

ABSTRACT

WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1838 - 1980

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This study attempts to understand the dynamics of female participation in education and its relation to the workforce in Trinidad and Tobago over the period 1838 to 1980. It proposes that developments in the education system as seen through educational policy have differentially affected both genders and examines the reasons for this differential if it is found to exist.

A review is first carried out of the literature on women and education, identifying both theoretical and methodological concerns with research on gender and the sociology of education.

The study then traces the development of the education system as affected by the changing economic and political circumstances of the society and appraises the status of the different ethnic groups of women as the social structure itself developed. At the same time it looks at how education policy was formulated and why changes were introduced. It illustrates how these changes reflected the concerns of the church and the educationalists in particular, and the social perception of women's roles in general.

The study next examines the differential labour force involvement of both men and women by occupation and industry, analysing closely how their status in the labour force is determined by

educational attainment levels combined with competing demographic, social and cultural factors.

Chapter four of the thesis analyses the findings of each of the areas previously investigated. This analysis reveals that despite greater equality in education policy between 1838 and 1980 and equal access to primary, secondary and tertiary education for both genders, by 1980 there is still evidence of gender stereotyping with regards to subject choices between boys and girls and a persistent sexual division of labour vis a vis occupational and industrial pursuits of men and women.

In conclusion, the study reveals the paradoxical nature of women's position in education. While policy developments have given them equal access, their actual educational and occupational choices are influenced by other competing social, cultural and economic factors thus delimiting their equal participation in the education system and predetermining their roles in the economy.