

Education for Women

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EMPLOYMENT conditions in the transition period which follows the war will doubtless operate to make women realistic about jobs. Every prediction regarding postwar employment is to the effect that competition will be very keen indeed, with preference in employment going to men. The seemingly fantastic yet actual stories will no longer originate of employees with slipshod habits of work and careless attitudes being retained on their jobs. Sound training and careful work will be demanded by employers. Educators already are noting signs of these changes and consequently they are aware of the special need to impress women students with the altered outlook for their economic future.

The future in their personal lives too has more than the normal amount of uncertainties. With heavy war casualties among young men, and for other reasons, marriage and family life so greatly desired by young women will be impossible for a very large number of them. Education must face this fact and must deal with it, notwithstanding its difficulties. Always has it been said that youth, healthy and vigorous, can never apply individually to itself the eventual personal reality of death. Likewise high school girls and college women students can not be made to prepare consciously for lives altered from their normal expectations. It is education's task, nevertheless, to help

them to prepare, and the best avenues of doing so are through evaluating the personal qualities of adaptability and resilience highly, through characters in literature or, preferably, life itself.

Mental hygienists concerned with youth in a war world advocate that we accustom young people to the concept of change, that we give them assurance that tomorrow there will be a world, possibly even a better one, but not the same world as yesterday. Education must seek to implant and encourage in young women additional ends and scope for happiness and self-realization beyond marriage. Avocations as well as careers and occupations should be stressed; community service should be emphasized; interest in religion or philosophy should be given every opportunity to deepen and strengthen itself.

Deepening Women's Experiences

All of these are experiences contributing to maturity and, therefore, in the event of marriage should enable the young women of the postwar world more nearly to match in mental and spiritual stature the young men who will have in most cases surpassed them in these ways through the educational and social experiences in the armed forces. All of the advantages, however, are not with the men for the development of qualities essential to the best in marriage.

Psychologists point out that extended military experience is fraught with perils to the social order. Men in the armed forces remaining long out of the pattern of normal social and family living frequently find a resumption of the pattern extremely difficult. Women, therefore, must be helped to an understanding of this fact and they must also be given direct instruction in the establishment and maintenance of a proper and happy home. Fortunately, to accomplish such major objectives the tone of the campus and the school itself is favorable. Study is being taken more seriously with purposes more intelligently evaluated, and extra-curricular activities are now more commendable, consisting of volunteer work in hospitals and in various civic and national organizations connected with the war.

Under the impact of war many of the long-desired changes in education are being effected, with procedures in the education of women no exception. First of all there is an insistence for a greater clarity in stating educational objectives. A recent study¹ of the aims and objectives, as expressed in 1942 catalogues, of seventy-four women's colleges to determine the extent to which these institutions are preparing young women to participate in the present world crisis revealed that in the main no clear activating idea was given either to the students or to the teaching staff as to the institutions' purposes. That we are now especially critical of this situation and urge functional definition is in part due to the fact that we have become accustomed to the current

As the author of this article suggests, the topic of education for women has been indecisively argued and debated ever since the days of Plato. Now again, with the new prominence accorded women in wartime employment and in the armed services, the subject seems destined to be reopened. Helen M. Hosp, Associate in Higher Education of the American Association of University Women, examines realistically the trends and problems of women's education as she sees them appearing on the postwar horizon.

Army and Navy procedure in placing specific requests upon educational institutions for designated courses of training for the attainment of fixed goals. We should not be desirous of an absolutism throughout, but a healthy measure of clear-cut directives is regarded as a welcome replacement of vague and generalized statements of goals.

Meeting "Inevitabilities"

Quite aside from the question of preparation of young women for participation in the present world crisis, education did little if anything to prepare women to meet the "inevitable-ities of their lives," assert the authors of *Women After College*.² But a whole reorganization of education is not called for because of the findings of this study and of similar conclusions reached independently. Indeed, rather than curricular reorganization, it is a new method of learning that is needed. Psychology, for example, as taught, had little functional value in the actual personality development of the women in the case studies.

¹ Leonard, Eugenie A.: "The Aims of Higher Education for Women in the United States," *School and Society*, October 16, 1943.

² Foster and Wilson: *Women After College*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1942.

A skill is not achieved by students through the verbalizations of an instructor. This pedagogic realization is permeating much more widely through all educational levels and real promise is held for future teaching. Students will be aided to experience—say, psychology—in terms of themselves and in such way as to deepen their understanding of and facilitating their relations with other people. For women this is particularly important, as they are especially dependent upon satisfactory personal relationships.

Community Work as Education

As a matter of fact, skill in human relations is increasingly essential in our one world of today. And consciousness of world citizenship is being nurtured in our schools and colleges. The best practical preparation for world citizenship is in directed local community contacts and experience, which, incidentally, furnish excellent sources of general education. There is good reason to believe that the education acquired from community resources and life will be accorded in the education of the postwar period the same importance as classroom study, with which it will be closely integrated. Appreciation is gaining steadily of the fact that we learn by what we do.

For women, this closer relationship with the community will lead to new vocational opportunities. Significantly indeed has Thorndike³ pointed out that only for a decade or two have women had any chance in municipal government, notwithstanding the fact that, with the exception of the work of the

police and fire departments and the construction of streets and sewers, "the business of a city or town is largely a sort of large-scale homemaking in which women have the advantages of a stronger interest in people and their feelings, a stronger impulse to relieve, comfort and console, and a greater satisfaction in caring for the young." A sensible direction vocationally for women's education can be had from the fact that "sanitation, health, education, recreation, and the care of the unfortunate account for about two-thirds of the current expenses of a modern civilized municipality."⁴

Vocational ends notwithstanding, a strong emphasis upon training for citizenship is needed in the education of women. They have an equally inescapable responsibility with men for intelligent citizenship which comprises much more than exercising the obligations of the ballot. They must learn that only when all able persons take their appropriate part in cooperative civic enterprises can society enjoy vigorous health.

Adapting to "Life at the Mill"

The question of a special education or curriculum for women is ever moot, it seems, with discussion about whether women should be educated differently from men going all the way back to Plato, with the views on the subject always reflecting the prevailing climate of opinion and status of women. Today through war's manpower demands women have new roles in the world, as workers, as members of the armed forces, in all of which they are proving

³ Thorndike: *Human Nature and the Social Order*, New York, The Macmillan Company.

⁴ *Ibid.*

their acceptance of the stern obligations of citizenship. Inevitably this will affect the education of women. One possibly minor but direct way is through the personal experience of teachers, high school counselors, and college deans of women now serving in industry and the armed forces where they have become more acutely conscious of certain personality or character deficiencies of women. It is charged that women ask more time out from the job for personal affairs; that "they will not face life as it is at the mill"; that they are irresponsible in that after receiving expensive training, "with no warning at all, they pick up and walk out"; that they lack emotional stability.

Purposely I have chosen flaws, serious shortcomings. To be fair, I should quote also from the splendid tributes paid women in jobs and fields, many of which are new to them. But the point is that women themselves are aware that women need all along in their schooling more of what may be called discipline; that they should be held to the satisfactory completion of any particular task or enterprise. The educators who return to the classrooms and to the main stream channels of personal, social, and vocational counseling will apply the newer realistic insights which they have gained to their educational programs.

Counseling Becomes Realistic

In teaching, a realistic stand must be maintained. Accuracy and precision in performance rather than excesses of opinion and appreciation are required for competence in industry and the professions, and these traits are acquired not quickly on the job but during the years in school. Already in departments

of physical education, there is revision so as to effect needed improved physical fitness and stamina among women. And the offices of the vocational counselors are becoming increasingly practical in the content and form of the information which they supply. For example, on the college level, bulletins are prepared that state in very concrete, graphic style the specific requirements for positions for which the institution's curricula offer preparation; the actual employment opportunities, national and local; the firms or government offices where personnel of certain qualifications currently are needed; and the outlook for future employment as judged by present trends.

In this discussion, emphasis has been placed upon the obligations of young women.

Something should be said of their opportunities in education. In fact, a great deal should be said and said emphatically, for opportunities in education for women may remain more potential than actual except for ex-service personnel. Strong advocates for truly democratic procedure should conspicuously raise the issue of financial aid for the continued schooling of young women, and of young men, whether or not they have been in the armed services, provided that on the basis of school records and objective tests they promise to be worthy investments. Sociologists point out that the greatest loss that we as a nation suffer is loss of talent, our greatest wastage, that of human resources. And talent and personality resources are equally the heritage of the rich and poor, of men and of women. Educational opportunities for women should match their responsibilities.

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