



# Having it all or giving something back?

Asks Lucy Elphinstone, Headmistress of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square

Over the summer, the argument has continued to rage. There is little which gets the sisterhood going as much as whether women can 'have it all'. An article in *The Atlantic* magazine by Anne-Marie Slaughter, a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University who served under Hillary Clinton, set us all off. Her situation – how she gave up this high-powered job to spend more time with her family – is well known, but her 'manifesto to women' may not be. Slaughter asserts that despite the substantial gains in educational, economic and professional attainment in the last three decades, women are less happy. Well-being not wages is the issue. She challenges the very definition of success – someone who climbs up the ladder the furthest in the shortest time. Slaughter says that women should see their careers not as a straight upward slope but as irregular steps with periodic plateaus and even dips. Count on peaking in your late fifties and early sixties, rather than late forties, she advises, and use technology to work more from home. She urges pushing for school timetables which match work schedules and for it to be acceptable to talk about children and family



commitments at work, citing the relationship between family-friendly policies and better economic performance. And she decries the 'face-time culture' of the macho work place, advocating space for play and imagination to free up creativity and innovation.

If what she says is true, it has profound implications for how we

educate girls. Much of our workplace culture appears rotten at the core, and joining the picnic is not the way to a decent life. Young people have already rumbled this. Many, sickened by the greed and amorality exhibited by so many in high profile positions, are opting for jobs which they feel are 'worthwhile', which make a difference to others' well-being, and which bring emotional and not merely financial fulfilment. To them, integrity and conscience matter. Quality and balance appeal more than quantity and extremes. And they realise their career paths won't be linear. They know that they may have to 'reinvent' themselves many times, that they need flexibility, creativity, communication skills and emotional intelligence, and that passing exams isn't sufficient. Perhaps now is the moment when not only our daughters but our sons too will reclaim healthy and happy lives for themselves and their families, and switch the emphasis from getting to giving. }

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