

# **History of Education in Jamaica**

The idea of this objective is for students to have a broad idea of the development of education in Jamaica. It is not necessary for them to know all the details. They should become aware of broad ideas such as:

- How access to education has changed over the last one hundred and seventy odd years.
  - Who was afforded access – why/why not?
  - Who was responsible for enabling access to education?
  - Has this access been egalitarian? Why/Why not?

Generally speaking these are the main ideas:

## **Access to Education**

- Historically this has been inegalitarian since the days of slavery. Before emancipation only children of wealthy, white planter class got an education through tutoring at home and then by being sent abroad to boarding school in England (Motherland). Slaves were considered property for labour. Schooling was seen as 'dangerous' for slaves as it might give them radical ideas.
- After emancipation provision of limited schooling for non whites was achieved by religious groups. Very few – only exceptionally bright children from poorer classes were able to get more than a basic primary education. Advancement was limited – focused on preparing black/brown Jamaicans to accept their status in the hierarchical social system based on race and colour.
- Establishment of teachers colleges through religious bodies/Mico Grant, provided for post primary education for poor Jamaicans.
- In pre-independence era of 1900's to 1950's, dual system continued with very bright and wealthier children attending traditional high schools that were established. Access was through payment of fees or for a few through scholarships. Education – curricula, text books, examinations etc. provided was still British – there was little valuing of local knowledge.

- Post Independence – saw government involvement in provision of education. Government policies mandated the construction of schools and quick training of teachers to work in them. Access was provided by means of the Common Entrance Examination. Local scholars began to produce texts on local knowledge.
- Over years efforts made to address issues to unequal access have included building of more schools, policy of universal free access to primary education, curriculum reforms such as ROSE, and the introduction of the GSAT, development of the CXC system of curricula and examinations.

In discussing issues of access and provision of education in Jamaica students should get a broad sense of the roles played by:

(a) Religious Bodies