

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO 1838-1983

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The thesis attempts to trace the evolution of ideas which influenced the formulation of educational policy in Trinidad and Tobago from the post-Emancipation era to the late twentieth century. It also seeks to identify the prevailing notions underlying educational practice and the development of the education system over the period. It is argued that the system of education faithfully reflected the shifting political emphases as much as the changing socio-economic conditions existing during both the era of colonial rule and the era of independence. What emerged by mid nineteenth century was a system that sought to provide mass education at the primary level with a small elitist structure at the secondary, characterised primarily by a struggle for control between Church and State, setting a paradigm that was not to be altered in any fundamental way until the massification of the

entire system coming with independence and the oil boom of the eighties.

The expansion of secondary education after 1960 revealed a new nationalist philosophy of development that came with political sovereignty. Thereafter education sought to provide a homebred leadership to the society, to create a formidable middle class, to catalogue the process of social and ethnic cohesion and to invest prodigally in human capital so as to bring about an economic transformation that would cement the goals of political independence. Despite the massive development of secondary and tertiary institutions and the virtual liberalisation of the system, schools continued to function as reproductive agencies of a status quo that continued to harbour enclaves of privilege and elitism. Yet they have functioned as an instrument of transformative processes, and have been one of the primary agents of acculturation and social cohesion, tolerance and understanding in a multi-ethnic, class ridden society.