

ABSTRACT

This study set out to test the level of political socialisation in young people attending Secondary Grammar and Technical Schools and who were on the point of graduating from these institutions.

It was felt that with the voting age in Jamaica reduced to eighteen, students who had just left school or were about to graduate would soon have the right and opportunity to vote. Whether or not the schools are preparing them for this responsibility or do in fact exert any kind of influence on the attitudinal and cognitive development of their students were questions which this research sought to investigate. Another important question was whether or not the socio-economic status of students influences their political values and attitudes.

The dependent variables used to examine levels of political socialisation were: political cognition, tolerance, commitment to the political system and self-efficacy. These were analysed in terms of socio-economic status of students, curriculum and organisation of the school. Curriculum included methods deployed in the class-room, subject matter and extra-curricular activities.

The variables were measured by means of a questionnaire of forty-one items, administered by the Investigator to a total of four hundred students, fifty in each of eight schools. Some of these were discarded because they were incomplete and, others because the students indicated on the control items that they were attached to non-school organisations that could influence them politically. The students were allowed to work at their own pace. Of the 400, a final sample of 304 was used for the study.

The relationship among the variables was analysed by means of Pearson r correlation analysis.

The major findings were:

- (a) Curriculum influences positively
 - (i) Tolerance in two schools
 - (ii) Commitment to the political system in five schools
 - (iii) Self-efficacy in three schools

Curriculum does not show an overall effect on Cognitive Growth except in one school. The Investigator feels that the variable, Curriculum, was defined in terms of too many elements and this may have affected the result.

(b) School organisation seems to have a significant influence on

(i) Commitment to the political system in three schools

(ii) Self-efficacy in five schools

(c) Socio-economic status relates inversely to political socialisation variables, indicating that students of the lower socio-economic status had higher levels of political socialisation.

It would seem from this study that the schools can be used to pass on certain values and skills which can help to make the Jamaican society evolve into a true democracy.