

1. Estudios sobre la mujer
2. Barbados
3. Universidad y mujer

WOMEN'S STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

A PROGRESS REPORT

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1. BACKGROUND

The University of the West Indies has three campuses on the islands of Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago. It has eight (8) faculties in which teaching and and research are conducted and the Institute of Social and Economic Research, which from its inception, has carried out research into Caribbean problems. The eight faculties are : Arts and General Studies, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Agriculture, Education, Engineering, Law and Medicine.

In 1982, student enrolment in both undergraduate and post-graduate programmes across the three campuses was 9,483. Of the number, 51% were men and 49% were women. Although the number of women at the University of the West Indies now almost equals the number of men, there are few women enrolled in agriculture or engineering.

In 1980, the senior academic and administrative staff numbered 789. Of these, 602 or 77% were West Indians.¹ Men far outnumber women in the academic staff, and in all senior posts.

¹ U.W.I. : Vice Chancellor Reports 1980, 1983

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The population of the territories served by the University of the West Indies is approximately 5 million. The other University in the region is in Guyana. There are also various other types of tertiary level institutions in different CARICOM countries including Teachers' Colleges, Technical Colleges and Polytechnics and Community Colleges.

The University of the West Indies provides tertiary level education for approximately 12% of the students who complete elementary school and five years of secondary education.² This 12% however, represents a small number of the age cohort since only a comparatively small percentage of students complete five years of secondary schooling.

2. WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

Two departments of the University of the West Indies, both in Barbados, support Women's Studies projects. The Institute of Social and Economic Research (I.S.E.R.), under its Deputy Director, Joycelin Massiah, carried out a three-year research project into the lives of Caribbean women between 1979-1982. Through its Women and Development Unit (WAND) the Extra-Mural Department, conducts outreach programmes which also generate data.

² This is roughly calculated using the numbers of candidates entered for CXC and 'O' level examinations in 1982.

In 1982, following a two-day meeting of staff for the three campuses, convened by WAND, a proposal for the introduction of Women's Studies into teaching faculties was formulated and there is now on each campus a group co-ordinated by a campus co-ordinator working towards this goal.

a) Research

It is widely agreed that there is a great need in the region for research related to women. Over the years, individual researchers have carried out investigations into the family and into fertility, and thus have generated relevant data. (Blake: 1975; Clarke: 1957; Cunper: 1958; Powell: 1975; Roberts & Sinclair 1978; Smith: 1956; Smith: 1962)

There are also studies on women and work (Abdelah: 1975; Durant Gonzalez: 1980, 1983; Massiah: 1978, 1982).

However, the first regional study on Women in the Caribbean was the I.S.E.R. 1979-82 project, which generated a wealth of data on women in relation to family, work, education and the law. Male and female perceptions of women and women's roles were also surveyed. The importance of this project lay not only in the data it generated but in six other major achievements. The W.I.C. project brought together a multi-disciplinary team of researchers from across the campuses. It identified short-comings in traditional methods and provided training in the methodologies used to part-time researchers. It disseminated data to policy-makers in government and non government agencies and thus could influence policy-making affecting the lives of women. It identified areas for further research and last but not least, it provided, for

the first time, a forum where women academics of the three campuses could meet to discuss common issues and concerns.

The project highlighted, among many other things, the need for planners to recognise that women head about one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of all households and were in effect the 'breadwinners' for their families. This has implications for existing types of education, employment and wage and salary structures. Data also revealed that there are several types of family structure, that although women were receiving higher levels of education than hitherto the vast majority opted for traditional occupations. A need for a "viable harmonized social law reform structure" was identified. The data also drew attention to women's ability to identify their problems and to seek solutions. Above all, the findings revealed the necessity for examination of sex-role stereotyping, which is accepted by both women and men; and for consciousness-raising education. While in many cases accepting complete responsibility for themselves and their families, women still perceive themselves as inferior to and subordinate to men.

Other research of relevance to our knowledge and understanding of sex differences has been carried out by, for example, Hamilton, in Jamaica.

Studies on the effects of early ^{malnutrition} ~~evaluation~~ carried out in Barbados also have interesting implications for a study of sex differences. Some of the relevant findings from these studies are that "behavioural deficits associated with prior malnutrition were experienced ^{to a greater extent} by boys" and "lags in physical development during the school years are greater

in girls as they approach pubescence (Gallor, Ramsey, Solimano and Lowell 1983). The roles of nature and of nurture in this process need to be examined more carefully.

A problem faced by researchers and teachers is that lack of adequate facilities for documenting and retrieving research findings. It is a common experience to come across research findings relevant to women, by chance personal contact.

Massiah (1981) observes that research related to women is in "an embryonic stage and argues that the most serious constraint lies in the inability of the region to fund its own research. (Massiah 1981: 19) Research must however remain the bedrock of teaching programs.

b) The Extra-Mural Department - Women and Development Unit (WAND)

The Extra-Mural Department of the University of the West Indies as its name implies, organizes out-reach activities. WAND was established at the Cave Hill Campus under Tutor/Co-ordinator, Peggy Antrobus. In addition to its several programmes, WAND has been an important catalyst in the region in relation to women's issues. The main areas of work undertaken by WAND are : Institution Building and Support for Organizations, Training, 'Model-Building', Curriculum Development Work and Communication.

WAND points to its Rose Hall project in the tiny island of St. Vincent, which has become a model for involving women in the development of a rural community. Some of the skills gained in this project were contributed to CANSAVE (Canadian Save the Children Fund) programme in

another country, Grenada, to formulate an income-generating project for mothers of pre-school children.

WAND's training programmes fall into three categories:

- (i) organizational and management skills
- (ii) other technical skills
- (iii) consciousness-raising - awareness-building

One of its most successful workshops was a regional workshop in Innovative Methodologies in Popular Education held in St. Lucia in March 1983, with participants from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Curacao, as well as the English-speaking Caribbean. The participants were an unusual mixture of social scientists, artists and playwrights, teachers and government representatives.

WAND is also involved in ^{the}making of curriculum materials to combat sex-role stereotyping. It co-operates with many regional and non-regional agencies. The Unit raises all its own funds and over the five years of its operation has secured nearly US \$2 million for its projects in the CARICOM region.

It has been building its communication section and among its many publications are - a quarterly Newsletter Woman Speak, developed along thematic lines; a monthly clipping series Woman Struggle and a series of leaflets Issues Concerning Women in Development.

Both I.S.E.R. and WAND have been building library collections related to women's issues and documentation 'centres'.

^{and}
c) Women/Development Studies

In March 1982, on the initiative of WAND, representatives from the three campuses of the University of the West Indies and others met in Barbados to explore the problems and strategies of introducing Women's Studies into the teaching faculties of the University of the West Indies. Since the University of the West Indies is structured on the model of a British University, all courses and programmes have to be approved by a hierarchy of university committees before they can be offered. Despite this it was discovered that several women academics taught their courses from a feminist perspective. This meeting set up a Working Committee on Women's Studies charged with establishing networks on each of the three campuses and with preparing proposals to be submitted to the University of the West Indies.

In the year that followed, groups were set up on each campus. The main activities of these groups have been lecture discussions. Several teachers in different disciplines are now guiding their students to select research topics related to women's studies and meetings have been held with Senior University Administrators.

The group sees its task as the restructuring of knowledge in various disciplines, and to this end its major purpose is to promote activities within the University of the West Indies, designed to broaden departmental and faculty curricula.

/-ed The Working Committee has recommend/an inter-disciplinary programme with the major components of teaching research and outreach. Secondly, in order to benefit from the material generated by the W.I.C.P. and by WAND the regional programme is to be based at Cave Hill within I.S.E.R.

A proposal for funding is now being prepared.

Women staff of the University of the West Indies have been strengthening links among themselves and also with University and other Institutions in N. America and Europe. Our representation at this conference is partly because we wish to forge links with Latin American institutions from whom we have so long been separated by the barrier of language.

We recognize that for our development we need to share ideas and experiences with colleagues from other countries engaged in tasks similar to ours.

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