

A HISTORICAL THINKING RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN
TRINIDAD (1851-1869)**

BY

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&

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HISTORICAL QUESTION

HOW DID THE PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION DEVELOP IN TRINIDAD?

HYPOTHESIS

After preliminary research, we believe that the Primary school System of Education came about as a result of the need for some sort of formal education for the descendants of African slaves and Indian Indentured labourers in the Post Emancipation era. Lord Harris, the then Governor of Trinidad was instrumental in setting up the first set of primary schools. As time went by, various religious bodies started schools to promote their religion along the established primary school curriculum.

DISCUSSION OF SOURCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

- ◆ The following documents were sourced from the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago:
 - ◆
 - 1) Historic Education Documents- Despatch and Resolutions from Lord Harris.
 - 2) Educational Report 1958-A Historical Summary-document from the Gov't. Printery pg 7-13.
 - 3) Local School Boards Historical Perspective- Chapter 2
 - 4) Historical Documents- The History and Present System of Education in Trinidad.
 - 5) Historic Education Documents-The System of Education in Trinidad and Tobago- A historical sketch.

SECONDARY SOURCES

In this section a discussion of some of the sources used can be found.

- ◆ Anthony, Michael. First in Trinidad. Cascade, T'dad: Paria Publishing Company Ltd., 1985.

This book was used to gather information on the First System of Primary Schools in Trinidad. It provided us with a good account of the primary school system -its progress and problems encountered during its establishment.

- ◆ Brereton, Bridget. An Introduction to the History of Trinidad and Tobago. Avon: the Bath Press, 1996.

SECONDARY SOURCES conf'd

This book gives an account of education and society and the influence of the church from 1838-1940.

- ♦ Brereton, Gerard Besson and Bridget. The Book of Trinidad. Port of Spain: 1992.

It gave a good historical account of Trinidad and Tobago from discovery to present time.

- ♦ Campbell, Carl C. Endless Education: Main Currents in the Education System of Trinidad and Tobago 1939-1986. Kingston: The Press of the West Indies, 1997.

This book gave a detailed account of the first century of the education system 1834-1939.

- ♦ Campbell, Carl C. A Short History of Education in Trinidad and Tobago 1834-1986. Kingston, Jamaica. Ian Randle Publishers, 1992

This book provided us with information on how race, colour and class relate to education

- ♦ Campbell, Carl C. The Young Colonials: A Social History of Education in Trinidad and Tobago. Kingston: The Press University of the West Indies, 1996.

This book gave one of the most detailed accounts of the implementation of primary school system in Trinidad.

- ♦ Dookhan Isaac. A Post- Emancipation History of the West Indies. Longman 1988

This book provided us with information relating to post emancipation and the aftermath of the freedom of the slaves.

- ♦ A Brief History of Early Primary Education. Retrieved, from <http://www.educoas.org/Portal/bdigital/contenido/interamer/BklACD/Interamer/Interamerhtml/Alleynehtml/AllCh3.htm>

- ◆ **Lord Harris: Live and Learn!** Retrieved from <http://caribbeanhistoryarchives.blogspot.com/2011/08/lord-harris-live-and-learn.html>
- ◆ **Governors of Trinidad and Tobago: 1840-1866.** Retrieved from <http://www2.nalis.gov.tt/Research/SubjectGuide/GovernorsofTrinidadandTobago/GovernorsofTrinidadandTobago18401866/tabid/280/Default.aspx?PageContentID=458>
- ◆ **Primary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago** Retrieved from http://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/Cit_parentDetail/?WCM_GL_OBAL_CONTEXT=/gortt/wcm/connect/gortt+web+content/TTConnect/Citizen/Role/AParent/EducationandTraining/Primary+Education+and+School

IMAGES AND MEDIA EXAMINED AND REPRODUCED HERE COMES FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES

- ◆ **Picture of Lord Harris**
<http://www.google.com/imgres?q=Lord+George+Francis+Robert+Harris+Governor+of+Trinidad>
- ◆ **Photos of Primary Schools** retrieved from Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago.
- ◆ **Pictures of despatches and resolutions** retrieved from National archives of Trinidad and Tobago.

CONTEXT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD (1851-1869)

The emancipation of the slaves in 1834 marked the real beginning not only of popular education but of public education. (Endless Education: Carl C. Campbell. P 50).

The first system of formal education began in 1851, when Lord Harris, the Governor of Trinidad and Tobago established wards or counties. He called upon each warden to open at least one school within his ward.



Lord George Francis Robert Harris- Governor of Trinidad (1846-54)

Lord Harris was aware of the fact that children of the emancipated slaves and indentured labourers had no school to attend. The existing church schools had one main objective and that was to teach religion, a fact that kept away children who were not of that religious persuasion. As a result of this, Lord Harris said, "If the schools are to be used by all, the Religious Instruction afforded should be such as all will readily accept."

He went on to formulate the first educational policy for the island. The aim was to unify the diverse racial and cultural elements and political loyalties (without regard to religion) through a state control system of secular education. The objectives of his educational policies (resolutions moved in a committee of the Board of Council on the 19th day of April, 1851) were:

1. That a board of education be formed, to consist of Governor, and other persons, being laymen, as may be appointed from time to time by the Governor.

2. That an inspector of school be appointed with a salary.

3. That, for the education of teachers, a training school, with a master and mistress, be established, and that the expenses of erecting and maintaining such training school, with suitable accommodation for the teachers be defrayed from the public funds of the colony.

4. That there be at once established in each ward of the colony so many primary schools, and at such places most suitable for the convenience of the population, as may be determined by the warden of the ward, and approved by the Governor.

5. That the training and primary schools be under the control of the board of education, and subject to the inspection of the inspector.

6. That on the establishment of any such primary school in any ward, allowances made from the Colonial Treasury to any other school within such ward be withdrawn.

7. That the expenses of erecting and maintaining the school-houses with suitable accommodation for the teachers, and the salaries of the teachers in each ward, be defrayed from the funds of the ward.

8. That no person shall be appointed master or mistress of any such school, unless such person shall produce, to the satisfaction of the Board of Education, certificates of good character from the minister of the religious body to which such a person shall belong and to whom he or she is personally known, and from two or

more respectable householders, and until such person shall have undergone an examination by the Board of Education, or by examiners to be appointed by the Board, and shall have received a certificate of sufficiency.

9. That at the primary schools, instructions shall be provided for day scholars and for evening and adult classes.

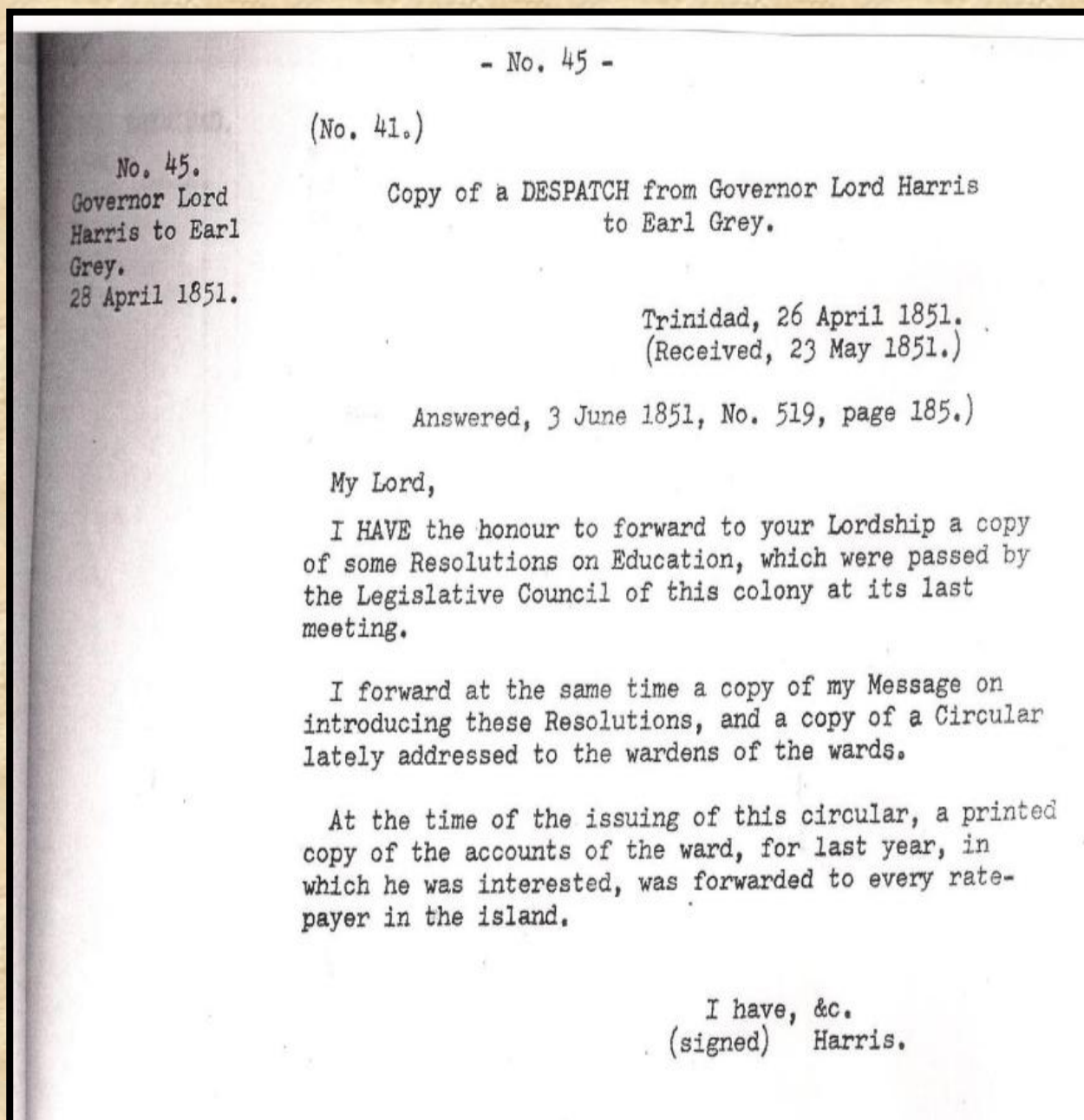
10. That to each school shall be attached a lending library, under regulation to be made for the purpose by the Board of Education.

11. That the admission to the primary schools be gratuitous.

12. That the instruction to be given at the training and primary schools be secular, and without direct religious or doctrinal teachings.

13. That the schools in the town of Port of Spain and San Fernando, now be receiving aid from the public funds shall be subject to inspection by the government inspector so long as they shall receive such aid (Passed in Council on this first day of May, 1851, and signed by Richard D. Cadiz, Clerk of Council).

A copy of despatch from Governor Lord Harris.



Source : Historical Education Documents-No. 3 - National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago

Resolutions on a System of Primary School Education

Encl. 1, in
No. 45.

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RESOLUTIONS moved in a Committee of the
Board of Council on the 19th day of April 1851.

1. That a Board of Education be formed, to consist of the Governor, and such Members of the Legislative Council of Government, and other persons, being laymen, as may be appointed from time to time by the Governor.
2. That an inspector of schools be appointed with a salary.
3. That, for the education of teachers, a training school, with a master and mistress, be established, and that the expenses of erecting and maintaining such training school, with suitable accommodation for the teachers, be defrayed from the public funds of the colony.
4. That there be at once established in each ward of the colony so many primary schools, and at such places most suitable for the convenience of the population, as may be determined by the warden of the ward, and approved by the Governor.
5. That the training and primary schools be under the control of the Board of Education, and subject to the inspection of the inspector.
6. That on the establishment of any such primary school in any ward, the allowances made from the Colonial Treasury to any other school within such ward be withdrawn.
7. That the expenses of erecting and maintaining the school-houses with suitable accommodation for the teachers, and the salaries of the teachers in each ward, be defrayed from the funds of the ward.

Source : Historical Education Documents-No. 3 – National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago

Board of Council Resolutions on a System of Primary School Education (conf'd)

TRINIDAD.

8. That no person shall be appointed master or mistress of any such school, unless such person shall produce, to the satisfaction of the Board of Education, certificates of good character from a minister of the religious body to which such person shall belong, and to whom he or she is personally known, and from two or more respectable householders, and until such person shall have undergone an examination by the Board of Education, or by examiners to be appointed by the Board, and shall have received a certificate of sufficiency.

9. That at the primary schools, instruction shall be provided for day scholars, and for evening and adult classes.

10. That to each school shall be attached a lending library, under regulations to be made for the purpose by the Board of Education.

11. That the admission to the primary schools be gratuitous.

12. That the instruction to be given at the training and primary schools be secular, and without direct religious or doctrinal teaching.

13. That the schools in the towns of Port of Spain and San Fernando, now receiving aid from the public funds, shall be subject to inspection by the Government inspector so long as they shall receive such aid.

Passed in Council on this 1st day of May, A.D. 1851.

(signed) Richard D. Cadiz,
Clerk of Council.

Source : Historical Education Documents-No. 3 – National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago

The first ward schools were built in districts around Port-of-Spain, such as Maraval, Diego Martin, San Juan, Santa Cruz and one was established as far away as Mayaro. At the end of the first year in which the wards began to operate. Lord Harris realized that some Of the poorer wards could not bear the expense of a building and running a school. This resulted in there being only eleven wards schools after three years. The pace eventually picked up and by 1855 there were 23 schools in 35 wards. Twelve years later there were only 30 ward schools in 35 wards.(The young colonials: A social history in education in Trinidad and Tobago 1834-1939, Carl/C. Campbell, pg 12).

When Lord Harris left Trinidad as Governor in 1854 the Primary School system remained as one of the key issues. The board of Education failed to meet regularly and the two governors who succeeded Lord Harris displayed little or no interest in the Ward schools. The two successive inspectors of the schools were left largely on their own to visit and examine the schools and manage the system. Because of the difficulties of travelling to the countryside and the fact that travelling expenses came out of their salaries, the inspectors rarely visit the rural schools.

In 1869, the Secretary of State for the colonies sent an Irishman Patrick Keenan, to observe and report on the system of primary Education in Trinidad. Keenan found that the schools in Trinidad were badly managed. There were thirty ward schools already established and he felt that they were not worth the public money spent on them. He also found that Lord Harris' condition of no religion in schools was openly flouted. He himself was a devout Catholic and felt this rule should be changed. He described the wardens, who were the school managers as being completely incapable. He recommended that management of each ward school should be given to a clergyman of the same religion as the majority of pupils attending the school. This was something Lord Harris was totally opposed to. Keenan also recommended that the twenty schools with Roman Catholic majorities be handed over to the Roman Catholic Church.

He also recommended that the eight schools with Anglican majorities be handed over to the Anglican Church. The schools were eventually handed over to the churches, but this made it clear that the government should set up and run its own schools-government school.

LIST OF SCHOOLS SHOWN ON KEENAN'S REPORT ON EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD, 1869

Mr. Keenan's Report on Education in Trinidad, 1869.—In 1869, Mr. (afterwards Sir) P. J. Keenan, at that time an Inspector of Schools under the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, and subsequently himself Resident Commissioner, who had been selected by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to enquire into and report upon the state of Education in Trinidad, gave the following list of the schools (whether aided by the Government or not) which he visited and examined:—

			PUPILS PRESENT.		
			Boys.	Girls.	Total
<i>Upper Class Schools.</i>					
1. Queen's Collegiate School*	...	...	68	—	68
2. College of the Immaculate Conception†	...	...	111	—	111
3. St. Joseph's Convent†	...	...	—	82	82
4. The Normal School*	...	...	7	—	7
5. Boys' and Girls' Model School*	...	...	103	229	332
6. The Free Model School†	...	...	76	—	76
7. Three Borough Schools of Port-of-Spain‡ and San Fernando*	...	...	222	33	255
<i>Primary Schools.</i>					
8. Thirty Ward Schools*	...	...	804	389	1,193
9. Thirteen Non-endowed Roman Catholic Schools†	...	...	217	214	431
10. Twenty-two Non-endowed Protestant Schools†	...	...	256	250	506
11. The East Indian Orphan Home†	...	...	25	17	42
Total	...	...	1,889	1,214	3,103

The public expenditure in 1868 had been £8,800 : namely, £2,700 on the Queen's Collegiate School, and £6,100 on the Ward Schools and the Normal and Model Schools.

At the thirty-five schools which were subject to Government inspection including the two Model Schools, the three Borough Schools, and the thirty Ward Schools, the number of scholars enrolled in 1868 was 2,836, and the average daily attendance 1,672. There is no record available of the attendance at the thirty-five non-endowed denominational schools which were visited by Mr. Keenan.

* Under the administration of the Board of Education.

† Independent of Government aid or inspection.

‡ Under the control of the Borough Council, but subject to Government Inspection.

Excerpt from Mr. Keenan's report on education in Trinidad, 1869

Source: Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago

KEENAN'S SUGGESTIONS IN REGARD TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Mr. Keenan's Suggestions in regard to Primary Schools.—Mr. Keenan's report, which severely criticised the educational results obtained in the primary schools, contained the following suggestions:—

- (a) The compilation of a set of school books suitable to the Colony, and descriptive of its natural phenomena, productions, &c.
- (b) That the appointment of schoolmistresses should be encouraged with a special view to the teaching of needlework ; and that attached to each school there should be a workshop and garden, in order that the boys might be taught carpentry and agriculture.
- (c) The institution of two Reformatory Schools, based in principle upon a modification of the English Reformatory and Industrial School Acts.
- (d) The abolition of the Boys' and Girls' Model Schools, and also of the Normal School.
- (e) That instead of establishing any Government Normal School, a scheme of monitorships should be instituted as an effective means of providing highly qualified teachers for the Colony in future.
- (f) That the plan then in force of exclusive management on the part of the State should be abolished ; and that, in future, all schools should be placed under the care of responsible persons having local relation or connection with the places in which the schools were situated.
- (g) That the management of each ward school should be vested in the clergyman of the same religion as the majority of the pupils—such arrangement, however, not to operate to the prejudice of any other person, clergyman or layman, who commanding a sufficient attendance of pupils and a suitable school house, might choose to establish a school under his own management.
- (h) As regards religious instruction, that no child on account of class, creed or colour, should be refused admittance to a school aided by the State ; and that no child should be exposed, directly or indirectly, to the danger of proselytism.
- (i) That every manager should be allowed free scope as to the course of religious instruction he might choose to adopt, and as to the employment of the person by whom such instruction should be imparted.
- (j) That the parent, by a formal act of registration, should determine the religion of his child ; and that the parish clergyman of the same religion as the child should then have the right to give his co-religionists instruction, at some convenient time, in the schoolroom.
- (k) That the principle of paying for ascertained results should be applied to the Trinidad teachers ; that one-third of their income should be dependent upon the results of their teaching, as ascertained by the Inspector at an annual examination ; that another third should be dependent upon a quarterly report of the manager ; and that the remaining third should arise from a "classification" or "certificate" salary.
- (l) The propriety of extending to the East Indian immigrants the opportunity of participating in the advantages of the public system of education.
- (m) The abolition of the existing Board of Education, and the appointment of a new board of twelve members—six Roman Catholics and six Protestants.

Excerpt from Mr. Keenan's report on Education in Trinidad, 1869 .

Source: Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago

BROADER SOCIAL CONTEXT

The indentureship period began in 1845, whereby East Indians from India started to arrive in Trinidad to work on the sugar plantations. They were brought in to replace the ex-slaves who no longer wanted to work in the sugar cane fields. At this time the ex-slaves were busy trying to establish themselves as free men. They had to now find homes away from the plantations on which they dwelled from the time of their arrival in Trinidad. They did this by setting up free villages on any available lands they could find that did not belong to the plantations.

During the second part of the nineteenth century the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches took a more active part in the welfare of the ex-slaves and indentured labourers of Trinidad. More schools were set up and the first Catholic nuns came from France and Belgium to set up convents. Government inspectors were appointed to maintain certain standards in schools and education acts were passed to regulate the system. However some people spoke out against education thinking that it would turn workers away from the agriculture fields. The move towards education for all was faced with numerous problems. Little money and time was spent on up keeping schools and often there was overcrowding and a lack of basic equipment to facilitate teaching and learning.” And yet it was out of these diverse beginning that our modern education system was born, a system of which all West Indian can be justly proud”

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY FOR EDUCATION TODAY

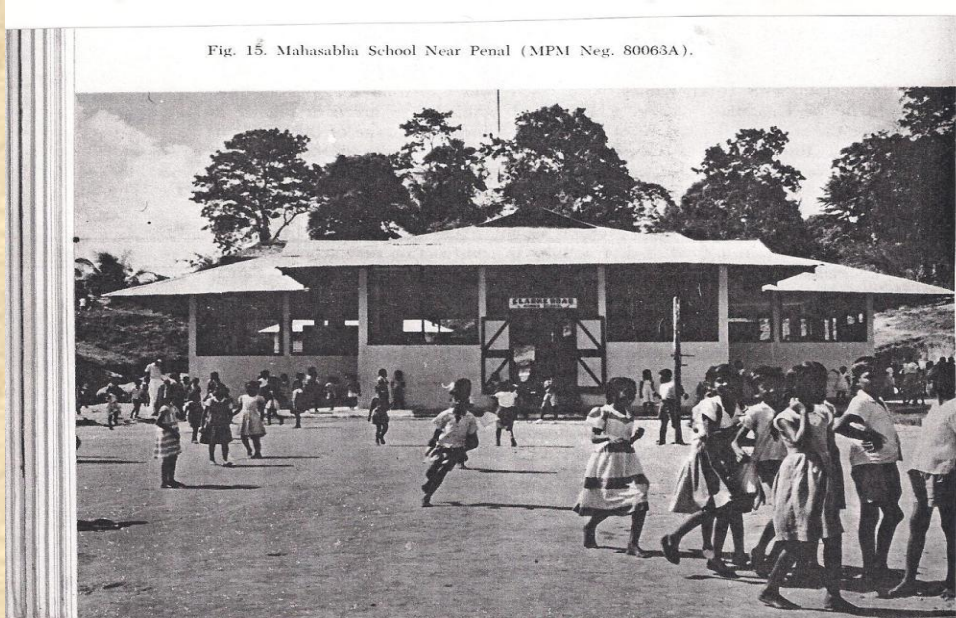
The establishment of ward or government schools by Lord Harris was the foundation for the primary school system in Trinidad and Tobago. When Lord Harris assumed Governorship in 1845, there were few primary schools in Trinidad, many of them organized by different churches. These schools were mainly for the poor white boys whose families could not afford to give them an education. A privileged few had access to an education and in many instances received private tuition or returned to Britain. His foresight into the need for schools to provide a formal education of the masses, that is, the descendants of freed African slaves and Indentured labourers was instrumental in the provision of education for all. This continues to be the government's policy today, this was further strengthened by the establishment of the Children's Act (amended 2000), and where all children ages 5 to 12 years must received primary school education. The establishment of the government schools gave students the opportunity to gain an education without being pressured to follow a religion that they did not belong to.

With the departure of Lord Harris from Trinidad there were few new schools established. Then in 1950 when the Statistical Digest indicated that a very high percentage of the East Indian population could not read or write, a concentrated effort was made by the denominational boards to build their own schools to cater for the educational needs of their people while promoting their religious beliefs. In 1951 The Islamic board built its first school, the Aranguez Islamia School which was followed by four more schools by 1956. They were closely followed by the Hindu boards which built over 40 primary schools from 1952-1956.

Presently there are over 483 schools belonging to both the government and denominational boards which is approved by the Ministry of Education to provide primary level education.

Early Primary Schools in Trinidad

Fig. 15. Mahasabha School Near Penal (MPM Neg. 80063A).



Source: Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago



Fig. 13. Canadian Mission School in Penal (MPM Neg. 80297B).

Source: Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago

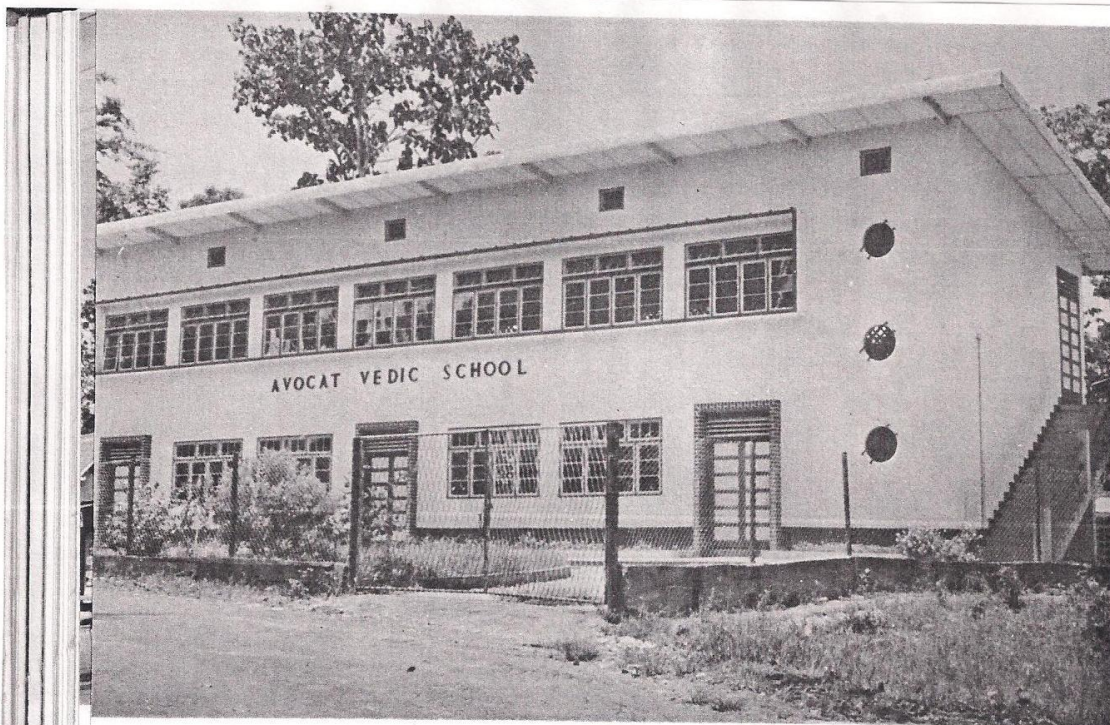


Fig. 14. School of Arya Samaj at Avocat (MPM Neg. 80105A).

Source: Historical Educational Documents- National archives of Trinidad and Tobago

CONCLUSION

The Keenan report was largely accepted, but Lord Harris' idea of setting up non-religious schools prevailed in the end with the establishment of Government schools. Whether religion was an issue or not, Harris' dream was well on the way to becoming reality. He had ended his resolution of April 19, 1851 with the words "I am desirous that the means and the opportunities for obtaining instructions should be afforded to every child in this island."

And so April 19, 1851 is a memorable date, it was the first time that a system of education for the children of the emancipated slaves and indentured labourers was started in Trinidad