

Women's Access to Education

by Mohammad Abdul Jabbar

Bangladesh, the biggest tropical delta, emerges to be the most densely populated state. Bangladeshis are identified by ethnologists to have originated from a branch of Indo Aryans from central Asia during the second millennium. A Dravidian and Mongoloid admixture are not too evident in its physical features.

Bangla is the most easterly of the Indo-European languages evolved through Prakrit and have deep influence of Pali, Arabic, Persian and English. It owes its base from Sanskrit. Cultural vehicle of Bangladesh is Bangla — a language with major literary tradition attributed by both Muslims and Hindus.

Bangladesh abounds in a predominantly Muslim tradition in the indigenous Hindu and Buddhist setting. This mixed heritage provide for rational understanding of its socio-cultural and even economic situation as these are obtained today.

Sex Differential

The society, though not suffers from the belief of 'Original Sin', tend to cherish male preference. Even moderately literate an settled people take pride in having more sons than girls and at the same time, take undue pleasure against fellow families with preponderantly larger number of girls. Families compete for worldly gains. Thus, economically males symbolic to be additive and females subtractive factors so far as this competition goes.

The edge of girls over boys among Muslims are a lot better with Islam asserting its place, however, its influence couldn't percolate deep enough to melt

prevailing dowry system in marriage of girls in some form. This social course, endemic and so exacerbated among rising elites, has pushed hard, of late, to enact preventive laws against dowry system.

The next cycle for the married girls leave room for satisfaction barring exceptions. For women save money and also are earners. As the proverb goes: 'Women-folks' treasury is never empty'. Further up, when the children are grownup she acquires a lot of authority in the household and she may and she may become the dominant partner. For motherhood is considered to be the pinnacle of fulfillment of girls' career in this society. It may be concluded by saying that most of the important deities worshipped among Hindus are females — personified commonly in goddess Lakami, who is believed to provide wealth and sustenance.

Social Priorities

Universalisation of education at the Primary level has been receiving priority with population control, employment generation and food security in the national development plans.

Declared as the fundamental human right in the country's Constitution, basic education (or literacy) has been receiving highest degree of political support. Promotion of girls education has been explicitly sought for in the national education policy and programmes since 1974.

Nationalisation of Secondary Schools and colleges has been quite liberal during the decade past covering large number of institutions exclusively meant for offering education to women in keeping with the

spirit of ensuring broader female participation in higher education.

However there appears no illusion to the basic fact that overall economic development efforts aimed at an improvement in the household condition of the majority must precede adequate resource allocation for continuing successful programmes in education, particularly for women.

Let's now have glimpse of relevant quotes on the treatment of sexes in the Holy Quran, Constitution and contemporary Laws:

The Holy Quran states —

(a) It is he who created you from a single person and made his mate of like nature in order that he might dwell with her (in love). (Sura 7:189)

(b) Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them.

Lo Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display their ornaments only that which is apparent and to draw their veils over their bosoms. And not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers or their sons.....

(Sura 14:31-32). Bangladesh Constitution— Article 10: Fundamental Principles of State Policy states as under:

Sex	1991	1992	1994	1996	1998
Male	10.0	15.3	18.8	29.3	31.0
Female	0.6	1.8	7.4	10.7	16.0

Steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of national life.

Article 18: The state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.

Article 17: The state shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of (a) Establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law.

Article 29: Fundamental Rights

(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office in the service of the Republic.

No law prejudicial to sexes are known to be in force at present.

Status of Education

Literacy data by sex available from the population census reveal relatively slower improvement in the literacy rates for females compared to males.

Literacy Rates by Sex (%)

The trend in improvement in this rate appears more favourable in respect of females since 60s.

At the Primary Level participation of girls rose to 750 as against 279 only for boys in 1988 compared to the base year 1951 (=100).

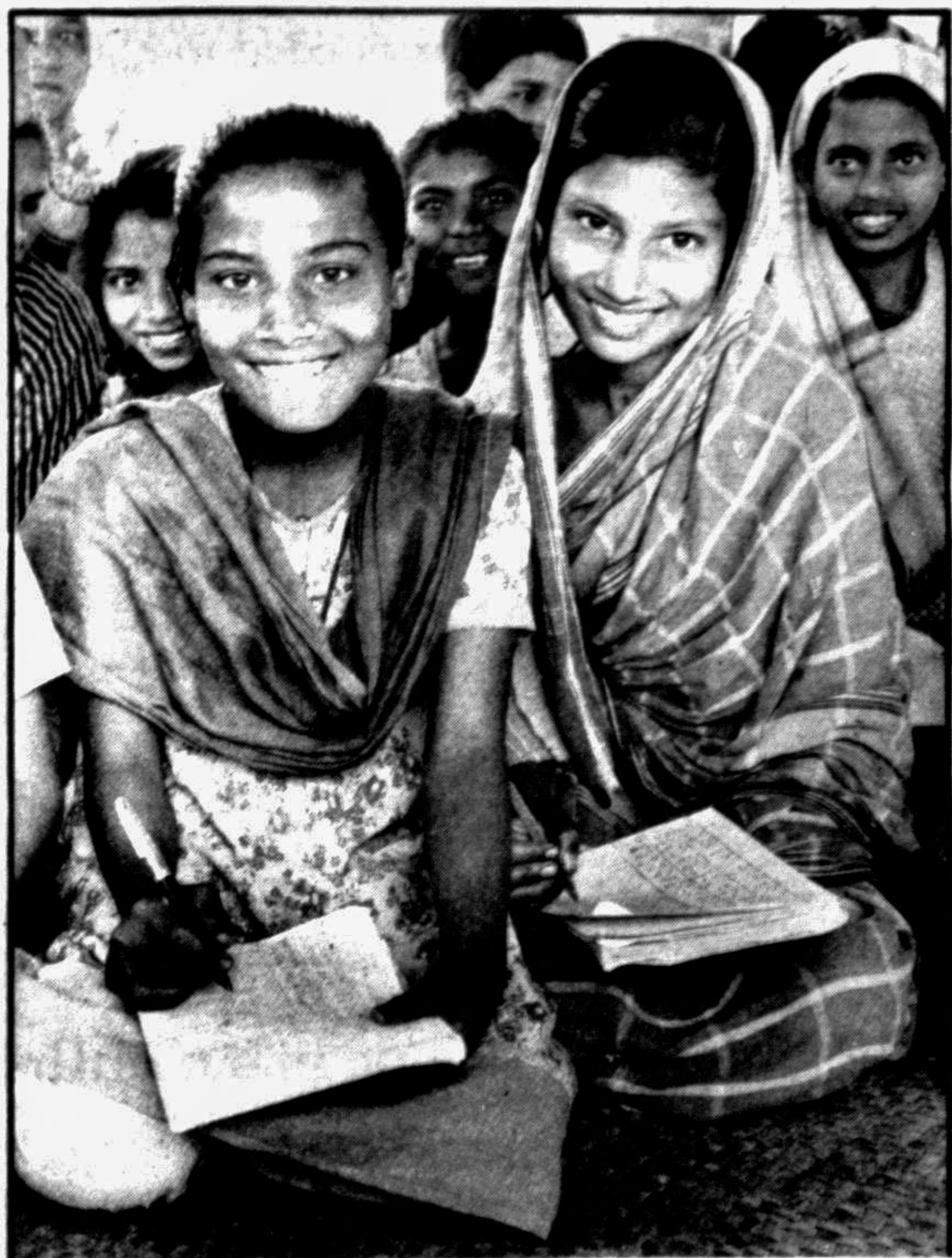
In the Secondary stage, girls are moving up significantly as well. Based on enrolment data for 1950 the index of girls enrolment stands at 348, as against 396 for boys.

In colleges 572 girls were enrolled in 1988, as against only 136 compared to the base year 1975 (= 100).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussions and statistics reflect that despite awareness of the problems faced and acceptance, to a degree, appropriate policy measures and adopting programmes for Women's access to education, there are certain paradoxes about this issue. Viewed against the immediate perspective of female participation in productive activities in Bangladesh, the situation is rather bleak in government and local bodies. FREPD (a) found employment rate of women in the NGOs to be 48% in 1988. To conclude it may be said that century tradition of separate female domain are to be seen not only in its historic and demographic facts but also in the behavioral norms of the people. Thus education for women in alienation detached from economic gains are not likely to be a self generating enterprise demanding unwisely and heavily on the public exchequer for a long time to come.

The author is Chief, Statistic Division of BANBEIS, Ministry of Education.



Education of girls is probably the world's best investment. Nothing else has such power to improve family health, slow population growth, and improve the lives of women themselves. —UNICEF photo

BLP: Above and Beyond the Call of Duty

by A M Emdadul Huque

BANGLADESH Literacy Project is a recent success story made possible under Special Grant 1986 of The Rotary Foundation (TRF) of Rotary International.

What is the Bangladesh Literacy Project? How did it all come about? To begin with, a focus on the essential need for literacy is necessary. The Government of Bangladesh, recognizing the importance of literacy, has made primary education compulsory by law. This is a good start, but effectively implementing this process is a tremendous challenge.

As late would have it, an article published in the July 1988 issue of 'The Rotarian' (a monthly magazine of Rotary International) describing Rotary Literacy work underway in Thailand, caught my sight and I wrote an inquisitive letter to PDG Dr Richard F Walker of Australia on 24 Sept '88 to obtain details of the programme and the CLE system, described below. A dream was formulated that a similar programme could be pioneered in Bangladesh and, through subsequent correspondence, an avenue was developed for implementing a pilot programme in Bangladesh similar to the Thai's.

On 23 January, 1989 TRF approved my volunteerism offer to visit Thailand to study and understand the practical side of the programme to aid in its implementation in Bangladesh. During my 6 week visit I met the Thai organizers and PDG Prof Dick Walker of Australia, one of the key personnel of the programme, and developed proposal for Bangladesh.

The project applied for Special Matching Grant (SMG) to TRF of Rotary International on 12 Feb 89 to sponsor a Pilot Literacy Project in Bangladesh. Rotary club of Footscray, Australia came forward to finance the project at the special request of PDG Jack Nankervis, RI Dist 9800. The first major milestone was achieved when SMG No 1766 was approved on 01 Mar 90.

A project committee with me as Chairman and with veteran Rotarians of District 3280 was set up which consisted of the following members: PDG Iftekharul Alam, PDG M A Wahab, DG M Z Abbas, DGN Prof Jalal U Ahmed, Pres M Salimullah.

them to nominate a coordinator. The Education Ministry then nominated Mr Shahidul Islam, Asst Secretary of Pathkali Trust on 18 Mar 90 to act as coordinator of the programme.

What exactly does the programme involve? It's an innovative technique for teaching children called 'Concentrated Language Encounter' of CLE for short which has been under development for nearly 10 years by various linguists. It is now a teaching model for reading and writing throughout Australia, USA and Canada. The CLE approach is completely opposite to the traditional teaching methodology in that the progression is from the largest to the smallest bits of language.

The four fundamental principles that explains the CLE approach are: — Children learn to read and write through being involved in reading and writing for recognised purposes.

— Learners need to start whole texts and then move to progressively smaller units of language.

— The teaching context should be one in which the learners are encouraged to take 'risks' as language users: — Pupils should be given every encouragement to become independent learners — self checking and self correcting.

It can also be stated that CLE is first used as a means of building meaning. The second phase is the cooperative writing and editing of text which is the reconstruction of that meaning. The third and final phase is the use of the text as a resource for further closer exploration of written and spoken language. The CLE teaching methods can also help teachers learn better teaching procedures and techniques.

A contact was made to the Thai Literacy Committee for providing training to the new coordinator and, with this, Mr Shahidul Islam visited Bangkok shortly afterwards for one month of training. A request was also made to the Education Ministry to nominate 3 schools and the concerned teachers for implementation of the programme. On 23 Apr 91, the Education Ministry gave final approval for adopting the proposed technique, the 'CLE' system, in the curriculum of the schools. Primary Education approved training of the teachers on 09 March 91 and nominated the following schools and teachers:

BKSP Primary School, Savar with teachers Md Ali Hossain

& Md Rafiqul Islam; Pathkali Child Primary School, Jatrabari with teachers Sabiha Begum and Wahida Begum, and Nishong Primary School, Bandar, N Ganj with teachers Syed Maqbul Ahmed and Mrs Ambia Khatun.

Monitoring progress of the project was a major consideration and I had to apply in that special management technique. Generally, regular information was sent to PDG Jack Nankervis. Also, information was sent on a casual basis to PDG Dick Walker and RC Footscray. Reports were also filed with Dhaka Rotary News bulletin on 14 Mar 89 and 2 Oct 90.

Four artists were selected from the Dhaka Art College on 6 May 91 for preparation of the Big books to be used in the programme. Four sets of these books were made ready on 7 July 91 — commemorating a major milestone toward the substantial completion of the project.

Therefore, an inaugural ceremony is arranged to be held on 22 July 91 at Hotel Sheraton with Prof Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs as Chief Guest, to formally start the training programme of the teachers followed by the official implementation of pilot programme in the three schools.

Training of teachers is scheduled to begin 27 July 91 for one week at the Conference Room of Pathkali Trust, conducted by Mr Shahidul Islam, the coordinator. Teaching of the primary students at 6 class rooms is expected to start from 10 Aug 91 at these three selected schools.

The Ministry of Education will have close supervision to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptance of the student and if satisfied may consider to recommend an extension of this Pilot Program to other primary schools countrywide. The Literacy Committee will then apply to RI with the assistance of PDG Jack Nankervis for approving a 3 H grant for implementation of this literacy project in a larger area for five years with the active support of the Education Ministry.

Through effective management and strict monetary control, I could complete the task ahead of schedule and also under budget, having over 40% of the initial money still unused. I feel happy to see it as an example of how dedicated efforts could provide a ray of light for so many hopeful children of Bangladesh. The author is a Rotarian.

ARE the principles put forth by the educationalist, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), still relevant today? For him, and he was a living illustration of these principles, all education should have a foundation of boundless love. He developed teaching methods the ultimate aim of which was to allow the individual to blossom. The Franco-Genevois philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) also played a major role in giving Switzerland its good reputation for education. He advocated a natural development of the personality, and pave the way for a new approach to children, to their place in society and their mental attitudes. In the 20th century, the Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, formulated new theories on the development of a young child's intelligence and thoughts, thus adding to the already solid foundations of education in Switzerland.

A Swiss education specialist, Moritz Arnet, tempers the praise which came from the British journalist quoted above: "Admittedly we have a solid education system, which has strong foundations. But compared with the systems of other countries, it is in some respects lacking in dynamism and flexibility." This lack results directly from the fact that in Switzerland, the 26 cantons, or member-states of the Confederation, jealously guard their own powers with regard to education. It took no less than 20 years for a very simple problem, a uniform beginning of the school year in the fall, to be decreed for the whole of Switzerland, in 1989.

A Citadel of Federalism

The education system is one of the most striking examples of Switzerland's federalist structure. The federal institutes of technology in Zurich and Lausanne are the only educational domains placed under the exclusive control of the central federal authorities. All other educational institutions, from pre-school to university and including compulsory schooling, are bastions of cantonal sovereignty. Only in matters of school-leaving certificates and higher studies does the Confederation have a say.

State education predominates in Switzerland — in 1988/89, only 5.2 per cent of Swiss pupils were being privately educated. This situation dates back to the 19th century, to a principle according to which elementary schooling should be at "a school of the nation and of the people", whereby children from all social strata had to be taught as equals. The education system is also founded on 19th century principles of free schooling, and of the strict religious and political neutrality of education.

The State School

Despite marked differences, the various cantonal education systems have much in common. Basically, Switzerland has three levels of education after nursery school:

Education: A Solid System, Costly and Federalist

compulsory schooling, divided into primary and lower-secondary education; upper secondary (professional training, schools which award certificates, high schools and lower colleges of education); and further education (universities, the hautes écoles, and engineering schools).

Swiss children have many educational possibilities, a situation which is effective but costly: accounting for 20 per cent of the total, education is the biggest single item of public expenditure. During this century, there has been major growth at every level of the education system. But until the immediate post-war period, further education remained a privilege of the better-off, despite the increased possibilities. It was only in the 1960s, years marked by strong economic growth, that there was real change in the sense of more equal opportunity.

After attending nursery school between the ages of four and six, all children have nine years of compulsory schooling. At the primary level, this lasts six years in most cantons, although some times five and even four years. The remaining period of compulsory education, which can be three, four or five years depending on the region, is the lower-secondary level. This prepares a young person through various channels for further studies or professional training. For many years, there have been many attempts at reforming this stage. In order to increase the possibilities of being able to pass from one channel to another. Reform is needed, to prevent the choice of a career being made too early.

Apprenticeship: Practical Experience

Switzerland places strong emphasis on the professional training of young people: 90 per cent of them go through one of the many channels of higher secondary education after completing compulsory schooling at the age of 16. Most of them — about 70 per cent — take up an apprenticeship in one of the 400 crafts recognized and regulated by the Confederation: some last for three or even four years. Priority is given to practical training in the work-place. Theoretical instruction — one day a week on average — takes place in the professional schools. The advantage of this system is that training conditions are very close to the real working conditions. Some cantons have introduced courses which, while preparing them for their particular field of work, also improves their general knowledge more than would be the case in the traditional professional schools. While the latter are, in quantitative terms, the main channels of further secondary

education, they are by no means the only ones. There are high schools, known in Switzerland as gymnasia, which prepare students for university, as well as teachers' training schools and those with diploma courses in the social and paramedical fields.

Universities and Other Higher Education

Numerous possibilities are offered by the professional training schools. There are also the technical colleges which train future engineers, and the management and administrative colleges whose

has recommended much greater flexibility in education, in the sense of permanent training. This requires a common effort on the part of the public authorities, economic organizations and private institutions. The main thrust of further training comes today from the private sector, specifically from internal courses within companies, professional bodies and specialized institutes. Private schools also play a part in traditional education, from primary to high school level, and including professional training and commercial schools. Then there are the

tal for men (8 per cent). The duration of apprenticeships in most of the so-called female professions is shorter than those in the so-called male professions. Occupations chosen by women perpetuate the traditional division of roles between the sexes: women tend to take jobs in offices, shops, body care salons, and hospitals. However, more women have undergone professional training than was the case 10 years ago: 66 per cent of females aged 20 have today served apprenticeships, compared with 76 per cent of their male colleagues. And as many 20-year-old women as men of the same age have a school-leaving certificate or teaching diploma: 15 per cent.

Switzerland-700 years after

students have already completed apprenticeships. Other non-university institutions include the music and theatre conservatories, and schools specializing in therapeutic pedagogy, social work, the hotel trade, transport, agriculture, forestry, etc.

smart and often expensive private institutes and boarding schools, for the children of well-off families from both Switzerland and abroad.

Adult education also offers a wide range of possibilities. For instance, there are various cantonal institutes, old and

After spending two years in Switzerland, the British journalist, Will Hutton, was full of praise: "What struck my wife and I about our daughter's school in the countryside between Zurich and Schaffhausen, were the patience and effort which teachers devoted to bringing the average or below-average pupil, up to a level which may not be brilliant, but which in any case was solid. Such an education might not produce Nobel prize-winners, but schools like these do give people a high level of intelligence, and that's what the world needs today. It is an education system which prepares people to participate actively in the economic and social life of the country." (quote from "Das Magazin," 26/90).

University training is available at the two federal institutes of technology (Zurich and Lausanne), at the seven cantonal universities (Basel, Bern, Zurich, Fribourg, Lausanne, Geneva and Neuchâtel), in St. Gallen at the institute of business and social studies and the pedagogy college, and in Lucerne at the theology faculty. About 10 per cent of young people are taking university courses or their equivalent.

Further Training and Private Schools

Further training — or refresher courses — have become increasingly important in modern society, and in Switzerland great efforts are being made in this direction. The Conference of cantonal public instruction authorities

rich in tradition, as well as the courses run by the leading Swiss supermarket chain, Migros. It is not uncommon in Switzerland for the private schools to be innovative. In August 1990 for example, the country's first bilingual German-French schools were opened in Geneva and Bern. These provide children from the age of 10 with a bilingual education — an interesting venture in plurilingual Switzerland.

Fairer Treatment for Women is Needed

The disadvantages confronting women in Swiss society apply in the field of education. The number of women with no training other than compulsory school education (17 per cent) is double the to-

But at university level, the proportion of females is low. One-third of university degrees and only one-fifth of doctorates are obtained by women, who also account for a mere two per cent of the university teaching staff, the lowest proportion of females is in engineering studies (8.4 per cent) and the highest in the human sciences (43.8 per cent).

Opening Outwards

Switzerland's educational system is strongly influenced by the political and social characteristics which lie at the very foundations of the country: decentralization and pragmatism. The experts are unanimous in stating that despite all their advantages, these structures could be an obstacle to international cooperation. How can they open themselves up to the outside world, when Swiss higher education institutions do not even recognize each others' diplomas, and when the possibility of free movement between the country's own universities can still present problems? There is a clear need for much more coordination and among the cantons themselves, and between the cantons and the Confederation.

"Swiss education policy is today going in the direction of cooperation and exchanges of information and experiences, even internationally," declared the Conference of cantonal directors of public instruction.

These good intentions have been proved by the fact that for the first time, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has made a study of Swiss education policy. Also, Switzerland agreed to sign — it is one of the last countries to do so — four Council of Europe conventions on education, allowing for reciprocal recognition of school-leaving certificates, semesters and high school diplomas, as well as the payment of grants for studies abroad.

—Jürg Mueller.