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WORKING PARTY ON "THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY"

26th - 29th November, 1974

Item 7 of the Agenda:

Continuous training and spells of employment for women

(Note by the Secretariat)

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

1. It seemed appropriate to circulate to Members of the Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy the enclosed document which will be examined at the 10th session of the Governing Body of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation [CERI/CD(74)21 - (19-20 November, 1974)]7.
2. Members of the Working Party might take this paper into account when considering point 7 of the Agenda (28 November) on: Continuous training and spells of employment for women (MS/S/74.3, page 6) for which another document, also prepared for CERI, has already be circulated (MS/S/74.5).

Paris, 9th October, 1974

CERI/CD(74)21

Scale 2

Or. Eng.

GOVERNING BOARD

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY: EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

(Note by the Secretariat)



1. The attached paper has been prepared by the Secretariat as a basis for a first discussion by the Governing Board of some of the main issues posed by the changing role of women in the economy and in society at large. It attempts to highlight some of the educational implications of these changes and their relationship to broader social and economic policy.

2. It is, of course, understood that these issues will be further discussed by the Education Committee and the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee.

3. The paper is submitted to the Governing Board for CONSIDERATION.



I. INTRODUCTION

1. During the decade of the sixties women's rights movements have gained increasing importance in most of the industrial countries. Although the form these movements have taken and the political, social and psychological reactions to them varied between countries, it is today rather evident that this concern reflects the culmination of certain economic and social changes within these countries that have changed the women's role within the family and socially at large, without at the same time offering them enough alternative options to achieve an equal role to men in the world of work. Even if the last decades have been years of an extraordinary increase in women's participation in the labour market, their family responsibilities have continued.

2. It has, consequently, proved very difficult for them to assume full and equal roles in the world of work as long as home roles have remained basically unchanged. It is, therefore, not surprising that women's growing presence outside the home raises some very basic questions about the structure of society about the hierarchy and organisation of work and about responsibilities within the family. This being the case, changing attitudes and policies about women toward work, family and society in general is today a major issue of common concern to most OECD Member countries. It should be noted at the outset that the purpose of this paper is not to provide a full analysis of this complex issue, but rather an attempt to elaborate some of the educational implications of the issue.

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II. ROLE PREJUDICE AND SEX DISCRIMINATION

3. Before going into the educational implications of the women's issue it is necessary to mention some of the crucial problems related to role prejudice and employment discrimination between the sexes. It is more and more being recognised that discrimination within the world of work and education is only a special case of a much longer process of role learning and role acceptance throughout the individual's whole life cycle. This means that the images of possible and actual roles for men and women are learned in the long process of socialisation. Consequently, the obvious fact of the genetic division of the human race into men and women qualifies in most societies as the major form both of discrimination in the existing world of work and of role prejudice. Professor Kenneth E. Boulding* has expressed this phenomenon and its economic and social consequences in the following way: "The very social visibility of the distinction between the sexes makes it a prime candidate

* Combatting Role Prejudice and Sex Discrimination: Findings of the American Economic Association Committee on the Status of Women in the Economy. The American Economic Review, December 1973.

for role prejudice, which creates a huge reservoir of false knowledge, false education and false learning-process. All are costly to society in exactly the same sense that an unknown and unutilised natural resource is costly in the sense of opportunity foregone. We can, oddly enough, think of role prejudice as a large natural resource which can be mined by the development of true knowledge and better learning processes to the benefit of the whole society."

4. The existence of such role prejudice in every country has, therefore, limited men as well as women to certain roles and life patterns. It has been pointed out, consequently, that the goal of equality between the sexes in status and treatment implies changes in men's conditions as well as in women's. As to women these changes would include greater opportunities for paid employment and education and training. In the case of men, it implies among other things, the possibility of assuming greater responsibility for home and children.

5. If such changes occur on a larger scale in the future it would have enormous consequences for the economy and social life in general. One obvious consequence would be a large increase in the size of the paid labour force. Professor Barbara R. Bergmann* has pointed out that if women had participated in the U.S. labour force to the degree that men of their age did in 1970, the labour force would have been 30 per cent larger. Such a rapid growth of the labour force would, of course, have created great problems of adaptation for the economy and would also, according to common economic theories, have created downward pressures on wage rates. However, the increased number of women entering the labour market and the problem this poses in terms of available jobs has also to be balanced against a foreseen trend in many industrialised countries of a fall in the number of hours worked.**

6. If the role of women in the economy, or perhaps more accurately, in society is perceived in this perspective, i.e. in relation to the role of men in the economy and society, then the application of policies for equality between the sexes have to be geared towards the creation of practical opportunities for both men and women to participate in active parenthood and gainful employment.

* The Economics of Women's Liberation: Why don't women have equal job opportunities? What would the economy look like if they had? in: Challenge, May/June 1973.

** G. Roustang: "Problèmes du Travail", in Problèmes Economiques, 8 mai 1974.

7. While such changes in the direction of greater interchangeability of male and female roles is increasing it is still a rather marginal phenomenon in most countries. But the question must be posed whether it is possible to combat role prejudices and women's unequal status in society without at the same time envisaging changes in the men's role. However, the resistance to such changes on a large scale is solid in our society and a social stratification based on sexes seems on the whole to contain a rather weak internal dynamic for change. Therefore, the problem of designing practical measures to achieve equality for women both in the traditional way (i.e. equal status with men in society) and the more utopian way (i.e. equal status with men but a greater interchange of male and female roles)* is much more difficult than achieving ideological commitments. However, even if its pace is slow and its ultimate results are difficult to foresee - everything points towards a much greater and active participation of women in the economy and the labour market. Consequently, the importance of employment and educational policies becomes paramount.

III. THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

8. During the postwar period and in particular the last decade, a major change has taken place in the attitude of women to paid employment. The increase in the rates of female participation is striking in almost all industrial countries as shown below:

Table 1: The Growth in Women's Labour Force Participation - 1950-1972

<u>Country</u>	Working women ⁺ as % of all women					
	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%
Australia	1954	26.3	1961	28.9	1971	37.1
Belgium	1950	24.0	1960	23.2	1971	26.1
Canada	1950	23.2	1960	27.9	1972	37.1
Denmark	1967	49.1	1972	53.5
Finland	1960	48.4	1970	48.1
France	1954	38.4	1962	36.2	1973	38.1
Japan	1955	56.7	1960	54.5	1970	49.9
Sweden	1950	33.6	1965	48.7	1972	54.9
United States	1950	33.9	1960	37.8	1972	43.8

+ Includes unpaid family helpers working 15 hours per week or more.

Sources: National reports: International Labour Office, 1971 Year Book of Labour Statistics

* A further description of different equality models for women's emancipation can be found in: "The Year Book of Social Policy in Britain 1973", pages 16-118.

9. This upward trend in participation rates is notable for married women, particularly for two groups of married women: those in the prime child-bearing years who are increasingly remaining in the labour force, recording fewer and shorter interruptions at the birth of children; and those in middle age with grown children who have been returning to the job market in ever more impressive proportions. The rising participation rates of young married women is particularly significant in that it reflects the fact that, contrary to common belief, a sizeable and growing number of women are developing a highly stable attachment to the work force.*

10. Yet, despite this clear trend of increasing female labour force participation -- suggestive that women may soon constitute half of the working population in the industrial countries, participating in equal numbers with men, their actual experience in the labour market is notably different from that of men. The pattern of dissimilar and essentially unequal experience is made up of several factors. Most significant are:

1. The segregation of jobs between the sexes

11. In terms of the sex distribution of employment, the lines of segregation are clearly drawn, and this is the case both between and within occupational sectors. Although women are found in almost all industrial and occupational sectors, they tend to be concentrated in particular fields and job categories -- and in those fields there are few men. Conversely, most men work in occupations with a small proportion of women. As can be seen in Table 2, women predominate in the white collar and service industries. They are the secretaries, sales clerks, nurses and primary school teachers. Those women who do work in the industrial sector as manual workers constitute substantial majorities in textiles and the garment industry. They are noticeably absent from the steel industry, mining and construction. Although there are recent examples in some countries of significant increases in the proportion of women in less typically "female" jobs, such as busdriver, telephone lineman and auto mechanic, the essential structure of occupational segregation has changed little over the past decades.

12. The pattern of sex segregation within occupations is equally clear and seemingly equally intractable. Equally striking are the differences in male-female distribution within the broad occupational categories. A brief survey of the kinds of jobs held by men and women within an industry or occupational sector reveals a recurring pattern of men in the top jobs and women making up the lower ranks. Even in those fields where women

* The widely accepted male-female differential in turnover and absenteeism has in the past been cited by employers as an important argument against hiring women for high-skill and supervisory jobs. But this pattern appears to be changing and the idea that women do not have continuous careers and will automatically quit work upon marriage or childbirth is clearly an outdated one. (See: M. Darling, "Creating Choices for Women: Recurrent Education and Equal Opportunity", CERI/OECD, 1973).

Table 2: Proportion of Women in Different Occupational Categories
(Women as a % of all persons in category)

Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Women as % of total
Belgium (1961)	42.2	8.3	51.5	33.9	17.5	4.5	17.8	15.9	64.3	27.0
Denmark (1965)	50.8	14.4	42.7	62.9	18.3	9.5	26.9	17.0	77.6	38.4
Finland (1970)	-	4.5	63.3	62.2	-	23.0	15.6	33.2	63.1	-
France (1968)	20.1	12.8	57.8	60.8	14.0	12.0	20.4	37.9	79.1	34.9
Sweden (1973)	45.9	10.1	47.5	78.8	-	-	15.2	22.2	79.1	40.9

Source: International Labour Office, 1971 Year Book of Labour Statistics, National Reports on "The Role of Women in the Economy" (MO(73)13/..)

1. Professional and technical
2. Managerial and administrative
3. Sales workers, commerce
4. Clerical, office workers
5. Craftsmen, artisans
6. Operatives, transport
7. Manual workers
8. Agricultural workers
9. Personal services, recreation



predominate, they are more likely to be the production workers while men tend to make up the sales and distribution staffs and to occupy supervisory and managerial positions.

13. An even more serious aspect of employment segregation is the fact that it appears to be self-reinforcing. The occupational categories given over to women involve jobs that are both low-paying and without advancement opportunities - dead-end jobs where "experience" has little to do with upward mobility. In occupations in which men predominate, the situation is quite different and years spent on the job in gaining experience generally bring raises in pay and promotions. In short, by confining women to jobs which provide little or no training, and in which experience does not contribute to the employee's ability to undertake more challenging tasks, segregation raises the probability that "once a clerk, always a clerk".

14. Nor has this pattern changed appreciably with the recent increase in the numbers of women who are entering or re-entering the labour market. The expansion in job opportunities for women has occurred primarily in the service sector.* The fields these women are entering are those already dominated by women, jobs often requiring little education and offering few training or advancement possibilities. As B.N. Seear concluded in her study of women re-entrants:

".....it is plain that opportunities for re-entry women are, in the main, restricted to the traditional women's professions of teaching, nursing and social work; to work in offices and shops, in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs in manufacturing industry and in service occupations. The limitations which in all countries affect the employment of women generally irrespective of age or marital status, are made more acute by the special problems of older women who have been absent from the labour market for a number of years. Under these conditions, many women fail to obtain the level of work of which they are capable, to their own and the community's considerable impoverishment."**

* See Table 3

** B.N. Seear, "Re-entry of Women to the Labour Market after an interruption in employment", Paris, OECD, 1971, pp.17.

Table 3: Proportion of Female Labour Force Employed in the Industrial and Service Sectors, 1960-1972

Country	Industrial Sector					Service Sector				
	Year	%	Year	%	+ or -	Year	%	Year	%	+ or -
Denmark	1965	23.8	1970	22.3	- 1.5	1965	68.8	1970	69.7	+ .9
Finland	1960	14.7	1970	14.3	- .4	1960	53.6	1970	59.8	+ 6.2
France	1960	25.6	1968	25.9	+ .3	1960	49.4	1968	60.4	+ 11.0
Germany	1960	34.9	1968	32.0	- 2.9	1960	44.3	1968	50.9	+ 6.6
Sweden	1960	25.2	1971	16.3	- 8.9	1960	64.7	1971	79.5	+ 14.8

Sources: Office Statistique des Communauté Européennes (OSCE), as reproduced in Evelyne Sullerot, l'Emploi des Femmes et ses problèmes dans les Etats Membres de la Communauté Européenne, (1970), p.180

National Reports on "The Role of Women in the Economy"
(MO(73)13/...)



2. The substantial disparity between male and female unemployment

15. Another dimension of women's position in the labour market is their generally higher level of unemployment vis-à-vis men. Women are relatively concentrated in the service sector, which as a rule is less subject to fluctuations in output and employment. But this factor tends to be more than offset by the higher rates of female turnover and factors bearing on the less advantageous position of women in the labour market - their lesser educational qualifications and work experience and especially their lack of seniority. The rapid increase which has taken place in female labour force participation has intensified these difficulties and in most European countries the differential in unemployment rates between men and women has widened in recent years. This rise in unemployment rates for women has been attributed to the "overcrowding" in female occupations, this line of reasoning holding that the segregation of women into "women's" jobs is largely responsible for the fact that the rise in job openings has not kept pace with the growth in the female labour force.

3. The persistence of wide sex differentials in earnings

16. As one might expect from the disparities in employment experience, the average earnings of women in all countries are substantially lower than those of men. A portion of the gap is associated with "objective" differences between men and women in hours of work, education and years of experience. The already mentioned differences in the occupational composition of employment is another important factor. Of particular note is the two-way relationship between women's lower earnings and their weaker attachment to the labour force. The greater percentage of women working on a part-time basis, the greater rate of female movement into and out of the labour force, the higher rate of female absenteeism (principally for married women with children), and the generally shorter period of women's accumulated work experience - all these may well be both the cause and effect of lower earnings and low job status. For as French, Swedish and Danish data suggest, rates of turnover and absenteeism - key employer screening devices in hiring and promotion - appear to be more highly correlated with job status and pay level than with sex. Those individuals with higher job status, level of responsibility, regardless of sex, record fewer absences and lower turnover rates.* Women generally experience both lower status and lower pay. In the end, all factors combine to give rise to very considerable differences in total earnings. In most European countries, though the gap has been decreasing, female earnings from regular employment are still only about two-thirds to three-fourths those of men.

* The Role of Women in the Economy, OECD, MS/S/73.3

17. The extent and universality of these disparities in men's and women's experience in the labour market and the unequal benefits accruing to men and women from their labour market activity are highly suggestive of unequal chances for women entering the labour market. Two variables seem to be at the root of these differences: first, the number of years spent in the labour force; and second, the educational qualifications brought to the job. Although women have had substantially shorter and less continuous work careers than men, the trend in female participation is clearly changing very rapidly in some countries. Women are remaining as permanent members of the labour force for a large number of years and this trend appears likely to continue. One can foresee that women's lifetime work experience will look increasingly more similar to that of men.

18. In education, however, rapid change is far less evident. The likelihood of the disparities in labour market experience which grow out of educational differences diminishing significantly at any near date seems remote. Yet education is central: to the degree that women receive less qualifying initial education and less vocational training as adults, their occupational opportunities and advancement possibilities will be less than those enjoyed by men. At the same time, to the degree the pattern of women's labour force participation is changing and becoming more permanent and continuous, then the more intolerable to society and to women themselves will their unequal employment opportunities become. The situation of unequal opportunity is especially relevant to lower class women who, given their often poor educational backgrounds, have little choice in the kinds of jobs they will take if they enter the labour market. Moreover, poorly paid unskilled work is likely to be far less attractive to these women than continued work in the home: the available work may be unappealing, and the costs involved in making alternative arrangements for the care of children may significantly reduce the economic contribution of her working. The question then is how to make wider choices a possibility for these women - more specifically, how both youth and adult education opportunities can expand choices for women in employment. Obviously one key element appears to be education as a means to create choices and open up a greater number of meaningful jobs to those in the lower socio-economic groups.



IV. WOMEN AND EDUCATION - PATTERNS OF ENROLMENTS AND COURSE CHOICES

Youth Education

19. The fact of being male or female has a special influence on educational and vocational decisions. The differences between men and women in years of schooling and in the nature of that schooling are two manifestations of fundamental importance to the future employment opportunities of both. As the total number of students in secondary and post-secondary education has increased over the last 25 years, so too has the proportion of female students.* In fact, in a number of countries today proportionately more girls than boys stay in school until the higher secondary grade levels. Yet although women have been less likely than men to discontinue their education at low levels, their representation in higher education has been strikingly small. Despite the great increases in the proportion of girls among post-secondary students, their numbers, especially at university, are far below their approximately 50 per cent share of the university aged population, as Tables 6 and 7 document. Beyond the considerable disparities in the level of education attained by men and women, there is a second occupationally significant difference in the educational experience of boys and girls. This is the striking difference in the course of study they pursue.

20. In most countries it is at the secondary level that many important decisions are made that affect the individuals' future educational and career patterns. In most European systems students divide at the secondary level into vocational and theoretical (academic) course streams. In a very few countries education at the secondary level takes place in comprehensive or amalgamated secondary schools which mix students who plan to attend university with those learning a trade; the more prevalent organisational arrangement separates students into different classes and frequently into separate school systems.

21. Characteristic of the vocational school system is the fact that boys and girls pursue very different courses of study and that boys' and girls' course choices follow the traditional sex-typing of occupations. Girls are concentrated in business and commercial courses, in health care and home economics. Boys, on the other hand, form a vast majority of those taking technical, industrial and trade subjects. A similar sex difference is found in the specialisation in course lines followed by students in the academic stream. Here there is a pronounced tendency for girls to be enrolled in letters and arts and language lines. Boys, by contrast, are heavily represented in mathematics and science.

* See Tables 4 and 5

Table 4: Proportion of Girls in Secondary Education
around 1950 and 1965

Country	1950				1965			
	General Academic	Technical and Vocational	Teacher Training	Total	General Academic	Technical and vocational	Teacher Training	Total
Belgium (a)	43	54	67	48	46	47	67	48
Norway	-	34(d)	-	-	48	37	-	45
Denmark	50	36	36	-	52	-	43	-
Finland	57	-	53	-	57	43	60	55
France	52	44	62	49	52	-	68	52
Italy	38	21	85	38	45	27	87	43
Netherlands	45	40	-	42	48(c)	43(c)	-	45(c)
Sweden	54	-	65	-	54	49	83	51
Germany	45	42	-	43	45	47	-	46

(a) 1952 and 1964

(b) approximate

(c) 1964

(d) 1952

Sources: .. Educational Expansion in OECD countries since 1950,
(Background Report no.1.), OECD 1970, p.35.

.. National Reports



Table 5: Proportion of Girls in Higher Education around 1950, 1965 and 1972

Country	around 1950		around 1965		around 1971	
	Year	Proportion	Year	Proportion	Year	Proportion
Netherlands	1950	20	1965	25		
Belgium	1952	26	1966	25(a)	1971	30(a)
Denmark	1950	24	1965	35	-	-
Finland	1952	39	1965	48	1971	47.2
France	1955	32	1965	39	1971	43.4
Italy	1950	25	1964	32	-	-
Sweden	1951	29	1962	38	1970	37.3(a)
					1972	29.6
Germany	1950	20(b)	1965	20.6(a)	1970	31(a)
Norway	-	-	1965	24(a)	1970	27.4(a)
United Kingdom	-	-	1965	26.4(a)	1970	29(a)

(a) university only

(b) excluding engineering schools

Sources: .. Educational Expansion in OECD countries since 1950
(Background Report no.1.), OECD 1970, p.35.

.. National Reports

.. Quantitative Trends in Post-Secondary Education
1960-1970, OECD, ED(73)7, 1973. Table 11.

Table 6: Proportion (%) of Women and Men Continuing To Higher Education, 1965

Country	All Institutions		University		Completing University	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
Norway	-	-	11.1	4.6	-	-
Belgium	25.7	17.7	13.3	5.9	7.5	2.3
Denmark	18.8	12.0	13.7	6.4	4.5	0.9
Finland	-	-	10.0	10.2	-	-
France	-	-	12.2	11.0	-	4.2
Italy	18.5	11.0	18.1	10.5	4.6	2.6
Sweden	16.0	14.3	14.3	10.6	7.9	4.0
Germany	17.1	5.9	9.3	3.0	-	-
U.K.	14.8	10.6	8.8	3.7	-	-
Netherlands	18.2	7.1	8.5	2.1	4.1	.7

Source: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Tables II-9 and V-3.

Table 7: Rates of Secondary School Completion and Entry into University, 196

Country	women as % of men completing secondary school	women as % of men continuing to university
Norway	80.4	49.8
Belgium	71.9	57.8
Denmark	84.7	66.1
Finland	135.1	73.8
France	101.6	88.4
Italy (a)	74.3	80.2
Sweden	103.6	70.6
Germany	57.3	62.0
U.K.	65.0	65.9
Netherlands	48.8	68.5

Source: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Table III-11

(a) Long secondary education and all institutions of higher education.

22. The patterns of course choices established at younger ages repeats itself in the subjects taken by women and men at various institutions of higher education. In the universities of every country, women are heavily represented in languages, letters and the arts - the more general cultural fields. They are poorly represented in disciplines with a strong vocational emphasis, with the exception of education and health care. Science and mathematics remain the almost exclusive preserve of men.

23. Similarly differentiated course choices are found in course enrolments at other post-secondary schools, which include university technical institutes, two-year colleges and community colleges. Women once again tend to predominate in fields considered preparatory for traditional "women's" jobs, such as nursing, nursery and primary school teaching, social welfare, commercial courses and nutrition. They are very rarely found in such technical and mechanical fields as aeronautics, electricity and electronics, and chemicals.

Recurrent and Adult Education

24. The deficiencies of initial education are not as much the dead end today as they used to be for women and men, either in seeking first jobs or promotions to higher positions. Because of accelerating technological change, learning more than ever before is becoming regarded in many societies as a continuing process for all individuals. Vocational training and basic education programmes, previously oriented primarily towards new school leavers, are being redefined to mesh with lifelong learning strategies. In many countries, consequently, women who have been housewives and who now seek further education or gainful employment, and women and men who aspire to better paying jobs - in addition to both women and men whose jobs have been altered or eliminated by technological advances - are taking advantage of a second chance for education.

25. Present education programmes for adults are essentially of three types: (i) the general interest continuing education courses which include academic offerings in language, the arts and literature and avocational courses in photography, art and other "hobby" areas; (ii) basic education courses in language and mathematics for those whose initial education was incomplete; and (iii) vocational training courses which are frequently organised by Labour Ministries, trade unions and/or employers. From the point of view of equalising opportunities for women in education and employment, it is the basic and vocational education offerings which are of most importance



26. Although there is some variation in enrolment patterns within and between countries in adult education offerings, a differentiated pattern of participation along sex lines is evident. While women and men record essentially similar experiences in general adult education, almost all vocationally-related training offerings are more frequently taken advantage of by men. Moreover, women tend to enrol for the short technical courses; men predominate in the longer courses.*

27. The reasons for the low representation of women in adult vocational training courses as they are presently organised are many. Lack of motivation, problems of financing, insufficient child-care facilities, legacies of their formal education, are part of the answer. It is the already educationally advantaged woman who can see the value of further education who is more frequently found in such courses. Lower socio-economic status women are far more likely to enter the labour market without training or with a brief course which occasions the least delay between the decision to seek a job and the earning of money. These women do not seek education for general knowledge. Should they be motivated towards education, they want short practical courses clearly related to job possibilities and job advancement. Finally, motivation may be totally non-existent for the least socio-economically advantaged and the lowest educated women, precisely those for whom real choice in employment cannot exist without further education. These women are at home or working part-time in poorly paid positions, often uninformed about alternative employment possibilities and the availability of education and training programmes preparing for them. Programmes which offer equal access alone, without special efforts to overcome low motivation are unlikely to achieve greater equality; those already endowed by wealth and earlier educational attainment seem to be the primary beneficiaries of expanded vocational training courses.

V. SEX ROLE PREJUDICES -- THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

28. These observed patterns in boys' and girls', women's and men's educational enrolments and levels of educational attainment, raise a number of questions for societies in the light of their commitment to equal educational opportunity and, beyond, to equal life chances. The fact that the increase in women's participation in education has taken place through an increased flow of female students to those few fields of study which already have a high proportion of women limits considerably the significance of this increase in overall enrolments. In this way even equal participation rates in education, both of youth and recurrent education, can co-exist with unequal educational and occupational chances.

* See: "The Role of Women in the Economy",
OECD, MS/S/73.3

29. From the point of view of equalising opportunities, then, the question must be asked - Why do girls and women fail to acquire in education both the orientation and skills so essential to advancement in the labour market?

30. One potential explanation to consider is the extent to which discriminatory barriers are set up by various educational institutions and systems which prevent women from reaching higher levels of education and keep them from certain courses of study. It is unquestionably true in some countries that some of the differences in training can be attributed to actual barriers whereby girls have been denied admittance to particular trade schools and higher technical institutes set aside for boys.

31. While such discriminations undoubtedly have played and still play a role in the educational differences between men and women, it cannot fully account for the consistency and universality of differentiation along sex lines. An alternative explanation must be considered: that women's attendance and course choice patterns mainly reflect a "practical" choice by women who, in the nature of things, have been socially conditioned to expect to assume the role of wife and mother - or perhaps of teacher, nurse or secretary before marriage and children - and who have been discouraged from thoughts of a lifelong working career.

32. Upon entering school, children are already aware of differences in sex roles from observing the contrasting activities of their parents in the home as well as from adult expectation about their own behaviour. But the question is less where and how children learn sex role differentiation than how the school experience modifies this learning. The answer, in most countries, is that formal education tends to reinforce these sex-roles learned early in life in both home and society. Although the academic curriculum is basically similar for boys and girls during their primary and pre-secondary years of schooling, sex-differentiated course content and sex-segregated classes frequently begin early in the school career. The two subject areas most universally affected are physical education and offerings in "life skills", which usually include home economics, with sewing and cooking for girls, the shop work, with metals and woodwork for boys. It is easy to see how many traditional attitudes towards sex roles are reinforced when such courses are given on a segregated basis.

33. Common stereotypes of sex roles are reinforced in other ways at school. Even pre-school level books have been shown to begin the stereotyping of female roles, with girl figures less numerous, less independent, less prominent and less imaginatively drawn than boy figures. Sex-typed roles are also presented to children in primary school text books used in the teaching of reading, social studies, mathematics and guidance subjects. The women's roles portrayed in these books - mother and housewife, secretary, school teacher, nurse - provide few challenging models for young girls.

Moreover, they fail to create a sense of community between men and women, at home and at work, as fellow and equal human beings capable of holding many roles, many of them shared and interchangeable. In short, analyses of sex role imagery in school textbooks in a number of countries clearly indicate that a woman's creative and intellectual potential is either underplayed or ignored in the education of children from their earliest years.*

34. For adult women family duties make full-time training difficult, yet many training programmes of the vocational sort are full-time or at hours incompatible with the woman's expected home role. Evening or after-work training courses are often impossible from the woman's point of view. Arrangements such as limited course loads and part-time programmes, flexible scheduling for classes, the location of courses near home and the breaking of courses into smaller individual units are important considerations for the woman.

35. However, even the completion of a continuing vocational course does not always mean an automatic job at the level qualified for; it is often easier, given continuing employer reluctance and/or discrimination or conditions of work, for a woman to find a low level unskilled job than a qualified position -- a situation which some women have experienced after training and which others merely suspect. The time invested in training may appear to some as a waste of effort in such cases, particularly if motivation is low to start with.

36. As a larger proportion of women enrol in vocational training programmes, another problem recurs which was encountered earlier in women's education. The greatest concentration of women continues to be in preparation for jobs traditionally held by women; in all countries women are under-represented in courses in managerial and technical fields. Thus the occupational choices of women are still limited to a traditional, narrow range of sex-typed jobs. In fact, training programmes themselves often mirror and reinforce women's "realism" in course choices, encouraging women to make the choices they already regard as "safe" in leading to employment in positions where women have always found work. While recent inroads have been made by women into training fields almost exclusively male, the status quo with respect to the kinds of occupations women train for has not been altered in any dramatic way in the expansion of continuing education opportunities.

* The literature is extensive on this subject. See Chombert de Lauwe, "Rapports reciproques des images et des statuts de la femme et de l'enfant dans notre société", Bulletin officiel de la Société Française de psycho-prophylaxie obstétricale, no.31, 1967. Gisela Schade, "Recurrent Education for Women", in: Recurrent Education (Papers from the Georgetown University Conference, March 1973), National Institute of Education.



37. What then can be done with the educational system to combat sex role habits? It is obvious that it is not simply a matter of removing obstacles to democratisation of achievement and participation. The need is also for more extensive programmes which take into account the underlying social and psychological dimension of the problem. For example, it is obvious that the present structure of the educational system is far too rigid to correspond to the woman's specific life-cycle with a period of child-bearing between the ages of 20 and 30 years. Consequently, a more flexible system along the lines of recurrent education would meet more adequately with women's life and career patterns. Although there are encouraging signs of change in the work patterns of women and in governmental legislation concerning equal opportunities for women in employment,* progress appears to be much more slow in education. Even in those countries where a conscious effort has been made to break down traditional patterns of sex-typed course choices the result has been modest. Countries which have opened up previously restricted vocational and technical educational opportunities to girls in fields which, by tradition, are for men only, have not been overwhelmed by applicants. In comparison, in some Scandinavian countries where special quotas have been created to attract boys to traditional women's fields, such as pre-school and primary teaching and nursing, the boys seem to take advantage of these possibilities more quickly than the girls who are offered similar chances for training in traditional men's fields.

38. While it is difficult to find sure answers to the fact that changes are so slow in education, one could advance for consideration that male and female sub-cultures are working within the educational system with different strength at different levels of the system. In other words, societies and social institutions as well as individuals, contain elements of two fundamental sub-cultures within them, male and female. Each sub-culture has its own value-system and norms of behaviour associated with it. For instance, the male culture, on the whole, includes strength, independence, competitiveness, rationality, mechanical and computational skills. The female sub-culture is more associated with warmth, dependence, emotional feelings, etc.

39. Most social systems and institutions can be analysed in terms of these two cultures, including the educational system. Although our educational system emphasises "female" values in the early years (where girls almost universally do better than boys in school), in the later years in particular at secondary and post-secondary education, "male" values seem to be more predominant.

* See: "The Role of Women in the Economy",
OECD, MS/S/73.3, pp.91-101.

40. If there is some element of truth in such a broad characterisation of the educational system, then perhaps all efforts at changing attitudes will be very slow as long as the institution within which children and teachers and counsellors operate does not change its philosophical base. What this suggests is that the educational approach must be consciously changed to include both the male and female sub-cultures of all levels of the system.

41. It would also mean that the consciousness of this male and female cultural influence should be brought out into the open in the educational system and challenged in the sense that values traditionally labelled as "masculine" and "feminine" are not inherently sex-linked and the development of the whole human being requires a blending or fusion of the two. Such an acceptance and appreciation of both sets of values within the individual would perhaps provide a base or foundation from which genuine choice in personal life decisions can be made by both girls and boys and men and women.

42. A conclusion to be drawn from this for educational policy-making would be: present rates of enrolments, changes of educational structures and admission rules towards more recurrent education, i.e. instruments making the educational system more democratic and flexible are all important; developments in this field are in progress, and should be further encouraged. Equal importance for combatting sex-role discrimination in education has however to be given to the internal life of the educational institutions themselves. This would, in particular, imply changes in the behaviour of teachers, guidance and counselling personnel and not least, for the people concerned with curricula development and text book and working materials.

