

# History of womens education history essay



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Over the past twenty years women have made substantial educational progress. The large difference between the education levels of women and men that were evident in the early 1970's have essentially disappeared. Females are more likely than males to attend college after high school and are as likely to graduate with a Masters degree. These gains in educational attainment are due to women's fights for these rights throughout history. These struggles date back to the ancient Greeks, Romans, The Middle Ages, and extend to the Education Amendment Act of 1972 and the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) of 1974 in the United States.

In ancient Rome upper class women received education. They were better educated than lower class women and lower class men. They increased their chance for success in managing money, real estate, business affairs and political interest by practicing reading and writing skills.

Very few children received an education before the early Republic, but after 300 B. C. child education increased. Children seven to eleven from families who could afford it went to a private elementary school called a ludus. It was a room, most of the time, in the back of a store. There was a teacher who taught Latin reading and writing skills, and arithmetic to only twelve students at a time.

At eleven years old, girls either stopped going to school or continued their education at home by their parents or tutors. Most of these girls were getting ready for marriage which usually occurred at fourteen or fifteen years old.

Fathers wanted their daughters to receive an education in order to attract a husband that had a higher societal position. However, other fathers just thought education was the right thing to do.

Musonius Rufus, who was a philosopher and a teacher in the first century A. D., said:

Women have received from the gods the same ability to reason that men have. We men employ reasoning in our relations with others and so far as possible in everything we do, whether it is good or bad, or noble or shameful. Likewise women have the same senses as men, sight, hearing, smell, and all the rest.

The Middle Ages or medieval period, 500 - 1400, began when the great civilizations of Greece and Rome had fallen. In medieval society women's education depended on their socioeconomic class. Women were thought to be inferior to men and were thus treated that way.

Educational opportunities for women were slight. Girls were only allowed to receive basic instruction from their mothers, while boys could go off to be tutored, go to church ran schools, or join a guild or burger school to learn an occupation. Most of the schools that girls attended in the Middle Ages were associated with the convents. Girls of the peasant class were taught good manners and domestic chores within the family. Noble born women acquired their education in palace schools and were expected to learn household chores, music, conversation, and the roles appropriate to the code of chivalry. However, in Frankish Medieval Society women were just as educated as men and many women were just as educated as their husbands

(Ruth Dean and Melissa Thompson). The most educated women in this period were the nuns. They educated girls in singing, reading, and writing. They also taught them domestic chores like cooking and weaving clothing.

Women's education is the greatest reason why women were able to fight for a voice in politics. As more and more females in Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries became educated they were able to fight for higher positions politically. Women were also able to take part in intellectual life as listeners, readers and writers. Although education only took place within the wealthier families with private teachers this was a big step in the right direction for women's rights. The women of the middle ages were the first to appreciate a small amount of the freedom in education that women can enjoy today.

In the 1800's, the time period before the American Civil War, there were women's rights advocates, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony who spoke out for women's educational and political rights. Susan B. Anthony went to a local district school where a teacher declined to teach her long division because she was female and not male. Her father took her out of that school and homeschooled her. He and a teacher educated her and taught her all about women's equality. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, unlike most women of her generation, was formally educated. She went to a co-ed school where she could compete with the opposite sex academically and intellectually. Stanton and Anthony both fought for women's political and social equality. They spoke out against racial and gender inequality and also supported the temperance movement.

Catharine Esther Beecher was a teacher and a great contributor in the development of education for teachers and formal education for women in America. She was tutored at home until she was ten years old. She then was sent to a private school where she was only allowed a limited education. This made her want to learn more, so she taught herself the subjects that weren't offered to her. She wanted to provide the same educational opportunities to other women. Catharine believed women needed a greater education in order to raise their children to be good citizens, to teach Christian values, and to train other women to become teachers. She wrote a lot on the subject of education for women and girls. She stressed intellectual stimulation, moral education, and physical health. In 1823 she opened the Hartford Female Seminary, and taught there until 1831.

She believed that women instead of men should be teachers because they have instinctive qualities that would make them better at it. She felt that women had greater potential if they were educated, and this was the career path that would make them socially useful at a time where opportunities for women were limited. Women are natural teachers because it's just a component of their motherly role. Being a teacher would make women financially independent and help shape future generations.

The Education Amendment Act of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in a public education stating: " No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..." (United States Code Section 20)

Also, the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974 (WEEA), was the changing point in women's education.

Thirty three percent of women twenty five to twenty nine attained a bachelor's degree or higher in 2007, which exceeded that of men in this age range (twenty six percent). Twenty eight percent of women twenty five and older obtained a bachelor's degree or more as of 2007. This

rate was up eleven percentage points from twenty years earlier (United States Census). These statistics were only made possible due to women in history that fought for these rights, or people of previous generations who understood how important it was for women to receive an education.