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Beginnings of Professional Education

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CHAPTER VII

THE BEGINNINGS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

FROM 1830 TO 1865, a ferment of ideas was working itself out in American life. This was the period of Jacksonian democracy and westward expansion. In literature and thought, transcendentalism was predominant while the anti-slavery agitation and the early woman's rights movement held the center of the political and social stage.

In Europe, the same condition persisted. The two revolutions of 1830 and 1848 bore testimony to a growing desire for more democracy. The emancipation of the serfs in Russia, the winning of Italian independence and the wide political, economic and social reforms in England were signs that such desires could no longer be ignored.

It is not strange that women all over the world, but especially in democratic America, should reach out for larger opportunities for self-expression. The strength of this desire may be measured by the opposition which it met. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, there seemed to be no end to the books which were written about women. It was only too easy to obtain book after book on the "sphere of woman" or the "mission of women." The magazines were flooded with articles on the same topic, all written from the conservative point of view. But to the practical thinker it became evident, in the course of time, that good advice was not sufficient to enable girls to earn a living. Such pleasant reflections fitted very well into a privileged life of ease but an increasingly large group of thinking men and women began to feel that plans should be devised by which a woman could earn a respectable income. The few employments which were open to her were more than over-crowded. Therefore it seemed advisable that ways and means should be devised by which more avenues of employment could be opened to women, thus relieving the congestion in the few markets already at their command.¹

As a legacy from England, needlework had always been considered in America a proper method by means of which girls could earn their living. Every school for indigent girls offered this study as part of its curriculum. Even in fashionable schools plain and ornamental needlework formed part of the course of study. In some instances, newer immigrants brought their household industries with them to the new country. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale College, mentions seeing ten German women seated in front of a little building busily employed in dressing flax. He adds, not without a certain pride, that women in New England were employed in and about the home and in the "proper busi-

¹ Penny, Virginia, "The Employment of Women," preface.

ness of the sex.”² However women could not long continue to stay at home even in New England. The social and economic forces which eventually forced large numbers of them out into the world of industry and business were becoming too strong to be resisted. And as an accompaniment to this social and economic change went a corresponding change in the idea of what was fitting for “the sex.”

From the beginning of the settlement of America women had been teachers of small children. But their work was not considered of enough importance to necessitate training had such training been available. The teaching which they did was looked upon largely as a stop-gap between youth and an early marriage. Naturally young girls, with no ambition for advancement in the profession, were satisfied to be entirely without qualifications for teaching. No standard of attainment was set at which they must arrive before they assumed the business of instruction. The result was that any young woman kept school who could persuade her friends to employ her. The examination and certification by a minister of the town, both more or less of a farce, proved to be no efficient check upon the intrusion of ignorance and inexperience into the schools. Especially was this true since the only fixed standard was a moral one. These very young teachers had no education beyond what they had acquired in the very schools where they taught. Of professional training, they had not an inkling. Not that this lack was peculiar to them. Young men were equally as lacking in any felt need or desire for such training but looked upon teaching as a convenient avenue to a more lucrative profession.³

As the attendance at summer school consisted of young boys and girls, it was considered highly desirable that the school board should save money by employing young girls as teachers. And the daughters of the citizens in the community were only too glad to earn a small sum by teaching such schools. Young men were employed during the winter as the presence of older boys at this season justified, in the eyes of the school board, the extra outlay of money. But with the development of the country and the opening up of other professions teaching proved less and less attractive to the more ambitious among the young men. Those who did remain in the profession were, in too many instances, of a mental and moral calibre which rendered them unfit for their task. By the eighteen forties the question was asked very persistently why young women were not competent to teach in winter as well as in summer. As early as 1838, Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, had said that, in his opinion, there would soon be an entire unanimity in pub-

² Dwight, Timothy, “Gravels in New England and New York,” Vol. 3, p. 295.

³ Carter, James G., “Essays Upon Popular Education,” p. 36.

lic sentiment in regarding "female" as superior to male teaching for young children. He felt that not only would a woman find out where a child was quickest but that she would follow its movements more readily and, if it went astray, she would bring it back into the right path more gently and kindly than would a man.⁴ In this, as in so many other respects, Horace Mann was far in advance of his time. At this date, the opinion of the majority was that women or rather girls could not handle the large boys who came to school in the winter. The natural feelings of boys of fifteen, sixteen or seventeen, it was said, would be that it was "pusillanimous to obey a woman."⁵ The discussion continued to persist and was looked at from many angles both in the reports of the district superintendents in New York as well as in New England. Various reasons were given here for employing women, not the least being that they could be procured at less cost than men thus freeing more money to extend the school term for the same expense.⁶ Other superintendents took a less mercenary view of the possibilities of women teaching and gave more worthy reasons for employing them. These executives felt that women had better morals than men consequently they would have a more wholesome effect upon the children. The old method of correction, corporal punishment, was felt to be outworn. This change in moral training eliminated one of the main arguments for employing men as teachers. Also it was becoming increasingly plain that learning of an exalted nature was not required to teach the very young but that habits of neatness and good manners were of prime importance. In these virtues women were held to be superior to men.⁷ With the outbreak of the Civil War in the sixties, came a great demand for men for the armies thus reducing the possible number available for civilian position. Society, as always when wars occur, became accustomed to look to women to do work formerly done by men. For this reason many women were appointed to places in the schools which had formerly not been open to them. By 1868, the superintendent of Public Instruction in New York reported that women were, at that time, successful teachers of nearly all the district schools. In addition, he stated, that there seemed to be no reason why they should not share those offices for which by nature and education they were so admirably adapted.⁸

⁴ Mann, Horace, "Lectures and Annual Reports on Education," Vol. 2.

⁵ Common School Journal, Vol. 2, 1840, p. 278.

⁶ Barnard, Henry, "Report on the Public Schools of Rhode Island, 1845, p. 11.

⁷ Report of Superintendent of Schools, Monroe Co., N.Y., 1844.

⁸ Fourteenth Annual Report, Superintendent of Public Instruction, New York, 1868, p. 14.

In New England, the same practice of employing women as teachers in rural districts was being well-established. The ideal of discipline by means of brute force was passing away, being supplanted by the ideal that better results could be obtained by the dignity and sympathy peculiar to a woman.⁹ In more populous districts women were employed as assistants to men principals, although sometimes they might be selected as principals of grammar schools and, after the middle of the century, of newly created high schools for girls.¹⁰

With the promotion of women to more responsible positions, the limitations of their abilities and training became more and more obvious. Any young woman of pleasing personality and good family had felt herself competent to teach little children. The likelihood of her being employed was only too certain since she was willing to work for a very low salary. It is hardly fair to put all the blame for such a condition upon the teachers themselves. They were as good as public opinion demanded and as good as public sentiment was disposed to appreciate. Public liberality was not ready to reward anyone more competent and the measures taken to qualify teachers would hardly have authorized anyone to expect better results.¹¹ It was only after public sentiment had been educated that better conditions could be hoped for. Such a change came about through many different agencies. The work of men like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard in New England and Gideon Hawley in New York; of women like Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher and Mary Lyon, was of the utmost importance. But their task, difficult as it was, would have been almost impossible had not certain social forces aided their efforts. The grouping of people in cities as a result of the industrial revolution, the rise of the laboring class to a place where their voices carried weight and the quickening of the public conscience through religious awakenings all made plain the demands for more equitable conditions in society. Among the many weaknesses of which society became aware, none was more glaring than the inadequate public school. Here, not only were the teachers poorly trained and uninterested in their work, but in many places it was found that the schools were closed half the year.¹² In others, that the youth came away from attendance on them without any proper provision of knowledge, with undisciplined minds unaccustomed to thinking and more often with a confirmed dislike rather than with a love of intellectual pur-

⁹ Connecticut Common School Journal, 1863, p. 168.

¹⁰ Grizzell, *Supra*.

¹¹ Mann, Horace, 7th Annual Report.

¹² Rochester Republican, April 9, 1838.

suits.¹³ Except in the cities and a few large towns, the teachers of the primary schools were considered as unfit for their vocation as imagination could conceive since they were lacking in knowledge, manners, dignity and character.¹⁴ In short what was needed was training for the profession and a responsible and intelligently impersonal agency for licensing applicants for positions.

Training for the profession was taken care of in three ways. These were teacher training classes in the academies, teacher's institutes and normal schools. Teacher training classes in the academies, perhaps, because they were the easiest to manage, came first. This method of solving a difficult problem was much more thoroughly organized in New York than in New England. As early as 1821, the report of the regents called attention to the desirability of the state looking to the academies for their supply of teachers. In 1826, Governor DeWitt Clinton, in his message to the legislature, called its attention to his belief that teaching should be ranked among the learned professions. To further this end, he recommended that a seminary for the education of teachers in the monitorial system of instruction and in those "useful branches of knowledge which are proper to engraft on elementary attainments" should be established.¹⁵ But the confidence of the legislature in the academies was too great to be easily disturbed and it was long after the middle of the century before they were supplanted by normal schools.

The first report made to the regents on the training of girls as teachers is found in their report for the year 1835. In this year Rochester High School reported that seventy males and females had been sent out as teachers and added that a large part of the instruction in the higher classes of the female department had been conducted by the "gentlemen" of the seminary.¹⁶

In some academies it was the custom to have a series of recitations and lectures for young women for two or three months preceding the opening of the summer schools. But even this slight training was undertaken with some hesitancy since there was grave doubt about the possibility of attracting the attention of "female" teachers to the subject for any length of time. It was hoped that if this could be done, the proposed exercises would have a happy effect in carrying out the plans of the regents. Also it was felt that more efficient work could be done in the winter school if a proper foundation were laid by the teachers in the summer school. As

¹³ New York Review, 1838, p. 482.

¹⁴ The Knickerbocker, March 1837, p. 28.

¹⁵ Lincoln, Charles Z., "Messages from the Governors," Vol. 3, p. 116.

¹⁶ Report of Regents, 1835.

a large part of primary instruction in these latter schools devolved upon women teachers it was considered of the highest importance that they should be well qualified in the elementary branches.¹⁷ It then became the custom to open departments for "females" during the winter in order that they might be prepared for teaching in the summer schools but no sessions were held for them during the summer term since their work in winter school was almost negligible.

In 1837, the Albany Female Academy opened a one year course for teacher training. No tuition charge was made to the pupils for the course, their only return for the instruction received was by way of substitute teaching. Whenever a regular teacher was absent, a pupil teacher took the class, thus gaining experience in the method of communicating knowledge.¹⁸

Troy Female Seminary was especially celebrated for its teacher training. Its founder, Emma Willard, believed that the best way of broadcasting her ideas of the education proper for girls was to train teachers in these ideas and to send them out to scatter widely what she considered to be the correct views on education.¹⁹ Following this plan throughout her entire public life, it is estimated that Troy sent out thousands of students many of whom became teachers. The plan of training was similar but not entirely like that at Albany. At Troy, the students taught regular classes for which service they received their tuition.²⁰

These two seminaries, Albany and Troy, did such splendid work for teacher training that they were designated by the regents as proper training academies in their respective districts and as worthy to receive state aid for teacher training classes.

When training classes were first opened in the academies, the number of men in attendance was larger than that of women. In 1845, for example, 6955 men and 6563 women were reported to the regents as being in such classes.²¹ But as other opportunities in life opened up to men and the chances for promotion for young women in the teaching profession widened, the ratio between the sexes changed. By 1867-68, the regents reported only 463 men in comparison with 1026 women.²²

Although the academies were not so well organized in New England

¹⁷ Report of Regents, Oxford Academy, 1836.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 1837.

¹⁹ Willard, Emma, "Advancement of Female Education," p. 12.

²⁰ Fowler, Henry, "Educational Services of Emma Willard," *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 6, 1859.

²¹ Report of Regents, 1846.

²² *Ibid*, 1869.

as they were in New York, yet there were independent academies in these states which did splendid work in training teachers. From the beginning of the movement to raise the education of girls to a higher plane, one of the chief incentives for carrying this pioneer work to a successful conclusion was the desire to offer opportunities to intelligent girls to become teachers. None of the seminaries for young women did better work in this respect than did Mt. Holyoke in Massachusetts.

From the establishment of the school in 1837, teacher training was one of its main objectives. The founder, Mary Lyon, never tired of impressing on her student's minds the need of a thorough education for those who were planning to teacher others. She gave certificats only to the students who had finishd the whole course and constantly added subjects for study to make the work more complete. Many of the pupils objected to spending what they considered an excessive amount of time in preparation. Three years of work was not relished when one year was universally conceded to be ample time in which to prepare any young woman to teach.²⁴ But such objections fell on deaf ears. Little by little, year after year, the course was improved and the pupils held up to an ever increasing standard of excellence.

However excellent the work done in the seminaries for girls and in the academies, at best it was only a makeshift. Better than the training given in the common schools, it was yet far from meeting the growing needs of the community. Indeed so limited were the possibilities in these institutions that there were not enough graduates of teacher training classes to meet the needs of the common schools. The effect of such a restriction upon education was to create a great inequality in standards. The schools taught by graduates of the academies improved in quality of work while the tone of the rest was lowered by comparison.²⁵ And quite without premeditation, the academies continued the class distinctions of an earlier day. On account of tuition charges, the poor could not avail themselves of the opportunities offered. Such a limitation restricted the ranks of teachers to the well-to-do. To a much less degree was this true of the seminaries established exclusively for young women. At Troy and at Albany, at Mt. Holyoke and at Ipswich, a large part of the justification for their foundation lay in the claim that in these schools poor girls could learn to teach by the apprenticeship method. In so doing the students not only paid their way but the supply of teachers was augmented. In some cases, as at Albany, the aid was purely gratuitous; in others, as at Troy,

²³ Reflections of Long Ago Days, p. 218.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 222.

²⁵ Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

the sum borrowed was paid back when the teacher had earned it, in other instances "good situations were provided or no tuition was charged."²⁶ But in spite of such well meant efforts to meet an increasingly complex situation, the training of teachers in academies was found to be inadequate to supply the necessary demand for teachers in the schools and some better way was sought. This better way was found in the establishment of normal schools.

To New England must be given the credit for the first experiments with this type of teacher training. As early as 1823, the Rev. Samuel Hall opened a private normal school at Concord, Vermont, which was moved some years later to Andover, Massachusetts, and, in 1837, to Plymouth, N.H. The next year, 1838, owing to the efforts of Horace Mann, the legislature of Massachusetts authorized the founding of three normal schools so located that all parts of the state might be served equally. The success of Massachusetts in establishing and maintaining publicly supported normal schools was an incentive to New York to try the same experiment. In 1844 the legislature in this state established its first state normal school at Albany which was soon followed by others throughout the state. By 1860 eleven state normal schools had been established in eight of the states of the American union and six private schools were also rendering similar service.²⁷

From their foundation normal schools were designed to include girls in their training classes. Some schools advertised such an objective in their announcements. Their purpose as thus stated was to give girls who had been graduated at the grammar schools such an education as would enable them to act efficiently as assistants to the teachers in the grammar and primary schools.²⁸ Lexington, Mass., also advertised itself as a normal school to qualify female teachers for the common schools.²⁹ But, in the main, the schools were open to both sexes alike although the tendency was for the girls to outnumber the men. By 1872 the report of the United States Commissioner of Education reports a discrepancy as follows:

New Hampshire State Normal School—3 men, 12 women graduates.

New York, Brockport—15 men, 37 women graduates.

Cortlandt—11 men, 63 women graduates.

Fredonia—2 men, 55 women graduates.

Normal College—1384 women graduates.

²⁶ Meridan Academy, New Haven Palladium, December 25, 1841.

²⁷ Cubberley, Elwood P., "The History of Education," p. 753.

²⁸ City Document No. 65, Report of the Annual Examination of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, 1853.

²⁹ Connecticut Common School Journal, Vol. 1, p. 96.

Oswego—43 men 441 women graduates.
Potsdam—121 women graduates.
Maine, Castine—24 men, 32 women graduates.
S. Paris—40 men, 108 women graduates.
Massachusetts, Salem—678 women graduates.
Westfield—350 men 850 women graduates.
Worcester—45 women graduates.
Vermont, Caselton—2 men, 24 women graduates.
Johnson—18 men, 87 women graduates.
Randolph Center—52 men, 6 women graduates.

Such figures seem to indicate not only an increase in the demand for women teachers but also a desire on the part of the women themselves to qualify for their task.

It may seem that this increase in the number of young women enrolled in the normal school had come about as an aftermath of the Civil War. But such was not the case. As early as 1847 the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, in his Tenth Annual Report, stated that in each institution for teacher training in that state more females than males were in attendance.³⁰ This statement does not mean that, in all cases, the two sexes attended at the same time. The same reasons for attendance at normal schools obtained as had prevailed in the teacher training classes in the academies. The men came in larger numbers in summer while in winter the reverse was true.³¹ This popularity of teacher training institutions it not to be wondered at since it fitted in well with preconceived ideas of the original nature of woman and of her social destiny. "No place could be found," said one of the leaders of feminine thought, "where girls could more safely assert their love of power and make so good a preparation for matrimony."³²

The course of study in the normal schools was practically the same for both sexes. The modicum of educational theory which had been formulated had not yet been differentiated into masculine and feminine, as had the academic subjects. In the latter studies some were not taught to women, such as higher algebra, plane trigonometry and surveying.³³ Doubtless this was not simply a sex difference but was influenced by the needs of women both in teaching and in other occupations.

Closely related to the normal schools was the Teachers Institute first

³⁰ Common School Journal, Vol. 9, 1847, p. 120.

³¹ Ibid, Vol. 6, 1844, p. 64.

³² Sigourney, Lydia H., "Letters to Mothers," p. 398.

³³ Report of the Executive Committee of the State Normal School, Albany, 1847.

definitely organized by Henry Barnard in Connecticut in 1839 to offer four to six weeks summer courses for teachers in service. By 1860 fifteen of the American states had followed Connecticut's example.³⁴

The Institutes met twice annually, in the spring and fall. Men and women, who expected to teach the following session gathered in some convenient place and formed classes under the leadership of distinguished teachers. In addition to lectures on the general principles of school management, order and discipline, actual drill in class procedure and the routine of the school room was given. The evenings were given over to lectures on topics connected with general educational ideals. The length of the institute varied in different localities. A fortnight, however, was the usual length of time spent in such training.³⁵

As Massachusetts had led in the founding of normal schools, so New York led in teachers' institutes. So popular did they become that in 1869 there were fifty-six in fifty-five counties, with 3009 male and 6486 female teachers in attendance.^{35a}

In 1834, Horace Mann called the attention of the public in his state to the superiority of New York's educational procedure. "It has a far more comprehensive and efficient code of laws for regulating public instruction than any other of the twenty-six states; and its system, with but few exceptions, is most wisely arranged and is now worked out with a vigor and spirit unequalled in any other part of our republic.

"Why cannot this plan of Teachers Institutes originating in New York be adopted in Massachusetts? We have borrowed her system of district school libraries and it has found almost universal favor among our citizens. She has borrowed our normal schools. . . . Let us now adopt the system of Teachers' Institutes which she has projected and thus maintain that noble rivalry of benefaction which is born of a philanthropy which cares more for good done than doers of it."³⁶

After the middle of the century, women appeared as instructors in the Institutes. Especially was this true of the teachers in the Oswego, N.Y. Normal School who were popularizing the Pestalozzian object teaching. As their work became better known it was not unusual for a teacher from the practice school carried on in connection with the normal school to give illustrations of her work not only in object teaching but in other subjects as mental arithmetic. Public readings became very popular at

³⁴ Cubberley, *op. cit.*, p. 753.

³⁵ Mann, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 429.

^{35a} Report of U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1870.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 430.

these Institutes which offered another opportunity for teachers in normal schools to demonstrate their ability.³⁷

As these readings were usually done by women, there is here strong proof of the change which was taking place in public sentiment. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century women were not even allowed to speak from a platform nor were girls taught elocution.

However the attendance of women at Institutes was not uniform. In some districts the pay was so small that the women teachers refused to incur the expense necessary for their attendance. In others they came but took no part in the meetings. There is an interesting story of the men teachers in the high school at Salem, Massachusetts, who invented a question box in order that the women primary teachers might be heard since they would not talk in meeting.³⁸ Such action is surely a tribute to the growing forces of democracy which were beginning to operate more strongly in America. Another example of a change of heart is found in the first announcements of teachers' institutes made in Massachusetts. This stipulated that each district should send an equal number of men and women to the Institute, fifty of each sex. If less than this quota presented itself, the number was to be filled from the other sex.³⁹ In many such ways both the normal schools and the Teachers' Institutes made it plain that their opportunities were open to both sexes alike. As these were the agencies for teacher training which survived, the academies having entirely disappeared or sunk into a subordinate position by 1870, sex became no barrier to entering the profession of teaching.

³⁷ Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, New York, 1866.

³⁸ Common School Journal, 1845, p. 93.

³⁹ Ibid Vol. 8, 1846, p. 124.