

Continuing Education for Women⁽¹⁾

Under several names like Adult Education, Extension Programs, Lifelong Learning, Continuing Education is the topic of the day, especially in the intellectual centers of the Far East.

Accompanied by a travelling team of experts in education, Mrs. Lily Badre, wife of BUC President, Dr. Albert Badre, visited nine colleges/universities in six Asian countries, to share in consultations on Continuing Education for women, instigated by the Asian Women's Institute.⁽²⁾ The team included Dr. Eva Shipstone, Sister Mary Braganza and Dr. Thelma Adair.

Why this interest in «Continuing Education»?

Because «formal liberal arts education, as offered in some of our colleges and universities to-day, is seen as irrelevant to the needs of the society we profess to serve». Most of the graduates of liberal arts colleges in Asia are not equipped to seek well paid jobs or to hold leadership positions in their respective countries. Besides its value as a means of personality development and intellectual growth, Continuing Education can prepare women for paid employment outside their homes. In supporting the movement, President Sumiya of Tokyo Women's Christian University said in his closing speech: «In order to stay young in this graying society, we must constantly rejuvenate ourselves through cultivation of up-to-date knowledge».

Continuing Education which in Europe and America, especially in the United States, has been attracting millions of women and offering all kinds of extension courses, has to be more comprehensive and diversified in Asia where it starts with the basics. Its function is to make women conscious of the new status and roles and opportunities which are open to women and help them take advantage of these roles and opportunities. It includes basic literacy education, education for community development, education to respond to new demands of social change and, very particularly, to help women achieve fuller development, so that they may participate fully in the world of work, in decision making and in society».

Mrs. Badre says that she was impressed by the activity going on in the field of Continuing Education in practically all the Asian countries she visited, particularly in Korea, the Philippines and India. «Programs are being offered by governments as well as by voluntary agencies of all kinds, ranging from women's organizations and men's clubs to educational institutions, churches and business concerns».

Her consultation in Korea was «hope-inspiring». Continuing Education programs are flourishing there. Offered by both government and

voluntary agencies, they involve almost every college and university in the country, and are directed towards a specific target group, rural or urban, depending on the location of the college/university. Ehwa woman's University in Seoul, South Korea, has a number of Continuing Education programs besides a popular Women's Studies course, attended this year by over 150 students. Another important program is offered to teachers who wish to up-date their knowledge or earn a higher degree while continuing working in their teaching jobs.

In Japan, the consultation was «thought-provoking». The division of roles between men and women is rigid and complete, thwarting progressive ideas regarding woman's role. Japanese women need Continuing Education to help them fill the leisure that rapid changes in society and technology have put at their disposal. Efforts are being spent to popularize women's studies and acquaint women with fundamental problems, such as studying the needs of the widowed woman, the single woman and the married woman whose children have grown up. These three categories of women need employment and must be trained for it.

In the Philippines, programs of Continuing Education abound, primarily those intended for the rural population. They include social and medical services, cottage industries, sanitation, health education, nursing, home arts and others.

In India, consultations were made at three colleges: Women's Christian College, St. Christopher's College and Izabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. The developed programs presented by the speakers were bound to wait because of the extreme poverty and ignorance of the rural population where 80% of the women are illiterate and living in slums. Encouraging signs, however, are not lacking. As an example, Izabella Thoburn College has adopted three rural villages where it is carrying out a social welfare program. If every college and university in India would do the same, this large country would move a long way towards solving its problems.

At Kinnaird College, Lahore, Pakistan, the needs of Pakistan's women as identified by consultation participants were: 1) sanitary and transportation services, 2) alleviation of women's frustrations caused by family situations or male dominance in the home, 3) providing job opportunities for women, 4) removing inhibitions to women's progress. Further studies on women's needs are expected from the Pakistan Women's Institute at Kinnaird College, which would be made possible through a women's studies course.

(1) Selections from a report, given in a workshop, by Mrs. Lily Badre on November 20, 1980, about the trip she made to the Far East during September 1980, as a consultant for AWI on Continuing Education.

(2) About the Asian Women's Institute see *Al-Raida*, September 1977, No.2, p.8 and May 1, 1980, vol.III, no.12, p.10.

On the whole, the basic factors responsible for the present depressed status of women in the Asian countries she visited are, according to Mrs Badre, more or less similar: traditional attitude toward women in Japan and Korea, the economic factor in the Philippines and India, the lack of training for work among educated women, their little concern about women's issues, the poor response of rural and slum women to the programs prepared for them, the little interest shown by men in women's needs and problems. All these trends call for extensive study and create two general challenges for colleges and universities to consider:

1) How to reconstruct current college courses for city women and Continuing Education courses for the urban housewife so as to motivate them to become contributors in their society.

2) How to make Continuing Education programs more challenging for the rural woman in order to motivate her to accept change and to seek to improve her situation.

A New Census of the Handicapped in Lebanon.

A «Commission of Statistics for the Handicapped in Lebanon» has been recently created with the aim of obtaining detailed information about the handicapped all over the country, to whatever category they belong. For this purpose, ninety centers will be established and equipped to receive the handicapped who will be registered and, accordingly, will have to fill a formulary reporting their personal and family conditions.

The project which will try to evaluate the aid that would be offered to the handicapped by national and international organizations during IYDP, will be carried out in four stages permitting a careful study of the results and conclusions of collected data and, lastly, the edition and publication of final reports.

Three hundred young people are already being trained for the execution of the project. Ninety of them will work as guides, 25 as team leaders, 10 responsible for the administrative districts. They will form itinerant teams, whose leaders will be free to decide about the starting point of their activities. Unregistered handicapped persons will be liable to home visits from team members inquiring about the causes preventing their cooperation.

The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Dr. Abdul Rahman Labban, is the director of this officially recognized organization.

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