

ABSTRACT

The Social Impact of High School Curriculum in Jamaica

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The attempt to match school curriculum with national goals is not a new phenomenon in educational history, and has been the topic of much discussion. This study was undertaken in order to examine the curriculum of the traditional high schools in Jamaica and to assess the extent to which this curriculum prepares students to fit in the "outside world".

Data and information for the study were obtained via the administration of questionnaires to students and principals in a sample of nine traditional high schools and the conducting of an interview with the Chief Education Officer in charge of Curriculum at the Ministry of Education, Kingston, Jamaica. Additionally valuable information was obtained from Government publications and documents.

The results of the study are:

- (i) The curriculum of the traditional high schools is largely academic with very little scope for preparation for citizenship or employment. Extra-curricular activities are not prevalent in the schools, there being an obvious shortage of Science

and Debating Clubs and groups such as the Cadet Corps or Boys Scouts.

- (ii) Students in traditional high schools favour a highly academic course of study with a minority opting for vocational subjects.
- (iii) The primary function of the traditional high school as perceived by students is preparation for further education.
- (iv) The quality of secondary education in Jamaica, as perceived by the majority of principals in the study, has deteriorated in recent times. This they thought was primarily as a result of inadequate funding, and the poor performance of students coming from the primary level.
- (v) There is insufficient communication between principals and the Ministry of Education resulting in traditional high schools being basically autonomous with minimal direction from the Ministry. There is therefore no commonly defined framework under which the schools operate.