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Secondary Education in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh: Gender Dimensions of State Policy and Practice

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Introduction

Linking gender and education to the social policy agenda is not straightforward. Many questions arise, most of which hinge on the kinds of impact education is expected to have on human behaviour, capacities and skills, and on gender identities and relations. In that sense, education within the wider social policy debate is linked to questions of society and citizenship, understandings about modernity and national identity, and the recasting of notions of masculinity and femininity at different historical moments of time. The content of education, the impact of policy choices adopted in the process of meeting universal education agendas, and the ways in which equity and social inclusion concerns are addressed through public institutions, are among the several issues that arise in relation to the reframing of social policy from a gender perspective.

A central proposition of this paper is that the focus on minimum ‘thresholds’ for public investment, in turn derived from the analysis of rates of return to education has contributed to the neglect of female post-primary education. Influenced by Human Capital theory (HCT), ‘gender’ and female education have been central framing discourses of education policy, resulting in substantial policy rhetoric and concern about women’s and girls’ education as a lever of development and progress. In India, acceptance of this global rhetoric has been mediated by particular policy choices, which have resulted in the neglect of the secondary sector, the rise of for-profit schooling at all levels of education, and a fragmented formal elementary education system, with particular implications for achieving gender parity and equality. This has resulted in a range of issues relating to female well-being being erased from the policy map. Girls disappear off the formal education policy agenda past the age of 14, at a crucial age when aspirations can be channelled into opportunities. In this paper, we focus on secondary schooling, which we believe best serves the interests of girls, especially if supported by policies that expand its availability, address socio-cultural constraints that exclude girls (both within society and within the school),

and keep its costs low. We argue that the lack of policy focus on secondary schooling for girls is linked to the curious contradictions between policy rhetoric, on the one hand, and policy prescriptions on the other, where development visions are not matched by policy decision making processes that can realise these visions.

Our choice of Uttar Pradesh (UP) as a case-study is guided by three factors. One, UP is the most populous state in the country, and also considered one of the most socially 'backward' in terms of development indicators. Two, there is recent and high quality research material on education in the state, on the political economy of education (Kingdon and Muzammil 2003), on sociology, gender and education (Jeffery, Jeffery and Jeffery, 2003), and more generally on education provision (Dreze and Gazdar 1996). Third, there has been a concerted attempt in the state to focus on reproductive health and fertility decline.² There are also innovative programmes for empowering women through education that operate outside the formal schooling system. Given the overall correlations drawn between fertility decline and female education, exploring secondary schooling for girls against the backdrop of this orientation towards fertility decline, on the one hand, and empowerment on the other, provides an opportunity to delve deeper in to the gender politics of investment in females.

In this paper, we report primarily on material garnered through secondary research, as well as field work undertaken to explore the status of secondary schooling in UP, particularly in relation to patterns of financial investment and provisioning of single-sex schools for girls. Our empirical research uncovered a vital consideration for gender policy analysis in education - the ways in which wider discourses get played out through particular policy processes at state level, which in turn are dictated by the compulsions of democratic politics as they are played out in India. In that sense, UP offers both an interesting case-study but

² Notably, through a large USAID funded programme in the state, Innovations in Family Planning Services (IFPS).

also an impossibly complex one, given the multiple political actors who inform the education policy agenda (see, for instance, Kingdon and Muzammil's (2003) fascinating account of teacher politics in Uttar Pradesh). Gender seems almost irrelevant in this tableau, although its very irrelevance is in itself a revealing insight into the ways in which rhetoric on gender equality that aims to please diverse publics, from vote-banks (perhaps) to union government and donor agencies, can mask actual practice. In that sense, the account that follows illustrates the 'reality' of policy making in a developing country context, not least the opaqueness of the concept of policy, and the difficulty of tracking what is or is not evidence of 'policy' in an intensely political policy making environment.

The political economy of market and commerce, on the one hand, and complex socio-cultural norms, on the other, find their own ways to influence the realm of policy and education system, often leading to inconsistencies between policy intents and practices adopted at ground level. An analysis of policy remains incomplete unless traced to its translation into implementation and practices at all levels. Policy practices need to be traced through penetrations and informal interactions at various levels, making it difficult to collect evidence following 'scientific' methods. Much of the empirical information presented in this paper is based on 'leads' gained through informal interactions. It is particularly difficult to track policy practices when there is a conflict between vested interests of socio-economic-political considerations and stated policy priorities, as we found to be the case with girls' secondary education in UP.

State policy and practice on female secondary schooling in Uttar Pradesh

In this paper we focus primarily on the resourcing, management and provisioning of secondary schooling in UP, with a view to assessing implications for gender equitable secondary schooling. Characterised by very low participation rates and a slow pace of change in educational indicators over the years, secondary education has not received desired attention in terms of either policy initiatives or

resource allocation. The increase in real per student expenditure in nominal terms at secondary level has not kept pace with that in the elementary education. The major proportion of state expenditure has been on maintaining the existing provisioning, mainly on teachers' salary in government and aided sectors with little emphasis on expansion of services. Instead, private investment has been encouraged by relaxing the norms and conditions required for recognition of schools and therefore compromising on the range and quality of facilities available. A policy initiative in the form of infrastructure grants to direct private investment to expand provisioning for single-sex girls' exclusive schools has been diluted by allowing boys also to be admitted. A gender-differentiated scheme of studies offering 'feminine' subjects to girls further reinforces gender stereotypes. In an environment where the majority of out-of-school children are girls belonging to disadvantaged socio-economic groups and girls' education is not a social norm, increased privatisation proves counter-productive. These issues are elaborated and discussed in the following sub-sections.

a) Gender and Secondary Schooling in Uttar Pradesh

Secondary education in UP is characterised by an overall low participation rates and sharp gender differentials. While the participation rates are lower, gender disparities are higher than the national average in the state. The overall Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) was close to 25 percent during the late 1990s, this being only about 15 percent for girls. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER is only 0.45 in the state as against 0.65 for the country as a whole (Table I). Only about 27 percent of girls enrolling in grade I reach grade X and only about 60 percent of these complete the grade (Table II). Despite substantial increase in enrolments, the GERs are not improving in the state reflecting the fact that the rate of increase in enrolment is barely enough to keep pace with the rate of increase in the population.

An interesting feature of girls' schooling participation in UP is that though notable gender differentials exist in favour of boys in transition rates from primary to upper primary and from upper primary to secondary, especially the latter, the trend changes when it comes to the transition rate between secondary and senior secondary (Table III). A significantly smaller proportion of boys studying in class X continue with their senior secondary schooling as compared to the proportion of girls studying at the same level. Pass percentages are also higher for girls at both grades X and XII, explaining to some extent the higher transition rate at that level (Table IV). A high proportion of boys join the labour force at this age, which also is partially responsible for their discontinuation from schooling after grade X.

Relatively low transition rates from primary to upper primary, and upper primary to secondary for girls indicate that the secondary schooling participation patterns cannot be understood in complete isolation. It is especially true for the fact that the largest drop-out takes place within primary level and only 38 percent of girls enrolled in grade I reach grade V (Table II). As a corollary to this, the GERs at upper primary level are significantly lower than that at the primary level (Table V). A combination of high drop out within primary stage, better academic performances at secondary level and a high transition rate from secondary to senior secondary indicates that though a relatively small proportion of girls continue with their post primary schooling, those who continue perform better in examinations and a greater proportion among them is likely to complete the senior secondary level. However, higher transition rates for post-secondary stage might be indicative of gender differentiation taking a different shape where girls do not have equal opportunities to join the labour market.

b) The Resource Gap

A perusal of the trends in the intra-sectoral distribution in education financing pattern makes it obvious that starting from the 1960s, school education as a

whole received more emphasis in terms of financial allocation. This was a shift from the relatively greater emphasis being laid to higher education in the past. However, within school education, the relative stress in favour of elementary education as against secondary education has been greater especially since 1980s. The low priority accorded to secondary education, we argue, adversely affected the expansion of state-sponsored schooling facilities for girls at post-primary level thereby affecting their participation. The absence of gender-segregated data for finances stops us from taking the analysis further.

Table VI shows that school education occupied about 60 percent of total expenditure in the sector during 1951-52, which went down to about 53 percent in 1960-61. It then increased to more than 72 percent in 1970-71 and went on to occupy nearly 88 percent of the total education budget in 2001-2002. However, the increase was largely due to enlarged expenditure on elementary education and the relative share of secondary education remained static around 30-34 percent of total education expenditure during the 1980s and 1990s. What is more revealing is that nearly 95-98 percent of the total expenditure on secondary education has been the non-plan expenditure, i.e., the expenses incurred on maintaining the system and only about 2-5 percent is being spent annually on plan head or the new activities such as expansion of coverage by opening new schools or improvement in the quality of teaching by providing more facilities or organising professional development activities for teachers (Table VII).

The proportion of plan expenditure or the new investments, on the other hand, has been higher for elementary education, especially since early 1990s. This was the period when the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project (UPBEP) followed by District Primary Education Project (DPEP) was launched in a large number of districts of the state. While the former was an exclusive project for UP and covered the entire elementary education sector, the latter was part of the national initiative and covered primary grades (I-V) only. Both these projects in UP were funded by the World Bank, the former being the first basic education project

being financed by them in India. Although the contribution of these externally aided projects to total expenses of the sector has not been considerable, they formed significant proportion of the new investments. The total amount coming from external sources amounted to nearly Rs.20000.00 million during 1993-2002³, which was about 82 percent of total new investments on elementary education in UP during the period. The project design for both UPBEP and DPEP demanded that the state government provide about 15 percent of the total project cost. Taking both external and internal allocations together these two projects accounted for more than 96 percent of total plan expenditure or the new investment during the period. This means that the high allocation for new investment during this period was mainly due to the presence of externally aided projects and only about 4 percent of the total allocations was spent on areas / items not covered by these two projects.

The neglect of secondary education in UP is obvious from the slow increase in per student expenditure in the sub-sector during the 1990s especially in comparison to that at the elementary stage (Table VIII). In real terms, the per-student expenditure rose by 8.6 percent per annum for elementary education between 1980-81 and 2000-2001 at 1993-94 prices whereas it was only 3.79 percent for per-student expenditure in secondary education during the same period. The annual rate of growth in real per student expenditure between 1993-94 and 2000-2001 was 7.25 percent for elementary education and 3.17 for secondary education. It could, however, be pointed out that the per student expenditure itself has been significantly higher at secondary level and hence the higher rate of growth for elementary education is to level these two. This needs to be understood in terms of different nature of education processes and educational management structures at these two levels. The high per student expenditure at secondary stage in comparison to elementary stage is due to substantially less number of students, significantly lower Teacher-Pupil Ratio and relatively higher salary levels in the former. The size of physical infrastructure

³ Based on estimates provided in the Implementation Completion Reports (World Bank) of the two programmes.

including laboratories and libraries at this stage is huge as compared to elementary stage and it is natural for per student expenditure to be higher. The low rate of growth in real per student expenditure at secondary stage coupled with the fact that almost entire amount goes for salary suggests a decline in expenditure on development and quality improvement.

Although it is difficult to surmise that the presence of externally funded projects led to diversion of funds from other sectors to elementary education, it is obvious that these projects forced the state government to maintain its own investment expenditure for the sub-sector. Once the project period came to an end, the state was also committed to maintain all the investments, raising the non-plan or the maintenance expenditure in the sub-sector. Though there cannot be two opinions about the need for increasing the level of investments in elementary education, doing so at the cost of other sub sectors is questionable. In absence of a clear policy focus and any direction from central government or external agency, no such pressure existed for maintaining or enhancing expenditure for secondary education in UP. As discussed earlier, the external agencies, in this case the World Bank, emphasised increased investment in primary education, though not always explicitly so, even at the cost of other sectors on the grounds of higher rate of social and private returns.

The argument based on rate of returns approach also ignores the point that the different sub-sectors of education are inter-dependent and lop-sided investments could prove counterproductive in the long run. A number of studies on elementary school participation in India have indicated that the availability of schools teaching higher grades also encourages enrolment and completion at earlier stages.⁴ A comparison of statistics showing girls' enrolment for primary stage in schools where only primary stage is available and the schools which provide education up to the secondary level in UP showed that the proportion of

⁴ See Vaidyanathan and Nair (2000) and Jha and Jhingran (2002)

girls' enrolment at primary stage is higher in the latter.⁵ However, these complications are rarely paid attention in policy-making process because of a short-sighted sub-sectoral approach followed increasingly by Indian states especially since early 1990s.

There also exist other important linkages between different levels of education. For instance, the spread of higher education is associated with increase in income levels and its distribution, which in turn is associated positively with increased demand for girls' primary education. The quality of teachers available for primary education is directly dependent on the quality and spread of secondary education in any country. The availability of women teachers, which is considered critical for promoting girls' participation and completion at primary level, cannot be ensured in rural primary schools without encouraging secondary education among rural girls. Women teachers constitute only about one fourth of total teachers in UP, their proportion being lower than that in rural areas.⁶ Therefore, it is difficult to achieve universalisation of even elementary stage without greater investments in other stages of education.

c) The Policy and Management Context

The absence of a clearly outlined policy and comprehensive management framework in secondary education further highlights the neglect of secondary education in the state. The lack of any comprehensive policy and focus to guide resources and management of secondary education in the state makes it difficult to trace policy discourse as the understanding is gained through review of reports of the committees, legal Acts, schemes and the office orders. Although UP has been one of the first Indian states to establish an autonomous board of secondary education⁷ and appoint a Commission for Secondary Education

⁵ These statistics have not been included in this paper.

⁶ See Jha and Bhardwaj (2001) for detailed analysis on women teachers in rural India.

⁷ The Board of High School and Intermediate Examinations was established as an autonomous body functioning under the Directorate of Secondary Education in 1922 in UP.

immediately after independence⁸, the issue of girls' participation in secondary schooling and making education gender sensitive has received only scanty attention so far. The Secondary Education Commission (1952) dealt with a number of important aspects but did not include girls' education as a separate issue in spite of large gender disparities existing in the schooling participation patterns. However, the report mentioned several measures including building of separate sanitary facilities and retiring rooms, and hiring of women teachers in co-educational institutions to increase girls' participation.⁹

One of the important features of secondary education in UP as also in many other Indian states is the vast presence of privately managed educational institutions. Secondary schools in Uttar Pradesh can be put in three broad management categories of Government, Aided and Unaided private schools. Government schools are fully financed and managed by the state government. Aided schools are managed privately by individuals, trusts, societies or corporate bodies but funded almost entirely by the government. The government bears almost the entire recurrent costs of these schools by providing grants-in-aid for salaries. Unaided private schools are managed and financed privately but recognised by the government. While the government and aided schools charge no tuition fee and only nominal other charges, unaided schools are for-profit organisations and charge substantial tuition and other fees.

The proportion of government schools remained almost static during the 1980s and 1990s while that of aided schools increased till 1986 after which no new school was brought under grants-in-aid scheme. The growth of private unaided secondary schools has been spectacular during the 1980s and 1990s. The number increased from a modest 845 in 1994-95 to 6541 in 2001-02, registering a nearly eight-fold increase. The proportion of private schools, especially unaided ones, has gone up to more than half of total secondary schools in UP after

⁸ A special Secondary Education Commission (known as Acharya Narendra Dev Committee) was appointed in UP which submitted its report in 1952.

⁹ Based on Sharadindu (2001)

bifurcation of the state, reflecting the fact that parts of UP that constituted the newly carved state, Uttaranchal, had higher number of government and aided schools (Table IX). Near stagnation in the number of government and aided schools which charge only nominal fees and expansion only through fee-charging private unaided schools reflects the state's policy of promoting privatisation. It is despite the fact that there exists apparently a greater demand for admissions in government school as compared to private including aided schools because of a common perception that these are better resourced and have a higher level of quality.¹⁰ The results of the terminal stages at grade X and XII of all schools affiliated to the UP board indicate that this perception is not ill-founded (Table X).

The increased focus on privatising secondary stage of education has negative implications for girls' participation. In a situation where girls' education is not valued, the demand for fee-charging school system is bound to be low as parents would not be willing to pay high charges for their daughters' education. As mentioned earlier, the increase in schooling participation at primary level witnessed during the 1990s is largely on account of demand from poorer and disadvantaged sections, and hence their capacity to pay is also limited. The continuation of girls from these sections depends crucially on state support and increased privatisation acts against that. But ironically, the only two schemes started to support girls' education during the late 1990s focussed on promoting unaided, fee-charging schools. These two schemes were meant to direct the private investments towards opening of single-sex schools for girls, but even these were subverted with the outcome of further discouraging girls' access to secondary schooling. How political considerations successfully subverted the policy goal is discussed in detail in the next section.

¹⁰ Based on personal interactions with people and functionaries belonging to government and private school systems.

The massive presence of private managed, aided and unaided, schools makes the role of regulatory framework crucial. A regulatory framework is important for directing resources and provisioning, maintaining essential physical facilities and adequate number of teachers, and improving the quality of teaching-learning processes, or in other words to establish a system of accountability. Perusal of the existing norms, guidelines and directives indicates a near absence of accountability mechanisms not only for unaided schools but also for aided schools that survive on substantial grants from state exchequer. Gender focus even in terms of ensuring facilities and creating enabling environment for girls is entirely lacking.

Successive committees and national policy statements have highlighted the need for increase in the number of women teachers in the light of parental insecurity and resultant restricted mobility of girls as well as create an enabling environment by providing positive role models in an otherwise non-inspiring environment. This is especially true for rural areas. However, the state does not have any policy for reservation for hiring of women teachers at secondary level either in government or aided schools. Though the government funds the entire salary bill for aided schools making this item the single largest constituent of the government's expenditure on this sub-sector and the teachers enjoy all the advantages of government service, no regulatory frame for their recruitment and conduct exists in the state. Teachers from government and aided schools enjoy substantial political clout and resist any effort to have accountability measures in place. Kingdon and Muzzamil's research shows that UP is one among only four states that has an upper chamber of the state legislature, and teachers have guaranteed representation in this body. They note two kinds of political influence:

“Political influence has been of two types: one, from above which has been instrumental in shaping the education system; and two, the lobbying and pressure groups from within the system originating at the local levels (and uniting at the state-level) in the form of organizations of teachers. **Education-related legislation in UP has often been framed under immense lobbying pressure from**

teachers, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. Teachers in school (as opposed to higher education) have been instrumental in determining the local base of political parties in the state.”

(2003:6, our emphasis)

d) Provisioning Female Secondary Education: the Politics of Investment

Since pre-independence days UP has followed the practice of providing single sex schools at all stages of education. Considering the fact that the availability of a school within reach was more important for participation of both girls and boys as compared to the school being single-sex for the primary stage age-group children, the provision was discontinued at primary level during 1970s. This measure was based, and perhaps rightly so, on the belief that girls in this age-group are young and parents do not mind sending their daughters to co-educational institutions provided the school is not situated very far from their habitation. However, the same logic does not apply to the secondary level as parents are reluctant to send their adolescent daughters to co-educational schools for reasons elaborated earlier. The availability of single sex schools, therefore, becomes critical at this level. Tables XI and XII show that the number of single sex secondary schools has been increasing throughout the second half of the last century, the rate of growth being the highest during the first thirty years of independence, i.e., during 1950s, 60s and 70s. The annual rate of growth slowed down during 1980s and the early 90s but again picked up during the late 90s. Although disaggregated statistics by management are not available, it is obvious that the increase in the number of single-sex schools for girls during the late 1990s is largely on account of unaided schools. No new school was added in the grants-in-aid category, and the number of new schools upgraded to secondary level in the government sector has not been large. Increase in the number of unaided girls' schools during the late 1990s can be attributed directly to two schemes introduced during this period, aimed at creating incentives for investment in secondary single-sex schools for girls.

The first of these two schemes was introduced by the state government of UP in 1997 making any new private single-sex school for girls opened in a hitherto uncovered block headquarter eligible for a one-time infrastructure grant of Rs.1 million.¹¹ Once all the block headquarters were covered, a new scheme was brought to provide Rs.2 million to any new girls' school being opened in an uncovered *Nyaya Panchayat*.¹² The fact that a good number of unaided private girls' secondary schools were opened reflects a positive response to these schemes. However, these are fee-charging schools with no aid from the government for paying salaries or incurring any other recurrent expenditure. This means these schools had to survive on their own revenue, the fees collected from parents being the main source. The demand for fee-charging private schools for girls in these interior areas did not seem to take off. As mentioned earlier, the value for girls' education not being very high and the low paying capacity of poorer households together act to keep the demand for fee-charging schools for girls low. The owners of the schools opened under these schemes demanded that they be allowed to admit boys as well. Initially, in 1999, all schools opened under these schemes were apparently allowed to admit boys by an executive office order, which was later revised after a gap of two years. Under the revised order, only those schools that are located in rural areas were allowed to admit boys along with girls.¹³ It implied that schools opened under this scheme and located in urban areas could not admit boys. The separate statistics for enrolment is not available in the public domain to indicate the proportion of boys and girls in these schools.

This experience shows that the girls' schooling participation in rural areas cannot be promoted by expansion of provisioning through fee-charging schools. It also reveals the role of political considerations in policy-making and their implementation. While the larger concern for girls' education at the national and international levels made it a good political decision to have directed schemes to

¹¹ Block is a sub-district administrative unit in India. It usually covers about 50 to 100 primary schools.

¹² *Nyaya panchayat* is a smaller administrative unit covering several villages and about 15-20 primary schools.

¹³ The revised order of the state government (order number 2501-8-2001-3009 | 5 | / 94) is dated August 17, 2001. It revised the order issued on September 29, 1999 (order no. 15-8-99-3009 | 5 | / 94).

improve provisioning of girls' schools, narrow political and electoral considerations at the local level demanded measures which subverted the very basis of allowing subsidy for a private enterprise. Most of these schools were opened by local politicians who first used the scheme to access public money for their private initiative and later exercised their political influence to get an order passed which allows them to make their enterprise initially viable and later profitable. These facts are not easily traceable as the available aggregate statistics do not provide any pointers and only a deeper analysis of executive office orders and other such directives help reveal such subversive attempts.

The rate of growth in enrolment slowed down during the 1990s especially the later part of the decade for all stages of education. The growth rate for girls' enrolment, however, has been higher as compared to boys at all stages. It is natural as girls constitute vast majority of out-of-school children in all age-groups. Nonetheless, despite higher growth rate for enrolment, girls constitute only about 36 to 39 percent of total enrolment at primary and upper-primary stages and only 26 percent at secondary stage in 2001-02. The fact that major expansion at secondary stages has taken place in fee-charging private unaided schools is certainly one of the factors for slowing down of the enrolment growth rate for both boys and girls, especially the latter, in 1990s. In an environment where girls' education is not a highly valued choice, increased privatisation is bound to act against their schooling participation.

The above analysis makes it clear that secondary education in UP is characterised by resource gap in public funding with its implications for expansion of provisioning at this stage. As a corollary to this there has been an increasing focus on promoting privatisation through direct and indirect measures. Privatisation has not been complemented by a suitable regulatory framework outlining directions and accountability mechanisms which has allowed market forces and political considerations to play a free and unchecked role. The absence of concrete and full-proof interventions to enhance appropriate

provisioning for girls' education proves that it is more of rhetoric than substance. The fact that the rate of growth for boys' enrolment has been even slower than that for girls shows that increased privatisation has hurt their participation as well.

e) The Socio-cultural Context, Gender stereotyping and the Secondary curriculum

The fact that in spite of very low enrolment ratios for girls at secondary level in UP fee-charging single sex girl schools for girls failed to attract adequate number of girls in the state indicate towards lack of sufficient demand for secondary schooling of girls, at least in rural areas. It also shows that though provisioning plays an important role, only provisioning, that too through private profit-making institutions, is not the way to increase girls' participation at secondary stage of schooling. However, no policy initiative aimed to influence demand for education is visible at secondary stage in UP. Some scholarship schemes exist for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students but they are not necessarily meant for girls. The coverage is also extremely small and they constitute less than one percent of total expenditure on secondary education. However, it is important to recognise that several schemes exist, focusing on encouraging girls' enrolment at primary and upper primary levels and appear to have played their role in increasing participation at those stages and to some extent at secondary stage as well. These include free textbooks and provision for scholarship for girls. Under UPBEP and DPEP, efforts were also made to review the textbooks for gender biases and train teachers for gender sensitivity.

The scheme of studies, curriculum design and content at secondary and senior secondary stages could itself be important means for initiating a change in existing gender positions and influence the constructs of masculinity and femininity in the society. In this context, the 1968 national policy's emphasis on undifferentiated curriculum till grade X assumes significance. The role of pressures to join 'womanly' courses, non-availability of non-traditional courses for

girls and women, gender stereotypes in both official and hidden curriculum and negative attitude of teachers have been recognised as constraints by Ramamurti Committee report (1991) which formed the basis of the Programme of Action (POE), 1992. Although it is not possible to delve into all these aspects of curriculum, the analysis undertaken shows that some of the existing practices in UP reinforce rather than question gender stereotyping. Apart from the fact that the curriculum design has no space for some critical skills, information and knowledge areas crucial for adolescent girls in their specific contexts, the existing scheme of studies also practices gender differentiation to the disadvantage of girls.

With adoption of 10+2+3 system and a unified curricular approach, the state adopted a new scheme of studies in 1998. Under this scheme, all students are supposed to successfully complete in seven subjects. These include five subjects with no or little choice: Science, Social Science, Hindi, one more Indian Language, and Mathematics. While Mathematics is compulsory for boys, it is not so for girls. Girls have a choice of opting for Home Science in place of Mathematics. The state offers two types of courses in Mathematics, one is known as Mathematics and the other as Elementary Mathematics. While boys have a choice between Mathematics and Elementary Mathematics, girls have an additional option available in Home Science. This practice not only goes against the very philosophy of undifferentiated curriculum, it also strengthens the existing stereotypes that girls are not capable of doing well in Mathematics. What makes the situation worse is that majority of single sex girls' schools in rural areas do not offer the choice of Mathematics, the only available options are Elementary Mathematics and Home Science. In case of two additional subjects where students have wider choices available, the single sex girls' schools usually offer limited options of 'womanly' subjects such as sewing, cooking, etc. The scheme provides for a number of options including 'non-womanly' courses such as commerce, agriculture, accountancy, etc. but most of these are not offered in

majority of girls' schools and they are forced to opt for among whatever is available.

The rationale for having the choice of Elementary Mathematics and Home Science, and 'womanly' optional subjects stems from the need to respond to 'demand'. The very presence of this option of Home Science in place of Mathematics for girls strengthens the existing notions of masculinity and femininity. It is rarely realised that the school is also responsible for creating 'demand' and not only responding to demand. In any case these are reflections of societal expectations from feminine role of women and whether girls are also interested in the same has rarely been investigated. The societal expectations and family pressures to opt for 'womanly' subjects find an expression in this choice. Moreover, the school strengthens the demand for stereotyped courses as the choice of opting non-womanly subjects is only notional in most of the single sex girls' schools. The 'practical' problem of not finding enough teachers for Mathematics and other such subjects to teach in girls' schools is often cited as a reason for not offering the course. It is not considered viable to have a teacher if only a few students are opting for the subject. What is not realised that unless more students including girls are encouraged to opt for those subjects the shortage of teachers is going to continue. The fact that these practices have been retained in the latest curriculum changes reflects the lack of a guiding vision based on notions of gender equality to guide policy planning. These practices perpetuate gender disadvantage and the school system becomes an agent of reinforcement rather than of change in the process.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that education policy initiatives remain divorced from broader visions of gender justice and social policy, partly on account of the continuing dominance of discourses of investment in female education, which rely on identifying thresholds for minimum public action. Although there are multiple discourses influenced by diverse actors in the education policy arena, these do not seem to translate into policies and practices that have an impact on female schooling in a way that reflects the reality of girls' education today.

We make three specific points. First, we argue that at a symbolic level, the continuing sway of the idea of the 'educated person' purely in terms of human capital has resulted in mechanistic definitions of what it is people are assumed to gain from education. This, arguably, reduces the focus on developing policies appropriate to girls and boys at different stages of the life-cycle, and places issues of quality and equity at the fringes of policy action. Combined with institutional biases and the political challenges of promoting gender equality, claims for investment in women that continually emphasise women's role in helping their families, communities and nations, end up reinforcing the core messages of human capital.

However, we also argue that 'gender' does not operate only in the symbolic arena and that symbolic discourses are not all-powerful. Discourses can and do get renegotiated in the realm of practice. In our attempt to map the operation of discourses and practices in the secondary schooling arena, we found that at all levels the neglect of secondary education for girls was reinforced. State policies for equity, such as in the UP case, are thus implemented through market-mediated processes. While we do not wish to suggest that this is the result of a linear process of translation of a particular [albeit hegemonic] policy discourse at different levels of policy decision making and execution, our case-study has

shown how political actors at local level can act to subvert policies enacted in favour of women, resulting in the dilution of state commitments to gender, even if these were weak at the outset.

In the case of the policy enacted in UP to encourage female secondary schooling, we argue that this was weak to start with because it omitted to build up the demand-side of girls' secondary schooling, resulting in low uptake of the schools made available. The neglect of a focus on the demand for girls' schooling also meant that when the policy was reversed, through the actions of private providers, girls and parents affected by this move had barely any voice to challenge the change in policy. This leads us to strongly argue for the active role of states, even where private providers are in play, to not just subsidise the costs of schooling, but also build up demand to ensure that education provision is seen as a matter of right, and not a privilege to be bestowed and then taken away.

Our third and final point refers to the issue of the outcomes of policy. Given the emphasis on gender parity in secondary education as an MDG and EFA target, as well as the emphasis on gender equality in the EFA goals, the issue of gender and education cannot rest at the level of grand policy pronouncements on the importance of investment in women. This point has global relevance, but here we speak to the Indian context. While elementary education is finally getting the impetus it has been promised for decades, care has to be taken that the policy directions followed for this sub-sector do not have negative implications for the sub-sector that follows. If elementary education persists in creating parallel schools for the poor and disadvantaged, and if all schools are not improved in terms of their quality, transition to secondary schools in terms of the access of the poorest, and of girls, will continue to be difficult to achieve. This fact, combined with the neglect of the secondary sub-sector in terms of providing girl-friendly single-sex schools that are relatively cost-free, will mean that girls are pushed out of education at a time when they need resources to develop the capacities, skills and aptitudes that will support their transition to adulthood.

Table I: Gross Enrolment Ratios at Secondary Level (Grades IX to XII)

Year	Uttar Pradesh				All India			
	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI
1980-81	32.1	39.4	11.3	0.28	17.3	23.1	11.1	0.48
1990-91	23.82	34.79	11.15	0.32	19.28	33.89	10.27	0.30
1994-95	25.51	33.31	15.64	0.47	30.95	37.19	23.82	0.64
1995-96	25.45	33.36	15.48	0.46	31.00	37.10	23.80	0.64
1996-97	25.12	33.04	15.17	0.46	31.4	37.55	24.42	0.65

Note: 1. GPI (Gender Parity Index) = GER for girls divided by GER for Boys

2. These are actual data. Data available for later periods are provisional.

Source: A Handbook of School Education and Allied Statistics (1996), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GOI), 1996 for 1980-81 and 1990-91 figures; Education in India (94-95, 95-96 and 96-97), MHRD, GOI, 2001, 2002, 2003 for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97

Table II: Crude Drop-out Rates and Proportion of Repeaters

	Uttar Pradesh			All India		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Drop out rates (grades I to V) 2000-01	56.51	52.93	62.11	40.67	39.71	41.90
Drop out Rates (grades I to VIII) 2000-01	61.02	56.26	68.54	53.67	50.33	57.95
Drop-out Rates (grades I-X), 2000-01	62.11	56.22	73.17	68.58	66.41	71.51
Repeaters (%) in grades IX and X, 1996-97	13.84	14.88	10.68	6.49	7.02	5.57

Source: Annual Report MHRD 2001-02 for drop-out rates and Education in India (1996-97), MHRD, Government of India, 2003 for proportion of repeaters.

Table III: Crude Transition Rates for Different Levels of School Education (1998-99 to 1999-2000)

Transition Rates	Uttar Pradesh			All India		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
Primary to Upper primary	92.63	96.15	85.80	89.00	91.60	85.48
Upper primary to secondary	83.2	91.7	69.5	83.0	83.1	82.7
Secondary to senior secondary	40.2	34.7	56.8	72.2	72.9	71.1

Note: This has been calculated by taking enrolment in the entry year as a percentage of enrolment in terminal year of the previous level during the previous year. This does not take contributions of migration from other states, repetition, etc. into consideration. Also, the fact that a large percentage of children never reach grade V, the terminal grade for primary education, is not reflected in this Table.

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, MHRD, Government of India

Table IV: Gender-wise Pass Percentages for Grades X and XII, Uttar Pradesh

Year	Class X		Class XII	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1996	37.01	65.61	68.16	84.17
1997	40.32	69.57	62.41	82.39
1998	18.21	54.92	46.31	74.24
1999	25.62	66.91	53.06	78.49
2000	24.46	47.19	60.37	81.88
2001	26.78	53.27	63.49	81.42
2002	31.73	59.39	62.34	84.56

Source: Board examination Results at a Glance (2000, 2001, 2002), Board for Secondary and Intermediate Education, Uttar Pradesh.

Table V: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at Different Stages of School Education

	Primary Level(grades I-V)				Upper Primary Level (Grades VI-VIII)				Secondary Level (grades IX-XII)			
	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI	Total	Boys	Girls	GPI
1980-81	62.50	81.80	40.30	0.49	32.10	56.30	18.00	0.32	32.10	39.40	11.30	0.28
1990-91	71.06	89.13	50.98	0.57	27.33	63.13	25.62	0.40	27.33	34.79	19.69	0.56
1994-95	61.20	72.03	48.86	0.68	25.51	55.52	31.28	0.56	25.51	33.31	15.64	0.47
1995-96	61.19	71.95	48.92	0.68	25.45	53.24	29.96	0.56	25.45	33.36	15.48	0.46
1996-97	61.13	71.71	49.02	0.68	25.12	51.24	28.91	0.56	25.12	33.04	15.17	0.46

GPI (Gender Parity Index) = GER for girls divided by GER for Boys

Source: A Handbook of School Education and Allied Statistics (1996), MHRD, Government of India, 1996 for 1980-81 and 1990-91 figures; Education in India (94-95, 95-96 and 96-97), MHRD, Government of India, 2001, 2002, 2003 for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97

Table VI: Expenditure on School Education by Levels in Uttar Pradesh, India

Rupees Million

Year	Elementary Education	Secondary Education	Total Education*
1951-52	35.03 (47.16)	16.78 (22.58)	74.29
1960-61	60.32 (33.89)	35.03 (19.68)	178.02
1970-71	364.26 (48.33)	179.48 (23.81)	753.701
1980-81	1714.47 (49.42)	1097.20 (31.63)	3469.20
1981-82	1882.91 (48.25)	1379.97 (35.36)	3901.80
1990-91	12109.42 (58.22)	6149.82 (29.57)	20798.40
1991-92	10659.08 (53.70)	6781.22 (34.16)	19849.50
1992-93	12146.87 (53.57)	7670.17 (33.82)	22676.80
1993-94	13335.88 (53.89)	8034.28 (32.47)	24745.90
1994-95	16101.16 (55.10)	9505.75 (32.53)	29221.99
1995-96	18621.84 (55.80)	10881.83 (32.60)	33374.74
1996-97	21306.519 (55.73)	11976.857 (31.33)	38232.36
1997-98	22521.59 (54.43)	13498.13 (32.62)	41375.12
1998-99	33168.06 (56.76)	18145.52 (31.05)	584327.71
1999-2000	26892.21 (51.88)	17546.05 (33.85)	51830.51
2000-2001	34271.07 (55.91)	19156.93 (31.25)	31299242
2001-2002**	34446.74 (57.88)	18041.08 (30.31)	59517.16

*including higher and other education

**Budget Estimates

Note:

1. Figures in parenthesis show the percentage share of respective level in total education expenditure.
2. These figures reveal expenditure on Revenue Account of the Education Department. In addition to these, a small amount of expenditure is incurred on Capital Account of the department, by other departments and ministries. However, together they account for less than one to two percent of the total expenditure on revenue account of the department.

Source: Budgeted Resources for Education (1951-52 to 1993-94), Department of Education, MHRD, Government of India, New Delhi, 1995 and Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, Government of India (Different Years)

Table VII: Percentage Distribution between Plan and Non-plan expenditures on Elementary and Secondary Education, Uttar Pradesh, India

Year	Elementary Education		Secondary Education	
	Plan	Non-Plan	Plan	Non-Plan
1970-71	12.24	87.76	4.93	95.07
1980-81	3.33	96.67	2.17	97.83
1981-82	4.39	95.61	3.07	96.92
1990-91	8.34	91.66	2.91	97.09
1991-92	8.06	91.94	6.04	93.96
1992 -93	8.26	91.74	4.78	95.22
1993-94	11.81	88.19	4.27	95.73
1994-95	12.73	87.27	4.32	95.68
1995-96	12.84	87.16	6.19	93.81
1996-97	13.52	86.48	4.61	95.39
1997-98	12.95	87.05	1.66	98.34
1998-99	11.84	88.16	3.05	96.95
1999-2000	4.18	95.82	1.42	98.58
2000-2001	9.33	90.67	4.64	95.36
2001-2002**	7.03	94.93	6.07	93.93

**Budget Estimates

Source: Based on Figures provided in Budgeted Resources for Education (1951-52 to 1993-94), Department of Education, MHRD, Government of India New Delhi, 1995 and Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, Government of India (Different Years)

Table VIII: Per Student Expenditure at Elementary and Secondary Education Levels, Uttar Pradesh, India

Year	Elementary Education				Secondary Education			
	Total Expenditure	Total Enrolment	Per Student Expenditure		Total Expenditure	Total Enrolment	Per Student Expenditure	
			Monetary	Real*			Monetary	Real*
1980-81	1714.47	12762037	134.34	419.81	1097.20	1853459	591.97	1849.90
1990-91	12109.42	16466813	735.24	1007.17	6179.82	2955073	2081.11	2850.83
1993-94	13335.88	17593289	758.00	758.00	8034.28	3015817	2664.04	2664.04
1994-95	16101.16	17835564	902.75	828.21	9505.75	3045167	3071.11	2817.53
1995-96	18621.84	18055640	1031.35	866.68	10881.83	3154719	3449.38	2898.63
1996-97	21306.51	16602422	1283.33	1002.60	11976.85	3205232	3736.65	2919.25
1997-98	22521.59	18481210	1218.62	889.50	13498.13	3239513	4166.71	3041.39
1998-99	33168.06	18680569	1775.53	1175.84	18145.52	3274449	5541.54	3669.89
1999-00	26892.21	19019535	1413.92	912.20	17546.05	3334369	5262.18	3394.95
2000-01	34446.74	18049991	1908.40	1142.75	18041.06	3318222	5436.97	3255.67

*At 1993-94 prices (Taken from Economic Survey, Government of India)

Note: While total expenditure is given in terms of Rupees million, per student expenditure is in terms of rupees.

Source: Table VII for total expenditure, *Shiksha Ki Pragati* (Different Years), Government of Uttar Pradesh for enrolment except for 1993-94 and 1994-95 and Education in India, MHRD, Government of India for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Table IX: Percentage distribution of Secondary schools by Management in UP, India

Year	Secondary Schools (grade 9-12)			
	Government + Local bodies	Private		
		Aided	Un-Aided	Total
1980-81	16.04	NA	NA	83.95
1990-91	17.79	73.86	8.34	82.20
1994-95	23.00	64.85	12.25	77.0
1995-96	22.96	64.41	12.15	77.04
1996-97	22.87	64.61	12.45	77.13
2001-02*	4.70	38.50	56.80	95.20

NA: Not Available

*2001-02 distribution denotes the position of schools that remained in UP after bifurcation of the state into UP and Uttaranchal.

Source: Education in India (94-95, 95-96 and 96-97), MHRD, Government of India, 2001, 2002, 2003 for 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97, and Directorate of Secondary Education, Uttar Pradesh for 2001-02.

Table X: Number of examinees and Pass Percentages in different types of schools (class X and class XII Examinations – 2002), UP

	Class X examinations				Class XII examinations			
	Govt. schools	Aided schools	Unaided schools	Others	Govt. schools	Aided schools	Unaided schools	Others
Number of schools	464 (5.09)	4467 (48.97)	3917 (42.94)	273 (2.99)	237 (4.56)	3506 (67.42)	1301 (25.02)	156 (3.0)
Number of examinees	80267 (4.16)	1043817 (55.02)	706016 (37.21)	68531 (3.61)	44499 (6.87)	473530 (73.09)	118962 (18.36)	10869 (1.68)
Students passed	78920 (4.47)	421868 (53.13)	310199 (39.07)	26367 (3.32)	32922 (7.0)	341978 (72.79)	86695 (18.45)	8239 (1.75)
Pass percentages	45.01	40.42	43.94	38.47	73.98	72.22	72.88	75.80
% schools with pass % between 0-20%	14.65	18.27	16.93	56.77	0.42	0.77	1.31	2.56

Note: Figures in parenthesis depict percentages for respective types of schools.

Source: Based on data provided by Board for Secondary and Intermediate Education, Uttar Pradesh.

Table XI: Growth of Schools in Uttar Pradesh, India

	Number of Educational Institutions								
	Primary Education			Upper Primary Level (grades 6-8)			Secondary Level (grades 9-12)		
	Total	Girls (Single sex)	% of girls to total	Total	Girls (Single sex)	% of girls to total	Total	Girls (Single sex)	% of girls to total
1950-51	31979	2520	7.88	2854	468	16.3	987	154	15.6
1960-61	40083	4927	7.93	4335	661	15.2	1771	282	15.9
1970-71	62127	11624	18.71	8787	2008	22.8	3415	581	17.0
1980-81	70606			13555	3200	23.6	5178	758	14.6
1985-86	73490			14728	3377	22.9	5709	848	14.8
1990-91	77111			15072	3319	22.0	5999	886	14.7
1991-92	78085			15328	3447	22.4	6060	889	14.6
1992-93*	74889			17730	3610	20.4	6115	560	9.16
1993-94	79522			15546	3509	22.5	6637	962	14.4
1994-95	82023			15976	3817	23.8	6637	962	14.4
1995-96*	88817			19516	2651	13.6	6977	1042	14.9
1996-97	91093			19917	2746	13.7	7003	1057	15.0
1997-98	92554			20436	2960	14.4	7135	1127	15.7
1998-99	94476			20675	3051	14.7	8339	1364	16.3
1999-00	96764			21678	3237	14.9	8549	1427	16.6
2000-1**	86361			19639	3021	15.3	8459	1501	17.7
2001-2	88927			20429	3102	15.1	9063	1608	17.7

* The particular year issues of the Government of Uttar Pradesh Publication were not available to the researchers.

**The state was bifurcated in 2000 into Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. Hence, the number of schools shown in 2000-01 and 2001-02 does not include schools located in Uttaranchal. Hence all trend analysis is up to 1999-2000

NA: Not Available

Sources: (i) *Shiksha kee Pragati* (Education's Progress) (Government of Uttar Pradesh), Directorate of Education, Allahabad, Different Years.

(ii) Growth of Schools 1950-1992 (State-Wise), MHRD, Department of Education, 1997 for 1992-93 data.

(iii) Education in India 1995-96, MHRD, Department of Education, 2002 for 1995-96 data.

Table XII: Annual Growth Rate for the Number of Institutions at different School Levels in Uttar Pradesh (India)

	Annual Growth Rate for the Number of Institutions				
Year	Primary Level (grades 1-5)	Upper Primary Level (grades 6-8)		Secondary Level (grades 9-12)	
	Total	Total	Girls (Single sex)	Total	Girls (Single sex)
1950-51 to 1980-81	4.03	12.49	19.46	14.35	15.69
1980-81 to 1990-91	0.92	1.12	0.37	1.58	1.69
1990-91 to 1994-95	1.59	1.50	3.75	2.66	2.14
1994-95 to 1999-2000	3.59	7.14	-3.04	5.76	9.67
1990-91 to 1999-2000	2.83	5.24	-0.27	4.72	6.78

Source: calculated on the basis of Table XIII

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