

FEMALE TEACHERS IN QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS A HISTORY 1860-1983

Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education No. 3

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Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education

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PREFACE

There have been two significant events in the history of women's employment in State education. The first was the introduction, in 1902, of a regulation requiring women to resign when they married. This consolidated an existing social practice which prevented many women from undertaking teaching as a life long career. The second major event was the re-employment of married women on a temporary basis in 1940 which culminated in a provision for the permanent employment of such women in 1969. Hence this study treats the period 1860-1983 in three separate sections (1860-1902; 1902-1940; 1940-1983) divided by these two events.

To discuss the employment of females it is necessary to look at male employment and therefore much of this history is a comparative study. Because of this, much has been revealed about general employment patterns.

The reader is urged to make full use of the statistics in this report.

While specific references to employment of females in technical education have been omitted, parts of this history are of general relevance to this employment. Of the small percentage of females employed in technical education, most worked in the area of home economics. For a history of home economics see G. Logan, *A Centenary History of Home Economics Education in Queensland, 1881-1981* (Monographs on the History of Education No. 1), Information and Publications Branch, Department of Education, Queensland 1981.

Finally, while this study traces major developments of the past into the present, it does not deal with the present in detail.

INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom in 1851, of the total 9.4 million persons employed, 2.8 million (30 per cent) were females. For most females, employment meant working in factories, or entering domestic service. To many girls and women aspiring to more satisfying employment, the picture before mid-century was bleak. A minority conducted dame schools or private venture schools, or became governesses, this latter occupation being one of very few respectable employments available to educated middle-class women¹. But it was the pupil-teacher system, an innovation of the 1840s, that was to have relatively rapid and far-reaching effects on the employment of females, and present opportunities for intelligent women of all social classes.

In 1846, James Shuttleworth launched the pupil-teacher system that replaced monitorial arrangements and soon supplied the elementary school with almost all of its teachers. Under the English pupil-teacher system, boys and girls of ability were chosen at 13 years to undertake a five-year

apprenticeship. In return for a low salary, pupil-teachers were required to undertake certain teaching responsibilities, and to pass annual examinations. Those who were successful in all examinations were eligible to attend a teachers training college, and some successful candidates were awarded scholarships to do so. Once at college, the pupil-teacher began a course of one, two or three years' duration. By 1860, there were more females than males entering the pupil-teacher system in England².

It was to be expected that colonial Australia would follow the English example. The Colony of New South Wales, following the English pattern of teacher-recruitment, introduced the pupil-teacher system in 1851. On Separation in 1859, the Colony of Queensland established an administrative Board of General Education and continued the New South Wales practice of employing female teachers and female pupil-teachers.

