EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN IRAN AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

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Abstract

During the last two decades, Iran has experienced a considerable increase in the total number of students in all public Higher Education (HE) institutions. This expansion has also been accompanied by increases in the participation of women in HE. This article seeks to explain the possible theoretical explanations behind the expansion of HE and women's participation in Iran. There are several different possible theories for the expansion. These are: varieties of Human Capital Theory, Cost Benefit Theory, Public Choice Theory, Conflict Theory, elements of Feminist Theory, and State Formation Theory. Among these theories, however, it seems that the modified State Formation Theory in relation to HE expansion and women's participation, may have the most comprehensive and satisfactory answer in explaining this process. A focus on nation-building helps to explain much of what is specific about women's participation in HE in the Iranian post-Revolutionary State.

Introduction

Higher education has been considered as a key element in the economic, political and cultural processes of every modern and developing nation. In the past two decades, most countries including Iran have experienced some form of expansion in their systems of higher education (HE). This expansion has also been accompanied by increases in the participation of women in HE. Research findings show that since 1960, the number of women being educated in the third world nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East

has increased markedly (Elliott, et al, 1980; INST, 1985; Kelly, 1991; Bradley, 2000), although, research also reveals pervasive gender inequalities among students, academic staff and senior management (UNESCO, 1997; Ashraf, 1985; Fatemi, 1997).

This article seeks to explain the possible reasons behind the expansion of HE and women's participation in Iran. In Iran, the number of women participating in HE has increased from 30.5 (54, 248 students) per cent in 1978 to 44.1 (299, 333 students) per cent in 1999. Clearly this constitutes a major breakthrough not only in participation

rates for women but possibly also in terms of their changing role in society. A review of the literature shows this phenomenon has rarely been investigated systematically in Iran and in particular little attention has been paid to explanations for this change.

Quantitative analysis of women's participation in higher education

During the last two decades, Iran has experienced a considerable increase in the total number of students in all public higher education institutions. For example, in the academic year 1978-79, the total number of students was 175,685, while in 1999-00 the number of students increased to 678,652. This represents almost a ten-fold increase. Also, Table 1 and Figure 1 shows in the academic year 1978-79, the total number of graduate students

was 35,559. In 1998-99, the number of graduates increased to 105,937. This constituted an increase of 800 percent over the number reported in 1978-79. Moreover, in recent years the position of women in HE appears to have improved dramatically. In the academic year 1999-00, 44.1 percent of HE students were female, compared with 30.5 percent in academic year 1978-79 (see Table 1).

Also, recent statistics show that the numbers of females applying to universities has increased gradually. In 1994, for example, 41 percent of applicants were girls, and in 1997 this number increased to 49.5 percent, (see Table 2). Latest statistics show that, among the 1,340,225 applicants who took the entrance examination for the 1999 academic year (616,480 males, 723,450 females), 54 percent were female, a proportion which is continuing to rise (MSRT, 1999).

Table 1. Total number of students and graduates between the years 1969-97

| Academic Year	The No. of Students			Graduates		
	Total	Female	%	Total	Female	%
1978-79	175675	54248	30.5	35559	10233	28.8
1979-80	174217	53571	30.7	43221	12507	28.9
1982-83	117148	36356	31	5793	2280	39.4
1983-84	121048	38643	31.9	12831	3750	29.2
1984-85	145809	45216	31	19944	6714	33.7
1985-86	151495	45404	30	28868	9325	32.3
1986-87	167971	49085	29	26927	8439	31.3
1987-88	204862	58929	28.8	58637	9706	16.5
1988-89	250709	71822	28.6	33010	10220	31
1989-90	281392	78573	28	37384	10734	28.7
1990-91	312076	85325	27.3	42587	11704	27.5
1991-92	334045	96969	29	52353	16576	29.6
1992-93	374734	105667	28.2	59194	18612	31.4
1993-94	436564	124350	28.5	63866	19553	30.6
1994-95	476455	145353	30.5	74170	21939	29.6
1995-96	526621	171816	32.6	83385	26938	32.3
1996-97	579070	209163	36.1	83882	28361	33.8
1997-98	625380	238687	38.2	91051	32366	35.3
1998-99	638913	267650	42	105937	40433	38.2
1999-00	678652	299333	44.2			

Source: MSRT (1999)
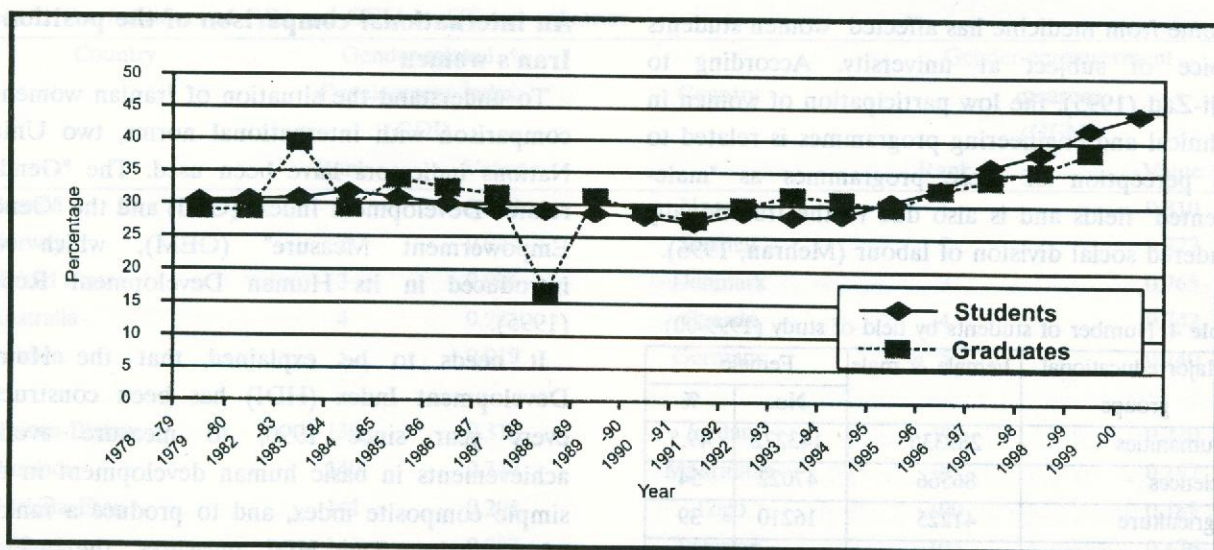
Figure 1. The percentage of women students and graduates between the years 1978-00

Table 2. Number of applicants entering the HE institutions from different educational groups (Data for 1994-97)

Year	Gender	Maths & technical Sc.	Natural Sc.	Humanities Sc.	Art	Total
1997	M/F	251208	408789	560645	20614	1241256
	F	57241	244211	297049	14167	612668
	%	22.8	59.7	5	68.7	49.5

Source: MSRT (1998)

By the 1998-99 academic year women represented 44.4 percent of the total student population, although they are still outnumbered by men at postgraduate level (Master's degree) by 80 percent (see Table 3).

Table 3. The number of students by academic level (1998-99)

Level of study	Female & male	Female	
		No.	%
Associate degree	120081	41256	34.4
Bachelors' degree	481025	233757	48.2
Masters' degree	30093	6029	20
PhD or Specialists	10547	2673	25.3
Professional Doctors	36906	15618	43
Total	678652	299333	44.1

Source: MSRT (1999)

Although the number of female students at universities has increased gradually (see Table 4),

there are still huge disparities between the proportions of men and women students within subject areas. For example, in contrast to engineering and technology, where men comprise 83 percent of new entrants to undergraduate courses, in subjects allied to medicine, 68.7 percent of new entrants are women. In arts, 66.6 percent are women (see Tables 5 and 6). El-Sanabary (1993) explains these differences according to cultural values because women enter occupations that serve other women and because Muslims are averse to the treatment of female patients by male doctors, women are well represented in medicine. However, because they have good access to mathematics and science courses at the secondary level in many Middle Eastern countries, women are better represented in natural science in these countries than they are in many western countries. Iraj-Zad (1997) supplements this explanation by noting that social prestige and the expectations of higher

income from medicine has affected women students choice of subject at university. According to Iraji-Zad (1995), the low participation of women in technical and engineering programmes is related to the perception of these programmes as "male-oriented" fields and is also due to the traditionally gendered social division of labour (Mehran, 1996).

Table 4. Number of students by field of study (1999-00)

Major educational groups	Female & male	Female	
		No.	%
Humanities	289336	143272	49.5
Sciences	86566	47022	54
Agriculture	41225	16210	39
Engineering	141859	22834	16
Medicine	95329	55512	85.2
Art	24337	14482	59.5
Total	678653	2999333	44

Source: MSRT (1999)

Table 5. Number of admitted students by academic level (1999-00)

Academic Level	Female & male	Female	
		No.	%
Associate degree	46256	17145	37.1
Bachelor degree	101985	57039	56
Masters' degree	9109	2014	22
PhD or Specialists	1746	404	23
Professional Doctors	4188	55	2296
Total	163284	78898	48.3

Source: MSRT (1999)

Table 6. Number of admitted students by field of study (1999-00)

Major educational groups	Female & male	Female	
		No.	%
Humanities	65025	35818	55
Sciences	18619	10666	57.3
Agriculture	10677	4631	43.4
Engineering	37603	6402	17
Medicine	23885	16405	68.7
Art	7475	4976	66.6
Total	163284	78898	48.3

Source: MSRT (1999)

An international comparison of the position of Iran's women

To understand the situation of Iranian women in comparison with international norms, two United Nations indicators have been used. The "Gender-related Development Index" (GDI) and the "Gender Empowerment Measure" (GEM), which was introduced in its Human Development Report (1995).

It needs to be explained that the Human Development Index (HDI) has been constructed every year since 1990, to measure average achievements in basic human development in one simple composite index, and to produce a ranking of countries. The HDI measures the average achievement of a country in basic human capabilities, indicating whether people lead a long and healthy life, are educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living (UNDP, 1995). However, the GDI and GEM, are composite measures reflecting gender inequalities in human development. While the GDI attempts to capture achievements in the same dimensions as the HDI (life expectancy, educational attainment and income) it adjusts the results for gender inequality, the GEM (seats held in parliament, administrators and managers, professional and technical workers, earned income share) captures gender inequalities in key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making (UNDP, 1999).

Table 7 shows the top and bottom five countries with the position of Iran in the rankings for each of the indices. As can be seen, the position of Iran in comparison with these countries is in the middle in terms of GDI ranking (0.696), but according to the GEM ranking the country has fallen to 88th place, and consequently needs to improve (GEM value 0.264).

However, from these descriptive statistics regarding women's situation in HE, certain key questions follow. These are:

Why is higher education expanding in Iran?

Why is higher education expanding in particular for women?

Table 7. The indicators of GDI and GEM in different countries

Country	Gender-related Development index (GDI)		Country	Gender-empowerment measure (GEM)	
	Rank	Value		Rank	Value
Canada	1	0.928	Norway	1	0.810
Norway	2	0.927	Sweden	2	0.777
United States	3	0.926	Denmark	3	0.765
Australia	4	0.921	Canada	4	0.742
Sweden	5	0.919	Germany	5	0.740
Guinea-Bissau	139	0.318	Jordan	98	0.220
Burundi	140	0.317	Mauritania	99	0.197
Burkina Faso	141	0.291	Togo	100	0.185
Ethiopia	142	0.287	Pakistan	101	0.176
Niger	143	0.286	Niger	102	0.120
Iran	81	0.696	Iran	88	0.264

Source: UNDP (1999)

There are many possible theoretical explanations for these questions that will be discussed in the following part.

Theoretical framework for study of HE expansion and women's participation

In order to establish which theories provide the best explanatory account of HE expansion and women's increased participation several theories are considered. These are: varieties of Human Capital Theory, Cost Benefit Theory, Public Choice Theory, Conflict Theory, elements of Feminist Theory, and State Formation Theory.

It should be stressed that these theories have usually been applied to western models of HE, however it is a further issue to be discussed in this article as to whether and in what ways they can be applied to a developing, 'post-colonial' society like that of Iran. While there are common world-wide trends, such as the increasingly important role of technology, there are also important differences among countries and in different parts of the world. The Third World presents a specific set of circumstances (Altbach, 1991) to which these

theories may or may not apply.

However, there are different theories in relation to expansion of HE (for example see, Meyer, et al, 1971; Ramirez and Rubinson, 1979; Boli, et al 1985; Ramirez and Boli 1987; Ramirez and Riddle, 1991; Archer, 1982; Altbach, 1991, 1998; Windolf, 1992, 1997; Ashton and Sung 1994; Green, 1990, 1997, 1999), which could be discussed at length in this paper, but to summarise:

Human Capital Theory cites education's contribution to economic growth through enhancing the quality of human resources. Also, according to this theory, individuals invest in themselves in order to prosper in the labour market.

Cost-Benefit Theory: the nature of HE expansion, and an individual's participation in it, is associated with its perceived cost and benefits, and in consideration of the balance between costs and benefits.

Public Choice Theory is the application and extension of economic theory and economic tools to politics or governmental choice. HE is concerned with the decisions of special interest groups or politicians, who seek their own well-being or

political power.

According to Conflict Theory, educational expansion is an outcome of a process of status competition among groups.

In contrast to Manpower Planning, the Credentialism approach can be cited as an individualistic orientation to HE, in that people usually assume that educational credentials (positional goods) are required to improve their labour-market chances.

The idea of Equal Opportunities policy is that every one, regardless of age, social class, urban or rural origin, or gender, has the right to education. This could be argued to have particular relevance to women's increasing participation.

Whilst idea of equal opportunity policies seeks equal chances and access for every one, Feminism Theory is looking to the particular empowerment of women, through their access to HE.

In the view of State Formation Theory, HE expansion and women's increased participation can be related to many different social, economic and historical factors in relationship with the broader process of nation-state building in a society. In fact this theory can also encompass some of these theories (for more detail about these theories see Salehi, 2001).

Given the discussion, there are further questions which can be drawn from these theoretical explanations including:

* Which of these theories best explains the expansion of Higher Education in Iran?

* Which of these theories most comprehensively and adequately explains the expansion of women's HE in Iran?

Theoretical explanations for the expansion of HE and women's participation in Iran

However, research findings show that human capital theory is problematic because the progression from investment in education to returns in the labour market are problematic in Iran, as it is argued by Salehi (2001) there is a real concern amongst Iranian students as to their job prospects.

Cost benefit analysis incorporated as a more sophisticated form of human capital theory may be of some help here. For example, if students could not find jobs if they did not attend university and if university is free then the benefits of a university degree probably outweigh the costs since there is some prospect of finding a paid job, even if the chances aren't great. However, the most telling point against both human capital and cost benefit theories is the fact that most students came to university for a combination of reasons including self-improvement, status as an educated person and emancipation.

With respect to Status Conflict theory, there is some evidence of concern amongst policy makers, supported by what some of the students said, that the competition to acquire credentials was developing. Moreover, with respect to women, that they were being encouraged into HE, by their fathers, as a means of marrying well are particularly patriarchal form of status competition (see Salehi, 2001).

Public Choice Theory does not seem relevant to the expansion of HE and women's participation in the context of Iranian society,. The reason for this can be related to the revolutionary context of the society. The state that did not allow special interest groups or politicians to advance their self-interest in relation to the expansion of HE in Iran. Although, it can be argued that some part of the expansion was concerned with government policy to maximise society's welfare, which in part may have been expanded in order to legitimise itself. However, this policy could equally have been implemented for different purposes, such as a genuine concern with eradicating poverty (that the society suffered from pre-Revolutionary times) and the desire to develop the society.

However it will already be apparent that these theories cannot adequately explain HE expansion and women's participation in Iran. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the research findings show that women were seeking HE for both economic and social/cultural reasons.

Moreover, the nature of the views expressed by the women students suggest that in this period from the revolution onward, there has been a radical transformation in how they view themselves in relation to education and paid work (see Salehi, 2001). Second, the labour-market (particularly in the private sector) remains discriminatory towards women-whether this is due to a tradition-dominated culture in society or for other reasons (see Afshari, 1995). In addition, the openings for educated labour of whatever gender remain limited. Third, the senior educational policy makers (with consideration of their key role in the expansion of HE) have also had in mind other considerations beyond the merely economic ones (see Salehi, 2001). Finally, providing equal educational opportunities for all, and thereby establishing social justice, is a goal of universities, that the economic models are, by their nature, blind to (Coombs, 1985).

The process may be explainable by ideas of equal opportunity and feminist theory, which argue that HE should be expanded equally for men and women. From these viewpoints, access to HE is assumed to be instrumental in achieving women's rights. To support this, Esfandiari (1997) has argued that the role of the Iranian Women's Movement and other women's organisations has been central in the recent years in encouraging women to be more active in education and work. But by this perspective again we are not able to explain the whole phenomenon, although, it is true that this school of thought has affected Western societies (and somewhat in Iran) to realise women's rights. There is no doubt that these factors are likely to have created a push factor in the demand for HE but if attention is given to the role of policy makers for the expansion of HE in society, we must look at other reasons. It is one thing for women to push for access to HE but it is another for the state to accept such demands.

Also, if we accept that particular women's groups have attempted (sometimes struggled) to gain more power and more privileges, we may also be able to explain the reasons for women's participation in HE

in terms of Status Conflict Theory. Here an element of students' participation in HE can be seen in terms of credential trends-a key element of conflict theory. But it seems that this theory is also not adequate to explain the origins of HE expansion in Iran.

However, there are several different possible theories for the expansion of HE and women's participation in Iran. Among these theories however, it seems that the modified State Formation Theory in relation to HE expansion and women's participation, may have the more comprehensive and satisfactory answer in explaining this process. A focus on nation-building helps to explain much of what is specific about women's participation in HE in the Iranian post-Revolutionary State.

Given the discussion in the review of literature (Skocpol, 1994; Defronzo, 1996; Derry, 2000) it can be argued more specifically here that the conditions for the development of nation states also fit well with Iran's recent history. Most obviously Iran has undergone an internal transformation (revolution). It has suffered external threats in the form of war with Iraq and a perceived threat from the former Soviet Union and from the United States. With respect to the latter there is a crucial element concerning the initial or triggering conditions that Green (1990, 1997, 1999) has omitted and to which I shall return. Finally, the issue of seeking to emerge from economic poverty and dependence is intimately related to the above conditions. Arguably, if the wealth created by the former regime's modernisation process had been more widely distributed, the recent history of Iran might have been different.

Part of the problem here concerned the domination of the Iranian economy by overseas interests particularly those of Britain and the United States and this in turn lead to a further point regarding the development of State Formation theory (see Salehi, 2001). Iran, prior to the revolution, could be considered a semi-colonial state. Clearly, this status could be seen by the

people as both an external threat and requiring internal transformation. In a sense the prior experience of colonialism gives added significance to education in a post-colonial state. As Coombs (1985) and Watson (1988) have noted educational ambitions that have the perception that education can remedy economic ills will have something to do with this 'explosion' but it is also the case that it will also have been related to the development of national identity.

While Green (1990, 1997, 1999) refers to education, he does not do so with specific reference to higher education. Although Altbach (1991) notes that a newly united Germany harnessed the university to nation building, in the modern world of a developing globalised economy, it can be argued that HE is now integral to nation building and development. In what follows the arguments for this position are reviewed and analysed.

All the evidence adduced so far suggests that state formation theory may provide the best overall account for the expansion of HE in Iran and in particular for women. However, there are alternative theories which can either be viewed as competitor theories or may be subsumed beneath the overarching umbrella of state formation theory. In order to determine which of these two possibilities provides the best explanation for HE expansion we need to establish criteria by which these competing alternatives can be judged.

With respect to state formation theory we can anticipate that in the process of nation building or reconstruction in the case of Iran that there will be multiple reasons for both social and economic factors being relevant to a policy of HE expansion in the cause of reconstructing the nation state. Included in these reasons will be the following:

1. The development of a national identity -with the consideration to the diversity in Iranian population etc- through common curricula.

2. The reduction of conflict between individuals and groups in order to generate unity

3. The provision of opportunities and fair and transparent rules for the conduct of positional competition.

4. The provision of skilled personnel for the economy and for the expansion of state activities.

These criteria certainly could subsume elements of alternative theories such as human capital theory, conflict theories concerning positional competition, while rejecting others, for example public choice theory.

Thus, in order to understand influences on women's HE expansion in Iran, we must go beyond an analysis of the *merely* economic or *merely* the social/cultural factors which have been used, in the past, to examine HE expansion and development (for example see Vahidi, 1996). We need now to look further and more closely at the particular historical origins and social circumstances in Iran which led to this process. This first requires, however, an analysis of the broader processes of state formation, and the role of higher education and women's participation within this.

Social revolution and political independence

"All revolutionary regimes implemented policies to effect a transformation of the existing system. This process often necessitated the large-scale destruction of the old order before the construction of the new one could take place" (Waylen, 1996b, p. 85-86).

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the achievement of political independence in February 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran came to existence with the hope of establishing an Islamic state (Mohsenpour, 1989). The new state and nation was trying to establish systems of education corresponding to their social, economic and political aspirations and circumstances (Shorish, 1988). There was general agreement that education was a panacea for miscellaneous socio-economic ills; it was seen as a key to economic growth and a weapon against deep-seated inequalities and injustices. In fact, the Revolution is regarded as a Cultural Revolution and thus education is believed to be the basis of all changes (Mehran, 1989; 1994).

In short, it was believed that there was a link between higher education and modernisation (see MSRT, 1997). After the Revolution, the construction of a new state and nation was attempted. This state offered a new role for women because the development literature suggests that their education may be central to development (see Woodhall, 1973; Benavot, 1989; Browne and Barrett, 1991; Heward and Bunwaree, 1999). Therefore, Higher Education expansion and women's participation therein, was vital to the success of this project, not only for educating human manpower for economic growth, but equally important, as a means of promoting national unity and nation-building. The fostering of a strong new nation and national identity has become one of the most important tasks for the Iranian government, and Higher Education in general, and the expansion of women's HE in particular, is seen as a major instrument for doing this (Women Employment Policies in Islamic Republic of Iran 1992, quoted form The Research Quarterly Journal of Women's Cultural and Social Council, 1999; Farzin-nia, 1995).

Part of the pressure for this had come from substantial private and individual demand. This demand for HE has been stimulated both by economic and social/cultural factors. Access to education has been helped by the relative equality of incomes, and by the lack of an historic elite, which has sought to appropriate education in its own interest by making HE, in particular, seem unattainable to the majority. The reason for this is that those who sought to monopolise the positional competition before the revolution emigrated with its advent. Consequently, the popular importance of education has been enhanced as a means of social status and mobility, and given credence by meritocratic ideologies promoted by the state. The state has strongly supported education in the national interest, both to build national unity to reduce conflict and to stimulate economic development (see MSRT, 1997; Nafisi, 1996).

It seems to the researcher that the Revolution,

and its associated ideals of personal and national independence, was one of the main factors in accelerating HE expansion, and therefore, women's participation in the process of nation and state building in Iran.

Legitimacy of the state

Legitimate governments protect the welfare of their citizens (Spicker, 2000, p. 134).

The other force for educational expansion in the context of State formation in the country relates to the 'legitimacy of the state'. In the pre-Revolutionary times, Iran was faced with illiteracy, poverty and social backwardness. Therefore, the legitimacy of the new government was dependent on responding to the people's will and establishing an agenda for social justice. Here, the educational policy of widening women's participation in HE was important. If nothing else, women in society had had a key role in the victory of the Revolution and had "earned" a right to participate. Instead they were still faced with huge social and cultural problems, such as a low level of participation in policy making, low levels of education etc. Therefore, the government's policy concerning mass Higher Education and expanding women's participation in the post-revolutionary period, can be related to achieving acceptance, and solid support from both genders. After all women make up over 50 per cent of the population. In addition, it could be argued that in promoting the cause of women the state was also seeking to obviate other potential tensions such as those relating to class. It could be argued that promoting the cause of women is a way of making an appeal to legitimacy which cuts across social class.

Expansion of the state sector

The Higher Education system in Iran expanded commensurately with expansion of the state sector after the Revolution. In fact, a part of the drive to increase numbers in HE has to do with the development of an educated cadre of state workers. If we look at the statistics, it can be seen that, prior

to the revolution, the number of higher educated workers in the state organizations was low. For example, if we compare the number of female state workers in 1966 (6.3 percent) with 1986 (47 percent), we see that the proportion of females has increased considerably in the state sector (Rezai-Rashti, 1989; Poya, 1999). The role of government intervention in policy making is very crucial in a developmental state. For example, there is some suggestion by Alvarez (1990), after examining Brazil, that state-led development inevitably increases employment opportunities for female professionals and technocrats within the state (quoted from Waylen, 1996a, p. 13). Thus, some part of the HE expansion was related to the needs of government bureaucratic organisations. To support this idea-that one of the functions of universities in a country is to provide a cadre for the state-Knowles (1977) points out that one of the important reasons for the creation of Daarul Fonoon (the first western-style university in Iran) was to provide skills needed for the state sectors. Derry (2000, p. 95) points out that the pressures of the Iran-Iraq War and the exodus of expertise placed demands on women to fill government positions, and also to provide medical and teaching services for women to comply with the demands of Islamisation. Furthermore, in the post-Revolutionary period, segregation of the sexes has been chosen as the new policy of this country. Esfandiari (1997) and Poya (1999) argue that sex segregation also increased the demand for professional women (physicians, schoolteachers, physical education instructors, and administrators) to deal with women and mainly female activities.

The impacts of the theory of Islamic education

Islamic thinking, and especially its emphasis on universal education, may also be another influencing factor on HE expansion and women's participation in the process of nation and state formation in Iranian society.

The theory of Islamic education is found in the Qur'an and in the hadith or traditions of the Prophet Mohammed. As to learning in general, one hadith states that 'the quest for learning is a duty incumbent on every Muslim male and female', another that 'wisdom is the goal of the believer and he must seek it irrespective of its source'. Other hadiths describe learning and wisdom as equal to worship, and of men of learning as successors to the prophets. For example, one hadith states that 'God eases the way to paradise for him who seeks learning', and another states that 'angels spread their wings for the seeker of learning as a mark of God's approval of his purpose' (quoted from Bray, et al, 1998, P. 43).

However, Islam also encourages the education of women equally with men (largely a novel concept both prior to the revolution - and until quite recently- amongst many societies). Although, in practice, some Muslim societies have given the impression that education is an exclusively male activity, it is certainly not the case in theory. On the right of Muslim women to receive education, Muslim scholars cite verses of the Qur'an such as Chapter 9 verse 39 and refer to several hadiths.

Also some Islamic clerical leaders in Iran like Morteza Mottahari, and non-clerical thinkers like Ali Shariati argue in their writings, talks, and sermons that Islam does not stand in the way of women's education, work, and active participation in society. On the contrary, they assert that Islam accords to women an honoured and privileged place in the community. Shariati depicted the Prophet's daughter, Fatemeh, as the ideal women: a model wife and mother, but also a companion to her husband, an active participant in the great religious and political struggles of the time, and an intrepid warrior for justice and truth (Esfandiari, 1997, p. 35).

It is important to emphasise that the new role constructed for women was not a role as might be understood in the west. Rather, the role of women in this new Islamic state needs to be seen against the background of the more general struggle against semi-colonial dependence and the promotion of an Islamic state. Islamisation (meant emphasising

Islamic and religious training and de-emphasising western education) of schooling was seen as a key element in this society and especial priority given to moral development of ideal citizen as good Muslims, over and above the development of a trained workforce (Higgins and Shoar-Ghattari, 1994; Mehran, 1989). Derry (2000, p. 91) describes the characteristic of Educational systems in the pre-revolution:

> Where textbooks had been presented as indicative of the ideological values of the Pahlavi regime, the whole education system under the monarchy was seen to harbour the supremacy of Western values. As with schools, universities were to be recons-tructed to rid them of 'Westoxification'.

Thus, Islam, as the influencing religion in Iran, has played a positive role in the expansion of HE and women's participation (see Nafisi, 1996).

The expansion of general education and adult education

Further evidence that supports the idea of nation building in the process of education expansion in the country may be found in the expansion of general education and women's adult education. This was also the result of the post-revolutionary priority given to plans for educational expansion in Iran. For example, in 1996/7 the female literacy rate was 74 percent, compared with 35 percent in 1976/7 (Poya, 1999). The IMF (1998, p.19) reports:

> The key social indicators have improved in Iran since the beginning of the 1980s, and policies have been implemented to improve both education and health in the country. The enrolment rate in primary education is approximately 100 percent (compared with 87 percent in 1980), and many students continue to secondary education, where the enrolment rate has increased to close to 70 percent (compared with 42 percent in 1980). The literacy rate increased from about 50 percent in 1987 to more than 70 percent

in 1996. In the age group between 6 and 29 years, the education effort is even more evident, bringing up the literacy to more than 90 percent for the total population in 1996 and to close to 100 percent in urban areas. Higher education has also experienced a significant expansion, with the number of students increasing from about 500 thousand in 1989 to 1.2 million in 1996/97.

These figures represent a response by the government to develop a literate citizenry. It was a response to the needs of adults, not only as individuals but also as members of their communities, in order to help them live more effectively in society (see National Report, 1995).

State policy on student admissions

In addition to the above explanations, there is further evidence that may support the state policy of women's wider participation in HE in the process of nation building. The most important sources of evidence in favour of state formation theory are those policies used in the student admission process. In HE is the "Guide to Enter Higher Education" called "Guide", a booklet published by the Ministry of Higher Education and distributed to the participants in the nation-wide entrance exams held every summer women (Guide 1998) were able to enrol in almost every field of study even Mining, that was closed to them in pre-revolution (see MSRT, 1999).

Conclusion

There are several points to make. HE as a whole has been expanded in Iran, in parallel with the general formation process of a new state and nation. Part of this formation process has been linked to women's participation in HE. This is because women can, with higher qualifications, play a major role in nation-building. This general and specific expansion has been instigated and backed by government policy. This policy can also be seen to promote more opportunities for women to

develop their ability in order to gain equality. Consequently, gender needs to be entered into the equation of contemporary state formation theory. The importance of gender when considering State Formation Theory has been neglected in the past, and it is an issue that has implications for Governments, when formulating policy towards HE institutions and employers.

Another point to be made is that although the social barriers relating to women's participation in HE in Iran have been removed, the economic barriers to women's future progress in the labour market are still remaining, although they are being addressed through employment by the state.

However, further challenges remain. The most important concerns the quality of education. Rapid expansion has risked a loss of quality and it is this issue that now needs to be more fully debated. Iran has come to a point where there may need to be a trade-off between further expansion and improved quality. Further expansion may in some way address issues of equality but at the cost of reducing the quality of students' education.

Finally, the potential impact of globalisation could threaten the process of nation building and the current process of state formation. Globalisation means access to information which is hard to control, for example through the internet. Yet the Islamic state that has been built is developing a nation according to a specific set of principles described in this article which includes a framework of identity formation for the nation state is based on the principles of Islam. The question which remains is whether such a state can survive in a globalised world or whether in line with many other states around the world it will adapt. The alternative is to close the doors to globalisation. But whether this is possible or desirable is another matter.

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گسترش آموزش عالی و مشارکت زنان در ایران

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چکیده

اکثر کشورها در دنیا و از جمله ایران در طی دو دهه گذشته گسترش آموزش عالی را تجربه کردند. این گسترش با

حضور و مشارکت بیشتر زنان نیز همراه بوده است. آمارهای موجود نشان می‌دهد که میزان مشارکت زنان در

بخش دولتی آموزش عالی در ایران بعد از انقلاب اسلامی رشد قابل توجهی داشته است. در این مقاله سعی شده

تا دلایل این گسترش و مشارکت با توجه به نظریه‌های مختلف گسترش آموزش عالی مورد تبیین قرار گیرد. برای

بررسی این مسئله سؤال شده‌است که چه نظریه‌ای به بهترین وجهی توسعه‌ی آموزش عالی و مشارکت زنان را

در ایران نشان می‌دهد؟ مرور ادبیات موجود و یافته‌های تحقیقات نشان می‌دهد که شرایط ایجاد ملت – دولت

در تاریخ معاصر ایران مشاهده می‌شود. لذا در این مقاله نتیجه گرفته شده‌است که احتمالاً تئوری شکل‌گیری

ملت – دولت یا ملت‌سازی (Nation Building) مناسب‌ترین توضیحات را در این درباره ارائه می‌کند.