



World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11





Jamaica

Revised version, May 2010.

Principles and general objectives of education

The Government of Jamaica is committed to human resource development as a tool for personal, social and economic development. Education must seek to create literate, skilled, democratic and patriotic society. It must also create a productive workforce and caring communities. Other important goals include:

- lifelong education that prepares citizens for changing roles in a dynamic socio-economic environment;
- major policy reforms to address inadequacies in Jamaica's education system; one major area of reform is to link education with science and technology and with economic growth;
- educational policy as an instrument for economic development and for redirecting social forces to emphasize the development of values that will produce positive changes in the thoughts and actions of Jamaica's people.

Therefore, education will prepare citizens of Jamaica for functioning in a global environment and a highly interdependent world. In doing this, education will also reinforce national pride and promote the knowledge of and respect for the proudest traditions and institutions of Jamaica, and awareness of the sanctity of human life. In addition to being literate in the basic areas of English, mathematics, the humanities, science, and a foreign language, special attention will be paid to the spiritual and ethical dimensions and the inculcation of positive values and attitudes. Each citizen should have the following qualities: respect for self and others, for authority, and for the environment; honesty, integrity and national pride; loyalty to school and nation; a sense of discipline; a sense of responsibility; and proper work ethics.

The underlying national philosophy is that each child must be assisted to maximize his talents and abilities, and acquire the highest level of skills and knowledge of which he or she is capable: "*Each child can learn and every child must*".

In the framework of the *Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan*, the vision statement for the Education Sector Plan is: "Well resourced, internationally recognized, values based system that develops critical thinking, lifelong learners who are productive and successful and effectively contribute to an improved quality of life at the personal, national and global levels". This vision focuses on facilitating equality of opportunities, social cohesion and partnerships. The Plan envisages that the average beneficiary of the education and training system in Jamaica will have completed the secondary level of education, acquired a vocational skill, be proficient in the English language, a foreign language, mathematics, a science subject, and information technology, participated in sports and the arts, be aware and proud of the local culture, and possess excellent interpersonal skills and workplace attitudes. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).



Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Education Act** of 1980 and subsequent amendments is the country's comprehensive regulatory framework for education. The text of the Act contains modalities for national education procedures of school operation, teaching and management.

Several attempts have been made to address the problem of irregular attendance in schools. For example, the Education Act (1965) was passed specifying that the Ministry of Education may declare any area within three miles from any school to be a compulsory education area and the compulsory school age in such area. A pilot project was launched in twenty-two schools in one parish in 1966, and extended to 157 schools in five parishes. Attendance officers were appointed to visit the homes of students attending schools irregularly. Some improvement resulted but was not sustained.

New attempts were made in 1982 with the appointment of Community Liaison Officers. Compulsory education areas were designated and the compulsory school age was declared to be 6-12 years. There were no provisions for welfare benefits or legal machinery to enforce attendance. Primary education is universal and free but the problem of irregular attendance remains. Other attempts include an Attendance Mobilization Programme, launched in 1997, with the introduction of various teaching strategies in schools identified as having unsatisfactory attendance rates, that is, attendance rates below 60%.

In 1998, legislation was passed into effect the transfer of the day-care services of the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Consistent with the projected targets of the draft Five-year Education Plan 1995-2000, the integration was formalized in 1999, resulting in the establishment of a comprehensive early childhood education and development programme, for children in the age group 0–5 years. The **Early Childhood Commission Act** of 2003 established the Commission as an agency of the Ministry of Education with overall responsibility for early childhood development (ECD) in Jamaica. The passage of the **Early Childhood Act** and its attendant Regulations in 2005 established legal framework and standards by which the operations of early childhood institutions (ECI) are governed. The Act and Regulations outline the minimum operating standards that all ECI must achieve in order to ensure that all children have equity and access to quality ECD programmes within healthy, safe and nurturing environments. The Early Childhood Act came into force on 30 November 2007, and its first requirement has been that all ECI should apply for registration within 90 days of the Act taking effect. In addition a curriculum has been developed for this level.

The **Human Employment and Resource Training Act** of 1982 and its subsequent amendment of 1994 established the Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust and the National Council on Technical and Vocational Training (NCTVET).

The **University Council of Jamaica Act** of 1987 empowers the University Council of Jamaica in the exercise of its functions to grant and confer degrees,



diplomas, certificates and other academic awards and distinctions to and on persons who have pursued courses of study approved by the Council at associated institutions and have passed such examinations or other tests as may from time to time be required by the Council.

Under the **University of Technology, Jamaica Act** of 1999 the status of the College of Arts Science and Technology was changed to the University of Technology, Jamaica. Under its Charter, the main objective of the University is to advance education and development of technology through a variety of patterns, levels and modes of study and by a diversity of means by encouraging and developing learning and creativity for sustainable development for the benefit of the people of Jamaica, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

The **Council of Community Colleges, Jamaica Act** of 2001 established the Council whose main functions are to: a) supervise and co-ordinate the work of community colleges; b) advise the Minister on policy education matters relevant to community colleges; c) consider, recommend or approve the curricula of community colleges; d) examine and assess the work of students in training at the community colleges; and e) collaborate with other institutions, including institutions of further and higher education, in the provision of educational opportunities.

Administration and management of the education system

Education in Jamaica is administered and delivered by the **Ministry of Education** (formerly the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture) through its administrative head office and six regional offices. The **Regional Offices** have responsibilities for such functions as schools' personnel, schools' supervision and maintenance of schools. Each regional office is staffed with a core of education officers responsible for monitoring, supervising and assessing the educational programmes from pre-primary to secondary. Within the Ministry of Education, the responsibility for curriculum is assigned to the **Core Curriculum Unit**, under the Deputy Chief Officer-Curriculum, Division of Educational Services.

According to the Education Act, every public educational institution shall be administered by a **Board of Management**. Members of the Board are appointed by the Minister. In addition, every public educational institution shall have a **student council** that shall consist of elected representatives of students with at least one staff advisor being elected by the students. Through the student council at the secondary and tertiary levels, the students shall have the right to: a) democratically elect their own representatives; b) have representation on the Board of the institution; and c) meet with the principal and staff or both on any matter affecting students' interests.

The following statutory bodies/agencies operate under the Ministry of Education.

The **National Council on Education** (NCE) is a multi-disciplinary, non-partisan council established by Parliament to ensure broad-based community involvement in the development of national policies on education, as well as effectively appoint and train school boards.



The **Early Childhood Commission** is an agency of the Ministry of Education that was established by the Early Childhood Commission Act of 2003. Born out of the need for a long-term vision and plan for a comprehensive delivery of early childhood programmes and services, the Commission has overall responsibility for early childhood development (ECD) in Jamaica. Using an integrated approach, the Commission brings under one umbrella all the policies and standards pertaining to ECD. It also maximizes the use of limited resources by ensuring a more cohesive delivery of services.

The **Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART) Trust** was established to develop, co-ordinate, monitor, encourage and provide financing for the training, employment and placement of various levels of skilled personnel. In order to carry out this mandate, the **National Training Agency (NTA)** was established to improve the co-ordination of vocational and technical training. The HEART Trust is financed by a levy from employers with a payroll above a specified level. The **National Council for Technical/Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET)** has the overall responsibility to develop occupational standards, accredit and approve training programmes and institutions which meet established standards, and to assess individual competencies (measured against the standards) leading to the awarding of the National Vocational Qualifications of Jamaica (NVQ-J). The Council also certifies technical and vocational instructors, develops and applies assessment procedures, and grants certificates to successful trainees. Since 2000, the Council has been the secretariat of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) and has been working closely with TVET Councils and Ministries of Education in Grenada, Belize, Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The JAMAL Foundation, created in 1973, was transformed into the **Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning** in 2006. It is an agency of the Ministry of Education responsible for the provision of non-formal adult continuing education.

The **University Council of Jamaica (UCJ)** was established in 1987 as a statutory body with a mission to increase the availability of university-level training through accreditation of institutions and programmes for recognition and acceptability. The UCJ facilitated the formation of the **Joint Committee for Tertiary Education (JCTE)**, established in 1992 as an umbrella organization for all public and registered private institutions. Its main functions are professional development, participation in collaborative programmes and advising the Minister on relevant matters. The UCJ functions as the Secretariat for the JCTE.

The **Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE)** within the University of West Indies is the plenary body through which teacher education is authorized in Jamaica, Belize, Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos Islands in the Western Caribbean. It operates through two standing committees: the Curriculum Committee and the Examination Accreditation Committee. The Board functions to approve syllabuses, examine and assess students, and make recommendations for certificates. An integral part of the Examination and Accreditation Committee is the Board of Studies which is the mechanism through which college tutors, external examiners and accreditation panelists within a given subject area are brought together. A recently established JBTE based at the Cave Hill campus in Barbados serves the Eastern Caribbean.



Private schools are registered by the Ministry of Education and allowed to operate if they meet certain minimum requirements.

Under the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the **Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities** is the government agency responsible for rehabilitations, vocational training and placement of persons with disabilities. It has as its objective the equality of opportunities and seeks through its services to establish social and economic independence for persons with disabilities through their own efforts and labour.

The process of modernisation of the Ministry of Education under the Public Sector Reform Programme envisages the establishment of new agencies to which the operational functions of the Ministry will be devolved. The **Jamaica Teaching Council** will have responsibility for the enhancement and maintenance of professional standards in teaching, and the professional status of teachers. Its principal functions will be the development of registration and licensing standards and the accreditation of teacher certification.

The **Curriculum and Assessment Agency** will have responsibility for integrating the functions of curriculum and assessment, in designing new curriculum approaches and strengthening the existing national curriculum and associated assessments, tests and examinations.

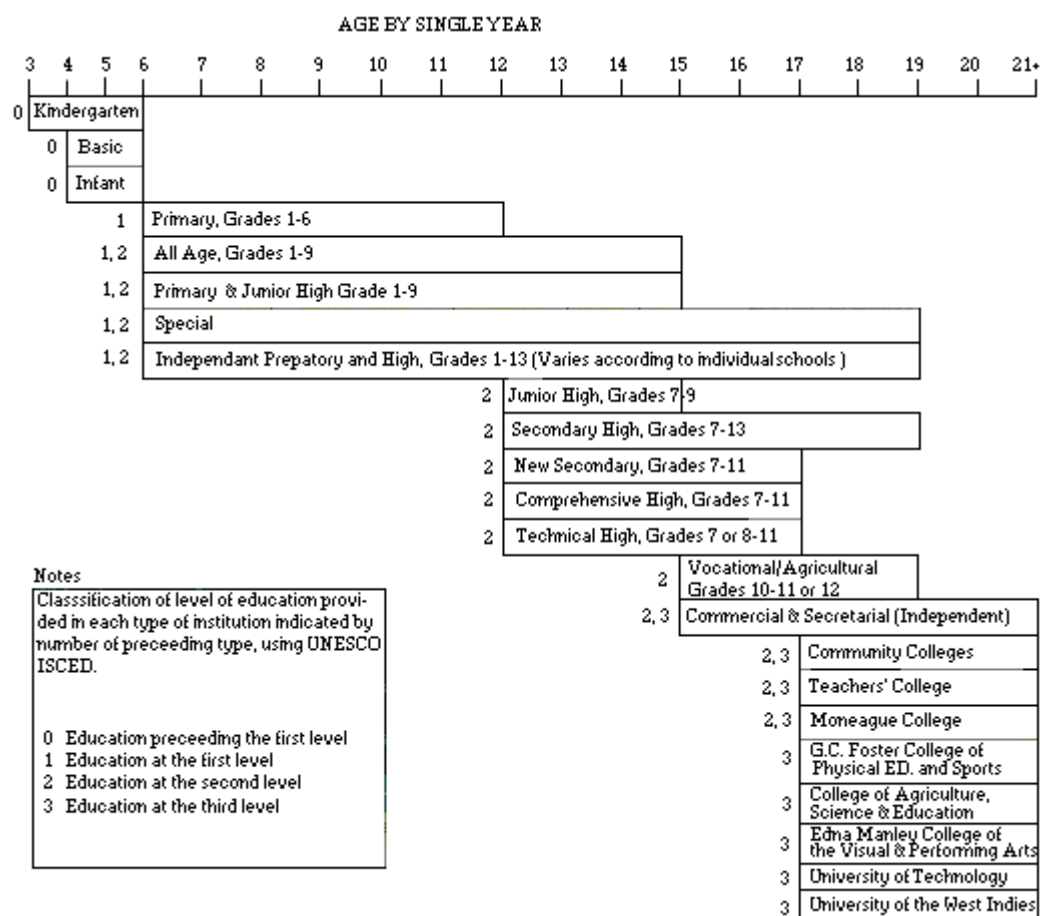
The **National Education Inspectorate** will be charged with the responsibility for monitoring, inspecting, evaluating and reporting on the standards and quality of education in primary and secondary schools. The Inspectorate will also be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of Regional Educational Agencies in supporting school and student performance.

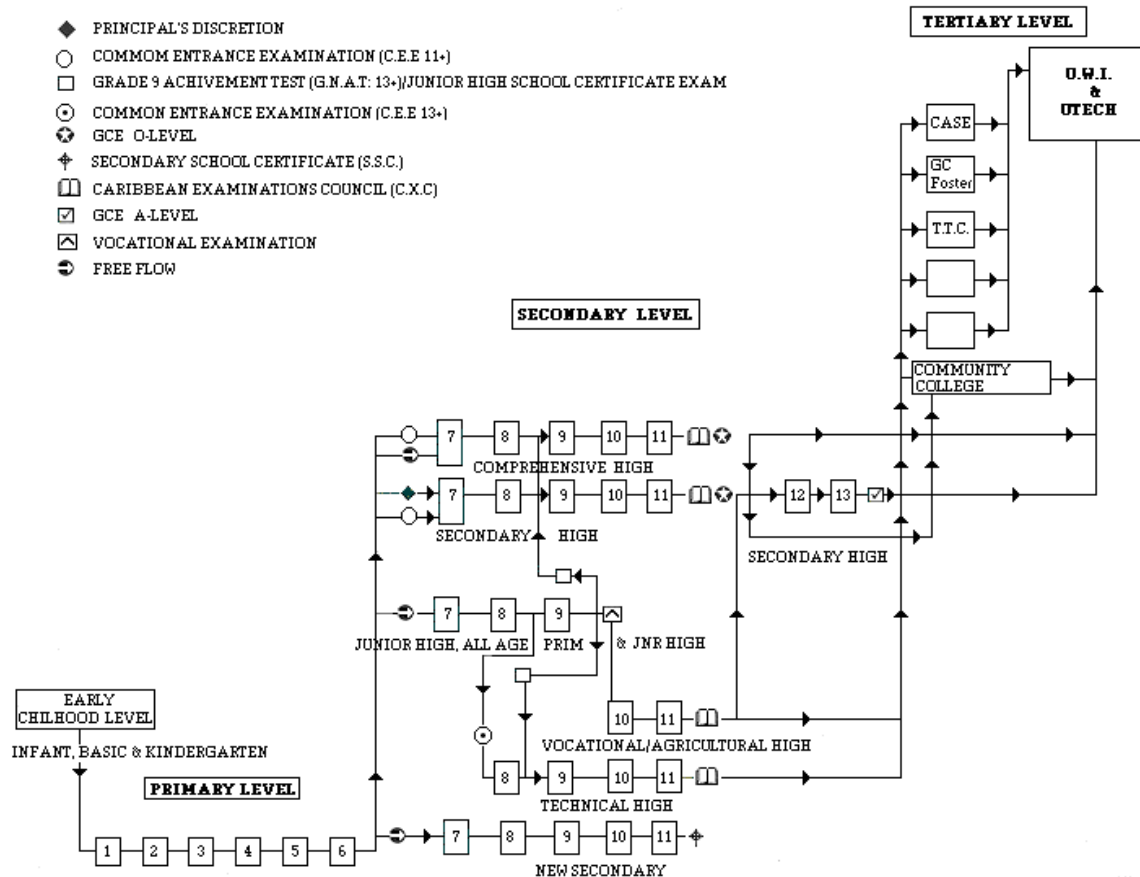
Regional Education Agencies will have responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of support programmes for educational institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels within the designated region. The fundamental purpose of the REA is to enable educational institutions to provide a more responsive educational service, leading to an improved education system.



Structure and organization of the education system

Jamaica: structure of the education system (2008)





Source: Ministry of Education, Planning and Development Division, 2009.

Formal education in Jamaica is provided mainly by the government solely or in partnership with churches or private trusts. The Education Act of 1980 stipulated that the public education system should consist of the following four levels: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Pre-school education

Children enter educational institutions from age 3 or 4, while those from birth to age 3 access services at day-care centres. Early childhood education programmes are offered in infant and basic schools, infant departments of primary and all-age schools, as well as in nursery and kindergarten schools for children aged 3-5 years. Basic schools are predominantly community operated institutions. Infant schools and infant departments are publicly operated entities; infant schools are stand-alone institutions while infant departments are attached to schools offering primary education.

Primary education

Primary education lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-11. Primary education is offered in primary schools (grades 1-6), junior high schools, preparatory schools, and all-age schools (grades 1-9). All-age schools are being converted to primary schools or primary and junior high schools. The Common Entrance Examination (CEE, secondary education entrance examination) was discontinued in 1999 and replaced with the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The GSAT is designed to



measure the academic development of children at the primary level and serves as a mechanism to facilitate the placement of students at secondary-level schools. In addition to the GSAT, pupils are tested in grade 1 (Readiness Inventory Test), grade 3 (Diagnostic Test), and grade 4 (Literacy Test). The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) was administered for the first time in 2008. It replaced the Grade One Readiness Inventory. The GOILP measures the proficiency level of students in six subtests, namely general knowledge, number concepts, oral language, reading, writing and drawing, work habits and classroom behaviour.

Secondary education

Secondary education consists of two cycles: the first cycle covers grades 7-9, and the second cycle grades 10 and 11. All-age schools as well as primary and junior high schools offer the first cycle of secondary education only. Secondary high schools and comprehensive high schools offer grades 7-11; some of these schools also offer grades 12-13 for students taking the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) examination. Secondary students in all-age schools can move to other secondary schools. For example, the CEE 13+ examination selects students from grades 7 and 8 of all-age schools to enrol in technical high schools (grades 8-11). The Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) selects grade 9 students from all-age schools to enrol in grade 10 in secondary high schools. Similarly, the Junior High School Certificate (JHSC) selects grade 9 students from primary and junior high schools to enrol in grade 10 in secondary high schools and comprehensive high schools. The Jamaica School Certificate (JSC) is an examination at the end of grade 9, taken mainly by out-of-school persons and some grade 9 students in all-age schools. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) is an examination at the end of grade 11, taken mainly by students from new secondary schools. The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exam is an examination for secondary graduates and also a selective examination for post-secondary education, taken mainly by students from secondary and comprehensive high schools.

Higher education

Postsecondary and tertiary-level programmes are offered by a variety of institutions, including teacher training colleges, community colleges, vocational training centres and institutes, the Vocational Training Development Institute, schools of midwifery and nursing (offering three-year programmes leading to a diploma), the University of the West Indies (a regional institution), and the University of Technology. In the teacher training colleges, a teaching certificate (primary education) usually takes two years of study plus an additional year of internship for holders of the Jamaica School Certificate; programmes leading to a teaching certificate/diploma (primary and secondary education) usually last three years for holders of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate. Multi-disciplinary community colleges offer pre-university, professional, commercial, vocational training as well as community-oriented courses; most of the programmes lead to the award of diplomas, certificates and associate degrees. Some of the community colleges have satellite campuses, and they can also offer bachelor's and postgraduate degrees in affiliation with local or foreign universities. Associate degree programmes usually last two years beyond the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), administered by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). They represent two years of a four-year degree



programme; in some cases an associate degree is accepted for admission to a bachelor's degree programme, while in others it is considered as a first-year credential of a three-year bachelor's degree programme. Bachelor's degrees normally take three years of study to complete (five years in the case of medicine and surgery) for holders of GCE A-level qualifications, and four years for holders of the CSEC. Master's degree programmes normally require two years of study beyond the bachelor's degree and the submission of a thesis or a research paper. Doctoral degree programmes generally last three years (full-time) or five years (part-time) beyond the master's degree. Higher certificates and diploma courses are also available.

According to the Education Act (1980), the school year extends from the beginning of September to the end of August of the following year. It is divided into three terms and every public educational institution shall meet for classes not less than 190 days of each school year. The number of instructional hours per school day as stipulated by the Regulations should be no less than four and a half hours at the primary, all-age and secondary schools on a shift system, and five hours for whole-day schools. 'Instructional hours' refer to the hours that a teacher and students are present together imparting and receiving educational instruction respectively. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

The educational process

The curriculum is centrally designed and developed by the Ministry, with significant support from external funding agencies. There is a lack of curriculum articulation between critical levels of the system, at early childhood, primary, primary and secondary, and lower and upper secondary, making it difficult for children to consolidate prior learning experiences. Cross-curricula themes such as: career education, HIV/AIDS, values & attitudes, environmental education, and gender are not always given the level of prominence necessary for the holistic development of the child. The potential of the visual and performing arts as disciplines in their own rights, as well as vehicles for teaching and learning, is undervalued in the curriculum development and delivery.

Curriculum implementation, particularly in secondary schools, is affected by reduced contact teaching time caused *inter alia* by teacher and student absence, and lengthy examination periods. At the primary level curriculum implementation is affected by extended breaks and other non-teaching activities. (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2004).

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, children enter educational institutions from age 3 or 4, while those from birth to age 3 access services at day-care centres. Early childhood education programmes are offered in infant and basic schools, infant departments of primary and all-age schools, as well as in nursery and kindergarten schools for children aged 3-5 years. Basic schools are predominantly community operated institutions. Infant schools and infant departments are publicly operated entities; infant schools are stand-alone institutions while infant departments are attached to schools offering primary education.



The curriculum is eclectic in its approach to preparing children for formal education. It focuses on the development of the whole child and the goal of the programmes is to ensure that children up to 6 years old are provided with the opportunity for developmentally appropriate stimulating readiness programmes with emphasis on the affective, psychomotor and cognitive domains. The curriculum suggests an integrated approach to teaching-learning experiences that should be provided hence subject constraints have been removed in favour of basic skills, concepts and attitudes. Four basic skills are emphasized throughout, namely: speaking, listening, observation (with all the senses) and manipulation. These are given priority in the hope that with the development of these skills the child will be better able to explore, thus making the process of learning continuous, wherever the child might be, hence the child's own desire for learning will be the motivator. To enhance this desire also, the experiences are presented through play as the chief vehicle of learning.

The Education Act stipulates that a minimum of three hours must be provided in each school day for not less than five school days in each week. Parents pay school fees, which go toward payment of teacher salaries and school maintenance. In partnership with the communities, the government provides a subsidy to augment teachers' salaries. This subsidy is based on the national minimum wage.

According to the Early Childhood Act of 2005, day-care centres are any premises used for the provision of non-residential day-care service to more than four children up to 6 years of age for at least six hours per day and at least four days per week. Early childhood institutions provide developmentally appropriate care, stimulation, education and socialization for children under the age of 6 years, including day-care centres and basic schools. The passage of the Early Childhood Act and its attendant Regulations in 2005 established legal framework and standards by which the operations of early childhood institutions (ECI) are governed. The Act and Regulations outline the minimum operating standards that all ECI must achieve in order to ensure that all children have equity and access to quality ECD programmes within healthy, safe and nurturing environments. The Early Childhood Act came into force on 30 November 2007, and its first requirement has been that all ECI should apply for registration.

The uneven delivery of early childhood education and development programmes has been attributed to several factors. The disparity between the quality of teachers in community basic schools versus the public infant schools/departments and the better supported preparatory schools: many of the basic schools are staffed by teachers who have received no formal training with the result that delivery of educational programmes is below the required standard. Additionally, there is a lack of the required physical infrastructure, equipment and support materials in some of these institutions, hampering the delivery of an acceptable standard of education to support the intellectual development of the child. For many of them, financing is an issue despite a subvention for teacher salaries from the government for required basic schools. The poor nutritional support impairs intellectual and physical development, and there is an absence of adequate parenting support for the children and the schools. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).



According to the Annual Statistical Review of the Education Sector, in 2008/09 of the 135,5392 children in the 3-5 age group in the population, an estimated 87.9% was enrolled in 129 government-owned and community-operated schools, with community operated schools accounting for 88.8%, infant schools and departments 10.3% and the primary level the remaining 0.9%. Total enrolment in infant schools and infant departments of primary, all-age, and primary and junior high school was 13,234 children assisted by 690 teachers. The average repetition rate was 4.4% in grade 1, 1.4% in grade 2, 1.1% in grade 3, 2.3% in grade 4, 2.3% in grade 5, and 10.8% in grade 6.

Overall, registration in public and private early childhood education (ECE) institutions stood at 111,050 children in 2007/08. Data from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2007 estimated that the 3-5 age cohort had a gross enrolment rate of 99.4% (boys, 100%; girls, 98.6%). The gender distribution at this level had males accounting for 50.3% of the total. The ECE level was served by some 4,191 early childhood teachers. The average teacher to pupil ratio was 1:23 compared to 1:21 in 2006. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

Primary education

As mentioned primary education lasts six years and caters to children aged 6-11. Primary education is offered in primary schools (grades 1-6), junior high schools, preparatory schools, and all-age schools (grades 1-9). All-age schools are being converted to primary schools or primary and junior high schools. The Common Entrance Examination (CEE, secondary education entrance examination) was discontinued in 1999 and replaced with the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The GSAT is designed to measure the academic development of children at the primary level and serves as a mechanism to facilitate the placement of students at secondary-level schools. In addition to the GSAT, pupils are tested in grade 1 (Readiness Inventory Test), grade 3 (Diagnostic Test), and grade 4 (Literacy Test).

The Readiness Inventory of the National Assessment Programme (NAP) was administered to grade 1 pupils up to 2007. The main purpose of this inventory was to assist teachers in knowing whether or not their pupils have entered with the prerequisite skills. The skills assessed were: motor co-ordination; visual discrimination; visual and auditory memory; figure ground; L-R orientation, receptive language, listening comprehension, number knowledge and auditory discrimination. The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) was administered for the first time in 2008. It replaced the Grade One Readiness Inventory. The GOILP measures the proficiency level of students in six subtests, namely general knowledge, number concepts, oral language, reading, writing and drawing, work habits and classroom behaviour.

According to the Education Act (1980), every public educational institution offering primary education shall provide not less than five school days in each week and a minimum of four and a half teaching hours on each school day if operating a shift system, and five hours in other cases.

After a significant period of consultation, including some stakeholder involvement and a broad based consultative approach, the national primary



curriculum was revised in 1999 and fully implemented in 2002. It is geared at providing opportunities for child-centered, inclusive teaching-learning experiences. It is designed on the premise that every child can learn, and as such provides for the identification and development of the intelligences. It is flexible enough to allow teachers to adapt it to satisfy the varying abilities and learning styles of the students as well as the demand of their local environment. The curriculum at the primary level utilises an integrated approach for grades 1-3 ('Me and my environment') and discreet subject areas from grade 4. Subject areas include: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, drama, music, physical education, visual arts and religious education. At the end of grade 6, students are expected to be equipped with the following skills: literacy and numeracy by global standards; competence in prerequisite knowledge and skills to access secondary education; possession of a caring attitude towards self, others and all nature. The overall goal is to lay the foundation for continuous learning of knowledge, skills and desirable values and attitudes.

In May 2002 available data on the Grade One Readiness Inventory showed that some 28,895 pupils (51.1%) sat the test. Of the total sitting, some 31.4% of the pupils mastered all four of the cognitive skill areas. The proportion of girls mastering all four was 36.9% compared to 26.3% of boys. By 2006, a total of 44,865 pupils sat the test (51.8 % boys) and girls continued to outperform boys. The score for girls was 49.1% compared to 36.1% for boys. In 2007/08, the Grade One Individual Learning Profile was introduced to replace the Grade One Readiness Inventory. Of the six tests administered under the new assessment, 18.5% (22.8% of boys and 13.9% of girls) of the pupils showed no mastery of any area. The highest rate of mastery was 29% of girls for the writing and drawing test (18.3% of boys). (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

Mastery of key subjects (language arts, mathematics and communication tasks) is tested at two levels, grade 3 (for diagnostic purposes) and grade four (to test for progress). The Grade Three Diagnostic Test in the National Assessment Programme was taken by 42,464 pupils (21,856 boys) in 2006. Less than 58% of boys and girls at grade 3 achieved mastery in any of the core subjects. For the period beginning academic year 2004 to 2006, girls had higher scores than boys in all the sub-tests. As regards the Grade Four Literacy Test, in May 2006 a total of 47,325 pupils or 93.7% of the cohort sat the test. Of the total, 30,674 or 64.8% mastered all three subjects (17,926 girls and 12,748 boys) compared with the 63.9% in 2005. Although the percentage that mastered literacy at the grade 4 level declined in 2007, the number increased to 48,289 or 99% of the eligible cohort in 2008, and the percentage that gained mastery increased to 68.9%. (*Ibid.*)

According to the Annual Statistical Review of the Education Sector, in 2008/09 a total of 271,722 children were enrolled at the primary level (public sector) in 792 institutions including primary schools (grades 1-6), all-age schools (grades 1-6) and primary and junior high schools (grades 1-6). The total number of teachers in those institutions was 10,734, of whom 971 untrained. Overall, total primary school enrolment in 2007/08 was estimated at 315,130 children, with an estimated 9% of the children enrolled in private schools. The Ministry of Education reported a gross enrolment rate of 94.5%, 96.3% for boys and 92.8% for girls. In the public school system, boys accounted for 51.2% of total enrolment. The average teacher to pupil ratio was 1:30 compared to 1:27 in 2006/07. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).



Secondary education

As mentioned, secondary education consists of two cycles: the first cycle covers grades 7-9, and the second cycle grades 10 and 11. All-age schools as well as primary and junior high schools offer the first cycle of secondary education only. Secondary high schools and comprehensive high schools offer grades 7-11; some of these schools also offer grades 12-13 for students taking the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) examination. Secondary students in all-age schools can move to other secondary schools. For example, the CEE 13+ examination selects students from grades 7 and 8 of all-age schools to enrol in technical high schools (grades 8-11). The Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) selects grade 9 students from all-age schools to enrol in grade 10 in secondary high schools. Similarly, the Junior High School Certificate (JHSC) selects grade 9 students from primary and junior high schools to enrol in grade 10 in secondary high schools and comprehensive high schools. The Jamaica School Certificate (JSC) is an examination at the end of grade 9, taken mainly by out-of-school persons and some grade 9 students in all-age schools. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) is an examination at the end of grade 11, taken mainly by students from new secondary schools. The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exam is an examination for secondary graduates and also a selective examination for post-secondary education, taken mainly by students from secondary and comprehensive high schools.

At the secondary level students are being prepared so that they either enter the job market or continue their education at the tertiary level. Emphasis is to be placed on the preparation of individuals who are trainable and who can function in a changing global environment.

The Five-year Plan 1990-1995 articulated a strategy for providing a common curriculum for all students in grades 1-9. The Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) initiative has been the vehicle for operationalizing the grades 7-9 programme. Other contributors were the Secondary Schools Textbook Project, the HEART Trust/National Training Agency and the Cost-sharing Programme.

Prior to 1994 there was no common curriculum for secondary education. With the introduction of the ROSE Programme in 1993, a national curriculum for grades 7-9 was introduced. 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 components of five technical and vocational subject areas. Career Education, which incorporates lessons on values and attitude, is infused throughout the curriculum. The curriculum aims at providing equal access to quality education, enabling students to become quality citizens, and achieving greater equity in the secondary school system to grade 9.

Students at the upper secondary level 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, an Expanded Secondary Programme is being implemented that seeks to ensure that: students obtain a broad general education with a set of minimum standard of academic achievement; and 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, have been developed and built around clearly stated standards. Teaching style is to be performance-based, student-centred, and should support the student to acquire, develop and apply thinking and reasoning skills in real-world context.

The Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) is offered to students in grade 9 at all-age and primary and junior high schools. Awardees are placed in secondary high and technical high schools. For the year 2007/08, some 7,288 students (3,000 females and 4,288 males) sat mathematics and 7,268 students (2,978 females, 4,290 males) sat language arts. Students' performance in GNAT improved significantly over that of the last academic year. The National mean scores for mathematics moved from 35 to 40, and the scores for language arts moved from 42 to 47.

The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) is designed to provide certification of the academic, vocational and technical achievement of students who, having completed five years of secondary education, and have obtained the required grades, wish to pursue further studies. The examinations address the skills and knowledge acquired by students under a flexible and articulated system where subjects are organized in 1-Unit or 2-Unit courses with each unit containing three modules. For 2007/08, computer science showed significant improvement over the performance in the previous school year. Approximately 99.7% of the entries in unit 1 achieved Grades I to V, which represents a 21% improvement. Also in Unit 2, approximately 98.6% of entries achieved Grades I to V compared with 63% in 2006/07, which is a 35% improvement in performance.

Student enrolment in public secondary education institutions in 2007/08 was 250,837. An estimated 11,789 students were enrolled in private secondary schools. Gross enrolment was estimated at 99.7% in the lower cycle (grades 7- 9), while enrolment at the upper cycle (grades 10-11) was estimated at 83.6%. For the combined age groups, the gross enrolment rate for grades 7-11 was 93.4% (90.4% in 2006/07). Girls accounted for 50.4% of student enrolment. The number of teachers employed in the 414 public schools offering secondary level education stood at 13,255. Females accounted for 69.2% of the total number. Approximately 87% of the teachers were trained, 54% college trained teachers/instructors, and 32% trained university graduates. The average teacher to pupil ratio was 1:19. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

Special education programmes are provided mainly through private voluntary organizations in collaboration with the Government and cater to individuals aged 4-20 years who are challenged mentally, physically and intellectually. Within the system there are: six schools and 21 statistical departments attached to primary and secondary level institutions catering to students with mental retardation and multiple disabilities; seven schools and five departments serving the hearing impaired - four of these schools are privately operated while three are grant-aided, that is, government is responsible for the operational cost of these institutions; and one school that caters to children who are blind or visually impaired.



In 2004, some 2,500 special needs students were enrolled in government and government-aided special education programmes. This represented only 0.34% the school population. The remaining students were enrolled in the mainstream education school system. Special education is delivered through two types of programmes to a population which stood at 5,786 students in formal school-based programmes and home/community-based programmes in 2005/06. The programmes had a total of 368 teachers and 208 teachers' aides/community rehabilitation workers. (*Ibid.*).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

As mentioned, a National Assessment Programme has been developed and implemented since 1999. At the primary level it comprises a grade 1 Readiness Inventory, a grade 3 diagnostic test, a grade 4 literacy test, and the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The grade 3 diagnostic test focuses on mathematics and language arts. The mathematics test assesses students' skills in using whole or fractional numbers; reading such instruments as the clock, thermometer and ruler; identifying geometric figures such as triangles, squares and polygons, and understanding information given in a simple graph or table. The language arts test assesses students' ability to read and understand simple stories, factual texts, maps and other documents as well as their ability to understand and use capital letters and punctuation marks in standard English. The grade 4 literacy test checks students' ability to recognize words, read and understand simple stories, factual texts, directions, lists and tables. It also checks their ability to write simple stories, reports and letters.

The GSAT has been expanded to include science and social studies, which were not previously tested in the Common Entrance Examination. The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) was administered for the first time in 2008. It replaced the Grade One Readiness Inventory. The GOILP measures the proficiency level of students in six subtests, namely general knowledge, number concepts, oral language, reading, writing and drawing, work habits and classroom behaviour.

The GSAT is designed to measure the academic development of students at the primary level and serves as a mechanism to facilitate the placement of students at secondary level schools. This curriculum-based examination had 53,017 (26,599 girls) students registered with 96.5% sitting in 2006. The mean percentage scores were 53.0 in mathematics (57.8 in 2005); 54.0 in language arts (53.9 in 2005); 51.0 in social studies (56.9 in 2005); 55.0 in science (51.6 in 2005); and 50.0 in communication tasks (40.0 in 2005). Girls outperformed boys in all subject areas and on average students from preparatory schools did better than those from public schools at the primary level. In the succeeding years 2007 and 2008, despite fluctuations (lower performance in 2007 and improved performance in 2008), a relatively low percentage of students showed mastery in the critical areas of mathematics, science, language arts, communication tasks and social studies. The success rate for language arts and mathematics never exceeded 58% in any year. The highest success rate for any area was 66% for communication tasks in 2007. (Government of Jamaica, 2009).

In June 2008, a total of 31,604 public school candidates sat the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examination administered by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). This represented 81.5% of the 2007/08 Grade 11 cohort



(38,778 students). Grades I–III are considered passing grades in the examination. Over the years 2005, 2006, and 2008, performance has gradually improved. The proportion of students who sat the examinations and passed five or more subjects was 26.4%, 28.4%, and 30.4% respectively. The percentage of students with passes in 1-3 subjects was 58.1% compared with 40.1% in 2006. In June 2006, 22.1% did not pass any subject, compared with 23.9% in 2005. The proportion fell to 19% in 2008. The performance in the core subjects of mathematics and English language has continued to be poor despite fluctuations.

In 2006 the proportion of students that passed English language fell to 50.1% from a high of 60.2% in 2005. In mathematics, the percentage of students who attained passing grades also fell to 35.7% from 39.4%. The basic requirement for tertiary institutions is five CSEC subjects including English language and mathematics. Of the 30,063 Jamaican students who sat the 2006 CSEC examination, 7,901 (26%) attained Grades I-III in five or more subjects including mathematics and English language. In 2007 the number fell to 5,060 and then rose to 5,866 (18.6%) in 2008.

Teaching staff

The teacher education programme is pursued over a three-year period of academic study and is delivered in teacher training colleges located in different regions of the country. The programme covers four areas: early childhood education; primary education; special education; and secondary education.

The early childhood education and primary education programme include a group of twelve courses and subjects, which prepare students to teach children between the ages of 4-8 and 6-12 years, respectively. The secondary programme includes a group of eight subjects and courses that prepare students to teach two content areas to adolescents aged 12-17. The special education programme include thirteen subjects in its curriculum and prepares students to teach children between the ages of 4 and 14 who are physically or mentally challenged.

The subjects offered in each programme include all those taught in the different types of schools (early childhood, primary, secondary and special education) plus teaching practice, research paper, personal development and education. A total of 1,980 hours of instruction is given over the three-year programme.

In order to be certified as a teacher, student teachers are required to successfully complete in its entirety the programme being pursued. As part of the general thrust to upgrade the level of courses offered in teacher training colleges, a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education) was introduced at Shortwood Teacher College. The programme is offered in association with the University of the West Indies and is the third undergraduate degree being offered in the colleges. The others, which offer studies in special education and physical education, can be pursued at the Mico Teacher College and G.C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sports, respectively. A bachelor's degree in technical education is offered at the University of Technology.



The workloads of teachers vary at the different levels of education. At the primary level, teachers are required to teach five hours per day. However where the shift system is in operation, only four and a half hours of instruction are delivered.

At the secondary level, teachers are time-tabled for forty sessions (each session being forty minutes) per week. Eighty percent of these sessions are contact periods, with the other 20% being utilized for preparation and correcting of students' assignments. The standard at the tertiary level varies according to the institution.

Different categories of teachers are employed in the education system. These range from untrained teachers to those holding higher degrees. The different institutions will require depth of understanding and mastery of skills that allow for the programmes to be effectively delivered. However, persons desirous of teaching at the primary and secondary level schools must possess a minimum requirement of four subjects in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination including English language (these subjects should be at range 4 or 5, range 5 being the highest level of competence) or four subjects in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination including English language (at Levels I or II, Level I being the highest level of competence).

Qualification to teach in high schools and tertiary level institutions range from the possession of a certificate/diploma in teacher education and/or degree obtained from higher education institutions.

The issue of teacher quality has been the concern of governments past and present and various programmes and initiatives have been put in place to remedy the situation. The Professional Development Unit of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with schools, professional associations, as well as the Joint Board of Teacher Education has organized professional development training for both in-service and pre-service teachers.

According to the Annual Statistical Review of the Education Sector, in 2008/09 the total number of teachers serving in the 1,020 educational institutions in the public formal education system (from early childhood to tertiary-level education) was 26,871 of whom 3,798 untrained, most of them in secondary high schools (2,134 untrained teachers). There were 10,734 teachers at the primary education level; 424 in special schools; 13,589 at the secondary level; and 1,512 at the tertiary level. Analysis of the data by professional qualification continued to show a ratio of approximately 6 trained teachers to 1 untrained teacher. Teachers with college training only accounted for the largest proportion (50.2%) of trained teachers in the system. This represents a decline of 4.7% over that of the previous year. The data also indicates that the percentage of teachers who were trained university graduates grew from 19.8% in 2002 to 34.2% in 2008. This, however, may be explained by an increase in the percentage of trained graduates from 31.8 to 34.1% over the same period. Of the untrained teachers in the system, approximately 43.2% had secondary education only. Of significance, the number of untrained secondary school graduate teachers has declined from 8.8% in 2002 to 6.4% in 2008.

Women continue to outnumber men at a ratio of nine to one, with female teachers accounting for 79% of the teaching personnel. At the primary level there was



a 1.9% increase in the number of females teachers employed during the period. At the early childhood level, male teachers were outnumbered by 30 to 1 in infant schools and departments.

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Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning: <http://jfll.gov.jm/> [In English. Last checked: May 2010.]

Ministry of Education: <http://www.moec.gov.jm/> [In English. Last checked: May 2010.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>