

RESEARCH AND THE TEACHING OF WOMEN'S ISSUES WORLDWIDE:

A WORKING PAPER

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ABSTRACT

A major INSTRAW programme for the biennium 1986-1987 consists of designing teaching programmes on Women in Development to be used by academic institutions, government bodies, non-governmental and women's organizations. In the first phase of this programme, INSTRAW is carrying out a survey at a global and regional level of academic and other centres that offer programmes or courses on women related issues.

This paper is the preliminary result of this survey. It discusses the development, the content and the institutional contexts of Women's Studies in five regions of the world, as well as some of the constraints that have hindered or encouraged its development in different places. The role of the UN in developing and promoting curricula on Women's Studies is outlined and INSTRAW's current programme is discussed. The concept of Women in Development is reviewed and the possible content of a WID course is offered. The paper emphasizes the interrelationship between research, teaching, public awareness and policy making and the way that Women's Studies can help transform people's minds, their behaviour and, finally, society.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING OF WOMEN'S ISSUES WORLDWIDE

Introduction

It is almost a banality to state that teaching is a form of socialization, of informing, of communication. However, when one sees the importance of teaching in forming peoples concepts and ideas about social and other realities and the impact that these have on their actions, the relevance of teaching becomes ever more apparent. Research, on the other hand, is the building block of education in so far as it directs the content of what is taught. Research and teaching, therefore, are two sides of the same coin and at any one time they reflect and influence the intellectual, political and social climate of the moment. In a world in which social change is increasingly planned, research and teaching play an important role in understanding and informing about the social realities which are the target of change and of concern. It is in this light that we need to focus on research and teaching of women and development issues.

Since women's access to higher academic training is a relatively recent phenomenon worldwide research was generally done by men. As a result of this, both the focus of research and the content of what was taught was often male biased. It was only with the eventual access of women to higher education, which was made possible in some of the developed countries by an initial consciousness of women's potentials and rights, that more women obtained academic training permitting some of them (those sensitive to women's issues) to study social, historical, cultural and other issues from a feminist perspective. This research began informing the public and reinforcing the women's movement in different countries at different times. These developments established the basis for the teaching of women's issues in formal and informal institutions in various countries and regions of the

world, and this has stimulated and is in turn stimulating more research on women, as it informs and sensitizes students and the public in general

If we trace the UN's concerns for the advancement of women since the start of the Decade, we notice the increased attention that "Women's Studies" (1) has taken. While at the World Conference held in Mexico in 1975 there was a call for more qualitative and quantitative data on the position of women, there was no mention or call for teaching what today is conceived of as Women's Studies. At that point, research on women's issues was directed mostly by policy-making purposes, while the academic value of it in terms of the reconceptualization of knowledge, was less explicit. Likewise, in 1980 at the mid-decade meeting held in Copenhagen there was no specific mention on Women's Studies per se, despite the fact that it was already flourishing in the United States. After 1980, some UN organs and agencies such as UNESCO adopted specific strategies for promoting the teaching of women's issues in university and other centres of learning. In Nairobi, only 5 years after the Copenhagen meeting, there is specific reference to curricula, and recommendations were made that, "Educational Institutions should be encouraged to expand their curricula to include studies on women's contribution to all aspects of development" and that "women's studies should be developed to reformulate the current modes influencing the constitution of knowledge". It is further stated that "the promotion of and application of women's studies will help to create a just and equitable society." These specific allusions to Women's Studies reflect the development and increased institutionalization, and to some extent legitimacy, that this field of study has taken. It also reflects the increased awareness that research and teaching of women's issues or with a woman's dimension is a relevant field of study since it reconceptualizes our knowledge of society which had, ironically, for so long developed without considering half of society's population. By

focusing our attention on women, we are at the same time providing new paradigms for the advancement of knowledge and consequently for the advancement of society.

In contributing to these efforts, INSTRAW has recently initiated a project for developing teaching programmes to be used by academic institutions, government bodies, non-governmental and women's organizations. The first phase of this project consists of a survey at a global and regional level of academic and other centres that offer programmes or courses on women related topics. For this survey a questionnaire was sent out to some 150 academic and other institutions requesting information on their programmes of study. Bibliographic sources on women's studies have also been used in understanding the situation in different countries and regions, including the Proceedings of various seminars on this topic. Since the start of this project, INSTRAW has attended and participated in seminars related to curricula development on women's issues and will be participating and organizing others on this topic. The second phase of this project, which is now in progress, involves the analysis of the content of these programmes. This analysis will allow us to see where and in what ways Women in Development questions are addressed in the curricula and how INSTRAW can contribute to its growth in different regions and countries of the world. Finally, the third phase of the programme consists of designing a series of courses and teaching materials on Women and Development for training trainers, specifically policy-makers, university professors and teachers at other levels.

This paper will offer an overview of the development of women's studies in different regions and countries of the world, the content of these programmes of study and the institutional contexts in which they are inserted. It will also attempt to define the concept of Women in Development and offer some guidelines for the teaching of this subject area.

The Development of Research and Teaching of Women's Issues: A Global View

Both the content as well as the institutional contexts in which research and teaching of women's issues takes place, varies from one country and region to another. As one scholar pointed out, theoretical production is articulated simultaneously with social demands and the internal demands of the theoretical field (Souzo Lobo 1986). In other words, research and consequently teaching are guided both by intellectual and social demands. In an article presented to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1980, Margherita Rendal (1980) discusses the purposes and implications of Women's Studies. First, intellectual purposes are concerned with completing and correcting the record. Women's Studies, in fact, are providing new paradigms and challenging the epistemological basis of the social sciences, thus rendering the study of women's issues of important academic and intellectual value. Second, psychological purposes relates to enhancing women's self-perception and esteem. Third, political purposes concerned with affecting policies in order to help raise the status of women in society. One could also point more specifically to the economic purposes in that women constitute half the world's population and are therefore an important component of and for development. These purposes, however, are mutually reinforcing and in most cases the development of one affects the others. In the survey discussed below, we will see how at different moments the development of Women's Studies was motivated in different regions of the world by one or more of these factors.

The institutional context in which Women's Studies can thrive will also depend on various conditions. First, the political framework must allow the universities and other centres a certain autonomy

in what they teach. Second, the economic and financial situation of the country, universities and other centres must allow and stimulate research and teaching of these issues which are not usually given priority in the curricula. Third, there must be sensitivity to and interest in women's issues in order to stimulate research and attract students (Oliveira 1986). In some cases, courses on women related issues may be taught in universities on an extra-mural basis or within the curricula as electives or as part of a degree programme; where specific courses on the topic of women do not exist, the topic may be dealt with in other courses in the curricula; courses on women's issues may also exist outside the university in research or other non-academic centres; in some cases there may be research on women related topics, but no formal teaching; in still other cases there may be neither research nor teaching of women's issues.

Our survey indicates that only in the most industrially developed countries, principally the United States, Canada and some European countries, does the teaching of women's issues figure in the universities. In the developing countries, such studies are not yet an integral part of university curricula, although in some Latin American and Caribbean countries, such as Puerto Rico, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Barbados, this is beginning to occur. In Asia, despite the scarcity of formal courses on women's issues, there has been much research on women's issues in universities. In Africa, on the other hand, the teaching of women's issues in universities or other centres is in its initial phase, although there has been much research on the topic. Due to the increasing amount of research on the topic of women in most parts of the world and the growing interest in such topics by students, there seems to be a trend toward institutionalizing the teaching of women in academic centres, including universities.

The content of research and teaching also varies cross-regionally and depends on the intellectual and social demands of the moment. Development issues appear to attract more feminist scholars in the

developing countries than elsewhere. Furthermore, courses or programmes on Women and Development issues in countries such as the United States and Britain most often attract women from the developing countries; rarely do they deal with how national and international development issues affect the developed ones as well. A focus on the latter, in fact, could and should be of interest and concern. After all, all societies are developing societies, particularly when it comes to the development of women as dignified individuals.

We will now look at the development, the content and the institutional context of Women's Studies in five regions of the world.

Women's Studies in North America

In the United States, research and teaching of women's issues began in the 1960's when the women's movement had motivated many women to study issues related to their past and present conditions, as a means of enhancing their self-perception and their status in society. Hence, one could say that in its initial phase, research and teaching of women's issues in the United States were guided mostly by psychological purposes, although there were undoubtedly intellectual and political purposes involved as well. The flexibility of the curricula of American universities in responding to faculty and student interest has made it possible for Women's Studies to figure in most American university curricula. It is remarkable that while in 1969 there were only some 16 courses on women related issues, by 1974 there were at least 4,658. Presently, courses are too numerous to count and programmes, which now number hundreds, are available at all levels, including Ph.D (Stimpson 1982, Rendel 1980). Such programmes of study generally consist of courses taken in various departments (Art, Comparative Literature, History, etc.), leading to a Major or Minor in Women's Studies. In some cases, these

courses are supplemented by core courses offered by the Women's Studies Programme or Department. It is interesting that seldom are courses with a women's focus offered in the Economics Department, and questions of employment, sexual division of labour and the impact of international capitalism on women are usually dealt with in Sociology and Anthropology departments. With a few exceptions (e.g. University of Michigan), in fact, most Women's Studies programmes in the United States do not deal with "development" issues, although they are on the increase. Most commonly Women and Development questions have been the concern of policy makers.

In Canada research and teaching of women's issues also developed in response to the Women's movement about 2 decades ago. Teaching in this field, however, is of a more recent development, even though many universities are now offering programmes analogous to those in the United States. Women in Development issues are assuming importance in Canadian curricula as recently reflected in a "National Planning Workshop on Strategies for Women and Development". One of the objectives of this workshop was "To introduce Women in Development as an essential element in international projects, and to bring more information to community colleges regarding WID." Among the mandates of the Canadian Studies Bureau, who co-organized this workshop, is "To introduce Women and Development concepts and issues into the curriculum in Canadian Colleges..."

Women's Studies in Europe

In Europe, the study of women's issues has been relegated to university faculties and research centres considered to be marginal in the curricula. These were introduced either as extra-mural studies or as part of traditional courses mostly in social science. This is both due to the structure of higher

education in which there are definite conceptions of different disciplines, as well as to the serious financial constraints of European universities. As a result, Women's Studies has not yet become an option for study in its own right as it is in the United States. However, in England and Holland there are a small number of short courses which consider women and development questions in developing countries. In England there are one or two courses on development planning strategies for low income families. They attempt to clarify the mechanisms in development projects through which women can implement improvements. There is evidence of a considerable amount of research done to investigate the conditions of women's work, domestic and remunerated. There have been attempts to consider the cross-cultural influence on women's lives and to document the history of the women's movement. The effects of policies on women's working conditions are being considered and suggest the beginning of linking the experiences of women with policy making.

Women's Studies in Japan

In Japan the first Women's Studies course was opened in 1962. It was interdisciplinary and included the study of women in Japanese and English literature, religion, philosophy and history as well as sociological and psychological aspects related to women. After the World Conference in 1975, the number of associations and research groups concerned with women's issues increased tremendously. However, it was really after 1979 that Women's Studies courses proliferated. A survey undertaken in 1983 by the National Women's Education Centre in Japan indicates that Women's Studies courses figure in at least 92 institutions of higher learning. It appears, however, that such courses are offered as electives and that no degrees are yet granted in this field of study as in the United States and Canada. On the other hand, there seem to be many courses which include a focus on women. At this point we have no indication of the existence of Women and

Development issues in Women's Studies courses and it appears that the topic of women is mostly inserted in courses in history, literature, education, psychology and sociology (NWEAC 1985).

Women's Studies in Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America, research on women's issues began in the 1970's. The teaching of women's issues is in its initial phase and only now is it beginning to enter the university campuses. In the universities, however, no degrees are yet offered in the field, and most often courses on women's issues are taught on an extra-mural basis or dealt with in one or two sessions in other conventional courses. Due to the financial constraints of Latin American universities and the rigidity of their curricula and, in some cases to political circumstances, the teaching of women's issues made its first appearance outside the university in research and action centres. In many countries, this is still the only viable environment in which such topics are dealt with. It is interesting to note, that both research and the teaching on the subject of women in Latin America have dealt more with what could be considered "development" issues than in the United States. Much research in Latin America has dealt with the impact of colonialism, capitalism, socialism and development policies on women, and as in other developing countries, scholars have been more critical of development issues and of how they relate to women. Many scholars interested in the sociology of knowledge have indicated how in Latin America, "social demands had reinforced studies along the lines of development, of economic inequalities. But internal demands in the field of gender relations and feminism, slowly directed research and courses towards gender consciousness or work/family relationship thus enlarging the field of study and even helping to change orientation, though beyond development-emphasizing issues" (Souzo Lobo 1986). Hence, some Latin American scholars have gone beyond development-emphasizing issues to consider questions of

"patriarchy", which are considered to some extent autonomous of economic development issues. An area of much interest to Latin American feminist scholars is the psychology of women, to which they are making substantial theoretical and methodological contributions from a feminist perspective.

Women's Studies in Africa

In Africa, research on women has not been guided, as it was in the United States, by a women's movement motivated by psychological and intellectual purposes. Rather, research has been guided largely by attempts to understand the socio-economic needs of women at the grass-root level, undertaking identification and evaluation of women's socio-economic needs and activities in areas such as cottage industries, energy, technology, employment, finance and health. Due to the fact that the main producers and sellers of subsistence and manufactured goods are women, most of the teaching is concerned at grass-roots level with practical skills to help women improve their income earning opportunities. There is some academic research into women in the media, the history of the women's movement, industrial development, the impact of colonialism and economic development which reflects the expansion of interest of feminist scholars. Furthermore, much of the information about women's contributions to agriculture and food systems at the international level is based on the work of non-governmental and women's organizations. The teaching of these aspects of women's issues in universities and other academic institutions is in its initial phase.

African women concerned with confronting and solving some of the problems that they face have felt isolated because they do not identify with the problems faced by women in developed countries and needed a support mechanism within their own culture. This led to the formation of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (Aaword) in 1978 , an organization which aims to

contribute through research and training programmes to the improvement of women's situation and transformation of their status. An important seminar was held by Aaword in conjunction with Fundation Dag Hammarskjold in Dakar in June 1982 which brought together men and women from North and South, researchers and planners from all political persuasions. It was agreed that the most fundamental and essential need for "another development with women" is structural transformation which means reconsideration of economic, political and cultural forms of domination found across local, national and international levels.

Women's Studies in Asia

In Asia the development of research and teaching of women related topics and issues varies from one region to another. We have already discussed the situation in Japan, the most industrially developed of the Asian countries. We will now look at the rest of Asia, reviewing selected cases from Southeast Asia, India, West Asia and China.

Despite the diversity of situations and conditions in Asia in what concerns research and teaching women related topics and issues, there has been much more research than teaching in the area. Some of the countries in the region, in fact, have an impressive array of research that has been done in the last decade and often dating earlier than that. Some of the constraints of incorporating Women's Studies into the curricula in Asia include the structural rigidity of the educational system, the scarcity or non-availability of reading materials and considerations of recognition and employability (Dube 1980; Samya Shakti 1983: pp. 102-114). The "lack of faculty, paucity of financial resources, heavy teaching load, tedious and time-consuming procedures for course change" have been identified as other obstacles for incorporating Women's Studies into the curricula in different Asian countries (UNESCO 1983).

As a whole, in Southeast Asia research on women has been predominantly the domain of social scientists many of whom often carried out their research for their respective government planning offices. Many researchers were also often professors in different university faculties many of which now have institutes or research units for studying women's topics and issues. Among these we might mention the Korean Women's Institute at Ewha Women's University, the Research Center for Asian Women at Sookmying Women's University in Korea, KANITA in the University Sains Malaysia and the Institute of Philippine Culture of the Ateneo de Manila University. As a result, we find a myriad of studies on women, focusing principally on aspects of fertility, nutrition, law, employment, education and technology. Many of these institutes are making attempts to integrate women's studies into the curricula. Although no degrees are yet available in Women's Studies in Southeast Asia, courses on this subject are offered for credit in some universities (e.g. University Sains Malaysia; in most university-level schools in the Philippines, in over a dozen colleges and universities in Korea; Thammasat University in Thailand). In other cases, women related topics and issues are incorporated into already existing courses motivating students to undertake research for thesis purposes.

Although in India research interest on women dates back to the 19th century's Social Reform movement and to the freedom struggle of the 1920's, it was not until after 1975 that research on women has been carried out from a social science perspective. The focus of research, however, has shifted in recent years from a preoccupation with women's role in the family, marriage and kinship network to women's participation in the economic sphere (Agarwal 1983), with particular attention to women's labour force participation, the socio-economic implications of new agricultural technologies and to rural development in general. New research trends also include women's organizations and movements, women and poverty and female-headed households. Much of the research after

1975 was promoted by the ICSSR (Indian Council of Social Science Research) and the National Committee on the Status of Women (CWI). Recently, research is also being supported by research units in various colleges and universities and other independent research centres, especially by the Centre for Women's Development Studies in New Delhi.

Despite the proliferation of new research in India, there has been less success at incorporating topics related to women into university curricula principally due to structural constraints since "...courses are designed by Boards of Studies, and Academic Councils of universities..." (UNESCO 1983). Successful attempts, however, have been achieved at SNDT University where there is a paper on the Sociology of Women as part of an undergraduate course in Sociology and a course on Women in Development at M. Phil level; at Bombay University there is also a course in sociology that deals with women's issues. There exists more flexibility in colleges and the "Thinking Cell on Women", called in 1982 in Delhi by the All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) has been attempting to increase the number of women related courses into women's colleges which in 1982 catered to about 50% of the women enrolled in higher education in India (Braganza 1983).

In West Asia, for which our information is selective and not comprehensive, the development of teaching and research in the formal sense, as understood in modern times, was largely generated by a meeting held in 1972 in EWHA Women's University in South Korea. This led to the creation of the Institute of Asian Women (IAW), comprised of 9 centres from Asia, one of which was the Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) of the University of Beirut. As in the rest of Asia, research on women in West Asia has been done almost exclusively by social scientists. The UNESCO meeting of experts in 1982 illustrated the

major current and future research area in the Arab World, but there was little mention of teaching. In 1976, IWSAW organized a workshop in Wellesly College in which 6 other Arab countries participated. The purpose of the workshop was to design courses on women's issues and to prepare reading materials. As a result of this workshop, the first women's studies course was introduced into the curricula in the University of Beirut in 1978 (Abu Nasr 1980).

According to accessible material in western languages, the paucity of research on women in China reflects the recent aperture and development of the social sciences and the recent upsurge of the women's movement. Consequently, research and teaching, according to Western scholars, is in its initial stage and has not yet entered the university campuses. Interestingly enough, however, women related topics have been integrated into secondary school courses for some years now, perhaps as a result of the revolution's advocacy of sexual equality and the recognition of women's participation in the Chinese revolution. Three major topics included into courses of Chinese Language, Politics and History are: marriage laws and the constitutional equality of the sexes, women's participation in the revolutionary movement and the socialist construction and, finally, biographical accounts of revolutionary heroines (Kelber 1983). There exists, however, a concern among many feminist scholars to incorporate Women's Studies in higher education and research organizations.

The "Development" Component in Women's Studies: Some Conceptual and Methodological Considerations

We might at this moment pause briefly to recall how women and development issues became linked conceptually and to reflect on the meaning of the twin concept - women in development - which has been of so much concern to both planners and scholars in the last

decade. Prior to the 1960's, development was considered by economists in terms of economic growth as reflected in the GNPs. When this approach failed to improve the life conditions of great segments of the developing world's populations, distribution and basic needs were considered more appropriate issues or approaches to development. At that point, scholars with a sensitivity towards women's issues emphasized that women were not sharing of the development pie; in fact, they were often jeopardized by it (Boserup 1970). Moreover, the focus on basic needs made evident the role women play in meeting the health, sanitation and other needs of the family and how they must be considered agents as well as beneficiaries of development. These considerations reflected the growing international concern, as manifested in the Declaration by the UN on the International Women's Year and then the UN Decade for Women, with improving the conditions of women worldwide as well as considering alternative strategies to development. It became ever more evident that national and international processes impinge upon the life conditions of local populations, including women and that women are important agents of development.

The concept of "women in development", then, emerged in response to the debates on economic development and the concerns of the international women's movement. Guided, perhaps, by the assumption that economic development would in and of itself improve the conditions of women, the concept of women in development came to refer to women in economic development, with particular reference and concern with the effects of economic policies, national and international, and how women can contribute to the process. Although economic conditions affect the condition of women, and should therefore be closely pre-considered, and monitored as agents in the process of economic development, it is also clear that economic development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the advancement of women. For this reason, there have been efforts, as recently manifested in the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies, to enlarge the concept of

development to mean "total development, including development in the political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life" Many scholars are now paying closer attention to the realm of "culture", "ideology", or the "social sphere" as significant in understanding and improving the condition of women and of making development projects more efficient; it is also considered that these realms must be promoted in their own right and protected from the effects of economic development. If we look at development in this way, it becomes evident that the concept of "women and development" should not be restricted to the developing countries as it generally has been. Even with reference to economic development, the concept should encompass industrially developed countries, since national and international economic processes affect women in those countries as well, often to the detriment of large numbers of them, both national and foreign.

Scholars and planners interested in women in development have pointed to the importance of combining macro and micro approaches. We need a conceptual framework that will allow us not to lose sight of the individual's basic needs (material and emotional) while considering all the factors (international/national economic and political; legal; ideological, etc.) that impinge on each and every women. We need, then, various levels and areas of analysis and action, that can allow us to consider development as it relates to the attainment by women of a dignified status, material and otherwise, in the home and in society at large. Our focus should pivot on the personal experience of women, looking beyond this to see what are the local, national and/or international factors affecting their condition. In an attempt to establish the criteria for analysing and evaluating the "condition" of women, the following can provide an initial guide: access and control of resources (land, animals, credit, housing, technology), decision making (inside and outside the home at the community, national and international level about all sorts of issues, ranging from decisions about

sexuality to economic or disarmament issues), self and social esteem, equal opportunities (education, jobs, political positions) and an a-sexual division of labour (e.g., women in jobs traditionally exclusive to men; men sharing in household activities, etc.).

Towards Developing WID Courses

The third phase of our programme consists of designing a course on Women and Development and the production of teaching material. Regional seminars of experts will be carried out to aid in the elaboration of these materials. The course, whether for academic or development institutions, will include conceptual/methodological, theoretical as well as policy and organizational issues of Women and Development, although different aspects can be emphasized depending on the participants. The idea, however, is that all theories have practical or policy implications and that all policies have theoretical underpinnings; hence, the need to bridge theory and practice.

In thinking about teaching WID issues, the conceptual framework outlined above could be a useful guide, emphasizing any level or aspect depending on the participants, without losing sight of the entire framework. An introductory course with this framework in mind could proceed in the following way: First, a sensitizing session in which the participants would be exposed to testimonies (bibliographical and visual) of women from different countries; in that session the development and rationale for research on and teaching of women's dimension would be discussed, pointing to the male bias and social and other analyses and the contribution, academic and otherwise, of a feminist focus. A second session would deal with theories of women's subordination with discussion on the origin debate and the sociological and anthropological contributions to this, including aspects of sex role socialization. A third session would review theories of

development (e.g., growth, distribution, basic needs strategies, dependency) and of women in development. A fourth session would focus on conceptual/methodological, empirical and policy aspects related to rural women and development. Another session would use the same approach to focus on urban women and development, including the literature on migration, urbanization, industrialization and the informal sector. The use and production of statistics and other indicators on women would be dealt with in a session dedicated to research tools. In a final session students would be asked to evaluate a specific programme making recommendations as to what measures, if any, were neglected that would have been important for a more beneficial or less detrimental effect on women. Throughout the course, discussions would revolve around conceptual/methodological, theoretical as well as policy and organizational issues. The discussions could include, among others, the following questions: What type of economic system is theoretically most amenable to female emancipation? What are women's actual achievements in countries with different economic systems? What type of political system is most amenable to women's emancipation, and what sort of bureaucratic strategy (women's bureau, women's party wings, etc.) offers the most favourable context for change? What is meant by subordination and what form would an alternative to it take? (2)

Future Research Areas

The research on the teaching of Women's Studies has so far given us a preliminary understanding of the content and institutional context in which this area of study thrives in different countries and regions of the world. We need more detailed research, however, on the content of the courses. We also need to look more closely at the conditions (political, institutional, ideological, etc.) that hinder or encourage the teaching of Women's Studies at the national level. This will allow us to determine the most

appropriate strategies for promoting the teaching of Women's Studies in different places. We also need to look at the pedagogic methods that are being used and which could prove most appropriate for teaching this subject to different target groups. As we all know, Women's Studies is unique in that the researchers or students are most commonly women and they are therefore both the subjects as well as the objects of study. Researching and teaching women's issues, therefore, requires a certain methodology which can bring together subjective experience and academic knowledge. Much research also remains to be done on the professional placement of Women's Studies graduates and labour market possibilities. We should also begin to attempt to compile data on female/male participation in Women's Studies programmes in order to have some basis for evaluating its progress in the future in this respect.

Concluding Remarks

Having looked at the development of Women's Studies in five regions of the world we can appreciate the extent to which this area of study has expanded in the last 15 to 20 years and the contributions it is making both to scientific knowledge as well as to social change. This development, however, has been disparate in different countries and regions of the world and even where it has developed most, there is still much research and teaching needed before it makes a marked impact on people's minds, on people's behaviour and on social organization everywhere.

Since a women's dimension exists in every aspect of social life, Women's Studies is almost by definition interdisciplinary. Although a women's dimension is being sought in most disciplines, Women's Studies as such remains highly fragmented and still no paradigm exists to coalesce the various strands. We still need more empirical data gathering, more conceptual refinement, more theory building before we can develop a sound framework that could

make Women's Studies stand in its own right. Such a framework would need to combine five approaches or dimensions which characterize the various strands of Women's Studies today. These are: first, a macro/micro approach, which characterizes some courses or areas of interest in Women's Studies (mostly those focusing on development issues, although the link is often difficult to establish); second, a diachronic dimension which particularizes the area of Women's Studies concerned with women's participation in history or which looks at how historical processes affect the condition of women; third, an interdisciplinary approach, which specifies the various strands of Women's Studies, such as Women in Music, Women in Religion, etc.; fourth, an action approach, which characterizes research and teaching on women's issues that is done for policy-making purposes, to raise public awareness, to organize women or to denounce inequality and discrimination; and fifth, the subjective feature of Women's Studies whereby women are both the object and subject of study, making it very personal. Therefore, we need to give Women's Studies a time dimension, a cross-cultural and cross-national dimension, a personal dimension, a political dimension and an inter-disciplinary dimension. If we can bring together these various approaches into a single discipline, Women's Studies will contribute to academic knowledge as well as to personal and social change. One thing we must be very cautious of, however, is that Women's Studies does not lead once again to a fragmented view and understanding of social reality, but that it will rather enhance our knowledge of it. Only in this way will it become a legitimate area of study and action.

Footnotes

(1) The term "Women's Studies" was coined in the United States and is often associated with the particular genre of research and teaching of women's issues in that country. The term is now used in Latin America, Japan and elsewhere to refer to research and teaching of women related topics, including women and development issues. In some cases, however, women's research and teaching with a development focus is referred to as "WID". We will use the term "Women in Development" to refer specifically to research and teaching that addresses simultaneously questions of gender and development with a specific policy making focus.

(2) For some examples of WID courses see Belhachmi 1983; University of Sussex; Staudt 1985.

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