you identify your gender: Male, female, other or you prefer not to mention?
2. In which of these age groups are you presently: below 20, 20 – 30, 30 – 40, 40 – 50 or above 50?
3. What is the highest level of education you have attained thus far?
4. Comment on the length of time spent in, and scope of experience with, youth work thus far?
5. If one were to ask you what is the main reason for the existence of your organization what would you say?
6. If one were to ask you to explain exactly how your organization contributes to the positive development of young people, what would you say?
7. Can you name any theory or philosophy that you would say underpin what you do and believe in your organization?
8. In what specific ways would you say that your organization helps in preparing young people for the workplace?
9. Can you identify and describe specific learning and training activities of your organization that you think are closely linked with what young people learn in school?

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10. If someone were to ask you to comment on how your organization is assisting the school in the education, training and general development of young people what would be your response?
11. How can the school and your organization work closer in the common task of educating young people and preparing them for the workplace?
12. Comment on the training provided for, or demanded of, youth leaders in your organization.
13. Can you share some feedback on the experience, positive or negative, that you have received from young people (or their parents or guardians) who have passed through your organization?

.

**Appendix B: Focus Group Discussions Questions**

Dear Participant

As part of the requirements for the completion of my course of study leading to the award of a Phd in Education from UniCaf University of Zambia, I am conducting a research study for a dissertation entitled *The Role of Youth Organizations in Augmenting the Formal Education System: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda.* The data that inform this study include the views of stake holders such as yourself obtained in focus group discussions. Since all participants in this study will remain anonymous to readers, I therefore invite you to participate in the discussion of my questions as fully, frankly and as honestly as you can. If you agree to participate in this study under these conditions, please indicate the same by placing a tick (√ ) in the box that follows the following statement.

*I agree to participate in this study of my own free will and hereby give my informed consent for participating*

1. How do you identify your gender:  Male, female, other or you prefer not to mention?
2. In which of these age groups are you presently: below 20, 20 – 30, 30 – 40, 40 – 50 or above 50?
3. What is the highest level of education you have attained thus far?
4. Comment on the length of time spent in, and scope of experience with, youth work thus far?
5. What in your opinion is the raison d' etre (the main reason/s) for the existence of youth organizations?
6. How do youth organizations contribute to the positive development of young people?
7. What are some of the guiding principles of youth organizations?
8. Identify and describe specific ways in which your organization helps in preparing young people for the workplace.
9. Identify and describe specific learning and training activities of your organization that you think are closely linked with what young people learn in school.
10. How is your organization assisting the school in the education, training and general development of young people?

    .

11. How can the school and your organization work closer in the common task of educating young people and preparing them for the workplace?
12. Comment on the training provided for, or demanded of, youth leaders in your organization.
13. Share some feedback on the experience, positive or negative, that received from young people (or their parents and guardians) who have passed through your organization.

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**Appendix C: Policy Document Analysis Tool (Adapted from Cardno, 2018)**

- *Document production ad location*
  Why was the document produced?
  Where was the document produced and when?
  Where was it located?
  Was it easy or difficult to access?

- *Authorship and audience*
  Who wrote the document?
  What is their position and do they have a bias?
  Who was it written for?

- *Policy context*
  What is the purpose of the policy (for the organization or the state)?
  Are drivers or forces behind the policy evident?
  What values underpin and guide the policy and are these linked to local or national strategic and quality issues?
  Are there multiple values that might create tensions?

- *Policy Text*
  How is the policy structured and how does the text provide evidence of its construction or development?
  What are the key elements of the policy and are they associated with local or national legal or regulatory requirements?
  Are there related procedures specified in the text that provide guidance for practice?

- *Policy consequences*
  What is the intended overall impact of the policy?
  How is the policy implementation intended to be monitored?
  How and when is the policy to be reviewed?
  How does the text draw attention to important aspects of practice to the policy?

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**Appendix D: Observations Guidelines (Adapted from Compte & Preissle's (1993)**

Permission will be sought from the head of each of the organizations to visit and observe activities meetings of clubs. Visits will be made until a point of saturation is reached. That is, no new information relevant to the objectives of this study is forthcoming from the activities being observed. Observations will be recorded in a field notebook using the following as guidelines:

- Who is in the group/scene/activity – who is taking part?
- How many people are there, their identities and their characteristics?
- How do participants come to be members of the group/event/activity?
- What is taking place?
- How routine, regular, patterned, irregular and repetitive are the behaviours observed?
- What resources are being used in the scene?
- How are activities being described, justified, explained, organized, labelled?
- How do different participants behave towards each other?
- What are the statuses and roles of the participants?
- Who is making decisions, and for whom? What is being said, and by whom?
- What is being discussed frequently/infrequently?
- What appear to be the significant issues that are being discussed?
- What non-verbal communication is taking place?
- Who is talking and who is listening?
- Where does the event take place?
- When does the event take place?
- How long does the event take?
- How is time used in the event?
- How are the individual elements of the event connected?
- How are change and stability managed?
- What rules govern the social organization of, and behaviour in, the event?
- Why is this event occurring, and occurring in the way that it is?
- What meanings are participants attributing to what is happening?
  What are the history, goals and values of the group in question?

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**Appendix E: Gate Keeper Letter**

| **Gatekeeper letter** |
| :---: |

**Address:**

**Date:**

**Subject:** Request for Participation of (Name of Organization) in a Study Involving Youth Organizations.

**Dear**

I am a doctoral student at the Unical University of Zambia.

As part of my degree I am carrying out a study of the role and potential of youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda in augmenting the formal education system in developing the employability skills of young people.

I am writing to inquire whether you would be willing to grant permission for your organization to participate in this research.

Subject to approval by Unicaf Research Ethics Committee (UREC) this study will be using personal and focus group interviews, document analysis and observations.

The study is qualitative in nature and is aimed at exploring the actual and potential ways in which youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda are contributing, or can contribute, to the preparation of young people for the workplace. The title of this study is *The Role of Youth Organizations in Preparing Young* People *for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda.* My Supervisor is Dr Trevor Gerhardt.

.

Participation in this research will mean that I will request of you to be interviewed by me on my research topic with respect to your organization. This should not exceed 30 minutes. In addition, I will request permission for me to conduct a focus group discussion with 5 of your youth leaders. These discussions should also not exceed 30 minutes. These participants may be chosen by you or by me if you so prefer. Finally, I will request permission to visit and observe meetings and activities of your clubs, and peruse your policy documents, curriculum and other artifacts of your organization.

Thank you in advance for your time and for your consideration of this project. Kindly please let me know if you require and further information or need any further clarifications. Yours Sincerely,

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's E-mail:** smyke74@gmail.com

**Student's Address and Telephone**: Blacksmith Crescent, Seaview Farm

**Supervisor's Title and Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**Supervisor's Position:** Freelance Tutor Unicaf University

**Supervisor's E-mail**: t.gerhardt@unicaf.org

**Yours Sincerely:** Myrick A. Smith

.

.

**Appendix F: Template of Informed Consent**

| Informed Consent Form |
|---|
| **Part 1: Debriefing of Participants** |

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's E-mail Address:** smyke74@gmail.com

**Student ID #:** R1912D9843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**University Campus:** Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctorate of Education

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in The Preparation of Young people for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

**Date:** 05-Jan-2023

Provide a short description (purpose, aim and significance) of the research project, and explain why and how you have chosen this person to participate in this research (maximum 150 words).

The purpose of this study is to explore the role and potential of faith-based and civic organizations in augmenting the formal education system in the preparation of young people for the 21st century workplace. Prior studies in other parts of the world have shown that participation in youth organizations have enhanced the employability of young people. This study with the aforementioned organizations in this part of the world is therefore pivotal. Being a qualitative study, some of the data will be collected in the form of the views of stake holders of the targeted youth organizations. Being one of the stakeholders, you are in a position to assist me in this project and I have secured the permission of the head of your organization to approach you and solicit your support.

The above named Student is committed in ensuring participant's voluntarily participation in the research project and guaranteeing there are no potential risks and/or harms to the participants.

Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage (prior or post the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In these cases, data collected will be deleted.

All data and information collected will be coded and will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. Data described and included in dissemination activities will only refer to coded information ensuring beyond the bounds of possibility participant identification.

I, Myrick Anderson Smith, ensure that all information stated above is true and that all conditions have been met.

**Student's Signature:**

# UNICAF
UNIVERSITY

| Informed Consent Form |
| :---: |
| Part 2: Certificate of Consent |

**This section is mandatory and should to be signed by the participant(s)**

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's E-mail Address:** smyke74@gmail.com

**Student ID #:** R1912D9843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**University Campus:** Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctorate of Education

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in The Preparation of Young people for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss about it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation to this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential, unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

**Participant's Print name:**

**Participant's Signature:**

**Date:**

**If the Participant is illiterate:**

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had an opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the aforementioned individual has given consent freely.

**Witness's Print name:**

**Witness's Signature:**

**Date:**

**Appendix G: Local/National Approval Letter**

GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

*MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS, AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES*
*GOVERNMENT OFFICE COMPLEX*
*QUEEN ELIZABETH HIGHWAY*
*ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA, W.I.*
*TELEPHONE:   Local: 462-0192/462-0193*
*462-0198/462-0199*
*Overseas: (268)462-4959*
*FAX NO. (268)462-4970*
*Email: ministryofeducationantigua@gmail.com*

January 18, 2024
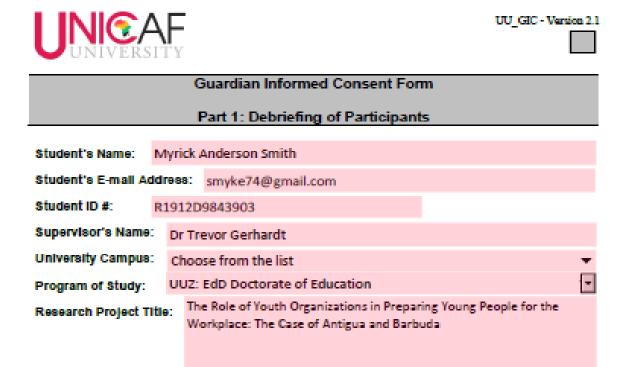
## To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that the Ministry of Education, Sports and Creative Industries approves the study conducted by Mr. Myrick Anderson Smith entitled "The Role of Youth Organizations in Preparing Young People for the Workplace: The case of Antigua and Barbuda."

Director of Education (a&b)

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

JAN 18 2024

AND SPORTS

**Appendix H: Template of Guardian Informed Consent**

UNICAF
UNIVERSITY

**Guardian Informed Consent Form**

**Part 1: Debriefing of Participants**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Student's Name:** | Myrick Anderson Smith |
| **Student's E-mail Address:** | smyke74@gmail.com |
| **Student ID #:** | R1912D9843903 |
| **Supervisor's Name:** | Dr Trevor Gerhardt |
| **University Campus:** | Choose from the list |
| **Program of Study:** | UUZ: EdD Doctorate of Education |
| **Research Project Title:** | The Role of Youth Organizations in Preparing Young People for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda |
| **Date:** | 29-Jan-2023 |

Provide a short description (purpose, aim and significance) of the research project, and explain why and how you have chosen this person to participate in this research (maximum 150 words).

The purpose of this study is to explore the role and potential of faith-based and civic organizations in augmenting the formal education system in the preparation of young people for the 21st century workplace. Prior studies in other parts of the world have shown that participation in youth organizations have enhanced the employability of young people. This study with the aforementioned organizations in this part of the world is therefore pivotal. Being a qualitative study, some of the data will be collected in the form of the views of stake holders of the targeted youth organizations. Being one of the stakeholders, you are in a position to assist me in this project and I have secured the permission of the head of your organization to approach you and solicit your support.

The above named Student is committed in ensuring participant's voluntarily participation in the research project and guaranteeing there are no potential risks and/or harms to the participants.

Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage (prior or post the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In these cases, data collected will be deleted.

All data and information collected will be coded and will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. Data described and included in dissemination activities will only refer to coded information ensuring beyond the bounds of possibility participant identification.

I, Myrick Anderson Smith , ensure that all information stated above is true and that all conditions have been met.

**Student's Signature:**

## Guardian Informed Consent Form

### Part 2: Certificate of Consent

**This section is mandatory and should to be signed by the participant's legal guardian**

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's E-mail Address:** smyke74@gmail.com

**Student ID #:** R1912D9843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**University Campus:** Choose from the list ▼

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctorate of Education ▼

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in Preparing Young People for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

I have read the foregoing information about this study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss about it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that the participant is free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of the participation to this study. I understand that all data will remain anonymous and confidential, unless stated otherwise.

I, _____ , the legal guardian

of _____ allow and provide consent

that _____ can willingly participate in the study.

I, _____ , the legal guardian

of _____ have been ensured that verbal consent

given by _____ will also be taken before the study.

Date: _____

2

**Appendix I: UREC Approval Letter**

### Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee
### Decision

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's ID #:** R1912D9843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctoral of Education

**Offer ID /Group ID:** O47780G60551

**Dissertation Stage:** 3

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in Augmenting the Formal Education System: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

**Comments:** Comment: Add some options when asking for the highest education level of the participants.

**Decision*:** A. Approved without revision or comments

**Date:** 10-Feb-2023

*Provisional approval provided at the Dissertation Stage 1, whereas the final approval is provided at the Dissertation stage 3. The student is allowed to proceed to data collection following the final approval.

**Appendix J: REAF_DS Form**

| UNICAF UNIVERSITY<br>RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM<br>DOCTORAL STUDIES | UREC USE ONLY:<br>Application No:<br>Date Received: |
|---|---|

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's E-mail Address:** smyke74@gmail.com

**Student's ID #:** R1912D9843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**University Campus:** Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctorate of Education

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in Preparing Young People for the Workplace: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

1. **Please state the timelines involved in the proposed research project:**

**Estimated Start Date:** 01-Dec-2021     **Estimated End Date:** 31-Aug-2023

2. **External Research Funding (if applicable):**

2.a. Do you have any external funding for your research?

☐ YES     ✓ NO

If YES, please answer questions 2b and 2c.

2.b. List any external (third party) sources of funding you plan to utilise for your project. You need to include full details on the source of funds (e.g. state, private or individual sponsor), any prior / existing or future relationships between the funding body / sponsor and any of the principal investigator(s) or co-investigator(s) or student researcher(s), status and timeline of the application and any conditions attached.

2.c. If there are any perceived ethical issues or potential conflicts of interest arising from applying or and receiving external funding for the proposed research then these need to be fully disclosed below and also further elaborated on, in the relevant sections on ethical considerations later on in this form.

## 3. The research project

### 3.a. Project Summary:

In this section fully describe the purpose and underlying rationale for the proposed research project. Ensure that you pose the research questions to be examined, state the hypotheses, and discuss the expected results of your research and their potential.

It is important in your description to use plain language so it can be understood by all members of the UREC, especially those who are not necessarily experts in the particular discipline. To that effect ensure that you fully explain / define any technical terms or discipline-specific terminology (use the space provided in the box).

The purpose of this study is to explore the notion that the formal education system of Antigua and Barbuda, being like most other formal education systems deficient in its capacity to effectively develop in young people appropriate 21st century employability skills, can be augmented in this mandate by non-formal education and training obtainable through faith-based and civic youth organizations. The acquisition of these skills by upcoming generations is considered critical to the socioeconomic development of any country. Hence, there is value in exploring any possibility for their more effective development.

With reference to the aforementioned youth organizations in Antigua and Barbuda therefore, this study's main research question is: What is their role and potential of in augmenting the formal education system in its mandate to effectively develop in young people employability skills for the 21st century workplace?

Subsidiary questions:

1. To what extent do their tenets, activities and general culture reflect best practices in pedagogy and learning and the preparation of youths for the knowledge based economy workplace?

2. To what extent does the nonformal curriculum of the youth organizations compliment the formal curriculum?

3. In what ways can greater synergies between the formal and non-formal education systems be achieved?

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**3.b. Significance of the Proposed Research Study and Potential Benefits:**

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research (use the space provided in the box).

Prior studies have shown that participation in youth organizations enhance the employabiity skills of young people. However, these studies have been done with other types of youth organiations such as National Youth Councils, and conducted in other parts of the world such as Europe and North America. Most people in Antigua and Barbuda spend a part of their youthful years as members of faith-based or civic organizations such as Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinders and Scouts respectively. This study is therefore of great significance as it explores the contributions of these particular types of youth organizations and in the Caribbean region. The results could be of great value to education policy makers and administrators not only in Antigua and Barbuda but further afield, in terms of creating or encouraging the creation of new paradigms for conceptualizing and undertaking the education of upcoming generations.

4. **Project execution:**

4.a. The following study is an:

[✓] experimental study (primary research)

[ ] desktop study (secondary research)

[ ] desktop study using existing databases involving information of human/animal subjects

[ ] Other

If you have chosen 'Other' please Explain:

4.b. **Methods.** The following study will involve the use of:

| Method | Materials / Tools |
|---|---|
| **Qualitative:** | ☑ Face to Face Interviews |
| | ☐ Phone Interviews |
| | ☑ Face to Face Focus Groups |
| | ☐ Online Focus Groups |
| | ☑ Other * |
| **Quantitative:** | ☐ Face to Face Questionnaires |
| | ☐ Online Questionnaires |
| | ☐ Experiments |
| | ☐ Tests |
| | ☐ Other * |

*If you have chosen 'Other' please Explain:

Document analysis. The policies, tenets, curriculum and any other publication of the targeted youth organizations will be mined for data.

Observations: The activities of a purposeful sample of clubs/units of each organization will be observed during their regular meeting times

5. **Participants:**

5 a. Does the Project involve the recruitment and participation of additional persons other than the researcher(s) themselves?

☑ YES    If YES, please complete all following sections.

☐ NO    If NO, please directly proceed to Question 7.

## 5 b. Relevant Details of the Participants of the Proposed Research

State the number of participants you plan to recruit, and explain in the box below how the total number was calculated.

Number of participants    55

For EACH of the 5 organizations targeted in this study: 1 Youth Director, 5 youth leaders and 5 current and/or former members. In total: 5 Youth Directors, 25 youth leaders and 25 current and/or former members

Describe important characteristics such as: demographics (e.g. age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc). It is also important that you specify any inclusion and exclusion criteria that will be applied (e.g. eligibility criteria for participants).

Age range    From    18    To    60

Gender    ✓ Female
          ✓ Male

Eligibility Criteria:

- Inclusion criteria    current or former youth director, youth leader, or member of the targeted youth organizations of age range 18 - 60, who are sanctioned to participate by their organization.

- Exclusion criteria    Officials or members outside of the stipulated age range 18 - 60 or who are not sanctioned by their organization to participate.

Disabilities    Only participants who can provide informed consent for themselves will be included in this study. Hence no one with mental disabilities will participate.

Other relevant information (use the space provided in the box):

### 5 c.   Participation & Research setting:

Clearly describe which group of participants is completing/participating in the material(s)/ tool(s) described in 5b above (use the space provided in the box).

> The Youth Directors will participate in face-to-face interviews.
>
> The youth leaders will participate in focus group discussions.
>
> The members will also participate via focus group discussions
>
> The policies, tenets, curriculum and any other publications of the targeted youth organizations will be mined for data using document analysis

### 5 d.   Recruitment Process for Human Research Participants:

Clearly describe how the potential participants will be identified, approached and recruited (use the space provided in the box).

> The Youth Director of each organization will be identified via their publications or by visiting or telephoning their head office and asked for a meeting. At that meeting the researcher and his project will be presented and the person invited to participate in ways indicated by the researcher. Informed consent will be sought for: face-to-face interview; assisting the researcher in identifying and recruiting youth leaders and members for focus group discussions; granting the researcher access to policy documents. The suggested youth leaders and members will then be contacted and invited to participate via focus group discussion after givign informed consent.

### 5 e.   Research Participants Informed Consent.

Select below which categories of participants will participate in the study. Complete the relevant Informed Consent form and submit it along with the REAF form.

| Yes | No | Categories of participants | Form to be completed |
|:---:|:---:|---|---|
| ✓ | | Typically Developing population(s) above the maturity age * | Informed Consent Form |
| | | Typically Developing population(s) under the maturity age * | Guardian Informed Consent Form |

* Maturity age is defined by national regulations in laws of the country in which the research is being conducted.

Myrick Anderson Smith        R1912D984390    6

**5 f.    Relationship between the principal investigator and participants.**

Is there any relationship between the principal investigator (student), co-investigators(s), (supervisor) and participant(s)? For example, if you are conducting research in a school environment on students in your classroom (e.g. instructor-student).

☐ YES          ☑ NO

If YES, specify (use the space provided in the box).

**6.   Potential Risks of the Proposed Research Study.**

**6 a. i.    Are there any potential risks, psychological harm and/or ethical issues associated with the proposed research study, other than risks pertaining to everyday life events (such as the risk of an accident when travelling to a remote location for data collection)?**

☐ YES          ☑ NO

If YES, specify below and answer the question 6 a.ii.

**6 a.ii  Provide information on what measures will be taken in order to exclude or minimise risks described in 6.a.i.**

**6  b. Choose the appropriate option**

|  |  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| i. | Will you obtain written informed consent form from all participants? | ✓ | |
| ii. | Does the research involve as participants, people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question? | | ✓ |
| iii. | Does this research involve participants who are children under maturity age?<br><br>If you answered YES to question iii, complete all following questions.<br>If you answered NO to question iii, do not answer Questions iv, v, vi and proceed to Questions vii, viii, ix and x. | ✓ | |
| iv. | Will the research tools be implemented in a professional educational setting in the presence of other adults (i.e. classroom in the presence of a teacher)? | ✓ | |
| v. | Will informed consent be obtained from the legal guardians (i.e. parents) of children? | ✓ | |
| vi. | Will verbal assent be obtained from children? | | ✓ |
| vii. | Will all data be treated as confidential?<br><br>If NO, explain why confidentiality of the collected data is not appropriate for this proposed research project, providing details of how all participants will be informed of the fact that any data which they will provide will not be confidential. | ✓ | |
| viii. | Will all participants /data collected be anonymous?<br><br>If NO, explain why and describe the procedures to be used to ensure the anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of the collected data both during the conduct of the research and in the subsequent release of its findings.<br><br>The face-to-face and focus group interviews employed in this study make anonymity impossible. Hence, all participants and their organizations will be coded and the codes kept a secure location (filing cabinet) under the personal protection of the researcher. The recorded interviews and transcriptions will be secured similarly. | | ✓ |

Myrick Anderson Smith          R1912D984390

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| | | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| ix. | Have you ensured that personal data and research data collected from participants will be securely stored for five years? | ✓ | |
| x. | Does this research involve the deception of participants? <br><br> If YES, describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Explain how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this debrief to the participants: | | ✓ |

**6 c. I.** Are there any other ethical issues associated with the proposed research study that are not already adequately covered in the preceding sections?

✓ Yes ☐ No

If YES, specify (maximum 150 words).

Visiting, observing and reporting on the meetings, activities and artifacts of the youth organizations.

**6.c.II** Provide information on what measures will be taken in order to exclude or minimise ethical issues described in 6.c.I.

The researcher will interact and engage in conversation only with youth leaders who have given informed consent. All recorded observations will be approved by them before being reported in the final report.

**6 d. Indicate the Risk Rating.**

☐ High ✓ Low

## 7. Further Approvals

Are there any other approvals required (in addition to ethics clearance from UREC) in order to carry out the proposed research study?

[✓] YES          [ ] NO

If YES, specify (maximum 100 words).

> Clubs of faith-based youth organizations are usually under the control of a local church governed by a local church board. Permission to inerview youth leaders and members and visit and observe thse clubs is required and will be sought from them.

## 8. Application Checklist

Mark √ if the study involves any of the following:

[ ] Children and young people under 18 years of age, vulnerable population such as children with special educational needs (SEN), racial or ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, pregnant women, elderly, malnourished people, and ill people.

[ ] Research that foresees risks and disadvantages that would affect any participant of the study such as anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, harm risk (which is more than is expected from everyday life) or any other act that participants might believe is detrimental to their wellbeing and / or has the potential to / will infringe on their human rights / fundamental rights.

[ ] Risk to the well-being and personal safety of the researcher.

[ ] Administration of any substance (food / drink / chemicals / pharmaceuticals / supplements / chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants.

[ ] Results that may have an adverse impact on the natural or built environment.

## 9. Further documents

Check that the following documents are attached to your application:

| | | ATTACHED | NOT APPLICABLE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Recruitment advertisement (if any) | [ ] | [✓] |
| 2 | Informed Consent Form / Guardian Informed Consent Form | [✓] | [ ] |
| 3 | Research Tool(s) | [✓] | [ ] |
| 4 | Gatekeeper Letter | [✓] | [ ] |
| 5 | Any other approvals required in order to carry out the proposed research study, e.g., institutional permission (e.g. school principal or company director) or approval from a local ethics or professional regulatory body. | [✓] | [ ] |

## 10. Final Declaration by Applicants:

(a) I declare that this application is submitted on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will only be used by Unicaf University for the explicit purpose of ethical review and monitoring of the conduct of the research proposed project as described in the preceding pages.

(b) I understand that this information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent, excluding use intended to satisfy reporting requirements to relevant regulatory bodies.

(c) The information in this form, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.

(d) I undertake to abide by the highest possible international ethical standards governing the Code of Practice for Research Involving Human Participants, as published by the UN WHO Research Ethics Review Committee (ERC) on http://www.who.int/ethics/research/en/ and to which Unicaf University aspires to.

(e) In addition to respect any and all relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines, where applicable, while in pursuit of this research project.

> ✓ I agree with all points listed under Question 10

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**Date of Application:** 23-Jan-2023

**Important Note:**
Save your completed form (we suggest you also print a copy for your records) and then submit it to your UU Dissertation/project supervisor (tutor). In the case of student projects, the responsibility lies with the Faculty Dissertation/Project Supervisor. If this is a student application, then it should be submitted via the relevant link in the VLE. Please submit only electronically filled in copies; do not hand fill and submit scanned paper copies of this application.

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## Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee
## Decision

**Student's Name:** Myrick Anderson Smith

**Student's ID #:** R1912D8843903

**Supervisor's Name:** Dr Trevor Gerhardt

**Program of Study:** UUZ: EdD Doctoral of Education

**Offer ID /Group ID:** O47780G60551

**Dissertation Stage:** 3

**Research Project Title:** The Role of Youth Organizations in Augmenting the Formal Education System: The Case of Antigua and Barbuda

**Comments:** Comment: Add some options when asking for the highest education level of the participants.

**Decision\*:** A. Approved without revision or comments

**Date:** 10-Feb-2023

*Provisional approval provided at the Dissertation Stage 1, whereas the final approval is provided at the Dissertation stage 3. The student is allowed to proceed to data collection following the final approval.