Deconstructing Pakistan’s education policy within the Gender and Development Framework: The cases of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

February 2017
Abstract

This thesis makes a case for education policies in Pakistan that take into account the diverse needs of its populace with regard to girls’ education across different locales and contexts within provinces. Using the Gender and Development (GAD) framework, it assesses whether education policies in Pakistan address the barriers to girls’ education, as expressed by communities in a customized and gender-sensitive manner. It found that provincial governments are addressing community expressed barriers to girls’ education in an incomplete and inconsistent manner. While they have displayed an understanding of these issues, there remains much scope for improvement and a deeper and long-term commitment to girls’ education is required to achieve gender parity at the primary level of schooling.

*Keywords*: education policy analysis; community participation; girls’ education; universal primary enrollment.
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Introduction

The right to education of girls in Pakistan has been jeopardized by a multitude of factors ranging from deeply entrenched cultural traditions to state failure and neglect. Notwithstanding international commitments to girls’ education, literacy rates in the country are staggeringly low — 70 percent for boys and 40 percent for girls (Haq, 2015). Moreover, the country ranks 146 out of 187 on the Educational Development Index ranking (Educational Development Index, 2015) and has been declared one of the least gender equitable in the Asia-Pacific region by the World Economic Forum (The global gender gap index results, 2015). There are 30.6 million girls in the world who are deprived of primary education and around four million are from Pakistan (Educate all children: Progress report, 2013-15). Pakistan is a signatory to international human rights treaties that make it obligatory for states to provide universal free and compulsory education to all children including the International Convention on Economic, Social and Political Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Article 25-A of the country’s constitution too guarantees education as a right for all children aged 5-16.

In order to combat this situation, prima facie, the government frequently and fervently affirms its commitment to girls’ education in policies and plans. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of its mention in policy documents, the education crisis persists in girls’ education in particular. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to question not only the gap between policy and practice, but in policies themselves. Are education
policies addressing the needs of communities with regard to girls’ education as have been expressed by them? Are policy rationale and measures tailored to the specific needs of different communities or are they simply a replication of international best practices? Is the development agenda in Pakistan participatory and are the voices of those it is meant to serve being included in its formulation and implementation?

Admittedly, decentralization that occurred with the 18th Amendment was an important step in this direction. The 2010 Amendment to the constitution, made education a provincial subject instead of a federal one including curriculum, textbook and teacher management (Bari, 2014). But are the provinces using their newfound powers to make policies more tailored to the needs of their communities? Undoubtedly, this presents an opportunity for policymaking that is in more in sync with the different needs of women and men with regard to girls’ education depending on urban/rural settings, income levels and level of conservativeness. It is imperative to examine the state’s policies and plans to assess whether the barriers identified by communities are being addressed and their variance depending on contexts being recognized. In this paper, I will attempt to answer whether education policies in Pakistan address the barriers to girls’ education, as expressed by communities, in different contexts across, and within, provinces in a customized and gender-sensitive manner? Using the Gender and Development (GAD) framework, I will assess whether the government, the duty bearer in the right to education, is adopting this approach in its policies in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — provinces with the lowest and second highest gender disparity in the country respectively (Pakistan District Rankings, 2016). This paper will focus on girls’ education at the
primary level of schooling.

Theoretical Framework — Education policy and the Gender and Development Framework

Macro-level policies often ignore the complexities of on-ground realities and the multiplicity of needs of communities. The Gender and Development (GAD) Framework, on the other hand, places emphasis on recognizing and addressing these differently lived realities and policy formulation that recognize the “relational character” of gender (Connell, 2005, p. 1806) and “the significance of gendered power structures of inequality in a range of contexts” (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005, p. 20). By acknowledging these nuances and different needs of women and need in varying socio-economic contexts within societies, the GAD framework ensures a more holistic and customized approach towards development (Bradley, 2006).

Keeping in line with this approach, which has gained traction in developmental discourse and practice over the last few decades, education delivery has evolved in the developing world including Pakistan. The GAD approach utilizes a gender disaggregated lens in development for effective policies that “articulate a precise picture of women’s and men’s roles both in a community and a country” (Jamal, 2014, p. 3). Community-based educational initiatives and community engagement in policy formulation and interventions are being increasingly employed by non-state actors in service delivery in the country. These interventions are successful as they are tailored to the specific needs of communities and give them ownership in the design and delivery processes. It is also
through this community-based approach that various studies (Hafeez, 2004; Ahmad and Hussain, 2015; Jamal, 2013; Jamal 2016) have unraveled the multifold barriers to girls’ education that change according to context and customs as expressed by communities. In line with these, localized community-based educational initiatives are being successfully implemented throughout the country mostly by non-state delivery mechanism.

Nevertheless, the state remains the largest provider of education in Pakistan, other than the private sector, NGOs and international agencies, giving primacy to its policies and programs. The onus of the full realization of the right to education lies first and foremost with the Pakistani state given its constitutional and human rights international commitment. Since education, especially that of girls, is a right that is fundamental to the realization of other rights and has significant gains for society as a whole (Sperling, Winthrop and Kwauk, 2016), it is important to examine education policy in Pakistan within the GAD framework in order to assess how holistic its plans and conceptual basis are.

Effective policymaking demands a deep understanding of the cultural, ideological and practical forces at play and of the need to identify, and remedy, the failings of past policies and practice (Armstrong, F., Armstrong, D. and Barton, 2016). It demands scrutiny of the incorporation, and at times replication, of international best practices, in policy and practice, often legitimized by donors, non-governmental organizations and unquestioning government officials and policymakers (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). The lack of implementation of policies is often decried in Pakistan; however, the focus must also be on policies themselves. Studies place an emphasis on evidence-based policymaking with
broad-based stakeholder participation (UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming, 2013; Siddiqui, 2016). However, it is crucial to problematize and expand this empiricist approach to the inclusion of voices of the beneficiaries; to dispelling myths, falsehoods and half-truths; and to be representative of, and targeted to, the differently lived realities of those whom the policies are meant to serve.

This course-correction in policymaking is a complex undertaking given the power of dominant discourses and international best practices in education policies and programs (Khoja-Moolji, 2017). Education reconstruction requires a methodical “awareness” of societal forces (McCulloch, 1994) and the gendered nature of structural inequalities (Troyna, 1994). This awareness must lead to rethinking and revisiting not only strategies in past policies but the underpinnings they were based on. For if policies are to be empirical then evidence must be factored in in its complexity and entirety — from different communities and contexts (Armstrong, F., Armstrong, D. and Barton, 2016; Razzaq, 2015; UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming, 2013).

The importance of community engagement in development practice has been much-espoused in the last few decades. A noticeable shift has been witnessed towards participatory development which entails taking on communities as veritable and consistent stakeholders in the process and including their expressed needs and problems into policies and programs (Jamal, 2014). It should be acknowledged that this process may involve overturning past assumptions and fallacies. Armstrong et al's (2016) term this “exposing myths, including those which grossly caricature or misrepresent what is a
complex reality” (p.3). It is the “complex reality” of girls’ education in Pakistan that needs to be addressed, and incorporated in policies, with its contextual variance, inter and intra-province; wide-ranging barriers; and supply and demand side factors. In order for policies to be evidence-based, they will need to account for the differently lived realities and multiplicity of voices of its populace.

Evidence of the importance, and even the centrality, of community needs in education policy has been established over the last few decades and the Gender and Development (GAD) framework provides an “awareness” of the “precise picture of women’s and men’s roles both in a community and a country” (Jamal, 2014, p.3). Moreover, GAD emphasis the need to use gender disaggregated evidence not only for a higher level of efficacy but accuracy (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 1999; Baden and Reeves, 2000). This participatory approach to development, by way of policymaking, for the purpose of this paper, emerged from the failure of one-size-fits-all policy and practice is favor of more contextualized, targeted and localized solutions (Razzaq, 2015).

A bottom-up participatory approach ensures the inclusion of a multitude of voices and a precision in needs assessments which policies are based on. Policymaking processes in Pakistan have come to represent this awareness as communities, students and teachers are part of consultation processes (Siddiqui, 2016). This “awareness” of the “complex reality” of girls’ education requires policymakers to revisit the binaries of the education-resistant male and the illiterate ‘other’ unwilling to education their daughters which can seen as an oversimplification (Jamal, 2016). Instead they need to understand the government’s failings in contributing to this resistance. Undoubtedly, deeply
entrenched cultural traditions and religious beliefs are important barriers to girls’
education, but it is imperative to understand that there are supply side factors that are
contributing to, and compounding, these factors.

In essence, community needs should be addressed in order to alleviate both demand
and supply side barriers to girls' education. According to Purewal and Hashmi (2015),
“Third World girls’ voice in the experiences of and struggles for the rights to education
are an overlooked dimension to our understandings of education in South Asia” (p. 978).
Meanwhile, “voice research urges policy makers to move from the study of (statistical)
gender gaps in education, beyond access questions (although not neglecting these) to a
study of the social construction of gender inequality and gender dynamics at local levels”
— the foundational basis of the GAD framework (Fennell and Arnot, 2007). Therefore,
“any policy to attain the goal of ‘Education for All’ must recognize that gender provides a
lens with which to identify the inequalities that are present in society” (Education for All
2015 National Review Report: Pakistan, 2015). Since both the the Punjab and KP
education policies are formulated with the ‘Education for All’ goals as part of the
foundational basis, they need to be deconstructed and assessed with this lens.

Review of the literature

Ensuring the full realization of the right to education of Pakistani girls in a
sustainable manner will require contextualized and customized strategies that address
specific needs across varying contexts. The growing emphasis on participatory
development (Jamal, 2014) and its successful adoption by NGOs in the country needs to be reflected in government policies and plans as it remains the largest provider of girls education in the country. Various studies have stressed the importance of community supported, customized models for girls education but no study looks into the extent the government policies doing so (Razzaq, 2015; Jamal, 2013). There is vast scholarship on girls’ education in Pakistan. Girls’ education-related research is often considered to be ‘oversaturated’ in the country given the plethora of existing studies on the subject (Naviwala, 2016); however, conspicuous by its absence are studies on the gender sensitivity of education policies in the country. Existing research focuses on the socio-cultural causes of the gender gap in education; the economic and development benefits of girls’ education; barriers to girls’ education; and the importance of community engagement (Khalid and Mujahid-Mukhtar, 2002; Hussain, Salfi and Mahmood, 2011, Latif, 2009).

Meanwhile, research on education policy in Pakistan is rare. As the government is the de facto power holder and responsibility bearer, it is important to assess whether government policies and plans are taking into account different needs and differently lived realities of Pakistani girls. It is also vital that the multitude of voices of stakeholders in the process are incorporated in policymaking processes and ultimately in policies and their implementation (Khoja-Moolji, 2015).

Existing literature on education policy focuses on tracing the history of policies and policymaking processes. Bengali (1999), for instance, provided a history of education policies since 1947, pointing out the salient features of each policy and lamenting the
lack of implementation. More recently, Siddiqui’s (2016) book, which describes itself as the “first comprehensive critique of educational policy documents” (p. xx), does in fact provide a holistic analysis of education policies from 1947 to the National Education Policy 2009. Notably the book has a chapter on female education which sheds light on the gender disparity in education and the related policy gaps. Other prominent education policy-related work included policy analysis of education in provinces by UNESCO which serve as a situation analysis as well (Malik 2011; Mustafa 2012).

Even though the aforementioned research includes gender to varying degrees, this thesis is the first study, to the best of my knowledge, to solely focus on the gender sensitivity of provincial education policies. While the National Education Policy 2009, continues to be a “jointly owned national document” (Mustafa, 2012, p. 25), each province has developed a policy based on contextual needs and issues within the framework of constitutional obligations and targets set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Through an examination of provincial education policies i.e. the Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP) 2013-2017 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2015, this thesis will seek to examine whether respective governments are adopting an approach which takes into account contextualized solutions for varying needs in different contexts and settings such as urban/rural, income level, etc.

Using the GAD framework, this thesis will make the case that it is in this reshaping of policymaking and policy will its effectiveness be increased and the right to education for girls be fully realized. In order for policies and plans to effective they will “need to
draw upon global good practice but will ultimately need to be developed, adapted, and owned locally in communities across the developing world” (Razzaq, 2015). What becomes important then is education policies in Pakistan that take into account the diverse needs of its populace with regard to girls’ education across different locales and contexts within provinces.

**Methodology**

Using a hybrid of the GAD and GAD-relevant UNESCO education policy framework, the education policies of two provinces — Punjab and Khyber Pakthunwa — have been analyzed. Within this framework, guiding questions from the UNESCO Handbook on education policy analysis and programming (2013) were employed to critically analyze the policies (See Annexure A). GAD-relevant components/points of analysis were extracted from the UNESCO Handbook’s guiding questions. The analysis has been conducted along the dimensions laid out by the Handbook i.e. primary schooling as a sub-sector; barriers to girls' education as analytical dimensions; and gender as a cross-cutting theme. In addition, the principles of the GAD framework discussed earlier have served as the conceptual basis for assessing these question in relation to community expressed barriers to girls’ education.

The GAD framework serves as the foundational and guiding force of the study with methodical guidelines from UNESCO’s Handbook albeit only the ones considered relevant to the framework, scale and scope of this paper — community and gender specific. The two have been combined to serve as the methodology for this paper which
draws from ethnographic studies in areas/provinces of focus. In this way, the study adopts a qualitative approach that combines — ethnographic and empiricist — methods. It does so by drawing on evidence provided by studies that highlight expressed province-wise community needs and barriers to girls’ education through on-ground, ethnographic research (Jamal 2013; Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). Each barrier has been used as a unit of analysis in both provinces to examine how it is addressed in the respective policies within the GAD framework.

**Punjab — situation and policy analysis**

Education in Punjab has been a success story of reforms and reconstruction led by the government and supported by DFID — the province in the largest recipient of the organization’s aid. As a result, enrollment has increased and attendance for teachers and already enrolled students has gone up from 72 per cent and 82 per cent in September 2011, respectively, to over 92 per cent in December 2012 (Afzal, 2013). But it is important to view these figures with caution, enrollment increases have been mostly for *katchi* (kindergarten) class and not at the primary level and quality remains an issue of grave concern (25 million broken promises: the crisis of Pakistan’s out-of-school children, 2014). More importantly, traditionally disadvantaged cohorts, girls, and areas, rural and southern Punjab, are still behind. Moreover, there are reports that these figures may be exaggerated by local government officials as a result of pressure from the highest echelons of the provincial government (Naviwala, 2016).
These figures also need to viewed through the gender lens — gender disparity in primary education is visible in the gross enrollment ratio — 103 percent males and 92 percent females (Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, 2014-15). In addition, some areas have more pronounced gender gaps than others such as the southern parts of the province (Pakistan District Education Rankings, 2016). Against this backdrop, Punjab’s success presents a threat of the exclusion and obfuscation of the differently lived realities of girls and their education status. While girls in better off, urban settings may be getting a quality education, those in rural areas are still at a disadvantage. Even where girls are enrolled, schools are not girl friendly i.e. with amenities such as toilets, drinking water, boundary walls and proper classrooms; teachers are irregular and under qualified; and schools are at a distance and often unsafe (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015).

It is with these realities as the foundational basis that education policies and programs must undertake to remedy and redress deep-rooted gender inequalities in a holistic and consistent manner. In this section, the Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP) 2013-2017 — the province’s main policy document — will be assessed within the GAD framework to determine how gender sensitive it is. It is important to note that other policy interventions with a focus on girls’ education have been formulated and implemented, such as the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme; however, the PSESP remains the main guiding force in education practice in the province. I will explore Punjab-specific barriers to girls’ education, as have been expressed by communities through evidence-based research and analyze PSESP’s treatment of these
Punjab School Education Sector Plan 2013-2017

In an effort to streamline education-related efforts and provide a policy specific to the needs of the province, the Punjab School Education Sector Plan (PSESP) 2013-2017 aims to “provide an operational plan to implement the school education reforms for improving quality, access and governance of education in the province” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p. i). The PSESP, in accordance with UNESCO definitions\(^1\), can be considered a policy and strategy as it includes guidelines; strategies; and responsibilities for different stakeholders. Moreover, it provides objectives that are to be “translated in the work plans and budgets of all departments at the provincial, district and school levels” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.i).

Notably, it stresses that key stakeholders were included in the consultative and formulation processes including the “beneficiaries of reforms” such as communities, teachers, students and school councils along with NGOs, policymakers and government officials (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.ix). It is important, however, whether this stakeholder engagement translated into the inclusion of community expressed barriers to girls’ education in the Plan. It should be noted that the PSESP

\(^1\) “A national education policy establishes the main goals and priorities pursued by the government in matters of education – at the sector and sub-sector levels – with regard to specific aspects such as access, quality and teachers, or to a given issue or need.” UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming. (2013). UNESCO Bangkok.

“A strategy specifies how the policy goals are to be achieved.” UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming. (2013). UNESCO Bangkok.
acknowledges that “gender disparities are … not very stark at the overall provincial level but differentials exist across districts” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p. xi) and commits to treating gender as a cross-cutting issue and achieving universal primary enrollment.

**Poverty and economic factors**

Even though Punjab is the largest and wealthiest province of the country high poverty levels exist especially in rural areas and the southern parts. Poverty has been established to be a significant determinant in, and barrier to, the decision to enroll and retain girls in school (Bari, 2014). A correlation has been established between low income parents cohorts with girls who drop out or are never enrolled in existing literature. The majority of parents cite poverty as a reason for employing girls in income-earning activities such as cotton-picking, embroidery; brick kiln work; domestic work and other farming-related work instead of sending them to school (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015)\(^2\). Even if girls are not employed, they are tasked with household chores or the care of their siblings or elders.

Further, investing in girls’ education is perceived to be an irrational decision since they are to be married off with dowry and other wedding-related expenditure considered to be a substantial economic burden (Zafar, 2004). Boys, on the other hand, are considered to be future bread winners and their education is seen as an investment thus the higher levels of enrollment in schools (Zafar, 2004). According to a female

\(^2\) The study targeted districts of South Punjab, Pakistan, namely Multan, Bahawalpur, and Muzaffargarh.
homemaker from a study in the rural areas of Faisalabad and Jhang:

Our son would be head of the household. He has to earn and feed the family, whereas daughters are paraaya dhaan [transl. ‘the wealth of others’] and have to eventually move to another home; why should we educate them? We will educate our sons and get them recruited in the Police or Army ... we will train her (daughter) for household chores and then marry her off (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015, p. 989).

The economic determinants of the decision to enroll are compounded by the inter-generational transmission of educational status. For girls, father’s occupation and educational status and mother’s schools have a significant bearing on the decision to enroll, but not for boys (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005). Since these indicators are poverty-related, the impact of poverty transcends generations and perpetuates the cycle of illiteracy. In order to combat these effects of poverty, the Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme has provided annual cash stipends of Rs1.5 billion to 380,000 girls in grades six to 10 in government schools, in 16 out of the 36 Punjab districts (Afzal, 2013). According to Chaudury and Parajuli (2008), a nine percent increase in female enrollment in these districts resulted from this girls-specific cash transfer program.

Meanwhile, the PSESP acknowledges the existence of poverty “especially in the

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3 The two districts are medium-ranking and low-ranking respectively in terms of female literacy. The majority of the residents in the areas are from low income groups.
South of the province” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.6) and its role as a barrier to enrollment but not in a gender disaggregated manner. Notably, it mentions the aforementioned girls-specific stipends program and how it continues to be implemented, but does not include plans to further it in its strategies. It does, however, promise to provide stipends to children of “poor families” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.74) without defining the term. Under GAD’s equity approach, the specific targeting of girls would be warranted to deal with the disproportionate impact of poverty on girls’ schooling along with a complete understanding of the gendered effects of poverty on education.

Social, cultural and religious factors

Socio-cultural values and norms lead to the subordination of women and girls acting as a significant barrier to their access to schooling. Education-resistant attitudes and behaviors are a result of the interplay of social, cultural and economic forces that lead to the conformity of traditional gender roles. These roles relegate women to the private sphere limiting their participation in public life and educational activities (Malik, 2011). There is, however, urban-rural variation in such attitudes — in upper and middle class urban household the education of women is seen as a marker of social and cultural capital but in rural lower class households a transgression of notions of respectability and honor (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015). In latter settings, women are seen as representatives of the honor of families and communities and education as a threat to the status quo.

Further, communities fear the modernizing effects of education for girls will lead
them to traverse the bounds of rural family life and reject the traditions of arranged and early marriages (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015). A study in Southern Punjab found that a majority of parents of never-enrolled girls cited early marriage as the reason for not enrolling them — education is viewed as futile as girls are to be married off (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). It is, however, important to note that there was not an “outright rejection” of girls’ education signaling opportunities for change (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). In fact, in rural Southern Punjab, the majority parents of never-enrolled and girls who were made to drop out acknowledged the importance of education, but cited economic factors as the reason for not sending their daughters to school (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). Religion, too, factored into decision regarding girls’ schooling, especially in rural contexts, where communities considered religious education more important for girls than schooling (Zafar, 2004).

Meanwhile, according to Purewal and Hashmi (2015), the failure to recognize these gender structures and roles lead to the failure of education policies. The PSESP too has failed to address socio-cultural factors in relation to girls’ education in its strategies. Within GAD, it is of prime importance that structural inequalities be targeted in development. Strikingly, the PSESP makes no mention of the socio-cultural factors responsible for gender disparity let alone include strategies to counter it. It does, however, commit to “advocacy and communication campaigns for community acceptance of marginalized children and groups” which presumably include girls (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.79). Nonetheless, this represents an inadequate and negligible effort in dealing with potent socio-cultural factors responsible
for the gender disparity in education. On the whole, this is a manifestation of the inadequate and peripheral treatment of gender in the policy.

Quality

A policy shift from an enrollment-focused approach to quality-enhancing strategies is evident in Punjab resulting from a growing realization that while enrollment figures have grown substantially, quality remains an issue of grave concern. Quality can be defined in terms of the quality of instruction, teachers, schools facilities, curriculum, learning outcomes and textbooks. Universal primary enrollment has been emphasized in a broad-based manner in education policies and plans in the country, in general, but the realization of the importance of quality gained greater traction in recent times (Jamil, 2016). Studies show that parents are sensitive to quality in their decision to enroll in both urban and rural contexts (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005; Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2002). Quality is also a determinant in the choice between public and private schooling in urban areas and more developed rural areas, even for girls, as the latter tend to have more qualified and attentive female teachers and girl-friendly facilities (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005). Communities have expressed concerns about school and teaching quality in the province (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015)

Even though, as a result of recent reforms in Punjab, some governments schools surpass private schools in terms quality and facilities such as computer labs, and libraries (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017), in less developed settings, government schools, especially for girls, are of lower quality (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar,
2005). The lack of quality, in such contexts, acts as a factor in the decision to not send girls to school. Community-level studies, in the poorer area of Southern Punjab, confirm that parents are discerning and quality-aware, and if they cannot afford to send their daughters to better quality private schools, they may not send them to school at all (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). On the other hand, evidence shows that for girls, “a shift from low to middle household consumption levels results in a rise in enrollment in public primary school, whereas a shift from middle to higher income is associated with a shift to private school” (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005, p. 695).

The lack of quality, and not resistance to girls’ education or access issues, may act as an enrollment-suppressing factor for girls in disadvantaged settings. Education quality-related literature confirms the gender differentiated impact of poor quality — boys will either be sent to better quality private schools or to government schools irrespective of quality due to the high value placed on their education in rural Punjab (Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005). Viewed within “an objective logic framed by the notion of returns” (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015), the issue is of the value of education. Bari (2016) emphasizes the logic of sending girls and boys to school in the face of poor quality when children of school-going age be engaged in alternatives with higher returns such as employment or helping with farming and household chores. To delegitimize such decisions, and to incorporate community expressed demands for better quality education for their daughters, policies must aim to improve quality especially at girls’ schools in disadvantaged settings.

The PSESP displays a consistent and complete understanding of the issues of
quality in education provision and commits to dealing with it with strategies and plans. It asserts that “Punjab has … been a pioneering province in shifting its policy focus towards “quality” as opposed to traditional approach of limiting reforms to improving access” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p. x). However, what is lacking in the Plan is a gender-sensitive treatment of the issue of quality. Admittedly, Punjab has the lowest gender gap in schooling in the country and has made great strides in girls’ education over the last decade with targeted interventions (Pakistan District Education Rankings, 2016). Nevertheless, the focus has to remain on remedying the barriers to, and issues, in girls’ education for disadvantaged cohorts with a consistent gender-aware approach in policies.

The PSESP acknowledges that district-wise variations exist in the province in terms of retention and transition rates which are symptomatic of quality-related issues and “internal inefficiencies within the … education sector” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.x). It also aptly identifies that “gender disparities are also not very stark at the overall provincial level but differentials exist across districts” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.xi) attributing it to quality and lack of community involvement in line with empirical assessments. Nevertheless, this realization does not translate into corresponding gender-sensitive strategies and measures in the Plan. For example, the Plan includes in its strategies to improve quality in standards, textbooks, curriculum, teachers, school environment and examinations. This presents a targeting of both inputs and monitoring outputs such as learning outcomes to ensure quality in education service delivery albeit without any mention of girls-specific measures.
Within GAD, these aspects of quality would need to be dealt with in a gender disaggregated manner with strategies for the different needs of boys and girls. For instance, the inclusion of curriculum review could have included the exercise of gender-bias identification and removal (Latif, 2009). Moreover, in order to ensure the empowering effect of schooling on girls (Zaidi, Sathar and Zafar, 2012), a specific focus on improving quality for girls’ schools has to be adopted under GAD. The GAD sees “women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development efforts” with a “strong emphasis on women's emancipation” (Tasli, 2007). In this way, the Plan, despite promising to include gender as a cross-cutting theme does not address girls-specific issues in quality.

**Female teachers**

A preference for same-sex teachers has been established by existing literature especially in middle and low income cohorts (Shah, S and Shah, U, 2012). However, in remote rural areas, there is a lack of availability of female teachers. Moreover, female teachers in government schools have a higher rate of absenteeism, owing to problems of female mobility, and lower qualifications and experience, than those in private schools (Ghuman and Lloyd, 2010). Communities in such contexts, for example in disadvantaged districts of Southern Punjab, have expressed the lack of female teachers and their irregular attendance as a significant barrier to the decision to enroll girls (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). According to a teacher in a village:
It is difficult for women from far off areas to come here for jobs and cause inconvenience to their own family. And locally educated girls are not available, because people here don’t let girls’ complete education. The girls of local landlords do study in the city but obviously they don’t work in these village schools! (Shah, S and Shah, U, 2012, p. 193)

In order to remedy these girls-specific teacher issues, targeted and innovative interventions need to be brought forward by the government. The PSESP does display an understanding of the need for teacher improvement both in terms of capacity building and increasing attendance. It commits to measures ranging from merit-based hiring to countering nepotism and patronage and from capacity-building through teacher training, with the help of international NGOs, to a computerized monitoring of teacher attendance. Strategies also include pre-service and in-service teacher development programs and the development of a teacher qualification framework based on a taxonomy of qualifications according to competency. However, no mention specific to female teachers has been made under the Plan.

Under GAD, this is a deficiency as the framework warrants a special treatment of girls’ issues in order to go beyond access to schooling and fulfill the emancipatory potential of education. In this way, female teachers, empirically proven to be lacking in quality and regularity, in the aforementioned studies, should have been targeted in the Plan. For instance, the Plan could have proposed transportation or hostel facilities for female teachers which evidence shows have proved to be a successful remedial measure.
in similar contexts in developing countries (Sperling, Winthrop and Kwauk, 2016).

On the other hand, there are GAD-compliant aspects in the Plan with regard to teachers. It does, for instance, mention teacher training in the “pedagogy of inclusive education” to target marginalized children including girls (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p. 178), but does not elaborate on what this entails. Also, teachers have been recognized as veritable stakeholders in the policymaking process and in the policy itself. GAD favors a participatory approach which has been further incorporated with the Plan committing to an increased role for parent teacher committees and community monitoring of teachers performance and attendance. On the whole, teacher-related issues have been only partially dealt with in a gendered manner in the Plan.

Infrastructural

Education service delivery in Punjab in terms of school infrastructure and amenities is of the highest quality province-wise in the country. Nonetheless, four percent girls’ schools still do not have a toilet and three percent are without a boundary wall (Pakistan District Rankings, 2016) and studies have established the gender differentiated impact of these inadequacies on girls’ enrollment. Hafeez (2004), in his study of six districts in the province, found that over two-thirds of parents would not enroll girls in schools without female-only toilets, boundary walls, drinking water and proper classrooms and furniture. Another study found that girls themselves do not want to go to school in the absence of proper toilets due especially due to menstruation-related needs (Lall, 2009). According to a female student in a rural school:
This school has only four rooms — we use one for office, admin, store, staff, everything, and the other three are classrooms for six classes. We are lucky we now have a toilet – this was ordered by the local councilor three years back. Previously girls had to go outside (pointing to the bushes outside the window) or go home for natural needs (Shah, S and Shah, U, 2012, p. 193).

Not only are girls’ schools lower in number, but these inadequacies in government are representative of a wider problem in the lack of existing schools not being girl friendly. Herz and Sperling (2004) note that having schools girls is not enough, in order to be girl friendly schools must have adequate facilities in which case most parents will educate their children “even where cultural barriers are strong … [like in] Pakistan” (p. 45). The Plan deals with infrastructure issues through a province-wide comparison of government school facilities, such as boundary walls, electricity, toilers and drinking water, with private schools. According to the data, except for drinking water, government schools fare better than private schools for all other facilities. However, this data has not been disaggregated by gender or urban-rural settings which presents the threat of the obfuscation of regional or gender variation in facilities provision.

In fact, infrastructure issues specific to girls’ school have not been discussed in the Plan even though wider infrastructure issues have been addressed. Under GAD, data should have been disaggregated to provide an accurate assessment of the problems facing girls’ school and regional variation within the province The Plan acknowledges that
“while facilities’ situation has been improved greatly in the province, over the last few years, issues of standards remain unaddressed” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.52). In its strategy for infrastructure improvement, it mentions that “the functional requirements of a particular school based on the age, gender and needs of its students” needs to be factored into the development of school infrastructure standards (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.52). However, it does not target or prioritize girls’ schools or disadvantaged areas, which evidence has shown to be worse off in terms of such facilities, for improvement. Disaggregated data has been prescribed by GAD for a more accurate assessment of issues leading to contextualized and localized solutions. Accordingly, the Plan should have identified worse off areas and schools for priority action.

Violence and sexual abuse

Violence against girls and women is a pervasive issue in Pakistan. Even though there is vast literature on the subject, few studies focus on violence against girls in schools. Nonetheless, the issue has been peripherally dealt with in existing scholarship. In a study in Southern Punjab, the practice of corporal punishment was cited by parents as a significant deterrent from enrolling and retaining girls in school (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). Girls themselves cited the practice as a reason for dropping out of school (Hussain, Salfi and Mahmood, 2011). However, communities and students remain reticent in discussing sexual abuse in schools. Even though such incidents have been reported, studies on sexual violence in schools are rare. In fact, existing research has
confirmed that schools are the third most common site of sexual abuse for children and that the ratio of children abused teachers in the country increased by more than eight times from between 2007 and 2011 (Salman, 2011).

While the Plan deals with the issue of corporal punishment, in an incomplete manner, it makes no mention of sexual abuse. It is important to note community attitudes towards corporal punishment vary — certain communities view it as an acceptable, even necessary, method of disciplining students while others do not. In order to this, the Plan proposes awareness-raising for changing community attitudes towards corporal punishment and training teachers in child-friendly disciplinary approaches. However, it does propose other strategies to deal with this practice in schools. Under GAD, strategic gender needs are required to be factored into policies in order to deal with, for instance, the inequalities in the experiences of sexual violence (Baden and Reeves, 2000). In this way, the omission of sexual abuse in the Plan is a significant gap, when viewed through the gender lens, as it ignores the lived realities of girls who disproportionately experience this form of violence in schools.

Distance to school

Long distances to girls’ schools serve as a factor in the decision not to enroll girls in school especially is rural areas. Female mobility is limited by security concerns and notions of girls in the public space as a violation of ‘honor’ and ‘respectability’ (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015). In addition, girls require an escort for traveling to and from school, which serves as a disincentive for parents and relatives, while boys are free to commute
on their own (Toor and Parveen, 2004). A study in Southern Punjab found that schools are often situated in unsafe and far away locations — six out of every 10 schools in each district are either too far from intended students’ communities; unsafe; or the route is considered unsafe, especially for girls (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015).

Studies, especially in South Asia, have shown that schools far away from communities act as a barrier to both primary and secondary education and policies and programs that remedy this “with more community engagement can be an important solution” (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016, p. 8). However, even though the Plan acknowledges that “common factors known to affect student access are distance from home to school (particularly for girls)….,” (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017, p.45), it presents no strategies or methods to address this issue. Under GAD, this is a conspicuous omission since issues of low mobility area a significant barrier to girls’ education especially in rural areas and need to be addressed in a targeted manner to fulfill the special needs of girls. Further, no interventions, such as transportation for girls, have been included in the Plan, to deal with this barrier in direct or indirect ways.

Community participation

Literature from developing countries stresses the efficacy and sustainability-enhancing qualities of community participation on girls’ education. Evidence from Pakistan, in both urban and rural settings, too points to its success. Moreover, there is a demand from different stakeholders such as, communities, parents, teachers and students, including girls, for the inclusion of their voices in policies and programs (Ahmad and
Hussain, 2015). Communities can act both as a barrier to, and an aid, for girls’ education — while community resistance is a potent factor in parental decisions not to enroll, increased community acceptability can lead to a change in negative attitudes towards girls' education at the household level (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015; Barrs, 2005). A study in Southern Punjab found that there has been a change in negative attitudes towards girls' education as a result of increased coordination between schools and communities through school management committees (SMCs) also leading to an increase in girls’ enrollment (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015). Moreover, it found that communities can play an importance role in dealing with other barriers to girls’ education such as safety issues in transportation to and from school and school management issues.

Nevertheless, according to World Bank reports SMCs and community involvement have had varying levels of success (Asim, 2015). These are conditions that make certain communities more amenable to facilitating girls’ education — the key lies in the identification of willing communities, and local government officials and NGOs. Further, Shafa et al (2011) note that “the notion of community participation must be enhanced up to the level of communities working as real partners with schools. Merely dysfunctional SMCs existing in office papers are a hindrance rather than a facilitating force for school improvement.” Therefore, the role of communities must be included in policies and plans in a way that gives them real ownership and power especially in relation to girls’ education. They can also play an important role in accountability and monitoring of teachers and in dealing with schools administration problems (Barrs, 2005).

From a rights point-of-view, communities should be involved particularly in the
advancement of the rights of girls in light of the “broader right of participation in public affairs” included in CEDAW (Secker, 2009). Moreover, Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), respect for the views of the child, encourages the inclusion of children's voices in decision making processes. This has been successfully implemented in Pakistan through student-teacher committees in, for instance, Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)-managed schools in Northern Areas of the country (Shafa et al, 2011). The GAD framework too stresses the importance of the role of communities in development practice. According to Jamal (2014), the GAD perspective “recognizes the family system in its diverse contexts and … acknowledges the social construction of different societies…. ” (p.3).

Considered under GAD, the PSESP is gender-deficient in its inclusion of community participation as, despite a consistent inclusion of community-related strategies and plans, it fails to provide girls-specific ones. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, in line with empirical studies discussed above, the Plan acknowledges the mixed success of SMCs and the failure of government school teachers and management to effectively engage communities. It also aptly identifies that “community involvement can assist in improving accountability of the school system and consequently develop greater confidence in schools. Communities also have the potential to ensure reduction in dropouts and an increase in enrollment (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017). Noting the “strong leadership from school” as a factor, it commits to training teachers for this purpose. Moreover, it also promises “to identify key weaknesses and strengths to develop a strategy for revitalization” of SMCs along with developing a
teacher training and community mobilization strategies in this regard (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017). The Plan also aims to increase public-private partnership in order to facilitate NGO-led community-based schooling initiatives — the latter have been proved to especially beneficial for girls’ education (Razzaq, 2015).

Notably, the Punjab Education Department has the distinction of being the only province in the country to have a Directorate of Community and Public Participation which manages evening schools and community participation efforts. The Plan aims to “utilize” it more in order to successfully implement its community involvement measures (Punjab School Education Sector Plan, 2013-2017). Even though these measures do not have stated gender-specific objectives, or are based on gender desegregated evidence, as prescribed by GAD, there presence can be welcomed as an indirect way of improving girls’ education. Nonetheless, gender should be directly and consistently addressed in policies and plans in order to remedy the gender gap in education.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — situation and policy analysis

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has the second highest gender gap in primary education among the provinces of Pakistan. According to the latest government figures, the primary school gross enrollment ratio (GER) in KP is 103 percent for boys and 80 percent for girls for 2014-15 (Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey, 2014-15). The gender gap in the population who has ever attended school is also substantial — 82 percent males and 53 percent females (Pakistan Social and Living Standards
Measurement Survey, 2014-15). Despite a growing focus on girls’ education and improving gender parity on the provincial level, regional, especially urban-rural, variation in enrollment at the primary level of schooling persists (Jamal, 2016). In the Pashtun tribal belt of the province, only 13 percent of primary-school-aged girls are enrolled (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2010).

Along with barriers to girls’ education facing the country as a whole, KP has suffered from targeted militant attacks on girls’ schools and the 2005 earthquake which left hundreds of schools destroyed. Moreover, socio-cultural norms, responsible for the subordinate status of women, in Pakistan are more deep rooted in Pashtun society leading to resistance to girls’ education. Against this backdrop, education reform efforts have had a growing focus on girls’ education resulting in improving gender parity in the province (Pakistan District Education Rankings, 2016). International agencies, donors and local NGOs are working with the government with a special focus on girls’ education — the province is the second largest recipient of DFID aid (Naviwala, 2016). Meanwhile, the government remains the largest provider of education in the province and has tripled its education budget since it became a provincial subject following devolution in 2010 (Naviwala, 2016).

In this section, I will explore the KP-specific policy dimensions of these reforms. Following devolution, provinces have formulated their own plans to provide guiding principles and strategies for education. With stakeholder consultations underway for the National Education Policy 2016 (still forthcoming) and KP’s new provincial policy, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2015 remains the most crucial
education policy document. This section will shed light on how gender-sensitive and context-aware its provisions are by assessing the inclusion, or lack thereof, of community expressed barriers to girls’ education in the ESP.

*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Plan 2010-2015*

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2010-2015 is “a medium-term development plan to develop the education sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, increase the stock of human capital and encourage progress, peace and prosperity across the province” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 1). The Plan, in self-avowed accordance with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA), aims to act as a guiding force for the province’s short-term action plans and future district level policies. As mentioned above, it is important to note that the latter and a new five-year policy, in accordance with policy norms in the country, are still overdue but currently under formulation along with stakeholder participation including community members, student and teachers. The ESP too involved these stakeholders in its formulation processes.

At the moment, the Plan remains the most crucial education policy document of the province — in terms of providing the goals and guidelines for practice. It should also be noted that the province has girls’ education-related reforms underway which have not been mentioned in the Plan, but their in-depth analysis remains outside the scope of this thesis. It is, however, important to note that this Plan can be considered both a policy and
a strategy document according to UNESCO’s definitions\textsuperscript{4}. There appears to be some definitional overlap as the Plan fits into the category of an education policy, albeit a provincial one, but also provides strategies. However, it does delineate roles and responsibilities for stakeholders which is how UNESCO defines a strategy. It does not, on the other hand, provide an action plan (still forthcoming).

\textit{Women in Pashtun society}

Women in Pashtun society, especially in rural areas, have little to no agency and decision-making power. Their lives are governed by the men in their families, and communities, who often relegate them to the private sphere (Naz et al, 2012). In compliance with rigid gender roles, they are expected to be pious, religious and virtuous in the strictest sense and any deviation is viewed as a violation of the family and community honor (Khan et al, 2014). This applies to education-related attitudes and behaviors as manifested by the gender disparity in enrollment and retention rates.

While studies show reticence or outright resistance to educating girls, especially in rural areas of the province, they also confirm a preference for sending sons to school in the face of limited financial and other resources (Iqbal, 2012; Naz et al, 2012). Investing in boys’ education is seen as a means of ensuring financial support for parents in their old age while girls are seen as financial burden with relation to dowry and wedding-related expenses.

\textsuperscript{4} “A national education policy establishes the main goals and priorities pursued by the government in matters of education – at the sector and sub-sector levels – with regard to specific aspects such as access, quality and teachers, or to a given issue or need.” UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming. (2013). UNESCO Bangkok.

“A strategy specifies how the policy goals are to be achieved.” UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming. (2013). UNESCO Bangkok.
expenditure (Khan et al, 2014). The opportunity cost of sending girls to school is also perceived to be high as they are tasked with household chores and the care of the elderly and other siblings (Khan et al, 2014). Gender roles, therefore, play an important role in the violation of the right to education for girls. Moreover, according to Jamal (2016), communities confirm that many do not send their daughters to school in adherence with the Pashtunwali tribal code, which embodies the values mentioned above.

As Pakistan is a signatory to CEDAW, education policies must address and combat regressive norms in order to bring about a change in the educational status of women and girls. Under GAD, the focus of policies must also be on changing the conditions that inhibit and hinder girls’ education and not just on educational provision. According to Engelhart and Miller (2014), “CEDAW stands out … Most human rights treaties enjoin governments to respect rights, but CEDAW goes further: It mandates change in the public sphere, the private sphere, and the minds of individuals”. Accordingly, policy must emphasize attitudinal and behavioral changes in a targeted and continual manner if they are to be evidence based.

In fact, the ESP shows an understanding of the impact of the traditions and cultural values on education along with that of the status of women and girls; however, in an inconsistent and incomplete manner. The Plan acknowledges discrimination against women and anti-education attitudes for girls in the culture along with compounding factors such as violence against women; lack of decision-making powers; stigmatization of women’s employment and education; and the prioritization of spending on weddings as opposed to education for girls (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.5). However, in
the contextualization of the socio-cultural characteristics of the province, it points to the “existence of balance of power among the families, tribes and communities” as a positive aspect of Pashtun society (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.4), but without referring to the imbalance of power between women and men. It also notes the respect for women in the culture, but does not shed light on how this respect manifests itself as women’s relegation to the private sphere.

Under the GAD framework, a more holistic and consistent inclusion of these factors would be warranted. The GAD approach to improving girls’ education not only aims at increasing enrollment, but addressing factors that contribute to the subordination of women and resistance to education in particular. In this way, the Plan does acknowledge that “despite of much improvement during the last three decades low women literacy is due to gender bias” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 5). It lays out the violations of women's rights in the province such as property rights; marriage of their own free will; stigmatization of employment; and low household expenditure on girls’ education (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015). Notably, evidence shows that awareness-raising is an effective way of bringing about social change; however, despite laying out creating awareness as a strategy nine times, the Plan makes no mention of any girls-specific campaigns (Jamal, 2016).

Religion and militancy

Religion plays a crucial role in Pashtun society which often negatively impacts girls’ education. A particularly regressive interpretation of women’s roles in Islam are
subscribed to in certain areas in the province along with the impact of war and militancy across the Afghan border (Bradley and Saigol, 2012). Bombings of girls’ schools, which took place a decade ago, resulted in their substantial destruction and military operations to combat militancy in the area led to the displacement of many residents negatively impacting already low levels of female enrollment in schools. As a result, many communities have refrained from sending their daughters to school fearing a backlash from extremist elements (Jamal, 2013).

While such elements are opposed to education in general, they are particularly against girls’ education. Nonetheless, it is important to assess the role of religion in a contextualized manner — religion-induced resistance to girls’ education is pervasive in certain areas but not in all. In fact, communities themselves have identified the need of employing and engaging moderate religious leaders to mobilize communities to send their daughters to school (Jamal, 2013). A participant in a community level study in rural KP explained this need:

Girls’ education activists should specially focus on Ulema or the central Madrassa’s Imam; if properly approached, satisfied, and convinced with authentic Islamic references, they could significantly help in spreading the word in support of girls’ education (Jamal, 2013, p. 280).

This demand for alliance-building, in fact, signals an opportunity in using the influence of religious leaders in a positive way to benefit girls’ education. Evidence
suggests that certain religious leaders are more amenable to girls’ education when given a role in the process or in schools (Razzaq, 2015; Jamal, 2013). Their involvement is expected to have a snowball effect — others following their example if they send their daughters to school. The ESP identifies religion as a significant barrier to girls’ education and the need for alliance-building with religious leaders “to address the problem of access especially for females” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 36). It goes on to assert that “unless this large and well-established community of religious leaders and opinion makers are taken into confidence and brought within the loop of regular government policy interventions, the road to UPE will continue to fall short of meaningfully achievable objectives and targets” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 37). However, no strategies or initiatives have been laid out in the Plan to translate this intent into action.

Nonetheless, this identification, and recognition, of males i.e. religious leaders as allies in the promotion of girls’ education is in line with GAD’s focus on factoring in gender differentiated roles and responsibilities in development. In this way, the Plan shows an understanding of the power dynamics at play in Pashtun society where religious leaders wield considerable influence and are in fact often responsible for spreading anti-girls’ education sentiments. In addition, in accordance with GAD, which accounts for “diversity and difference” (Arnot and Fennell, 2007), it acknowledges the pluralities of masculinities in the province — religious leaders’ resistance to girls' education varies in, and across, urban-rural settings.

Furthermore, this inclusion of the need for alliance-building, based on the
recognition of roles, in the Plan is indicative of a contextualized and localized approach to education policymaking in accordance with GAD. It is based on an understanding of the cultural, social and ideological forces in Pashtun society that lead to the legitimization and perpetuation of structural rooted discriminatory girls’ education-related attitudes and behaviors. Alliance-building with these power-holders targets the forces responsible for these structural inequalities and, therefore, promise broader social change as opposed to interventions aimed at increasing enrollments, etc. Not only is this a more context-aware approach, but a practical one — Paidar (2002) stresses the necessity of alliance-building and “practical feminism” in religious societies “rather than waiting for the ideal society to arrive where Islamic jurisprudence does not influence the state's gender policies” (Molyneux and Ravazi, 2002, p. 259). On the whole, the inclusion of religious leaders as potential allies in girls’ education is evidence-based and GAD-complaint, however, still lacking as corresponding strategies and measures are missing.

**Poverty**

Poverty is a key barrier to girls’ education in KP with the second highest poverty figures — 49 percent — among the provinces in Pakistan (Multidimensional poverty in Pakistan, 2016). This has had a direct impact on girls schooling as, in the face of limited financial resources, especially in rural areas, boys routinely get preferential treatment — they are sent to government schools, or better quality private schools, while their sisters are kept at home for household chores or farming (Bari, 2014). Given the practice of early marriage of early marriages, girls are seen as someone else’s property while boys as
future providers of financial support (Shahzad, Qadeer and Khan, 2012). Household expenditure on girls comprise mostly on marriage-related dowry and wedding celebrations which are seen as a matter of honor in Pashtun culture. A participant in Jamal’s (2016) study explains the economic factors behind education-related decision-making:

In our Pashtun society, people give more attention to the boy’s education because he will one day support the whole family. As for the woman, she has traditionally been limited to the house. So this is why the son would be preferred. This is not because they are doing gender discrimination. No, they don’t. They pay more attention to their male children because he will one day support them (p. 6).

Moreover, indirect costs of schooling including uniforms, books and transportation prove to be an added disincentive especially since boys commute unescorted while girls require more expensive public transportation (Callum, Sathar and ul Haque, 2012). Such decision-making patterns, however, are less common is economically better off areas of the province, especially urban contexts, where there is better school accessibility and a high level of awareness (Rahman et al, 2011)).

The ESP displays an understanding of the role of poverty in girls’ education by acknowledging the aforementioned socio-cultural practices and household decision-making patterns. Further, in its vision, it states that “the National Education System should be meaningful and relevant in order to alleviate poverty and sustain growth
through the provision of quality education for all Pakistanis” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.31). Recognizing the disproportionate impact of poverty on girls' education, it commits to providing them with stipends and free textbooks. By addressing their specific needs, GAD principles appear to have been factored into the Plan. Moreover, studies have confirmed the positive impact of cash and in-kind transfers on girls’ education (Ahmed and Zeeshan, 2014).

**Female teachers**

Interaction between females (girls and women) and *na mahram* (men who aren't relatives) is frowned upon in conservative settings in Pakistan, especially KP. It is thus preferred that girls be taught by female teachers in schools. However, there is an availability problem of female teachers in the province contributing to the decision not to send girls to schools (Shah et al, 2015). Community-level studies confirm that the absence of unavailability of female teachers acts as a significant barrier to enrolling girls in schools. In Jamal’s (2016) study, a former education ministry official explained the supply and demand side dimensions of the problem:

I will give you the example of small villages here in Mardan in the outlying areas of the district near District Swabi, like Grumat Meray, Toroo Maray. No bus, no car or horse coach goes there. It is impossible for the female teacher to walk to the school through farm fields. She just can’t do it. So there are major transport problems. Fact is that girls do want to study, but if there is no teacher then what can they do? (p. 8)
The Plan acknowledges the lack of female teachers and commits to redressing this in a consistent manner in relevant sections of the document such ‘Enhancement of Enrollment’ and ‘Infrastructure’. Significantly, it notes that female teacher management has been “worst affected” as a result of devolution as the administrative unit, which was separate for female teachers, has been merged with that of males (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.11).

Under GAD, it is significant that the importance of building of trust between teachers and communities has been stressed in the Plan since GAD stresses the crucial role of communities. For example, in a special initiatives with the World Food Programme for the promotion of primary education for girls, increased interaction of female teachers with communities has been included. Moreover, it acknowledges and addresses the gender needs of female teachers in the face of low mobility and security concerns by laying out plans to provide them with transportation and housing. In yet another example, the Plan targets seven worse off districts, in terms of gender disparity, to provide special incentives to female teachers. According to the Plan, “in order to encourage female teachers to work in difficult areas, the Government intends to provide special incentives to female teachers in those areas. It also intends to build cluster hostels for female teachers where there is no alternative” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.43).

Nonetheless, there are ambiguities and certain gaps in this regard in the Plan. It asserts that “in order to bring about changes in the attitudes, knowledge and skills of the whole teaching force, changes in the current curriculum of teachers’ training institutes
will be introduced” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.52). However, there is no mention of targeting gender bias or increasing gender awareness through this training which studies have shown proves instrumental in dealing with anti-women values and norms prevalent in the province (Latif, 2009). It should be noted that GAD prescribes an approach which deals with social and cultural factors in a holistic manner.

Access and long distances

The paucity of female-only schools and long distances to school act as demand-suppressing factors for girl’s education especially in rural areas of the province (Mustafa, 2012). Given low female mobility and security concerns, long distances to schools act as a factor to not send girls to school. Communities identify this as a significant barrier to girls’ education both in terms of enrollment and retention (Jamal 2013; Iqbal, 2012; Rahman et al, 2011). A father in a study in the tribal areas of KP highlighted the problems of long distances to schools:

I have three daughters. I wanted all of them to be educated. My older daughter has graduated from high school but I had to drop other two after primary school. Now the security situation is terrible. Police force and justice system is all corrupted. There is no justice. Rich and elites will get away with anything they do! If something happen to my daughter or someone bothered her, where will I go? Who will give me justice? I am a poor man. Instead of sending them to a faraway school and taking the risk to their chastity and safety, I better keep my daughters safe and keep them at home (Jamal, 2016, p. 8).
To encapsulate the extent of the problem, a study found, using logistic regressions of enrollment and attrition via secondary data from the National Adolescent and Youth Survey, “that even after taking school availability into account, girls in households allowing unrestricted mobility to school had 1.5 times higher odds of ever being enrolled than those who required an escort. Once in school, the need for an escort implied 1.6 times higher odds of dropping out” (Callum, Sathar and Haque, 2012).

The ESP identifies and shows an understanding of the “problems of female mobility” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 38) compounded by climatic and geographic characteristics of the province that hinder access to schooling especially for girls. It also acknowledges that the lack of female-only schools causes dropping out as locks find co-education unacceptable. In order to deal with these issues, it plans on building new schools for girls in underserved areas and “study possibility of introducing government-financed private school subsidizing for areas with low female enrollments” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.38). It also promises to “establishing community schools for under-served areas” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.63).

However, long distances to schools and problems of female mobility for existing schools have not been directly addressed in the Plan. Under GAD, this is an important oversight as access to schools has been proven to have a gender differentiated impact on girls and contributed to the gender gap in the province. GAD places an emphasis on identifying and addressing the specific needs of boys and girls and low mobility is a problem that disproportionately affects women and girls especially in KP given the
security situation. In order for plans to be effective, efforts must be on improving access to existing schools, for instance, by providing transportation or improving security, and not simply on building new schools.

**Infrastructure and facilities**

Inadequate infrastructure has been a significant problem in schools across Pakistan and it acts as a barrier to education especially for girls. Problems range from lack of boundary walls and seating in classrooms to the absence of female toilets and clean drinking water (Suleman et al, 2012). In KP, infrastructure issues have been compounded by the 2005 earthquake and bombings of schools by militants (Naqvi, Khan and Ahmad, 2012). The government and NGOs are to date dealing with the resulting reconstruction and renovation needs, but the problem is more deeply rooted and predates the aforementioned destruction. Even unaffected girls’ schools, lack basic facilities — the lack of proper toilets, for instance, aggravates menstruation-related issues while the absence of female toilets in co-education schools deters parents from sending their daughters to school (Sinden, Sahin and Francois, 2015).

Communities have cited these infrastructure and facilities issues as a major determinant of the decision not to send their daughters to school and have demanded girl-friendly schools (Jamal, 2016; Suleman et al, 2012; ). It should be noted that the aforementioned issues disproportionately impact girls’ schooling as boys mobility and perceived lesser need for privacy enables them to better deal with these inadequacies at school. The Plan identifies these weaknesses in the government school system along with
their disproportionate impact on girls, and commits to remedying them. It asserts that the “provision of basic facilities is a fundamental pre-requisite for all schools, especially in female schools, to ensure that parents send their children to schools” (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.61).

The Plan identifies the number of schools in need of renovation and reconstruction as a result of damage. It presents strategies including community participation; public-private partnerships for schools improvement; prioritization of schools with missing facilities; and more detailed identification of infrastructure needs for schools (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p.63). Nonetheless, there are deficiencies in the Plan when considered under GAD. Even though the gender differentiated impact of missing infrastructure and facilities has been acknowledged, it does not address the strategies in a gender-sensitive manner. For example, strategies for redressal do not include any girls-specific measures. Moreover, interventions that have been proven to benefit girls’ education, such as an increased role for communities, more schools for “marginalized communities”, and the establishing of more community-based schools, have been included but without the specific targeting, or mention, of girls (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015).

This is significant as GAD requires policy to meet “both women’s practical gender needs and more strategic gender needs” (Baden and Reeves, 2000, p.33). As a result, policies need to factor in, in a consistent manner, interventions for the redressal of these inadequacies which promote discrimination in access to schooling as discussed above and
the specific needs of girls and boys. Meanwhile, studies show that the existence of girl-friendly schools, with proper infrastructure, has a positive impact on enrollment and retention rates for girls (Winthrop, Sperling and Kwauk, 2016).

**Community participation**

Even though the Plan displays an understanding of the importance of community participation by explicitly acknowledging it and repeatedly including it in strategies, a disproportionately low mention is made of girls-specific community engagement. Evidence from the province has consistently shown the success of, and the need for, community-supported and community-based models of girls’ education (Razzaq, 2015). Evidence is also clear on the special benefits and increased acceptability and effectiveness of community supported strategies and interventions for girls’ education. In fact, communities themselves have expressed a need for greater involvement and ownership in girls’ education (Razzaq, 2015; Jamal 2015). Emphasizing the importance of engaging men in the cause of girls’ education, an experienced educator, in a community-level study in KP explained:

There are elected representatives in every area like councilors or you can contact the elders of a community. You can also contact those Islamic clerics who are flexible and broad-minded. Your first target should be those men, elders, and clerics who are open-minded and who are able to live and think in their era (Jamal, 2013, p. 279).
Another participant in the study, a community leader, further stressed the need for community participation:

Awareness about girl’s education can only be done in a Hujra [guest house]. There is a Hujra in every village. Guests [girls’ education activists] should go to a Hujra, ask the hosts to gather the people of the village because they want to discuss a few things with them. Guests will present proposals and the villagers would give their views and comments (Jamal, 2013, p. 280).

Notwithstanding, the Plan’s stated goals to “promote gender equality” (Education Sector Plan, 2010–2015, p. 1), it does not fully utilize the aforementioned evidence to promote girls’ education-specific community participation in a consistent manner. It does assert that the “removal of gender disparities” is a priority area which will be addressed through community participation among other measures (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. II); however, this is only translated in a disproportionately low number of strategies and initiatives. For example, increased interaction with female teachers as part of a World Food Programme initiative to increase girls’ enrollment in selected districts is planned (Education Sector Plan, 2010-2015, p. 24).

It should be noted that the importance of community participation has been emphasized for improving both access, governance and quality in education throughout the ESP. For example, increased funding for parent teacher committees has been promised along with an increased role for communities in monitoring the quality of
education. This accountability to communities approach would be welcomed under GAD which places importance on the role of communities. However, gender has not been factored into this role for communities in the Plan — as evidence and GAD have prescribed. The GAD framework places emphasis on the different roles and needs of women and men, and boys and girls, within communities, which, in the case of this policy, would mean factoring these into all aspects of education planning and provision.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings confirm significant inter and intra-provincial contextual variance in KP and Punjab. While education-resistant socio-cultural and religious factors are more pronounced the former, economic and quality determinants are more so in the latter. It is, of course, important to note that Punjab has the lowest gender disparity in education in the country while KP has the second highest (Pakistan District Rankings, 2016). Against this backdrop, provincial education policies need to be tailored to their respective gender needs and contextual variance by identifying both commonalities and differences in this regard.

Punjab

While it is important to acknowledge the success in Punjab’s education sector — enrollment figures have crossed 90 percent in some districts for both girls and boys (Pakistan District Rankings, 2016) — and the comprehensiveness of the PSESP, it is also
crucial to note its inadequate and peripheral treatment of gender. Especially since the
Plan acknowledges that while gender differentials in education may not be high on the
provincial level, they are substantial in disadvantaged areas. Despite a stated commitment
to treating gender as a cross-cutting issue, in accordance with UNESCO guidelines, the
PSESP treats it in an incomplete and peripheral manner indicating that provincial success
may have led to the exclusion of still-disadvantaged girls in the Plan.

Policies must take into account the multiplicity and differently lived realities of
girls in the province to be inclusive of, and relevant to, those left out of the benefits of
reform and reconstruction reform in a continual manner (Siddiqui, 2016; Khoja-Moolji,
2015). Rising enrollment figures should be viewed in a regional and gender
disaggregated manner to uncover the on-ground realities of the disadvantaged. However,
the Plan fails to address every community expressed barrier to girls’ education in a
gender-sensitive manner as has been demonstrated earlier in this section.

It does display an understanding of the persisting gender disparity and certain girls-
specific issues such as long distances, community engagement and the lack of quality,
It fleetingly mentions gender sensitized management to “ensure gender equity in both
policies and practices…. [G]ender equity for both men and women must also translate in
terms of practice i.e. gender sensitivity in textbook content development, teaching
practices, logistical planning, management decisions (Punjab School Education Sector
Plan, 2013-2017, p. 86). However, it does not present strategies in a gender disaggregated
manner — none of them are specific to girls’ schools.

Nonetheless, the Plan’s focus on quality can be viewed as indirectly addressing a
community expressed barrier — as discussed quality issues act as a factor in the decision not to enroll girls since they are higher returns in employment, etc. (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015). Evidence shows that in Punjab quality and economic factors are more important than socio-cultural and religious one, as in KP, in the demand for girls’ education (Ahmad and Hussain, 2015; Lloyd, Mete and Sathar, 2005). In this way, the PSESP is comprehensive in its treatment of quality issues of standards; learning outcomes and assessment; curriculum; teacher development; and school environment. It should also be noted that the aforementioned barriers to girls’ education such as infrastructure; community participation; and teacher development have been addressed in the Plan as well but not in a manner targeted to girls’ education.

Nevertheless, the focus must remain on viewing the policy within the GAD framework in which respect it is sorely lacking. Even though reforms in the province have targeted girls’ education through targeted cash transfers, etc. the Plan does not present such targeted measures. On the whole, the Plan is not gender sensitive; lacks gender disaggregated data on account of presenting figures for disadvantaged districts; and does not present specific measures to bring remaining out-of-school girls into the universal primary enrollment fold. Gender requires continual and continuous efforts and a consistent integration into all aspects of policy not as peripheral issue acknowledged but not addressed.

*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

The ESP’s main objectives include achieving universal primary enrollment and
reducing gender disparity in the province — both have missed their 2015 targets albeit zealous reforms are underway (Bari, 2016; Naviwala, 2016). Experts believe that the province is on the right track and may surpass Punjab in education indicators. Moreover, efforts in the province are believed to be self-driven instead of donor-driven (Naviwala, 2016) — indicating an approach that takes into account context-specific needs of the province.

In fact, the Plan displays a complete understanding of the specific needs of girls and the barriers they face in different settings in the province — worse in rural and tribal settings. It appears to understand the centrality of the role of socio-cultural and religious factors to girls’ education in Pashtun society — showing an understanding of which factors are more relevant in the context of the province (Jamal, 2013;) . It also emerges to be empirically sound and inclusive of voices of the marginalized — all community expressed outlined above, identified by way of community level, on-ground research, and through the voices of communities, have at least been mentioned in the Plan. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that although importance has been given to evidence-based barriers to girls’ education, there remains much scope for improvement, and a continuing and consistent inclusion of girls’ education is required in education policy.

Using the GAD framework, as discussed earlier, is instrumental in identifying how gender-sensitive the ESP is and to gauge its approach to, and treatment of, issues related to girls’ education and, in turn, its commitment to reducing gender disparity. In this regard, the Plan appears to have adopted a WID-GAD hybrid approach. In line with WID, it focuses on increasing girls’ enrollment and highlights the benefits of girls’ education
for development in KP, but it does so in a manner that is aware of the socio-cultural underpinnings of girls’ education needs. It is GAD-compliant as it address not only supply side factors of girls’ education, such as schools and infrastructure needs, but also demand side needs, factors responsible for resistance to girls’ education. Moreover, in line with GAD, it displays an understanding of the importance of the role of communities by committing to an increased role for communities, provision of more community-based schools, and the strengthening of PTCs (Razzaq, 2015; Jamal, 2014).

Nevertheless, despite these inclusions, the Plan suffers from an incomplete and inconsistent treatment of girls’ education issues. In every section of the document — infrastructure, governance, teacher improvement, quality and enrollment — it mentions the problems specific to girls but does not put forth strategies for their redressal in a consistent and comprehensive manner as has been demonstrated earlier in this section. For example, in line with GAD, it displays an understanding of the importance of the role of communities by committing to an increased role for communities, provision of more community-based schools, and the strengthening of PTCs. However, this has been done without the specific mention of the relation of these measures to girls’ education even though its girls-specific benefits have been highlighted by evidence-based analyses in the province (Jamal, 2013; Razzaq, 2015).

Further, there is “significant regional variation in government priorities” across urban-rural settings with regard to girls’ education in the province (Jamal, 2016, p.9). The ESP aptly identifies that regional and contextual variation exists in girls’ education; however, does not promise to prioritize disadvantaged areas. It should be noted that a
mistrust of the government’s role and lack of attention to the cause of girls’ education is strong in such settings. For example, communities, in latter regions, agreed that there is mismanagement of government funds and administrative issues that fail to deal with female teacher absenteeism (Jamal, 2016).

Conversely, there are girls’ education issues that have been discussed in the ESP but did not emerge in the evidence, of the community level studies included in this thesis, such as quality and corporal punishment or sexual abuse. This could be indicative of the lack of sensitivity to quality in the province and the stigmatization of discussing sexual abuse in Pakistani society in general. Nonetheless, the ESP commits to improving quality, which has emerged as the most intractable and impactful issue all over the country (Bari, 2016; Jamil, 2016). However, there are gaps in the girls-specific aspects of the commitment. For example, the Plan notes that due to the paucity of qualified female teachers in rural areas, the criteria for hiring has been relaxed. But it does shed light on the impact of this on quality, which is already a major issue in government schools for girls’ education.

On the whole, there appears to be consensus among certain communities that despite affirmations in policies and plans, the cause of girls’ education is often neglected in disadvantaged areas (Jamal, 2016). Even though the Plan commits to reducing gender disparity, in marginalized and under-served areas, girls’ education has been addressed in an incomplete manner in the guidelines and strategies of the document. Moreover, despite having identified the various barriers to girls’ education, it has neglected to present
targeted strategies and interventions for redressal in the areas of accessibility, awareness-raising, increased public-private partnership, and transportation specifically for girls’ education in a consistent manner.

The following recommendations for each province are based on the findings of the policy analysis undertaken.

**Punjab**

Punjab needs to maintain a focus on gender if it is to adopt an empiricist approach to policymaking despite the lower gender disparity as compared to other provinces. Based on the evidence-based different needs of boys and girls, as discussed in the section above, each segment of policy, such as infrastructure, curriculum, teacher training, learning outcomes, need to be addressed in a gendered manner. Gender is not simply about addressing disparity in enrollment, but ensuring that educational experiences are tailored to the these needs. A tepid incorporation of gender does not address the policy needs of girls and boys presenting the danger of the perpetuation of inequalities that lead to gender disparity in education. The province must ensure that its next policy incorporates gender as a transversal theme instead of mentioning, and addressing it, fleetingly. Education policy should address the unique needs of girls’ school in order to level the field with an equity-based approach. Each category of the policy should identify and address the needs of both girls and boys.

It should undertake a gendered needs assessment and subsequently address these in the next policy. Special targeted efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that girls in the
most disadvantaged areas are brought into the schooling fold. Success on the provincial level should not lead to the exclusion of their voices. Stakeholder participation from such areas could be increased in policymaking processes and they should be prioritized for urgent action in future policies. On the whole, gender should be integrated more fully and consistently in future policies. Internal and external gender audits should be initiated as a means of ensuring this compliance and commitment to gender.

*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needs to address gender needs in a more innovative and comprehensive manner in policy. It should be acknowledged that its understanding of issues of girls’ education is clear and tangible in the current policy. Nevertheless, in future policy, gender needs to be fully integrated in solutions and interventions. The province needs a stronger focus on combating education-resistant socio-cultural and religious norms in a broad-based manner. Alliance-building with moderate forces in the clergy and community participation need to have a girls’ education focus in future policy in order to combat such resistance. Given the especially low rates of girls’ schooling in tribal and remote areas, a targeted increase in stakeholder representation in the current consultations for the new policy should be achieved. On the whole, internal and external gender audits should be initiated as a means of ensuring a more complete and effective incorporation of gender.
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empowerment and reproductive health.

Annexure A
The following guiding questions have been reproduced verbatim from the UNESCO handbook on education policy analysis and programming 2013. They have selected for their relevance to the Gender and Development Framework.

Society and culture

• What are the problems and issues regarding education for disadvantaged social groups?
• What kinds of cultural values and behaviours have been negatively or positively influencing participation in education? What is the scale of such cultural influence? In what way have past and present education policies tried to address these social and cultural issues and needs?
• What kind of proactive social and education policies will be needed to address the remaining social disparities and cultural biases related to education?

Evidence-based policy-making

• To what extent are recent education policies based on information and research evidence?
• Do policy and information gaps still exist? How can evidence-based policy-making be improved in the future? What actions need to be taken?

The right to education and provision of education

• Is the right to education recognized and mentioned in the legislation, policies and public
discourse in the country?

• Does the government provide free and compulsory basic education to all?

• What are the main obstacles to ensuring the right to education is upheld in the country?

How have these obstacles been addressed in existing education policies, strategies and plans? What are the remaining gaps and issues?

• Learning from past experiences, how should future education policies and plans pursue efforts to uphold citizens’ right to education?

**Access and quality**

• In what way have existing education policies and plans addressed the issue of balancing resource allocation between increasing access and improving quality?

• What alternative solutions and innovations have been adopted in terms of providing access to good quality education for disadvantaged population groups?

• Measurement Are education statistics and indicators (e.g. intake rates, enrolment ratios, repetition rates, drop-out rates and completion rates) disaggregated by gender, location, etc.?

• How have provision of education, access to education and participation in education evolved over time? Has this changed in terms of level of education, gender participation and other criteria (e.g. geographical location, socio-cultural, family income groupings)?

• How best should education coverage, access and participation be measured in the future?
Transparency and accountability

• In what ways do local schools inform and involve local community stakeholders in school management?

Equity

• Are there sufficient numbers of schools and capacity, with appropriate geographical distribution, to meet actual needs? If not, which are the under-served areas and student population groups? How best can capacities be expanded to cater to their needs?
• Are there sufficient numbers of trained teachers to teach the total primary school age population? If not, what can be done to increase these numbers, especially for the under-served areas and population groups?

Policy and legal frameworks

• How strongly is the government committed to gender equality? Is there adequate legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex?
• Is there any policy explicitly targeting equality in access to education for both girls and boys? What is its nature and scope? What are the underlying assumptions being made about gender difference and inequality?
• Is gender mainstreamed into these processes?
• To what extent have the equal rights of girls and boys to receive education been enforced?
• How far and in what ways are the needs of the poorest and most disadvantaged women taken into account?

• Are there concrete incentives for the implementation of empowerment strategies? Are local elected bodies, stakeholders and communities sensitized to gender equality?