“Universal Secondary Education and Society in the Commonwealth Caribbean”

Systems of secondary education within the Caribbean date back to the mid-1850’s, though many institutions were built long before that as elementary schools, and transformed in the latter 1800’s. The primary operators of these institutions were religious bodies or charitable trusts - the government itself had almost nothing to do with the education of its constituents, and this did not change until the 1950’s and beyond. Around this time, Caribbean governments began to receive loans from bodies like the World Bank and Caribbean Development Bank, and increased their involvement in education due to a surge in demand via newfound adult suffrage and representative government. Unfortunately, the religious institutions and lenders-of-money would have a large say as to how this development of education would proceed. Common Entrance Exams were implemented to determine if a citizen could access the prestigious, academically-oriented, “traditional” high schools, while “Junior Secondary Schools” were built for those who could not gain admittance. However, these ‘’Junior” schools were acutely geared toward vocational education, and would only be attended by those too poor to pay for Private Secondary education, or pass the CEE. A faulty component that led to this is the fact that those who are unable to satisfactorily complete primary education are still shuffled into Secondary schools, despite their lack of understanding. Increasingly, there is a disparity between the implementation of school systems and the ability of citizens to engage these institutions. Thus, the Caribbean must abandon the perception of Secondary Education as it has been presented by European powers, and devise ideas that will allow educational systems to instead embody cultural and societal paradigms that are native to the area.