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EDUCATION IN NUTRITION

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Explanatory Note on the Scottish Educational System

For those not familiar with Scottish education some expressions used in these papers may require a little explanation. *Primary Schools* correspond to elementary schools in England, except that the standard age for transfer to the secondary school is somewhat higher (12 instead of 11 and over). The pupils' capabilities are tested at this stage by the *qualifying examination*, sometimes also called the *control examination*. Each Education Committee (county or city) has its own qualifying examination. *Junior Secondary Schools* provide 3-year courses. *Senior Secondary Schools* provide 5-year or 6-year courses leading to the (Senior) *Leaving Certificate* (popularly known as 'Highers'). Pupils sit this examination at 17 or 18; the standard is between that of English School Certificate and that of Higher School Certificate. Passes on a suitable standard in certain combinations of subjects qualify for university entrance.

In cities and populous areas, junior secondary and senior secondary schools are usually separate entities. In smaller places, both types of course are provided in the same school, which may also be the primary school, all under the same headmaster.

Nearly all Scottish schools are attended by both boys and girls. A very high proportion of pupils are educated in the state schools, and many of the non-state schools, e.g. the well-known Merchant Company schools in Edinburgh, are organized in the same way as the state schools.

The Teaching of Cookery and Nutrition in Schools

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I have purposely entitled this paper 'Cookery and Nutrition in Schools' because, for the younger age group of girls, 11 and over to 14 or 15, the only satisfactory way of teaching nutrition in schools is along with practical cookery. I do not think at this stage that teaching nutrition as a separate subject would serve any useful purpose or

arouse much interest on the part of the child but, taken as part of practical cookery, nutrition can be approached gradually by considering the food value of separate ingredients, the mixing of ingredients to form a dish, and the combination of dishes to form a satisfactory meal.

The second point in combining the teaching of practical cookery with nutrition is that the time given to any one subject in school is limited, so that although it is important that a pupil should have some knowledge of what to eat, it is equally if not more important that she should know how to cook the food she eats. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is not so much to urge the teaching of nutrition in school as to make out a strong case for the broadening of school courses so that all may include domestic science.

We glibly say that education is meant to be a preparation for life, but is it? I think it might be more correctly said that the tendency of secondary education is towards preparation for earning a living, which is important but should certainly not be the main function of education, and is not all that goes to the living of a full life, especially for girls. By far the greater proportion of our girls get married, after probably a few years in some business or profession for which they have been very thoroughly trained for 4, 5 or even 6 years. They then start the complicated business of running a home and rearing a family, where the health and comfort of all depends so largely on the wife and mother who, in many cases, has had very little or no training for this part of her life. Of the girls who do not get married many set up homes for themselves in rooms or service flats and are dependent on their own efforts for food.

The easy, comfortable assumption is that a girl can pick up all she needs to know from her mother. This may work to a certain extent if the home is a good one, but even there the time factor comes in; a girl out all day, first at school and then at business, does not have much opportunity to learn the business of home-making. If we are going to follow this theory to its logical conclusion, we should also say, 'Father is a doctor, therefore his son or daughter can pick up doctoring from him', or 'Father is a chartered accountant, therefore why teach his son arithmetic'. It would seem, therefore, that a girl should be taught the rudiments of domestic science in school; this, in a great many cases, is the only opportunity she has of gaining this knowledge which at some time of her life is bound to be necessary.

Many girls do get this training in domestic science in school but, unfortunately, there is also a fairly large proportion who do not. May I here, for the sake of those not familiar with school organization, relate what happens in Glasgow after children have passed through the primary department of a school and sat the qualifying examination? They are graded according to their performance into categories A 1, A 2, A 3, B, C.

The A 1 children are directed to the senior secondary school serving the district in which they live. Some of the A 2 children, who state that they intend to complete a 5-year course, may also go to a senior secondary school, but a great many of the children who embark on this 5-year course do not complete the full course. I shall illustrate this later with figures. The remainder of the A 2 pupils and the A 3 pupils go to junior secondary schools, where 3-year courses are offered. The B's are mostly

retained in their primary school to make another attempt at the examination, unless they have attempted it before or are over 13 years of age. The C pupils are those who, through age or low mental capacity, are not likely to improve their grade. They are transferred mainly to post-qualifying centres for a course consisting largely of practical work.

The position so far as the inclusion of domestic science is concerned is satisfactory in the courses offered to C pupils. All girls receive instruction in cookery and other domestic subjects, usually to the extent of 6 hr./week or more, but under present conditions they do not stay at school long enough for this to make a lasting impression, since they are generally late in sitting the qualifying examination and leave school at the earliest opportunity. The raising of the school-leaving age to 15 years will, however, remedy this defect to some extent. From the teaching point of view it is not very invigorating to be dealing all the time with pupils of this rather low grade of intelligence.

In junior secondary schools (3-year courses), there are generally two types of course for girls, commercial and domestic. Unfortunately the tendency is to encourage the children in the higher categories to enter the commercial course, whereas those in the lower categories are almost automatically put into the domestic course. This straight away puts domestic science in an inferior position, and here, I think, lies the beginning of our domestic labour troubles; we are sowing the seeds that grow into the conviction that domestic work is of the lowest order. Here are the figures for Glasgow: total number of girls in junior secondary schools, 5020; number of girls taking commercial course, 1590; number of girls taking domestic course, 3279.

One encouraging feature is that there is a growing tendency to include instruction in cookery in commercial courses. If this is done, however, it means that the girls cannot also have French, since the amount of time required for commercial subjects, in order to reach the examination level, does not allow of the inclusion of both French and domestic science as well as the other necessary subjects. To my way of thinking, however, it is more important for most girls to have some knowledge of food and cookery than the smattering of French which is all they have time for. Of the 1590 girls taking commercial subjects, 1178 include cookery among their subjects and only 412 do not.

Certain parents and girls show a strong preference for the commercial course. The parents see in this course a way of having their girls trained for a nice ladylike way of earning a living. The girls have 'film-like' ideas of offices and of probably marrying their employer's son, whereas the only wage-earning possibility that the parents see in a domestic science course is domestic service, which, as everyone knows, is very unpopular.

As only about 8% of the girls in junior secondary schools do not have instruction in domestic science, including cookery, the position is again in the main satisfactory.

I may add that very good work is done in junior secondary schools which does not always get the recognition it should. The senior secondary schools, getting the cream of the pupils and taking them on further, have more showy results to their credit. A social distinction also creeps in here. Many parents and pupils feel that

a senior secondary school is a stage higher, and even if the course at this type of school is not so suitable for the particular pupil, and there is little likelihood of her completing the 5-year course, they want to be able to say, 'I was at a senior secondary school'.

It is in senior secondary schools that the trouble in connexion with the inclusion of domestic science in the curriculum mainly arises. Here all promising pupils are encouraged to take an academic course so that the largest possible number may sit the Senior Leaving Certificate examination, which is far too apt to be the beginning and end of all things in a senior secondary school. This attitude would be more understandable if all pupils completed the course and sat the examination, but since only about 10% of the children do, it means that the others are trailing after the select few and having a course which is not always suitable or interesting for them.

May I just give you two instances of this? In one senior secondary school in Glasgow, 200 girls start out on an academic course, and by the fifth year there are only twenty girls left. Some needlework is included in their course but no cookery, except for the few who remain until the fifth year. These have a short intensive course after they have safely got over the Senior Leaving Certificate examination. This school is in a working-class area where there is little chance of the girls having much instruction in domestic science elsewhere than in school.

In another senior secondary school, sixty girls set out on an academic course. The fifth year shows only one girl on the roll. In this case, twenty-nine of the sixty girls had cookery in their first year only.

These are examples of schools where facilities are available but domestic science is not encouraged. There are, on the other hand, other senior secondary schools where up to 86% of the total number of girls have instruction in cookery.

In recent years domestic science has been an optional subject for the Senior Leaving Certificate, but it is not one that is acceptable to all colleges of higher learning, e.g. the university. In many schools there is a tendency to use domestic science as an escape subject. When it is found that a girl is weak in some other subject and not likely to make the grade, she is transferred to domestic science, often as late as the end of her third year, which makes heavy going both for the girl and for the domestic science teacher. You may say, 'Why accept the girl in domestic science classes'? The answer is that we of the profession are so anxious to make a place for our subject that we will attempt almost anything. There is, however, no doubt that this again places domestic science in an inferior position as compared with other subjects. The other girls encouraged to take domestic science as a subject in the Senior Leaving Certificate examination are those who express a desire to go to the College of Domestic Science on leaving school. In my opinion, these are precisely the girls who do not require so much domestic science in school, since they are going to have a very thorough training when they go to the College of Domestic Science.

It is the girls who go to the university who most require domestic science in school, and they are just the group who study two languages and hence have no time for domestic science.

In the war years, when the schools were running camps for children helping with potato lifting, the headmaster of one secondary school was most perturbed because

his domestic science teacher was unable, for very adequate reasons, to go to the camp. When he approached me on the matter, I asked him if none of his other teachers, or senior girls, could cook. He looked at me first as if that were a most peculiar question to ask, then said 'No'. I could not refrain from saying 'Whose fault is that?', his school being very well equipped for domestic science but only a minimum being taught.

A great many people are beginning to feel that some change in school courses leading to the university and a professional career is due. Meanwhile, the school courses of these pupils are too much influenced by what the university wants, and too little by what would be best for the pupil. I cannot think that a student with all-round experience, practical and theoretical, would make a less efficient, finished product as a doctor, or a teacher, than a student who is good only at 'book' learning. I am not advocating the lowering of entrance standards, but a less stereotyped standard. After all, you can teach the production of carbon dioxide in a laboratory by means of marble chips and hydrochloric acid, or you can teach it in a cookery room by using cream of tartar and baking soda, but in the cookery room you teach the making of scones at the same time.

The girls who leave school with little or no instruction in cookery and kindred subjects seem to feel this lack in their education very soon after they finish with school. We get greater numbers enrolling in continuation classes than we can satisfactorily cope with. In September of last year, Glasgow Education Committee advertised courses of lessons in home making. The advertisement appeared only once in a few papers, and the result was astonishing. When I went to see how the enrolling was proceeding, I found between 300 and 400 people of all ages trying to enrol. I was very much interested in a conversation I had with a young married woman who came to enrol herself and her younger sister. She was very anxious to come to the classes herself, but more anxious that her young sister should get a place, 'because', she said, 'I would like her to have a better chance when she starts a home of her own than I had'. This young woman, even in her own opinion, had been misguidedly started out on an academic course at school which there was never any reason to suppose she would complete. When the enrolment for further courses took place in January, some of the students were there an hour before the stated time to make sure of their places. This would indicate that there is no antipathy to the subject itself, but something wrong with the system which debars the most promising pupils.

The all-over position in Glasgow is as follows:

Total number of post-primary girls	17,328
Total number having instruction in cookery	10,090
			Difference	7,238

Of the 7238 who do not have cookery, 3289 have instruction in needlework only in the early years of their course.

From these figures, which will be fairly typical of Scotland as a whole, it can be seen that, while a large number of girls do receive instruction in cookery in school, a considerable proportion do not. The 7000 with no cookery are, as I have shown

earlier, largely to be found amongst those taking academic courses. This means that in many cases our most mentally alert girls are being left out. The belief that the girl who is not good at other subjects must shine at practical subjects, and that the 'clever' girl is not good at practical subjects, is not found to be true in practice. The girl who is 'clever' at academic subjects is often found to be just as clever at practical subjects, and it does not seem to be in her interest to exclude her from cookery.

We must now ask ourselves where the fault lies and what are the remedies.

There are various reasons why domestic science is not included in all courses.

(1) The traditional Scottish education, of which we have had reason to be proud, is predominantly academic, and as a race we are slow to change.

(2) We have a legacy of old school buildings where no accommodation was provided for practical subjects such as cookery. Examples of this are found in several large senior secondary schools in Glasgow, and they make a considerable contribution to the numbers not receiving instruction in cookery.

(3) There is too strong a connexion between wage-earning and education.

(4) Curricula are overcrowded and headmasters, especially those who are academically minded, can very easily crowd out domestic subjects.

(5) The Scottish Education Department give sanction to courses which do not include cookery. This weakens the hand of anyone else trying to push it in the school.

(6) Education is too much divided into compartments or courses, and the child has got to fit into one or other of the courses. I suggest these remedies:

(1) The most effective remedy would be to have domestic science, including cookery, made a compulsory subject for all girls in the same way as physical training is a compulsory subject for all pupils. If it is important to train the body in physical fitness, it is equally important that pupils should have some knowledge of nourishing the body so that perfect fitness may be obtained.

(2) All interested bodies should consult together in order to frame school curricula in the best interests of the child.

(3) A Senior Leaving Certificate should be framed, acceptable to all establishments for further training, which would not exclude practical subjects from the course of study in school.

(4) Headmasters, who have a great deal of influence in directing the course of study for pupils in their respective schools, should give more consideration to the advantages of including domestic science.

(5) All new schools should be built with adequate provision for domestic science, and existing schools should have this provision made as quickly as possible.

The Teaching of Cookery and Nutrition in Schools

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In this paper I propose to discuss what I regard as the fundamentally important aspects of the teaching of cookery to schoolgirls as these strike the person responsible for the organization and efficiency of a large mixed establishment. The question whether all schoolgirls should receive such instruction permits of one answer only.