# INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Edited by
GAIL P. KELLY

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# INTRODUCTION

Gail P. Kelly

The *International Handbook of Women's Education* is a source book for students and scholars. Its focus is on women's schooling—its history, current status, and outcomes—and its intent is to provide comparable information about women's education across a broad spectrum of countries. Each chapter in this volume considers the history of women's education, ideological and religious beliefs, as well as cultural and political traditions which account for the pace of development of women's education and particular forms education has taken. The historical context of each chapter serves as a basis for understanding the extent of sex inequality in school and society which has characterized the world in the past and persists in most places in the present. The focus of the work is women's education today. A central concern is to chart enrollment patterns—how many women relative to men attend what kinds of schools for how long—and to examine how educational, social, and economic policies affect these patterns. Each chapter also considers the content of women's education as well as the outcomes of education for women in the labor force, in the political system, and in the family. Finally, the handbook considers contemporary government policies which seek to redress inequalities in education or the outcomes of education, and the role of the women's movement in seeking change.

This book is both descriptive and analytic. It does not seek to provide a theory of women's education, its determinants, or its outcomes. Perhaps such theory-construction will become possible as data, such as are reported in this volume, become more widely available for each and every country in the world. Although the chapters in this volume are not explicitly theoretical, they are guided by im-

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plicit feminist theory. They all look at education in the context of women's oppression. None presumes that women's subordination is determined solely by the economy and easily remedied by "quick fixes" like a socialist revolution or a mass entry of women into paid labor. None presumes that society or the schools are gender-neutral; rather, they look at schools in the context of patriarchal institutions that have served to oppress women. The work asks whether, how, and under what conditions education can become a force for liberating women rather than oppressing them. Description and analysis are the first step in developing theories about schooling, patriarchy, and liberation, and it is this first step to which this volume is devoted.

That this book provides detailed enrollment data and charts women's educational patterns is a major contribution in and of itself. Unesco and the World Bank—two of the major agencies that report enrollment statistics internationally—have been hard pressed to provide gender-based enrollment statistics for many countries. When such statistics are reported, they are fragmentary and are sometimes confined to the primary level of education. When secondary enrollments are reported, attrition rates and the types of programs in which women are enrolled tend to be missing. Statistics on these questions tend to be more available for Western industrialized nations such as the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. They are rarely available for Third World nations like Nigeria, Vietnam, Botswana, Iran, or China. Even in Western industrialized nations, where gender breakdowns for school enrollment, by type of school and field of study, are generally available, data on racial, ethnic, and regional variations among female enrollments are rare. The statistics on women's educational patterns contained in this book, while not always comprehensive, constitute a major contribution that we hope will facilitate further research.

Although this handbook provides as comprehensive a picture as possible of women's educational enrollment patterns, it also seeks to explain why the pattern is as it is. Such explanations not only involve analysis of the cultural and historical context in which the schools operate, but they also look to public policies regarding women and the nature of educational provision. Why women attend school is not simply a question of women's choice or long-standing cultural prejudice or parental preference. Rather, the reasons relate to contemporary policies that seek to encourage or discourage women's participation in public life and equalize women's life chances with those of men. Governments that have set gender equality as a priority have tended to enroll women in schools and have kept them there. Different types of educational provision have different results. Coeducation versus single-sex education, differentiated versus common schools, nonformal versus formalized programs, free versus fee-paying schooling—all affect whether women are educated and how long they are educated. History and culture notwithstanding, educational provision is the key to understanding women's educational patterns and that provision is often a function of state policy. The chapters presented examine the policies responsible for con-

temporary patterns as well as newly adopted policies that have the potential to change women's educational attainment patterns.

The concern with schooling and with education in this volume derives from a belief that educational patterns profoundly affect social status. Much of the literature on women's subordination views women's undereducation—or lack of education—relative to men as a reason why gender-based inequalities persist in income and in political power as well as in the family. Whether changing women's education changes gender-based asymmetrical economic and political relations or relations in the family is a complex set of issues which each chapter seeks to address, with varying degrees of success. For the most part, research on women is a relatively new phenomenon. Before the mid-1960s, few governments were interested in whether women entered the workforce or earned money or whether women gained access to political power. Little or no gender-based workforce statistics were available. This has been more the case in the Third World nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East than in Europe and North America. Data are usually available on women's entry into the workforce; what are not available are comprehensive sets of data on the types of occupations women pursue, women's access to managerial and executive employment, and women's income. In addition, data are not always available on the age, educational, and familial characteristics of women who do work over time. However, even with the fragmentary data that exist, each chapter explores the relation between changes in women's educational patterns and their entry into and status in the labor force.

For a long time the literature on women's education focused exclusively on the workforce, assuming that the workforce outcomes of education were the only ones that counted. For feminists, particularly those working from a Marxist perspective, entry into the paid workforce signaled women's liberation. Gaining an income was seen as the way in which women would gain freedom and autonomy and power. Those working from the perspective of economic development theories, particularly in Third World contexts, saw women's entry into paid labor as crucial to the process of enhancing national production and leading to economic development. Thus, a great deal of data has been generated on the workforce outcomes of women's education. Until recently, few asked about the relation between women's schooling and access to power and authority in society. This handbook asks whether women's participation in politics and their access to government posts has changed as a result of their widened access to schooling. Some of the chapters ask whether schooling has anything to do with the increased mobilization of women into autonomous women's movements designed to bring women's issues to the fore. Although these issues are explored here, they are only tentatively examined because so little research has been conducted on these questions in most countries beyond a simple enumeration of women who hold political office.

The relationship between changes in women's education and public life—

economy and politics—is not the only issue raised in this volume. As important are questions that relate to education and women's lives in the private, domestic sphere. Does education change women's marriage patterns? The relation between husband and wife? The work women do in the household? Childbearing and childrearing patterns? In short, what effect does women's education have on the family? Does it change patriarchal relations within the family and in what way? These issues are not easily addressed. Research traditions in education and the social sciences have long ignored women, or when they have studied women, they have done so either by assuming women are no different than men (and therefore ignored the domestic sphere) or that women are by nature confined to the domestic sphere (and that sphere was by no means worthy of study except to elaborate on the preordained sex-role divisions of labor). Thus, our research on the domestic sphere has tended to ask about control of reproduction only—leading to the literature on fertility—but not about power relations in the family. This volume tried to pull together information on these issues, but found the data base particularly wanting except in most instances on fertility control.

In sum, this handbook looks at the historical context of women's education, patterns, and outcomes. It attempts to show how educational reform can help correct gender-based inequalities in the economy, the family, and the political system and how government policy and women themselves can bring about sexual equality. These studies of individual countries are limited to the extent that the data on specific issues outlined above are available. However, each chapter addresses the issues raised here as fully as possible, given the state of the current data and research base.

## THE COUNTRIES

No single volume can consider, in depth, women's education in every country in the world. Consequently, the handbook has chosen to cover twenty-three nations representing a range of political, social, and economic systems; levels of industrialization and wealth; historical contexts; and dominant ideologies about women's proper place. They also represent countries with a diversity of policies toward women and their education. Included here are highly industrialized nations like the United States, Japan, Canada, Sweden, Great Britain, the German Democratic Republic, and the Soviet Union. Third World nations are also represented. There are chapters on India, Botswana, Peru, Nigeria, Iran, Egypt, and other African, Asian, and Latin American nations struggling with the problems of underdevelopment. Socialist as well as nonsocialist countries are considered. In addition to the Soviet Union, there are chapters on Poland, China, and Vietnam.

This handbook also includes nations that have recently emerged from colonialism like Senegal, Zaire, and India as well as countries that have recently experienced far-reaching revolutionary change. Both Vietnam and China underwent communist revolutions with a strong commitment to liberating

women after World War II. In contrast, within the past decade, Iran has instituted a revolutionary Islamic fundamentalist state guided by a very different set of ideologies.

The countries considered in the handbook are diverse in their economic, political, and educational histories as well as their traditional ideologies about women and women's proper roles. Included here are Islamic societies which practice seclusion of women and countries like Egypt which have sought to change them in the past. Israel, a Jewish state with quite different sex-role ideologies, is also a part of this volume. Also considered are Japan, Vietnam, and China which share Confucian ideologies which "valued 100 women less than a man's testicle" and Latin American countries with strong traditions of Marianism and machismo. Western Christian patriarchal traditions characterize other countries studied here—the United States, France, Britain, and Australia.

A range of cultural traditions and sex-role ideologies and religious traditions are represented in the countries studied in the handbook. Countries with diverse sex-role divisions of labor are also included. In some of the countries, women traditionally were confined to the domestic sphere and did not engage in production outside the household as in Sweden, Egypt, and Chile; in others—as in Nigeria and Vietnam—there has been a strong tradition of female labor force participation. The countries also represent a range of family structures. The United States, Canada, and France are among the nations with established traditions of nuclear family structures. Several countries considered here have long practiced polygamy—namely, Egypt, Vietnam, Nigeria, and Botswana—and others have a strong tradition of joint families as in India.

The countries examined in this work represent societies with very different contemporary policies toward women and with varying commitments to sexual equality in school and in society. Countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, Sweden, Canada, and, to a lesser extent, India have attempted to bring about gender-based equality via affirmative action, and they view education as an enabling condition of that equality. Accordingly, Sweden, the United States, Australia, and Canada have initiated curriculum revision and have sought to incorporate women's knowledge into educational processes as well as to open women's access to the schools. Other nations, like Vietnam and China, Egypt and Israel, do not look to the schools to provide gender-based equality. Instead, priorities have been placed on educational efficiency and economic development which are often seen as being in opposition to sexual equality. Countries like Japan do not have any policies specifically designed to bring about sexual equality through the schools or otherwise.

The countries in this handbook also have a range of school systems. Some, like Nigeria, Vietnam, Botswana, Chile, Israel, and the Soviet Union, have highly centralized educational systems, whereas others, like the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, are decentralized systems controlled locally. In some of the countries, a large private sector serves elite children—as in Chile

and Britain—in others, as in Poland, China, and East Germany, there are no private schools. Some of the countries examined have highly stratified school systems; others provide a common schooling and have tended away from diversification on the secondary level.

Yet another point of diversity among the countries is the distribution of education among the general population. In Western industrialized countries as well as in Australia and a handful of Third World nations like Chile, primary education is universal. In most of the Third World, however, primary education reaches 33 to 80 percent of the age cohort. The countries covered in this volume represent nations with a range of educational enrollment ratios. Some have universal primary education; others do not. Some, like the United States, which provides nearly 50 percent of the age cohort with higher education, approach universal secondary education. Others enroll under 25 percent of the age cohort in secondary school and 10 to 15 percent in higher education.

Finally, gender-based disparities in educational enrollments vary considerably among nations and are not always related to the percentage of the age cohort enrolled in schools at each level. In some countries, females make up a small proportion of the school population, and their percentage declines with each succeeding grade level. However, in other countries, there are more females than males in secondary school and in higher education. (This is the case in Chile, Poland, and East Germany and is becoming the case in France.) The countries surveyed here include those in which women form a small portion of the school population as well as those in which women are the majority of students in secondary and higher education.

In sum, the countries examined in this work are diverse. They were chosen for their diversity in both the political system and the level of industrialization. The countries also have diverse cultural traditions and long-standing ideologies about women's proper place which have profoundly affected women's status in society, women's role in the family, women's participation in productive labor in and outside the household, and women's access to political power. The countries represent a range of traditions of female education as well as of policies that focus on providing women education in the contemporary world. Finally, the countries have different kinds of school systems and reach varying proportions of the schoolaged children. The disparity between male and female enrollments also differs across nations. In some countries today, more females than males are enrolled in school, and these differences are represented in the countries selected for inclusion in this volume.

The range and diversity included here provide us with a basis not only for obtaining a realistic view of women's educational pattern worldwide, but also for posing questions about how political, social, cultural, and educational systems affect the persistent patterns of gender-based inequalities throughout the world, as well as the variety of options that might change such patterns. From such a consideration, theories as well as policies may emerge which may lead to a more equal and just society.

## ORGANIZATION

The chapters are arranged according to geographical divisions and within each division by country (listed alphabetically). We begin with the African nations of Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zaire and then move to Asia: China, India, Japan, and Vietnam. Australia, Europe, the Latin American countries, and the Middle East follow. The individual country chapters end with a consideration of North America. The handbook concludes with an essay on worldwide trends in women's education, which puts the individual chapters in perspective and suggests avenues for future research. This is followed by a bibliography of published book, journal, and monograph research conducted over the past two decades on women's schooling worldwide.

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# CONTENTS

# AFRICA

# 1
# BOTSWANA

## Wendy A. Duncan

> One other factor which strikes an observer's eye . . . is the great disparity between the numbers of the boys and those of the girls. Throughout the first five years of the Primary Course the girls outnumber the boys by 2:1 . . .
>
> . . . the numbers of boys attending school are disturbingly low, and an improvement in that respect is one of the most pressing educational needs of the Bechuanaland Protectorate.[1]

In the heart of the rich mining and agricultural region of southern Africa lies the country of Botswana, the home of the Tswana people. Proclaimed a British protectorate in 1885, the country was known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate until it achieved independence in 1966 when the name was changed to Botswana. Much of the country is arid, but cattle-herding, the traditional activity of the Tswana, is carried out on a large scale. Since independence, a lucrative mining sector has also developed, making Botswana's economy one of the most successful capitalist economies in Africa. Along with other countries in the region, however, Botswana has developed in the shadow of South Africa. Although much of its colonial and contemporary history is marked by the struggle to maintain political independence, Botswana remains significantly dependent on South Africa economically and, being a land-locked country, needs the right of transit for its imports and exports.

One of the major causes and consequences of its dependency on South Africa was Botswana's development during the early part of this century. Large numbers

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