THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL REPORT OF JAMAICA

BY

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE

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Overview of the Education System
1.1.

(a) The Legal Framework

The development of education is rooted in slavery and in its early years, was intended to maintain and re-enforce a social structure characterised by a small white elite and largely black labouring class. As the political landscape shifted, so too did the education system. However, it was not until the Education Act of 1965 that the system was regulated *"….to meet the needs for greater self-financing capability, a better definition of Jamaica's educational goals and the expansion of the system to meet both individual and national needs"*[1] The system has evolved not only in terms of its structure but also in terms of its management.

(b) Management and Structure of the Education System

Education in Jamaica is administered and delivered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture through its administrative head office and six regional offices Prior to 1991, everything for the schools was done through one central office resulting in a number of problems, chief among which was the long time spent in travelling to the office and the ability of the office to deal with issues on a timely basis. Presently, the regional offices have responsibility for such functions as schools' personnel, schools' supervision and maintenance of schools. Each regional office is staffed with education officers whose main responsibility is the supervision of schools from the pre-primary to the secondary levels.

Despite the limited decentralization, of these functions to the regional offices, there has been quicker response to problems at the school level, more effective monitoring and supervision of schools and a closer relationship between schools and central administration.

Structure

Formal education in Jamaica is provided mainly by the government solely or in partnership with churches or trusts. Churches or private trusts own approximately 33 per cent of the total number of public schools at the primary and secondary levels.

The Education Act, 1980 stipulated that the public education system should consist of the following four levels:

- ❑ Early Childhood
- ❑ Primary
- ❑ Secondary
- ❑ Tertiary

Table 1 provides information regarding the number of schools at the various levels in the school system

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[1] Jamaica Education Sector Survey, 1977 pg.18

**Table 1   Number and type of institutions offering
public education (2003/2004**

School Type	Number of Institutions	Level of educational offering
Infant	29	Early childhood
Primary	355	Primary
All-Age	349	Primary; lower secondary
Primary & Junior High	88	Primary; lower secondary
Junior High	1	Lower secondary
Special Education	10	Early childhood to secondary
Secondary High	139	Lower and upper secondary
Technical High	14	Lower and upper secondary
Vocational/Agricultural	2	Upper secondary
Community Colleges	5	Post-secondary; pre-university
Teachers' Colleges	5	Teacher training,
Multi-disciplinary	3	Teacher training, post secondary; pre-university
Specialized Colleges	2	Higher education and training
Universities	2	Higher education and training

Source: Statistics section, MOEYC

The 2003/04 census data revealed that there were 1004 institutions offering public education at the four levels, catering to approximately 701,300 students.   Private institutions also offer education at all levels.

Educational Policy

The main objectives of the education system are outlined in the White Paper, ***Education: The Way Upward – A Path for Jamaica's Education at the Start of the New Millennium*** tabled in Parliament in March 2001**.**   The seven strategic objectives of the educational sector are:

- To devise and support initiative striving towards literacy for all in order to extend personal opportunities and contribute to national development .

- To secure teaching and learning opportunities that will optimize access, equity and relevance throughout the education system.

- To support student achievement and improve institutional performance in order to ensure that national targets are met.

- To maximize opportunities throughout the Ministry's purview that promotes cultural development, awareness and self-esteem for individuals, communities and the nation as a whole.

- To devise and implement systems of accountability and performance management in order to improve performance and win public confidence and trust.

- To optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of staff in all aspects of the service in order to secure continuous improvement in performance.

- To ensure student learning by the greater use of information and communications technology as preparation for life in the national and global communities.

These seven objectives are the basis for both the long-term and short-term planning activities of the Ministry guiding the development of the corporate plan (3 year rolling plan) and the operational plan (annual plan).

The Government's *White Paper*, published after broad public consultation set up the policy framework to address the challenges of the sector. Recognizing that schools must serve the needs of a diversified student body in an era of globalisation and technological change, the White Paper emphasizes quality education for all and life-long learning.

It calls for meeting the challenges through early intervention from birth. Providing early childhood care and education is likely to compensate for a disadvantaged home environment and improve the readiness of children for primary education. In keeping with this mandate, the Early Childhood sector has been regularized and standards developed to ensure improved quality by all service providers.

In 2002, the government passed a legislation, which saw the establishment of the Early Childhood Commission and resulted in the drafting of comprehensive regulations to guide early childhood care and development from birth through the early childhood years. The new regulations, detail not only the basic health safety and nutritional requirements to be followed by service-providers, but also provide guidelines for social-emotional development and for the most appropriate learning climate for children and their families.

(c) Curricular Policies
Early Childhood

As the government continues to implement policies and strategies to ensure greater access to quality education, much focus has been given to improving the early childhood curriculum. The transformation began at the early childhood level where a curriculum for 4-5 year olds (early childhood) has been developed. The new curriculum is eclectic in its approach to preparing children for formal education. It focuses on the affective, psychomotor and the cognitive domains for the four to five years old. The curriculum aims at making children ready to access primary level education.

Primary

The curriculum at the primary level has also been rationalized to improve articulation between primary and secondary level curricula. It utilizes an integrated approach for Grades 1-3 and discreet subject areas for Grades 4-5. Teacher/learning and other support materials are provided free of cost to teachers and students. Assessment at this level has also been improved. A National Assessment Programme has been developed and implemented since 1999. It comprises a Grade 1 Readiness Inventory, Diagnostic Test at Grade 3, Literacy Test at Grade 4 and the Grade Six Achievement Test. The Grade Six Achievement Test has been expanded to include Science and Social Studies, which were not previously tested in the Common Entrance Examination. The test is more aligned with the curriculum for the primary level.

Secondary Level

At the secondary level, it was felt that much needed to be done in order to address the issues of quality and equity. Accordingly, a common curriculum was developed for grades 7-9 under the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE 1) Project. This curriculum seeks to engender skills of problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking and decision-making through cooperative learning. Resource and Technology (R&T), a new subject area has been introduced as part of the new curriculum. R&T integrates the contents of five technical and vocational subject areas. Career Education, which incorporates lessons on values and attitude, is infused throughout the curriculum.

(d) Current and Forthcoming Reforms

- Current data show that a significant percentage of the out-of-school population has not attained Grade 11 certification. This translates into the fact that a number of Jamaicans are under-educated and cannot take advantage of educational and economic opportunities that may arise. In an effort to rectify this problem, programmes are being implemented to improve the educational level of this population. One such initiative is the **High School Equivalency Programme** (HISEP).

  The High School Equivalency Programme which is a modular programme of self instruction is aimed at:-

  (a) providing persons who were not accommodated by the formal system with another opportunity to get high school education and certification.

  The programme will be implemented by the institution with responsibility for adult education.

- At the secondary level of the education system, students are being prepared so that they either enter the job market or continue their education at the tertiary level. There is the concern that the output from the system does not possess the attitude and the skills required to function effectively in today's society. Emphasis is to be placed on the preparation of individuals who are trainable and who can function in a changing global environment. In keeping with this objective, an **Expanded Secondary Programme** is being piloted for full implementation in

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secondary schools. The curriculum at the upper secondary level has been evaluated and restructured and students are expected to pursue a core of six compulsory subjects including Mathematics, English Language, a social and natural Science subject, a foreign language and Information Technology in addition to the Expanded Secondary Programme. The Expanded Secondary Programme seeks to ensure that:

(a) students obtain a broad general education with a set of minimum standard of academic achievement
(b) students receive standardized certification and transcripts on successful completion of five years of secondary schooling.

Under this programme, new courses such as Visual and Performing Arts, Conversational Spanish and Science, Technology and You, are being developed and are built around clearly stated standards.
Teaching style will be performance-based, student-centred and will support the student to acquire, develop and apply thinking and reasoning skills in real-world context. Students will have a chance to consolidate existing skills while building new skills, knowledge and attitude
A mix of internal and external assessment and a variety of methods will be used to determine "successful completion" of each course. These assessments will be based on the course objectives and utilizing curriculum-based continuous assessment techniques.

- The **Reform of Secondary Education Project 11** (ROSE 11) is currently being implemented and is a follow-on to ROSE 1 implemented between 1993 and 2000. ROSE 11 in continuing with the reform, aims to improve the quality and equity of secondary education through school-based initiatives and reform support from the center; to expand access to upper secondary education in a cost effective manner and to strengthen the capacity of the central ministry and regional offices to monitor and manage the reform. Consequently, the initiatives are being devised to support literacy and numeracy and address students' learning problems as well as anti-social behaviour.

1.2. Major Achievements and Lessons Learnt

- Many initiatives have been implemented at all levels of the education system in order to improve the offering and outcomes. At the Early Childhood level, the State has developed standards to guide the delivery of the programme, teacher training, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the requirements are being met. In addition, an island-wide campaign in support of early childhood care and early stimulation for children between birth and age four has been on-going. The establishment of the Early Childhood Commission that resulted in the drafting of a comprehensive regulation to guide the birth through early childhood cohort has been one of the major achievements of the education sector at that level.

All of these initiatives have resulted in not only increasing the number of children exposed to early childhood care and development, but have improved the quality of early childhood education.

Among the lessons learnt in trying to improve this level of education are:-
1. It is important to include all stake-holders as well as ensure inter-sectoral collaboration in early childhood care and development.

2. It is also important to have a strong early childhood foundation, which will provide the basis for improved achievement at other levels of the education system.

- At the primary level, the achievement of universal primary education is a major achievement. Numerous initiatives have been aggressively pursued in order to achieve this. At present, approximately 99.5 per cent of the primary level school age population is enrolled in school.[2]

- One of government's policies speaks to the equipping of every primary school with at least one computer and Internet Service. This policy is implemented in almost all primary level schools except those that have no electricity. Those schools without electricity are, however, provided with other support such as provision of encyclopaedia. Partnership with private sector has intensified the effort as some primary schools and all secondary level schools are equipped with computer laboratories.

- The Technical/Vocational Rationalization project aimed at producing better quality secondary school graduates is another of the achievements of the education sector. This project provides improved quality technical and vocational education for secondary level students who through the sharing of resources benefit from improved facilities in different schools. The programme has not only provided better articulation with programmes offered at the tertiary level but it has provided secondary school students who benefit from the pilot, with relevant and marketable skills.

- Participation by civil society in the education process has also been heightened. In a situation where there are a number of programmes competing for limited resources, it is not possible for government to adequately meet the demands of the education sector. It has engaged the private sector and civil society in dialogue resulting in additional funds being provided for the education system.

Over the years, one of the difficulties with which the system has had to cope is the vandalism of its facilities resulting in dilapidated structures. In order to increase the involvement of the communities in maintaining these facilities, a programme known as the School Community Outreach Programme for Education (SCOPE)

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[2] Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2002, Page 3.2

was introduced. Through this programme, the community takes ownership and supports the school in its maintenance and other programmes.

Participation of civil society is also evident through the Adopt-A-School programme. This programme encourages the participation of private individuals or entities in the schools' activities through the sponsoring of the school, a class or even a programme for any given period. Both the SCOPE and Adopt –A-School programmes have produced significant results. In each regional office, an education officer has responsibility for the promotion of school-community relations. The system is moving towards increased school-based management and therefore greater accountability at the school level. Hence all schools must prepare and implement school improvement plans.

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1.3. Problems and Challenges facing the System

- **Access to full secondary education**
  One of the major problems facing the education system is that of access to secondary education. Whereas the country has achieved universal access to primary education, the challenge at the secondary level is formidable especially with the present financial constraints. The Government's White Paper of February 2001, *Education the Way Upward*, sets a target of providing "five years of secondary education for all students entering Grade 7 in the year 2003 and thereafter". The challenge is to provide an adequate number of places for students at the upper secondary level. Although new schools are being constructed, existing ones being extended and /or refurbished and some placed on shift, as well as places being bought in private secondary schools; the demand for places is still not being met.

- **Equity and Quality**
  The issue of equal access to quality education continues to plague the system. The students who are placed in All Age schools tend to be the most disadvantaged, as these schools, for the most part, do not have the facilities to deliver effectively the new grades 7-9 curriculum. Like the Primary and Junior High schools, All Age schools, only offer lower secondary education, that is to grades 7-9.

- **Poor Performance**
  Another problem facing the education system is the number of students who continue to perform below their grade levels and the large number of those who leave the terminal grades unable to take advantage of educational and economic opportunities. A number of initiatives have been implemented, some of which have been previously discussed, to improve the situation

- **Gender Disparity**
  An overall analysis of the in-school status of males and females revealed that there is no difference in enrolment rates between boys and girls up to the lower secondary level. However, this changes in favour of the girls at the upper secondary and post secondary levels.

At all levels of the system, females continue to out-perform the males. The low performance of males at the different levels of the system has implication not only for their performance at the subsequent levels but also for the type of worker who will enter the job market. In 2002/2003, for example, at the University of the West Indies, Mona, where the proportion of females enrolled in all programmes was 4638 and 1945 for males, the proportion of females gaining first class and upper second degree was 46.8% compared to 32.2% for males. Males accounted for only 17.3% of the total number of students gaining these quality degrees.

At the secondary level for 2002/2003, data from the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) showed that females accounted for 64% of the entries compared to 36% for males. The same trend exists in the performance of the students and even in some of those subjects considered to be male-oriented the females are out-performing the males.

2.1. Education and Gender Equality

(b) Policies and Programmes

"The State has the responsibility to ensure that every child who is born within Jamaica or acquires Jamaican nationality and citizenship has a right to education to the level and extent possible within the resources of the state"[3]
This statement implies that education is provided equally for males and females. There is no policy that speaks specifically to gender, rather equal educational opportunities for all The fact is that government's policy states that in all areas of educational and skills training geared towards occupational opportunities, there should be freedom to choose and equal opportunities for all, and that employers should employ workers based on qualifications and not based on sex, ethnicity class, social background, political or religious preference.

The curriculum and textbooks at the primary level have been designed in order to address the issues of gender stereotype. These texts highlight the positive roles of both the male and female, so that students will be socialised into performing roles, which are necessary, rather than gender assigned.

The Reform of Secondary Education exposes males and females to a common curriculum, elements of which have traditionally been separated into male-oriented and female-oriented subjects. Students are now afforded the opportunity of exploring their aptitudes for non-traditional areas.

The effort is being reinforced with the infusion of Guidance and Counselling in all subject areas of the grades 7-9 curriculum. In addition, the inclusion of Career Education

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[3] *(*Education: The Way Upward- *A Path for Jamaica's Education at the Start of the New Millennium*, page 10*).*

in the curriculum at the upper secondary level should also contribute to eradicating gender stereotyping.

2.2. Social Inclusion
(b) Groups considered to be most vulnerable
In the context of the Jamaican education system, social inclusion takes into consideration those persons affected by development disabilities which might be physical, mental or intellectual. In addition, the poor and vulnerable, many of whom are children with disabilities as well as children with health issues such as HIV/AIDS and minority groups may also be negatively affected.

(c) Measures to promote social inclusion and increased educational opportunities

One of the key considerations outlined in the White Paper, *Education: The Way Upward – A Path for Jamaica's Education at the Start of the New Millennium,* is that
"children with special needs are provided for either in special schools or in regular schools. Mainstreaming where possible is preferred and offers advantages to both the general school population and the special need child".
In addition, the National Policy for HIV/AIDS Management in School, dictates that,
"Care should be taken to balance the rights of individuals with those of society, as well as the rights of the infected with those of the uninfected"

In keeping with this,
- The government has given consideration to the issue of access by ensuring that new schools are designed and constructed to facilitate easy access of the physically challenged.
- Children who are visually impaired can now sit the grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) since the exam is now printed in Braille
- Special schools for the blind, the hearing impaired and those with extreme physical disabilities have been established and are specially equipped to meet the needs of these individuals
- Depending on the extent of the challenge, children are placed in regular schools
- Libraries are also now equipped with software to facilitate persons with specific difficulties
- There has been the importation of specially equipped buses (kneeling buses, special handle bars to aid support, wide aisle space) to foster interaction with other children travelling to school
- Students with developmental disabilities are exposed to the same curriculum and many of them on leaving the secondary level are equipped with vocational and technical skills
- There is also the opening up of sporting activities at all levels to include persons with disabilities
- Those who are placed in alternative care, such as orphans, are fully supported by the government and they attend regular schools.

- There is consistent and aggressive public education to sensitize the public to better appreciate the unique capacities, gifts and talents of its members with disabilities
- Rehabilitation centres have been set up to foster reintegration into society
- Special legislation have been drafted and enacted to ensure protection of the rights of all persons with challenges.

2.3. Education and Competencies for Life
(b) Flexible Learning Opportunities for Young People

Mindful of the changes that are taking place around the world as various nations grapple with the consequences of globalization, the society expects the education system to meet the demands of these changes. The buzzwords in the society today are the "knowledge economy" and "lifelong learning". It is expected that the education system will prepare the Jamaican citizenry to function as global citizens who are able to contribute to the economic development of the country.

As the demand for workers who are trainable increases, the education system is expected to provide the opportunities for individuals to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to make them employable. The following initiatives have been developed and are being implemented:

- The Technical and Vocational Rationalization Project affords the exposure to technical/vocational programmes in well-equipped laboratories and workshops. This has greatly increased access to quality programmes not only for students in the formal system but also for the wider community, through after school programmes.

- Flexible learning opportunities are also offered to young people through the Work Experience Programme. Under this programme, students in secondary levels schools pursuing technical/vocational subjects are required to engage in on-the-job training relating to their career choice. This activity is undertaken under the supervision of qualified individuals.

- The High School Equivalency Programme is geared towards providing opportunity for persons who for one reason or another were not able to complete their high school education and receive certification. Unlike traditional mode of classroom delivery in a five-year secondary education programme, it is a programme of self-instruction.

(c) Developing Common Basis of Human Values in Secondary Education

In addition to being exposed to English, Mathematics, the Humanities, Science and Foreign Language, special attention has also been given to the moral, spiritual and ethical dimensions including the acquisition of positive values and attitudes. Elements of these are subsumed in all the subject areas but in particular in Social Studies. Guidance and Counseling, which is an integral part of the secondary school curriculum, focuses on

personal and social development, career education and the development of healthy life style. It is expected that students will be able to think critically, demonstrate responsible, social behaviour, respecting others and self and sustain healthy relationships with other persons in the family and community

2.4. Quality Education and the Role of Teachers

Much effort has been made through training to recruit and retain teachers in the profession.

- Many teachers have been awarded scholarships to upgrade their professional skills while many others continue to be involved in in-service training.

- The high demand for teachers with competencies in Mathematics, Science, Information Technology and Foreign Language has seen the Education Ministry offering scholarships to persons wishing to pursue the Bachelor of Education degree programme in these areas.

- In an effort to strengthen the skills of teachers in newly up-graded secondary level schools, the Government of Jamaica has provided scholarships for them to read for the Bachelor of Education degree. The programme, which has been specially developed by the Regional University, is more content–oriented and is delivered through distance education mode. Approximately 3000 teachers are expected to benefit from the programme.

- Courses have been developed and offered to teachers in early childhood institutions cater to their special needs.

- Additional increment is granted to teachers deemed to be teaching in remote areas or in areas considered volatile

2.5. Education for Sustainable Development

In the curricula at both the primary and secondary levels issues relating to sustainable development are infused in subjects such as Social Studies, Life Skills, Geography and History.