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Using Enrollment and Attainment in Formal Education to Understand the Case of India

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Introduction
The investigative inquiry of global trends in comparative and international education provides opportunity to examine the current state of the field and perpend its future study. Studies in the field have traditionally sought to reveal similarities and differences in educational ideas, systems, and practices. This timely edited volume offers felicitous case studies on the inequality of education, focusing on educational participation measured in terms of educational enrollment and attainment.1 This chapter is devoted to understanding educational inequality in India. After providing a brief overview of the country, the first section offers a sketch of India’s educational system, methods used to measure enrollment and attainment, and statistics that offer a numerical depiction of education in the country, with a particular emphasis on differences by sex. The second section offers a literature review of enrollment and attainment in the formal education sector.2 This examination of national policy and scholarly literature pinpoints inattention to studies on educational enrollment and attainment at the secondary and tertiary levels, and educational participation among other populations, including the “disabled,” “deviant,” and minority populations. It also shows how the unequal representation of both quantitative and qualitative studies presents an inadequate and incomplete depiction of the educational enrollment and attainment situation in the country. The conclusion offers final thoughts on and future directions for the field that highlight the need to reexamine educational enrollment and attainment by using sociological frameworks that prominently position gender as a critical pivot point to understand educational inequity in India.

India is comprised of 25 States, 7 Union Territories (UTs), and 466 Districts. Excluding the politically volatile regions of Jammu and Kashmir, the country reports a population of 1,028,610,328 with 532,156,772 males and 496,453,556 females (Registrar General 2001). Approximately 80% of its population is Hindu (N = 827,578,868), approximately 13% Muslim (N = 240

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Figure 10.1: Map of India, 2001


138,188,240), approximately 2% Christian (N = 24,080,016), approximately 1% report themselves as Sikh (N = 19,215,730). The Registrar General (2001) also notes that less than 1% of the population is comprised of Buddhists (N = 7,955,207), Jains (N = 4,225,053), or other religions (N = 6,639,626).³

Table 10.1 (Registrar General 1991) reflects India’s spoken languages, (excluding Jammu and Kashmir populations).⁴