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Manpower and Education

MS/S/74.5

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

(26th-29th November, 1974)

Continuous Training and Spells of Employment for Women

Point 7 of the draft Agenda

1. The attached document was prepared for a small group of experts organised by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD. It will serve as a basis for preparing the guidance on "Recurrent Education" for a Ministerial Meeting foreseen in 1975.
2. This paper is submitted to the Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy as a background paper for discussion of:
  - (a) the situation of the basic educational and vocational level of women, their enrolment pattern and their need for recurrent education and continuous training (quantitative data, practical examples could be described during the meeting);
  - (b) the ways and means for adjusting recurrent educational programmes to the training needs of working women - (content, time arrangements, flexible training schedules, etc.), the analysis of specific national experiments might be appropriate;
  - (c) governmental action and public policies (among others, financing of recurrent education);
  - (d) actions to be taken for improving the accessibility of participation by women in continuous training - (special attention should be given to the section of the attached note pps. 33-37: "What is to be done" and sections IV and V).
3. The Members of the Working Party might wish to consider formulating their own recommendations and comments (illustrated by examples, similar to the Swedish Experience described on p.43), which could be brought to the attention of the Ministerial Meeting in 1975 mentioned above.





CREATING CHOICES FOR WOMEN

RECURRENT EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

INTRODUCTION

I.

Institutions, bodies, education, society, all go on training human beings for the old, long after the new has come; much more when it is only coming. But the true virtue of education is to live together as equals; claiming for themselves not only the right to be treated as equals but to be treated as equals.

MEETING OF GROUP OF EXPERTSON RECURRENT EDUCATION

John Stuart Mill  
The Subjection of Women, 1869

## (Programme Area I - Project 2)

Education is a basic investment. The very complexity and rapidity of the technological and social changes which characterize highly developed industrial societies require a comprehensive understanding of the world as well as specialized skills. In turn, the general knowledge and specific skills each individual acquires in school have a considerable influence on the kind of occupation he or she chooses, and the future life and the future life of the community.

to be held at the Château de la Muette on 24th and 25th June, 1974.

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The importance of education for individual, social and economic advancement is recognized in all societies; in the desire of parents that their children have more opportunities for prolonged education; in the governmental policy commitment to the expansion of public education systems, both primary and post-secondary; and in the tremendous increase in student numbers in many countries. Indeed, education has become the cornerstone of many nations. In both individual and social terms, education has come to symbolize the promise of a better future. In both individual and social terms, education has come to symbolize the promise of a better future. In both individual and social terms, education has come to symbolize the promise of a better future.

CREATING CHOICES FOR WOMEN:RECURRENT EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

This document was prepared by Miss Martha DARLING, of Princeton University, U.S.A., at the request of the Secretariat.

The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the author and, as such, do not necessarily reflect the position of the OECD, or the national authorities concerned.

But the magic of expanding education systems and increased student enrolments in creating equal life chances - even equal opportunities in education - has begun to wear thin. It has become obvious to many that the mere replication of existing educational structures and offerings - the same, only more of it - does not guarantee that equal opportunity is enjoyed by all student-aged members of the population. Indeed, a striking feature of most school systems is the pattern of inequality in



## CREATING CHOICES FOR WOMEN:

## RECURRENT EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

I. INTRODUCTION

Institutions, books, education, society, all go on training human beings for the old, long after the new has come; much more when it is only coming. But the true virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals; claiming for themselves nothing but what they as freely concede to anyone else.

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Education is a basic investment. The very complexity and rapidity of the technological and social changes which characterise highly developed industrial societies require a comprehensive understanding of the world as well as specialised skills. In turn, the general knowledge and specific skills each individual acquires in school have a considerable influence on the kinds of occupations, the potential level of earnings and the future life style he or she can attain.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

The importance of education for individual social and economic advancement is recognised in all societies: in the desires of parents that their children have more opportunities for prolonged education; in the governmental policy commitment of resources to the expansion of public education systems, both secondary and post-secondary, since World War II; and in the tremendous increase in student populations this expansion has allowed. Indeed, education has become the cornerstone of many governmental growth policies. A more highly educated and more highly qualified labour force is seen as the means to achieving a faster growing, more productive economy. In both individual and societal terms, education has come to symbolise the promise of our democratic systems: that with the benefits of education, any child can rise to his or her highest potential and reap the full rewards of political, social and economic life in our industrialised societies: that regardless of ethnic origins, race, sex or social class, every child is assured, by the educational system's promise of equal opportunity, an equal chance in society.

But the magic of expanding education systems and increased student enrollments in granting equal life chances - or even equal opportunities in education - has begun to wear thin. It has become obvious to many that the mere replication of existing educational structures and offerings - the same, only more of it - does not guarantee that equal opportunity is enjoyed by all student-aged members of the population. Indeed, a striking feature of most school systems is the pattern of inequality in





educational participation and achievement between social groups. These disparities between groups are considerable and have not, on the whole, been affected profoundly by the massive educational expansion of the recent past. Student decisions to remain in school to higher levels and to pursue certain courses of study continue to be determined by social background, level of education of parents and peer groups influences - all factors that are strongly socially biased(1).

Thus equal opportunity cannot mean simply that everyone is given the chance to participate, because that participation takes place within a framework of goals and rules established by dominant groups. To achieve true equality, some rules may need changing. For equality of access is not equivalent to and does not necessarily lead to equality of educational opportunity. It requires more: in order to achieve greater equality in school attainments and subsequent life chances, society has to adopt special means to compensate for the deficiencies of the socio-cultural environment - and sometimes of earlier schooling - in which the individual grows up. Equality of educational opportunity in initial education is likely to require alternative attendance options, special programmes and some restructuring of education itself to fit the needs of these students for whom equal access to the increased places in the schools and universities is not working.

Then, too, there are those in the population who do not, by and large, benefit at all from the recent expansion in educational offerings and institutions: those who are beyond school age, who have already left school for work in the labour force or work at home in the care of household and family. The extension of youth education and the devotion of considerable public resources to it have not affected the vast majority of these individuals who are less educated than the new school leavers. This situation has given rise to another type of inequality in educational opportunity and life chances, that of intergenerational educational inequality. Resulting from the recent rapid expansion of educational enrolments, the wide disparity between younger and older generations in terms of the educational level they have attained will exist as long as the average length of years of schooling continues to increase; and its effects will be felt long after this process has come to a halt. This gap between those with less formal education and skills training and those with better training and current skills is a permanent as well as an immediate problem, given the increasingly rapid pace of social and technological change and the consequent more rapid obsolescence of skills. Intergenerational inequality is particularly serious for those older people whose basic education may be lacking, preventing them from even undertaking further training for improving their possibilities in adult life and employment. For these

(1) See Asa Sohlman, Differences in School Achievement and Occupational Opportunities: Explanatory Factors - A Survey Based on European Experience. Background Report No.10, Group Disparities in Educational Participation and Achievement IV, OECD, 1971).



individuals, an institutionalised educational "second chance" may be required to free them to some degree from the constraints of their own socio-economic origin and deficient educational background. For those who did obtain an initial qualifying education, there may still be a need for compensatory or special educational programmes for skills and knowledge updating.

The one group which stands out in its need for such compensatory opportunities - both in youth education and as adults - is that of women. The order of magnitude of the disparities in educational and employment experience between women and men makes it clear that the grant of equal access to education has proved insufficient. Equal educational opportunity along both the intra- and intergenerational dimensions does not exist for most women.

Moreover, this area of unequal opportunity is becoming more central to our concepts of social equality and action more unavoidable due to recent changes of major proportions in women's participation in the labour force. As long as women remained at home, the pressure on societies to make good on their promise of equal employment opportunity for women remained at a low level. But because of changes in their experiences and expectations about their years in the labour force - often brought on by the unexpected reality of working after leaving school and the absence of career plans made in school - women workers are no longer seeing themselves as temporarily employed. This change in self-perception has led to demands for advancement opportunities and higher pay in the labour market. Pressures for equal pay laws and for legislation abolishing overt discrimination in employer policies and practices, which have deprived women of equal conditions of employment, have been one result of this change. And the general, if sometimes grudging, recognition by governments that women are increasingly permanent members of the labour force has resulted in a variety of legislative measures aimed at assuring more equal opportunity in employment.

But equal employment opportunity for women, as for men, depends not only on the guarantee of equal access - of equal conditions and treatment in the job market. The kinds of jobs a person can obtain, along with chances for advancement, still depend largely on education and training, on the qualifications and educational background brought to the labour market. Here women are particularly disadvantaged. At present most women are poorly trained for long-term careers. Their initial education reveals a pattern of vocationally non-qualifying course choices and levels of educational attainment substantially lower than those of men. In addition, there are special problems which face adult women who, after a number of years at home, are entering or re-entering the job market. As techniques change, formerly skilled manual workers are particularly vulnerable to a loss in qualifications while out of the labour force. This is especially evident in view of limited opportunities for non-marginal part-time work which could allow





these women to keep up their skills during the years when their children are young. Even more important, a great percentage of these entry and re-entry women lack qualifying initial education and a vocational orientation as well as recent work experience in the labour market. Following years of no work experience, these poorly educated women will be restricted to low paying unskilled work. Equal life chances for all of these women may require substantial compensatory programmes in both basic education and training for specific vocations, giving them a second opportunity to plan and train for a work career they never before concretely envisaged.

### Recurrent Education

In recent years both intragenerational and intergenerational educational inequality have been the subject of increasing concern as the whole of the educational structure and the resources devoted to it have come under questioning. Analyses of the existing educational system and how it works have led to some important new thinking about the nature of education and its purposes in highly industrialised societies. One of the major concepts which has emerged from these concerns with equal opportunity is that of recurrent education:

"The essence of the recurrent education proportion.... is the distribution of education over the lifespan of the individual in a recurring way. This means a break with the present practice of a long, uninterrupted pre-work period of full-time schooling... It also implies the alternation of education with other activities, of which the principal would be work, but which might also include leisure and retirement." (1)

Recurrent education is not seen as an alternative to the present system but rather as providing an overall framework for educational change in relation to which many specific policies and approaches can be formulated. Essentially it means a new learning environment for youth at the upper end of secondary school, an alternative to immediate university entry via the right to return to higher education, and more flexible post-secondary arrangements which would enable the continuous adjustment of careers to ambitions, labour market opportunities and changing social conditions. One major claim by recurrent education advocates is that such new relationships between individuals, educational opportunities and working careers would lead to more equity between social classes, ethnic and age groups and between women and men than is currently possible in youth education alone.

- (1) Denis Kallen and Jarl Bengtsson, Recurrent Education: A Strategy for Lifelong Learning, (Paris, OECD, 1973), p.7.



Recurrent education can be viewed as having three tasks: First, to compensate for the inequalities of the present youth educational systems; second, to spread educational opportunity over a longer period of an individual's life; and third, to restructure secondary school education to mesh with recurrent education strategies.

Recurrent education should not, however, be seen only as the expansion of educational opportunities throughout adult life. Equal access to such lifelong learning programmes is not equivalent to equal educational opportunity - any more so than is youth education. Motivation, too, is essential if an individual is to take advantage of the equal access offered. Recurrent education, as Kallen and Bengtsson acknowledge, can only be a 'policy' "if it provides all those concerned with the education and career planning ... with the necessary information and motivation". High quality guidance services are pre-requisites to institutionalising multiple chances through recurrent education. Without such services recurrent education is likely to follow traditional patterns, with motivation and choices remaining essentially determined by social background and conditioning. If recurrent education opportunities are offered only on an equal access basis, those likely to take advantage of them will be the already relatively privileged and well-educated. "Recurrent education could thus lead to an increase in inequality that would be much more difficult to counter than the present inequality." (1)

Thus recurrent education, with its (1) coupling of guidance and counselling services to opportunities for access to knowledge and skills training (2) throughout the individual's life (3) in line with his or her interests, aspirations and abilities, aims at reducing social inequalities arising out of differential early life and educational experiences.

To the degree it can accomplish these three tasks, recurrent education can play a major role both in raising the basic educational level of women and in providing the training and re-training which they need for improving their opportunities in the labour market. These are potential benefits. Their specific policy applications and problems are the subject of this paper. This analysis examines first the position of women in the labour market, then youth education and the foundations of vocational choice and finally the nature of participation in adult education and the special requirements of women. The paper concludes with a personal postscript.

## II. THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The post-war period and particularly the last decade have witnessed a transformation of major proportions in the attitude of women toward paid employment. One result is the striking

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(1) Kallen and Bengtsson, op. cit. p.41.





increase in the rates of female participation observable in almost all industrial countries(1). In France, where the female labour force has been growing very rapidly, women now make up almost 40 per cent of the labour force; and in the Scandinavian countries, which have traditionally had among the highest levels of female participation, women now comprise over 40 per cent of those at work(2). 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(3).

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:

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### 1. The prevalence and durability of "occupational segregation"

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

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(1) See Table 1.

(2) See Figure 1.

(3) 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 out-dated one.



Table 1

THE GROWTH IN WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE  
PARTICIPATION, 1950-1972

Country	Working women <sup>(a)</sup> as % of all women					
	Year	%	Year	%	Year	%
DENMARK	-	-	1967	49.1	1972	53.5
FINLAND	1950	53.5	1960	43.4	1970	48.6
FRANCE	1954	38.4	1962	35.2	1973	48.4
SWEDEN	1950	33.6	1965	43.7	1973	55.2

(a) includes unpaid family helpers working 15 hours per week or more

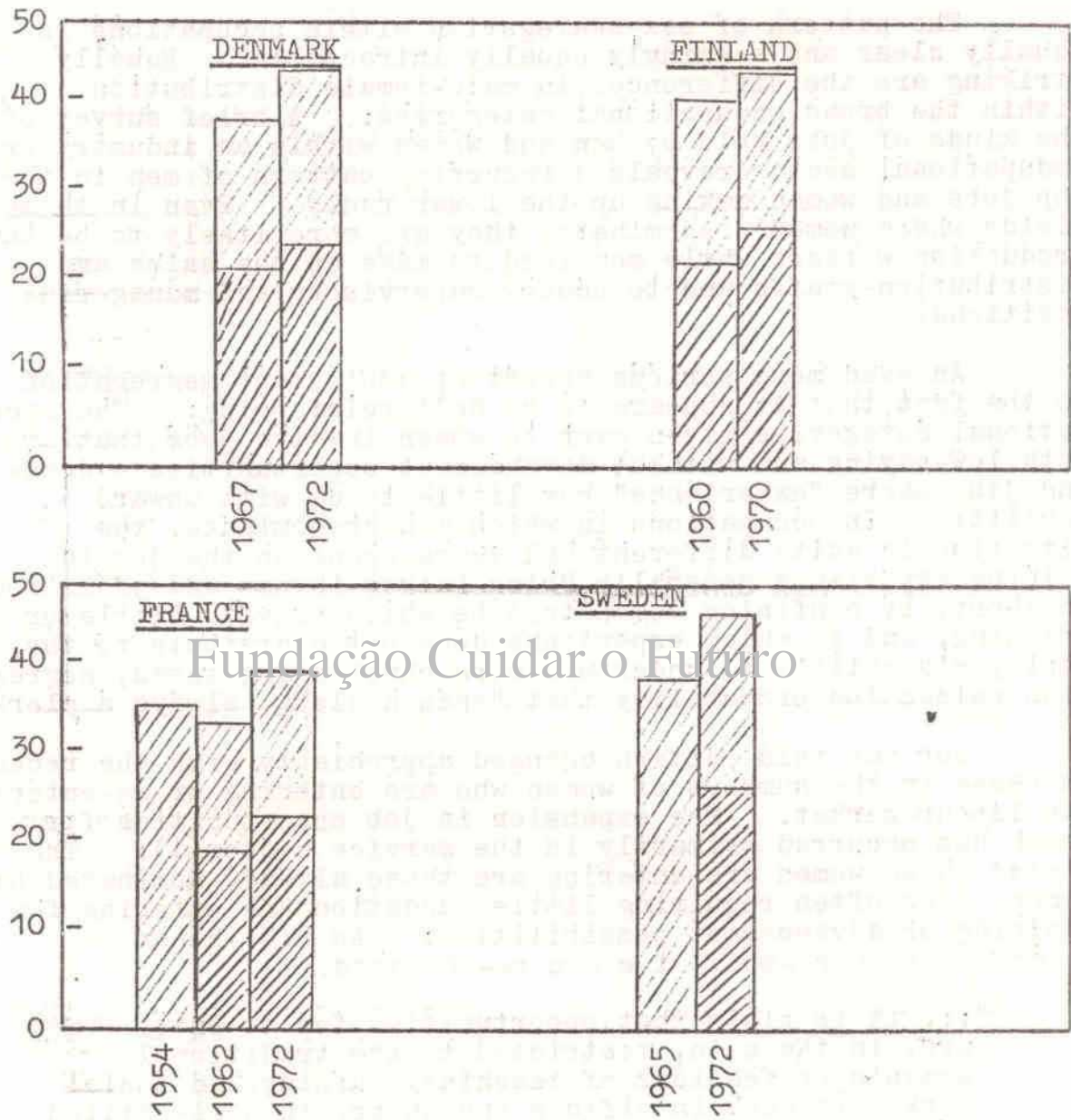
Sources: National reports on "The Role of Women in the Economy", NO(73)13/...; International Labour Office, 1971 Year Book of Labour Statistics





**FIGURE 1: WOMEN AS A PROPORTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE, BY MARITAL STATUS**

% of labour force



Source: "The Role of Women in the Economy" (MS/S/73.3) by Martha A. Darling, OECD, 1973.



All  
working  
women



Unmarried  
women



Married  
women



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 bus driver, telephone linesman and auto mechanic, the essential structure of occupational segregation has changed little over the past decades.

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 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.

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".

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(1). 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."(2)

(1) See Table 3.

(2) B.N. Seear, Re-entry of women to the labour market after an interruption in employment. Paris, OECD, 1971, p.17.



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	10.0	47.5	78.8	-	-	15.2	22.2	79.1	40.9

Source: International Labour Office, 1974, 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





2. The substantial disparity between male and female unemployment

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 by some 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

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 young children), and the generally shorter period of women's accumulated work experience - all these may well be both the cause and the effect of lower earnings and low job status. For as French, Swedish and Danish data suggest, rates of turnover and absenteeism - key employer screening device 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<sup>(1)</sup>. 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.

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(1) National Reports on "The Role of Women in the Economy",  
OECD [MO(73)13...].



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/...)





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.

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. Again the key 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.

### III. YOUTH EDUCATION AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF VOCATIONAL CHOICE

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.





## Levels of Educational Attainment

As the total number of students in secondary and post-secondary education has increased over the last twenty five years, so too has the proportion of female students<sup>(1)</sup>. 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 fifty per cent share of the university-aged population, as Tables 6 and 7 document.

## Course Choice and Enrollment Patterns

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 courses of study they pursue.

In most countries it is at the secondary school level that many important decisions are made that affect the individuals future education 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.

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.

The durability of these sex-differentiated course choices is evidenced in the experience of the Swedish school system. The Swedish schools have made a conscious effort to deal with

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(1) 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	-	35	-	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	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)
GERMANY	1950	20(b)	1965	23	1972	29.6
				20.6(a)	1970	31.0(a)
NORWAY	-	-	1965	24(a)	1970	27.4(a)
U.K.	-	-	1965	26.4(a)	1970	29.0(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.



MS/S/74.5



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	.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

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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.



the problem of sex role stereotypes and how they bias individual choices of courses and occupations. The general aims and guidelines for the school system therefore include the following statement:

The school system should work for the equality of men and women - in the family, in the labour market and in society generally. Information should be given concerning the debate on the sex roles, and pupils should be encouraged to debate and question current conditions. Schools are to create understanding for groups facing particular problems in modern society.

The implications of these guidelines for different subjects are further outlined in instructions issued by the National Board of Education. One of the goals laid down for study and vocational guidance in schools is to counteract restrictions on the freedom of choice due to preconceived notions as to what jobs and interests are suitable for men and women respectively.

Despite these efforts, Swedish authorities do not expect to see any very noticeable effects in the short-run. Certain attitude surveys reflect an increased awareness on the part of boys and girls of sexual prejudice and sex role stereotypes due to their teaching. But actual choices of optional subjects and course lines are still powerfully dominated by conventional attitudes(1). Thus there is a strong male majority in technical and industrial fields and an equally pronounced female majority in arts subjects and nursing education. Change in behaviour, as opposed to attitudes alone, is very slow in coming.

The pattern 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, as Table 10 indicates, 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.

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.

(1) See Tables 8 and 9.



### Sex Role Differentiation

These observed patterns in boys' and girls' educational enrolments and levels of educational attainment raise a number of questions for societies in 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 studies 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 secondary and post-secondary, can co-exist with unequal educational and occupational chances.

From the point of view of equalising opportunities, then, the questions to be asked are more complex: What are the variables that affect the course enrolments and consequent occupational choice patterns of women? Why do so many girls complete lower levels of schooling and then stop? Why do fewer girls than boys attend university? Why do girls obtain less occupationally qualifying educations than boys? In short, why do girls fail to acquire in school both the orientation and skills so essential to advancement in the labour market?

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. The case of the French "grandes écoles" is a well-known example of such discrimination on the basis of sex. Now, however, although most of these schools are open to women, the number of female applicants seeking admission to these prestigious preparatory schools for top posts in government and industry is still far below that of men. Similarly, French attempts to remedy the low representation of girls in technical and vocational education at the secondary level by opening places in specialised lycées which had previously been closed to them have resulted in relatively few interested girls. The French experience is not unique. Other countries which have similarly opened up previously restricted vocational and technical educational opportunities to girls in fields which are, by tradition, for men only have not been overwhelmed by applicants. In comparison, in several Scandinavian countries where special quotas have been established to attract boys to traditional "women's" fields such as pre-school and primary school teaching and nursing, the boys appear to take advantage of these possibilities more readily than do girls offered similar chances for training in traditional "men's" fields.



TABLE 3

Trends in optional and life skill course choices  
in the Swedish comprehensive school by sex,  
1970-1973



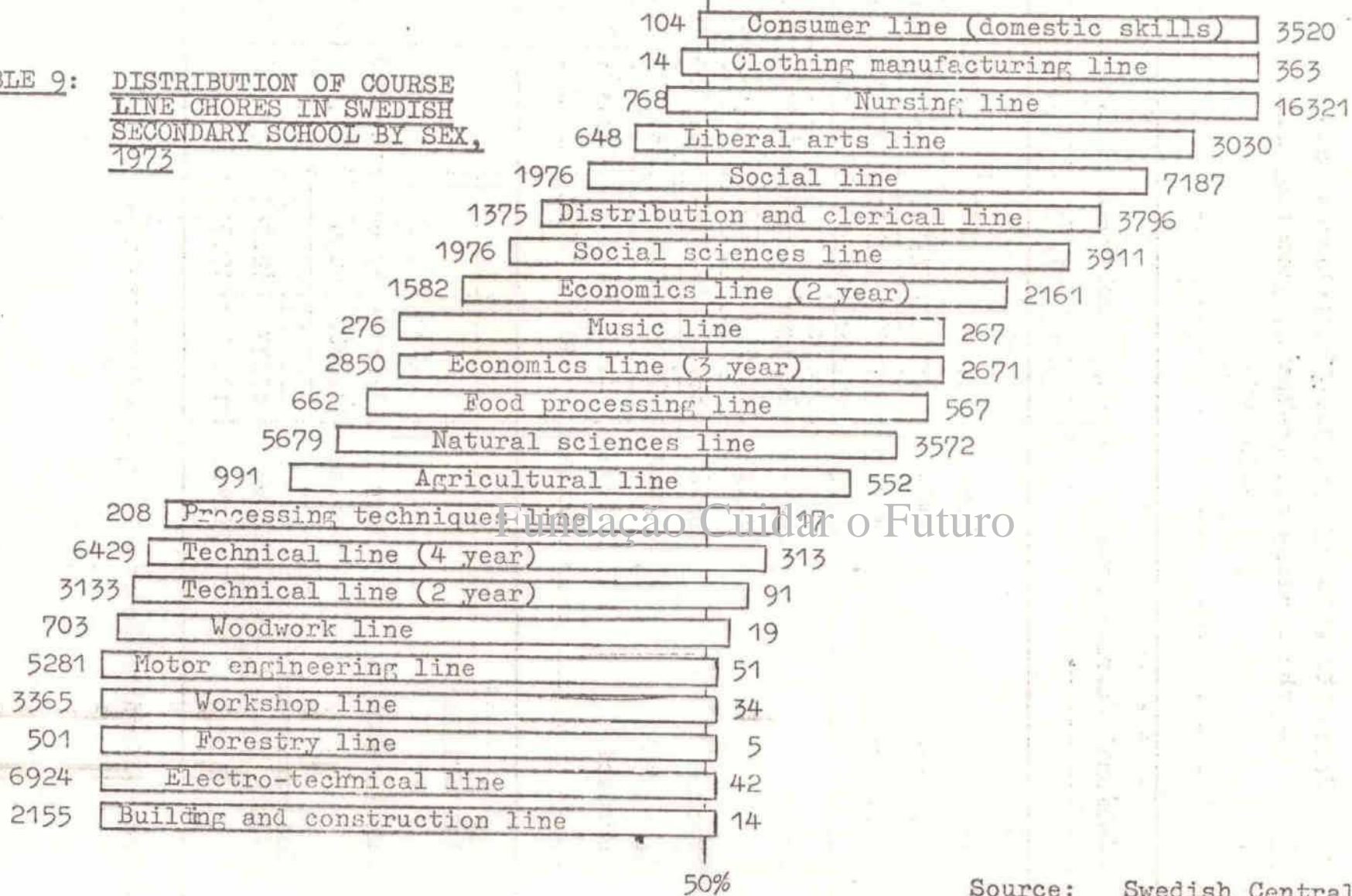
A. Optional Course Choices		Numbers of Students			
		70/71	71/72	72/73	73/74
Art	Boys	1,224	747	754	794
	Girls	3,700	2,701	2,640	2,200
Economics	Boys	3,060	3,215	3,053	3,053
	Girls	7,500	9,223	9,887	10,353
French	Boys	6,936	5,423	5,030	5,553
	Girls	18,550	15,805	14,529	14,657
German	Boys	18,462	19,774	18,786	20,023
	Girls	20,000	22,815	22,125	22,479
Technical	Boys	21,216	24,133	23,569	22,991
	Girls	300	287	266	153
B. Life Skills					
Textile Work	Boys	3,621	3,564	3,771	2,930
	Girls	39,800	40,513	39,992	44,163
Wood and Metal Work	Boys	47,379	49,747	47,476	49,404
	Girls	12,000	10,318	9,420	5,628

Source: Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics



BOYSGIRLS

TABLE 9: DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE  
LINE CHOSES IN SWEDISH  
SECONDARY SCHOOL BY SEX,  
1973



Source: Swedish Central Bureau  
of Statistics

TABLE 10: WOMEN AS A PROPORTION (%) OF ENROLMENTS IN UNIVERSITY COURSES, 1965

	Pure Science	Technology and Engineering	Medical sciences	Humanities	Law	Social science	Women as % all univer- sity stu- dents
NORWAY	14.6	3.1	23.4	43.0	11.8	8.2	24.3
NETHERLANDS	7.6	0.9	22.7	45.5	18.8	17.2	25.0
NETHERLANDS	22.3	4.2	31.3	50.8	30.0	6.1	28.1
NETHERLANDS	36.2	3.7	37.8	75.5	26.1	43.3	48.6
NETHERLANDS	31.0	5.9(a)	34.9	65.0	28.0	-	43.4
NETHERLANDS	31.4	0.5	17.0	74.0	15.0	15.8	35.5
NETHERLANDS	12.3	0.7	19.2	40.5	22.7	12.7	18.0
NETHERLANDS	25.0	5.9	26.4	63.0	20.3	38.3	36.9
NETHERLANDS	12.7	0.5	29.8	39.7	11.3	13.4	20.6
NETHERLANDS	22.1	1.8	24.1	42.1	-	31.1	26.4

(a) 1971/72 data for France

Source: Analytical Report on the Development of Higher Education 1950-1967, OECD, ED(70)3, Table IV-13

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





While discrimination undoubtedly plays 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 life-long working career.

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 includes home economics, with sewing and cooking for girls, and shop work, with metals and woodwork for boys. It is easy to see how many traditional attitudes toward sex roles are reinforced when such courses are given on a segregated basis. For in addition to limiting the skills children learn - should not boys as well as girls be able to cook and sew and should not girls as well as boys be encouraged to acquire manual skills? - such stereotyping of skills by sex is likely to have far-reaching consequences in terms of the attitudes and orientations boys and girls form toward their own vocational futures. Differences in instruction in these subjects - in the information given and skills taught - place girls and boys on an uneven footing in giving equal consideration to the full range of vocational and career possibilities open to them.

School programmes of physical education and sports, while less directly related to vocational orientation, also reinforce sex role differentiation and the attitudes which support it. Sex segregation in physical education courses generally begins later than for life skills courses and is most extreme at the secondary level in most countries. The prohibitions in some societies are very rigid, and sports at this level are seldom mixed. The differential emphasis given to boys' and girls' sports is perhaps even more damaging than the failure to allow mixing, however. For it is based on the premise that girls and women have traditionally engaged in athletic activities to a more limited extent than boys, and men, both in terms of the rate of participation and the number and range of sports (individual rather than team activities) in which they have taken part. In failing to participate in





group and team sports activities, many girls may be missing an important means of learning certain habits, attitudes and skills that would be helpful in their own personal development and in their relationships with others. It should be pointed out, too, that the emphasis placed on sports for boys at the secondary level discriminates against those boys who are not athletes and who may suffer the bias of inclusion along with the girls who are discriminated against by their exclusion.

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 textbooks 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(1).

In the last few years, some school systems, most notably the Swedish, have made specific efforts to revise readers and other school books which reinforce stereotypes. Such changes may slowly influence attitudes. In many countries, however, the problem has not even been addressed.

During these same formative early school years boys and girls begin to develop interests and ideas about what they will be and do later in life. Early formal education, with its differential treatment of boys and girls in life skill classes and sex-typed textbooks, has a distinct tendency to reinforce these observed male/female role differences and to help boys and girls incorporate the differences into their own decisions about interests, courses and vocational plans. It is natural that these learned sex role differences are expressed in different orientations toward certain course lines in secondary education, which lead, in an almost inevitable way, to certain vocational choices or non-choices for life.

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- (1) The literature is extensive on this subject. See Chombart 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; Kari Skjønberg, "Sex roles in boys' and girls' books", and Karin Westman Berg, "Schoolbooks and roles of the sexes" in Hertha (Fredrika-Bremer Association), No. 5, (1969).



As a Finnish study(1), carried out to chart occupational plans of students completing the nine year primary school and secondary school, has revealed, boys and girls have sharply different aspirations. The occupations which girls at the extended primary level preferred were, in descending order, clerical and sales work (25 per cent), nursing (21 per cent) and catering and household work (14 per cent). Girls in secondary school also favoured teaching and child care activities (17 per cent) and 12 per cent chose natural sciences and technical subjects. The most popular occupations among boys, on the other hand, were skilled manual work (67 per cent of the extended primary school boys) and technical work (39 per cent of the boys in secondary school). Only five occupations were held in common in the first thirty chosen by boys and girls: sales clerk, physician, office worker, architect and physical education instructor. According to the study, occupations favoured by boys were located higher in the occupational status hierarchy.

The easy logic of each step a girl makes toward her vocational future - each proceeding naturally from all previous steps back to her earliest handling by her parents - is a powerful clarifier in understanding the basis for many of the problems a woman encounters in entering the labour market. Given her preparation at home and in school, it is not surprising that, at the two critical times of decision in her educational life, the girl makes the non-vocational choice she does. At the transition from primary to secondary school, when she chooses the course line she will take, and at the completion of secondary school, when she decides what she wants to do, a girl has virtually the same range of options as a boy. The difficulty, however, at both times, is that free choice may be impossible, even in the face of "equal opportunity" and "equal access". For when the girl learns of possible careers, she may not be ready to consider them seriously - partly because she has not grown up in the expectation of having a lifetime career of her own and partly because the stereotyped careers judged acceptable (by herself as well as by others) are within a much narrower range. Even if she is among the relatively few of her sex who continue on to a university or other post-secondary institution, her choices may not grow more numerous or become any broader. The disequilibrium in the choice of subjects by women continues in higher education and, as at other levels, carries over into their job possibilities. Instead of specialising and qualifying for high level, often technical jobs, women themselves, as a result of parental and societal influences, restrict their education. When they do enter the labour market, often later in life, they frequently find themselves unqualified and generally ill-prepared to take advantage of the full range of employment possibilities. Too frequently they end up in routine, low status, low paying, low mobility "women's" work.

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(1) National Report of Finland on "The Role of Women in the Economy", OECD /MO(73)...7.





### What is to be done?

If equal opportunity is to be enjoyed by both girls and boys from lower socio-economic class as well as relatively privileged backgrounds, it will not simply be a matter of removing overt obstacles to democratisation of achievement and participation. The need is for far more extensive compensation programmes which especially go after the social dimensions of the problem. For this is a matter of "choices" made in the child's school career, principally at the late primary and secondary levels, which lead to certain courses of study and close off others and which influence drop-out rates and transfer rates to secondary and higher education. Choices set limits. It is these socially biased "choices" which must be changed.

Guidance and Counselling. Many of the attitudes which serve as the bases for thinking about life roles and about careers and the education appropriate to them are already formed before students enter secondary school. The Swedish schools, which have a thorough vocational guidance system beginning for students in the sixth year, do not believe they are early enough with this counselling to counter sex-biased course and career choices. Given the requirement most school systems impose on students to choose between vocational and academic streams of study and among course lines within each stream, the lack of adequate guidance early in school life can severely handicap children in their ability to make critical choices regarding career options. At present most girls at an early age drop such technical subjects as mathematics and science and so, in practice, limit their subsequent choice of career. Moreover, these decisions are frequently made in ignorance of their long-term employment consequences.

There is need for earlier, more ambitious, and perhaps more aggressive guidance and counselling services to children from primary school years on. All children should be exposed more to the world of work, the different kinds of jobs people hold and the relationship between jobs and a qualifying education. This is particularly important for girls, who are in special need of information on career opportunities and the specific courses of study or training which prepare for them.

Teachers and Teaching. Regardless of the education, it is difficult to implement fully since it involves major organisational and structural upheaval in the educational system with its inevitable entrenched power centres and understandable resistance to change. The goals for teaching and for guidance counselling may be very advanced on paper, but their implementation, will be uneven because it depends ultimately on those doing the counselling and teaching and learning. All those involved in dealing with the issue admit that change in attitudes and behaviour will be slow and gradual.

Nonetheless, policies can work toward attitude change. Conscious efforts at educating teachers in equality, vocational choice and sex role issues are urgently required, both for



those already teaching. In Sweden, the country probably farthest ahead in trying different approaches to deal with these issues, role playing, small group discussions and special summer courses are all used to raise teacher awareness toward helping children to be open to all vocational choices. Planned summer courses to train small groups of teachers from the same school to become change agents are another significant innovation. Another problem, highlighted in Denmark's exploration of merging vocational and theoretical secondary school systems, is the need to co-ordinate and/or integrate systems of teacher training in a way which will provide teachers in both the vocational and academic courses with broader perspectives.

Restructuring Secondary Education. But guidance and counselling efforts will not be effective if the structure of education works against rather than supports attitude and behaviour change in boys and girls. School systems, as they are currently organised in most countries, tend to make change difficult, if not impossible. Although primary school is generally of a comprehensive nature, with common courses of study for all children, the division into rigidifying course lines is still the prevailing characteristic of secondary education. And once the division occurs, the existing structure of most educational systems makes it almost impossible for the individual to reverse the decision on the course of studies embarked upon. At present, students leaving secondary school have no free choice: certain streams leave no alternative to higher education, others no possibility for entering it.

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In recognition of the rigidity of this approach to education and the inequalities which arise from it, several countries are engaged in discussion about reforms which could bring more flexibility and choice points into secondary education. The reform issue is generally seen as a need to restructure the last years of secondary, moving toward the integration of general and vocationally-oriented education. The objectives in breaking down the division between the two are both philosophical and practical. In a world of rapid technological change, traditional vocational training course lines in schools may be too narrow, orienting students to specific fields in a way that presupposes a certain stability in the labour market and in society more generally. But now, in contemplation of the possibility that every individual may hold not just one, but two or three different careers in his life, it is thought that to serve the future life interests of the student, "vocational" education must be more flexible, covering a greater range of the production process and a wider foundation of general knowledge. Equally on the theoretical side of secondary education, there is now advocacy that students should have the benefit of greater exposure to the world of work and the realities of the labour market.

Moreover, the merging of vocational and academic course lines or school systems into one secondary institution could have potentially major benefits for girls' educational





experience. First, by breaking down the substantive division between the two, and emphasizing the need for secondary education to incorporate elements of both, girls would inevitably be exposed to a greater range of fields and options. Presently segregated systems contribute to girls' failure to consider many vocational course line possibilities. To open this choice vocational experience needs to be integrated into the general school framework.

The second major benefit to girls arising from such a reorganisation of vocational and academic systems under one conceptual roof is the greater possibility that girls will consider vocational offerings - especially those in traditionally "men's" fields. At present, vocational education is predominantly a make system - a situation reinforced by the physical and academic segregation of the two systems contributes to their failure to consider many vocational course line and career possibilities. If vocational and academic education are offered in the same institution and school system, it will provide easier entry for girls into vocational courses. It will also provide more support for both girls and boys who choose "untraditional" vocational fields previously thought of as single sex occupations. The current "equal access" promise has not been sufficient to overcome the socially conditioned sex segregation in many of these vocational offerings.

In sum, the point here is to make it more legitimate for girls to enter vocational fields leading to "men's jobs" and boys to enter "women's" fields and to make it more legitimate - indeed possible - for both boys and girls to transfer between the theoretical secondary school and vocational training. Restructuring secondary education along the lines outlined above provides (1) the possibility of laying a better and broader foundation for the vocational future of all students, and (2) a system of youth education upon which more effective recurrent education programmes can be built.

#### IV. ADULT EDUCATION AND THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

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 toward new school leavers, are being re-defined 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.

Present education programmes for adults are essentially of two types: (1) the general interest continuing education courses which include "academic offerings in language, the arts



and literature and vocational courses in photography, art and other "hobby" areas; (2) basic education courses in language and mathematics for those whose initial education was incomplete; and (3) 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.

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.

The reasons for the low representation of women in adult vocational training courses as they are presently organised are many. Lack of motivation, a legacy of their formal education, is 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 toward 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 will become the primary beneficiaries of expanded vocational training courses.

Motivation alone, however, is not enough to assure women access to educational services after a period away from their initial schooling and often from labour market as well. Recurrent education's potential to achieve equality of educational opportunity

"... is determined by the accompanying and supporting changes made outside the educational system. The need for these changes and arrangements is inversely proportionate to the education and social level of the candidates. The lower their income level and professional status, the less is their motivation





to enrol in recurrent education and the fewer their possibilities to make the necessary arrangements for work, job, financing of study, choosing the most appropriate type of programme, and planning their career, while their chances of rejoining the labour market on the same or a higher professional level are also diminished ... Without the necessary support and adaptation of, among other things, labour market policy, and unemployment and promotion conditions, recurrent education risks increasing inequality and strengthening social selection."(1)

These observations apply especially to women who, in seeking to complete their general education or to improve or acquire a vocational qualification before taking a job, are faced with the same kinds of obstacles in getting training as forced them to interrupt their initial schooling or careers: their often full-time responsibilities for the care of household and family, particularly the care of young children. If these women are to undergo training, certain costs beyond the direct teaching costs will have to be met. For employed women, as for employed men, compensation for earnings foregone while in training will be required - costs which are often met by labour market training programmes operated by Ministries of Labour. But since these grants often depend on the income of the family, financial support may be reduced if a husband works, despite the drop in family earnings faced by two-income families. For married women at home principal support costs will include the provision of child care and other home services performed by the housewife (e.g. home nursing services and health aid for sick family members and housekeeping services). In short, grants to women leaving the home for a training course must be sufficient to cover the costs of replacing her in the home so that her training activities are not a burden on the family. This is an important consideration given the psychological strains of a training programme for the women, especially if she has been out of the labour force for some time and must re-learn study skills and habits. In the case of low income women, such support will be essential. It will, otherwise, be very difficult if not impossible for them to undertake training since they may have to alternative to staying at home with small children.

In summary, it is quite clear that unless incentives and costs facing present non-participants in training courses are substantially changed, the creation of more training opportunities as such is not likely to alter their behaviour. The "second chance" offered will be taken up by those who are

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(1) Kallen and Bengtsson, op. cit., p.68.



already educated, highly motivated younger members of the labour force - and the equalising aim of these programmes will be obscured. Admittedly, financial support of this magnitude can be an expensive proposition, but some means of support are crucial to the fulfilment of the equal opportunity promise.

Financial support and services may make training possible for adult women, but they do not make it effective. For this, three factors are relevant:

1. Practical training arrangements. Adult women need special arrangements which take into account their continuing responsibilities for home and family. 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.

2. Course relevance and content. This refers to two aspects of training. There is the question of admissions requirements for the courses themselves. Here access to vocational courses generally requires a basic level of knowledge which is essential for further training and for good jobs but which a number of older women who have never worked before lack. Where basic education courses are not standard features of vocational training programmes, they must be incorporated into such offerings in order that women have access to the actual vocational skills courses. In addition, flexible admissions requirements and credits for previous work experience acquired both at home as well as in the labour market would undoubtedly facilitate the participation of women in these courses.

The courses offered must also be relevant to women's labour market aims. 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. Thus it is important that training has a tie-in to the labour market and that women can see that there are jobs at the other end of the training process at a level and pay to which they aspire.

3. Teaching methods. Adult education is not the same as youth education and should not be organised along the same lines. While the courses offered may treat the same subjects as youth education, courses and teaching methods must be organised in recognition of the past and present of these adult





"students". Many existing adult systems, in fact, fail their students in this area, subjecting them to the same exams and qualification requirements as for the youth-level degree or certificate. But formal degree qualifications should not be the first aim of adult education - rather its purpose should be to help these students overcome any educational deficiencies, adapt vocational skills to the changing job market, and generally gain more control over their own lives, whether in their home or at work. This point is especially relevant to women, whose fears of failure and insecurity about education are likely to become self-fulfilling if adult education is structured along the same lines as youth education. What adult education must therefore aspire to is a more flexible design of courses with an adult orientation and the possibility of "student" involvement in the design.

There is a final point to be made in this discussion of adult education. That is the need for follow-up: the recognition that when the woman makes the move to leave the home for more education and work beyond it, the whole structure of interpersonal relationships within the family is likely to be altered. While some of the adjustments within the home may be recognised and while external support policies and counselling and services may be provided, not all problems will become apparent at the beginning. They may emerge later for both the woman and her family. Counselling follow-up programmes will be particularly important to monitor and identify these problems and help in their resolution.

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The purpose of recurrent education is not simply to get women to enter the labour force but to provide the basis for a realistic and critical choice, whether and how to do so. In the light of their initial educational choices, however, it is doubtful that women can presently exercise such critical choice. For even if 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.

From the point of view of equal opportunity, vocational training programmes alone will be of limited usefulness in changing attitudes and occupational segregation patterns without a much greater investment of time and resources in counselling to accompany them. Too many retraining programmes involving women offer training in stereotyped "women's" work areas,



often at the advice of counsellors. Traditional counselling orientates women to traditional women's jobs. Again, training must be tied into outreach activities to women: they must not be offered just a job choice and the means to achieve the job chosen. Here, there may be a special role for short job exposure courses or orientation sessions. Women often need help in identifying their interests and ideas about the kinds of jobs they want. This is obviously a very important point in breaking through the socially conditioned "choice" of traditional "women's" work fields. Incorporated in such orientation courses should be actual visits to places of work in traditional "women's" work fields and in those mixed and those predominantly "male". Better still, women should have the actual opportunity for a trial period of work at several jobs.

#### Outreach: The Swedish Experience

In this connection a special experiment in Kristianstad in southern Sweden merits special mention and continued observation. The area chosen for the experiment had a large demand for workers from the local industrial firms, which had no possibilities of filling all the open positions with men or with foreign labourers. Against this background, the regional Labour Market Office invited local women by a letter mailing to every household to a one-day information session in August 1973 to explore job opportunities in several participating local industries. Approximately 150 women attended the session which provided information about the firms, a tour of the factories and the possibility of talking with male workers about the available jobs. The Labour Market service also told the women about the kinds of labour market training that was available to them. Those women still interested then participated in a four-week informational and practical labour market course which included a large element of on-the-job training and experience in several different positions in the firms. After the four weeks, 90 per cent of the women accepted job offers. Early follow-up has found the women satisfied with their placements and employers pleased with the entry of women into traditional male jobs in a traditionally male milieu.

Another feature of the experimental programme of major importance was that not only the women were prepared for entering the participating firms; but the firms - the employers, trade unions and male workers - were also prepared for receiving the women. Discussions of the move were held before the event with the employees and the unions; their advice and opinions were sought about how many women various parts of the operation could take, which jobs were suitable for which ages, and what machine modifications would be needed. Special efforts were also made to prepare the community for the change represented by these women assuming work outside the home so that the community could offer supportive services necessary, such as child care facilities. (This has been difficult, authorities report. The absence of sufficient number of child care places has meant that some women who wanted to work could not do so).





All indications thus far point to the Kristianstad experiment as a considerable success. Further follow-up work is now being done. The format will be expanded at the beginning of June to five other labour market regions. Other regions are also voluntarily adopting the approach - evidence of the demonstrations effect.

There is a footnote to the Kristianstad experience. Female unemployment has been on the rise in Sweden recently. The hidden unemployment represented by women at home who had not bothered registering because they considered work impossible is now appearing on employment office registries. The phenomenon of increased female unemployment figures appears to be related to women's perceptions of their possibilities for finding jobs, itself a function of the demonstration effect of outreach programmes. Swedish authorities believe they have good proof of this hidden unemployment phenomenon from their experience in Kristianstad.

A further adjunct of Swedish outreach activities is a series of special short-term measures to bring women into contact with job and training possibilities. These include the following:

- one hundred new labour market officers have been appointed to the regional level specifically for the purpose of providing counselling and guidance to women and of recruiting jobs for women;
- financial education supplements are available to employers who educate women for "male" jobs and men for "women's" jobs in approximately ten job categories selected by labour market authorities;
- industries receiving financial incentives from the government for locating in economically depressed regions of the country are obligated to employ at least 40 per cent women - or men in the case of traditional "women's" job areas - in their work force.

#### Educational leave of absence

A proposal which is currently under debate in some countries is the paid educational leave of absence. Conceptually, the educational leave idea is an integral part of the recurrent education strategy, the means for institutionalising recurring opportunities for education throughout working life. While it is not the intention here to discuss the various aspects of the educational leave proposition, how it relates to women's opportunities for education should be discussed. First, the dangers already outlined with respect to motivation apply very strongly to educational leave proposals. Unless very clear outreach activities accompany the educational leave



provision, it will once again be those individuals already relatively advantaged who will take advantage of these educational opportunities. The proclamation of the "right" to an educational leave of absence is not enough, particularly if lower class, poorly paid women in the labour force - who are frequently responsible for home and family as well - are to benefit.

There is the question, too, of those who are not in the labour force and their access to the benefits of the educational leave proposals. These non-members are primarily housewives. Should no special provisions be made for these individuals, the recent pressure to improve the conditions of work and educational and employment opportunity through legislation or collective bargaining terms for an educational leave of absence may inadvertently discriminate against women by concentrating only on the needs of "workers" in paid employment. This indirect form of discrimination would widen the gap in opportunity and unfairly disadvantage those women at home. Those who are out of the labour force should be able to participate in educational leave plans along with financial support to make such participation possible. This principle, agreed to by all in the abstract, may very well come under pressure and be accorded a lesser priority when it is a question of limited resources. Under these conditions unions especially are likely to push for priorities for the already employed.

## V.

### PERSONAL POSTSCRIPT

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 coming much more slowly in equalising the educational experiences of boys and girls. Even in those countries where a conscious effort has been made to break down traditional patterns of sex-typed course choices in compulsory schooling, change has been almost negligible. Indeed, the continued durability of sex differences in the kinds of education boys and girls receive is disturbing evidence that the problem of unequal life chances will still be with us in the next generation.

In these circumstances, it seems not enough to say that change in attitudes will be gradual, evolutionary, slow in coming. For the problem seems so deeply rooted in the nature of the school experience and the different attitudes and experience of boys and girls that perhaps one should question whether we are approaching the problem in the right way, even whether our definition of the problem and its causes - and therefore our proposed solutions - are accurate. Until we can provide satisfactory answers as to why girls do not take advantage of their initial education to qualify for a good job or to keep open their possibilities for further education and employment later in life, it will be difficult to implement a recurrent education strategy and "lifelong learning" programmes may be limited to operating on a largely compensatory basis for women.





Most discussion of the disparities between girls' and boys' course choices generally lead to a concentration on the "wrongness" of the girls' choices. But perhaps we have missed the point. It is commonly assumed that if girls make "right" choices, the problem will resolve itself. But the fact that the school system does not "work" for girls, as symbolised by their persistent choice of non-vocationally qualifying courses in the arts and humanities and their early disappearance from physics, advanced mathematics and technical courses in general, suggests that at least part of the failure may be on the side of the educational system itself. The question is not only "why don't girls like physics and why don't they succeed in higher maths?"; but also "why is the school system as currently organised unable to teach girls physics and why does the school system fail in helping girls learn?"

While there are no sure answers to these complex questions, there are several ideas I would like to advance for consideration. 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 those values. Attributes associated with the male culture include strength, independence, competition, rationality, mechanical and computational skills, among others. Those associated with the female culture include warmth, dependence, emotional feeling, love, co-operation, support-giving, gentleness, verbal and artistic skills. All social systems and institutions can be analysed in terms of these two cultures, including the educational system. Although our educational systems emphasize "feminine" values in the early years (where girls almost universally do better than boys in school), in the later years of primary school and particularly at the secondary and post-secondary levels, "masculine" values become predominant. The essentially one-way communications system, the overt and covert levels of competition, the theoretical, abstract and rational emphasis of the courses on the academic side and the quantitative - mechanical stress on the vocational side - all are aspects of a system which neglects the strengths of "feminine" values such as an orientation toward people, small group work, inter-personal contact, helping and co-operation. Given the more or less clear division in the socialisation of children as male or female, it is easy to understand why males are more likely to succeed at the higher levels of education.

If there is some element of truth in this characterisation of the education 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 more elements of the female culture in the use of smaller groups for teaching and more opportunities for personal interaction among learners and teachers. It also means that consciousness of this male and female cultural influence should be brought out into the open in the educational system and



challenged - that values traditionally labelled "masculine" or "feminine" are not inherently sex-linked and the development of the whole human being requires a blending or fusion of the two. This acceptance and appreciation of both sets of values within the individual would 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.

Differentiation on the basis of traditional sex roles does a terrible injustice to the individual, boy or girl, man or woman, in denying the existence and the legitimacy of both sets of attributes in the personality. The traditional division of labour between men and women has limited men as well as women to certain roles and life patterns, considerably restricting the possibilities and likelihood of informed free choice in life decisions. It is for this reason that education has a responsibility to try to break down this sex role differentiation in the attitudes of children toward what they should be as children and what is appropriate for them as adults. Just as girls must be made aware of the possibility of their participation in the labour force, so too must boys be made aware of their equally responsible role in parenthood. Unless and until our educational systems re-examine their influence on children's attitudes, recurrent education offerings will be of limited value in creating a wider range of life choices for women. Equal opportunity must start here: in the recognition and the possibility of equally shared roles for men and women.

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