

Historical Thinking Research Project

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GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

1960-1990

HYPOTHESIS

Government policies of Trinidad and Tobago from 1960-1990 have been the main reason behind the improvement of primary school building structures and facilities which continues today.

Dicussion of Sources

During our research we consulted a number of Primary and Secondary resources. We visited the Trinidad and Tobago National Archives and web sites.

At the Trinidad and Tobago National Archives we made use of the following Primary Source:

- Ministry of Ed. Drafted Educational Plan (1985-1990)
- Ministry of Ed. Assessment Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago 1968 - 1983

Our Secondary Sources were:

- ¹ <http://www.contact-tt.com/index.cfm?Content=218>
- ² http://www.moe.gov.tt/general_pdfs/education_act_laws_of_tt.pdf
- ³ http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Inclusive_Education/Reports/kingston_07/trinidad_tobago_inclusion_07.pdf
- ⁴ <http://www.educoas.org/Portal/bdigital/contenido/interamer/BkIACD/Interamer/Interamerhtml/Alleynehtml/AllCh6.htm>
- ⁵ http://www.photius.com/countries/trinidad_and_tobago/economy/overview.html
- ⁶ www.bridgew.edu/Soas/jiws/fall01/pasley.pdf
- ⁷ www.cifas.us/caribbean/PDFs/Aftermath_Sovereignty.pdf The February Revolution : *Lloyd Best Part 2; No. 15; pages 307- 308*

- <http://www.moe.gov.tt/iciu.html>

Images and Media

The paper makes use of images taken from :

- <http://www.tntmirror.com/2012/01/08/josiah-the-miracle-boy>
- Photography by Gregory Thompson-
 - 1) Fig. G Picture of La Horquetta South Primary School.
 - 2) Fig. J Picture of Arima West Gov't Primary School.
 - 3) Fig. L Picture of Arima Boys' R.C. Primary School.
 - 4) Fig. M Picture of Arima New Gov't Primary School.
 - 5) Fig. N Picture of Arima New Gov't Primary School.

CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

From our research, prior to 1960, it was clear that the churches had possession and authority over the majority of schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago. They also bore the full burden of all costs related to building construction. In 1960, however, the government made an agreement with the religious organisations, the Concordat, to partner with the religious bodies by providing funding for the salaries of teachers and the maintenance and expansion of school buildings. This marked the beginning of massive government spending on primary school buildings and facilities development.

¹ Article 4 of the CONCORDAT provides for the rights of the Church to have teachers of its own faith. It stipulates; "A teacher shall not be appointed to a school if the Denominational Board objects to such an appointment on moral or religious grounds." The CONCORDAT introduced greater financing by the State; all teachers are now paid by the Ministry of Education, and renovations, repairs and rebuilding are financed by the State at a ratio of 75 per cent to 25 per cent at primary schools and 66.75 per cent to 33.5 per cent at secondary schools, the greater percentage being the input of the Ministry of Education. The National Curriculum is used in every school and national testing is prescribed by the Ministry.

¹ <http://www.contact-tt.com/index.cfm?Content=218>

REFORMATION OF EDUCATION IN THE 1960'S

The concordat gave way to the government implementing policies that would lead to the improvement of primary school buildings and facilities. Fig. B highlights the improvements that were made to the facilities and buildings of schools which were denominationally based. A number of new government primary schools were also built in accordance to the objectives set by the government.

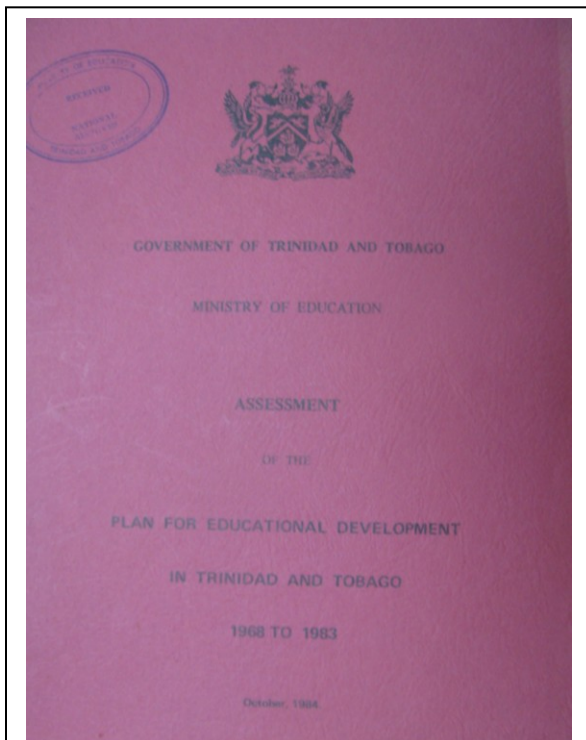


Fig. A shows the cover of the Assessment Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago 1968 - 1983

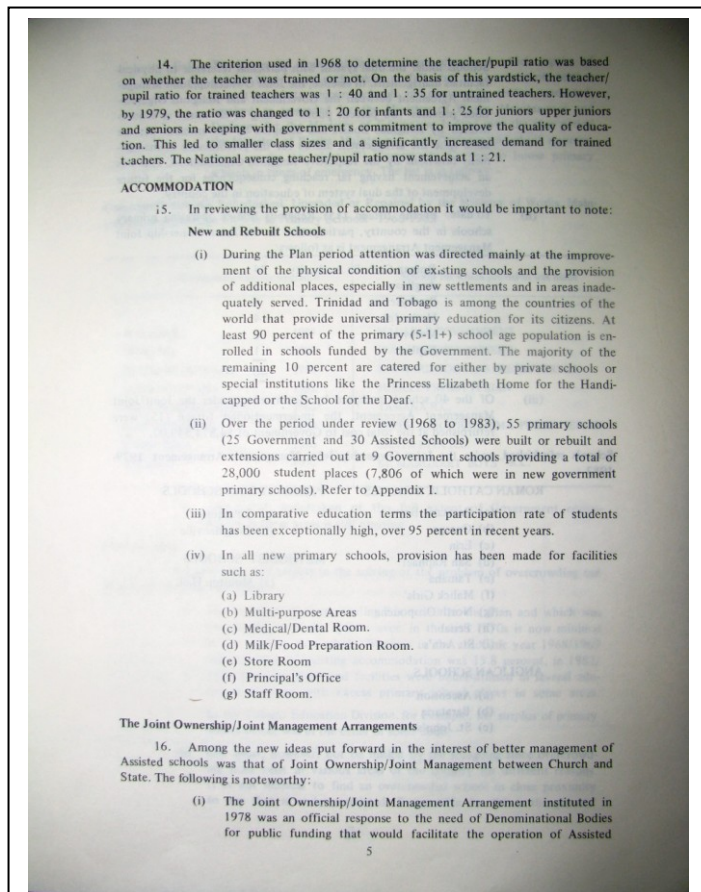


Fig. B shows an excerpt from the Assessment Plan for Educational Development in Trinidad and Tobago 1968 – 1983.

The improvements above were done in accordance with the Education Act formulated in 1966.

The aim of this act was ²‘to make better provision for the promotion of education in Trinidad and Tobago.

General purposes of Act. 3. The powers conferred on the Minister by this Act shall be exercised so as to ensure-

- (a) the promotion of the education of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the establishment of institutions devoted to that purpose by means of which he shall thereby contribute towards the development of the human resources, physical, mental, moral and spiritual of the community;
- (b) the establishment of a system of education designed to provide adequately for the planning and development of an educational service related to the changing needs of the community;
- (c) the effective execution of the education policy of the Government.’

REFORMATION CONTINUES IN THE 1980’S

Ministry of Education drafted educational plan (1985-1990) continued to showcase the government’s commitment to the improvement educational system.

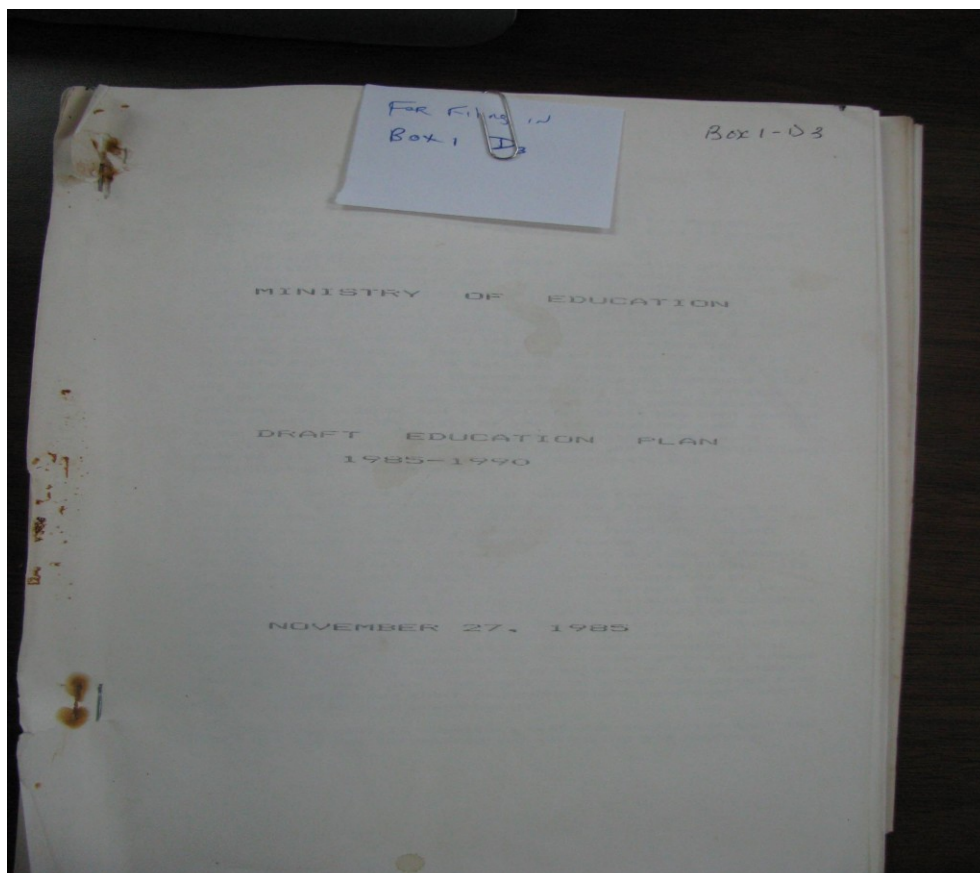


Fig. C Ministry of Ed. drafted educational plan (1985-1990)

The Ministry invited stakeholders to share their views in an effort to reform an educational system much in need of repair as seen in Fig. D below.

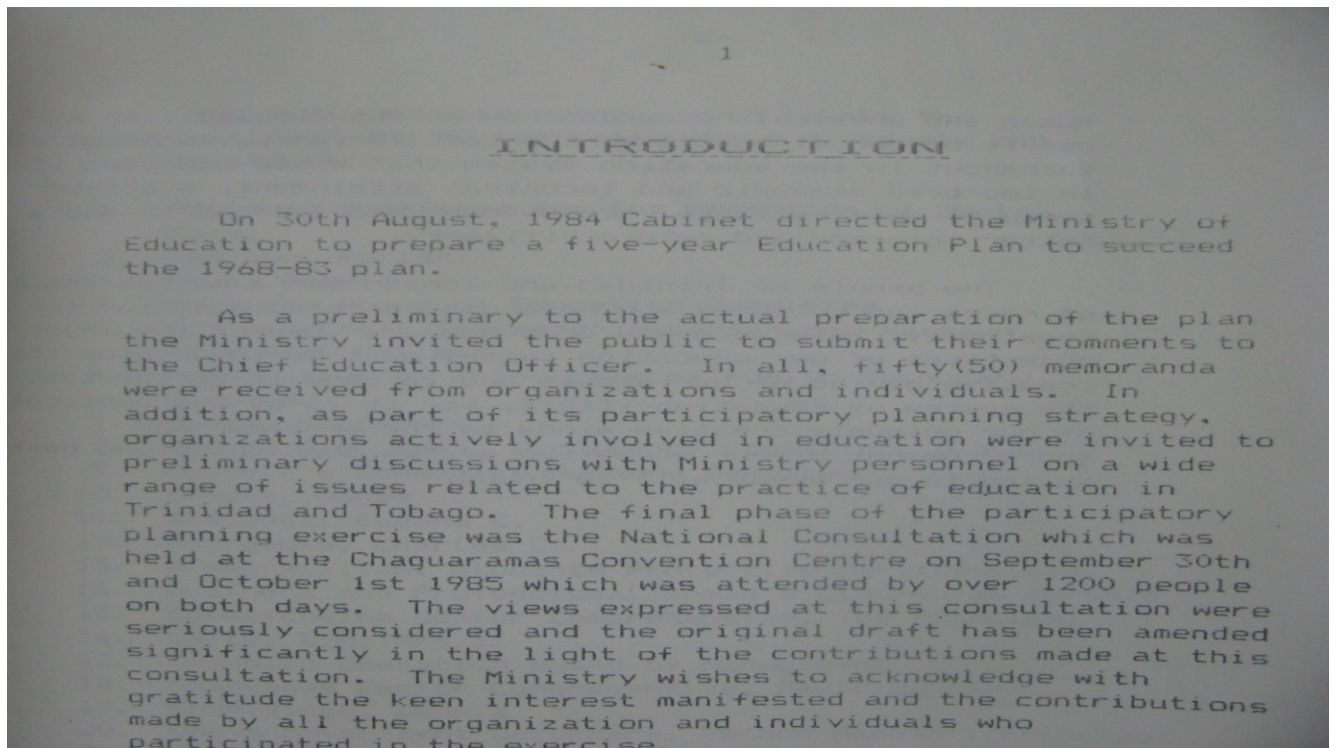


Fig. D Ministry of Ed. drafted educational plan(1985-1990) – Page 1: ‘The Introduction’.

A GROWING POPULATION DEMANDS CHANGE

The National Consultations on education during this 1980's period resulted in serious concerns about the growing population.

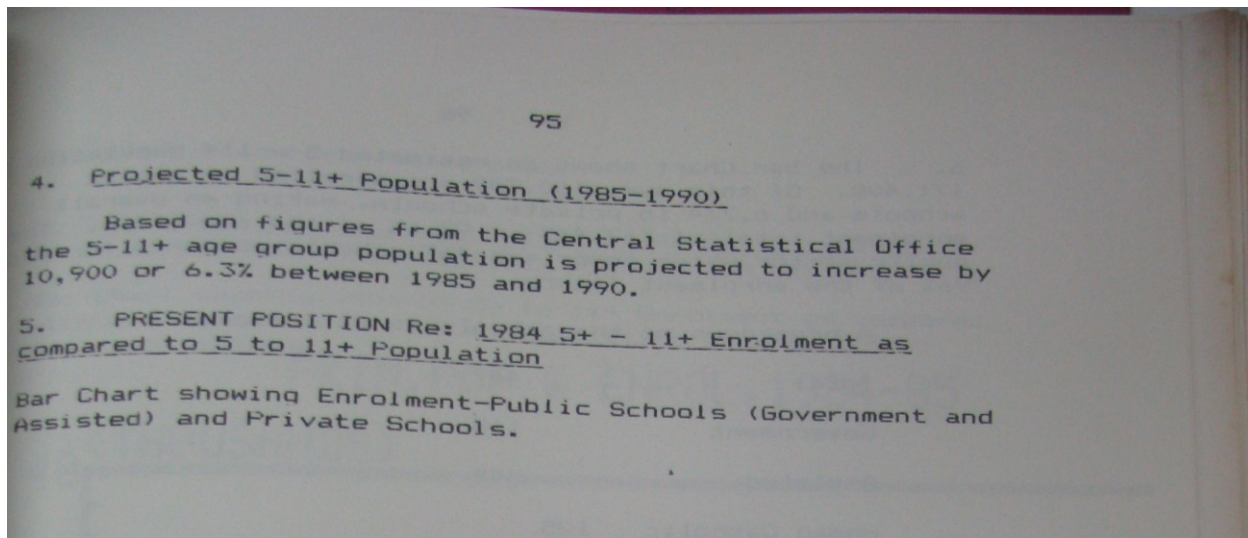


Fig. E Ministry of Ed. drafted educational plan(1985-1990) – Page 95

The primary education system, which had languished during the 1960s and 1970s due to limited capital and maintenance inputs, began to receive increasing attention during the 1980s due to the country's growing population. The Ministry of Education drafted education plan (1985-1990) stated on page 99- section 10, problems of school provision at the primary level which were perhaps most noticeable in areas of rapid population growth, such as in government-sponsored housing estates in places like La Horquetta and Maloney, or in areas of heavy squatter influx such as Enterprise and Montrose. Here, planned and unplanned housing sprang up with little attention from the government to the provision of necessary social amenities such as schools.

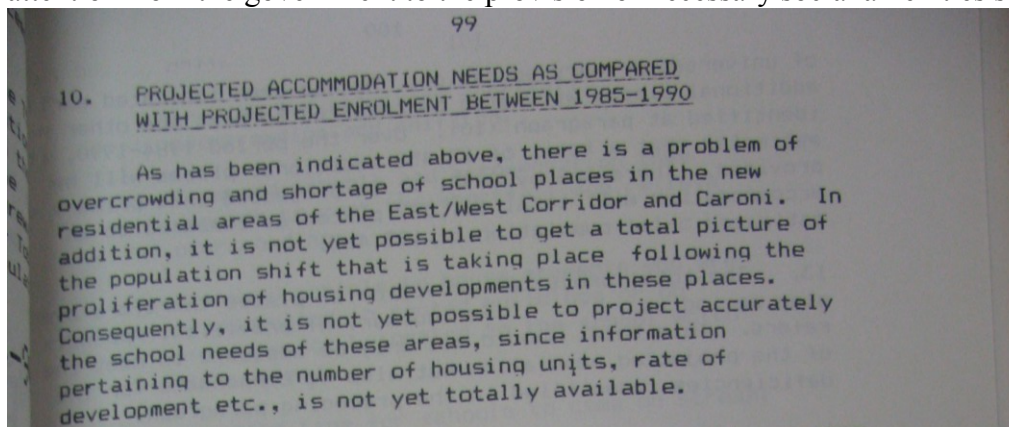


Fig. F Ministry of Ed. drafted educational plan(1985-1990)- page 99

Today we see schools such as La Horquetta South Gov't Primary, built in the government-sponsored housing estates having a capacity of 720 pupils.



Fig. G shows a picture of La Horquetta South Primary School.

MAKING WAY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS STUDENTS

³**In 1982**, the Advisory Committee on Special Education was appointed. The Advisory Committee comprised representatives of the non-governmental organizations involved in the education of students with special educational needs and Ministries of government that were involved in the provision of funds for the administration of these schools.

In 1984, the Report of a National Survey of Handicapped Children and Youth in Trinidad and Tobago was made public. This Survey was the result of a Project in Special Education and Rehabilitation of the handicapped that was undertaken by the joint efforts of the organization of American States and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Survey identified the estimated prevalence of children with special needs aged 3 – 16 years as being 16.1% of the population. Following the Survey, the Special Education Unit identified many areas as being of major concern. Two concerns are highlighted below as being significant for this research -:

- 1) The integration of students with handicapping conditions into regular schools.
- 2) The integration of students with special educational needs at both primary and secondary schools.’

BROADER SOCIAL AND SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT

The Political Landscape

The People's National Movement (PNM) was in government, led by Dr. Eric Eustace Williams. This government vigorously pursued an election campaign focusing mainly on universal secondary education. ⁴It adopted education, especially at the secondary school level, as a major plank in its political platform. In 1964, the government invited a UNESCO Educational Planning Mission to the country, and in its report the Mission outlined a scheme for educational development. One of the proposals in the Mission's report was to establish a small, but well-trained planning unit within the Ministry of Education and Culture to ensure relevant and balanced educational advance.

Economic Growth of Trinidad and Tobago

During the mid 1970's, Trinidad and Tobago experienced what is commonly called the 'oil boom' thus facilitating large-scale expansion in the building of schools.

⁵ Unlike other Caribbean nations, Trinidad and Tobago benefited immensely from the energy crisis of the 1970s. The oil boom of the 1970s flooded the national treasury, cut the unemployment rate in half, created large balance of payments surpluses, and stimulated the economy at large. Nonetheless, it also devastated the agriculture sector, which declined 25 percent because of the resulting shortages of labourers, who migrated to west coast cities for higher wages. Although the boom was reversed in the early 1980s, Trinidad and Tobago's accumulated wealth permitted it to weather the impact of the international recession better than most developing countries and avoid the debt crisis that confronted its neighbours. Although some charges of government waste and corruption were voiced during the 1970s and 1980s, sufficient discipline in public finance prevailed to allow the country to elude the fiscal crisis that confronted other oil-exporting, developing nations such as Mexico, Venezuela, and Nigeria.

In the late 1980s, Trinidad and Tobago displayed a mixed economy that allowed for a level of government involvement second only to that in Cuba among the countries of the Western Hemisphere. The large role in the economy of subsidies, transfers, and joint ventures between

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<http://www.educoas.org/Portal/bdigital/contenido/interamer/BkIACD/Interamer/Interamerhtml/Alleynehtml/AllCh6.htm>

⁵ http://www.photius.com/countries/trinidad_and_tobago/economy/overview.html

the government and the private sector created an intertwining of the public and private sectors that often blurred distinctions between them. During the 1970s, the government purchased a share in over fifty major companies in banking, insurance, agriculture, utilities, and manufacturing. As a consequence, the government also became the largest single employer in the country. Although Trinidad and Tobago was a country where capitalism generally flourished, free enterprise, especially the foreign sector, was highly regulated by the government.'

Black Power Movement in the 1970's

⁶In February 1970 the Black Power movement in Trinidad exploded as thousands of young people took to the streets in massive demonstrations that rocked the island. The government responded by arresting activists and ultimately declaring a state of emergency. At the same time a group of young army officers, sympathetic to the Black Power movement, mutinied. Prime Minister Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) government emerged from the uprising, severely shaken but still with a firm grip on powers. Women played an active role in the demonstrations and within the activist groups that were a part of the movement, but scholars and observers generally have failed to document their participation

"The February Revolution" in Trinidad and Tobago, 1970.

⁷Let us begin at the end as it were, and take the story from February the 26th, when 200 students and friends from the University of the West Indies-mainly students embarked on what had become a routine political activity. They went into Port of Spain to hold a solidarity march with the students involved in the crisis at the University of Sir George Williams in Montreal. And they paraded around the town. They assembled on South Quay (I think it was), went to the Canadian Embassy in the Furness Withy building or somewhere about (I was out of the country at that time, I didn't actually see it); and they went up town, up Henry Street, across Park Street to the Royal Bank of Canada, back down in town to the main branch. They milled around denouncing the regime, denouncing Canadian imperialism and so on, and some of them decided to take a rest in the Cathedral on Independence Square. And that was like a match in a tinder box. The entire thing exploded. But not immediately; it took a few days.

It took, first of all, the scuffle that ensued with the police and then the arrest on the next day of 12 chaps for assembling in a place of worship and for other charges for which purpose the Attorney General reactivated a piece of legislation which, significantly, had been passed in days just after emancipation to control the Queen's ex slaves. And the country took note of that. The issue of the church and the intervention in the Cathedral, of course, ripped aside a lot of the veils with which the society had been hiding its past and disguising the old order; it introduced an element of anxiety into the situation.

The next week-that February 26th was a Thursday afternoon-the men who had been arrested were due to be tried. And on the Tuesday afternoon, I think it was, and the leaders of

⁶ www.bridgew.edu/Soas/jiws/fall01/pasley.pdf

⁷ The Aftermath of Sovereignty; The February Revolution : *Lloyd Best Part 2; No. 15; pages 307- 308*

those 200 students determined to have a solidarity march for the men who had been arrested. And lo and behold 200 students were suddenly transformed into 10,000 and the country immediately stood up and took notice. And Geddes Granger, the leader of those 200 students and of the National Joint Action Committee which had organised the thing, a man of a certain platform flair, decided to take the movement into Shanty Town. And that is exactly what he did. They began, of course, with only a few hundred and the thing that astounded the country is that those 200 became 10,000 in a matter of minutes, as they marched to the outskirts of the city. And that, Sisters and Brothers, introduced an altogether new chapter into the history of Trinidad and Tobago and the West Indies, though some of us did not know that for another week and a half or so.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Upon taking a comparative study of policy documents from 1960-1990 and today's policy documents, we were able to identify some similarities. There were considerations made for the physically challenged.

Today we see schools constructed with ramps for wheelchair access and special diagnostic testing rooms. Figure H below also shows a picture of Josiah Arthur, a young handicapped boy who has been part of the regular school system.



Fig. H 'He does not have any fingers and feet, but seven-year-old Josiah Arthur got an A grade with 90 percent in his last end-of-term examinations at Sangre Grande Government School.' Picture taken from TnTMirror 2012.

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS

Consideration was made for classroom size- specifically looking at the pupil to teacher ratio and the accepted unit of space per pupil, were measures deliberated upon so as to improve the quality of education being delivered. The general structure of school buildings were therefore altered to cater for not only a growing population but also to facilitate better quality education.

Researchers in this project visited schools in the borough of Arima to gain information on physical changes that took place during the years covered in this report. Interviews with

principals revealed that most of the primary schools of Arima came into existence in the 1800's – 1900's. Schools that experienced extensive changes include Arima Girls' Government, Arima Girls' R.C. and Arima West Government. These schools moved from wooden structures in dusty yards to modern concrete buildings consisting of 2-3 storeys high. Information on some of the rooms that form part of the extensions as collected on these schools' documented history has been placed in the table below.

Extensively Renovated Schools of Arima

Name of school	Arima Girls' Gov't	Arima West Gov't	Arima Girls' R.C.
Science Room		*	*
Computer Room	*	*	*
Art Room		*	
Audio Visual Room	*	*	
Teacher Resource	*		
Library	*	*	*
Activity Room	*		
Diagnostic Room		*	*
Prayer Room			*
Auditorium		*	
Pan Room		*	

'Before' and 'After' Pictures of Schools in Arima.

Arima West Government

Before



Fig. I Picture taken in 1983 from the school's picture collection.

After



Fig. J Photographed by G. Thompson.

Arima Boys' R.C.

Before



Fig. K Picture of school painting photographed by G. Thompson

After



Fig. L Photographed by G. Thompson

Arima New Government

Before



Fig. M Photographed by G. Thompson

After



Fig. N Photographed by G. Thompson

Conclusion

To our surprise, many of the educational policies from the period of 1960-1990 relating to the improvement of primary school buildings and facilities are quite similar to those of today. Today, we see the government's unwavering focus on developing an improved educational system -The Concordat of the 1960 continues to be in effect; The government remains committed to building and expanding schools to facilitate the growing population; Inclusive education is regarded as an important part of nation building; Equity for all, regardless of race, colour and religion remains a vision of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed we continue to see improvements which seek to provide more facilities to meet the needs of a global village. The vast advancement in technology and the world becoming a place where travel and communication are a lot easier, students are now required to keep pace with such developments. Schools are challenged to provide facilities that prepare students to meet the needs of an ever changing and demanding world.