

**ABSTRACT****THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SHIFT SYSTEM  
IN A JAMAICAN HIGH SCHOOL  
1978-1988  
THE SEARCH FOR A MODEL OF ORGANIZATION  
A CASE STUDY****Norma Hope Darlington**

This study examined and documented the administration of the 'shift system' of school organization in a Jamaican Traditional High School, over the ten year period, 1978-1988. The study documented the strategies and measures taken by the administration of the school in its efforts, over the decade, to create a model of organization which would make the shift system an efficient expansion strategy.

The case study is set in an historical frame. Prior to 1978 the school was organized as a non shift school and in 1988 it reverted to that mode. There have been studies of the operation of schools organised on the shift system, but none has examined the administration of the innovation over an extended period and in this case over the life of the 'two-shift system'. It was considered timely, therefore, since the problems that initiated the shift system in Jamaican schools still exist and there is even a call once again for the re-introduction of this system. A thorough examination of the innovation was justified on the basis that strengths

and weaknesses could be isolated and the findings could provide a useful reference point for educational planners and those interested in the form.

The research focussed on three areas, namely:-

- [a] The Introduction of the shift system in traditional high schools in Jamaica
- [b] Educational innovations
- [c] School management/Administration

Data were collected through a variety of ways including:

- [a] Documentary research into the school files, logbook, staff meeting minutes, reports and other personal files and records of staff members.
- [b] Interviews and discussions with administrators and staff members

The major findings showed that:

1. [a] The extended day format was the expansion strategy employed by union High School and the introduction of that system created certain factors favourable to the organization; viz,
  - greater use was made of existing school facilities
  - promotional opportunities were provided for a greater number of teachers
  - more job opportunities became available on the academic, administrative and ancillary staff
  - it brought about the physical expansion of the school plant.

[b] The introduction of the extended day format also created a number of difficulties including:

- disruptions in the domestic arrangements of some families
- deterioration in punctuality of students on the morning shift
- students on the afternoon shift being unable to participate in cultural and other activities held during the afternoon
- logistical arrangements related to timetabling and allocation of staff duties
- extra work load for some staff members
- loss of teaching time due to factors internal and external to the school
- co-ordinating activities across the two shifts.

[c] The relative smoothness of the introduction of the expansion system could be attributed to the following factors:

- the acquisition of a holding area
- the non-rotation of the shifts
- the selection of the parallel rather than the vertical structure
- the one-school concept
- the willingness to experiment and to search for the best structure.

2. [a] The extended-day format as an educational innovation, was seen not as better than the system it succeeded but as an innovation that could be justified at the time because it:
- allowed for more efficient use of the school plant
  - its goal of a 50% increase in student intake over the three year phase-in period was realised
  - it was a more cost effective way of providing education for a larger school population.
- [b] The innovation was not compatible with the values, experiences and needs of all its users and so the level of acceptance was low. Lack of adequate preparation for the introduction of the format was identified as a key factor which militated against its acceptance.
- [c] There were many difficulties encountered in managing the system and these testified to the complexity of the innovation.
- [d] The innovation had a built in trial period - the three year phase-in period and this allowed for trial on a small basis. This small scale beginning aided the introductory period.
- [e] The high visibility of negative comments about the operation of the shift system in schools

contributed to the low tolerance towards 'the shift system' in Union High School.

3. [a] The administration of the shift system highlighted the importance of the role of the chief executive/principal as change agent.
- [b] Proactive planning as a key management function was emphasized as integral to the implementation of educational innovation.
- [c] The importance of evaluation was evident. The lack of a systematic and planned evaluation was a serious drawback to the innovation and resulted in changes being made too cautiously and too hesitantly.

This study was a preliminary examination of a system about which more can be done. It is hoped that this case study will prove the springboard for further work by those with an interest in school administration.