

# WOMEN AND EDUCATION

LICERIA BRILLANTES SORIANO\*

## I. *Introduction*

The celebration of International Women's Year focuses attention on the "what about the women" of all nations and this lecture series initiated by the U.P. Law Center is one of the many activities that attempt to assess the status of the Filipino woman. The celebration was conceived in Geneva where in 1972, the Commission of the United Nations on the Status of Women met. In endorsing the plan of the Commission, the United Nations General Assembly enunciated that the year would be devoted to intensified action on:

1. The promotion of equality between men and women.
2. The greater integration of women in total development effort by emphasizing women's responsibility and important roles in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels.
3. The recognition of the importance of women's increasing contributions to the development of friendly relations and cooperation among states and to the strengthening of world peace.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing statements on the goals of the International Women's Year can be reduced into three simple but very significant terms, namely: equality, development and peace.

These, we can all agree, are legitimate and perhaps urgent goals to pursue, especially the second and the third in the sense that in our present efforts to build a new society geared toward development and peace, all our human resources of which woman potential is a substantial and significant part must be exploited to the full.

With respect to equality, I do not believe we should go "burning bras" and shouting "women's lib" in the streets, for honestly, we Filipino women have, as of today, achieved a social status which is better than most women all over the world. I am quite certain that the few civil rights which our women-lawyers say have been denied us, will under the present temper of the times, soon be secured by them for all of us.

For indeed, the Filipino woman who lives in the Orient is in several ways far ahead of her sisters in the region who until recently, wore a

---

\**Director, Bureau of Elementary Education.*

<sup>1</sup>Bulletin Today, October 23, 1974.

veil over the face or a red dot on the forehead. Our women are quite advanced in all aspects of life — political, social, economic, cultural and educational. Because of this, it has been said that she is more of the West than of the East. It is, of course, more accurate to say that she is a product of a strange mixture of these two influences, emerging from the mix as one truly different, and yet still blessed with other advantages of a unique Philippine vintage.

In the field of education, however since the topic requested of me to talk about is "Women and Education", I will briefly trace a few historical facts as a background to the position of women both where they are and where they are not today.

## II. *Early Education of Filipino Women*

Writings of Filipino historians and educators do not show that the right to education had ever been denied the Filipino woman. These writings agree that during the pre-Spanish period there existed some system of education, but what kind of schools were established was not indicated. Father Chirino who was one of the first to study this matter states that there was hardly any man, much less a woman, who did not read and write in the letters used in Manila.<sup>2</sup> Why much less a woman? This would seem to indicate that there were more women than men who could read and write at the time adverted to.

Upon the arrival of the Spaniards in the Philippines, the missionaries immediately worked on the conversion of the natives to Christianity. The need for training young men, particularly the sons of the "*conquistadores*", led to the establishment of schools for boys, for the service of the king and the church. Thus schools for boys, such as the Royal College of San Jose and the College of Santo Tomas were established in 1601 and 1610 respectively, the latter having been elevated to a university in 1645.<sup>3</sup>

Alzona, however, says that during this period the education of women was not neglected. The royal decrees ordered the establishment of popular schools for boys and girls in the parochial centers in Manila and in the provinces.<sup>4</sup> Among the earlier ones were Santa Catalina College which was founded in 1695 and the Beaterio de la Compañia de Jesus founded in 1699.

The girls' schools in Manila were classified into *colegios* and *beaterios*. The *colegios* offered academic and vocational courses while the *beaterios*

---

<sup>2</sup>ALDANA, THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE PHILIPPINES 2 (1949).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>4</sup>ALZONA, THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINE EDUCATION 33-34 (1932).

were run like orphanages where those who wanted seclusion were accommodated. On this matter, Alzona says, "As the chief aim of these institutions was to prepare women either for motherhood or for the religious life, there was little academic instruction. In the college of Santa Isabel, for example, there were only two teachers — the directress who gave lessons in catechism and Spanish grammar and a male teacher who went there now and then to teach arithmetic. At that time, this amount of training was regarded sufficient for women. In fact, Murillo Velarde, in his account of the Jesuit Missions from 1616 to 1716, asserted that the girls in Santa Isabel College were receiving 'admirable education.' However, Alzona also says that women's education in the Philippines at that time compared favorably with that of women in Europe, particularly France."<sup>5</sup>

The Royal Decree of 1863 provided for a system of primary schools. This was the first real attempt by the Spaniards at popular education in the country. It provided that there should be one male and one female teacher for every 5,000 inhabitants. This requirement, however, was realized only in the "*centros de poblacion*" and the rural communities were never reached and so they remained unenlightened for long.

The primary schools were open to boys and girls. The subjects offered to the girls were, however, slightly different from those offered to the boys. The three R's were common to all, but in place of Spanish geography, history and practical agriculture taken by the boys, the girls were required to take "employments" (subjects) suited to their sex.<sup>6</sup>

To man the primary schools, teachers had to be trained. The first normal schools to train teachers for men were "to serve as a source of supply for religious, moral and educated teachers to take charge of native schools or primary instruction." The Manila normal school for men was under the immediate supervision of the Jesuits while the normal school for school mistresses established in Manila in 1868 was under the Sisters of Charity. Soon after, another normal school for women was organized under the charge of the Assumption Sisters.<sup>7</sup>

The Santa Isabel de Nueva Caceres in Naga, named after the Queen of Hungary was also established by royal decree. This was the first normal school for girls in the provinces and it was in operation from 1877 to 1898. During the 22 years of its existence, it graduated 300 women teachers.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup>ALDANA, *op. cit. supra*, note 2 at 5-6.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>From the inscription on the marker at the Colegio de Santa Isabel in Naga City.

It can be seen from the foregoing gleanings from history that the education of Filipino women during the Spanish time was under the tutelage of the religious — the priests and sisters. This is perhaps responsible for the stereotyped image of the educated Filipina at the time, as one who was a *colegiala*, and therefore, religious, gentle and submissive; the last trait to the extent of servility, which was severely criticized by Filipino writers and thinkers. Graciano Lopez Jaena censured the generosity of Filipino women to the friars and the Church. "With the gifts that they showered on the priests," Lopez Jaena said, "they could found schools and build hospitals which would be a blessing to the people in general."<sup>9</sup>

The previous discussions likewise reveal that, before the primary schools for both boys and girls were ordered established by the decree of 1863, schools for girls, be they *colegios* or normal schools were always thought of and organized much later than the same schools for boys, a clear sign of discrimination or inequality of educational opportunity.

One significant incident on women's initiative to educate themselves happened in the late 1880's when the end of the Spanish regime was only a decade away. Twenty-one socially prominent women of Malolos, defying existing regulations on the opening of schools for women, presented a petition to the Spanish Governor, General Weyler, for the establishment of a school where they could study the Spanish language. In spite of hindrances and difficulties in the approval of the petition, the women were undaunted and were finally granted the permission they sought. Upon being informed of this move, Rizal wrote the now famous "Letter to the Women of Malolos" and even as he congratulated them for their courage, he reminded them of the desirability of putting an end to the manner in which they were being educated by the friars. He admonished them against blind submission to the priests. He reminded them that religion did not consist in repeating kilometric prayers, kissing the hands of the parish priest, kneeling and wearing greasy *scapularios*. He enjoined them to use their reason rather than obey blindly their confessors. He told them that if the women did not emerge from their ignorance, they would perpetuate their country's slavery. He said that a country whose women are wrongly educated could never progress. Asia is backward, he wrote, because of the ignorance and slavery of its women.<sup>10</sup>

The twenty-one women petitioners were the first students; however, the school, according to information later admitted boys and it continued to operate till the early part of the American regime. A marker now identifies the site of the original schools.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup>ALZONA, *op. cit. supra*, note 4 at 173-174.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>Gamos, Manila Chronicle, July 5, 1961, p. 22.

### III. *During the American Regime*

The present public school system, as it exists today, had its foundation in the beginning of the American regime. The first schools were established by the military government in 1899 and were redesigned by the civil government in 1901, gearing their objectives to the requirements of modern democracy.<sup>12</sup> Schools were opened in all towns and barrios that could be reached. Both boys and girls were admitted. The academic curriculum for both sexes was the same; however, variations in the industrial arts which were aimed mainly at manual training, were advocated. The girls were trained in sewing and housekeeping and the boys, in gardening and any other industrial work suited to the local conditions, needs and resources in each particular community.<sup>13</sup>

The same curricular differentiations have been carried over to the intermediate and secondary schools until today where the boys take practical arts in the shop such as woodworking, electricity, carpentry, metalwork and automotive while the girls take the various branches of home economics. The sex-role concept that the woman is to be prepared for motherhood and to perform her household chores well and that the man is the provider and, therefore, must learn to trade or a profession is still dominant in Philippine society especially among rural families.

This concept of the role of man and woman is true, not only in Filipino culture but in other cultures as well, the American none-the-less; a concept that has perpetuated the woman's position as the weaker sex or second sex, or secondary sex. This attitude was shown in the male monopoly of decision-making positions during the whole American rule. All the secretaries of public instruction and directors of public education who were mostly American, up to the Commonwealth government, were men. All the American superintendents of schools were men.

In the fulfillment of the American mission to prepare the Filipinos for self-government and, therefore, for leadership in all areas of national endeavor, *pensionados* were sent to the United States to specialize in certain fields. The first 100 Filipino *pensionados* were sent in 1904 and all of them were men.<sup>14</sup> After about twenty years, specifically, in 1922, the male pattern was broken (it could not be verified if this was the first time) for in "Pensionado Reminiscences" which appeared in the Philippine Free Press in 1938, it was mentioned that four students earned doctorates in philosophy and one in science. One of the doctorates in phil-

---

<sup>12</sup>ALZONA, *op. cit. supra*, note 4 at 198.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>14</sup>GRAPHIC, October 22, 1927.

osophy was obtained by a woman, Dr. Encarnacion Alzona, who then became the first Filipino woman to obtain this coveted degree.<sup>15</sup>

The Filipinization move in the educational system with the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1935 brought about the appointment of the first Filipino Director of Education. In 1938, Dr. Celedonio Salvador was appointed to this position. But still all the decision-making positions in the hierarchy of the public schools below the Director were given to men. Such were the positions of division superintendents, district and division supervisors and secondary school principals. Women were hardly considered for such positions for it was the tradition to have men, and the women accepted it with resignation, if not with a second-class complex. In the late 1930's, there were a few women appointed to the position of elementary school principal, perhaps as a concession, since the office supervises young children whom a woman can adequately handle.

Gradually, as time went by, the American policy of education in the country, in line with modern democratic principles, not only permitted but actually encouraged the establishment of schools for women. Many private schools mushroomed not only in Manila but also in the provinces. The first of such schools was the Instituto de Mujeres founded in 1900 by Rosa Alvero Sevilla who herself was a graduate of the Superior Normal School established by the Spaniards. The Centro Escolar de Señoritas (now Centro Escolar University) was founded by Librada Avelino in 1907 and the Philippine Women's University by Francisca Benitez in 1910. Many Catholic schools and colleges for girls were also established and all those opened in the earlier decades of this century still exist and are among the best in the country today. The Philippine Normal School (now College), the first government teacher training institution was opened as a co-educational school in 1903 and so was the University of the Philippines which was opened in 1908. In 1924, Santo Tomas University which before that time was only for men, began to admit women, thereby accepting the principle of co-education.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. *From 1946 to The Present*

The conditions brought about by World War II and the achievement of our independence as a nation brought about many social changes which resulted in gains for women. In the educational system alone, there was a big shift of manpower (men) from teaching to other trades and professions. Because many of the government supported schools, colleges and

---

<sup>15</sup>PHILIPPINE FREE PRESS, August 22, 1938.

<sup>16</sup>ISIDRO, EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINE 296-297 (1939).

universities could not be reopened at once upon the termination of the war, many of the students, especially in the secondary and tertiary levels flocked to the private schools, which, depending wholly upon tuition fees to operate, found no difficulty in reopening their doors. In fact, the backlog of high school and college students that accumulated during the war was so big that enrollment in the private schools swelled to unmanageable proportions. Many of the principals and supervisors in the public schools before the war were invited to private schools to fill vacancies in both the teaching and administrative positions.

Public school teachers with necessary degrees moved to the private schools which at that time could offer higher salaries than the impoverished and despoiled public institutions. There was a rush for degrees in order to qualify to teach in the overcrowded elementary and secondary schools, both public and private. Hence, enrollment in all colleges and universities was further swelled by those already employed but were in pursuit of new degrees. As if suddenly awakening from lethargy, many women were enrolled in evening, Saturday and summer classes to upgrade their qualifications and improve their competencies. As a result of the movement to the private schools by teachers, many of whom were men, and of the attainment of advanced degrees by more women, the latter began to fill administrative and policy-making positions in the public schools, such as elementary school principals, district supervisors and national supervisors. The first national supervisors for health, home economics and music, who were appointed even before the Philippine gained its independence, were women. But note that the areas to which they were assigned were those that were sex-connected.

For the first division superintendent examination that was given after the war in 1946, two women, daring and self-confident, applied, to the complete surprise, if not disbelief, of the then Director of Education who had to grant the permission. Both of them were admitted and both of them qualified, along with twelve men out of 180 examinees. One of them, the late Dr. Miguela Solis was appointed Division Superintendent for Bataan in 1948 and the other one was appointed Superintendent for Zamboanga and Basilan Cities in 1949. Thus the male barrier to the public school superintendency was broken. But it was not until twenty years later that several women, in fact more than ever expected, qualified in the superintendent examination given in 1966.

In all the line or hierarchical administrative positions in the Bureau of Public Schools, there has been a fast accommodation of women. The comparative number of male and female in the different positions in the field today is shown in Table I.

Table I  
Hierarchical Positions in the BPS

Category	Male	Female	Total
Division Superintendents	89	22	111
City Superintendents	15	13	28
Division Supervisors	503	685	1,188
District Supervisors	1,068	454	1,522
Secondary Principals	142	162	304
Elementary Principals	3,507	2,400	5,907

In the Central Office of the Bureau of Public Schools where there are fifteen administrative and promotional divisions, all positions of Chief or Head used to be occupied by men. However, with the appointment of a woman as Chief of the Medical and Dental Services in 1946, and of the Home Economics Division in 1960, women started the move toward the position of Division Chiefs but still in the sex-connected fields. Then, in 1964, a woman was appointed Chief of Special Subjects and Services, a division which takes care of the administration and supervision of science, mathematics, art, music, physical education, cooperatives, library services, visual education and textbook services. Today, all of the eight promotional divisions which deal with the substantive part of the educational program are headed by women and the only ones left to the men are the administrative positions: finance, accounting, property, school plant, legal, records and personnel.

In the enrollment in colleges and universities, the figures are equally encouraging to women. In this connection, two tables have been prepared to present more vividly the male-female trend in higher education. Table II presents the number and percentages of first year enrollees in ten selected colleges and universities.<sup>17</sup>

Table II (see next page) shows that there was a total of 52,454 first year students enrolled in the ten selected colleges and universities. Of this number 21,343 or 40.73 per cent were males and 31,061 or 59.27 per cent were females.

In two schools, De la Salle College and Ateneo de Manila University, the first year enrollees were predominantly male, the percentage of male first year enrollees being 85.35 and 69.55, respectively. This may be due to the fact that these two schools formerly accepted only male stu-

<sup>17</sup>Personal data gathering by Mrs. Josefina Esdicol from Deans/Professors in the Colleges Sampled.



dents and it was only recently when they became co-educational. The highest percentages of female first year enrollees were found in PNC, PCC, Philippine Christian College and UST, the percentages of female enrolment being 93.09 per cent, 84.91 per cent, 74.83 per cent and 64.24 per cent, respectively. In the latter group of schools, there was a predominantly female first year enrolment possibly because these schools offer courses deemed appropriate for women like teaching, secretarial work, pharmacy and nursing.

Table II  
Number and Percentage of First Year Students  
Enrolled in Ten Colleges and Universities  
School Year 1974-1975

Universities	Number			Per Cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1. U.E.	8,303	10,403	18,706	44.38	55.62	100.00
2. F. E. U.	6,030	7,469	13,499	44.68	55.33	100.00
3. U. S. T.	3,308	5,943	9,251	35.76	64.24	100.00
4. U. P.	1,225	1,460	2,685	45.62	54.38	100.00
5. La Salle	839	144	983	85.35	14.65	100.00
6. P. C. C.	726	4,083	4,809	15.09	84.09	100.00
7. Ateneo	425	186	611	69.55	30.45	100.00
8. Pamantasan ng Maynila	287	336	623	46.06	53.94	100.00
9. Phil. Christian College	158	471	629	25.12	74.88	100.00
10. P. N. C.	42	566	608	6.90	93.09	100.00
Total	21,343	31,061	52,404	40.73	59.27	100.00

The grand total, however, shows around 33 per cent preponderance of female students.

Table III<sup>18</sup> (see next page) shows the enrollment figures in various courses by sex.

As shown in Table III, the courses taken by the greatest number of first year students are: Arts and Sciences, Commerce/Business Administration, Engineering and Secretarial Work with 35.20 per cent, 19.19 per cent, 15.19 per cent, and 14.21 per cent, respectively, taking these courses.

The courses taken predominantly by male students are: Engineering, Law, and Architecture & Fine Arts, the corresponding percentages being 85.86, 76.50 and 70.49. The courses taken mostly by female students are Education, Nursing, Secretarial and Medical Technology, with 93.19 per cent, 92.62 per cent, 89.40 per cent, and 78.87 per cent respectively, taking these courses.

<sup>18</sup>*ibid.*

Table III  
Number and Percentage of First Year Students  
Enrolled in various Courses by Sex  
School Year 1974-1975

Courses	Number			Per Cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Arts and Sciences	7,035	11,411	18,446	38.14	61.86	35.20
Commerce/Bus.						
Adm.	4,064	5,993	10,057	40.41	59.59	19.19
Engineering	6,836	1,126	7,962	85.86	14.14	15.19
Secretarial	789	6,656	7,445	10.60	89.40	14.21
Nursing	168	2,107	2,275	7.38	92.62	4.34
Architecture and						
Fine Arts b/	946	396	1,342	70.49	29.51	2.56
Education	84	1,139	1,233	6.81	93.19	2.33
LL. B.	293	90	383	76.50	23.50	.73
Medicine	321	277	598	53.68	46.32	1.14
Medical Technology	116	433	549	21.13	78.87	1.05
Others	691	1,423	2,114	33.68	67.32	4.03
Total	21,343	31,061	52,404			

a/ Percentage obtained by dividing the number of 1st year students enrolled in each course by the total number of First Year students.

b/ Does not include data from U.P.

In a similar study made by Father Leonardo Legaspi, Rector of Sto. Tomas University, as reported by Ben Lara, the following figures are given:

In the school year 1969 to 1970, there were 319,400 females in college, compared to only 257,654 males students or a proportion of 55% female to 45% male. In the same report, it is stated that some professions as well as disciplines are dominated by women. The disciplines include chemistry, commerce, liberal arts, medical sciences and food and dietetics.

The proportion of female faculty members has also been rising, according to the same report. The proportion rose from 42% in 1955 to 49% in 1967. The same report states that in the next years, the women will most certainly outnumber the men.<sup>19</sup>

The proportion of males to females in the first National College Entrance Examination given in 1973 was also studied. Table IV, *infra* shows the figures.

Out of the 300,072 examinees, 134,198 or 45% are males. About 165,874 or 55% are female examinees.

<sup>19</sup>B. Lara, Bulletin Today, October 18, 1974.

Table IV  
1973 NCEE

	No. of Examinees	Percentage
Male	134,198	45%
Female	165,874	55%
Total	300,072	100%

  

	Passing		Failing	
	N	%	N	%
Male	101,612	76%	32,586	24%
Female	124,451	75%	41,423	26%

Of the 134,198 male examinees, 101,612 or 76% qualified while 32,586 or 24% did not. Out of the 165,874 female examinees, 124,451 or 75% qualified while 41,423 or 25% did not.<sup>20</sup>

It is quite interesting to note that in the college entrance examination, the females excelled in the number that took it and although the rate of non-qualification is higher by 1% on the part of the female, the aggregate number of females that qualified for entrance to college is still significantly bigger.

A look at the scholarship opportunities granted to men and women under four different programs reveals the following:

	Male	Female	Total
1. PATAP (Philippine Association of Technical Assistance Participants) 1960-1974 .....	2,594	456	3,410
2. NSDB (National Science Development Board)			
a. Graduate Level .....	44	26	70
b. Undergraduate .....	105	76	181
3. Science Talent Search (1974-1975) (PSHS) .....	345	214	560
4. Bureau of Public Schools Scholarship Programs — 1965-1975			
a. CLEP .....	127	64	191
b. Language .....	124	670	794
c. Special Education .....	48	387	433

<sup>20</sup>From a report of Dr. Mona Valisno, Executive Director of NCEE

Although the above information does not include all the scholarship programs available, the figures adequately show that women and girls have had their rightful share in the grant of government-supported scholarships. It is perhaps safe to assume that the same situation obtains in the case of privately supported grants.

And so, looking at the "equal rights with men in education" provisions in Article 9 of The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women consisting of:

- (a) Equal conditions of access to, and study in, educational institutions of all types, including universities and vocational, technical and professional schools;
- (b) The same choice of curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard, and school premises and equipment of the same quality, whether the institutions are co-educational or not;
- (c) Equal opportunities to benefit from scholarship and other study grants;
- (d) Equal opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult literacy programmes;
- (e) Access to educational information to help in ensuring the health and well-being of families,<sup>21</sup>

it is clear that the women in the Philippines are not missing anything, educationally speaking.

#### V. *The Gaps and Challenges*

Examining now the total picture within the perspective of national development, one may ask "Have women really arrived as equals of men?" In many instances, we still find vestiges of the sex-role differentiation, if not female discrimination. Why, for example has there been, in the whole history of the Philippine government, only one woman cabinet member and this one assigned to the portfolio which by its very nature has been associated with the traditional function of women — social welfare? It was not until last year, in 1974, that the first woman Justice of the Supreme Court was appointed. It took the public school system some seventy years before it got its first woman Director. There are only two women in the Court of Appeals, one woman President of a government university, one woman President of a state college. The University of the Philippines has at present its first women deans in the college of law and in the college of education.

---

<sup>21</sup>United Nation's Declaration on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly, in its Resolution 2263 (XXII) of November 7, 1967.

It was a gratifying thrust to have had several women "firsts" in positions of great significance in the decade of the 70's. But it did take quite a long time. Way back in 1968 in an address before the Federation of Free Workers, then Senator Helena Z. Benitez decried the fact that "no women have yet been appointed undersecretary and secretary of education."<sup>22</sup> This is still true today. Neither has there been a woman President of the University of the Philippines nor even a woman member of the Board of Regents except, in the old Charter, ex-officio, by virtue of the positions they held in the government. The present Board does not have a woman.

There are many high executive and managerial positions, both in government and in the private sector, which many women, by training and leadership qualities, could very well fill. But for the reason why women are not there, they are perhaps partly to blame. Why they are greatly outnumbered by men in such positions may be due to the fact that women have been resigned to be what liberationists refer to as the four "A's" "adjuncts, associates, assistants and auxiliaries."<sup>23</sup> Many of our women have not been tapped to the maximum of their potentialities to contribute to national development, not necessarily, perhaps, that they have been intentionally denied their rights, but rather because many have not really cared, nor tried, nor demonstrated their capacity to perform at least equally well with men because traditionally it is the man that leads; it is he who knows and can do better.

In a paper presented at the Twenty-eighth Biennial Council of Pi Lambda Theta, Janeway said, "Realizing our potential, then, begins at home, in our own minds and hearts. It begins with the casting off of the crippling image of the past, of women as the second sex, the eternal help-mate the nurturer, who wins her reward through others and by their favors . . . So the first step is not self-assertion, but simply the affirmation of self-confidence . . . the ability to plan and think ahead, to hold to convictions and intentions, and to steer a course through life to a desired end . . . The second step is for women to help men to learn something about how effective women can be in dealing with public affairs, and in coping with large scale human problems . . . men who have worked with women in politics or in business, have quite a different attitude toward women from men who have not. The stereotype has faded."<sup>24</sup> And to this, I must add, that when so recognized, women must not ask for extra or sex-linked privileges.

---

<sup>22</sup>H. Benitez, *Philippine Herald*, July 14, 1968.

<sup>23</sup>D. Torrevillas-Suarez, *PHILIPPINE PANORAMA*, July 7, 1974.

<sup>24</sup>E. Janeway, *Realizing Human Potential: Focus on Women*, 52 *EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS*.

All the foregoing discussions so far have been concerned more with the urban woman, the woman who must be the equal of man in the policy-making, executive and management positions; the educated woman with the college degree or some such qualifications that fit her for the higher positions in government down to that of the classroom teacher.

What about the rural women who after all constitute 75-80% of the whole womenfolk? Here, I believe, is the other and more serious gap in the utilization of woman power and which poses the greater challenge to us. For as Shahani says, "Although women comprise 51% of the population and compose half of the educated class, they have not yet contributed their 'fullest potential' to nation building . . . One-half of the unemployed workers are women. Four out of 10 employed women workers are in agriculture, usually 'subsistence' agriculture where they don't earn too much money . . . They dominate low-paying occupations like domestic workers . . . This means that there is much to be done in educating and training Filipino women to undertake more productive occupations . . . making reference . . . to the great masses of women in rural areas and in ghettos of urban communities."<sup>25</sup>

This, to me, is the biggest challenge that we women who may be considered to belong to the educationally privileged face today; a challenge posed to us in the International Women's Year, which is even more serious and urgent than the equality of opportunity which we seek with the men in the areas of service where we move about. How can we give to the 75-80% of our women that live in the rural areas and in the "inner cities" their share in the right to live decently and enable them to meet satisfactorily the minimum needs of a respectable life?

Several innovative programs in the Department of Education, particularly in the Bureau of Public Schools, are geared toward the development of the individual with heavy emphasis on giving as much educational opportunity as possible to the rural child. The revised secondary school program which is rich in options for vocational skills and occupations for both boys and girls; the barrio high schools which extend to the rural youth the opportunity to obtain secondary school education right in their own barrios, thus overcoming the difficulty of moving to the urban towns where the high schools are usually located; the continuous progression scheme in the public elementary schools which aims, among others, to help every child to finish at least an elementary education without the threat of repetition in any of the grades; the IS-OS approach to primary education which by its very operation, assures the parents and elders

---

<sup>25</sup>Leticia R. Shahani, as reported by Ben Lara in *Bulletin Today*, October 19, 1974.

a share in the education of the child and thereby profit from it; the adult and out-of-school youth programs which afford to the non-schooled community people an opportunity to obtain functional literacy and vocational training — all these are designed to spread education to all, and in the context of this paper, to the rural girl or woman in particular.

There are several other agencies besides the Department of Education that undertake non-formal education programs for out-of-school youth and adults. Among those are the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Agriculture, Department of Local Governments and Community Development and Department of Health. In order to facilitate the full integration of women in national development, these agencies must intensify and spread their efforts to the women in the rural areas. It is reasonable to hope that when this is achieved; when the majority of the women would have been equipped with the minimum understandings, attitudes and skills needed for effective citizenship in the New Society and would then be able to participate more actively in decision-making in the local, national and international communities, hopefully minimizing, if not removing thereby the basic roots of friction, the course of nations may be different. The moral suasion, the subtle influence, the "silent diplomacy" instinctive to women may yet provide the missing link in the frustrating negotiations for national and international peace.

#### VI. *Concluding Statement*

The New Society in the making needs all available human resources for the achievement of its goals. Women constitute a large, nay, a major portion of such resources. The men occupying managerial and executive positions should now learn to accept this. Trends even indicate that men may soon be outnumbered in several areas of human endeavor, therefore, it would be well and urgent for men to utilize this woman potential to advantage, not merely as a "helpmate" but as an equal contributing partner.

On the part of women, it would likewise be well and urgent that they strive to develop and utilize their own talents and potentialities, not with the objective of replacing the men, for it would be a monotonous, if not a dreary world of work without them, but with the aim of achieving worthy credentials that they indeed can do just as well and that, therefore, they truly are men's partners. The old concept of "man's world" and "woman's place" should now be replaced with a new concept of a human universe manned by men and women with distinct but equally important roles, for in the total effort of building a nation and a world, all human beings, male or female, must be utilized to the maximum; as no one can be dispensed with nor taken for granted.