THE IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION IN A DEVELOPING SOCIETY By Meagan A. Sylvester

Abstract

This paper intends to present both the historical and contemporary aspects of educational expansion in Trinidad and Tobago focussing specifically on primary, secondary and tertiary level growth. It will highlight the relationships and struggles of state-led versus church-led education in both primary and secondary schools and thereby provide a comparative analysis of the dual mode of educational opportunity and access. This study will itemise the steps of expansion in only one tertiary level institution, the University of the West Indies, while illustrating the impact of this expansion on the society.

Introduction

Some educational expansion theories\(^1\) which have been posited, often illuminate the impact of this phenomenon on the social system while others speak to the necessity of access-creation in an attempt to forge an ameliorated society\(^2\). Accordingly, Fagerlind and Saha suggest that, irrespective of the explanation put forward for the expansion in global education, the consequences of this expansion may be problematic. There are many tensions and strains, which can prohibit and impede economic, social and political development.

The accelerating costs of expanding educational systems constantly compete with other sectors of respective societies for finite resources. This creates economic tension. From a social stand point, whether in a developed society or in a developing one, the social benefits which accrue to those who are participants in the educational process, have the potential to change fundamentally over time. The differential rewards to educational attainment are dependent upon the distribution of both education and benefit variables throughout the population.
There are at least two consequences of this process, which have immediate relevance for both developed and developing societies\textsuperscript{3}. Firstly, as the levels of school achievement increase, the disparity between the achiever and the non-achiever in terms of social benefits (income, occupational status, etc.) will also increase. Accordingly, as participation rates for any given educational level approach 100\%, with the consequent decrease in social benefits there will be pressure for expansion at the next higher level, resulting in a spiraling effect commonly experienced in all countries. The burgeoning demand for education, especially in developing countries presents a working example of the social, political and economic forces at variance. With levels of aspirations high for both educational and occupational achievement, governments are put in the position of realistically assessing and determining its spending priorities in an atmosphere of scarce resources. Concomitant with this, is the feature of controlling the expansion of education. Both structural functionalist and conflict theorists have given attention to this issue. Todaro (1977)\textsuperscript{4}, adopting a position based on the assumptions of the human capital and modernization theories, argues that in developing countries, it is necessary to temper educational demands in an attempt to bring costs and benefits to more realistic levels. This approach to tension reduction falls within the structural functional paradigm. From the radical camps, developing societies are seen to be victims of circumstance since their economics and cultures have been penetrated by the interests of Western Industrialised societies. This resulting dependency of this penetration and one of its subsequent effects is that the modern sector is distorted to the point that economic growth does not necessarily result in the expansion of jobs\textsuperscript{5}.

Following from this, it therefore becomes imperative that development strategies, which are inclusive of educational expansion objectives, ought to ensure that there is a promotion of consistency and balance between the educational outputs and the absorbing capacity of the economic structure.

Education as a social institution is intimately related to other institutions in modern society (Mustapha 1994)\textsuperscript{6}. The explanation of human behaviour using various scientific approaches is one of the major foci of sociology. Theorists in this discipline want to
provide an understanding for the world around them and in this regard, therefore, sociology is committed to objectivity rather than subjective analyses. The main theoretical thrust of sociology is to analyse questions asked, prescribe and utilise different methodological approaches and provide varying explanations for the same phenomena.

Caribbean contemporary analyses on education tend to have an underlying commonality which tends to underscore the colonial legacy's impact upon educational systems. In that regard, major emphasis is put on West Indian societies and their inherent vulnerability of the uncritical acceptance of metropolitan models of education.

Education in general, and schooling in particular, cannot of its own achieve the desired societal goals without additional structural support\textsuperscript{7} educational goals such as academic achievement, career orientations and attitudes and beliefs are only partially affected by educational factors.

In this study, educational expansion will be analysed from its earliest inception (1834) to the late 1990's (1997) within the Trinidad and Tobago society, the ensuing challenges faced by the system such as elitism, race, colour and class will be examined and analysed to see how far these variables have an impact on educational access.

\textit{PHASES OF EXPANSION}

\textit{(1834-1939)}

According to Campbell\textsuperscript{8}, the abolition of slavery marked the real beginning not only of popular education, but of public education. Trinidad was unlike other West Indian territories in that it was primarily an underdeveloped plantation society of new immigrants and conflicting nationalities. Added to this demographic difference, Trinidad had no prior history of free-coloured youth struggling to gain access to all-white public schools. As a result, the impetus to provide primary schooling for the masses presented itself as an overwhelming need within the society during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Nevertheless,
educational access in Trinidad was, at that time, and as this study will attempt to indicate, for an elite group of individuals. Since 1839, the development of educational access has been linked to the specific group to which an individual belonged e.g. race, colour and class, as the indicators will show, while educational access and opportunity has been steadily afforded at varying times and in varying degrees to different sectors of the population, empirical findings demonstrate the continuance of barriers and irregularities of opportunity in all countries, and by extension to Trinidad and Tobago. Issues such as social class, family background and socio-economic background exercise a large influence on educational achievement and motivation⁹.

Trinidad had traditionally been a Spanish colony for centuries however, it changed hands in 1792 when it was captured by the English. Following from that new development, a resulting phenomenon is that, more Frenchmen than Spanish resided in the island. The French Creoles who proved to be the backbone of the planter class were of the elite whites engaged in an ongoing battle with the English rulers who were determined to engrave their stamp on the society. Education was eventually the chosen method used to anglicise Trinidad.

**PRIMARY EDUCATION**

With regards to primary education during the time period, the Christian churches took the lead in establishing inexperienced elementary schools with the express purpose to encourage conversion to Christianity. However, the intention was not to promote upward social mobility. These schools were meant for the black and coloured lower class and it was believed at this time that educational advancement was not a dire need of the ‘underclassed’.

**SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Secondary education was designed specifically for the white upper class in the plantation society, which was essentially based on race. Social mobility proved to be difficult and the charging of fees for entry into these institutions further fostered the social divide since blacks and coloureds could rarely afford to go to secondary school
TERTIARY EDUCATION
During this period, there was no local university and the three public schools of note; CIC, QRC and Naparima College were the revered institutions of higher education.

CHURCH VS STATE
This period was characterized by fairly constant tension and sporadic struggles between the church and the state and between the churches themselves. The churches together with the government was responsible for the dual system of education. Despite the conflict which existed, the positive effect of the rivalry was the increased access of both primary and secondary school levels.

During the period 1834 – 1939, primary and secondary education served to be an avenue of upward mobility to both the Africans and Indian population. The racial and cultural divide remained static yet the society moved away from particularistic-ascriptive values of a slave society towards a universalistic-achievement one.

1939 – 1955

PRIMARY EDUCATION
This period was marked by the birth of Hindu and Muslim schools at a primary level and this heightened the growth and expansion of aspirations which in turn created a powerful demand for school places. Cambridge examinations produced a number of successful candidates and acted as a catalyst to continue the widening of the educated middle class. Nevertheless, the stratification of the society along economic barriers of race and colour remained and the role of the church in education in Trinidad continued to have a strong influence. Correspondingly in Tobago, the demographic landscape was not as coloured and there did not exist such a stark church – state divide. The population was smaller and enrolments and attendance tended to remain static.
SECONDARY EDUCATION

The recognized secondary schools witnessed unprecedented school expansion and the parallel growth of private secondary schools during this period indicated a high demand for this level of education. Teacher training underwent significant expansion during this period and three training institutes were established, registering record enrolment between 1941 and 1945. In Trinidad, technical/vocational educational opportunities were created and in Tobago, Bishop's High School tripled its population. QRC and St. Joseph's Convent, Port-of-Spain) gained considerably in size. In 1938, the recognized secondary schools had a total of 2,259 students, in 1945, the total was 4,190 and in 1946, it was 4,765.

1956- 1981

PRIMARY EDUCATION

This phase was marked by an improved relationship between the PNM government and the churches. Firstly, the position taken by the government created a challenge to the churches feeding open controversy and hostile ruminations until a reprieve was sought with the introduction of the Education Act of 1966. Secondly, the government and the church entered into a less hostile working arrangement, accepting each other as two arms of the dual system of education.

At the primary level of education, the government increased the number of school places yet the Roman Catholic Church still outnumbered the government in the actual number of primary schools. Added to this increase in primary school access, the government also expanded nursery schools. In 1970, plans were announced for a National Pre-School Education Project, with 100 centres for about 5,000 children between 4 and 5 years. By 1976, there were ten centers with plans to establish more. The Indian population was educated in either Christian and government schools since the Presbyterian Church largely responsible for secondary school expansion for the Indian population, had not heavily invested in school expansion at the primary level. The expansion of primary school by the government provided a source of upward mobility for all races.
SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education during this period underwent major positive changes of benefit to a broader base of the population than ever before. The Common Entrance Examination introduced a "democratizing thrust" which seemed to equalize educational access in a racially divided society. Free secondary education from 1961 further provided opportunity for larger sections of the populace.

According to the PNM Major Policy Documents, the secondary schools were to be "the cradle of new nationalism". It was envisioned by the PNM government that the education system would foster social integration and economic progress by bringing youth of different races and classes into the same learning ground. Following from this, major improvements were produced in a short space of time. The statistics indicate that with the government secondary schools, the PNM moved from 3 in 1957 to 21 in 1967.

The introduction of the junior secondary schools from 11 in 1974 to 16 by 1975 and 22 by 1979 moving the number of children from 6,962 in 1972 to 35,676 in 1979 illustrated a Herculean approach to educational expansion. Senior secondary schools, composite schools and teacher training colleges were introduced and upgraded respectively, to further facilitate the government's expansionary vision. Adult education had been seen to be poorly advanced by the colonial authorities in the PNM’s view and as a result, additional island scholarships were granted for study overseas between 1956 and 1961 with 91 development scholarships being granted to civil servants and teachers for study abroad. In Tobago, the PNM government established and expanded secondary school access by the setting up of institutions at Signal Hill, Scarborough and Roxborough.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

In this phase, there were areas of quickened growth in education. Adult and community education were partly government-sponsored programmes and university education was introduced in a formal sense within the island.
Many non-whites began to be holders of university degrees and study abroad continued to be a major facet of tertiary education landscape in Trinidad and Tobago. Campbell’s research indicates that Chinese immigrants sent their sons to China to be educated, while East Indians and Africans were at McGill and other overseas tertiary institutions. Nevertheless, this pattern of Trinidadians and Tobagonians studying abroad and oftentimes deciding to reside there, represented valuable human resources being invested in other countries. Subsequently, the Irvine Committee was set up to investigate the nature and extent of the readiness for a West Indian university. Establishing findings in the affirmative, it was believed that West Indian University would raise the level of cultural activities and break the centuries old tradition that trained men must come from abroad.

To take this argument further, Dr. Eric Williams, the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the principal function of the West Indian University was that it should not be an elitist institution but should seek to educate the masses.

As a response to the clarion call, The University College of the West Indies was established in 1948 and began as a single campus in Jamaica and then developed branches in Trinidad and Barbados subsequently. In Trinidad in particular, expansion at the tertiary level was significantly boosted with the opening up of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA) followed by the construction of a College of Liberal Arts and faculties of Engineering and later, Natural Sciences.

At the St. Augustine campus, the enrolment of nationals in Arts and Sciences courses increased sizeably between 1964 and 1971. Those in the pursuit of agricultural studies doubled and engineering students doubled. There was a five-fold increase in natural science students and social science studies which had commenced in 1965, tripled, while a small start was made in 1968 with studies for the Diploma in International Relations. By 1978, a fund was established with approximately TT$15 million to initiate building of a University Medical Complex at Mount Hope to include a teaching hospital, schools of medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, pharmacy and nursing.
The PNM began to diversify its economy towards a focus on iron, steel, petrochemicals and fertiliser plants during this period and it was felt that science teaching and research needed institutional support not presently provided for by the UWI. The answer was the establishment of the National Institute of Higher Education (Research, Science and Technology-NIHERST).

Conclusively, the phase was marked by a significant rate of increase in educational expansion than the former phases.

1982 – 1997

The successive governments of the PNM, NAR and UNC opted to make a shift from quantitative expansion in education to a qualitative one. As a result, the Ministry of Education, now the government body responsible for mass education in Trinidad and Tobago outlined in its “Education Policy Paper (1993-2003)19 “the need to establish and maintain an efficient and equitable system of basic education which is a true commitment to “sustainable human development”.

Qualitatively, the changes occurred in the curriculum as an attempt was made to embrace the multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-class nature of the society. Curricular changes were manifested in the onset of early childhood care and education, pupils with special needs and teacher education and development while upgrades took place in primary, secondary and tertiary educational facilities.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

From a quantitative standpoint, by 1996, the age of the primary school population was approximately 214,000 and it was projected to rise to 227,00020. To facilitate this by the year 2000, it was estimated that some 51 new schools needed to be erected.
SECONDARY EDUCATION

With secondary education, it was felt that during this period there was a shortfall in accommodation for the 12-16+ population and that to alleviate and ameliorate this, it would be necessary to provide some 49 schools between 1993 and 2000.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

The introduction of the University of the West Indies (UWI) has further developed the concept of quality education since specialization has taken place. UWI is a regional university since it has three campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados with the non-campus territories including Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

According to the University of the West Indies Strategic Plan 1996-97-2001/2002 (St. Augustine Campus), the overall enrolment target is roughly 21,000 students Full Time Enrolments, (hereafter FTEs) by the academic year 2001-2002, an increase of 5,000 above the enrolment level in 1995/1996. To assist in the realization of this targeted expansion, the enrolment at St. Augustine must be increased, in FTE terms, by 58.3% from 4,633 in 1995/96 to 7,333 in 2001/2002. This amounts to an average annual increase of 450 FTEs sustained over the period 1996/97 to 2001/2002. On a strict headcount basis, postgraduate enrolment increased by approximately 40% over the last three academic years.21

The Strategic Plan fully recognizes that UWI's developmental impact depends not merely on enrolment but also on the actual output of graduates. The qualitative dimension is that incremental change has occurred over time with the opening up of the Industrial Development Unit in 1996 which caters in the main to the improvement in teacher
efficiency through interactive teaching methods and the operationalising of the Learning Resource Centre during the academic year 1997/1998. Quantitatively, the University’s plan to enhance the facilities and infrastructure at the St. Augustine Campus is a vital part of the overall strategy for expansion of enrolment and output with a move towards academic quality and efficiency.

**CONCLUSION**

This phase has involved major changes in the thrust of educational expansion. Specifically, efforts have been focused on embracing all sectors of the population more evenly. Primary, secondary and tertiary, technical/vocational and early childhood schooling have been given qualitative changes and this policy has lent itself to the creation of an education system which allows for more opportunity and educational access and more attainment, generally speaking. Added to this, the expansion in higher education indicates that despite both a qualitative and quantitative shift in the provision of educational tools, there still lies the problem of real and total access for all sectors of the population.

**IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION**

The foregoing analysis shows that in Trinidad and Tobago, the period 1839-1992 was marked by dramatic educational expansion especially at all levels of educational attainment. Yet the progress has waxed and waned through the years. Now there is a move to greater relevance.

Many young adults have access to education in Trinidad and Tobago at all levels from primary to tertiary. Superficially then, the education system seems to foster an atmosphere of equality. Nevertheless, the findings of several studies suggests that
education has tended to be elitist by nature to certain groups in the society. Mustapha 1984.

Cross (1970) has found that educational opportunity is inextricably linked to family background, social class and socio-economic status (SES). The secondary school system in Trinidad offers a dichotomy between school type and social class. Baksh (1986), states that the “government secondaries” (five and seven year schools) provide instruction for a greater proportion of students from the middle class while junior secondaries comprise a greater proportion of students from the working class. Mustapha (1989), posits that there is a positive correlation between socio-economic class (SES) and occupational aspirations. Similarly, Osuji (1976) ascertained that there exists a positive relationship between SES and educational attainment. Based on the evidence, these studies seem to suggest that while educational expansion in the first three phases focused on the quantitative aspect i.e. school buildings, the education system itself was not developed by egalitarian principles. Little improvement has taken place in the condition of a large majority of the members of the lower class.

One sociologist, Talcott Parsons asserts that through tertiary level education, the nature of differentiation seems to be precisely a matter of individual ability and class status. The interactionist perspective on social stratification and educational structure focusses heavily on the importance of intelligence as it relates to the social class structure. Further Davis (1951), examined these variables and ascertained that middle and upper class children are more capable of abstract verbalization and educational achievements in both secondary and tertiary levels.

The existing education system characterized by rigidity of the curriculum and conventional pedagogical approaches utilized, continues to prepare persons for employment in the modern industrial sector, thereby, neglecting the real needs of the poor, leaving them in a state of perpetual powerlessness. In the name of excellence, the education system, encourages and rewards individual competition and rivalry, thereby leaving the majority as helpless and hopeless as they were before. The very mechanisms
introduced to remove the existing inequalities are ironically reinforcing them (Mustapha 1984). Competition existed since the College Exhibition examinations and continues today up to the tertiary level. While places are more readily available, there still seems to be an elitist structure in place. Williams dreamed of education for the masses. But the research has shown that there exists opportunity only for the masses within a particular class grouping.

With regards to the relationship between education and economic growth, the literature in indicates that investment and educational expansion did not lead to economic growth as first theorized by Theodore Schultz in his “Investment in Human Capital” thesis. Quality education has been a major thrust in the fourth phase of expansion. However, increased access and curriculum changes only seem to inflate aspirations and expectations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the 1960’s, the human capital theorists purported that investment in education was the secret ingredient to economic growth, an end to poverty and a more equal society. However, by the 1970’s and 1980’s, it became quite clear that educational investment failed to abolish poverty and deliver a more equal society. The middle class continues to get more out of educational opportunities than the poor.

There is no clear relationship between inputs and outputs in education. More money does not necessarily produce better results. Educational expansion can be counter-productive. If the number of graduates is doubled without of a parallel doubling of the number of graduate-level jobs, the result is the fostering of graduate unemployment and a systematic debasing of academic qualifications.

At all levels, there needs to be more development in the curriculum to account for various learning abilities within the different classes. A middle class school system should not be
the yardstick with which to measure the masses of a mixed class structure. Reform is needed in the dual mode of education. A formula must be developed whereby the school tone and the school type should not be made to direct the self-esteem of learners. Similarly, the issue of the growing dropout population must be dealt with. To, too many sectors of the population, education seems unattainable. In that regard, an accommodation needs to be made between individual ability and access instead of on the ability to pay.

**CONCLUSION**

The impact of educational expansion must be addressed by looking at factors other than the numbers of schools and the access. Credence therefore must be given to issues such as education and equality, education and economic growth, the disparity between aspirations and achievements and the relationship between the schools, government and society. Further research must be undertaken in an effort to establish the relationships between these variables.
NOTES


2. Theodore Schultz and other human capital theorists have posited the view that educational expansion can serve as a catalyst to economic growth.


7. See I Fagerlind and L.J Saha. Education and national development...

9. For a discussion on these variables affecting educational attainment, see A. H. Halsey, J. Floud and C. Arnold Anderson (Eds.) Education, Economy and Society (Glencoe, F.P., 1962).


12. For further elaboration on educational objectives during this phase, see PNM Major Policy Documents. Vol#1. The People's Charter. (Port-of-Spain).


14. See C. Campbell. Endless education...


17. For an in-depth appreciation of these views, see E.E. Williams. Education in the British West Indies. (Port-of-Spain: Guardian Commercial Printing, 1950).
18. See C. Campbell. Endless education…


20. See Statistics on Public Education. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Education.


