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## Under Review: Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy

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**UNDER REVIEW**

***Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy***

By Richard D. Lakes and Patricia A. Carter (Eds.)

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In their book, *Globalizing Education for Work: Comparative Perspectives on Gender and the New Economy*, editors Richard Lakes and Patricia Carter examine gender issues related to vocational education and training in today's emerging economy. The contributors to this volume probe a complex range of issues affecting cross-national work force education. The book explores how vocational education policies and practices are framed differently depending upon the dominant political ideologies governing the nations in which they are realized. Additionally, contributors disclose how educational policies are further embedded in cultural and social norms that have had, and continue to have, a tremendous influence over educational equity, gender equity, labor negotiations, and economic development in the countries featured in this volume. Given the international scope of this work, an array of audiences will benefit from the insights it provides. Specifically, international vocational educators, vocational teacher educators, policy analysts, sociologists, and economists will find the book enlightening.

**Overview**

In the introduction, Lakes and Carter discuss the effects of economic globalization on education for work and explore its impact on the lives of women. They note that globalization and newly developed technologies have affected women differently than men. This appears to be especially true in developing

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countries as they become more industrialized. In the typically patriarchal cultures of developing nations, economic opportunities seem to be hastening women's move from solely domestic and reproductive roles to wage-earning and occupational ones. However, Lakes and Carter question whether globalization will promote women's social and economic status or whether it will lead to the continued marginalization of women if, bent on achieving economic growth, developing nations exploit woman as a cheap source of labor.

Donor agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund view women's education from both a social as well as an economic perspective. However, Lakes and Carter caution that these agencies tend to highlight the economic benefits of educating girls and women over the social gains that girls and women receive from access to educational opportunities. Furthermore, the authors note that while developing nations achieve economic gains by utilizing women in the labor force, not all of these nations reallocate these gains back into social systems that benefit women, most notably women's maternal health care.

#### **Feminist Theory as Frame**

In the chapter entitled *Education for Work as Human Rights for Women: A Feminist Analysis*, Patricia Carter discusses feminist theory in order to construct a unifying framework for the essays presented in the book. She surveys key human rights documents that set international standards for women's rights and offers a feminist critique of these documents. In criticizing these documents, feminists have expressed particular concern that while human rights policies seek to protect individuals from governmental abuses—i.e., abuses in the public sphere—they fail to address abuses in the private arena. Feminists argue that in delineating women's rights, international laws must protect women from domestic abuse as well. By relegating domestic abuse to the private versus the public policy sphere, governments have done little to protect women from abuses occurring within their own families.

Carter looks at "the constraints imposed by gender stereotyping" (p. 19), a phenomenon that is directly linked to gender equity issues and that affects educational policy,

vocational education, and work. Carter points out the consequences that gender stereotyping imposes on equal rights in both work and education. She notes that the unpaid domestic work of girls and women is not calculated in the gross national product (GNP) despite the undeniable value that domestic labor provides society. In examining equality in education, Carter cites the gender gap in primary and secondary education evident in many parts of the developing (and developed) world, and she discusses the manner in which schools reproduce gender stereotypes through a hidden curriculum. Additionally, Carter examines the numerous factors that impede women's education, fueled in part by the disquieting trend of religious fundamentalism worldwide.

### **Re-defining Masculinity for Working-Class Males**

In *Working-Class Masculinities and Schooling: New Considerations for Vocational Education*, Richard Lakes presents an unsettling picture of white, working-class males who face an insecure future in a dwindling blue-collar labor market. Lakes cites research from the United States and the United Kingdom revealing that white, underclass males are increasingly expressing white supremacist and sexist attitudes. Lakes suggests that this alarming behavior occurs because in the new economy white, underclass males no longer retain a sense of racial or gender privilege. The new economy has caused abrupt industry and labor market shifts in the United States and the United Kingdom and created serious reductions in industry and manufacturing jobs. These shifts have resulted in a decrease in the number of males enrolled in courses teaching traditional vocational trades. Additionally, as vocational education programs have become more closely integrated with core academic content areas, many working-class boys are rebelling against this educational policy shift and exhibit their rejection of the school curriculum by displaying disruptive behaviors at school. Ultimately, at precisely a time when they are faced with the need for more schooling in order to obtain gainful employment, their behavior leads them to increased academic failure. Furthermore, these adolescents cannot look to their own fathers for guidance in constructing their futures or their masculine identities. The rules

of the game have changed too radically. As a result, these young men find they can no longer easily mold themselves into familiar, working-class, masculine roles. These research findings are disconcerting as further alienation could lead to increased racism, sexism, and violence in poor, working-class communities. To address these distressing trends, Lakes cites research that advises practitioners working in vocational settings to provide young males with opportunities to explore, reflect upon, and re-create what masculinity means to them.

### **Wage and Education Disparities for Women**

Tania Ramalho discusses the potential of education to emancipate women and minorities in the historically patriarchal society of Brazil. Ramalho begins *Defying the Grip of Globalization: Brazilian Women's Employment and Education for Work* by providing a historical, political, and cultural overview of Brazil. She posits that present day gender and racial inequalities in Brazil are the result of a historical, socio-cultural legacy of colonialism, racism, elitism, and sexism. She argues that this legacy has resulted in economic dysfunctions in Brazilian society. By providing this background information, Ramalho is able to illuminate the unique challenges that Brazilian women, especially Brazilian women of color, face in advancing their status through education and work opportunities available to them. She discusses the historical role of women in the labor force and the highly segregated Brazilian labor market and cites some disconcerting realities. She notes, for example, that within vocational education and training, women are segregated by curricular areas. She also notes, with some concern, that in recent years the vocational and technical education curriculum has removed its humanities component. She expresses deep regret that the Friesian ideology of education as liberation has been abandoned. Nevertheless she declares her optimism in women's ability to "push away globalization forces that want to place themselves at the center of what matters to life" (p. 81).

In *Preparation for (In)equality: Women in South Korean Vocational Education*, Hye K. Pae and Richard Lakes examine the disparity in wage earnings and occupational opportunities that women experience in South Korea. They link these

inequalities to the South Korean vocational education system and to South Korea's culturally patriarchal society. Women in Korea have traditionally been subservient to men. In South Korea, globalization seems to have merged this cultural practice with the economic realm. That is, the South Korean government now allows and encourages women to participate in the labor force to help expand the economy but only to the extent that their productive endeavors remain subservient to the economic goals of the state. The object of women's employment is not to fulfill their individual goals. Women are vital to sustaining South Korea's economic growth because they provide a cheap source of labor. Indeed, as the authors note, the South Korean economy experienced remarkable growth during the 1980s and 1990s precisely because of the inexpensive source of human labor that women provided. South Korea's economy remains heavily export based, especially in the areas of computers and information technology. Thus, in order to expand their economic advantage in an export driven economy, the state will most likely continue to exploit women in the labor force.

Confucianism traditionally prohibited women from working outside the home and a public role for women has emerged only very recently. Historically, women's role in political decision making has also been very weak, and it remains weak today. Wage gaps prevail with women's earnings averaging 58% that of men. Given this, women remain in a poor "bargaining position" in their own households. There is widespread evidence of discriminating workplace practices, including the common practice of advertising for and hiring women based on their physical appearance. Often, women who wish not to subject themselves to this sort of discrimination, or those who feel they cannot meet the beauty standard, choose factory work over office or clerical work. Pae and Lakes express hope that women's stature in Korea will improve as women gain a foothold in the political arena where they can design and support public policies that promote gender equality in school and work.

Johanna Lasonen presents startling statistics that aptly illustrate the links between poverty, illiteracy, and powerlessness for Ethiopian women. In *Poverty and Powerlessness in Ethiopia: Shaping Gender Equity Through Technical, Vocational*

*Education, and Training* Lasonen discusses how vocational education and training could prove a catalyst for improving women's economic and social status in Ethiopian society. The demographic statistics that Lasonen presents illustrate the sad economic state of this impoverished country. For instance, only 15% of the workforce is formally employed, and the remainder of the Ethiopian population labors primarily in subsistence agriculture. Yet, even in light of this overall poverty, women experience disproportionate degrees of poverty in Ethiopia. Women's domestic work duties revolve around a host of labor intensive tasks that include gathering water and firewood as well as the husbandry of agriculture and livestock. These domestic tasks consume enormous amounts of their time. Women laboring in the domestic sector average 15-18 hour workdays for which their reward is simply survival. Due to their value on the domestic front, few girls and women receive any sort of formal education, and as a result, they cannot move beyond a subsistence level of survival. On average children in Ethiopia receive 4.6 years of education, and more than half the nations' children receive no schooling at all. Lasonen believes that vocational education and training has the potential to reduce poverty and offer a means to achieve gender equality in Ethiopia. However, existing vocational education and training programs focus primarily on traditional male occupations, and girls and women do not participate in these programs on a broad scale. More significantly, vocational education does not provide training in developing micro-businesses and small enterprises where women could flourish. Lasonen states that more needs to be done at the policy level to focus on the education of girls and women to help pull them out of poverty.

### **Balancing Work and Family**

Liv Mjelde in *Changing Work, Changing Households: New Challenges to Masculinity and Femininity in Norwegian Vocational Education* reports that Nordic countries offer popular support for gender equality. However, she explains that different interpretations and expectations lie hidden beneath this concept. She notes that middle-class society traditionally supported the gender roles of males as breadwinners and females as stay-at-

home wives. However, these viewpoints began to change when Socialist parties encouraged the transfer of certain public duties to the private sector, which supported working women. In addition to these changing social policies, in the mid-1970s educational reform policies led to the unification of previously separated schools of vocation, commerce schools, and college preparatory (gymnasias). The objective behind these reforms was to support equality of opportunity across classes and genders. From a curricular viewpoint, this meant uniting vocational and academic prep curricula. Nevertheless inequality in education still prevails. As Mjelde explains, there are still divisions between vocational and general education as well as divisions between traditionally male and female occupational spheres. Typically, boys engage in education and training in the “hard” trades while girls participate in education and training for care-sector professions. Likewise, in the workforce, women dominate particular industries at particular levels. The female occupational track has been characterized as offering lower paying and poorer working conditions than the “highly skilled” occupational areas that men dominate. In 1998-2000, the Ministry of Education initiated a project which attempted to develop more gender independent education and occupational choices. However, males and females still appear to make career choices that are largely divided along gender lines.

Given this reality, Mjelde states that attempts to achieve occupational equity by encouraging women to move into higher paying male occupations will not work, and she suggests instead that traditional female occupations should be upgraded. She also points out some public policy efforts that are working. Most notably, she examines the Norwegian public policy efforts that promote equal sharing and caring as “part of the natural order” (p.122). These family and labor market policies focus on men’s duties in relation to housework and childcare and ease women’s participation in the labor market by supporting their needs to raise a family. Mjelde states that these policies offer promise because they have the potential to promote gender equality both at work and in the family. In that regard, they might be considered revolutionary, and they offer a working model for other societies to adapt and adopt.

Tara Fenwick explores women's participation in vocational and workforce education in Canada. In her article, *Gender and the New Economy—Enterprise Discourses in Canada: Implications for Workplace Learning and Education*, she states that, like the United States, Canada's economy is shifting from resource and heavy industry to technology development, knowledge production, and information management. This profound economic shift has placed new constraints on workforce preparation and workforce (re)training and development. Fenwick examines recent vocational and training developments within the context of Canada's new economic and labor market changes. Specifically, Fenwick's research investigates current provisions being made for girls' vocational education and women's work-based training. She utilizes her findings to make recommendations for gender sensitive vocational education to help girls prepare to enter the labor market. Fenwick calls for work-based training and development that will provide women the support they need to attain both their personal and professional goals. This support must help them create and sustain a work-life balance that enables them to successfully manage their challenging private and public roles without having to sacrifice one for the other.

#### **Equal but Unequal**

Marg Malloch looks at vocational education in Australia and asks *Where are the Women in Vocational Education and Training?: An Assessment of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in Australia*. She addresses this question by first exploring the traditional masculine focus of Australian vocational education and training. In doing so, Malloch provides background information on the overall goals, delivery systems, and educational policies that have historically guided TAFE in Australia. Against this background, she describes what life is like for female students and women employees in TAFE. Malloch's findings show that while women enroll on a near equal basis with men in TAFE, Australia has a highly gendered workforce. Overall, women are employed in only a small number of occupations, and these occupations are at the bottom of the pay scale. Of the nearly 42% of Australian women employed in the

workforce, over a third are employed part-time only. Thus, women who receive TAFE training do not share equal employment outcomes with their male counterparts. Furthermore, many female TAFE students enrolled in TAFE institutions state that they experience general hostility and sexual harassment on a regular basis.

Also uneven are the employment trends within TAFE institutions themselves. Malloch reports that while TAFE's female employees hold the majority of teaching positions (52% to 47% male teachers), men hold 69% of available full-time teaching positions and 57% of all positions. She points out that it is more common for women in TAFE to receive temporary labor contracts while their male TAFE employees are more likely to hold continuing labor contracts. Not surprisingly, Malloch's findings reveal that few women hold top positions in TAFE institutions.

In examining TAFE's vocational education and training policies, Malloch notes that there has been a move toward a gender inclusive curriculum in TAFE. Policies charge TAFE institutions with providing gender equitable course counseling as well as gender equitable materials and delivery. Additionally, current policies call for courses and programming to be offered on a flexible time-table more appropriate to women. She acknowledges that these policies were developed specifically to address women's training and to provide more gender equity in TAFE institutions. In addition, on the management level, current TAFE policies ask for an increase in the number of women in administrative positions in TAFE institutions. However, Malloch believes that all of these potential gains for women in Australia's TAFE system could be offset by a trend toward competency based training. She expresses concern that a focus on competency based training could work against women, as this training methodology narrows the scope of competencies to be addressed in a given occupational curriculum and the competencies that are valued tend to be gender biased, favoring males. Malloch predicts that this narrowing of focus will undermine women's ability to move into different sectors of the occupational fields for which they are trained. She argues instead for a need to recognize and reward the skills, competencies, and accomplishments of all workers.

### Re-Directing Through Public Policy

Katrin Kraus and Patricia Carter pose a fundamental question in *Disincentives to Employment: Family and Educational Policies in Unified Germany*. They ask, "Does family life determine work roles or do work roles determine family life?" (p. 169). In order to address this question, Kraus and Carter assert that one must first examine what institutional arrangements have been made in the areas of production and reproduction. They utilize Germany as a model for analyzing this arrangement because it provides a unique contrast of differing institutional arrangements in East and West Germany before and after re-unification.

Differing institutional arrangements in the former East Germany (GDR) and West Germany (FRG) illustrate how the state has the ability to adjust gender relations and determine work roles and family life. To clarify this point, the authors discuss how before re-unification the former GDR had many state incentives to facilitate women's employment in the workforce, whereas the FRG offered state incentives that supported the German family ideal of male as head of household and traditional breadwinner. Therefore, former East German women were well represented in the GDR workforce regardless of marital or maternal status before re-unification, while their married-with-children West German counterparts tended not to work or work part-time only, often resuming their careers full-time after their children reached school age or left home. With re-unification, former East German women experienced significant job losses. Furthermore, there were losses in state-supported child care facilities making it more difficult for former East German women with children to remain employed. By contrast, life for former West German women continued in a familiar vein supported by state policies and subsidies which promoted their childbearing capacities over their economic capacities.

In evaluating the current state of affairs in present day unified Germany, women appear to have suffered tremendous setbacks in the career and vocational sector. As Kraus and Carter elucidate, life and career planning mean different things for boys and girls in today's Germany. In discussing future career goals, girls tend to frame their career choices in relation to future roles

as wife and mother. In vocational education settings, girls show a preference for career choices that they believe will be more compatible to domestic work. Boys, on the other hand, perceive no conflict when choosing vocational tracks. Kraus and Carter conclude that although women in Germany do not have equal employment opportunities with men, the majority of German women do want to work. Yet current state policies and structures do not support their participation in the labor market. Due to this lack of state support, German women are increasingly delaying marriage and childbirth, having fewer children, and hiring household help when they do attempt to raise families and work outside the home. The authors ponder the likelihood that German society will fulfill the promise of gender equality in the future.

In *Gender Equity in Vocational Education in the United States: The Unfinished Agenda*, Steven M. Culver and Penny Burge state that vocational and career education and training have a major role to play in redirecting social expectations surrounding gender, education, and employment in the United States. Their research shows that the United States has made little comprehensive progress toward fulfilling gender equity initiatives in vocational education. In fact, U.S. women remain largely segregated across and within occupational fields, and they continue to earn less than their male counterparts in the same professions. In an effort to explain the reasons for this, Culver and Burge analyze federal legislation tied to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act from 1984 to the present to determine what role it has played in influencing gender equity in vocational and career education.

Culver and Burge compare the stated initiatives and funding for gender equity of Perkins I, II, and III. They point out that Perkins I (1984) provided considerable funding to promote gender equity in vocational education by appropriating 3.5% of Perkins funds for programs to “foster gender equity in vocational education” and an additional 8.5% of funds were allocated “to provide services for single parents and displaced homemakers” (p.191). However, when congress reauthorized the Perkins Act in 1990 (Perkins II) they gave less emphasis to gender equity and more to new programs such as Tech Prep. In 1998, when the Perkins Act (Perkins III) was reauthorized for a second time, it

emphasized funding initiatives for technology in classroom instruction and bolstered Tech Prep programming. More significantly, Perkins III completely eliminated funding that had previously been set aside for gender equity programs including funding for a full-time department of education employee responsible for coordinating these programs in each state. To provide an accurate portrayal of the current status of gender equity in vocational education, Culver and Burge report on findings from a 2002 study conducted by the Civil Rights Office of the U.S. Department of Education at the request of the National Women's Law Center. This study investigated vocational education programs for violations of Title IX, which in 1972 banned sex discrimination in schools. Notable findings from the 2002 study indicate that young women fail to receive accurate information and counseling on nontraditional career options. The report also noted that young women do not have female role-models in high-wage trades, and that in many cases young females endure discriminatory attitudes and practices from counselors, teachers, and administrators.

Culver and Burge conclude their article by offering strategies to combat these disappointing findings. They state the need for more federal funding targeted specifically for promoting gender equity in vocational education. However, they argue that funding alone is insufficient and that vocational teachers' behavior and attitudes can provide the greatest influence on their students' success in achieving gender equity in the educational and occupational spheres.

### Summary

In the *Afterward*, to this volume, Lakes and Carter present the "four overarching discourses" (p. 203) of the volume: (a) Responsibility for promoting gender equity in vocational education and training (VET) has shifted from the state to individuals (p. 203), (b) Socio-cultural traditions of patriarchy continue to limit female equity despite continued revisions to vocational and educational training systems and policies (p.204), (c) Gender stereotypes and masculine privilege prevail in VET due to support from "institutional and system-wide practices and student peer cultures" (p. 205), (d) Donor agencies influence

“VET and gender equity agendas in the developing world” (p.206). In their discussion, the editors briefly recap each article in relation to one of these overarching themes. This provides a closure to a multi-faceted journey and offers a broad forum for further scholarly discussion and debate.

The cross-national perspectives on gender and education for work featured in this volume reveal that gender disparities in occupational opportunities and wage earnings persist across the globe. With its capacity to relate school to work, vocational education can serve an unprecedented role in breaching the economic divides that generate imbalances in the lives of men and women. As new policies and practices evolve in the new economy, vocational education may well provide the means to promote worldwide gender, social, and racial equality.