Report by women says
Co-education handicaps girls

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Everything is prepared in the physics laboratory. Large tuning forks, knitting needles of varying sizes, and a series of oscillation sheets are positioned in front of an oscilloscope linked with a microscope.

On a table nearby there's an air pump and a siren, and a few music instruments are hanging on the wall, including a triangle set, a gong and a xylophone.

After the school bell rings eight schoolgirls and seven schoolboys take their seats in the laboratory

The latter immediately turn their attention to the devices set up, whereas the girls start chatting until the teacher comes in

This behavioural pattern recurs during the leson, the boys actively involved in the experiment, the girls reserved observers.

Two weeks later in the same physics laboratory. This time a different scenario.

The girls are on their own this time, since the boys have been allowed to miss the physics lesson to take part in a football tournament.

In the absence of the boys the girls become more actively involved in practical experimentation and are surprised to discover at the end of the lesson that physics can be fun.

One schoolgirl admits that she never realised how much this subject could appeal to her

And the physics teacher remarks: "It's amazing what the girls can accomplish".

This aha-experience was apparently a totally unexpected albeit no longer isolated one.

Numerous teachers have been forced to admit during recent years that the joint teaching of boys and girls, coeducation, often has adverse effects on the girls.

This observation was more or less made by chance, since in the Germanspeaking countries at least there was no serious research into the efficiency of coeducation following its introduction.

This is surprising in view of the original misgivings about mixed education.

In 1830 the German anti-coeducationalist E. W F. Eberhard justified his rejection of this system in a publication entitled "The Character of the Sexes and National Ability."

The Dortmund research team Jacqueline Kauermann-Walter Maria-Anna Kreienbaum and Sigrid Metz-Gockel, which recently came up with a devastating appraisal of coeducation, was also confronted by this topic by chance.

All the three researchers originally wanted to do was to conduct an analysis of the students of Chemistry and Information Studies in Dormund.

During their research they more or less "by chance" noticed the high percentage share of girls who had come from girls' schools among the female students of these two subjects.

Even though girls' schools in the Federal Republic of Germany only accont for a good ten per cent of girls taking their school-leaving and university entrance qualification exams 36 per cent of the girls studying Chemistry and Information Studies in Dortmund came from these schools.

Control tests at the universities of Aachen and Paderborn confirmed this ratio discrepancy.

What do these findings indicate? Isn't the high percentage share of girls studying natural sciences subjects simply due to the social background of the schoolgirls at girls grammar schools? The research team dismisses this any such claim:

"In our survey there is no such "elite bonus" with respect to the social background for the female students of Information Studies and Chemistry who come from girls' schools."

Research findings from the USA substantiate the findings in Dormund to an almost alarming extent.

Elizabeth Tidball from the George Washington University and Alexander W. Astin from the University of California discovered that the number of dissertations written by women in natural sciences subjects at the Women's Colleges which admitted men after 1972 had decreased by 25 per cent over a period of ten years.

They also showed that three times as many female natural scientists come from Women's Colleges than from mixed colleges.

The men turned out to be the big beneficiaries of the coeducation system.