1938

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Recommended Citation

Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol18/iss9/6

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Around the World in Home Economics

Ruth Stultz gives us foreign interpretations of Home Economics training

Although we may think of home economics and Iowa State as synonymous, neither Iowa State nor even United States is the only place where home economics plays an important role in the college curriculum.

Home economics was introduced into Puerto Rico in 1913 with a 2-year normal course. A 4-year course for teachers, with a course for dietitians, was recently added of which the enrollment in 1938 was 280. A marker to the home economics improvement on the island in the past 25 years is a new home economics building which is being financed by federal funds from the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration. Marie Vestal describes it in her article, "Home Economics at the University of Puerto Rico" from the Home Economics Journal, January, 1938. The handsome Spanish Renaissance building, its creamy walls picked out with colorful terra cotta, has a columned arcade on two sides of an open court. The interior, planned by members of the home economics faculty, reflects the years of experience. The home management house, originally the home of the president, is Spanish type, built about an inner patio centered with a fountain of Spanish tile. A beautiful setting is provided for the useful work of home economics in Puerto Rico.

On the island of Hawaii is the University of Hawaii with a home economics department very similar to those in the United States with students courses mainly in child development, clothing, and foods. Working out from the university all over the island are extension agents who are doing more and more each year in 4-H clubs, in women's extension clubs and adult education classes.

Foundations were laid for the coming of home economics to New Zealand by the Education Act of 1877, which made needlework a part of the elementary school work. Home economics as a science made its appearance in 1909 when the University of New Zealand received an endowment from Lieutenant Colonel John Studholme to establish a "Chair of Home Science." At the present, graduates of the school may have degrees in education, clothing, institution management and special diploma for high school teaching may be received.

African home economics can be divided into north and south sections. South African home economics is found in technical colleges where practical household arts alone are taught, and universities where some scientific as well as practical arts are taught. Technical colleges are found at Johannesburg and Capetown with teacher training, housewifery courses, nursing courses, institution management and special subjects constituting their curriculum. The University of Stellenbach offers a bachelor of science degree.

North African home economics is in its pioneer days. Progression is very slow due to language differences and customs of the people. Eight schools known as "workshops" are doing all the work.

The large vast continent of Asia has been touched but little by the science of home economics. However, China, India, Japan, Palestine, Syria and Turkey have at least one university that offers some work.

The year 1912 saw the beginnings of work in China which lasted one month and then died down until 1922. A year later a college was established in the University of Peking. Home management and health of family and community are the most important phases of the work.

Japanese people as a group feel no need for home economics. Although few trained teachers are available, the situation is not too hopeless, for the American Home Economics Association is aiding in home economics work. Japanese women are dress-conscious and desire knowledge on "dressing for the occasion." Some work is being done with electrical equipment because of the extensive electricity supply in Japan. Nutrition from the standpoint of improving the body is gaining attention.

India offers work in Baroda College, Bombay University and Lady Irwin College for women at Delhi. Indian women are using home economics as a way out of an ancient social set-up and on the benefit of wives and mothers. Work in Palestine and Syria is similar to that in India. One problem in Palestine is the offering of home economics work to the men, since they do the buying.

England and Continental Europe present home economics as a means of professional training. The professions stressed are: housekeepers, maids, teachers, nursery school teachers and a few dietitians.

No women receive as long training for their work as Iowa State students. These European girls are given little of the basic scientific training. The entire course is based upon quick, practical application.

Denmark and Sweden are giving their students a little more science than any of the other countries. Also they are carrying on another homemaking project, that of adult education. Large class enrollments are offered a well organized program.