Foundations of Elementary Education in Antigua-Barbuda 1838-1914

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Introduction

The teaching and learning which was provided in Antigua-Barbuda before emancipation and for some decades after, can scarcely be deemed education, if we take that term to mean the production of autonomous and thinking persons. The religious organisations which took the initiative to teach, did so with an extrinsic remit that was not necessarily connected with the development of mind which, arguably, is what education is about. Being Sunday Schools, the first schools avowedly engaged in indoctrination and at the same time they did not interfere with estate labour. Reporting on the English Harbour Sunday School in 1825, Anglican agent William Dawes, noted that the boys had generally improved in reading and he was hopeful that religious instruction was not totally lost on them. At that point they were more docile and were more obedient and respectful to their teacher than formerly.[1] Those were the goals of instruction.

Even if the religious teachers had embraced loftier goals of learning, powerful social forces would have thwarted their efforts. For as elsewhere in the region, the planter-lords of Antigua-Barbuda regarded education as inimical to both their economic and social interests. The notions of brotherhood and freedom imbedded in Christianity were anathema to the guardians of a society which depended for its maintenance on a rigid class and race structure scaffolded by coercive and captive labour. In their view, children should spend their week-days working to graduate from the 'grass gang', the 'weeding-gang' and on to the 'great gang' with learning to read and write relegated to week-ends (Hall, 1971). In other words, schooling was not to interfere with the real business of children's life - estate labour.

The planters were able to influence schooling policy because of their power in government. The Old Representative System, which was really an oligarchy of the wealthy, continued for some thirty years after emancipation. Only the white and wealthy were empowered to elect or be elected in this form of government which is sometimes referred to as a plantocracy. One would hardly expect them to use the powers of taxation to tax themselves for the benefit of their voiceless labourers. A schooling system had to be developed therefore on voluntarism, missionary work and beggarly finances. Slender finances along with limited intentions impacted the nature, scope and quality of education as did the dependence on British missionaries and consequently on British models of education.

Even when the Antiguan government assumed control of education, the religious organisations continued to influence the process. In fact, government assumed the responsibility not because they had the appropriate means and ideological motivation but because the churches lacked the finances to respond to growing local demand for education. The stingy system of government grants was woefully inadequate. Between 1871 and 1914 therefore, schooling came under dual governance as the church continued to run some schools and to house the so-called government schools. Actually, in the new era, finances were only marginally improved, if indeed they were. Multiple-source financing meant that no particular agency was responsible for funding education and in every case, it was severely underfinanced. In these circumstances, it is somewhat surprising that a system of mass education emerged in the early twentieth century. Some of the credit has to go to the high native ability of the children and grandchildren of slaves and the sacrifices which their parents were prepared to make to school them. Exaggeration or not, William G. Sewell (1861) who visited in 1860 regarded Antiguan creoles to be more intelligent than the other West Indians whom he had met. What is not surprising, is the length of time it took for high quality elementary education with bearing on the local environment and relevance to real development goals, to emerge. In the next section, we deal with the financing of Antiguan-Barbudan education, followed by a section which examines the purposes of instruction. In section four, we analyse the scope of the education provided and conclude with a survey of the educational edifice that was built on the foundations

laid in the 76 years after emancipation.

Financing Education

Financial support for education in Antigua-Barbuda came from five major sources - religion-related philanthropy, imperial funding through what was known as the Negro Education Grant, the Lady Mico Charity, the local government and local philanthropy. The number of sources did not amount to adequacy.

Church-related funding sources were *ad hoc* and unreliable and it was therefore difficult to develop systematic programmes of schooling thereon. The sums which the religious organisations raised, were small and the product of schooling was correspondingly inferior. Inevitably, the human capital invested in education was unequal to the task. The church was accordingly forced to rely mainly on free labour and as a result, the instructional system in which the prime qualifications for teachers were dedication to Christ and the church and a smattering of literacy, was ineffective. A teacher was often synonymous with a catechist or "class" leader. Thome and Kimball (1838) who visited the island in 1837, found many six-year olds reading better than their teachers. The latter were long on zeal and commitment but lacking in education.

The Negro Education Grant in all its insufficiency was the first semblance of a reliable funding source after emancipation. It consisted of £30,000 per annum for five years 1840-1845 for the entire British West Indies. Based on its ex-slave population, Antigua was allocated £1000 in theory and it was managed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and the Methodist Society (Gordon, 1963). This established a situation whereby external agencies and not the local government were responsible for education. And as a result the education delivered tended to be a pale copy of what obtained in England.

Antigua-Barbuda was one of two of the Leeward Islands which benefited from the Lady Mico Charity. The money which was originally bequeathed for ransoming Christian captives from the Moors, was re-directed to another humanitarian cause. This was the provision of non-sectarian Christian education in the West Indies. The funding allowed Antigua to establish a Mico school in St John's where the usual denominational bias was attenuated; it also allowed for improvement of educational quality in that more emphasis was placed on the three Rs - reading, writing and arithmetic, along with the inevitable teaching of the Bible.

Being centrally positioned in the administration of the British Leeward Islands, Antigua benefited from monies of other various English charitable organisations such as the SPG and the Society for the Conversion of Negro Society, which was active in the pre-emancipation era. As headquarters of the Anglican church in the Leeward Islands also, Antigua received the greatest portion from special church funds designated as the bishop's subscription and a rector's fee. This does not mean that education was adequately provided for in Antigua, it only means that the colony was perhaps better off than Montserrat and St Kitts and perhaps even more dependent on overseas resources.

These metropolitan based funds became even more inadequate, and matters became worse when the Negro Education Grant expired in 1845. The local government then had the responsibility to supply the deficit. We have already alluded to the difficulty of getting the plantocracy to disburse funds geared, as they saw it, to diverting labour from their estates thereby reducing their profits and ultimately rocking the foundation of plantation society. To make matters worse, a natural disaster in the form of a massive earthquake inflicted heavy damage on the island in 1843. Planter parsimony allied with parental pauperism deprived many children of value educational exposure. Child labour redounded to the mutual interest of both parties, since absence from school meant more cheap labour for exploitation and an increase in the beggarly income of parents.

The British government like its planter-ridden local counterpart did not regard the education of Caribbean blacks as a priority. It expected parents, most of whom were below the poverty line, to finance their children's education; and some of the British official representatives danced to the tune of the planters. Lieutenant-governor Cunningham was typical. He exhorted the parents of Antigua-Barbuda to provide Christian instruction for their children by sending them to school regularly and diligently paying the expenses for teaching. He reminded them that the teachers ought to be well paid by those whose children they were training in the way that they should go; and they should no longer look to

the mother country for a large contribution. Not that it was ever large. Not all officials were as myopic and inhumane as Cunningham, but resistance from the tax paying class was difficult to overcome. Higginson, Cunningham's successor, claimed to have repeatedly urged the Antiguan administration to fund education because of its civilising and economic benefits. He supported a proposal to empower vestries to levy a school tax on all parishioners, but there is no evidence that this was not implemented.

Evidently, putting together finances for education was a painful and exhausting task. Meanwhile many children went unschooled. Fortunately, a few local philanthropists lent a hand. In the 1820s governor's wife Lady D'Urban, helped to engender planter tolerance for schooling and even elicited financial support from some wealthy local Antiguan families such as the Brooks, Gilberts, Loobys, Stephensons and Thwaites. Theirs may have been a personal response to this prestigious humanitarian, but in any case Antiguan children benefited. In Barbuda too, Sir Bethel Codrington volunteered assistance in the face of official neglect of education.[3] In his case though, he was the virtual owner of the island. So there were some exceptions in the colony among the selfish, grasping and unenlightened monied class.

One of the touching aspects of the study of educational financing in Antigua is the contribution by parents in fees or donations. They evidently appreciated the power of schooling to bring social advancement and dignity to their children and were prepared to make sacrifices out of their penury. Thome and Kimball remarked with interest on these sacrifices; and Methodist school superintendent, Charles Thwaites reported that £46 per annum was raised from children's fees. Religion and reading as ancillary to religion were free but the other two Rs, writing and arithmetic, dubbed "higher" education, were not. Children who learnt writing and needlework were charged 1½d weekly (Thome and Kimball, 1838).

Fees in fact were a significant slice of educational funding in Antigua, especially compared to the other Leeward Islands. The Moravian schools in particular, came closest to being self-supporting.[4] This was very likely due to a combination of factors. They offered the best quality schooling and therefore attracted payment. Antigua was economically better off than the other islands and its earlier declaration of emancipation in 1834 gave it a social head start. Even here though, ex-slaves struggling to survive could not really finance education; and as in other colonies school administrators had to resort to expedients such as periodic special appeals to both local and overseas sources. Some appeals were as degrading as productive and even productive because they were degrading. A booklet, *Shall I Help Antigua* printed in 1906 with the approval of the Bishop demonstrates this. The appeal was based on the claim that:

> The Negro is only on his way to civilization. His immediate ancestors as slaves were not far removed from lower animals and were often treated as such. Through heredity he possessed little power of will and a character sadly void of stability and permanence... The Negro despite his weakness and slow development is worthy of the choicest gifts of self-sacrificing love.[5]

The author may have deliberately exaggerated to make the appeal effective but in so doing he articulated an ideology of blacks as a genetically inferior species in intelligence and morality. What a price to pay to garner a few pounds sterling to educate the producing sector of the economy! But this was a time of drought and economic depression in Antigua and government felt compelled to reduce its aid to the schools.[6]

Antigua-Barbuda could not develop a system of mass education based on such piece-meal, *ad hoc* and inadequate funding. Occasionally, the British government assisted but this was too unreliable and miserly. Learning and instruction were characterized by penury and this did not change until 1871 when a federal Leeward Islands government was established. Factors other than finance, however, impacted on the scope and quality of education as we explore in the next section.

Objectives and Content of Elementary Education

Schooling before emancipation and moreso afterwards was utilitarian but not in the sense of contributing to the economy, except in a negative way. Elementary schooling received support if it fostered docility and contentedness with one's lot, and was essentially Christian teaching designed to keep an oppressed people quiescent in the absence of

legitimized coercion. Its objectives were to keep the ex-slaves subservient, to civilize and improve them morally, to reduce criminal activity and to guarantee growth in church membership. It was even used as a strategy in competitive evangelization as denominations vied with each other for black and coloured members. Cognitive development was not a priority.

To question superiors was shot down as arrogance. Anglican missionary, William Dawes, complained that the senior boys at the English Harbour Sunday School exhibited marks of arrogance, insubordination and "a disposition to ape their superiors in rank and station, which, however common in this country are truly painful to behold". It has to be inferred that any demonstration of autonomous thinking or ambition for personal advancement met with official disapproval. Instruction was expected to reform these boys, rescue them from these supposed defects and make them more "docile, obedient and respectful than formerly".[7] The English Harbour boys 'failed' because they displayed attitudes and behaviour that were inconsonant with plantation culture.

Dawes was not isolated in these views. The infamous Lieutenant-governor Cunningham voiced his uncategorical agreement in an address to Antiguan parents: "You must not put extravagant notions in your children's head, but teach them to live virtuously and contentedly and work quietly... in every respect do their duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them".[8] The theme of supine submission and contentedness with one's divinely ordered state is familiar. Bigotry and racism were regarded as practical wisdom. Kittitian-born British clergyman, John Sterling also shared certain values and assumptions of the society, and these informed his purpose for education. He regarded the blacks to be of barbarian origin and therefore education was required to address their inherent moral defects (Gordon, 1963).

Evaluation is closely linked with instructional objectives and an analysis of evaluative statements and reports readily reveals the emphasis on moral conduct, instead of real intellectual development, as the prime goal of teaching. When Thome and Kimball visited infant schools in the vicinity of Parham, their report highlighted quantity and morality rather than quality and fundamentals of learning. The number of scholars had increased, morals had essentially improved, falsehood and thefts had decreased and they had begun "to have regard for character". In addition, their sense of right and wrong was enlightened and their power of resisting temptation and adhering to right, manifestly increased" (Thome and Kimball, 1838:30). These 'infants' were obviously served a heavy helping of morality; the only real cognitive activities mentioned in the examination was the reading of the Bible and answering questions thereon and singing songs of the praise, the latter making a demand on memory which is a low level of cerebration. Joseph John Gurney, another visitor about three years after Thome and Kimball, affirmed that education had brought about the moral improvement of blacks in Antigua as evidenced by an increase in marriages and a reduction in crime (Gurney, 1840). The governor of Antigua strongly endorsed this moral purpose when in 1847 he referred to education as the best guarantee of social order and a most effective instrument for achieving the prevention of crime. In his words, this was a "righteous and benevolent object".[9]

Evidently, a purpose of instruction was the reduction of crime. These visitors did not exaggerate and had no reason to, when they reported on the nature of instructional activities. Emphasis was placed on the scriptures which urged obedience to the law, and teachers reiterated prohibitions against stealing, lying, cheating and idleness day and night (Fergus, 2003). White and wealthy society had a vested interest in law and order in a society where instituted deprivation led to estate larceny (sometimes of a trivial nature), and the instructional programme was co-operative and supportive of the social order.

In their promotion of Christian knowledge which was a definition of the education of the day, clergymen were not totally altruistic. In elementary schools this knowledge meant proselytization and indoctrination in specific denominational beliefs. Indeed, interdenominational rivalry was too fierce for sentiments of unity and brotherhood to emerge and as a result, the various denominations did not join forces in the common cause of learning. The Mico School was the notable exception, offering scriptural instruction without sectarian bias. School was perceived as a nursery of the church and this was often the motive for educational efforts. In proposing a school building to replace an unhealthy cellar at Old Town, an Anglican priest argued that he was losing children to non-conformist schools. He insisted that:

> If the church is desirous of maintaining her position in this part of the parish, nothing would be more

> effectual than a school house... The foundations of dissent had been undoubtedly shaken which made them make more strenuous efforts and exertions to increase their sandy ground work.[10]

The priest overstated the extent to which the Anglicans were winning the wars against the nonconformists, but the message was clear: the schools were conduits of conversion and bulwarks against sectarian aggression. The Methodists for their part convinced themselves of the indispensability of their schools in the maintenance of their church society. As expressed by W. R. Symons to the synod,

> I am most strongly convinced that the closing of any school in the country stations would practically mean abandonment of our work and that our existence as a religious and educational force would only continue for a brief period. Wherever our school has been closed, our society is feeble and gives cause to great anxiety.[11]

Educational objectives were altered somewhat between the middle of the century and 1914 when the Antiguan government assumed responsibility for education. Denominational influence was still dominant, but there was an element of secularisation, as the schools came under dual management.

Two landmark pieces of legislation set the course of education for the rest of the century. The first was Leeward Island Act No 2 of 1874 under the newly federated Leeward Islands government and the second was the 1890 Education Act. The former, inter alia, introduced subjects such as history and geography on the same footing as religious instructions. They treated facts about the British Empire deliberately, for the inculcation of loyalty to empire was emerging an important goal of elementary education. Indeed English grammar was made a compulsory subject based on the dubious assumption that it initiated the blacks into British culture. The dogma of empire somewhat replaced the moral and mental coercion of slavery and the whip of religion. The 1890 Act which did not add much to the previous one concentrated on compulsory attendance which seems to suggest that the authorities may have started to see schooling as inherently valuable, but one admits to some speculation here. The Act did not, however, pay much attention to what children were to do once they got there, at least those whose social circumstances allowed them to get there. What it did do though was to further secularise learning to an extent. Daily Bible reading and rehearsing of the Lord's Prayer were compulsory for state-aided schools only, while religious instruction was optional.

The Quality and Scope of Education

Against the background of minuscule financing, narrow extrinsic goals and the perception of blacks as congenitally inferior intellectually, it is useful to explore the scope of education in Antigua-Barbuda over the study period.

Educational objectives are logically related to content and even to instructional methods, so it is not surprising that the Bible was the main text book. In a cheap system, it was cheap to source, as English benefactors were able to pride themselves on the worthy cause of contributing to the conversion of "heathens" on the periphery of the empire. The dominant method was memorization and recall and such low levels of cognitive activity were supposedly appropriate to persons of inferior intelligence. Thome and Kimball (1837) observed that the Bible was the chief text book in Antiguan schools; children read it, memorized it and learnt its characters and events. They observed a black girl carrying a box of New Testaments on her head to the examination centre at Willoughby. And Samuel Smith, a black Antiguan born in 1877 recalled in colourful style the cynical use which the British made of the Bible at his Methodist church school in Freeman's Ville:

> They gave us Bible and hymn book and told us we must be obedient to our massas for Christ was obedient to death. I think there was hardly one Englishman in this land that was not telling nega people how good heaven was and what we must do to get there (Smith and Smith, 1986:121).

The use of the Bible as resource material in a variety of ways contributed to the moral purpose of education. The words for spelling and sentences for penmanship were drawn from the scriptures. Other religious materials such as catechisms, collects, hymns and sacred poetry came next to the Bible in curricular importance because they supported the process of indoctrination which was almost synonymous with teaching. It has to be admitted that the singing and

reciting of hymns provided a welcome relief to a deadening diet of memorization of scripture and other and data. Typically, schools opened and closed with singing and prayer and at the Moravian day school at Newfield, the children marched out with music. Even if the song were not a church hymn, it was chosen for its moral message. The song, "Brotherly Love" for instance, ironically extolling brotherly love, harmonious living and preparation for a heavenly home, was commonly sung.

> We're all brothers, sisters, brothers
> We're sisters and brothers
> And heaven is our home (Thome and Kimball, 1838:32-33).

Some expansion of the curriculum beyond Bible and hymns occurred as early as the late 1830s. In theory, Sunday schools majored on scripture while day schools added writing and arithmetic (or ciphering as it was sometimes called). In practice though, some day schools added little other than needlework for girls, a subject which fitted in with the aim of creating domestic workers. Where arithmetic was taught, it attracted fees and was reserved for older children. There were no free sums.

Instructional skills were so deficient that the very concept of teaching scarcely applied in these early decades. Referring to a group of schools outside St John's, Latrobe lamented the "total want of method".[12] This was due in part to lack of funds to employ basically literate persons let alone persons with teaching skills. Many of the teachers were deemed unfit, ignorant with very little skill in child management.

From 1857 onwards, government aid linked with regular inspection became a feature of educational governance in Antigua. This led to quantitative expansion and a modicum of qualitative change suggested by inspection. Education still could not flourish, however, in the sterile and oppressive atmosphere created by governors such as Stephen Hill. For him education was harmful because it stimulated the ambition of boys to the detriment of society. In his perception: "Negro boys educated for a position in the social scale above that in which God has placed them, is a mistake injurious to the future of the boys, as it generally makes him ambitious and dissatisfied with his lot in life".[13] This primitive and selfish thinking shows how far the island was from regarding education as an instrument of real development which includes people.

Antigua capitalised on its head start and on a per capita basis had the largest school registration in the Leeward Islands. Numbers vary with sources but one can by analysis tease out the general truth. John Davy (1854) recorded 3,000 attending schools, half of whom were Anglicans with the other half divided abut equally between the Methodists and Moravians. John Gurney's number of 7000 in 1840 must have included Sunday Schools, for the figures which Sewell (1861) provides for 1858, were 52 day schools with 4,467 students and 37 Sunday schools with 6,418 students. If as he reported, the population age five to fifteen was estimated at 8,000, then a large percentage of youths were exposed to some kind of schooling even when allowance is made for the attendance of adults at Sunday schools. Sewell's figures do not vary significantly from those provided in the Legislative Council minutes to which I give the most credence. Table 1 shows a gradual decrease in enrolment between 1858 and 1863 as well as declining attendance. Schools were opened for 246 days but on average each child attended for only 137. Little consideration was given to the fact that attendance and success in schooling generally depended on favourable factors in the social and economic environment.

The 1874 Act introduced payment by results and schools were graded first, second and third class and allocated aid - £20, £15 and £10 respectively based on examination performance. The system provided an impetus to excel but it had the disadvantage of depriving some low achieving schools of the very resources needed for improvement. Unfortunately, no account was taken of the environment in which teaching and learning took place. Fortunately, Antigua had a Her Majesty Inspector in Marshall who was critical of rote reading without understanding. He cited a child who went on "reading" fluently even after the book was closed. He was however unable to do much to remedy the deficiencies including the high lack of teacher training.

Table 1: School Enrolment and Attendance in Antigua, 1858-1863

Year Ended	Register	Average Attendance	Percentage Attendance

Sept 1858	3,910	2,516	64.3
Sept 1859	3,979	2,532	63.6
June 1860	4,010	2,547	63.5
June 1861	3,893	2,287	58.4
June 1862	4,360	2,360	54.1
June 1863	4,364	2,428	55.5

Source: CO9/53 Legislative Council Minutes 1863-1866, Antigua

By 1887, with some rationalization of the system in the era of federalism, the number of schools in Antigua was 38 with a total enrolment of 4,520, but the average attendance was very low, in some cases below the 50 per cent mark. All schools with the exception of the Mico school were receipt of government assistance which amounted to £974.12s. Of the 38 schools, six were graded first class in 1887, nine second class, 20 were graded class three, two schools advanced from class three to class two while a Barbudan Anglican school was not graded because it was an infant school.[14] It was no wonder that chalk, talk and rote learning were entrenched, for in 1875 a school at Free Town was promoted from the ungraded status although it did not possess a single map.[15] The school population at the time was about 4,500. Table 2 lists the 39 schools (one in Barbuda), their class status, denominational affiliation and other data. It is not surprising that the Mico school topped the list followed closely by Moravian schools. These would have benefited most from the modicum of teacher training available and they also had the edge on finances.

Qualitative development did not keep pace with numerical growth. However, while, the landmark Education Acts of 1874 and 1890 did not revolutionise education, some improvement in quality has to be attributed to them. By broadening the curriculum to include subjects like geography, history, grammar and singing in addition to the three Rs and religious instruction, children received a greater exposure to knowledge. It has to be accepted that there was some educational quality control in the establishment of an inspectorate, but it is readily evident that the cognitive abilities of students were not seriously challenged and stretched. The emphasis was still on attendance levels and the regurgitation of facts.

Table 2: Data on the Schools in Antigua-Barbuda for the Year 1888

No.	Name of School	Denomination	Kind	Class	Average for Capitation	Class Grant £	Capitation Grant £. s. d
1	The Mico	Undenom:	Mixed	i	124	20	37 4 0
2	Spring Gardens	Moravian	Mixed	i	166	20	49 16 0
3	Cana	Moravian	Mixed	i	97	20	29 2 0
4	Cedar Hall	Moravian	Mixed	i	100	20	30 0 0
5	Ebenezer	Wesleyan	Mixed	i	85	20	25 10 0
6	Cathedral	Anglican	Mixed	i	62	20	18 12 0
7	St James'	Anglican	Mixed	ii	64	15	16 0 0
8	Freetown	Wesleyan	Mixed	ii	48	15	12 0 0
9	Newfield	Moravian	Mixed	ii	66	15	16 10 0
10	Gracefield	Moravian	Mixed	ii	37	15	9 5 0
11	Lebanon	Moravian	Mixed	ii	79	15	19 15 0
12	Seatons	Wesleyan	Mixed	ii	60	15	15 0 0
13	Greenbay	Moravian	Mixed	ii	114	15	28 10 0
14	Potters	Moravian	Mixed	ii	50	15	12 10 0

15	St Mark's	Anglican	Mixed	ii	129	15	32 5 0
16	All Saints'	Anglican	Mixed	ii	83	15	20 15 0
17	Grace Hill	Moravian	Mixed	iii	51	10	10 4 0
18	St Peter's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	44	10	8 16 0
19	St Paul's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	61	10	12 4 0
20	St Bartholomew's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	46	10	9 4 0
21	Five Islands	Moravian	Mixed	iii	27	10	5 8 0
22	Parham	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	31	10	6 4 0
23	St Augustine's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	68	10	13 12 0
24	The Point	Anglican	Mixed	iii	57	10	11 8 0
25	St Luke's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	44	10	8 16 0
26	Grace Bay	Moravian	Mixed	iii	48	10	9 12 0
27	St George's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	42	10	8 8 0
28	Freemansville	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	57	10	11 8 0
30	Bolans	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	42	10	8 8 0
31	Barbuda	Anglican	Mixed	iii	50	...	...
32	Sawcolts	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	50	10	10 0 0
33	Ottos	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	60	10	12 0 0
34	English Harbour	Wesleyan	Mixed	iii	30	10	6 0 0
35	St Stephen's	Anglican	Mixed	iii	29	10	5 16 0
36	Valley Church	Anglican	Mixed	iii	38	10	7 12 0
37	Buckleys	Anglican	Mixed	iii	47	10	9 8 0
38	Johnson's Point	Moravian	Mixed	___	58	£2 10	2 18 0
39	Barbuda	Anglican	Mixed	___	72	...	...
TOTALS					2439	£472 10	£558 12 0

Source: Her Majesty Inspector Schools, Statement for the Year 1888 of Schools in Aid as the Result of Examination, CO157/2.

The educational landscape had not changed significantly by 1914 when the Antiguan government assumed total control of education. They did not do this because they were driven by any conviction about the social and economic importance of education or of state responsibility to the rising generation. They did so simply because the churches were no longer able to shoulder the responsibility even in the role of partner. Evidently, the parsimonious system of grants based on unequal and irrational competition had failed to provide an effective popular education system. Foundations were laid by the church, but the goals were narrow and so were also the scope and quality of education. It was not geared to producing creative thinkers.

Considerations of quality elementary education cannot be divorced from teacher training. None of the early efforts at teacher training in Antigua was adequate to produce acceptable quality or quantitative work. The monitorial system whereby a tyro was apprenticed to a 'skilled' or 'qualified' teacher was a prototype of the pupil teacher system. Both were forms of inservice training in which training was subordinated to service and in the case of the pupil teacher system, the training in reality came after a full day of toil contrary to the original concept.

Institutional training started in 1837 with the establishment of the Mico Training College.[16] This 'normal' school which

meant a school cum-training college was a regional institution although it served mostly the Leeward Islands. In 1888 the year before it closed, Antigua had the largest number of students, but this amounted to only 11; and according to the Leeward Islands Blue Book of 1890 only 140 students in total had been trained there by 1888.[17] A parallel institution was established by the Moravians in 1840 to train female teachers for their schools. The Spring Gardens College, as it was called, did not add significantly to the numbers trained. In its sixtieth year, it had only 11 students compared to five which was its first enrolment.[18] With the closure of Mico, male students were trained at overseas colleges such as Mico in Jamaica and then the Rawle Institute in Barbados. This of course merely compounded the quantitative problem, given distance and cost, even if the quality of training improved.

Both inservice training systems were inherently flawed as far as quality was concerned. The apprentices were used as cheap labour and the pupil teacher system became in effect the basis of elementary school staffing for half a century. By 1942, of the 112 elementary school teachers in Antigua-Barbuda, a third were pupil teachers;[19] and by definition the latter were both undereducated and untrained. Actually, the Moyne Commission denounced the system as a means of obtaining cheap labour under the guise of training.[20] It is worth noting though that one of the virtues of the system was that it provided a form of secondary education for many. The early trainees tended to be sponsored by religious organisations who made voluntary Christian service rather than academic performance, the criterion for recruitment. In any case the petty monies paid to teachers was a disincentive to attracting bright young persons into the vocation. A 1929 Report on Spring Gardens showed that the failure rate was high and the quality of work poor. Mention was made of "extreme carelessness in grammar and spelling".[21] In fact although Marriott-Mayhew credited the college for discipline, industriousness and moral and spiritual values, Mayhew found it "totally useless".[22] This dismissive indictment was somewhat exaggerated and unfair but it gives some picture of the quality of teachers who were let loose among elementary pupils in Antigua.

This is not to say that there were not pockets of excellence among Antigua-Barbudan teachers as time advanced. In 1935 Olva Flax and Oscar Bird topped the graduating class at Rawle Training Institute in Barbados, outperforming students from Barbados and the Windward Islands.[23] And for all its faults, the pupil teacher system produced some outstanding teachers such as H. T. Kirnon and James H. Carrott who went on to exercise educational leadership in the country. In its first hundred years elementary education suffered from lack of an adequate cadre of qualified teachers. That it achieved so much has to be due largely to the dedication of those teachers.

Beyond State Takeover: Building on the Foundations

Significant changes in educational provision and quality were slow to follow the 1914 administrative change. On the contrary, the resources shrank because schools lost the church input and government had to pay rent for church buildings. Besides, World War I (1914-1915) and a world-wide depression in the late 1920s gave the British administration some justification for austerity. The church did not totally dissolve its long marriage with education for it continued to operate a school at Willikies up to the 1930s. By then its 150 pupils were divided into five classes but it employed only one teacher at a salary of £18 per annum.[24] When the Anglican church became unable to guarantee this pittance of pay, it tried to persuade the government to build a school since everyone concluded that there was no good school in the vicinity. The government for their part lacked the funds to make a positive response. The Willikies episode illustrates that the era of denominational schooling may have dragged on for too long, and it also demonstrates how ill-prepared the government was for its new and rightful responsibility.

The first major event in the take-over era was an Elementary Education Consolidation Act of 1925 for the Leeward Islands. It was the initiative of an energetic federal inspector of schools who wanted a legal framework for what he called "efficient elementary education".[25] This connoted adequate accommodation, trained teachers and full attendance - factors that would readily present the face of success. The Act placed on parents the obligation to ensure that their children received efficient elementary education as if mere attendance could guarantee this. District officers were also appointed to police compulsory attendance but the essentials of schooling such as curriculum, school organisation and teaching method were absent from his remit. Attendance did improve but one needs to understand the social dynamics of attendance. An economic downturn sometimes had a positive effect on school attendance since there was then a

reduced demand for child labour. A Commission observed just such an attendance improvement among the 12 to 15 year olds due to unemployment in the 1930s (Gordon, 1968). At any rate an outbreak of full attendance would have posed an accommodation crisis. It is evident that laws by themselves were inadequate to effect meaningful education reform.

Statutory Rules and Orders passed under the 1925 Act did address the curriculum which was prescribed in the dictatorial manner of the day. The compulsory subjects were broadened and by 1931 they included reading, writing, arithmetic, English (including English grammar and composition), moral instruction, tropical hygiene, elementary science with gardening, geography and history, singing and physical exercises. Manual training in varied occupations for boys and domestic science and elementary drawing for girls, were optional. One can discern some suggestion here of social relevance but only a suggestion; for curriculum prescription was one thing while implementation was another.

The 1925 Act and related developments were influenced by the fact that it came near midway between two world wars. The school's programme was cast in the metropolitan and imperial mould with a premium placed on loyalty to Britain. This objective would be attained by teaching subjects like history, geography and singing in such a way as to mould impressionable minds in an imperial ethos. Attention to agriculture was also important for its link to the local economy and its potential for producing primary trade items which were of value to the mother country.

In theory, this curriculum was somewhat of an advancement with possibilities for cultural richness and ecological relevance. Federal Inspector, Tucker exulted over the syllabus which was considered "more up to date, more practical and more attractive".[26] It would, however, have required more than laws, rules and pious prescriptions to have achieved real success. Harrigan and Varlack (1975) disagree with Tucker, rejecting the new initiative as an outmoded British model implemented in a manner that made it irrelevant to the Leeward Islands. More could have been salvaged though if the teachers were appropriately trained to adapt the syllabus to the indigenous environment and apply the principles taught to the practicalities of living. According to Tucker's own 1929 annual review, reading with intelligence and expression was weak and the rules of tropical hygiene were glibly trotted out in sanitation arrangements which only negatively illustrated the rules.[27] As we have observed before, higher cognitive processes and meaningful application were limited. The very style of inspection with its mass examinations abetted rote learning and low levels of mental operation.

The schools were more successful in inculcating patriotic citizenship, but alas it was an alien citizenship. Tucker commended the lessons in patriotism that were subsumed under moral instruction but castigated the schools for not doing enough to instil the duties and responsibilities of Empire citizenship. For him teaching civic knowledge and loyal attitudes to Empire was a moral imperative. History, as British as Tucker himself, and geography in particular, were taught with special reference to the Union Jack in an effort to produce imperial loyalty. On the other hand, Antiguan citizenship and local history were neglected for as Caribbean poet Merle Collins (1985:17) notes in her poem "The Lesson": Grannie/Din remember/No Carib Chief/No Asante King/For Grannie/Fedon never existed... And songs also such as "The Minstrel Boy to the War has Gone" and "Early One Morning, Just as the Sun Was Rising" complimented the history lessons in their focus on British culture (Archibald, 1993). There were no songs about Liberta, Freeman's Ville' or Boggy Peak. Commenting on the analogous situation in St Kitts, Archibald explains:

> There was a characteristic feature about these songs. The purpose of teaching them could not have been music appreciation. The purpose was indoctrination. That's why we had to learn these songs by heart and store them in our memories so that by the time we grew up our minds would be full of British imagery, British loyalty (Archibald 1993:35).

The songs did serve another purpose, however, intended or not. They provided diversion, emotional satisfaction and enjoyment in the arduous school routine which focused on facts driven in sometimes by a strap or tamarind rod.

Landmark curricular innovation may have been lacking, but a number of significant organisational changes were made in the wake of the 1925 Act. The school leaving age was placed at 15 years making elementary schools into "all-age" schools; the schools were tiered in lower, middle and upper divisions with eight grades from juniors or infants to standard seven in which a fortunate few wrote a school leaving examination. Most schools had bulging lower divisions due partly to irregular attendance, financial deprivation and inadequate staffing. As a result schools produced many

first standard "grandmothers" and "grandfathers" whose only graduation was from the cane fields. As implied above, standard seven classes were small which spoke of severe wastage in the system with many pupils repeating classes and finally dropping out. In 1930, of 4,148 students writing the annual examination only 183 were presented from standard seven, and of these a mere 114 passed. The corresponding figures for the following year were slightly higher at 4, 569, 217 and 146 respectively but the percentage of those successfully reaching the top was similarly small.[28]

Standard seven certificates served an important function in providing upward social mobility for the achievers. It was from the ranks of these certificate holders that recruits were made for the teaching, nursing and police professions. Armed with the certificate, some poor children were able to put their foot on the first rung of the lower middle-class ladder. One of the drawbacks was that this examination, the prestigious test of academic prowess was confined to the traditional three Rs even after the broadening of the curriculum. There was at first no test in subjects like elementary science and geography and history which if sensitively taught could have made a contribution to children's understanding of their society and their relation to it. As usually happens, the examination subjects received the emphasis.

A genuine ideological shift in Antiguan education came only with a number of landmark Commission reports in the 1930s and 1940s. The Marriot-Mayhew commission appointed in 1931 to consider education problems in the Eastern Caribbean was disadvantaged by the fact that it was forbidden to recommend any expenditure increase in the Leeward Islands. Responding to the underfinancing of education, they recommended a six-year primary school programme (six to twelve) instead of a nine-year one as a more effective way of investing the miniscule sums available. This would have affected the standard seven programme and its social role in a situation in which secondary education was reserved for a tiny elite. F.C. Marriott, director of education in Trinidad and A. Mayhew chief educational adviser to the British on colonial education, recognized as none before, the dialectical process involved in education whereby education supports and is supported by the society. The impoverished environment which they detailed - malnourished children, poor clothing, overcrowding, lack of facilities, untrained teachers - ensured a poor investment and consequently a weak economy (Gordon, 1968). Stemming from this, the commissioners made curriculum relevance a major issue in their report, an issue that would be echoed and reinforced by others commissions. For the first time, education was seriously considered as having an integral connection with the economy and society. Curriculum innovation is, however, usually costly and even more so if it is also necessary to invest in related learning materials which at the time were precious little.

S. A. Hammond, a British education commissioner, repeated the diagnostic evaluation of Marriott-Mayhew in 1936. Like them he recommended a restructuring of the system in order to reduce expenditure on elementary schooling. His notion of redirecting the funds to a proposed 'modern secondary' school was misconceived; and his simplistic metaphor about "the swelling trunk starving the branches and fruit"[29] betrayed a lack of sensitivity and flawed understanding of the role of education in development. Elementary education was the root and not the trunk, and since it was what was accessible to all, it was basic to all social and economic development. To his credit, he endorsed the need for educational relevance like Marriott-Mayhew and called for curriculum formulation which reflected interest in the surroundings. Hammond was part of a growing pressure for organisational changes in elementary education including the way it was funded.

One of the things which separated the West India Royal Commission 1938-1939 (generally known as the Moyne Commission from the chairman, Lord Moyne), from the others was its consultative rather than prescriptive approach. Local participation is critical for the development of a people especially one coming out of slavery. The Antigua Teachers' Association was able to present its views on a range of educational matters. They criticised the type of equipment the schools possessed pointing out that it made curriculum implementation stereotype and offered no scope to the children for individual activity and self-learning . In their view, such activities were "most important factors in modern educational practice".[30] Moreover, they contended that the dilapidated buildings, the drab and uncongenial atmosphere and surroundings had no appeal for children and failed to stimulate their interest and co-operation in the learning process.

Responding to this and other submissions from other teachers' associations, Moyne made valuable proposals for educational renewal. The consultations derived added force and validity from the fact that the views of lay persons were also cavassed. Curriculum relevance became an irrepressible ideology, and so the commissioners called for the

literary curriculum to be altered, simplified "and brought more into relations with the environment of the children".[31] These were now becoming familiar words that would recur in educational dialogue in Antigua and the Leeward Islands. Full implementation, however, would be long in coming. Predictably and in the vein of relevance Moyne endorsed the teaching of agriculture for boys and domestic training for girls.

It worked to the advantage of education that it was considered as one area of life and development along with the social and economic aspects of these societies. Moyne came close therefore to taking a holistic view of development and education's role in it. Education accordingly received a fair slice of the colonial welfare cake which came in the form of the Colonial Development and Welfare (CD&W) fund. By placing the funds under the management of a comptroller based in the West Indies, the British gave further recognition to the importance of the local environment in educational planning.

With Moyne, elementary education in Antigua turned the corner ideologically and practically to some extent, in course of time. And school accommodation, an age-old need also benefitted significantly. It, however, took the emergence of national labour leaders in the 1940s to seek to indigenise elementary education and hitch it to the wagon of national development (Bird, 1981). A 1943 one-man commission of Sir Cosmo Parkinson served to reinforce Moyne and perhaps accelerated its implementation. Emboldened by the riots of the 1930s and the emergence of a workingclass movement, Antigua reiterated the familiar problems - overcrowding in class and playground, water supply, disrepair of furniture and sparseness of text books and stationery. Commenting on the mood of the teachers, Parkinson wrote:

> Judging from the spirit and temper of people these days the teacher feel that only substantial practical evidence of the desire and goodwill of the mother Country to see the people rise above their present level in every respect, will counteract the growing tendency to mistrust authorities empowered to plan for the improvement of a neglected community.[32]

Pressure on the British mounted as lay society weighed in with supporting and compelling argument. The editor and owner of the *Antigua Magnet* newspaper, emphasised the importance of the learning environment to the quality of learning. In his view, one reason for the backwardness in Antigua society was the inappropriate curriculum and the dilapidated buildings in which primary education took place. "A curriculum which gives a bias to agriculture and vocational training should be introduced and modern houses constructed",[33] he insisted. His curricular solution may not have been perfect but his was part of a fairly coherent set of ideas which directed development and progress in elementary education in Antigua-Barbuda up until the middle of the century.

Notes

[1] William Dawes, On the English Harbour Sunday School, 31 March 1825, Rhodes House Archives, Oxford CW/0,6,8.

[2] Lieutenant-Governor, Cunningham to the Antigua Legislative Council 1845, CO 7/82.

[3] Peter Latrobe, *Report on Negro Education*, CO 318/138.

[4] Rhodes House Library, Oxford, Miscellaneous West Indies Volumes, 1900.

[5] Rhodes House Archives, Oxford, Miscellaneous West Indian Volumes.

[6] *Historical Notes on Education in Antigua 1837-1984*, c.1984, Antigua Archives.

[7] Dispatch by William Dawes, 31 March 1825, Rhodes House Archives, Oxford, CW/0,6,8.

[8] Lieutenant-Governor Cunningham to Antigua Legislative Council 1845, CO 7/83.

[9] Governor J. M. Higginson Addresses the Legislative Council c.1850, CO 7/95.

[10] SPG Reports Antigua, Leeward Islands SOAS, Priest to the Bishop from Hermitage, Antigua, 20 June 1843, C/WIN/ANT 1, Box (1714-177) 736, 1840-53.

[11] Report on Methodism in Antigua - Societies, School Buildings 13/1904-07, SOAS, University of London, Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) Box 751.

[12] Peter Latrobe, *Report on Negro Education*, CO 318/138.

[13] Legislative Council Minutes, Antigua 1863-1866, CO 9/53.

[14] *Royal Gazette of the Leeward Islands* Volume X, September 1887.

[15] Rev. M.N. Punshore to the General Secretary, MMS, Box 26, File 1833-1890, no. 1243, SOAS, Wesleyan.

[16] *Leeward Islands Blue Book 1890* CO 157/4.

[17] *Leeward Islands Blue Book 1890*, CO 157/4; S. Gordon cites documents which show that between 1838 and 1858 some 293 teachers attended the college. Perhaps the Blue Book gives the number that successfully completed the course.

[18] *Antigua Blue Book 1900*, CO 157/14.

[19] Stockdale, Comptroller of CD&W Funds, "Leeward Islands Education Objectives 1942-46" pp.5-6, CO 1042/355.

[20] *West Indian Royal Commission Report*, London, HMSO, 1945.

[21] Departmental Reports 1915-1930, CO 155/17.

[22] A Note on Certain Questions Arising out of the Report, by Mayhew, CO 318/414/1.

[23] Report of the Inspector of Schools, 1935, CO 152/457/13.

[24] Colonial Reports 1931, CO 152/428/13.

[25] The Elementary Education Consolidation Act 1925, CO 154/13, no.8 of 1925.

[26] Leeward Islands Education Reports, 1915-1930 (1926), CO 155/17, p.9.

[27] Ibid. (1929).

[28] Report of the Education Department of the Leeward Islands for the year ended 31 December 1931 (18 March 1932), CO 155/21.

[29] *The Hammond Report* IV, p.41.

[30] Memorandum on the Primary Education System of Antigua, Submitted by the Antigua Teachers' Association, to the Moyne Commission, p.3, CO 950/947.

[31] *West Indian Royal Commission 1938-1939 Recommendations* London, HMSO (Cmd. 6174), 1940, p.11.

[32] Memorandum on Primary Education from the Antigua Teachers' Association to Sir Cosmo Parkinson, 1943, p.1, CO 318/453/13.

[33] "What Antigua Needs", *Antigua Magnet*, 4 January 1943 CO 1042/355.

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