

Paper -women education

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Topic:-WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Today, there is practically no gender gap in the opportunity for education in Japan. Even in the upper secondary education and higher education levels, difference of enrollment ratios between male and female students is scarcely present. Historically, however, especially in the early stage of building modern education system, educational opportunities for girls were considerably disadvantaged. Even in the compulsory elementary school, the attendance rate of girls was very low. Opportunities for accessing to secondary education for girls were limited. Higher education for women was not even supposed. Japanese government has developed policies and efforts for promoting education for girls and young females. Conditions for women's education have been gradually improved. As a result, in elementary education, gender gap in schooling was dissolved until the first decade of the 20th century. In the secondary education level, until 1925, the number of students in the girls' middle schools had caught up with the students in the boys' middle schools. And even in the secondary vocational schools the enrollment of female students had been increasing gradually. Achieving gender equality in the higher education, however, was carried over till after the World War II. In the favorable conditions such as the advancement of democratization in the postwar Japanese society, sexual equality, and changing employment structure, higher education for women has grown rapidly.

1. Feudal ideal of women and education

Until the middle of the 19th century, in the feudal Japanese society dominated by male chauvinism, social roles of women were confined. Working places for women were rarely existed excepting the farmer's works and the family business. In the samurai class and upper commoner class, roles of women were restricted to the family works. They were expected to serve faithfully to her husband and parents-in-law. Particular norms for women such as Three Obedience and Seven Divorces restrained their activities and attitude. Women undertook a

task for their daughter's education and discipline. They were not responsible, however, to the education for their sons, especially for the eldest son who would succeed their patriarchal extended family. Mandatory abilities for respectable men such as training in classical Chinese letter and martial arts, manlike manner were different from that of for women. Mothers could not intervene to boy's education. It was alleged that a doting mother would spoil their sons. Such role was expected to their fathers or older mentors.

In Edo era (1603-1868), there was a relatively wide diffusion of educational institutions. There was a large number of popular learning houses called Terakoya, which concentrated on teaching the practical skills of reading, writing and arithmetic to the commoners. Some girls also attended to Terakoya. In the urban area, some female teachers were teaching. For the male samurai class, there were institutions for public education (fief schools) in which to learn classic Chinese literatures (Confucian Studies). On the other hand, private academies, equivalent to secondary schools, were open to all regardless of social classes. However, there were no advanced education institutions for women.

2. Debates on women's higher education in the Special Council for Education

In 1917, the Special Council on Education was established under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister. It was to conduct investigations and deliberations on important educational matters. In accordance with the recommendations of this Council, in 1918, the University Order was promulgated. Under this Order, approval was given for the establishment of single-subject universities and private universities in addition to the comprehensive Imperial Universities that had existed up to this time.

In this special council, girls' education was also discussed as one of the important topics. There were arguments in favor of higher education for women. These were made by Naruse Jinzô (principal of Japan Women's College) and Kano Jigorô (principal of the Tokyo Higher Normal School). Naruse eloquently put forward his long-held ideas about girls' education, and fervently called for the establishment of institutes of higher education for women. He prescribed a policy of schooling separated by sex rather than opening men's universities to women, and hence called for the founding of women's universities. But they were in the minority. Conservative arguments against the higher education for women were dominating over the discussion in the Council. Some council member claimed that higher education for women would delay the marriage and childbirth of young females and bring a drop in the birth rate, and therefore would put the future of the nation at risk.

By 1918, Council for Education dismissed the establishment of institutes of women's higher education on the grounds that the time was not yet right. Admission of women into universities by the regular route was not realized. Instead of rejecting the establishment of institutions of women's higher education, Council recommended reorganizing girls' middle school. It admitted that the girls' middle schools would establish the both specialized and advanced courses for the students who wished more advanced education. Some girls' middle schools really created the specialized or advanced courses besides the regular course. However, neither specialized nor advanced courses enjoyed continued growth, and they ultimately failed to be established on a broad scale. Female students did not equate the inadequate specialized and advanced courses in the girls' middle schools with the professional colleges and the high schools for men.

In 1920s, the enthusiastic promoters for women's education continued their activities and often sent their petitions for establishing the higher education institutions for women to the Imperial Diet. But their hopes could not be realized anyway. The ideal of "Good wife and Wise mother" really contributed to promote the girls' middle schools by providing it with a theoretical justification. This ideal fundamentally emphasized the role played by women as wives and mothers in the household and confined their activities to it. It meant that when women began to desire more advanced education for getting decent jobs, that ideal itself turned out to be a restrictive and repressive constraint. At any rate the striking contrast between the considerably developed secondary education for women and the scarcely developed higher education for women was one of the distinctive aspects in the prewar period in Japan.

3. Changing Policy for women's education after the World War II

After its 1945 defeat in World War II, Japan was occupied by the Allied Forces. From that time to 1951, Japan was placed under the control of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Allied Forces. Under this system, de-militarization, democratization, and the rebuilding of the country were all taken forward. GHQ requested the U.S. to dispatch a "United States Education Mission to Japan" to examine the country's postwar education reforms. The large-scale postwar reform of the Japanese education system was carried out on the basis of the recommendations of this mission. It is noteworthy that the revision of the secondary and higher education for women had already started even before the report of the mission.

On October 15, 1945, immediately after the formation of the new Cabinet, GHQ made pointed reference to the need for women's suffrage and the attainment of equality between the sexes. A cabinet decision of that same month paved the way for the extension of universal

suffrage to all citizens from twenty years of age. The educational counterpart of this move was the Guideline for the Renovation of Women's Education (Joshikyôiku sasshin yôkô), agreed upon by Cabinet on December 4, which stated that there should be equal opportunity in education for both sexes. It called for equality in the content of education given to men and women and for mutual respect between the two sexes.

In concrete terms, it was stipulated that a) for the time being, eliminating the regulations that preventing women go to higher educational institutions, b) establishing women's universities and making the universities to be coeducational; c) establishing female high schools; d) bringing the content of girls' middle school education up to the same level as that offered in the middle schools; and e) opening up the lectures of the universities and professional colleges to women.

The long-cherished wish of the proponents of women's education was granted by the government only after four months the defeat in the atmosphere of democratization of Japan. U.S. Education mission to Japan approved such policies. In the mission report it was said that "The young men and women of Japan should have freedom of access, on the basis of merit, to all levels of higher studies.....In order that equality may be generally true in fact, steps are necessary to insure to girls in the earlier years an education as sound and thorough as that of boys. Then a good foundation for training in preparatory schools will place them on really equal terms with men for admission to the best universities." "Freedom of access to higher education should be provided immediately for all women now prepared for advanced study."

4. Development of women's education

The basic framework of the new education system was as follows: (1) a shift from the prewar, dual school system to a single track system, known as the 6-3-3-4 system; (2) the extension of compulsory education to 9 years, including primary school and lower secondary school; (3) the adoption in principle of co-education in all school levels.

In the compulsory lower secondary schools, attendance of girls went smoothly. Although there remained some gap in the enrollment of both sexes in the transiting process from old system to new one, difference became indistinguishable soon until in 1949. In the upper secondary level, in the starting year 1950, the percentage of students who advanced to the new high schools was different for both sexes that were to say, 48.0% for boys and 36.7% for girls. In 1958, more than half of the students entered to the high schools and gender gap was reduced to lesser extent that was 56.2% for boys and 51.1% for girls. And in 1969, the advancement rate of girls to the high schools exceeded that of the boys, 79.2% for boys and 79.5% for girls.

In the higher education level, new system started in 1949. All previous higher education institutions including former imperial universities were grouped under the same status as “daigaku” which is generally translated as “new university”. Most of the former non-degree granting professional colleges were upgraded to universities or merged into the new universities. Undergraduate courses in the new university last for four years, except those in medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and pharmacology, which extend to six years. As a general rule, at least one national university was established in every prefecture. Thus, 70 national, 8 public, and 180 private universities began their activities in 1949. Universities became to be co-educational. For the sake of advancing the higher education for women, two national women’s universities were established in Tokyo and Nara.

Institutions that could not satisfy the conditions to upgrade to university-status were permitted for the time being to start as two year short courses. These institutions were called “tanki-daigaku” or “junior colleges.” These junior colleges made unexpected rapid development as a type of higher education institutions that was suitable for women. Female students and their family who had yet anxiety over the employment opportunities and social reputations for the female graduates of the four-year university course preferred junior colleges. Junior colleges were generally general education oriented. Access to junior colleges was relatively easy and was more cost-effective for them. The percentage of female students in junior colleges expanded rapidly from 67.5% in 1960, to 74.8% in 1970, to 89.0% in 1980, and reaching 91.5% in 1990.

On the other hand, in universities, the proportion of female students started from 12.4% in 1955 and was around 20-25% from 1975 to the 1980s. In recent years, however, the number of the female students who chose university courses rather than junior colleges has been rapidly increasing. The ratio of the female students in the universities increased from 32.3% in 11 1995, to 36.2% in 2000, to 39.3% in 2005, and amounting to 41.1% in 2010. On the contrary, schooling in the junior colleges has lost popularity and the number of junior colleges decreased from 598 at its maximum in 1996 to less than 400 in 2010. Majority of the female graduates from universities and junior colleges has entered into the labor market.

In 1985, Japanese government enacted the Law on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women in Employment. It prescribed the prohibition of discriminative treatments against women in employment and improved the working conditions for women. In 1999, system for child-care leave and family-care leave for workers was established. These measures have promoted the employment of women and at the same time, the advancement

of female students to the university courses. In the advance rate from high schools to higher education institutions (universities & junior colleges), there was considerable gender gap in the form of male dominance until the 1960s. In 1974, however, the advance rate of girls caught up with of boys or 32.2% for both sexes. After that year, the tables were turned toward female dominance. That was to say, 51.9% for boys and 55.9% for girls in 2011.

In sum, Japan had achieved the gender equality in education, at least in the meaning of securing equal opportunity for accessing to each level of schooling. Sometimes the uneven distribution of female students concentrating in some faculties and departments in the universities, for example, in education, literature, nursing, pharmacy and domestic science and so on is pointed out. In recent years, however, increasing number of female student is majoring in science and engineering. Today, even the National Defense Academy and University of Marine science and Technology are coeducational. In this connection, also in the field of life-long education, it is often said that the zest for learning among women would be greater than men.