

Girls' Education and the International Community:

The Case of Education for All (EFA) and India

By  
Leigh Fuke

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Approved: Dr. Anne Marie Dalton  
Thesis Supervisor

Approved: Marian Pelletier  
First Reader

Approved: Anthony O'Malley  
External Examiner

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Girls' Education and the International Community:  
The Case of Education for All (EFA) and India

by Leigh Fuke

**Abstract**

This thesis looks at issues in girls' education and development both generally and specifically within India. These issues are examined in light of recent international focus on girls' elementary education, specifically the Education for All (EFA) framework. The research question being addressed is: what is the potential of India's national strategy to achieve gender related EFA goals? The issues examined in this thesis include ideological perspectives on education and development and international involvement in education as well as the identified outcomes of and barriers to girls' education. The second part of this thesis involves a more in depth look at international frameworks for education, with particular attention to the Education for All framework and its influence on policy and centrally sponsored educational programs within India. This thesis concludes with an attempt to provide an assessment of India's National Strategy to achieve their defined EFA goals.

April, 2007

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## **Introduction**

This thesis will address issues in girls' education and development both generally and specifically within the Indian context. These issues will be examined in light of recent increased international focus on girls' education, in particular the Education for All (EFA) framework developed at the World Conference for Education for All (WCEFA) in 1990. This thesis will examine the EFA framework and India's National Plan of Action to achieve EFA goals. The particular focus will be on the plans and programs designed to achieve the gender related EFA goals. This thesis will examine a number of important issues associated with girls' education: theoretical perspectives on education, development outcomes associated with girls' education, the barriers to education for girls, the various international frameworks for girls' education and India's national policy and programs as they relate to girls' education.

In recent years there has been an increased international focus on girls' education which has translated into a number of policies and initiatives, as well as a wide variety of studies and points of view on the topic. The issue of girls' education has been recognized as significant by both the international and academic communities and is something which will continue to be an important topic based not only on the large number of out of school girls around the world, but also on the potential development outcomes associated with girls' education. The missed opportunities associated with continued trends of large numbers of out of school girls cannot be ignored by the international community or individual countries.

## **Education Indicators in India**

Before addressing the more substantive issues to be dealt with in the literature, it is necessary to provide a brief background on the current situation of girls' education both

internationally and specifically in India. While girls' school attendance and achievement in education has been increasing around the world, progress in the South Asian region, which includes India, has been limited. UNICEF estimates that there are one hundred and twenty one million out of school children, most of whom are girls (UNICEF, 2003). In terms of educational indicators in India, there has been some improvement in recent years, although this does not appear to be proportionate to the level of policy commitment on the national and international level.

According to the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report from 2003/4, India is one of two countries in the region at risk of not achieving gender parity at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level by the 2015 target. It is important to note as well that this target was originally set for 2005 and has already been missed. Target setting is something that will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis, both in chapter one and in the discussion section. In 2000, South and West Asia, as a region, had the lowest percentage of female enrollment in primary education (44.1) out of any region in the world and 66% of the total out of school children in the region were girls (UNESCO, 2003).

These statistics are interesting on their own, but are particularly compelling considering India's economic development of the same period. As India's economy has been booming, the educational development and increased gender equality (both measures of social development as defined by the UN's Human Development Index) that we might expect to come along with this have not materialized. This raises an issue that is one of the rationales behind choosing the girls' education, the international community and India specifically as a thesis topic. While in many circumstances there appears to be a reason behind the consistent missing of educational targets and persistent low levels of girls'

education, this does not seem to be the case in India. There has been no devastating health pandemic, no civil war encompassing the country, no drastic economic downturn (conditions identified by Jansen as likely contributors to a country's failure to meet its educational targets). In fact, of all the developing countries striving to achieve Universal Elementary Education (UEE) for the first time, it would appear that India was, and is, in a relatively good position to do so. With relative political stability and an expanding economy, it does not seem that there is any obvious reason why these goals would be so difficult to achieve.

This combination of economic growth and low corresponding social development also raises questions about the commonly made link between economic development and national social development. The current situation of gender (in)equality in India certainly lends credence to the argument that there is more to national development than economic development. Although this remains to be seen as the economic development is relatively recent and not evenly distributed, the educational situation in India may as well debunk the idea that economic development will lead to other forms of development and should therefore be the focus of development efforts.

### **Methodology**

The question that will be answered by this research is, what is the potential for success of India's National Plan of Action to Achieve EFA goals? Success will be measured in terms of achievement of the stated goals for girls' education identified in policy documents and individual program goals. Although policies and programs differ in terms of their exact goals and timelines, these are centered around the areas of increased enrollment of girls, increased retention of girls (completion of primary school and continuation from lower primary to upper primary education) and material progress (increased number of schools,

facilities and teachers necessary to provide a quality education). In order to answer this question, a number of issues and concepts will be addressed. This will involve looking at the more general issues in both education and development and girls' education and development. This is done in order to provide the necessary theoretical basis and practical background for the examination of these particular programs. The examination of these issues will come in the first two chapters of this thesis, while the examination of the specific international frameworks as well as the Indian situation in terms of policies and programs will come in chapter three. A more detailed outline of the issues to be discussed in this thesis can be found below.

The strategy to answer the research question identified above will involve two major areas of research; looking at the development of international policy on girls' education and its effect on policy in India, and the programs and their results in India. The first part of this research will attempt to determine whether the Education for All framework has had a notable impact in terms of influencing policy. If it is determined that there has been little in the way of policy change since committing to this framework, this raises questions about using the resources of the international community in this manner. If it is determined that there has been change in policy then this may speak to the influence of the international community in pursuing certain objectives.

The second focus of the research will involve examining the programs that make up this policy and strategy and looking at their individual outcomes. The potential for success of the strategy as a whole will be determined by examining the programs that make up this plan to determine if they have achieved, or made progress towards achieving, their goals. If it is determined that these programs have made progress towards the stated goals, it can be



said that the current strategy is likely to succeed, or that there is some potential for success in this strategy.

Relevant statistics will be used to determine progress made towards achieving educational goals. These statistics will include enrollment rates for both boys and girls at the primary and upper primary level, numbers of teachers and numbers of schools built. This section will compare statistics from 1993 and 2002; the source of this data will be discussed below when looking at data and sources.

### **Thesis Outline**

The first issue to be examined is different theoretical perspectives on education. This section will address the thinking behind various approaches to education and development, as well as the rationales behind various methods of providing education as a public service. Perspectives on education will be divided into two broad groups, universalist and culturally relative. The main beliefs of these two groups will be discussed, as well as their interpretation of international involvement in education. As well, the manifestation of these broad perspectives in specific positions on education will be examined. These perspectives have informed and influenced different positions on education; the universalist perspective views education as a tool for social transformation while the culturally relative position views education as a tool for cultural and social reproduction and even domination. In support of the view of education as a tool for liberation, the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum will be discussed. The relativist position with the view of education as domination is expressed in the work of Bourdieu, Illich and Carnoy. As well, some of the more current work on each of these positions will be examined. While there are a number of issues in the area of education and development that would be worthy

of additional focus<sup>1</sup>, the issues of education as a tool for either liberation or domination are most relevant to this thesis in the context of international involvement in the education systems of developing countries.

A discussion of the general work relating to international involvement in education will follow, including some of the more specific perspectives and issues relating to the Education for All program. These perspectives are in many ways closely related to the more general theoretical perspectives on education, but it is important to include work that relates specifically to this phenomenon of international agency involvement in educational planning.

These perspectives on education have consequences for the discussion on girls' education. The two overarching perspectives of universalism and relativism are significant as the perspective taken by the entity responsible for education will have serious consequences for the way education is delivered. A universalist approach sees education as being important for all people and those working from this approach are likely to be supportive of ensuring that all people in society have access to an education. The culturally relative approach which is less than supportive of the formal schooling system likely does not see girls' education as being relevant. In addition, this perspective is associated with postmodernism which would not be in support of this approach to girls' education. This perspective would more likely encourage different forms of education depending on the context and may not agree with the notion that all girls should be encouraged to receive an education.

Perspectives on the delivery of public services, education in particular, will be discussed as well. The inclusion of a brief review of the literature on education as a public service is included as this thesis is focused on determining a particular strategy's potential for

success in delivering a specific service. If it is clear from the public service delivery literature that one approach is almost certain to fail, this should be identified. As well, some of the programs being examined in the Indian context raise issues related to decentralization as this is a strategy that is pursued in some cases; thus public service delivery will be briefly discussed in chapter one.

The second major issue to be addressed in this literature review is the development outcomes associated with girls' education. It is these outcomes which are often used as a rationale for promoting education by both international agencies and national governments. When looking at rationales for the widespread promotion of girls' education, there are generally two main issues that are raised. The first is the positive development outcomes, as mentioned above, the second is education as a human right. Although this is something which is a part of the discourse on girls' education, and education is viewed as a human right by many of the international agencies, as well as the Indian government, the debate over whether education is in fact a human right will not be addressed in detail in this thesis<sup>2</sup>. To thoroughly address education as a human right would require more than is possible for a thesis of this length and depth so this thesis focuses on development outcomes. In this thesis, development outcomes associated with girls' education will be grouped into categories - health outcomes, economic outcomes and empowerment/capacity building outcomes. Although girls' education is generally associated with positive outcomes, any identified negative outcomes of girls' education will be identified in this section as well.

The third major issue to be examined is the conditions which contribute to limiting girls' access to and achievement of education. This section of the literature review will focus on both conditions which have been identified cross culturally and conditions which are

specific to India. These barriers to education will be divided into three categories: economic barriers, socio-cultural barriers and organizational or administrative barriers. Although it is true that in many cases, these factors work together, they will first be addressed separately for the purposes of clarity. Within each of these categories, both attitudes and conditions which contribute to keeping specifically girl children out of school as well as those which keep all children out of school will be identified.

The remainder of this thesis will build on the issues identified and discussed in the first two chapters. This part of the thesis will look at how these issues are manifested in reality and how the research on the topic of girls' education and development as well as international involvement in education relate to the Education for All framework, specifically India's policy response to commitments made within this framework and the programs implemented to make these policies a reality.

The third chapter of this thesis will look at girls' education and the international community as well as girls' education in India. This will begin with a discussion of the major frameworks currently in place in support of increased girls' education. This discussion will show not only the point of view taken by the international agencies in regards to girls' education, but how strongly this position has been promoted. This shows not only the importance afforded to girls' education, but the time and resource commitments involved. These are bound to affect policies in developing countries as they are often cited for obtaining aid and technical support. This section will identify the positions and goals expressed by some of the major and more recent programs promoting girls' education. The programs to be briefly discussed in this section include the UN's Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the World Bank's Education for

All Fast Track Initiative (FTI). While there are certainly more initiatives for girls' education than the ones to be examined here, these ones are closely connected with the EFA framework which has been adopted by India.

The next part of this chapter will look specifically at the EFA program and provide a brief outline on how this framework was developed. This is important as it helps to identify EFA as a major commitment which has required a massive investment of resources. In this section, there will also be a brief discussion of how national plans to achieve EFA goals are formulated within the EFA framework. There will be a review of UNESCO's guidelines for developing a national strategy. This will be done to determine how structured these guidelines are and how much flexibility exists in the development of national plans. This is important as it may help to identify an area of weakness in international agency involvement in this area. If countries are given very little autonomy in developing their national plan, it would be difficult to hold them solely accountable for an eventual failure. Conversely, if the guidelines are so broad as to be virtually nonexistent, this reflects equally poorly on international agency involvement as it raises questions relating to the purpose of their involvement.

This section will as well look at the goals and timelines of the EFA framework. This will involve identifying the gender related goals as well as the target date associated with these. This section is particularly relevant as it identifies the specific commitments made by national governments when becoming part of the EFA framework. In order to discuss whether these commitments have influenced Indian national policy on the subject, it is necessary to first outline the EFA program and its' specific goals and targets. This will involve consulting a number of documents, reports and plans from the original World

Conference on Education for all in Jomtein in 1990, the mid-decade Amman conference, the Dakar conference in 2000 as well as other sources. Although a number of documents will be used for this purpose, the ones of major significance will be the *Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs* and *Meeting Basic Learning Needs: A Vision for the 1990s*, both from the original World Conference on Education for All, *The Dakar Framework for Action (subtitled Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments)* from the 2000 World Education Forum and *An International Strategy to put the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All into Operation* (2002).

The information for this section will be taken from a combination of primary and secondary sources, with much of the research based on analysis of documents produced by UNESCO. These documents provide the necessary information to answer many of the questions being dealt with in this section. The secondary sources will include work specifically about the issues raised in regards to the EFA framework.

The remainder of section two of chapter three looks specifically at Indian national policy dealing with education, specifically portions dealing with girls' education and the associated programs designed to achieve educational goals. Five important policies or plans will be examined in this section: the Indian Constitution, the National Policy on Education 1986/amended 1992, Education for Women's Empowerment 2001, the relevant five year plans with a focus on the current Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007 and the National Strategy to Achieve EFA Goals. In examining policy on girls' education, specific goals and targets will be identified as well as what programs or actions have been put in place or proposed as a part of these policies to achieve these goals. This is a particularly critical section of this thesis as it traces girls' education through significant educational policy and demonstrates the

level of policy commitment to this issue.

The question guiding the examination of policies about girls' education is: how has girls' education been addressed in these major policies? This will involve looking at whether the education of girls and women is specifically mentioned in the policy, what the goals and targets for girls' education are and whether programs have been designed or implemented to achieve these goals. This section is looking at the specific treatment of girls' education in these important planning documents for developing a national strategy in order to determine how structured these guidelines are and how much flexibility exists in developing national plans. Such examination may help to identify areas of weakness or strength in international agency involvement in this area. If countries are given very little autonomy in developing their national plan, it would be difficult to hold them solely accountable for their eventual failure. Conversely, if the guidelines are so broad as to be virtually nonexistent, this reflects equally poorly on international agency involvement as it raises questions relating to the purpose of their involvement.

With regard to programs implemented to achieve these goals, the tasks will be to determine whether or not there was/is actual implementation and to provide some assessment regarding actual or potential outcomes. The programs will be identified through the EFA NPA and the current Five Year Plan. When looking at these programs, their goals as well as their proposed and actual implementation will be examined.

### **Data and Sources**

The data for this thesis will come from a variety of sources. As chapter one (Perspectives on Education and Development) deals with theoretical perspectives on education, this information will be taken from various articles and books on this subject.

This chapter is not based on research studies, rather on identified positions and ways of thinking about education and development.

The information for chapter two (Girls' Education and Development – Outcomes and Barriers) will be taken from secondary sources on the topic. There has been a vast amount of research done on the relationship between the education of girls and women and various development outcomes which makes locating information on this topic a fairly straightforward task. A representative selection of research will be used.

Much of the information obtained for chapter three (Girls' Education, the International Community and India) will be taken from policy documents and the documents produced by the international agencies. These include a number of important documents from the three major EFA conferences, as well as EFA global monitoring reports, regional frameworks and guidelines produced for the development of national plans. These documents are widely available in their complete form and access is not an issue. They provide the necessary information relating to targets and timelines. The relevant Indian national policy documents are also available online directly from government sources.

The material for providing the assessment of the individual programs will come from both government and agency assessments and, where possible, secondary scholarly reflection. Government sources are important for this study as they provide valuable information on the implementation and scope of programs; they are not, however without drawbacks. The government is an important stakeholder in these programs with much invested in them and therefore objectivity may be in question. Certainly this does not mean that government designated reports are inaccurate, on the other hand, neither are they disinterested.



It is important at this stage to address some of the possible weaknesses with this type of a study. The first, and most obvious, is that this study relies to a large extent on the data collected and assessments made by other researchers. While this is information that is obtained from reputable sources, it is never possible to completely account for another researcher's individual biases and background. This is particularly relevant to the issues discussed in chapter two, and parts of chapter three, as this is based directly on the research of other people. Although this part of this thesis will rely on secondary sources, there is a great deal of research done on this topic, which means that sources are widely available. Utilizing a range of sources, particularly in chapter two, should be self-correcting as this involves multiple sources of data and analysis, rather than one researcher's findings.

### **Broader Discussion**

This thesis contributes to the overall development discourse in two areas. The discussion of the international community involvement in education is intended to add to the debate on international involvement in national affairs such as education. One element of this thesis is to examine whether a large scale international framework such as the Education for All initiative can be significant in influencing the national policy of an individual country. Campaigns such as EFA appear to be growing in popularity and prevalence and will certainly impact the future direction of development. If this is the direction that the involvement of the so-called developed world is taking, it must be determined if this is an effective use of resources. If it is determined that the international agency involvement in the situation has been largely ineffective or irrelevant, this may have consequences for future international agency involvement in the public service arrangements of stable countries.

The second contribution of this thesis is to provide a discussion of the Indian national

strategy to achieve educational goals. This will provide an example of how the EFA framework has been interpreted on the national level and some reflection on the likelihood of success in achieving educational goals.

# **Chapter One**

## **Perspectives on Education and Development**

### **Introduction**

When dealing with issues surrounding international initiatives for education it is first important to examine the various perspectives exist on the role of education in development. While there are a vast number of issues and perspectives discussed within the broader topic of education and development, only the overarching perspectives which help to define the various positions on international involvement in education will be discussed here. Those involved in this particular debate can be divided into two broad perspectives, which in this paper will be termed universalism and cultural relativism. These perspectives will be discussed in turn, as well as their influence on the international landscape of educational promotion programs. In addition to these broad theoretical approaches to education, there are a number of approaches and points of view on various aspects of education. These include education as a liberating force versus education as a tool of social reproduction, as well as the international agencies' approaches of education as a tool of development or education as a fundamental human right. These points of view and the major proponents of them will be discussed in turn. As well this section will examine the work of those writers dealing specifically with this relatively new trend of heavy international agency involvement in national education structures. This is crucial as it provides the theoretical background to be considered when looking at the development and implementation of these programs, which will be done later in this thesis. The last issue to be discussed in this section on theoretical issues in education and development is that of education as a public service. This is important to address as it deals with many of the organizational/administrative problems

and concerns that may arise when attempting to design an educational structure.

### **Universalism**

The two broad and opposing perspectives on education and development can be traced logically from broad perspectives on development in general. These perspectives are based on interpretations of sameness and difference and raise the question of whether we should focus on our common humanity or whether our individual or cultural differences should be afforded primacy when approaching both the broad idea of development and the narrower issues under the umbrella of development. Although this is a wide net to cast, it is necessary as these issues do shape the debate on education and development, and are currently shaping the debate on international involvement in education in developing countries.

The term “universalism” is now frequently used to describe a perspective and approach most logically linked with modernization theory. Universalists hold that we should focus on educating all people in basically the same manner, regardless of difference or cultural influences that may make a different approach more appropriate. When discussing the term modernization, Adams notes the dichotomy between universalist and culturally relative approaches and states that “(t)he particularism-universalism dichotomy refers to the extent to which people are expected to act in accordance with general norms or standards rather than on the basis of particular cases” (Adams, 1970: 3). In terms of developing an approach to education, this may mean creating a national or even international program rather than tailoring educational structures to suit individual groups with diverse needs.

Those working within the perspective of modernization theory saw education as crucial to development, which was conceived as the move from being traditional to being

modern. This process of modernization was seen as being dependant in many ways on education, as it was the responsibility of a small number of enlightened, or entrepreneurial, individuals who would usher in this new era of modernity. A key factor in the development of the so-called “modern man” was education. In his study on the relationship between education and “individual modernity”, Inkeles found that formal education was very significant in a person’s acceptance and development of the qualities of a modern man. Through his creation of a scale of individual modernity, Inkeles was able to assign a number to a person’s “modernity” and thereby determine what factors were present in those with the highest level of individual modernity. Individual modernity refers to “a complex set of interrelated attitudes, values, and behaviors” (Inkeles, 1974: 9). Certain attitudes are identified as being crucial to the condition of modernity: an openness to new experiences, increasing independence from the authority of traditional figures, belief in science and medicine, ambition for oneself and one’s children to achieve high goals in terms of employment and education, an interest in planning in advance (and, bizarrely, liking people to be on time), interest and activity in community affairs and local politics and making an effort to keep up with the news (Inkeles, 1974: 9-10). Although the concept of modernity as quantified in numerical terms may sound absurd now, it is indicative of the modernization approach to development. People were seen as striving to become more modern, and their progress towards this goal could be measured through the development of this scale. In his study of education and individual modernity, Inkeles looked at whether education can make people “modern”. This study found that “education was a prime factor in determining the level of a man’s modernity” (Inkeles, 1974: 13). Inkeles also maintains that the act of inculcating children with modern ideals goes past what is actually taught as the curriculum

noting that while in school, students “not only learned geography and acquired skills in reading and arithmetic; they evidently also learned new attitudes and values, and developed new dispositions to act, whose full significance would not be manifest until they were adults” (Inkeles, 1974: 19) This raises the issue of the socializing effects of the education system, a debate which will be taken up later in this chapter.

Although there have been a vast number of critiques of modernization theory in general, including its linear perspective on development, the role that culture is seen as playing in underdevelopment and the fact that development is essentially equated with economic growth, the emphasis on the importance of education in the development process has largely endured within the development discussion. As well, there are certain parallels between the modernization approach to development and the international agency approach to education in developing countries. Although we no longer hear of education as being instrumental in creating the “modern man”, we do hear of education being used as a means to achieve similar goals within a society. As well, there is no denying that education is being touted as a means by which countries can overcome their underdevelopment, similar to what we saw with modernization theory.

While modernization theory in its earlier forms may no longer be considered the dominant development paradigm, the importance placed on education is still a major part of the contemporary development discourse. When looking at the sheer volume of international initiatives and programs designed to encourage or enhance education, whether it is girls’ education, primary education, non-formal education, or just education in general, it is clear that in the mainstream approach to development, education still has a very important role to play. The universalist approach to education and development supports programs which

promote universal education. The role of local culture is minimized; priority is placed on the universality of education as a means to achieving goals, rather than on the particular cultural elements which may prevent certain groups from doing this, which may have been the case with modernization theory. Although culture may no longer be seen as an impediment to achieving development, there is no doubt that countries are still being asked to strive for the same goal.

One area that is often emphasized when discussing the importance of education is that of employment. As Nussbaum states, “If there was a time when illiteracy was not a barrier to employment, that time has passed. The nature of the world economy is such that illiteracy condemns a woman (or man) to a small number of low-skilled types of employment.” (Nussbaum, 2003: 332). Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of education in terms of finding gainful employment and this is clearly closely related to national development. In addition to education providing economic opportunities, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, Dreze and Sen make the point that the social opportunities of any widespread economic growth are limited when a large proportion of the population cannot read or write. While they are speaking specifically of India, this idea is obviously transferable. It suggests that a lack of education can be a cause of not only non-participation in the economic sphere, but non-participation in any social benefits that may be derived from any increased national development.

It is important to note that this perspective on education and development is to a large extent shared by a number of multilateral agencies. UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, as we will see in chapter three of this thesis, have all emphasized the importance of universal basic education in the development process and this belief in education has

translated into a number of initiatives promoting education. Although there is some attention given to non-traditional education such as non-formal education for working children, the goal is the universalization of education to a specific, internationally agreed upon standard.

### **Cultural Relativism**

A contrasting perspective on education is that of cultural relativism. This perspective is best associated with the broader framework of postmodernism as many of the main ideas are borrowed from it in some way. This is not to say that the two are synonymous, as Green says “there is clearly no such thing yet as a postmodern theory of education” (Green, 1997: 9) rather that a culturally relative approach to education borrows from postmodern thought. In contrast to this view that education is a key element in the development process, there are a number of authors who equate formal education with Western cultural imperialism and believe that not only is formal education not particularly significant in the development process, but is actually harmful. Those working from this perspective call for the end to formal education and schooling. The major theorists relevant to this perspective include Martin Carnoy and Ivan Illich. While these writers were generally working before the time of this major increase in the number of international initiatives for education, their thoughts on the subject of education in developing countries are certainly applicable and appear to be increasingly relevant and influential.

This view that education is a form of cultural imperialism is not applicable exclusively in developing countries, rather it is something that takes place in formal schooling systems in developed countries as well. The formal education system is seen as a means for reproducing the current social order and ensuring that the dominant ideology is



passed on to the next generation. The relevance of education to the control and domination of developing countries began in the colonial period, according to Carnoy. The colonial powers used the education system “to effect change, but only those changes that solidified their influence and control over the peoples of India and Africa” (Carnoy, 1974: 82).

According to Carnoy, early education systems in India were intended to keep India economically dependant on Britain and the structure of this system changed as the needs of the colonial power changed. The influence of British colonialism on the current Indian education system will be briefly discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

The work of Ivan Illich is also particularly noteworthy when dealing with education and development. Like Carnoy, Illich argues that formal schooling is a destructive process. In Illich’s case, this appears to be part of a broader statement on institutionalization of society, but the education system is used as an example. For Illich, schooling and education are incompatible, “(a)ll over the world the school has an anti-educational effect on society” (Illich, 1971: 8). Illich draws a sharp distinction between schooling and education and maintains that the education of children cannot take place within the confines of the formal schooling system. Illich’s strong opposition to the schooling system is best explained in his own words, “(n)either learning nor justice is promoted by schooling because educators insist on packaging instruction with certification. Learning and the assignment of social roles are melted into schooling.” (Illich, 1971: 11). Illich goes so far as to suggest that compulsory schooling is a violation of the “politically recognized and culturally accepted” right of free assembly (Illich, 1971:93). While these ideas may seem outrageous, and certainly go against what could be considered as falling within the mainstream of development and education thought, they have been taken up in some of the writing on international involvement in

education and will be discussed in greater detail later.

### **Education as a Tool for Liberation**

The perspective of education as a positive force and a means to eventual liberation follows from the universalist position on both development and education in development. The idea that education can be used as a tool for liberation or freedom can be connected with the capabilities approach to development articulated by Amartya Sen and discussed as well by Martha Nussbaum. Sen's work on the subject of capabilities is vast and enlightening, but will be dealt with only briefly in this thesis, specifically in the context of how it can be extended to education as a way to expand capability and therefore a means to liberation or freedom.

In developing the capabilities approach, attention was paid "to what people were able to do, rather than to what people could buy with their income" (Saito, 2003: 19). Significantly when dealing with education, "capabilities comprise what a person is able to do or be" (Saito, 2003: 19). While the focus of this approach is not on the potential economic value of capabilities, Sen notes that capabilities stemming from education, health and basic freedoms do play a role in making people more productive and helping to generate more income. Dreze and Sen also note the "interpersonal" effects of education. This refers to the fact that an individual or small group of people with an education can have a major influence within a community. The notion of capability focuses on the options that a person has in their life:

(t)he notion of capability is essentially one of freedom – the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of a life to lead. Poverty of a life, in this view, lies not merely in the impoverished state in which the person actually lives, but also in the lack of real opportunity – given by social constraints as well as personal circumstances – to choose other types of living  
(Drèze & Sen, 1995: 11)

It is clear that even a basic education will improve a person's capability to do a number of things. Because of this, education is not only a tool for development, but a tool for increased personal freedom. Drèze and Sen maintain that literacy is not only an important social achievement in itself, but also has an "important instrumental role in facilitating other achievements" (Drèze & Sen, 1995: 3). It is noted that "(a)n illiterate person is that much less equipped to defend herself in court, to obtain a bank loan, to enforce her inheritance rights to take advantage of new technology, to compete for secure employment, to get on the right bus, to take part in political activity, in short, to participate in the modern economy and society" (Drèze & Sen, 1995: 109)

### **Education, Social Cohesion and Cultural Reproduction**

While education is often discussed as a tool for liberation and a means for one to lift oneself out of poverty, another perspective sees education as a tool for the reproduction of current social norms and practices. This perspective holds that rather than acting as a tool to change one's position in society, education is more likely to reinforce this position and ensure that it endures among future generations.

One noteworthy author who wrote extensively on education, and who is most often associated with this position of education as a tool for social reproduction is Pierre Bourdieu, whose discussion of the relationship between education and cultural or social reproduction will be addressed here. While Bourdieu was writing specifically about the education system in France, his major ideas and concepts are largely transferable. Bourdieu maintains that the formal education system serves to reproduce the existing class and social structures of a society. Formal schooling, the university in particular, reinforces the dominant class as dominant and does nothing to help the dominated class in overcoming their own

subordination. Bordieu singles out the examination process as one of the most objectionable aspects of the education system and claims that this is one of the ways that the values of the dominant culture are transmitted; the examination, “provides one of the most efficacious tools for the enterprise of inculcating the dominant culture and the value of that culture” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977: 142). This is done through the determination that a particular type of knowledge or way of knowing is worthy of official sanction by the school or university.

This notion of education as a means for social or cultural reproduction is related to that of education as a means for social cohesion, but there is a fine line between creating or maintaining social bonds and order, and blindly reproducing the existing social structure and its class inequalities. Stephen P. Heyneman looks at this relationship between education and social cohesion and maintains that educational organizations are one of the “four ‘pillars’ to support the objectives of social cohesion” (Heyneman, 2003, 29). All pillars must work consistently; the other three pillars identified are political organizations, social organizations and economic organizations. Heyneman maintains that the education system performs certain essential purposes, one of which is teaching “ ‘the rules of the game’ - the interpersonal, political, social, and legal principles underpinning good citizenship, the obligations of political leaders, the behaviour expected of citizens, and the consequences for not adhering to these principles” (Heyneman, 2003: 29). This is thought to “foster tolerance and lay the groundwork for voluntary behaviour consistent with social norms” (Heyneman, 2003: 29) It is interesting to note that this function as identified by Heyneman is considered social cohesion, while a similar function as identified by Bordieu is considered cultural domination.

Jeffrey et. al. address Bourdieu and Passeron's discussion of the role of education in "entrenching social inequalities" (Jeffrey et. al., 2005: 2098) in their study on this topic in rural Bijnor district, in Uttar Pradesh, India. It was found that the elite caste of this community has used their status and economic wealth to ensure superior educational and employment opportunities for their children. As a result of this study, the authors again raise the question of whether education should be universally identified as a "social good" (Jeffrey et. al., 2005: 2098).

This relationship between the education system and the perpetuation of class distinctions and social inequalities is taken up by Sen in his chapter "Radical Needs and Moderate Reforms". They maintain that deep class biases have helped to shape Indian educational policies and priorities and that inequalities in education are a reflection of economic and social inequalities between groups in India: "educational inequalities both reflect and help to sustain social disparities" (Sen, 1997: 14).

The work of Sen is significant not only for its contributions to the way we look at education, but also in that it shows that it is possible to see education and schooling in two ways simultaneously. Sen's work awakens us to not only the reality of education, in that it may be a perpetuator of class distinctions and entrenched inequalities, but also the role of education as a liberating tool for social change.

Sen's discussion of education's role in sustaining current social relations and inequalities is echoed in Govinda's work,

...universalising primary education is not just an educational endeavor. Limited access to education has, to a considerable extent, helped to: preserve the traditional social power equations within the society; maintain the status quo in male-female relationships within and outside the family; and perpetuate the political economy of the predominantly agrarian society. Thus any attempt to change this entrenched framework of relationships tantamounts to seeking a virtual social transformation (Govinda, 2003, 191-2).

It is important to note when looking at education as a tool for social reproduction that this is not necessarily incompatible with education as a tool for liberation, if the focus on social cohesion and reproduction is not taken to an extreme. Formal education can serve to both reinforce social norms and encourage individual growth and development. It would be difficult to argue that the formal schooling system plays no role in maintaining social order, but this does not necessarily mean that it is purely a tool for the domination over one group by another. Certainly an education system has the *potential* for this, but this does not mean that every school system which reinforces cultural norms is committing some form of domination.

### **International Involvement in Education**

While not all international programs are alike, a common element of these international programs is, as previously mentioned, their appeal to universality in pursuing their goals. The language used in these initiatives comes very much from a universalist discourse. Education is viewed as a “fundamental human right” and the goals being pursued are generally based around the overarching concept of “education for all”. These programs are generally promoted on the basis of either an appeal to human rights or an emphasis on the development potential of the strategies and goals promoted within the program. In this sense, education is both a development input and a development output. It is both a means to development and an indication of some form of development being achieved. Higher national educational attainment is seen as a development outcome; countries with higher levels of education are viewed as having achieved some level of national development. This thesis will not address the notion of education as a human right. While this concept does

play a fairly significant role in both international approaches and the Indian national approach to education, the debate over whether education is a human right is not the focus of this thesis. Whether the monolithic perspective of “education for all” in a non-monolithic world is responsible for the limited success of these programs remains to be seen; what is important at this stage is recognizing the perspective and rationale upon which these frameworks are based.

There is a considerable amount of literature identifying the benefits of primary education, particularly for girls, which will be discussed in some detail in the next chapter of this thesis, and one would assume that it is largely on the evidence presented in this literature that international initiatives promoting increased girls’ education are based. Within the limited, but quickly growing, body of literature which deals directly with international initiatives for education supported by international agencies, there are a few issues relevant to this thesis: time bound achievement targets, the cost of achieving the associated goals, and the language of instruction promoted within these frameworks.

As previously discussed when dealing with perspectives on education and development, there has been some criticism of these international initiatives, particularly EFA, as promoting a particular knowledge system and set of values. One criticism of the goal of the universalization of education is a very practical concern, which is the impossibly short time line set to reach this goal. When discussing the goal of gender equality in education found in the Millennium Development Goals, Unterhalter has argued that timelines, often criticized as being unrealistic, have actually had the positive effect of allowing us to focus on how resources can be used to “confront the injustice of gender discrimination in education so as to transform this” (Unterhalter, 2005a: 121).

Another positive interpretation of target setting and committing to international frameworks has been offered by Govinda, who states that “the most important contribution of the Jomtien conference has been the explicit nature of commitment made by individual countries in terms of physical achievement, targets and time frame with respect to the overall goal of ‘Education for All’” (Govinda, 2003: 171). While other concerns within this framework are pointed out, the vocal commitment and set targets and time frames are often seen as a positive development despite the fact that in many cases these goals are a repetition of those which have been previously defined within a national setting.

Timelines and targets have also been discussed in the work of Jansen who offers a harsh critique of not only the Education for All program, but earlier programs with similar goals for failing to meet specified targets. He points out that targets have been set in the field of “international development education” (Jansen, 2005: 369) since the 1950s. So while this target setting is nothing new, its continuation is something which is worthy of attention. The obvious point that Jansen articulates, which surprisingly does not seem to be discussed very often in the literature, is that every time a target is set, it acknowledges the failure of the previous target, “(w)hat is striking about the serial commitment to target setting is that each new landmark conference over the decades acknowledges that the targets have not been met, and then proceeds immediately to set another round of targets” (Jansen, 2005: 369).

Jansen questions the wisdom of educational target setting on three bases, methodological, conceptual and organizational. Methodologically he notes that information on key data categories are not available for many countries. Additionally, over and under reporting of particular sets of data may have certain political implications, for example under-reporting enrollment levels may mean that less tuition needs to be transferred from



schools to district authorities. This certainly calls into question whether the data that are provided are reliable, which makes the targets suspect as well. Even if it appears that targets, have been met, is this really the case? Jansen notes that in many cases, international agencies do acknowledge the methodological concerns and warn about serious problems with data, but they still draw conclusions based on this data.

Conceptually, Jansen notes that there is some disagreement over what is actually being measured. Terms like “primary age” may have various meanings depending on the context and there is no certainty that internationally used definitions are being used in all countries reporting data. In terms of organization, Jansen claims that targets assume that countries can and will reorganize their structures and priorities to meet international guidelines. He says that in this regard, international targets ignore “what happens inside countries in their day-to-day education planning and delivery functions” (Jansen, 2005: 374).

Jansen notes several other concerns with setting educational targets, including the potentially negative effects that this could have on educational quality. This concern is often raised when looking at educational target setting outside of the development context. The argument has been made that when specific targets are pursued, a strategy of “teaching to the test” may take over in the classroom. This means that classroom education is narrowly targeted towards examination content and does not necessarily represent the curriculum as it would have existed without the existence of achievement targets.

One point that is of particular interest is the question of why, once all the countries have agreed to the goals outlined in a framework such as Education for All, it is necessary to monitor their progress and ensure that targets are being met. Jansen asks whether in this context the international agencies are becoming a sort of an enforcer for World Bank and

IMF loans. Are these programs really just a way to ensure that the international lending agencies don't lend money for nothing?

Another criticism specifically of the Education for All framework is that it is prohibitively expensive. This is not to say that there is not enough money to make this goal attainable, rather that these resources are not being appropriately allocated (Delamonica et al, 2004: 3). In other words, either that the universalization of primary education is not as important a goal as one may expect it to be based on the documented evidence of its benefits or that some governments have not been able to effectively make use of available resources.

One writer who has commented against universal education, particularly in the context of the Education for All program is Caroline Dyer who, in her article, "Nomads and Education for All: education for development or domestication?", looks at the ideals of Education for All as related to a particular group of pastoral nomads in India. Her work raises three issues in particular with the Education for All framework as it relates to this particular group. The first of these issues is that Education for All is conceptualized "within a framework of individual rights" (Dyer, 2001: 325). This is a position that would be difficult to dispute given the repeated declaration within Education for All documents and reports that education is a human right. She notes that this focus on individual rights is in conflict with the primacy placed by these nomads on the welfare of the family group and raises the issue of whether the state should be permitted to impose its own values on such groups. The second issue raised in this article is that curriculum choices, as well as the language in which education is delivered and the form of education, prioritize certain forms of knowledge. In promoting one form of knowledge as the accepted and mainstream form of knowledge, other forms will be relegated to secondary status. Thirdly, Dyer questions

whether states which promote Education for All are similarly committed to creating employment opportunities for their citizens as traditional occupations are being “edged out by development” (Dyer, 2001: 325). The issue of education and employment will be further explored in chapter two of this thesis when looking at outcomes of education.

The issue of international involvement in education, again specifically within the context of Education for All, is taken up in great depth by Birgit Brock-Utne. Brock-Utne looks mainly at Education for All in Africa, specifically Sub-Saharan Africa, but she does write a great deal about the EFA program, and the universalization of education in other forms, as a general topic. One area that Brock-Utne addresses which is particularly relevant for this thesis is the specific targeting of girls for education. She maintains that the argument that education should target the girl child is “based on economic analysis” (Brock-Utne, 2000: 13). This is not a particularly radical notion as we have already discussed the basis for programs promoting girls education as being based on either development outcomes, which are in many cases economic outcomes <sup>3</sup>, or an appeal to human rights.

One of the most significant contributions of Brock-Utne’s work, specifically when looking at internationalization of education in general rather than strictly within the African context, which is largely her focus, is her discussion on the language of instruction and the consequences and politics of this choice. She notes that the language of instruction is a crucial factor in the education of a country’s youth, and the political statements that this makes must not be ignored. As well, she maintains that language of instruction is not given much thought in the development of educational policies and points out that in the World Declaration on Education for All, education in the mother tongue is mentioned once, “(l)iteracy in the mother tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage” (WCEFA cited in

Brock-Utne, 2000: 141). She raises the issue of the potential consequences of determining that the language in which someone normally communicates is not suitable as a language of instruction within the schooling system. In addition, she maintains that the use of national languages (ie. Non-European languages) in education represents a sign of political sovereignty and an assertion of cultural identity. This point is made specifically in an African post-colonial context, but it is clear that this can be extended to many nations around the world, particularly those in which a dominated group is seeking to overcome this domination.

Brock-Utne does note as well in her discussion of language of instruction the practical concerns of providing instruction in local languages, particularly the cost of producing educational materials. The cost of providing textbooks and classroom materials in every, or even many, local languages would be prohibitive for many countries implementing a strategy of universalizing education. While this cost is acknowledged by Brock-Utne, she maintains that the continuation of an educational policy which uses a foreign language as the language of instruction constitutes a barrier to learning for students. She contends that this needs to be taken into consideration when calculating the costs of producing educational materials in local languages. Regardless of the theoretical debate on language of instruction, it is clear that additional production costs of educational materials would need to be included in any estimate of the cost of the universalization of basic education, which is already a concern to many observers.

In contrast to this view that the language of instruction in schools should reflect the local language, there is the notion that teaching only in a narrowly used language does not provide the same level of post educational opportunity as teaching in a widely used and

recognized language. This is certainly not to say that all teaching at all stages should be done in what is essentially a foreign language, but it is clear that teaching exclusively in a very localized language will limit students' opportunities post-school.

These are certainly interesting points and one must acknowledge their relevance as they relate directly to the framework under review here, but there are a few conceptual issues which must be raised. While it is true that curriculum development and formal schooling prioritize a certain type of knowledge, one must examine the alternative before dismissing these programs outright. Developing an educational strategy based on a very specific culture, with only the knowledge important to that culture being passed on essentially ensures that people will remain within that culture. Certainly there is some validity to the argument that formal education is responsible for the creation of obedient citizens and the reproduction of the status quo, but a lack of formal education essentially ensures that people who are not already a part of the mainstream will remain marginalized. An education does not necessarily mean that a person must join the mainstream, rather it provides some means of access for those who desire it.

It is important to note at this point that the Indian national approach to education, in terms of policy, closely matches the goals of the Education for All program. Primary education is free and compulsory and the Indian government has developed a National Plan for Action to achieve the goals set out by the Education for All program. Girls' access to and achievement of education is addressed in this plan and a number of programs have been put into place in an attempt to enhance opportunities for girls. These programs will be discussed in detail and evaluated later in this thesis.

## **Education as a Public Service**

When discussing theoretical interpretations of development as related to education, it is also important to address discussions around how education is best provided in the more technical sense. The preceding discussion dealt with providing education in the context of international frameworks; the discussion that follows will focus on the various perspectives on who should be responsible for providing this service once it is agreed that it will be provided. While specifics of educational provision are generally not outlined in international protocols, Education for All included, these programs often have a particular leaning in terms of how education is provided. For example, the Asia and Pacific Regional Framework for Action from the Dakar Framework for Action calls for the greater involvement both NGOs and the private sector and further decentralization of the responsibility for education (UNESCO, 2000a).

The perspectives on how to deliver public services can be divided into three main categories; those who favour private provision, those who favour public, or state provision and those who favour community provision. Of course it is important to note that in reality there are different degrees of each perspective involved in the delivery of every service, but it is fair to say that most programs or projects will, to a greater or lesser degree, fall into one of these three categories. As well, while there are a number of additional considerations when discussing each service individually, this section will deal only with the provision of education.

Private provision of public services, education in particular, is often proposed based on efficiency or quality arguments. It is often argued that when administering public services, it is better to allow those who are in a position to pay for services privately to do so, which is thought to make available additional resources for those who cannot pay. Whether this is the case in reality, or whether this approach leads to a two tiered system in which the poor receive inferior

quality services, remains to be seen.

The promise of improved quality is an often cited reason for the private provision of education. It is thought that if education is bought and sold on the market, competition, and the consumer choice associated with this, will ensure that quality is kept high. Ideologically, arguments for privatization are also tied to the “rolling back of the frontiers of the State” (Tiwana, 1997, 278). The argument for the private provision of public services is often used in the context of countries where states are not thought to have the capacity to deliver services.

Those advocating a public, or state, approach to service delivery often do so on ideological grounds. The main argument for state provision is one of social equity. It is thought that the only way to ensure that important public services such as education are provided equitably is by having the state carry the major responsibility for this. This approach to the provision of education is largely based on the model of the currently developed countries. While in many of these countries education was initially provided through private non-profit services such as religious organizations, this responsibility has been to a large degree taken over by the state.

Community provision of education may have any number of meanings in reality and largely depends on the community involved. This approach is based on the belief that it is the community that is best able to provide education for its members because community members best understand their own needs. The role of “experts” from outside the community would depend on the particular situation. This approach varies widely in reality and, as with all service delivery models, may influence a particular project or program to a greater or lesser degree.

Community provision of education may be part of a wider policy of decentralization. This is important as it will come up later in this thesis when looking specifically at national policies and strategies as well as international recommendations. Decentralization refers to the process of shifting power and responsibility for various aspects of service provision to lower level authorities. This is done based on the belief that local authorities are more in touch with how the needs of their community are met and on the belief that this will lead to greater efficiency in providing services. This could in reality involve any number of practical arrangements, but it is the overarching concept which is important for this thesis. As noted by Mukundan and Bray, decentralization is often raised in the context of the provision of education in developing countries; they maintain that is something which has been encouraged as a part of the development discourse for a number of years. They raise an interesting issue related to this which is worthy of brief note and echoes the pattern noted by Jansen when dealing with educational target setting, “(t)he fact that decentralization continues to be advocated so widely implies that it has not been strongly implemented in the preceding decades” (Mukundan & Bray, 2004: 226). Thus, renewed focus on decentralization is not a new strategy, rather an attempt to pursue a previously stated approach.

There are certain rationales for pursuing this decentralization as a policy as well as identified reasons why these policies are frequently not implemented as planned. It is argued that decentralizing educational management will lead to greater efficiency and faster change. This may include a more efficient and effective allocation of resources. As well, decentralization is thought to increase the local involvement in educational planning, giving the community (or state or village) more voice in how education is administered in their



region. This appears to be a fairly logical conclusion, that having the input of the local stakeholders will allow education to be better suited to the particular needs of that community and take their localized concerns into account when making decisions. To sum up the possible benefits of decentralization, “(r)educing distances between government and citizens, whether through financial, administrative, or political decentralization, is considered to offer possibilities for greater efficiency and equity in service delivery” (Subrahmanian, 1999: 69).

Although there are certainly reasons for pursuing a strategy of decentralization, there are also problems that can arise when doing so. One of the major concerns is that responsibility for a service can be decentralized without any of the necessary power to ensure that this responsibility is met. This is noted by Mukundan & Bray when discussing a study on educational decentralization in Indonesia, “(t)he concept of decentralization appealed intellectually to many bureaucrats, but in practice they had trouble relinquishing power” (Mukundan & Bray, 2004: 227). The result was that lower level groups were not empowered and there were few significant changes at the institutional level.

As well, it has been noted that decentralization is not as simple as it is often made out to be in policies or on paper. Decentralization involves a new level of commitment on the part of both the centralized government giving up the power and the localized authorities taking on new responsibilities. This is noted by Hanson, quoted in Fullan & Watson:

Decentralization is not created by passing a law. Rather it must be built by overcoming a series of challenges at the center and the periphery by, for example, changing long established behaviours and attitudes, developing new skills, convincing people in the center who enjoy exercising power to give it up, permitting and sometimes encouraging people to take creative risks, promoting and rewarding local initiatives, and maintaining continuity with the decentralization reform even as governments change.  
(Fullan & Watson, 2000: 461)

We can see from the work on the politics of education that there are a variety of

perspectives on education and development generally, and within the context of international involvement in education. While these perspectives are certainly enlightening and raise a number of important issues to be considered when dealing with education, it is important to note that whatever perspective is taken by individuals on these issues, they are already being put into practice in reality. Addressing these issues in terms of both theoretical perspective and actual practice is more important now than ever. Despite criticisms and critiques of education in general, the focus on girls' education and international involvement in education, all of these things are already happening. What is important now is to determine how these issues have played out and determine whether these concerns really should be encouraging us to take a second look at the wisdom of these vast, all encompassing international initiatives for girls' education. The case of India's National Strategy to achieve EFA goals, specifically goal 5 relating to gender equality in education, will be used as a case study.

### **Discussion**

Although there is certainly value to both the universalist and culturally relative positions on education, this thesis is written in support of the universalist view. There are two main reasons for this: concerns about education being used to perpetuate a particular perspective or ideology can be dealt with in the curriculum and an education that is purely culturally relevant can be isolating. While the culturally relative concerns about education being used to reproduce the status quo or further dominate those already in a dominated position may have some merit, these are issues that can be dealt with within a framework of providing all people with access to education. These concerns can be addressed in curriculum or even in the structure of education within a broader understanding that having

an education provides people with greater opportunities in life. The focus on access to and enrollment in education in this thesis is based on the belief that these are necessary first steps in providing people with an enlightening education. Encouraging access to, enrollment in and completion of education can be seen as necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for providing all people with a quality education that can be used to expand their opportunities in life<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, a purely culturally relative approach to education which seeks to reproduce only locally relevant and traditional knowledge, is denying people within these communities the opportunity to fully understand the world in which they are already living. Denying people access to education is denying them the chance to understand, and possibly to change the global structures that influence their local community. In order for people to have the chance to make a difference in their world, they must have access to and an understanding of the structures that shape this world. A formal education can provide this access and an opportunity for understanding.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Girls' Education and Development: Outcomes and Barriers**

Whether education is seen as a necessary condition for development, or as a means for the import of foreign cultural ideals and domination, research has found that there are a number of positive development outcomes associated with higher levels of education, particularly that of girls. This chapter will examine these outcomes in some detail. For the purposes of this thesis, the development outcomes associated with girls' education will be divided into three broad sections: health outcomes, economic and employment outcomes, and empowerment or capacity building outcomes. These are particularly significant when looking at educational policy as related to development as many policies and programs on both the national and international level argue for increased girls' education on the grounds of these positive development outcomes.

Chapter two will also look at identified barriers to girls' education. This will involve looking at factors which contribute to keeping all children out of school as well as those which cause specifically girls to be out of school. Those barriers affecting all children are important to address as these will have an impact on girls as well. The remaining chapters will look at how these barriers are addressed in both national policies in India and international programs promoting girls' education.

One important note before beginning the discussion on these outcomes: when discussing the outcomes associated with girls' education and development, it is not always made entirely clear what is meant by "educated". Certainly the word will have different meanings depending on the study and in some cases is synonymous with "literate". The specific meaning pertinent to each study will be identified as necessary. It is important to recognize that even development outcomes associated with post-primary levels of education

have a close link to girls' achievement in primary education. Without first achieving a primary education, it is virtually impossible to pursue any type of higher education. In order to ensure that outcomes associated with all levels of education are achieved, ensuring universal primary education is the logical place to start.

### **Health Outcomes**

The health outcomes associated with girls' education are among the most often cited outcomes, possibly as these are the easiest to quantify. Such health outcomes include lower fertility rates which refers to the number of live births, lower infant and maternal mortality rates, and an increased likelihood that a mother will seek health care for her children.

The first health issue to be discussed in this chapter is the association between education and lower fertility rates. The obvious consequence of lower fertility rates is population control; an identified goal for some countries, including India. Mumta Murthi et. al. distinguish between three areas of population control on which female education may have an effect: desired family size, the relationship between desired family size and number of births, and the ability to achieve the planned number of births (Murthi et. al, 1997). They state that female education is expected to reduce the desired family size as educated women are more likely to resist and take action to avoid repeated pregnancies. This may happen for a number of reasons including more control over household resources, increased personal autonomy and more say in the reproductive decision making. The indication is that an education provides not only an increased knowledge of family planning and birth control, but also more probability that women will exercise their choice in fertility decisions. What this means is that educated women may "have greater control over the frequency and spacing of childbearing" (King & Hill, 1991: 26). A further discussion of the link between education

and women's decision making power will appear in the section of this chapter dealing with empowerment. Another possible link between increased education and decreased fertility rates comes through the association between education and age of marriage. Education has been linked with a later age of both marriage and first childbirth, which will likely result in a woman having fewer children (Chacko, 2003). This link is again more of an indirect one; the education may not teach contraceptive use or family planning methods per se, but other social factors associated with receiving an education may result in a lower fertility rate overall.

In a study looking at contraceptive use in West Bengal (using 1992-3 National Family Health Service data) it was found that “(w)omen's literacy has a highly significant impact on the current use of contraception for rural and urban women” (Pal & Makepeace, 2003: 160). A similar relationship was not found with male education. An interesting note from this study relates to reasons given for not using contraceptives. When giving reasons for not using contraceptives few women suggested that this was because of a lack of knowledge about available birth control options (Pal & Makepeace, 2003). This again suggests that it is not the content of what is learned that leads to fewer children, but the act of learning or becoming literate. The consequences of this in terms of policy planning are that it may be a better use of resources to promote a literacy program which could have a dual effect of teaching reading and promoting health awareness than a program based purely on specific health services.

Another possible explanation for the link between education and lower fertility rates is that literate women are more likely to be conscious about health and hygiene when it comes to their children so these children are more likely to survive. This means that

educated women generally need to plan fewer births in order to achieve their desired family size (Murthi et. al, 1997). It has been found that both a woman's age at marriage and her level of primary education directly influence improvements in her health as measured by infant mortality (Wickrama & Lorenz, 2002). Infant mortality is closely associated with a mother's health, so lower rates of infant mortality indicate that mothers are healthier.

Educated women may also be more likely to try new remedies for sickness and may be more receptive to modern ideas on child care (Browne & Barrett, 1991). This openness to more modern forms of health and child care may be related to lower rates of maternal mortality which is another frequently identified health benefit of providing girls with primary education. It has been found that each extra year of schooling for a girl correlates not only with a reduction of fertility rates, but with an increase in maternal survival during childbirth (Slaughter-Defoe et. al., 2002). This increased maternal survival rate for educated women may be due to the fact that women who have been educated are more likely to seek health care than uneducated women.

It has also been found that educated women are more likely to seek health care for themselves and their daughters than women who have not received an education. This is particularly significant in the South Asian context as there has been found to be a wide disparity in health care sought for girl children and health care sought for boy children. This trend of gender disparity in health care has been established to be the case in physician consultation, expenditure on drugs and treatment and "protective care-seeking practices" such as immunization (Bhan et. al., 2005: 716).

While lower fertility rates is one of the most often identified benefits of aggressively pursuing girls' elementary education, there has been some conflict over the ethical

implications of this. Brock-Utne raises the issue of whether lowering fertility rates in developing countries is something which should be endorsed so whole-heartedly by Western agencies. She notes that population density in Central Europe is greater than many developing regions and the argument is made that this approach of targeting girls' education as a form of population control could be viewed as racist when coming from Western development agencies. She notes the work of Christine Heward who claims that in developing countries, girls' education is being used as a contraceptive and that promoting girls' education means that politically charged debates on reproductive rights can often be avoided.

Another issue related to pursuing a strategy of girls' education to reduce fertility is whether this is something that will work across a number of countries. Brock-Utne again notes the work of Heward, who has found that there are "thresholds of development" below which education may not have an effect on fertility meaning that a country must first achieve a certain level of development before increased levels of education would even affect fertility rates (Brock-Utne, 2000: 14). This finding has consequences for the pursuit of girls' education as a development strategy, namely that this is not something that can be done without taking into account the overall development situation of the country.

The argument about racial bias in promoting girls' education for population control is certainly an interesting one and should be addressed when looking at international involvement in education. While it is clear that the notion of promoting population control of a particular group or nationality from the outside would be a racist practice, there is more to be considered in the case of India. It is important to note that it is not only the international agencies that identify lower fertility rates as a benefit of girls' education; the Indian National



Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 has pursued the same policy: “The growth of our population needs to be brought down significantly over the coming decades. The largest single factor that could help achieve this is the spread of literacy and education among women” (Government of India, NPE 1986). The fact that the relationship between population control and girls’ education is explicitly noted in a national policy makes it difficult to argue that, in the case of India, this is a Western import and, therefore, a merely racist suggestion.

Another relationship between female education and child’s health that is being questioned is the link between mother’s education and child’s health care. In contrast to studies that show that educated women are more likely to seek health care for their girl children than uneducated women, Gautam Bhan et. al. found quite a different result in their study looking at care seeking practices of a low income group in a region just outside New Delhi. This study looked at gender bias in hospitalization rates in order to determine if differential care occurs based on gender, possibly contributing to excess female mortality. It is noted that gender bias can appear in both child-rearing practices (such as providing better nutrition for male children) and care-seeking practices (seeking hospital care for illnesses); these practices have an indirect and direct effect on child mortality, respectively.

This study found that the chances of any child, boy or girl, dying were significantly lowered with each increasing level of maternal education and economic status. However the relationship between maternal education and gender bias in hospitalization found in this study was the opposite of what one would have expected. It was found that maternal education does affect gender bias in hospitalization in that the higher the level of maternal education, the less likely a girl child was to be hospitalized. The likelihood of hospitalization

for girl children was found to be highest among those whose mothers had no formal education at all. A relationship between education of mothers and treatment seeking for children was found with boy children; educated mothers were more likely than uneducated mothers to seek treatment for boy children. The authors suggest that educated mothers are using their additional knowledge and resources to further favour boys which reflects the strength of the existing gender norms and “the inability of education alone to alleviate these biases” (Bhan et. al., 2005: 723).

### **Economic and Employment Outcomes**

Another positive relationship often cited between girls’ education and development is the increased employability and earning power of educated women. Although the link between education and employment may seem to be a logical one (all people should, in theory, be more employable when they increase their skill set), there have been mixed results on how this relationship actually works in reality. While some studies have shown that education may increase a woman’s likelihood to enter the paid workforce, others have not found this relationship and have in fact found the opposite relationship.

Elizabeth King and M. Anne Hill note an interesting relationship in their book on the subject of girls’ education, “(w)hile more educated women are generally better paid and more likely to find employment in the paid sector than less educated women, married women are more likely to withdraw from the labour market as their schooling increases from the primary to the secondary level.” (King & Hill, 1991: 26). This indicates that the more educated a married woman is, the less likely she is to continue with her employment.

This finding is echoed in the work of Maitreyi Bordia Das and Sonalde Desai when looking at the relationship between women’s education and labour force participation in

South Asia, India in particular. It is noted that there is a link in India between a woman's seclusion and her husband's level of social prestige. A woman's absence from the work force is not just a sign of a family's high status, but the act of withdrawing from the workforce may actually increase this status. Particularly for those in the upper castes, keeping women in the home is "a matter of family honour" (Das & Desai, 2003: 6). An interesting fact noted in this article is the relationship between caste and the likelihood that a woman will work outside the home. Das and Desai maintain that those in the Scheduled Castes<sup>5</sup> understand that they cannot escape their low social status so there is really no point in emulating the upper caste tendency to keep women in the home as a form of social prestige and, as a result, lose the income that that woman would bring to the family (Das & Desai, 2003).

The link between education and employment has another interesting consequence, which is future female advantage in terms of child survival. As discussed by Murthi et. al. in "Mortality, Fertility and Gender Bias in India", research has shown that female labour force participation is related to lower levels of female disadvantage in child survival. A few possible reasons for this relationship are cited: female labour force participation raises the returns on "investment" in girls, female labour force participation raises women's status in society and the value attached to girl children, it lowers dowry levels, which reduces the financial cost of raising daughters, it makes women less financially dependant on sons in their old age which reduces son preference and it raises bargaining power of women which makes them more able to resist pressure to discriminate against girl children (Murthi et. al., 1997).

We can see that some of these qualities attributed to female labour force participation have also been identified as direct outcomes of female education, such as increased bargaining power within the home, to be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Although this certainly complicates the discussion on the relationship between girls' education and employment, it doesn't change the fact that some research has identified a positive relationship between the two.

Although we typically think of education as always providing positive economic or employment outcomes, there is research which indicates that the opposite may be true as well. One consequence that has been found of increased levels of education is the unemployment or underemployment of educated people. This is an issue dealt with by Das and Desai in their study on women's education and labour force participation in India. While it is true that unemployment and underemployment of educated people is a phenomenon which happens worldwide, this could have major consequences for the developing world if this promotion of girls' education continues. In their study, Das and Desai note that there has been some evidence that labour force participation actually declines with education in India; it is this relationship that they seek to investigate. As there has been no acceptable explanation found for this relationship, Das and Desai looked at whether low employment levels are related to cultural or structural factors. It was found that employment decreases with education for women and that in communities with high levels of education, the supply of educated labour far exceeds the demand for it. A lack of appropriate employment reduces options for educated women as the more desirable formal sector jobs are typically male dominated. Das and Desai maintain (although it is unclear whether this is based on evidence found in their study, or on common sense) that educated women are usually married to

educated men who have some financial resources and these women will likely stay out of the labour force rather than accept a poorly paid job. This means that certain groups of educated women are remaining unemployed rather than taking a job that is irrelevant to their education.

Obviously this negative relationship between women's education and labour force participation has consequences for national development. If there is no concurrent effort to expand formal sector jobs, a focus on women's education will do little in the way of expanding opportunities for women, or helping the country to grow economically. Inequitable gender relations in society at large also certainly play a significant role here. If men are continually and systematically given the more desirable positions, educated women are unlikely to be able to make inroads into the formal work sector.

### **Empowerment and Capacity Building**

The issues of capacity building and empowerment are discussed with nearly as much regularity as are the health outcomes of girls' education, but there are still certain conceptual problems with these outcomes, the most significant of which is the difficulty in determining exactly what is meant by both of these terms. Despite this potential problem with defining what is meant by these phrases, they have often been identified as benefits of girls' education and, as such, are important topics of discussion when dealing with the issue of girls' education.

Empowerment as a concept is both widely discussed and vaguely defined. There are a number of definitions for this concept, which may be interpreted differently in various situations and contexts. That being said, there are certain aspects of empowerment that can be identified as common. Sandra Stacki & Karen Monkman identify, from a number of

earlier studies and conceptions of empowerment, six common elements. These elements include knowledge autonomy (having political and legal awareness), decision-making autonomy (involvement in decisions), physical autonomy, emotional autonomy (freedom from domination), economic and social autonomy, and political autonomy (participation in political activities) (Stacki & Monkman, 2003).

Some conceptions of empowerment focus narrowly on economic forms of empowerment, which may include economic activity rates, the share of earned income, and percentages of women in professional and technical related occupations (Jayaweera, 1997). Political activity including voting and running for public office have been identified as forms of political empowerment (Jayaweera, 1997). Empowerment within the family is also identified as an important aspect of women's general empowerment and this type of empowerment has been linked with higher levels of education. It is thought that literate women play a larger role in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their children (Kambhampati & Pal, 2001).

Dealing with women's empowerment in the domestic sphere, Anju Malhotra & Mark Mather's study on the relationship between schooling, work and the empowerment of women divided domestic empowerment into two spheres; decisions relating to finances and decisions relating to organizational and social matters. It was found that while women's education and employment play an important role in financial household decisions, these factors are not significant in the social and organizational decisions (Malhotra & Mather, 1997). This suggests that factors other than female education are at least partly responsible for women's decision-making power in terms of social and organizational decisions. This conflicts with some other research done on women's education.

An interesting relationship has been found between education, domestic decision-making power and the future schooling of girl children. In their study on six rural villages in West Bengal, Uma S. Kambhampati & Sarmistha Pal found that educated women have more bargaining power within the home and as a consequence of this they were more likely to send their girl children to school. This relationship did not exist with boy children. Kambhampati & Pal state that “(w)hen mothers have bargaining power, in this case via education, they are likely to increase collective household welfare rather than perpetuate discriminatory practices” (Kambhampati & Pal, 2001: 116).

This study is particularly interesting as it indicates not only that women’s bargaining power is increased through education, but that this newfound power within the home is used to encourage the future schooling of girl children. What this means is that a cycle of female education could be self-perpetuating in that once it starts, educated women will ensure that it continues; what is important is ensuring that this process is started. This is significant not only in terms of being an additional positive outcome of education, but also in terms of government policy. If governments are facing ideological barriers from the public to sending their girls to school, this might be addressed through a campaign to change public opinion on the value of educating girl children. What this research suggests is that such a campaign, and the associated expenditure of resources, may only need to be done once, if it is done effectively.

Another important type of empowerment is political empowerment. The relationship between political empowerment and women’s education would appear to be a logical one. If women are able to read and develop critical thinking skills, in this case through education, it follows logically that they will be more likely to participate in the democratic process,

whether through voting or running for office if they are inclined to do so. Martha Nussbaum points out that despite the fact that India does provide ballots with party symbols rather than names, which makes voting possible for illiterate men and women, those who are able to closely follow the political process through newspapers are better able to understand the process and their role in it. It seems like an obvious point to make, but it is an important one nonetheless, that “a person who can read the newspapers has a much fuller and more independent voice than one who cannot” (Nussbaum, 2003: 334).

It is important at this point to address another benefit of girls’ education which really needs no research to conceptualize. A formal primary education is essential as an entry point to any further education. Notwithstanding the numerous other benefits associated with basic education, without achieving this it is virtually impossible to move on in the formal education system. While we may at times emphasize the importance of secondary and tertiary education, we cannot forget that this level of educational achievement is entirely dependant upon achievement at the primary level.

Although education is often thought of as a means for greater empowerment for women, there has been some discussion of education as a means to reinforce inequitable gender relations in a society. This is related to the ideas of education and social reproduction discussed in Chapter One, but deals specifically with education and the reproduction of gender relations and societal roles. This is discussed by Fiona Leach, who maintains that just as schooling serves as a means for reinforcing social norms, it may also serve to reinforce gender (as well as class and race) inequalities: “if we accept that society is structured along gender lines (as well as along class and racial lines), it would not be unreasonable to assume that the school, as one of society’s fundamental institutions, reflects this structuring” (Leach,



1998: 10). Leach also argues that although schooling may help some women to acquire skills that are necessary for employment, schooling has not changed their position within society or challenged women's traditional role as a wife and mother. In this sense, it is unclear whether the education of women has been an agent of empowerment if it has done little to empower women as a group within society.

### **Additional Issues for Consideration**

The first additional issue to be considered when dealing with this international focus on girls' education is the effect that this will have on boys of the same cohort. Although this is an issue with obvious importance, and one that would logically seem to arise out of this discussion on girls' education, it does not appear that research has been done on this topic in the context of developing countries in general or India specifically. It is possible that this research is in progress or is just not as widely available, but at this time, none has been found addressing this topic either way.

The second additional issue to be discussed when looking at the benefits of increased levels of girls' education is an issue of great significance. While it has been found that educating girls and women can have positive effects in terms of development outcomes, there are often factors at work that are difficult to capture in research and difficult to quantify. The status of women in society is something which will always play an important role when looking at what benefits women may see from receiving an education. This also means that while research may show a relationship between education and certain development outcomes, this does not guarantee that this will be the case across all situations. Just as cultural conditions affecting the role and position of women in society will be significant in this context, so will individual familial relationships.

## **Barriers to Girls' Education**

Although some research shows that a number of positive development outcomes can be associated with higher levels of girls' primary education, it is also clear that the number of girls attending school and achieving primary education in India, as well as in other parts of the developing world remains relatively low. While there have been some gains made, this has not occurred at a rate that appears to ensure future primary schooling of all girl children; this despite international and, in the case of India, national attention. This lower than expected success rate in the achievement of universal primary education for girls raises the obvious question of why this is occurring. The reasons for lower school attendance and educational achievement for girls can be divided into two categories, economic factors and socio-cultural factors, which includes organizational and administrative factors. For the purposes of this thesis, conditions which have been identified cross culturally as well as those which are specific to India will both be discussed.

## **General Gender Bias**

Before getting into specific factors which have been identified as keeping children generally, and girl children specifically, out of school, it is important to address what can be termed a generalized gender bias which exists in nearly all societies and is more pronounced in certain countries. While it is possible to identify specific factors that may be manifestations of this pervasive bias, it is important to note that they are just that, symptoms of a general attitude. This is significant as it makes developing an approach to circumvent the more specific conditions difficult. For example, it may be relatively easy to develop, and maybe even to enforce a law which dictates that sex selective abortion may not be practiced, it is considerably more difficult to develop policies or programs which force people, men and

women, to recognize women's value and contribution to society and ensure that the general public is not interested in seeing this practice perpetuated.

### **Economic Factors**

The economic factors that contribute to girls' differential access to school may seem obvious, but there are some considerations which may not be immediately recognized. The first issue to be dealt with when addressing the economic factors that contribute to girls' differential access to education is that of the direct costs of schooling. These costs include school fees, books, uniforms, transportation and any other expenses that may make school prohibitively expensive. For many families, these costs simply make schooling beyond their financial reach. This appears to have an unequal impact on boy and girl children. It has been found that "when private costs are high, and parents in poverty face the choice of sending a boy or a girl to school, it is the boy who is sent" (Mehrotra, 1998: 478). These direct costs have been identified as significant not only in the context of girls' education or India, but across a number of countries and cultures. While it is true that financial hardship contributes to keeping both boys and girls out of school this appears to affect girls disproportionately and as a result is a condition which must be dealt with on a policy level.

Another major factor contributing to girls' differential access to education has been found to be the opportunity costs of sending girls to school. In many developing countries, girl children play an important role in the family and their labour is often too valuable to give up. This labour may involve working on the family farm or, as is more often the case with girls, working in the home. It has been found that caring for younger children is often an important role that older girl children play and this often means that they do not have the opportunity to attend school (Rao, et. al., 2003; Mehrotra, 1998). Making up for this lost

labour in the home would require an additional output of resources which is not an option for many families. Again, this is something which is found both cross culturally and in India. This is closely related to socially assigned gender roles and helps to explain not just lower access to school in general, but lower access for girls specifically.

In addition to household labour, paid labour outside of the home is something which must be addressed as a possible cause for decreased access to school, in this case not just for girls, but for all children. Although this is not a condition which will necessarily affect girl children differentially, it is a major contributor to keeping children out of school and, as such, will be addressed here. It is noted by Hallak (in Brock-Utne) that the importance of child labour is one of the reasons (out of four that he identifies) that parents do not send their children to school. This is also addressed by R. Govinda who discusses compulsory education in South Asia and how this might contribute to the achievement of universal elementary education. While Govinda maintains that elementary education should be compulsory (an important distinction should be made here between having compulsory education, mandated and, in theory, enforced by law, and having a right to education, meaning that it must be available if desired, but not mandatory), it is noted that, “the major argument held against the plausibility of implementing compulsory education provisions is the poverty of the people and their consequent inability to forego earnings of their children” (Govinda, 2003: 181).

It is important to note that in India, elementary education until the age of 14 is by law compulsory, however enforcement of this has been notably lax. In addition, despite several laws restricting the use of children as labour, including certain forms of protection for working children in the Constitution and stronger legislation on the issue in recent years, this

practice is still widespread in India. There have been relevant policies enacted to prevent the employment of children as labourers in certain industries and to regulate working conditions in other industries. The most recent and far reaching act regarding child labour is the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1987. This act, which refers to children younger than fourteen, outlines the prohibited industries for child labour and the conditions under which children are permitted to work including the number of hours a day, the number of days per week and the hours during the day that children are permitted to work. Although there has been some movement made towards providing non-formal education and education for working children, the practice of child labour continues and this will certainly have detrimental effects in terms of education. India has the largest number of working children in the world; although exact figures are difficult to determine, it has been estimated that India is home to between 40 and 115 million child workers between the ages of 5 and 14, with the majority of these children employed in the agricultural sector. Many of the working children in India are working to pay off familial debts. This practice of debt bondage is against both Indian and international law (PHR, 2003).<sup>6</sup>

The prevalence (and the implicit social acceptance) of child labour does not fit with the promotion of universal elementary education. Logically, if children are working, they're not in school. If children are legally allowed to work, then by extension they are legally allowed to not be a part of the traditional school system. In a study conducted by Physicians for Human Rights, an NGO, looking at child workers in cotton fields in Andhra Pradesh, it was found that all the children in the study reported that they could not go to school from May to February because of work commitments. Many of the children reported dropping out of school or never having gone to school (PHR, 2003). The fact that many children involved

in child labour are unable to attend school makes the co-existence of legal child labour and compulsory elementary education somewhat of a contradiction.

Another explanation cited for differential levels of education for girls and boys is differential benefits from educating boy children and girl children. The perception is that there will be less economic benefit in the long term from educating a girl. This issue is addressed by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon in a study of whether women really do receive differential benefits from education in the labour market. It was found that, when controlled for family background and school quality, this appears to be the case. In this study, she was looking specifically at the Indian context. Kingdon states, “(t)his substantial gender asymmetry in the labour market pay-offs of education is likely to be an important part of any explanation for Indian women’s observed lower average educational attainment than men’s” (Kingdon, 1998: 59).

It is also important to note that whether or not an education does improve a woman’s chances of finding employment in the labour force or increasing her earnings, the perception of whether this is the case is equally important. Even if an education will help a woman to obtain a job or a higher income, if it is popularly believed that this is not true, this will likely have an effect on levels of education for girls. Nirmala Rao et. al. discuss a study conducted in northern India looking at parental attitudes towards education for girls as opposed to boys. It was found that 87 percent of parents of boys wanted to educate them because it would improve their employment opportunities and income, while the corresponding number for parents of girls was 40 percent (Rao, et. al., 2003). This shows that regardless of whether girls will see less of an eventual financial return on education, the belief popularly exists that this is true.

### **Socio-cultural Factors**

In addition to the economic factors often cited as contributing to keeping girls out of school, there are a number of socio-cultural factors as well. These factors will be divided into two broad sections for the purposes of discussion in this section; social issues and school related issues. Before addressing specific conditions which contribute to girls' lower access to and achievement of education, it is first necessary to briefly address some general issues of gender relations in India. This is closely related to the general gender bias discussed earlier, but it is the more material consequences of this bias that are being discussed here. A general "son preference" has been identified in India, as well as in some other Asian nations (Das Gupta et. al., 2003). This son preference is manifested in several ways including sex selective abortion, female infanticide and lower levels of health care for girl children (Das Gupta et. al., 2003; Sen, 2001). The relationship between gender discrimination and girls' education will be discussed in greater detail below, but it is important to note at this point that this type of discrimination, as well as the associated practices, has been observed in Indian society.

It would be impossible to address cultural factors which play a role in keeping children, boy and girl, out of school in India without looking at the caste system. Although this is something which does permeate every other socio-cultural factor to be addressed here, it will be discussed briefly in its own right. Membership in a Scheduled Caste or Tribe (SC/T) does have a relationship with rates of female education in that women from this group are less literate than their upper caste counterparts. It has been found, when looking at 1991 Census data from rural West Bengal, that 71 percent of females (aged seven and above) from upper caste families were literate, the corresponding number for female scheduled caste

members was 22 percent and for female scheduled tribe members was as low as 5 percent (Pal and Makepeace, 2003: 154). This may be related to financial status and the ability to spend the requisite money on sending children to school; upper caste families are generally financially better off than those from the lower castes.

This relationship between membership in a lower caste or tribe and lower levels of literacy for women has significant consequences in terms of development. It means that the identified benefits of female education or literacy will likely not accrue to this group. So, for example, if female literacy is found to increase birth control use and female control over family planning decisions, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, Scheduled Caste/Tribe (SC/T) women may not see this benefit if they continue to have lower levels of educational achievement. As well, there are obvious consequences in terms of educational planning. Girls in general are a disadvantaged group, but SC/T girls are doubly disadvantaged and must be given such recognition in policy planning.

Based on a study conducted in Uttar Pradesh which has one of the lowest literacy rates and highest gender disparity in education rates, Jean Dreze & Haris Gazdar concluded that “blatant forms of caste-based discrimination....have by and large disappeared” (Dreze & Gazdar, 1997: 85). What was found instead of this blatant caste discrimination, such as denying children of certain castes access to school or requiring children of different castes to sit separately, was the widespread existence of more subtle forms of discrimination. This type of discrimination included discrimination in terms of the location of schools, teachers refusing to touch SC students, children from certain castes becoming the target of abuse and punishment by the teacher and physical violence against lower cast students at the hands of upper caste students. Although these forms of discrimination may not be as obvious as



previous forms of caste discrimination, this does not make them any less harmful. Given that high drop out rates are a significant problem in achieving universal elementary education in India, the systematic abuse of particular groups of children within the school system at the hands not only of other student, but of teachers as well, should be of grave concern to school administrators and policy makers alike.

In addition, Dreze and Gazdar make an interesting point about the way that the caste system plays into educational attainment in even more subtle ways. If a particular group, in this case a caste, has virtually no experience with education, they may have no way of seeing the value of becoming educated. They may see that there are some benefits to education, but as these are not benefits to the group to which they can relate, they remain foreign. Particular castes are seen as having a certain role in society, and whether education is considered valuable or pointless may be dependant on these social roles.

One important socio-cultural factor to consider when addressing the question of why girls are less likely to go to school is the marriage tradition. Although this may be applicable in many parts of the world, it is the situation in India that is being discussed here.

Traditionally, when a woman marries, she goes to live with her husband's family, "(i)n most of the Indian sub-continent once a girl is married, she 'belongs' to the husband's family" (Theobald, 1994: 143). Because it is generally accepted that women will eventually go live with another family, she is considered an "economic burden" on her family (Rasheed, 2004: 116). This means that upon marriage the woman is "absorbed" into her husband's family and is seen as no longer being a part of her birth family (Das Gupta, et. al., 2003: 161).

Notwithstanding the consequences this has for gender relations in general, this has particular consequences in terms of girls' education. While it is the girl's birth family who will bear

the costs of her education, which have been previously discussed, it is her husband's family who will reap any eventual rewards (Mehrotra, 1998: 477). This makes girls' education as an investment unreasonable for many families whose resources are already thinly stretched.

Another factor that should be addressed in terms of marriage traditions and lower desire for education is the relationship between a woman and her future mother in law. In many Indian families, the mother in law is highly influential and holds much more power within the family than the new wife. As such, women and their families often take measures to avoid antagonizing the mother in law and it has been reported that remaining uneducated may help familial relations in this way. If it is understood that education will cause problems with a girls future mother in law, it is unlikely that parents will be enthusiastic about sending their daughter to school.

The social expectation or desire that women will "marry up" is another important consideration when looking at barriers to girls' education. If a woman is expected to marry someone with a higher level of educational achievement than herself, increasing her own level of education may make this more difficult. In addition, if a higher level of education is seen as undesirable, this may result in a more costly dowry<sup>7</sup> for the woman's family.

In addition to these social factors, there are certain conditions relating to the schools themselves which have been identified as contributing to lower access to education for girls. These factors include a lack of female teachers, gender bias and stereotypes in teaching materials and the classroom environment and a lack of female washrooms at school. "Teachers' attitudes, the nature of the curriculum, harassment, concerns about safety and the quality of the infrastructure may all serve to push girls out of school" (Subrahmanian, 2005: 399). The issue of a lack of female teachers is dealt with briefly by Mehrotra in his study on

high achieving countries in the context of the EFA goal of universalizing primary education. He notes that the high achieving countries had a high proportion of female teachers, while the lowest achieving regions, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, had very few female teachers, with a figure of twenty percent in the populous Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (Mehrotra, 1998). The issues of teacher hiring and training is something which will be looked at more closely when looking at the Operation Blackboard program in Chapter Four.

The issue of gender stereotypes and negative portrayals of women's capabilities is taken up by King and Hill who maintain that negative attitudes towards women's roles and girls' potential are seen early in the education system, "(s)ome of the barriers begin even at the primary school level with teachers and textbooks projecting attitudes that discourage performance of girls, or promoting stereotypes of girls not being as capable as boys in learning technical subjects or mathematics" (King & Hill, 1991: 26). This finding is echoed by Fiona Leach who states that stereotyping based on gender is indeed a barrier to girls achieving an education, "..... barriers to girls' achievement which have tended to be ignored derive from gender stereotyping in the curriculum, especially in textbooks, where girls tend to be portrayed as passive, modest and shy while boys are seen as assertive, brave and ambitious" (Leach, 1998: 14).

Another factor that may play a role in keeping children out of school is the perceived quality of the education that is received. This is one of the factors identified by Hallak (in Brock-Utne) as contributing to low demand for schooling. This perceived poor quality that he identifies does not refer only to the school environment and facilities, but the relevance of education to the daily lives of children. If parents see education as being irrelevant, and therefore a waste of time, they may be reluctant to send their children to school. The issue of

a lack of relevance of education to the lives of students is taken up by Krishna Kumar in his book *Political Agenda of Education*, in which he claims that the subject matter of the Indian education system today is shaped by a colonial view of Indian society. In the colonial system of education, school curriculum came to be totally unrelated to the lives of Indian children and represented the values of the colonial bureaucracy. As well, Kumar observes that the lack of input on curriculum and low status of the teacher, maintained through low salary, ensured that curriculum was passed directly from the colonial state to the children with no interruption.<sup>8</sup> The use of English as the language of instruction ensured that what was taught in the classroom would have little relevance to the children's everyday lives. Kumar states that education became equated with access to the colonial state. Education served as an access point to a particular route of employment, not as a way to improve the students' daily lives or expand their potential in terms of other forms of employment or education. Kumar's assessment of post-colonial education in India is that it remains committed mainly to the maintenance of law and order (Kumar, 1991)

Another perspective on the discussion of "relevant curriculum" is offered by Leach and is significant when looking at what should be taught in the classroom. She notes that "relevant curriculum" can have particular consequences for women and what is seen as relevant will result from the position that women have in society. If women are seen as being useful only within the domestic sphere then this would likely be the focus of a "relevant" curriculum. In this sense, the idea of offering a relevant curriculum may need to be considered more carefully. A relevant curriculum may serve to maintain and perpetuate gender and class divisions and ensure that certain groups only learn what is relevant to their

current position in life, not what could be relevant to their potential, or what could help them to advance their position in society.

In terms of physical facilities having a detrimental effect on educational levels, a lack of facilities and materials has been identified in playing a role in low educational quality, a possible reason for parents keeping their children out of school. In their study on two rural villages in India, Anuradha Kumar and Carol Vlassoff found the overall quality of the schools to be poor. It was found that there were minimal supplies available for teachers, students had to bring their own supplies and were forced to sit on the floor as there were no desks (Kumar & Vlassoff, 1997). Govinda maintains that many elements of the education system are determined by economic factors, rather than what may actually be needed in a particular community, “(g)overnment provision as well as internationally assisted projects invariably supply educational facilities such as school buildings, teachers, teaching-learning equipment, even teacher training, based on the budgetary resources available, rather than respond to local articulation of demand” (Govinda, 2003: 187).

Finally there is the issue of educational achievement for girls relative to the urban/rural divide. In many developing countries there is a difference in the level of services available in urban and rural areas and this is no different in India. Literacy rates differ noticeably between rural and urban dwellers and this is something which has endured over time. Data from censuses conducted from 1951 to 2001 in India show that the literacy gap between these groups is quite significant. The figures from 1991 and 2001 highlight this fact. It is important however to note that this is not a recent phenomenon; the figures from 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 showing similar urban-rural disparities.

### **Literacy Rates in India 1991 & 2001**

<b><u>1991</u></b>	<b><u>Male</u></b>	<b><u>Female</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>Rural</b>	57.90	30.60	44.70
<b>Urban</b>	81.10	64.00	73.10
<b>Total</b>	64.13	39.29	52.21

<b><u>2001</u></b>	<b><u>Male</u></b>	<b><u>Female</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>Rural</b>	71.40	47.70	59.40
<b>Urban</b>	86.70	73.20	80.30
<b>Total</b>	75.85	54.16	65.38

Source: Indian Economic Survey 2001-2

Rural areas often have a lower level of public service availability, including education, and this may be responsible for the observed lower achievement levels for rural dwellers in terms of educational indicators so the most obvious reason for this urban/rural divide is accessibility and proximity of facilities. If schools are not practically accessible, parents are unlikely to send their children. It is more likely that children in rural areas will live a greater distance from school than children in urban areas. This may be more pronounced in the case of girl children as parents are unlikely to send their girls to school if they are concerned about their safe journey to and from school. Safety is often more of an issue for girl children than it is for boy children.

Another factor that may influence the higher educational achievements of urban students is that they may be less likely to contribute to the household in terms of either working outside the home, helping with the family farming or being responsible for household chores. The fact that urban children are less likely to contribute to household production is noted by Pal & Makepeace when discussing the relationship between education and contraceptive use (Pal & Makepeace, 2003). Although they do not note specifically that

this may be a possible explanation for higher levels of educational achievement in urban settings, it is a logical relationship. As working either inside or outside of the home is one of the identified factors in keeping children out of school, this may help to explain why urban children typically fare better in terms of education than their rural counterparts. Lower urban fertility rates mean smaller families which may lead to higher levels of attendance for urban children. Even if the direct financial costs of school to the family are high, if only two children are being sent rather than four, this is obviously more manageable for most.

Although the degree to which some of these relationships exist has been disputed, it is clear that there are a number of benefits associated with increased levels of girls' education. As well, there are a number of factors which contribute to keeping educational attainment for girls in India relatively low. The previous and present chapters have identified relevant issues in education and development and provided a background for the current international focus on girls' education and development. The remaining chapters of this thesis will focus on the international agency involvement in girls' education, specifically the Education for All program and Indian national educational policy and programs as they relate to girls' education.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Girls' Education, the International Community and India**

It is clear that a great deal of research has been done on girls' education in India by both the academic community and various international agencies. Girls' education, both in general and specifically in India has been identified as a situation worthy of investigation and it is clear that, particularly in recent years, the issue of girls' education as a whole has become an important topic in the discourse on development. While this may be indicative of the fluid nature of development interests, it is also clear that there is some research which supports the relevance and significance of these programs at least in terms of their development claims. This is significant as it is these development claims that provide much of the rationale for the promotion of girls' education by the international agencies.

A number of things become clear as a result of reviewing the literature on the topic. Several perspectives on education and development exist both in terms of overall outlooks on education and the more specific roles that education can play. Additionally, a number of possible development outcomes have been linked with increased levels of girls' education. There are certain factors, both beliefs and material conditions, on the local level which hinder the access to and achievement of a primary school education for individual girls: education for girls is not a good use of family resources, and for larger populations of children in general, school facilities are often inadequate. When looking specifically at the policy on girls' education, at both the international level and at the national level in India, it is clear that these policies come from similar perspectives. At both the national and international level, the education of girls is promoted on two bases; an appeal to human rights, and the development outcomes that are associated with increased levels of girls' education.



This chapter will look at several of the more practical aspects of girls' education, development and the international community. This will be done in several sections looking broadly at international initiatives or frameworks for girls' education, specifically at the EFA program as well as Indian national policy on girls' education. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to outline the history of large scale frameworks for girls' education in the international community including the identification of the targets and timelines set for the Education for All program through its various conferences and declarations and to identify relevant Indian policy aimed at achieving girls' education goals.

The first part of this chapter will look at the development of international frameworks for girls' education, beginning first with a general discussion of the frameworks on this topic that are currently in operation then moving specifically to the Education for All framework. This section will look not only at some of the major programs seeking to achieve the goal of access to and achievement in education for all girls, but also at the development and specific goals and targets of the EFA framework. The purpose of this section is to highlight the attention and resources given to the issue of girls' education as well as to trace the development of this issue through the international community. The programs to be discussed in this section are: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations' Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), and the EFA related Fast Track Initiative, a World Bank sponsored program. These programs will be discussed briefly to provide an indication of the goals and targets set as well as the perspectives expressed. This section will also provide an outline of the Education for All framework by looking at how this framework was developed through the major conferences and declarations which resulted.

### **Conferences & Conventions**

In addition to being the subject of a number of programs currently in operation, the topic of girls' education has been taken up in a number of important conferences and conventions supported by the international community in recent years. Girls' education was a topic in both the 1994 Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. Despite not being focused specifically on either education or women's issues, the Cairo Conference highlighted the issue of girls' education in its program of action, "Beyond the achievement of the goal of universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015, all countries are urged to ensure the widest and earliest possible access by girls and women to secondary and higher levels of education, as well as vocational education and technical training, bearing in mind the need to improve the quality and relevance of that education." (UN ICPD). The Beijing Women's Conference articulated a similar objective, albeit with a different time frame; strategic objective B.1. of this conference is to "Ensure equal access to education", with the actions being taken by governments including to, "close the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005". The Convention on the Rights of the Child notes a similar objective to the two identified above, specifically that governments should, "make primary education compulsory and available free to all". It is clear from examining these conferences that the issue of girls' education has become a concern of the international community. Despite the fact that these conferences were not dealing specifically with education, each of them included a girls' education related goal.

## **International Frameworks for Girls' Education**

In addition to the reference to the importance of girls' education at these recent conferences, there have been a number of larger scale programs introduced in recent years either geared specifically towards increasing girls' education or including girls' education as an important part of the initiative. One of the most significant of these frameworks is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are two directly relevant MDG in terms of girls' education and there are girls' education related implications in several of the other goals. The directly relevant goals are numbers two (to achieve universal primary education – “ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling”) and three (to promote gender equality and empower women – “Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015”). As will be shown later, these goals very closely mirror those of the EFA framework in terms of both the language used and the timeframe set.

A particularly significant program for girls' education and one that is closely linked to the EFA framework is the United Nations' Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). This program was announced at the Dakar conference, to be discussed later, and is geared specifically towards ensuring that the gender related EFA goals are met, “At the country level, UNGEI supports country-led development and seeks to influence decision-making and investments to ensure gender equity and equality in national education policies, plans and programmes” (UNGEI website). Although there is some reference to the UNGEI in other EFA documents, this program does not appear to be particularly widespread and its exact goals and mandate are unclear. It is possible that this initiative is still in the process of becoming operational as it is a fairly recent development. The fact that this initiative was

announced at Dakar suggests that momentum and support behind the issue of girls' education is still building.

Associated with both the MDGs and the EFA framework is the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). The FTI "seeks to achieve universal completion of primary school in a selected set of countries in which leadership and commitment to education have already produced visible progress" (Birdsall et. al., 2005: 344). This initiative is designed to link increased donor support for primary education with tangible results in this area. The FTI was developed in 2002, stemming from the Monterrey Consensus on development support (Bruns et. al, 2003). The FTI is essentially a funding arrangement available to countries that meet the criteria of an existing Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and a national education plan for providing publicly financed and free primary education. Additionally, there is an "Analytical Fast Track Initiative" for countries that do not have such a plan in place; this initiative provides technical support for creating this plan. Although the FTI is designed as a funding initiative, it has been noted that the FTI "is not sufficiently funded to allow it to finance all the countries meeting its criteria" (Mundy, 2006: 37).

It is clear when looking at the various conferences, conventions and international programs that the universalization of elementary education, in particular the education of girls, has become an issue of international focus. These issues are not only featured in the current MDGs, but have been a focus of the international community for some time. While the universalization of education has been a component of many development frameworks put forward by the international community, the EFA initiative is squarely focused on providing universal education around the world. Girls' education is viewed as a critical aspect of this. The next section of this chapter will examine the EFA framework.

## **Education for All**

The Education for All framework was initially developed in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtein, Thailand. The purpose of this conference was to bring together the international community in support of particular educational aspirations and goals. The overarching goal of this framework obviously is to provide an education for all people, in particular, to provide all people with the “educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (WCEFA). This conference was a massive undertaking, with representatives from 155 countries and over 150 organizations participating over a period of five days. It was sponsored by several development agencies including Unicef, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank and is currently administered by UNESCO. This conference was the beginning of a huge undertaking by the international community in terms of education, and this has been maintained in the time since the original Jomtein conference. Since the time of the original conference, there have been two large scale follow up conferences, the mid-decade EFA conference held in Amman Jordan in 1996 and the Dakar conference held in 2000. Additionally, there have been numerous regional EFA conferences and meetings of the E9 high population countries<sup>9</sup>.

While the original Jomtien conference obviously marked the beginning of the EFA movement, it is the Dakar framework for action that holds many of the significant goals of this initiative. This framework contains both the specific goals agreed to at the Dakar conference and regional frameworks for action, as well as a framework for action for the E-9 high population countries. The Dakar Framework for Action has been referred to as representing, “the most important international political commitment towards promoting Education for All” (Subrahmanian, 2005: 396). Although gender issues do permeate the

other Dakar goals, the particular gender related goal is: “Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality” (UNESCO, Dakar framework).

An important distinction should be made at this point between the various measures of gender balance in education. Gender parity, gender equity and gender equality are phrases which permeate international agreements and documents on the subject, but are not always clearly defined. While gender parity refers to females being represented in equal numbers as males in the education system, gender equity and equality have deeper meanings. These terms include concepts such as educational achievement, learning and the treatment of female students in the classroom. Gender parity, or the elimination of gender disparities, is an important achievement on the path to gender equality in education.

### **Creating National Plans**

Although the EFA initiative was obviously developed on the international level and is administered by a major international agency, it is the individual countries that are responsible for developing and implementing a plan to achieve these goals. As stated in the Dakar framework, “the heart of EFA lies at the country level”. In order to assist countries in doing this, UNESCO has provided certain guidelines in preparing such a plan. Two significant documents in terms of the girls’ education related goals are the Guidelines for Preparing Gender Responsive EFA Plans and the Preparation of National Plans of Action Country Guidelines. The general guidelines for preparing national plans were prepared after the Dakar conference in order to help maintain the momentum from Dakar and to stimulate

countries to increase their efforts in achieving the Dakar goals (UNESCO, Preparation of NPA Country Guidelines).

One significant aspect of these guidelines is the recommendation that countries take existing policies and plans as their point of departure for developing an EFA plan. Creating a plan for EFA does not mean abandoning what is already in place, but it is seen as essential that existing strategies be reviewed in terms of their adequacy post-Dakar. Certain elements are identified as crucial to EFA plans: political and social support, relevance and direction in regards to Dakar goals, budget priorities, integration within wider development plans, strategies for those who are currently excluded from education, participatory planning, and the role of the international community.

In addition to the general guidelines, UNESCO's Asia Pacific Regional Bureau for Education has produced guidelines for preparing gender responsive EFA plans. These guidelines indicate that gender concerns must be integrated at all levels of planning, implementation and evaluation. The key strategy should be the mainstreaming of gender concerns into the national education system which is intended to ensure sustainability of gender focused action. In terms of concrete actions to be taken by countries, the significant suggestions are that countries must not neglect early childhood care and education programs and that, in the short term, non formal education will be needed for girls who have withdrawn from school early or were never involved in the formal education system at all.

### **Discussions on International Frameworks for Education and EFA**

Apart from critiques and discussions regarding the general involvement of international agencies in national educational policies and practices, there are some comments made in particular about the EFA framework and what it represents. One writer

who has commented positively on this new international focus on education for development is Karen Mundy. She notes that this new focus on basic education represents a shift in the way that education for development is both viewed and managed. A new international consensus, or compact, has emerged since 1995 with the UN and Bretton Woods agencies working together with basic education being a central focus of this consensus. She notes that the fact that education is at the centre of this consensus is not particularly surprising given that education is important for both productivity and equity conceptions of development; it “straddles the divide between neoliberal and social welfare orientations” (Mundy, 2006: 33). Another significant aspect of what Mundy refers to as a “new educational multilateralism” is the inclusion of new types of actors such as civil society groups and NGOs.

A common critique of the EFA framework actually relates not so much to the framework itself, but to the strategies to put this in place and the likelihood of success, and this is the issue of funding. It has been noted repeatedly that the funding that is currently in place or is likely to be forthcoming is nowhere near what would actually be necessary to achieve the stated goals of EFA or the MDG of universal primary education (Mundy, 2006; Birdsall et. al, 2005; Bennell & Furlong, 1998; Bruns et. al, 2003). Although there have been a number of different estimates regarding the total costs of achieving universal education in the developing world, as well as different estimates regarding the funding gap, Bruns et. al, when looking at the cost of achieving the education MDG, estimate the financing gap at between \$5-7 billion USD (Bruns et. al, 2003).

An important consideration that has been raised in terms of funding is that improving educational delivery is in large part dependant on recurrent funding. This refers to funding that must take place regularly over a period of time. What this means is that while it is still



in many cases important for a country to receive initial funding for infrastructure or one-time costs, these investments will essentially be meaningless without continued funding for maintaining the system. The consequence of this is that one time grants may not be enough in terms of providing funding for UEE.

### **Girls' Education and India**

It is clear that while these goals have found widespread commitment on the international level, the major arena of action is the country level. The next section of this chapter will examine what actions India has taken to achieve these goals. This will be done by examining first the national policy development related to universalization of elementary education and girls' education. The discussion will then move to the programs identified in these policies, in particular the current policies including the National Plan of Action for EFA. This section will attempt to provide an assessment and discussion of these programs individually in order to determine the likelihood of success of this strategy as a whole. The purpose of this section of this chapter is twofold: to examine the Indian policy response to the issue of girls' education and to examine the programs that have been implemented as a result of these policies

This section will look at how India has responded to the issue of girls' education on the policy level, both before and after EFA. This is done in an attempt to determine whether EFA has had a notable impact on Indian policy. This chapter will examine Indian national educational policy in terms of how it has addressed the issue of girls' education in the period since Independence. This chapter will look at several significant policies, chosen because they are either dealing with education specifically or they deal with educational issues through a gendered perspective.

This will provide some background for Chapter Four as well, which contains a discussion of the various programs identified in these policies. This will involve looking at the goals of these programs, their administrative structure, their criteria for geographic selection (ie. where are they being implemented and how was this decision made), and their implementation. As well, this section will attempt to provide a brief assessment of the success of these various programs based on available information and research.

### **Indian Education System: Structure**

Before discussing Indian national educational policy and the relevant programs, it is first necessary to provide some background on the current administrative structure of education in India. The educational system in general will be briefly discussed, as well as the types of schools in India. The educational system in India is quite complex and responsibility for the delivery of education is multi-leveled. Responsibility for administration of public services in India is determined by the inclusion of the service on one of three lists, as outlined in the constitution. The three categories are Central items, those which are administered by the central government such as national defence, State items, those which are seen as being local issues and are administered by the States, and the Concurrent list, which includes those issues which are essentially of local concern, but are seen as having particular national importance. Although education was originally on the State list, elementary education was moved to the concurrent list in 1976. This was seen as further establishing the universalization of elementary education as a national priority.

When discussing the actual structure of the school system, it is important to note that there is a great deal of variation in the administration of schools among the various states and even among districts within the same state. This discussion refers to the general state of

school arrangements. There are four levels of education in India; lower primary, (aged 5 or 6, depending on the state, to 11), upper primary (11 to 14), secondary, and tertiary. These divisions are also sometimes called primary (for classes 1-5), junior (classes 6-8), secondary (classes 9-12) and tertiary. The phrase “universal elementary education”, refers to lower and upper primary (until the age of fourteen as stated in numerous national policies and the constitution), while primary education refers to lower primary.

There are three basic types of primary schools in India; Private Aided (PA), Private Unaided (PUA) and Public, or Government (G), schools. While these categories exist throughout the country, the particular elements of each category may differ according to the state. Private Aided schools are those which are managed privately, but are still largely funded by the state. They are regulated by the government and in general they do not hire or fire their own staff. Staff salaries in these schools are completely paid by the state and the rate of pay is the same as for staff in Government schools. Essentially the only difference between these schools and Government schools is that they are managed privately.

Private Unaided Schools are most analogous to the “private school” in the Canadian school system. These schools operate independently and are self-financed. An important distinction exists between recognized and unrecognized private unaided schools. Unrecognized private schools receive no government support and cannot issue certificates (PROBE team, 1999). Without recognition by the government, schools cannot become eligible to apply for government aid; however, many do not want to do so as this would bring them under government regulation and move them to the category of PA.

Private schooling plays a significant role in the Indian education system, although exactly how significant is difficult to measure as many schools operate outside of

government controls. Parents often turn to private schooling because of the perceived low quality of public schooling. The PROBE team found that there were two conditions linked with the emergence of private schools; the breakdown of government schools and parental ability to pay for schooling. It was found that the poor functioning of government schools was the more significant of these two issues. The PROBE team also found that a gender bias does exist in terms of sending children to private schools with boys being favoured in terms of private school enrollment (PROBE team, 1999). As private schools do charge fees, this will likely exacerbate existing financial constraints in terms of sending children to school and the gender bias in choosing which child goes to school will again become relevant.

A last important issue to be dealt with in terms of educational structures in India is teacher training. It appears that the qualifications necessary to be a teacher are not clearly defined and there is a range of educational qualifications attained by teachers. The PROBE team found that most primary level teachers have at least completed secondary school and about 2/3 have received some kind of pre-service training. It was found that while younger teachers generally have higher qualifications, they have less pre-service training (PROBE team, 1999). As levels of training appear to vary depending on the individual, this indicates that content and methods of teaching could vary as well according to not only the school, but the individual teacher.

### **Regional Disparities**

An important issue to be addressed before beginning a discussion of Indian national educational policy and programs is the level of regional disparity between different states within the country. Just as educational attainment is stratified by gender and caste (as we have seen in chapter two), levels of educational achievement vary greatly by region and by

state. While all states have differing levels of achievement, this can be further refined geographically.

Evidence of educational disparity can be seen in the wide range of literacy rates between various states. According to the 2001 Census, the female literacy rate for the country was 54.28%. The corresponding figure in the low achieving states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh were 33.57%, 39.38% and 42.98%<sup>10</sup> respectively (GOI Census, 2001). Although high achieving states were fewer in number, Kerala and Mizoram stand out with female literacy rates of 87.86% and 86.13% respectively. The remaining states fall somewhere in the middle of these. Although a similar trend exists in terms of a wide regional disparity between literacy rates for males, this is not as pronounced as it is for females. The highest and lowest achieving states are the same with regard to male literacy with Kerala's male literacy rate at 94.20% and Bihar's at 60.32%. We can see that the difference between the two literacy rates for males is 33.88 percentage points, while the differential for female literacy rates is 54.29 percentage points. This would indicate not only a lower standard of service delivery in general in these lower achieving states, but also that there is inequity in gender relations at least with regard to education.

Equitable gender relations appears to be another area where wide regional diversity is evident. This can be seen in the variation in sex ratios between the states. Sex ratio (the number of women per 1000 men in the population) is a commonly used measure of gender equality in a society. It is clear that there is wide diversity in sex ratios in India; the 2001 sex ratio for Kerala was 1058 while the corresponding statistic for Uttar Pradesh was 898<sup>11</sup> (GOI, Census 2001). Another important point to make regarding the sex ratios of these regions is that while Kerala's has been rising with every census taken since 1901, indicating an

increasing proportion of women to men in the state, Uttar Pradesh's has fallen in this time, although the 2001 number of 898 shows an increase from the 1991 number of 876 (GOI, Census 2001).

It is clear that Kerala's development indicators are markedly different from the states at the lower end of the scale as well as the country's average. Various reasons have been suggested for the relatively higher position of women in society in Kerala versus the rest of the country. These reasons include better educational facilities and the existence of better employment prospects for educated women. As well, it has been suggested that obtaining a bachelor's degree is an important step for a woman in order to find a husband who is an educated professional (Chacko, 2003). There have been other explanations for the higher status of women in Kerala based in the state's history. The state historically practiced a system of matrilineal inheritance. Additionally, there has been a tradition of female education and work participation which has contributed to the higher status of women in the state (Rajan et. al., 2000).

The sex ratio figure for the country as a whole is 933 which takes into account states at both the high and low end sex ratios. An important trend to note when looking at sex ratios in India is the long term trend. The sex ratio in the country overall has declined fairly steadily, with some ups and downs, in the last century. The trend has held true for many states including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, states often identified as low achieving in terms of educational indicators (GOI, Census 2001). An interesting fact to note as well is that while the sex ratio for the country overall for all ages is 933, the sex ratio for those aged 0-6 is 927. This may indicate that sex ratios are on a downward trend which is something that will need to be monitored closely.

## **Indian National Educational Policy**

Despite the fact that there is great regional diversity in terms of both education and general development indicators, and the fact that the state government is largely responsible for policy implementation, educational policy is determined nationally. The education system in India has been shaped by a number of important policies since the time of Independence. The universalization of elementary education has been a major goal of many of these policies and continues to be the basis of a large number of programs at all levels. The policies to be briefly discussed here are the Indian Constitution, the National Policy on Education (1986/modified 1992), the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) and the relevant Five Year Plans. After discussing these national policies, the National Plan of Action to Achieve EFA goals will be discussed.

The Indian Constitution is clear on the subject of universal elementary education, “(t)he State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years” (GOI, Constitution). This article refers to the provision of both primary and upper primary school. Although there is no specific planning in the constitution regarding how this monumental task will be achieved, the inclusion of the universalization of elementary education as a goal is important. What is significant about the inclusion of universalizing elementary education in the constitution for the purposes of this thesis is that it sets out from the beginning of India’s modern history that this is a priority and something which is to be actively pursued. There is a timeline of ten years set in the constitution, one which has obviously been missed by a number of years, but it could be argued that this timeline is not particularly significant; the contribution of including universal elementary

education in this document is that it states that this will be a focus of the government and should be expected to bear concrete results over time.

Since the writing of the Constitution, national educational policies have referred to girls' education in various ways. The National Policy on Education (1986) is the widest reaching and most current national educational policy in India. This policy makes specific reference to the provision of elementary education for girls in several places. In earlier policy, the National Education Policy (1968) called for the equalization of educational opportunities and stated that, "the education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation" (GOI, NPE 1968). The National Policy on Education (1986) continues this focus on girls' education and its' role in the process of social transformation. The notion of education for women's equality is discussed in this policy and it is stated that "(t)he National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women" (GOI, NPE 1986). Education is to be used as a change agent for improving the status of women and action is to be taken to address imbalances of the past: "(i)n order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women" (GOI, NPE 1986). This policy acknowledges several important issues regarding girls' education; the importance of education as an agent of change, the link between education and empowerment and the necessity of positive interventions in ensuring girls' equal access to and achievement of education.

Another policy which links education with the empowerment of women is the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women (2001). This policy obviously seeks to improve the position of women in Indian society, recognizing that gender disparity exists in



various forms in the country. In addition to providing this recognition of the need for interventions in terms of gender relations, this policy does address the issue of gender disparity in education,

Equal access to education for women and girls will be ensured. Special measures will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive education system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of occupational/vocational/technical skills by women.....Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination(GOI, NPEW 2001)

Although specific plans or strategies are not laid out for this to be done, the reference to education in this policy reinforces, on paper, the commitment to ensuring that girls and women are given access to the education system. As this policy dates from 2001, specific interventions to achieve these goals would be laid out in the Tenth Five Year Plan.

The Tenth Five Year Plan addresses development and maintains that previous progress in terms of education has been unacceptable, “(p)erformance in the field of education is one of the most disappointing aspects of India’s development strategy” (GOI, Tenth Five Year Plan, 9). The latest plan states that one of its goals is a “radical transformation” of the current educational situation and identifies the SSA, which will be discussed later in this chapter, as the vehicle to do this. Additionally, a number of goals and targets are set for educational achievement. The goals of this plan are in the area of universal access, universal enrollment, universal retention and universal achievement. Time bound targets in terms of enrollment include enrollment of all children in school or an alternative scheme by 2003 and completion of five years of primary schooling for all children by 2007. Time bound retention targets include universal retention in the primary stage by 2007 and reduction of drop out rates to less than ten percent for grades 6-8 by 2007. Universal achievement targets include bridging all gender and social gaps in enrollment, retention and

learning achievement in the primary stage by 2007 and reducing this gap to 5 percent in the upper primary level by 2007.

It is clear from examining the various conventions and initiatives on the international level, as well as Indian national policy regarding girls' education that there are similarities between these. These initiatives and policies all set particular goals and targets, with various timelines attached to these. In looking at these targets throughout time, it is clear that as new policies are set, new targets are devised to go along with these. In setting these new time-bound targets to achieve old goals, there is an admission that these old targets were not achieved. The issue of target setting is something that will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion section of Chapter Four of this thesis.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Indian National Strategy to Achieve EFA Goals**

This chapter will address the current strategy in place to achieve gender related educational goals within the EFA framework. This will involve examining first the EFA National Plan of Action as submitted to UNESCO as well as examining the individual programs identified in this plan. The goals, areas of focus and measured success of these individual programs will help to provide a basis for discussion on the potential for success of the strategy as a whole.

#### **EFA National Plan of Action**

A crucial aspect of the EFA program is the development of country plans of action to achieve these goals. As previously discussed, while goals and commitments may be laid out by the EFA program itself, it is up to the individual country to ensure that these goals are met. As required, India has produced a National Plan of Action to Achieve EFA goals. This document can be seen as the intersection between the international EFA framework and national policy. Although this is a fairly substantial document that covers many aspects of education in India, this thesis will deal with those aspects concerning girls' education only. The document reiterates the national goal of universalizing education and recognizes the new, EFA based goals of eliminating gender disparities in education by 2005 and ensuring gender equality in education by 2015. The national goal stated in this plan that corresponds to this EFA goal is to provide "eight years of quality education to all children in the age group 6-14 by 2010 through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program". The goal dealing specifically with girls indicates "the removal of all disparities, including gender, in primary (class I-V) by 2007 and elementary (I-VIII) by 2010" and indicates that this is to be done

through “special schemes targeted at girls, apart from focus on girls in general schemes” (GOI, NPA, 2003).

The significant aspect of this plan for the purposes of this thesis is the identification of programs designed to achieve the above noted goals. It is important to note that the information collected here will be combined with information on the same topic taken from the Tenth Five Year Plan as this is a specific national planning documents while the EFA plan is less detailed. The major programs identified in the NPA for the purposes of achieving the girls’ education goals are: Mahila Samakhya: Education for Women’s Equality (MS), Operation Blackboard (OB) “and various EFA projects”, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP), and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)<sup>12</sup>. The Tenth Five year plan identified two additional programs as being significant in terms of the education of girls: Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and the National Program for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) which are actually a part of the SSA program. These programs will be discussed in turn in order to determine how they have progressed and whether outcomes have been determined. Where some type of outcome has been established through additional independent research, the outcome will be discussed. One important factor to note before this discussion is that the SSA program is intended to be the “umbrella” program for universalizing education. As such, most of the programs identified above have been, or are being rolled into this program. While NPEGEL and KGBV will be discussed in conjunction with SSA, the others will be discussed separately as the bulk of these programs was implemented before the introduction of SSA.

The programs being discussed in this thesis are centrally sponsored, multi-state programs. While it is the case that there are numerous state, district and local level

interventions across the country, and these will certainly influence the educational landscape in India, they cannot be addressed within the scope of this thesis.

### **Operation Blackboard**

One of the Indian government's large scale, multi-state programs implemented to help achieve their identified goal of universalizing elementary education is Operation Blackboard (OB). This program focuses largely on the material aspects of providing education and identifies the minimum standards necessary for schools. As initially set out in the National Policy on Education 1986:

Provision will be made of essential facilities in primary schools, including at least two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather, and the necessary toys, blackboards, maps, charts, and other learning material. At least two teachers, one of whom a woman, should work in every school, the number increasing as early as possible to one teacher per class. A phased drive, symbolically called- OPERATION BLACKBOARD will be undertaken with immediate effect to improve Primary Schools all over the country. Government, local bodies, voluntary agencies and individuals will be fully involved. (GOI, NPE 1986)

In the modified version of this National Policy (1992), this is changed to indicate “three reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather, and black boards, maps, charts, toys, other necessary learning aids and school library. At least three teachers should work in every school, the number increasing, as early as possible, to one teacher per class. At least 50 percent of teachers recruited in future should be women.” (GOI, NPE 1986/modified 1992).

Despite the changes made in the 1992 version of the policy, the purpose and focus of the program remain the same. This program is designed to improve the facilities in which education takes place as well as the professionals that provide this education. As we have seen in chapter two, poor infrastructure and a lack of female teaching professionals are active in keeping girl children out of school. As such, these are important issues to be addressed

and OB is an attempt to do so. In addition, this program required some enhanced teacher training for in-service teachers, to be discussed later.

Operation Blackboard is a centrally sponsored program, with the states being responsible for certain aspects of it. The intention was for all existing schools to be brought up to the level specified in the OB program and for no new schools to be sanctioned by the government unless it met these standards. This program was implemented across the country and states were responsible for determining the order in which districts would be included.

In practical terms, the goals of Operation Blackboard were to provide a second teacher to all one-teacher schools, provide a teaching-learning aid (a package of teaching materials) and to ensure that all schools have at least two usable and functional classrooms. Of the three main components of this program (two school rooms, two teachers and the TLAs), the central government was responsible for 60% of the funding for buildings, paying the first five years of OB designated teachers' salaries, and the TLAs. The states were responsible for 40% of building costs, the teachers' salaries after five years, and the upkeep of the TLAs such as replacing lost or broken items (Dyer, 1999).

This first component of the OB program was researched by Aimee Chin, using data from the All India Educational Survey (AIES) which provides data on school resources and the National Sample Survey (NSS) which is a household survey. This study looked specifically at the results of the teacher component of the OB program. Teacher hiring is an important issue to be addressed in discussing the success of the OB program as this was identified in the program design as an important component. If teacher hiring has been found to be inefficient, this will have an impact on the likelihood of the OB program meeting its goals. Chin's research provides some interesting conclusions and she makes some

important points about both the implementation and the design of the teacher increasing component of this program. Before discussing her conclusions, it is necessary to briefly outline how this program intended to increase the number of teachers. One-teacher schools were identified through the 1986 AIES and these schools were marked as OB schools in terms of the additional teacher component. The state was responsible for hiring teachers to fill the additional positions created by the new policy and the central government would bear the cost of these new salaries. Funds were not transferred directly to the schools, but would be paid to them through the state and local government. Once a teacher is hired for a post, their salary is transferred from the central government to the state government.

Chin notes some issues with the way this part of the program was implemented. First of all, it is possible that the teachers identified as OB teachers could have been sent to schools that already had more than one teacher. It is also possible that being provided with additional OB teachers meant that states slowed down or stopped their own hiring of teachers, reducing the total increase in teachers. It is also possible that states could have “re-labeled” teachers that were already employed as OB teachers which would mean the central government is now paying the salary of an existing teacher (Chin, 2005). Although Chin does not state whether this was found to be the case, the PROBE team found that several states had in fact slowed down regular teacher appointments after the implementation of OB, in order to keep salary costs down. This concern is noted as well with attempting to meet the new required levels of female teachers.

The results of Chin’s study show that these new OB teachers were misallocated by the states. As the schools for new teachers were identified through data specifically reporting one-teacher schools, the number of these schools should have gone down by one every time a

new OB teacher was hired. Chin's data shows that OB paid for 140,000 teachers and the number of one teacher schools decreased by only 38,000. Although she notes that is possible that in the time between the identification of the number of one-teacher schools and the time of the study, more one teacher schools were built, she maintains that only one out of every two new teachers was properly allocated to a previously one-teacher school (Chin, 2005: 9).

In terms of hiring new female teachers, Chin reports that 40% of the OB teachers were female, although this did not significantly raise the proportion of female primary school teachers, possibly because existing female teachers were now being labeled as OB teachers. Despite these concerns about teachers being re-labeled rather than new teachers being hired, Chin found that the distribution of teachers was significantly altered. Teachers from multi-teacher schools were redistributed to one-teacher schools meaning that some school would lose a teacher or two (but still be left with more than one) and previously one-teacher schools would gain a new teacher.

Based on her data, Chin considers whether this increase in schools with multiple teachers has had an effect on school attendance and concludes that it has. She notes that one-teacher schools would depend almost entirely on that teacher and if that teacher was absent, school would likely be closed. Given the high rate of teacher absenteeism in India, particularly in rural and remote areas, this is certainly a concern. She notes the positive effect that this additional teacher per school would have on girl students. Considering the identified gender discrimination in the classroom, as discussed in chapter two, it is possible that where there is only one teacher girls will receive less attention. An additional teacher may help to remedy this. Additionally, as parents are concerned about a lack of supervision at school, the additional teacher means that schools will not be closed if one teacher is absent.



As well, Chin notes that it may be that parents, or even students themselves, prefer a female teacher and will be more likely to allow their girl child to attend school if they know that she will be taught by a woman. It is clear from Chin's research on this particular aspect of the OB program that while it was not implemented exactly as intended, there were some benefits to this. She concludes that the teacher related component of OB increased primary school completion rates by up to four percentage points for girls and up to two percentage points for boys.

While Chin looked specifically at the teacher hiring (or redistributing as it were) component of OB, Caroline Dyer has looked at the teacher training and teaching-learning aid (TLA) components of this program. Dyer studied the implementation of the TLA aspect of OB and the use of these materials in the classroom. This research was done in Gujarat state and although this limited geographical reach may be considered a weakness of using this research as it does not cover all states, elements of the research suggest that it could be relevant throughout the whole country. This research looks at an urban area, a rural area and a tribal area, meaning that issues faced by teachers in all of these groups are being examined. While there are certainly issues at work in this state that may be less (or more) significant in other states, such as mechanisms for pre or in-service teacher training, or the composition of students in terms of scheduled castes or tribes, there is much in this research to speak to the success or failure of specific aspects of this program and are useful in attempting an evaluation of the program as a whole.

In her research, Dyer observes a number of practices and patterns, and makes a number of conclusions that could be useful in terms of evaluation of the OB program. The first fact observed that should be noted as it will contextualize all other conclusions made, is

that of the fifty teachers interviewed for this study, only three reported actually wanting to teach; the others had chosen a teaching career for other reasons such as job stability and a regular salary. This lack of motivation to teach and become involved in education within the community is something that was found as well by the PROBE team; their research indicated that “most teachers convey a deep lack of commitment to the promotion of education in the local community” (PROBE team, 1999: 57). As well, the perception of teaching as an easy and secure job with a good salary is echoed in their findings. This has obvious implications in terms of their classroom performance and interest in professional development.

One of the aspects of the TLA implementation that Dyer examines in her research is the training teachers underwent to learn how to use these. This training was intended to encourage a shift in teaching style, to a more student-centred teaching, as mandated by the NPE 1986<sup>13</sup>. General in-service training for teachers was to take place in ten day training camps, called Programme for Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST). In addition to this, a similar program was designed to teach just how to use the TLAs. Dyer identifies several problems with the TLA instruction identified: in some cases the training took place long before the TLAs were actually available to the teachers, some of the training took place without TLAs, and some of this training was provided to teachers who had not received the initial PMOST training, meaning that they would not have understood the policy to which these new materials were related or why these new materials were necessary.

Issues were also found with the use of these TLAs once the training was complete. She found that many of these kits were not being used; in the tribal area most of the teachers in the study used the charts provided in the kits, but none of the other supplies. Some of the teachers had not looked in the boxes at all. The rural area reported more use of the TLAs and

the urban area had problems with the kits not being delivered or being of very poor quality. Many teachers in the urban area didn't look at the kits and just put them in a cupboard unused (Dyer, 1996a).

Dyer notes the importance of the attitudes of teachers in determining whether this element of OB was implemented effectively and had any effect on either increased enrollment or retention. She notes that the teachers working in the urban environment studied were of a different caste and socio-economic background from the students in their classes and reported the children in their classes as being from low-caste and backward families, with uncaring parents. They reported that these conditions were responsible for the students' poor performance and their poor attitudes towards their jobs. Dyer notes as well that there was a large gap between what was expected of teachers under this new policy and the conditions and attitudes that were previously pervasive in the education system.

In addition, Dyer discusses the progress made on the three basic components of this program. She describes the progress in implementation of the program, observed on visits to selected schools six years after the policy began, as "limited and patchy" (Dyer, 1999). While the TLAs had been delivered in all areas observed, the quality of these aids was poor; they were visually unappealing, some parts were easily breakable, and many parts of them had been delivered broken (Dyer, 1999). It was reported that the teachers took the poor quality of these kits as a sign of the government's lack of interest in them.

Dyer notes another problem with the design of the program related to the planning stage. She notes that there was very little input to this program on the part of either the teachers or the state governments. She indicates that there was a level of resentment on the part of the states at not being included in such a massive policy endeavor. A result of this

was that the states were largely responsible for the implementation (and by extension, the success or failure) of this program, but had no real sense of ownership over it (Dyer, 1999).

The research on the subject of Operation Blackboard has shown that there were some problems with this program from its inception. Chin's research indicates that although there may have been some improvement in completion rates, based specifically on the teacher increasing component of the program, there was widespread misallocation of teachers. Dyer's research indicates that problems of teacher motivation were more of a concern than initially accounted for in the policy. The input of teacher's groups and states may have increased a sense of ownership over the policy and may have encouraged participants to be more involved.

In terms of whether OB achieved its intended goals, the number of one-teacher schools decreased, additional schools were built and a number of TLAs were provided, although none of these things happened to the degree intended. The Seventh AIES indicates that of 2,225,972 government run primary sections there were 1,615,146 usable blackboards (GOI, 7AIES). This leaves a shortfall of 610,826. Additionally, the number of schools reporting one teacher is 97,670 with those reporting two and three teachers as 281,278 and 108,228 respectively. This leaves a large number of schools still reporting only one teacher, which was a focus of the OB program. The countrywide percentage of schools with female teachers is listed as 49.38 (GOI, 7AIES). Of the 35 states in the survey, 22 report 50% or more schools with female teachers. Of these 22 states percentages range from 50.93 to 100% of schools having female teachers (GOI, 7AIES). This indicates a wide range across states in terms of how many schools actually have female teachers. These numbers indicate that some of the conditions identified as a cause for concern before the implementation of OB persist.

### **District Primary Education Program**

Another major educational intervention launched by the central government in an attempt to achieve universal elementary education goals is the District Primary Education Program (DPEP). This program also required a massive investment of resources and a huge commitment in terms of planning. Like Operation Blackboard, this program was sponsored by the central government and implemented by the states. Notable in DPEP was the huge resource commitment on the part of the World Bank. The central government provided 85% of funds, obtained through World Bank loans as well as assistance from the European Commission (EC), Unicef, the Netherlands and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). The remaining 15% of funding was provided by the individual states.

This program was initially launched in 1994, and eventually expanded twice; there were three phases of this program. The districts chosen for the first DPEP had female literacy rates below the national average of 39% as taken from the 1991 Census and had implemented a total literacy campaign to some measurable success. The total literacy campaign must have had the effect of creating some demand for elementary education in the district in question in order for the district to be eligible for the DPEP. The states and districts chosen for the initial phase of the program were not necessarily chosen based on those with the most need; they were chosen based partly on how quickly it was anticipated they would show results (Pandey, 2000). As this was a major program and investment for the government, it was thought that initial positive results were crucial to the eventual success of the program as a whole. In the later phases of the program, districts were chosen based on their need and these later phases did eventually include the states with some of the

lowest literacy rate states in the country. The initial seven states covered by the DPEP were Assam, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

While the focus of OB was on the improvement of physical facilities of schools, the DPEP focused on the quality of education. As such, no more than 24% of the funding under the initial phase of the program could be used for school improvements. 70% of the budget was to be spent on improving the quality of education, leaving 6% for management costs. A major component of the DPEP was the decentralization of educational planning.

Decentralization has been a feature of Indian educational planning for quite some time, but has not been done effectively to this point. Under the DPEP, district plans are developed at the district level and the participation of a number of groups including elected local representatives, academic organizations, education workers, parents and government departments other than the department of education is encouraged (Varghese, 1996).

The DPEP had certain specific goals, including providing all children with access to primary education, reducing primary level dropout rates to less than 10%, reducing differences in enrollment, dropout rates and learning achievement between boys and girls and social groups to less than 5%, raising the average achievement of students in language and math by 25% and in other subjects by 40%, and strengthening the capacity of national, state and district level institutions for planning, managing and evaluating primary education (Bajpai & Goyal, 2004).

In terms of evaluating the success of the DPEP in India, there are a few concerns to be addressed. First of all, the initial implementation of this program was geared towards districts where success was likely. Given that a high likelihood of success was a condition for a district being chosen for participation, it should not be surprising if this is the eventual

result. Additionally, as this program operated in districts chosen through this criteria, success of the program does not necessarily mean success for the whole country, however it does demonstrate that the program has the potential to succeed nationwide.

When looking at particular educational indicators from the districts participating in the first phase of DPEP as compared to non-DPEP districts, Yash Aggarwal notes that enrollment in DPEP districts increased faster than non-DPEP districts. Four of the seven states showed this trend, with the differential in DPEP and non-DPEP states ranging from 7.5 to 16.8 percentage points. Aggarwal notes that in one of these states, Kerala, a decline in enrollment has been occurring for approximately ten years and that this decline in DPEP districts is less than in non-DPEP districts (Aggarwal, 1998).

Although these statistics do show some encouraging results, Schmid notes that there are a few methodological issues with this type of a study. Comparing before and after statistics of DPEP districts may be misleading as all educational indicators improved in this period for virtually every district. Although there is a noted differential in the improvement of enrollment between DPDP and non-DPEP states, there is really no way to be sure that this would not have occurred regardless. Despite the concerns with Aggarwal's methodology, Schmid's study on the effectiveness of the DPEP found some similar results. This study was conducted using census data and based on districts which implemented the program in different years. This study covers programs in all three phases of the DPEP, although conclusions are only drawn for those in the first and second phases.

Schmid concludes that the change in school attendance rates for boys and girls was higher in districts in which the DPEP was in place. Attendance increased more strongly in the more backward states. As well, the author concludes that DPEP contributed to a

narrowing in the gap between female and male attendance. The authors “generally find that the DPEP contributes to the lowering of the gender gap for all outcome indicators” (Schmid, 2006: 23). In general, all social groups benefited from the first two phases of DPEP. In most cases, a higher proportion of Scheduled Caste students significantly raises the change in outcome for these students; the same trend was found with Scheduled Tribe students. The author suggests that, “it seems that the development of a social group depends on the social group being big, possibly to pressure for more attention” (Schmid, 2006: 24).

Another important finding when looking at the success of the DPEP is the range of outcomes according to state. The World Bank Implementation Completion Report for the second phase of the DPEP found that progress in terms of achieving goals has been varied across states. Additionally, although the overall goals and intentions of the DPEP appear to have been widely embraced, the implementation of the DPEP has “varied considerably” across states (World Bank, 2003b). This is not particularly surprising given the range of educational development that has been noted across states in India. This report suggests that setting different goals and having different expectations of different regions may have been an improvement to the design of this program. It was found as well that the majority of districts involved in this phase of the DPEP have not reduced dropout rates to less than ten percent as targeted; in fact, average drop out rates are around 30%, with Uttar Pradesh’s dropout rate remaining at over 40% (World Bank, 2003b). A positive note on the subject of dropout rates is that this report indicates that gender disparities in drop out rates have been reduced in about three quarters of DPEPII districts (World Bank, 2003b).



### **Mahila Samakhya (MS)**

The Mahila Samakhya (MS) program represents a completely different approach to gender equality in education in India. This program, the title of which means Education for Women's Equality seeks to address gender imbalances in the community and society at large. Through this breaking down of gender barriers and re-examining and contesting of the role of women within society, it is believed that women will become leaders in a new generation of educated girls. There is an acknowledgement that girls' and women's participation in education reflects their position in society at large. This program aims to change the educational participation of women by raising their status in society rather than raising their social status by changing educational participation. In this program, "the empowerment of women is seen as a critical precondition for the participation of women and girls in the education process" (GOI, Mahila Samakhya Program Genesis). While much has been written on the power of education to act as an agent of empowerment for women, this program looks to the empowerment of women to encourage their participation in the education system.

Mahila Samakhya was conceived of in the 1986 National Policy on Education. Like OB and the DPEP, it is a centrally sponsored scheme with funds being allocated in this case through a registered MS society at the state level. Unlike OB which was financed largely by the central government and DPEP which was largely funded through World Bank borrowing, MS was completely financed by the Dutch government. MS was initially launched in Karnataka, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh in 1989, expanded to Andhra Pradesh at the end of 1992 and to two districts in Kerala in 1998. It has since been adopted by some districts in Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Assam (GOI, MS Expansion and Coverage). In each

participating district, the number of villages covered varies, but the Tenth Five Year Plan calls for a minimum of 250 participating villages per district (GOI, MS Expansion and Coverage).

This program is unique in that it is designed to encourage dialogue, critical thinking and the challenging of traditional gender roles and responsibilities. Part of what sets this program apart from other programs is that it doesn't actually provide any services or have any concrete goals in terms of targets or timelines. The major component of this program is the development of Mahila Sanghas, or women's collectives. These sanghas are community groups of women that meet to discuss and take action on issues that are important to them in their community. The issues addressed could be anything that is considered an important issue to local women, although it is envisioned that at some stage this group will turn its attention to the issue of education for girls.

While this program certainly represents an innovative approach to gender and education (and really gender relations in general as it is left to the sanghas to determine what issues will be dealt with in their community), there are certain conceptual problems with evaluation. As there are no actual goals, it is impossible to determine if these have been met. The main purpose of this program is women's empowerment, a concept that really cannot be quantified. Certainly there are quantifiable measures of women's position within society, which presumably would be raised if women are empowered, such as female health indicators, literacy rates and sex ratio, but these can take generations to be affected. What is likely a better determinant of whether this program is performing as intended is the feedback provided from the women in the sanghas.

The 2004 evaluation of the MS program in Uttar Pradesh found several issues that will need to be addressed in the future. The first issue identified is the lack of personnel for new areas. The program has had trouble expanding and many positions at the district level were vacant which had seriously limited expansion. It is suggested by the evaluation team that the women in the existing sanghas may be used to assist in the expansion of the program into new areas. The evaluation team notes that one of the successful areas of this program has been the Mahila Shikshan Kendra (MSK), residential girls' schools "aimed at developing a pool of aware, trained and literate women at the village level" (GOI MS website). Of the 12 districts in which MS operates in Uttar Pradesh, 6 districts are home to such schools, with a total of 11 in operation and 520 girls being reached. These schools are for girls who have either been completely left out of school or have withdrawn.

Despite some localized success and the potential that this program holds in terms of addressing root causes of gender discrimination, something not often seen in large scale government policies, there are some concerns about the program. The same evaluation of MS in Uttar Pradesh found that the lack of clarity in the design of the program has led to some additional responsibilities that may be beyond the scope of the program. In particular, the National Program for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), to be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, has become one of these responsibilities. It was thought that having this type of extra responsibility forced on this program would lead to a decline in quality. Also, "(t)here is a growing resentment to the way in which things are being thrust upon MS" (MS UP Evaluation 2004, 10). Additionally, it has been noted that "it is clear that the programs has not been able to impact on the scale as anticipated or envisaged" (Jandhyala, 2003: 12). An important point to make when looking at the program

of Mahila Samakhyas is that, as previously mentioned, because of its unique approach to education, assessment is difficult. What is more likely is that this program will impact future generations in sending their girl children to school and ensuring that they continue and complete their education.

### **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

The most recent, and far reaching, national program launched to achieve the universalization of elementary education in India is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). This program was launched in 2001 and is to become the umbrella program under which all other national education programs are administered. SSA, like all the programs discussed in this thesis, is a centrally sponsored scheme. SSA currently has a 75:25% arrangement of financing for the centre and states, respectively with this shifting to 50:50 after the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The funding for the central portion of the scheme comes from a combination of World Bank, European Commission and DFID.

Like most of the other programs discussed here, SSA has particular goals which are based on the universalization of elementary education. The specific goals for SSA are: to have all 6-14 year old children in school or an alternative scheme by 2005, to bridge all gender and social gaps at the primary stage by 2007 and the elementary stage by 2010, to ensure universal retention by 2010, and to focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality, “with an emphasis on education for life” (GOI, SSA website)<sup>14</sup>. These goals correspond with those outlined in the National Plan of Action for EFA. The quality aspects of the SSA include appointing additional teachers, distributing free textbooks, implementing computer aided learning at the upper primary level, providing additional in-service training

for teachers, implementing programs of remedial teaching and implementing independent testing of children to ensure learning level (GOI, SSA website).

Under this umbrella are certain programs identified specifically for the education of girls which will be discussed in greater detail. These two programs are the National Program for the Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme (KGBV). The NPEGEL is geared at specific geographic areas, namely Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs - referring to a block where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap is above the national average), blocks of districts which have at least 5% SC/T population and SC/T literacy rates below 10% as well as selected urban slums. While all girls are targeted under this program, specifically the most at risk girls (drop-outs, overage girls, working girls, girls from marginalized social groups, etc.) are the focus. NPEGEL is to be implemented through the State SSA Society; in states where MS is in operation, the SSA Society will transfer funding from the centre to the MS Society for implementation. Very little information is available on the NPEGEL program possibly as implementation has been slow. Hopefully this will soon change as according to the Fourth Joint Review Mission of SSA, an implementation handbook and a monitoring framework are in progress (GOI, SSA 4<sup>th</sup> JRM, 14).

The KGBV is another effort to reach out of school girls. This program focuses on out of school adolescent girls and attempts to reach those who would otherwise be left out of the school system as they are overage. The SSA Manual of Planning and Appraisal indicates that the original intention of this program was to build up to 750 residential elementary level schools for girls belonging to mostly SC/T, OBC and other minorities from areas of low

educational achievement (GOI, MHRD, 2004). The remainder of the students were to come from below the poverty line.

The target area for these schools is EBBs with rural female literacy rate below the national average and gender gap in literacy above the national average, in this case according to the 2001 census. In terms of physical progress of this program, some assessment has been done. Out of 1180 KGBVs sanctioned, 787 were operational as of September 30, 2006, with a total of 52,350 girls from SC, SC, OBC, other Minorities, or below the poverty line enrolled (GOI, SSA website). Worthy of note is that the educationally backward states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal all now have operational fewer than half of their intended schools, with West Bengal having 2 out of a sanctioned 54 KGBV schools operational.

Although SSA is relatively new in terms of educational programs in India, there has been some assessment of material progress made so far by the government. This assessment can be found in the Ministry of Human Resources and Development's Annual Report 2005-2006. This report indicates the progress that has been made to this point in terms of civil works completed and in progress, as well as the progress that has been made in terms of recruiting additional teachers. In terms of the percentage of civil works completed, MHRD does not report any states as having completed the civil works required, although several states are at 100% in terms of completed or in progress civil works. For the country as a whole, MHRD reports that 70% of civil works are completed or in progress and 42% are actually complete. In terms of teacher recruitment, MHRD reports that 64% of the target has been reached for the country (GOI, MHRD 2005-06). The Fourth Joint Review Mission

indicates that the first phase of SSA has been “very productive in terms of ensuring basic physical conditions in schools for quality education” (GOI, SSA 4<sup>th</sup> JRM, 20)

### **Education Indicators in India: Recent Change**

When examining these programs and the potential for success of this plan as a whole, it is helpful to look at the change in relevant indicators in recent history. As SSA and the associated KGBV and NPEGEL programs are relatively new, it is not likely that these have had a distinct effect on educational indicators, however some progress in educational development and equity in education can be discussed. Improvement can be seen in the areas of enrollment and material conditions. In order to examine this progress, this section will look briefly at some of the statistics in these categories. This will be done by examining data from the Sixth and Seventh All India Educational Surveys. These surveys have dates of September 30, 1993 and 2002, respectively. In terms of enrollment, both primary and upper primary enrollments have increased. The following chart shows enrollment data in primary schooling from the 6AIES.

	Primary Total	Primary Girls	Upper Primary Total	Upper Primary Girls
Rural	72,472,982	30,410,302	21,475,112	7,823,354
Urban	24,556,253	11,470,884	12,595,946	5,675,496
Total	97,029,235	41,881,186	34,071,058	13,498,850

Source: Sixth All India Educational Survey

The following chart shows the corresponding information from the 7AIES.

	Primary Total	Primary Girls	Upper Primary Total	Upper Primary Girls
Rural	93,097,960	43,508,859	30,566,950	13,029,667
Urban	29,817,341	14,043,879	16,278,895	7,582,632
Total	122,915,301	57,552,738	46,845,845	20,612,299

Source: Seventh All India Educational Survey

Using data from the 1991 and 2001 censuses, it is possible to determine the percentage of total children and girl children enrolled in primary school. Data from the Sixth AIES and the 1991 census, 80.95% of the total population aged 7-14 were enrolled in school, with 71.42% of the female population of this age enrolled in school. Data from the Seventh AIES and the 2001 Census show improvement in the percentage of female children enrolled, with 82% of the female school age population enrolled. An interesting finding from this data is that there was a slight drop in the percentage of boy children enrolled in school between these two time periods. The earlier data shows 89.71% of school age boys enrolled, while the later data shows 87.66% of these boys enrolled.

In addition to change in the enrollment indicators, there has been progress in terms of the material indicators of number of schools and teachers. The 6AIES indicates that the total number of primary schools was 570,455 and the total number of Upper Primary schools was 162,805. The 7AIES shows the number of primary schools has increased to 651,064 and the number of upper primary schools has increased to 245,322. A similar trend has emerged with the number of teachers in schools; 6AIES shows 1,623,379 teachers at the primary level and 1,129,747 teachers at the upper primary level. The 7AIES shows 1,823,692 full time teachers at the primary level, with an additional 89,883 para-teachers and 14,041 part-time



teachers. At the upper primary level, the 7AIES shows 1,488,734 full time teachers, with an additional 91,802 para-teachers and 14,011 part-time teachers (GOI, 7AIES).

The major area of progress that has occurred in India in recent years is the increase in enrollment rates for both boys and girls, and the narrowing of the gender gap in terms of enrollment. This change has not been as pronounced in terms of continuation rates as evidenced by the large gap between enrollment in primary schooling and enrollment in upper primary schooling. The 6AIES shows that the total enrollment (boys and girls) of upper primary school is 35.11% of the enrollment of children in primary school. The corresponding figure for girls is 32.23%. This indicates that a large number of children, a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys, either drop out of primary schooling before completion or, upon completion of primary schooling, do not continue with their studies in upper primary school. The corresponding figures for the 7AIES are 38.11% for all children and 35.81% for girls. The differential between these figures for these two study years has narrowed very slightly, with a 2.88 percentage point differential from the 6AIES and a 2.3 percentage point differential from the 7AIES.

There has been improvement as well in the percentage of enrolled students who are girls in the period. The 6AIES indicates that at the primary level, 43.16% of enrolled students were girls, while at the upper primary level this drops to 39.61% (GOI, 6AIES). The corresponding figures for the 7AIES show that 46.82% of children enrolled at the primary level were girls and 44.00% of children enrolled at the upper primary level were girls (GOI, 7AIES). This shows that not only are more girls enrolling in primary schooling to begin with, but it appears that gender parity is being increased at both the primary and upper primary level.

The enrollment data from the Sixth and Seventh AIES indicate that while enrollment has increased quite substantially, fewer than half the number of children that enrolled in primary school later enrolled in upper primary school and far fewer than half of the children enrolled in upper primary school are girls. While the increased enrollment of girls in lower primary schooling indicates that access has been improved, completion and continuation are still significant problems to be addressed and should be of great concern to administrators tasked with planning strategies to achieve universal education. These issues will be raised in greater detail in the discussion section of this thesis.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This discussion section will deal with four areas relating to the issues addressed in this thesis. The first section will consist of a discussion on the broader issues in girls' education and development as identified in chapter one. The second area of discussion will relate specifically to international frameworks for education. The third section will look at Indian national policy and programs including an assessment of the prospects for achieving the goal of gender equality in education. Finally, the fourth section will consist of a discussion of considerations and prospects for the future of elementary education in India. Future areas of research on this subject will be identified at the end of this section.

## **Girls Education and Development**

The issues raised in chapter one are theoretical in nature and certainly valid arguments can be, and indeed have been, made to support either a universalist or culturally relative approach to education and development. While it is easy to see the contributions that both positions offer in terms of pursuing education for development on the international level, it is difficult to support a position which would see the drawing back of formal education in support of education based purely on skill development and what is seen as relevant in a child's life. This type of education may limit students to the position they currently occupy in society, and while the argument that this will maintain local cultures may be valid, it is possible that this will be done at the expense of giving children the opportunity to be a part of the broader global society and bring their culture into conversation with others. If we accept the argument that education can play a vital role in building capabilities and opening opportunities for children from all backgrounds, we should ensure that education is

being provided to all children and that the education being provided is one that can actually do this.

It is clear that there is a close relationship between education and development. This relationship can be thought of in two ways: education leading to increased levels of development and increased levels of education serving as an indication that development has occurred. While there has been some debate on whether the relationship between female education and increased development indicators in the area of health, empowerment and employment are as robust as originally thought, this is no reason to contest the value of female education. Female education is often presented as a sound investment based on the factors identified above, but even if these relationships are not as direct as may have been thought, that does not make educating the female population a poor investment. Ensuring that a country's whole population is educated regardless of gender broadens the pool of potential thinkers, leaders and future architects of national development.

Additionally, in terms of negative outcomes associated with girls' education, the major one appears to be the unemployment of educated women. Certainly this is not a positive effect, but this also is not a reason to avoid pursuing gender equality in education. Educational equality is not pursued purely based on employment outcomes, so despite the fact that increasing access to education may lead to more unemployed, educated women, this should not change the course of educational development. This potential consequence does raise the importance of pursuing multiple areas of development simultaneously. A narrow focus on one issue as "the key to development" is bound to be unsuccessful. Girls' education is certainly an important part of development, but should be pursued within a broad

development strategy that is equipped to deal with eventualities such as a large cohort of educated and unemployed or underemployed women.

Although gender equity in education is promoted on the international level through appealing to both the potential development outcomes and the notion of education as a human right, it would seem that if commitment to the right to education were strong on the national level, promoting the development outcomes so strongly would not be necessary. It is possible that this promotion of girls' education is promoted on the basis of increased national development is done as this is politically simpler than the international community promoting this issue purely on the basis of social justice or equity. Although the links with other development indicators may make increasing girls' education an easier sell to countries which do not traditionally have equitable gender relations, this does dull the message of including females in the education system on the basis of gender equity. It seems as though it may be useful to promote some sort of tangible national development gain to educating women rather than hoping that equitable gender relations will suddenly materialize.

### **International Involvement in Education**

The discussion on international involvement in education and the case of India will focus on two distinct areas: the setting of goals and targets and the influence on national policy. Although the setting of goals and targets is popular in international frameworks for education, there are some problems with this. As noted by Jansen in chapter one of this thesis, these targets are continually set and continually missed. It appears as well that in the case of both the international community and India, these targets are overly optimistic in terms of their time frame. Given the massive number of out of school children in the world,

particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, it seems surprising that such tight time frames would be promoted by the international community in both the MDGs and EFA.

This is true as well in the case of Indian national target setting. Educational targets have been consistently missed since the writing of the constitution. What this means is that no matter what progress is made, this can only be considered a failure because the time bound target was not achieved. Although the argument that setting goals encourages time sensitive action must be recognized, it could also be argued that continually allowing goals to go unfulfilled is conducive to failure. If those involved in educational provision see these targets as wildly unrealistic, this cannot help motivation to achieve them. A more realistic time frame, or the setting of a clear goal with no associated time frame, would not only recognize the magnitude of the task at hand, but would also acknowledge that this goal will be pursued no matter how long it takes.

I would suggest limiting the use of time bound targets to expenditures on education rather than using them to measure achievement. The setting of goals in terms of achievement is a valuable exercise and once a goal has been set and committed to, it should be pursued no matter what the time frame. The fact that target dates are allowed to come and go without the achievement of the associated goal gives the appearance that the goal was not important which is likely not the case. It may also be difficult for people to rally behind a time bound goal which they see no chance of being achieved.

In terms of the influence on national policy, EFA has had a limited impact in India as the goals espoused in the EFA framework have been a part of the Indian policy framework at least since the time of Independence. The universalization of education and the pursuit of gender equality in education have appeared in numerous policy and planning documents, as

demonstrated earlier in this chapter, and as such any further encouragement to do this was unnecessary. There is certainly a case to be made for raising the issue of girls' education and the universalization of elementary education on the international level to build support and consensus on the issue, but in the case of India, this consensus was not necessary as the policy level support for these issues already existed.

One area of concern in the Indian national response to EFA lies in the programs indicated in the NPA as helping to achieve these goals. Several of these programs identified have been in place since long before the EFA framework was developed. This is not necessarily a problem as we can see that the EFA goals closely mirror Indian national goals, so if these programs are achieving their intended goals, they are contributing to achieving EFA goals. What is of some concern with the programs identified in the National Plan for Action is that several of the programs are focused mainly on universalizing education rather than a focus specifically on the girl child. While these programs certainly have consequences for girl children, they have not in the past been a specific intervention in terms of getting girl children into school. Hopefully this is something that will change with the NPEGEL and KGBV programs. Although these programs are administered under the banner of SSA, they are specifically designed for girl children. These programs have the potential to address the issues specifically of out of school girl children and they do represent a clearer focus on the girl child.

### **Indian Policy and Programs**

When looking at Indian national policies and programs aimed at universalizing education and increasing educational access and attainment for girls, the major point of discussion is the co-ordination of these programs in terms of implementation. There has

been some evidence that confusion exists on the local level regarding exactly who is responsible for what aspect of these national programs. In the past, the implementation of new programs has sometimes meant confusion and resentment on the local level as expectations are not always clearly defined. Additionally, there has been some resentment about new policies being forced on lower levels of administration by the central government. State or local level governments do not always have the capacity to implement and administer national level programs and this can have a negative effect on not only how these programs are perceived by the local governments, but also on how they are implemented.

The implementation of the SSA program may hold some promise in this area. The co-ordination of previously existing programs under the SSA umbrella may provide an opportunity to bring all roles and responsibilities into clear focus. Certainly this is something that is likely to take time. However, bringing all these programs into a common administrative structure can be seen as a positive intervention.

### **Indian Education System: Future Considerations**

Several issues and trends associated with the education system will likely continue to pose a threat to the universalization of education in India. Although there has been some progress in terms of improving certain educational indicators, there are three major issues that will need to be continually addressed. These issues are: poor educational quality, low retention and continuation rates, and low teacher motivation and social status.

Of the three major issues faced by the Indian educational system, possibly the most notable is the overall poor quality. This can be seen as a contributing factor to a number of the conditions identified in chapter two as being relevant in keeping children out of school. This means that not only are children more likely to drop out as their parents see that they



aren't actually learning anything, but even if they do complete a full cycle of primary school, they are often left with lower abilities than one would expect. This problem is something which has been the focus of programs in the past and is a feature of the current Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Improvement in educational quality should not only help enrollment and completion rates as parents will be more likely to send their children to schools perceived as being of good quality, but will also improve actual learning levels.

Another major concern currently facing the Indian educational system is the low retention and continuation rates. This means that while there has been progress in providing access to schooling, raising enrollment rates and narrowing the gender gap in enrollment, there has been much less progress in ensuring completion and continuation. This is a major problem facing education in the country. Increasing access to education is a waste of resources if children are enrolling and dropping out shortly after, or really any time before they complete their full five year cycle. As well, if children are completing only the primary and not the upper primary cycle, educational goals will not be achieved. Improving retention and continuation rates in education for girls is related to low educational quality and is a crucial aspect of not only achieving universal elementary education goals, but of achieving EFA based gender goals as well.

A third major concern that must be addressed is the low social status and motivation of teachers. This is something that is addressed in Dyer's research on Operation Blackboard and has long been a feature of the Indian educational system. This low motivation to teach is closely related to both the low educational quality and low educational attainment rates discussed above and obviously has a hugely adverse effect on the education system in general. Low social status and low motivation are clearly two different issues, but are

closely linked. With many teachers looking at teaching as a steady job with relative security and not being particularly concerned with the important social role that they play, low educational quality is bound to continue. As well, it will be virtually impossible to move to the new student-centred and responsive approach to teaching that has long been desired in educational policy. Improving teacher motivation is a difficult task for sure, but vitally important in ensuring future educational achievement in the country. The true difficulty lies in determining how this is to be done.

I would suggest two possible areas of intervention to ensure greater teacher motivation and dedication to the task at hand in the future. The first area is ensuring that teachers are consulted when new educational interventions of any type are being developed, and ensuring that their concerns are taken into account when program planning and implementation takes place. Teachers are the best resource that the government has in terms of articulating locally felt needs. These concerns identified at the local level are at the heart of problems with the education system and addressing concerns identified by teachers is vital in achieving educational goals. If teachers are not being included in a meaningful way in planning processes, one must question the overall commitment to educational goals.

Although it is often said that policies and plans have been participatory in their planning, research on Operation Blackboard has shown that aspects of these programs did not reflect the issues which teachers were dealing with in the classroom. Interventions were essentially forced on teachers without adequate explanation of what changes were expected to be made and this made implementation of these changes difficult. If teachers have a sense of ownership of interventions and the programs and changes actually reflect what they think needs to be done, motivation to make these changes will surely be higher. This

recommendation is not specific to teachers; local stakeholders should be consulted to determine not only what needs exist at the local level, but what type of responsibility can be absorbed in terms of implementing a centrally sponsored program.

As well, additional training thoroughly addressing new policies and approaches when a new program is implemented should be required for all teachers. Obviously this would be a large administrative undertaking and may not be a realistic solution in the short term, but thorough and comprehensive training on student-centred learning would help to ensure that this is actually practiced in the classroom and would reduce teacher confusion about what exactly they are supposed to be doing. This is an issue that has been recognized by the government, and additional training, both pre-service and in-service, has been a component of many of the programs implemented to achieve universal elementary education. This needs to continue to be a focus of these programs and is a positive intervention. As well, a more standardized system of pre-service training for teachers would likely increase the level of professionalism in the teaching field. Ensuring that all teachers are required to hold the same level of qualifications and have met certain educational requirements themselves would likely raise the status of the profession in the community.

An important consideration when dealing with the status of teachers in any society is their financial compensation. Poor salaries are generally associated with lower paying jobs and raising salaries, along with the previously discussed standard training, would help to raise the social status of the teaching profession. This would certainly be a difficult proposition in the Indian context as a very high proportion of educational funding is already devoted to teachers' salaries, but the connection between low pay and low social status must be acknowledged.

## **Conclusion**

When assessing the prospects for the achievement of gender equality in education in India the programs discussed in this thesis, and associated recent change in educational indicators, provide a good indication of the likelihood of this goal being achieved. The programs identified here address particular issues that have been identified as contributing to keeping girls out of school. Despite the fact that broader concerns such as poor physical infrastructure, a lack of teaching materials and a lack of female teachers are being addressed at the policy level, educational interventions should be sure to take care that local conditions are recognized. Although the state government is responsible for program implementation, it would likely increase clarity of roles and responsibilities if these were outlined more explicitly at the national level.

There is one major issue that must be considered regardless of programs, policies or other interventions and this is the close link between low educational attainment by women and the low social status of women in society in general. In many cases, women are denied access to education and encouraged to end their education prematurely because of their societal and familial roles. The traditional role of the girl child in taking care of younger siblings and helping in the home from an early age is clearly problematic in terms of the achievement of education by girl children. Additionally, marriage traditions which see a woman absorbed into her husband's family are problematic in terms of allowing girls' parents to envision some future benefit of educating girl children. Marriage of girls at an early age is another practice which is seriously limiting to girls in terms of educational opportunities.

These traditional practices are not only indicative of the general situation of gender

relations in the country, but help to ensure that the cycle of inequitable gender relations continues. Until inequitable gender relations in society at large have been eliminated, gender equality in education cannot become a reality. There is no reason to think that gender equality will exist in education when gender equality does not exist in society<sup>15</sup>.

The Mahila Samakhya program in India is working to change women's position in society and, in doing so, change their role in the education system. This program is not only a recognition on the part of the government that inequitable gender relations exist, something that cannot be denied, but also that this is serving as an impediment to gender equality in education and needs to be directly addressed. The issue of gender relations and inequality is crucial in ensuring the future schooling of all girl children.

The current approach to the universalization of elementary education in India, and the achievement of gender equality in elementary education, holds some promise for the future. The NPEGEL and KGBV programs, while fairly new and largely untested, have potential to improve the educational situation in India. The fact that these programs are geared towards those children with multiple layers of disadvantage shows not only a commitment to the education of all children, but a recognition that these children have not been adequately reached by previous interventions.

Achievements have been made in the areas of access to education, enrollment of both girls and boys, and the provision of the physical requirements for elementary education such as schools, teachers and teaching materials. This is a very important first step towards achieving the identified national goals. Had progress not been made in these areas, there would be little chance of this strategy working to ensure the future education of all children in India. The future of the achievement of universal elementary education and gender

equality in education lies in a renewed focus on ensuring completion of primary education and continuation to upper primary education for girl children.

Although educational goals have not been fully achieved, it cannot be said that no progress has been made towards achieving these. Enrollment of girls at both the primary and upper primary levels have improved, as have the proportion of girl children continuing from primary to upper primary level. While these numbers are still quite low, this progress would likely be considered a success were it not for short time limits placed on achievement. If this progress continues into the future, with a renewed commitment to improving quality of education and ensuring that completion and retention rates also improve, there is no reason that India cannot achieve its goal of universalizing elementary education for all children.

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<sup>1</sup> A particularly timely issue is that of the increased involvement of the private sector in education.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the right to education, see Jover, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> This notion will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, but the development outcomes associated with increased levels of girls' education include increased economic productivity and lower fertility or birth rates which both have economic consequences. Brock-Utne's arguments on the politics surrounding targeting girl children for increased education on the basis of decreased birth rates will be discussed at this point as well.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on education for social change, please see Choules, 2007 & Roberts, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The term "Scheduled Caste" refers to those castes which are listed in a schedule which appears as an appendix to the Indian Constitution. "Scheduled Tribes" are referred to as such for the same reason. Special provisions are often made for these groups in educational policy as they are disadvantaged in terms of educational access and achievement. For more information on the caste system and social attitudes, please see Anant, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> For a recent discussion on child labour and economic development, please see Kambhampati & Rajan, 2006. For more information on child labour and education, please see Heady, 2003; Admassie, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> An outlawed, yet widely practiced tradition of providing material goods or financial incentives from the bride's family to the future husband and his family upon marriage. For more information on the practice of dowry, please see Srinivasan, 2005; Stone & James, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> This issue of low teacher input on curriculum and other administrative matters will be addressed at greater length in Chapter Three of this thesis.

<sup>9</sup> The E9 high population countries are: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan.

<sup>10</sup> Although Uttar Pradesh is not the lowest achieving state and there are others not mentioned here that have performed worse, its low educational achievement is included here because of the consequences this has. With over 140 million inhabitants, it is a crucial geographical area in terms of Indian development and low achievement of any kind is worthy of mention.

<sup>11</sup> See above note

<sup>12</sup> An additional program, Non-Formal Education (NFE), is identified in this plan as well. Although this may have relevance for out of school and overage girls, this thesis is concerned with formal education and, as such, this program will not be examined.

<sup>13</sup> "A child-centred and activity based process of learning should be adopted at the primary stage" (GOI, NPE 1986)

<sup>14</sup> Although the government's SSA website indicates the previously mentioned time-bound targets, the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan indicates an earlier target of 2003 for the enrollment of all children.

<sup>15</sup> The relationship between gender, education and societal roles and positions is a complex and circular one. While there is evidence that education may improve women's empowerment and position within society and the home, there is also some suggestion that equality in education cannot occur unless women's empowerment exists to a greater extent in society in general, in particular with reference to marriage and family traditions in

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the case of India. This is not an issue that has been solved in the research and will likely continue to be a source of discussion.



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