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# Gender Equality, Education, and Development: Tensions between Global, National, and Local Policy Discourses in Postcolonial Contexts

*Naureen Durrani and Anjum Halai*

## 1 Introduction

Education and gender equality remain key foci within the development agenda, particularly since the international consensus garnered through the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) movements. Despite the widespread critiques of EFA and the MDGs (Dunne, 2009; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; Unterhalter, 2012), the mobilisation they propelled led to considerable gains in widening access to education. Nevertheless, globally gender parity in enrolment remains unrealised in primary education (in over 33% of countries), lower secondary education (in 54% of countries), and upper secondary education (in 77% of countries) (UNESCO, 2016b). These disparities are mostly at the expense of girls at primary level globally, and at lower and upper secondary levels in countries with low enrolment ratios, with gender gaps much higher in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. A majority of these countries face the contexts of postcoloniality.

Equal access to education, while essential, does not guarantee gender equality. Schools, as formal state institutions, tend to reproduce existing gender regimes and power relations rather than subvert them. Furthermore, gender and gender equality can be buzzwords that produce different interpretations across contexts and actors. Paying attention to the specificities of contexts in which gender equality discourses are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted is, therefore, crucial to understanding the construction of gender and the hope of its transformation in and through education.

We adopt a postcolonial perspective as an entry point to the proliferating literature on global gender equality policies and their enactment. Through a literature review and an empirical study of postcolonial Pakistan, we argue that global gender equality discourses tend to ignore the ways colonialism was integral to the rise of modernity in the West. The development of modern societies also saw the development of institutionalised education in forms that now underpin the promotion of mass (universal) education around the world.

These interconnections have a significant bearing on the relationship of gender and education, particularly in postcolonial contexts, where education is deployed in nation-building projects that simultaneously seek to modernise the nation by emulating the rationality, science, and technology of the colonial power in the public realm, and to keep the nation's distinction from the colonisers through the feminine. This feminine positioning involves the construction of 'authentic'/'traditional' womanhood to mark the cultural distinction of the postcolonial nation. The private/public divide that was intrinsic to Western gender relations was, thus, redoubled in contexts of postcoloniality. The collision of these competing national goals – modernity and tradition – with international policy discourses is detrimental to the realisation of gender equality.

This chapter addresses that neglect of the specificities of postcolonial settings in education and development scholarship. The next section presents our theoretical framework, covering the key concepts we deploy – nation-state, development, education, and gender. This is followed by summarising the findings of a brief literature review on the relationship of gender and education in postcolonial contexts. The next two sections first offer a description of Pakistan, the context of our empirical research, and outline the methods and data sets. We then offer key analyses from research that explored the potential of education for promoting gender equality in Pakistan. The conclusion relates the analyses back to the literature and offers implications for gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## 2 Theoretical Framework

We begin with an exploration of the relationship between the nation-state and education, and the ways modernity shaped that relationship. Next, we trace the intersection of nation and gender, and the ways this relationship was shaped by colonialism. Finally, we discuss conceptualisations of gender and its location within global development and education frameworks.

### 2.1 *The Modern Nation-State and Education*

In a study of four postcolonial contexts, Dunne et al. (2017) demonstrate how modern values underpinned the development of the nation-state in the West. Furthermore, they discuss how the development of the nation-state was bound up with the emergence of liberal secular democracies and was premised on the supposed separation of religion and state. The term nation-state refers to

a mode of governance concerned with the protection of particular territorial boundaries alongside the governing of the people within those boundaries. Dunne et al. (2017) draw on Dean (2007) to argue that while the sovereignty of the state was recognised in Europe by the early 18th century, the conquest of the non-European world by Western nation-states went unfettered. This was justified by the discourse of modernity that sought to 'civilise' the 'barbaric' colonised nations. If the nation is an 'imagined community' discursively constituted, as argued by Anderson (1991), the establishment of a state-organised education system played a key role in forging national imaginations and the rise and spread of nations (Gellner, 1983). The emergence of state-funded schooling in modern contexts coincided with the consolidation of the modern nation-state. However, in colonial contexts, Western education was the privilege of the few and central to the creation of internal social hierarchies and division.

## 2.2 *Gender, Nationalism, and Colonialism*

The nation is a gendered construct, constituted through gender symbolism. Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) argue that women reproduce the nation biologically and sustain the boundaries of national groups through restrictions imposed on sexual relations. Women are also the main transmitters and reproducers of national culture and symbolic signifiers of national differences.

Women were central to nationalist projects in postcolonial contexts. Chatterjee (1989, p. 622) contends that the British invoked the 'oppressed' native woman as a key symbol in the discourse of the civilised West against the 'degenerative and barbaric' Indians.<sup>1</sup> To deal with this onslaught on their tradition, Indian nationalists resorted to a material/spiritual dichotomy. Because European countries established their dominance over non-European peoples through the material domain, which included, for example, science, technology, rational forms of economic organisation, and modern methods of statecraft, the incorporation of these characteristics in the material culture was seen as vital to overthrowing colonial subjugation. However, the spiritual inner core of the Indian culture, which Indian nationalists saw as superior to the West, had to be insulated from Western infiltration. This inner/outer distinction when applied to daily life demarcated the social space into *ghar* (the home) and *bahir* (the world), with women being the representation of *ghar*; and *bahir* being the domain of men (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 624). The nation was imagined and constituted through maintaining a balance between 'modernity' and 'tradition', with 'modernity' performed and embodied, predominantly by men, in the material/outer/public world and tradition enacted, predominantly

by women, in the domain of the spiritual/inner/home. Taking up Spivak (1988), Dunne et al. (2017) contend that the symbolic significance of gender to national imaginaries leaves postcolonial women under double surveillance. Internally, they are regulated by their men and women with respect to intersecting kinship as well as national and religious norms; externally, they need to be 'rescued' from their men, including through the enforcement of international human rights regimes. Because women's rights and education feature centrally in human rights discourses, the violation of both is constituted as regressive and premodern and can offer the grounds for global interventions (Khoja-Moolji, 2017).

Chatterjee (1989) further illustrates that formal education was deployed as a key mechanism for the construction of a respectable Indian female subjectivity that fixed the essential femininity of women in terms of certain culturally visible markers of religiosity/spirituality, such as 'her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanor, her religiosity', setting her apart from Western women and women of the lower class (Chatterjee, 1989, p. 624). In the case of Muslims, as elite (*ashraf*, meaning noble) men increasingly lost their influence in the public sphere because of colonial governance, attention shifted to the home 'to redefine Muslim identity and norms of respectability' (Khoja-Moolji, 2018, p. 25). In the reconfigured colonial power relations, Muslim theologians, reformers, and nationalists saw women as 'the upholders of familial morality, domestic managers, and mothers of future citizens' (Khoja-Moolji, 2018, p. 25). Furthermore, education was seen as reforming *ashraf* women, enabling them to perform the social practices of nobility, including hard work, religiosity, and self-discipline. In other words, the iconography of woman applied to both Hindu and Muslim communities, and education sedimented class, caste, and gender hierarchies in the population.

Therefore, in postcolonial societies, while education is seen as significant to the construction of the 'ideal' woman, this idealised national female subjectivity is not necessarily aligned with the 'empowered' woman framed in global education and development discourses. Furthermore, these ideals could incorporate religious values, rather than being framed by a secular imaginary of the modern. This disconnect between the national and the international/global is a key issue in considering gender equality in the Sustainable Development agenda.

### 2.3 *Gender, Education, and Development*

The promotion and measurement of gender equality in education is linked to conceptualisations of gender. Unterhalter (2012) offers a distinction between 'gender' as a noun, an adjective, and a verb. Gender as a noun refers to a

descriptive identification of girls/women and boys/men, as exemplified by the gender parity index (GPI) in education participation and attainment in SDG Target 4.1 on all boys and girls completing primary and secondary education (UNGA, 2015b). This theorisation of gender underpins the Women in Development (WID) framework that emphasises the entry of 'women in development, and thus girls and women into school', primarily in the interest of (economic) efficiency, but not for challenging multiple subordinations of women (Unterhalter, 2005, p. 17). Understandings of gender as a noun, despite its limitations, remain dominant in the international education and development policy landscape (Unterhalter, 2012).

Gender as an adjective is an attribute of the relationships of 'power and meaning in different sites' between men and women (Unterhalter, 2012, p. 68). An example is SDG Target 4.a: 'Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all' (UNGA, 2015b, p. 17). This conceptualisation focuses on the ways schools and learning processes both transform and reproduce structures of gender inequality. With respect to the relationship between gender and education, the interest is in explorations of how the curriculum and pedagogy might be gendered or how some subjects assume a gendered identity that excludes girls and women from the study of particular disciplines related to prestigious occupations. Such an understanding of gender speaks to the concerns of the Gender and Development (GAD) framework, which is interested in a more relational theorisation of gender and the removal of structural barriers to gender equality (Unterhalter, 2005).

Gender as a verb refers to the ongoing discursive construction of gender performed within the constraints of specific social contexts (Butler, 1990). Furthermore, gender is viewed as a way of structuring social practice, and therefore, intrinsically linked to other structures such as nationality, race, class, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity. Institutions, for example the state, the workplace, and the school, are considered key sites for the configuration of gender (Connell, 1995). With respect to education, the verb 'gender' refers to how girls and boys perform their gender identities within the constraints of the social context of school. The SDG 4 goals, targets, and indicators make no use of 'gender' as a verb. Theorisation of gender as a verb reveals the complicity of the WID and GAD approaches in transforming women from the Global South into objects of technical knowledge, and in the construction of white Western middle-class women as modern, free, and progressive, and women in the Global South as their 'other' (Humphreys, Undie and Dunne, 2008). From this perspective, the political and theoretical interests reside in the recognition

of difference and unmasking the marginalisation of nonmainstream identities (Unterhalter, 2005).

While Unterhalter (2012) believes that all three conceptualisations of gender – noun, adjective, and verb – are limited on their own and need to complement one another, we see them as drawing on different and contradictory theoretical understandings. Gender as performative or a verb highlights the power of social construction. Gender identities are constituted by discourse and gender performances bring into being what they name – in this context, the gender binary. In other words, it is not the identity (male or female) doing the discourse but the discourse doing the gender (Butler, 1990). Treating gender as a male/female binary renders transgender and agender identities unintelligible, establishing heteronormativity and silencing nonheterosexuality. The hegemony of gender binary discourse implies that nonbinary and nonheterosexual lives ‘fit no dominant frame for the human’ resulting in their dehumanisation (Butler, 2004, p. 25). While the notion of performative is useful in ‘troubling’ and ‘undoing’ gender, its continued neglect in global education and development discourses is linked to the concept of development and its modern imperatives, which implies an inherent privileging of liberal theories of gender.

Against this background, global education and development discourses, while not homogenous, tend to position girls’ education in the Global South as a solution to countless persistent development problems, simultaneously positioning girls as victims of poverty and ‘conservative’ cultural norms, and as embodying the potential to solve these very issues (Khoja-Moolji, 2015).<sup>2</sup> The concurrent representation of ‘poor women from the South as both objects of transformation and redemption and potential entrepreneurial subjects’, rather than being an aberration, is a continuity of ‘colonial discourses of salvation which simultaneously infantilised its objects and imposed a moral responsibility for self-improvement on them’ (Wilson, 2012, p. 68). The elevation of girls’ education in the Global South as a hegemonic ideology is linked to particular social, material, and political histories, and is closely entwined with harnessing their labour in the global economy (Khoja-Moolji, 2015).

While the framing described above constrains understanding of gender equality in education by focusing on ‘girls and not gender (or boys)’ (Monkman and Hoffman, 2013, p. 63), Khoja-Moolji (2018, p. 4) argues that this ‘global rallying around girls’ education has been in relation to *specific* populations and nations in the global South’, in contexts such as Pakistan, where ‘poverty, terrorism, and gender-based violence’ are viewed as a consequence of girls’ restricted access to schooling.

### 3 Gender and Education in Postcolonial Contexts: Key Issues and Debates

Modern education was a key institution for consolidating the cognitive, moral, and political authority of colonial regimes (Topdar, 2015). Consequently, the 'childish' native was subjected to state schooling 'as part of multiple civilizing mission projects' that sought differentiated outcomes for different classes, ethnicities, and genders (Topdar, 2015, p. 3). In Canada, such colonial projects involved the forceful removal of Aboriginal children from families and their confinement in Indian Residential Schools, with a bifurcated design to separate children by gender (de Leeuw, 2009). In Sierra Leone, Leach (2008) demonstrates that since the beginning of missionary engagement, gender was the main organising basis of schooling, with the curriculum for girls centred on domestic skills and morality as a preparation for marriage. In Africa more widely, colonial education systems entrenched 'traditional Christian notions of femininity and the appropriate social roles of women', while preparing men for the economy in pursuit of capitalist colonial interests (Ricketts, 2013, p. 6).

In the Indian context, Khoja-Moolji's (2018) archival research identifies a long-standing belief in girls' education as a key means for rescuing both girls and their nations, as reflected in the words of the Bishop of Calcutta, in 1871:

Female education is of the utmost moment in India for religious, social, and even political reasons, there being no more effectual nurses of the fanaticism of the Musalman [Muslim] and of the superstition of the Hindoo than the women of India. (quoted in Khoja-Moolji, 2018, p. 11)

This framing of girls' education both legitimised colonial interventions to 'emancipate' Indian women, including those by white feminists (Syed and Ali, 2011) and offered Indian nationalists and social reformists opportunities to 'regulate women's bodies and mobility' (Khoja-Moolji, 2018, p. 10). The 'new' Indian woman created at the nexus of colonial and nationalist discourses became 'emancipated' to enter the public realm of school, lead other women into nationalist/freedom projects, and even take up paid employment, as long as she strictly policed the boundaries between the 'ideal' and the Western/'common' woman (Chatterjee, 1989). Khoja-Moolji (2018) and Chatterjee (1989) further highlight the class inflections of the ideological project underpinning the education of Muslim and Hindu girls, respectively, resulting in the crystallisation of group boundaries along class lines. Colonial education and social reform projects not only allowed Muslim and Hindu women from



the nobility to participate in some public spaces and knowledges hitherto limited to men, but also enabled them to reinscribe their *class* status over women from lower classes, who continued to be excluded from such opportunities.

A number of studies illustrate how the 'ideal' woman is recruited in the curriculum and school practices of postcolonial contexts for the creation of the 'ideal' nation. In Pakistan, Naseem (2006) demonstrates that curriculum texts discursively constitute gendered citizens through totalisation, classification, and normalisation by excluding women visually and by fixing the meaning of the images that articulate gender in the texts. In Tanzania, school curricula seek to enable girls to become good citizens by learning the skills of accomplished home managers (Ricketts, 2013).

In addition to the official curriculum relayed through school textbooks and learning materials, the practices of schooling reproduce gender regimes through the hidden curriculum at micro and meso levels. Dunne's research in Botswana and Ghana reveals that in both contexts the informal practices of the hidden curriculum show striking similarities in the 'pervasive and inequitable gender/sexual practices within schools' (Dunne, 2007, p. 499). Likewise, a study of secondary schools in Uganda observed strong gender codes underpinned by morality and enforced and regulated by teachers and student-spy networks, resulting in the normalisation of 'compulsory heterosexuality and attendant homophobia' (Muhanguzi, Bennett, & Muhanguzi, 2011, p. 147).

Another significant theme emerging from the literature relates to the gaps between global gender goals and local/national implementation of 'empowerment' interventions on the ground. For example, Holmarsdottir, Møller Ekne, and Augestad (2011) show that South Sudan government officials comply with an array of girl-focussed interventions pushed by global development agencies, but implementation and coverage of these projects remain poor. Similarly, in Kenya, the tensions between 'national goals, competing cultural norms, and international expectations' on gender equality resulted in inconsistent gender messages in textbooks and a lack of fit between textbook messages and lived experiences, constraining students' ability to understand how gender (in) equality plays out in their lives within local communities (Foulds, 2013, p. 165).

The assumption that there is a positive relationship between education and gender equality would benefit from empirical scrutiny. As a multidimensional issue, gender equality cannot be achieved simply by expanding women's access to education and the labour market. Indeed, the study conducted by Chisamy et al. (2012) in marginalised communities in Bangladesh and Malawi found little evidence of transformation in gender relations or female empowerment despite girls' equal participation in schooling. Education interacts with social structures in complicated ways, and 'without changing social structures,

education does not guarantee empowerment' (Monkman & Hoffman, 2013, p. 75). While the above example is from a postcolonial context, the illusionary belief in a direct relationship between education and emancipation also applies to Western contexts (Skelton and Francis, 2009). Nevertheless, there is often an 'orientalist' bias in the Western attribution of gender inequality to culture in postcolonial contexts, while failing to engage with culture's impact on gender inequality in the West.

In conclusion, what the preceding studies seem to suggest is that the connection between education and empowerment is rather delusional. We argue that in postcolonial contexts competing demands between nation-building goals, the harnessing of education for human capital development, international gender equality commitments, and local cultural roles considerably complicate the work of education in meeting global gender equality targets. These insights would need to be considered as the global community comes to an agreement regarding what gender equality means and how to monitor and measure progress on it.

#### 4 Pakistan: Sociohistorical Context

Pakistan is a federation with four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [KP]), three territories (Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas), and the federal capital, Islamabad. Pakistan came into being in 1947 as a result of the partition of British India along religious lines amidst large-scale human migration, communal violence, and rape of women (Dunne et al., 2017). However, global economic and geopolitical relations continue to legitimise colonial patterns of dominance over Pakistan through global trade, terms of lending from International Monetary Fund, Western support to military regimes and *jihadi* groups in Pakistan (Kadiwal & Durrani, 2018), and more recently the 'War on Terror', which continues to incur huge human and financial losses (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

Pakistani culture is highly gender-segregated with clearly defined roles along the male/female gender binary and the exclusion of nonbinary gender identities. Many sources link the marginalisation of transgender and transsexual people in Pakistan and India to British colonial governance and their imperial project of civilising non-Western cultures (Hinchy, 2017; Khan, 2017). Precolonial India tolerated fluid gender identities, with transgender and transsexual people enjoying privileges such as land ownership, state stipends, and the possession of important positions in princely and royal courts (Khan, 2017).

Under British colonialism, the lives of transgender people became increasingly structured through modern European norms of heteronormativity. In 1860, the colonial state criminalised sodomy and carnal intercourse (Khan, 2017). British norms of gender and sexuality infiltrated the attitudes of Indian elites through British education, resulting in discrimination against transgender communities. The largely stable colonial policies of regulating transgender communities were challenged when in 2009 the Pakistani state gave the transgender community political recognition, ‘identifying them as citizens of a modern state’ (Khan, 2017, p. 1283).

The centrality of male/female gender binary to social life in Pakistan is strongly linked to national identity, which is constructed through religion and the military against the antagonistic non-Muslim ‘other’, particularly Hindu India, against whom Pakistan has fought four wars (Durrani & Halai, 2018). Gender segregation also marks the provision of school education. Government schools are the main providers of primary (grades 1–5), middle (grades 6–8), and secondary (grades 9–10) education. Currently, more than one-third of the those in education (42%) are enrolled in the private sector, with 48% enrolled in preprimary, 39% at primary, 37% at middle, 35% at secondary, and 22% at higher secondary level in private institutions (NEMIS-AEPAM, 2017). The government school system is largely gender segregated with schools for boys with male teachers and those for girls with female teachers. Parents prefer to send their daughters to girls’ schools, especially at the postprimary levels.

Pakistan is a country with a significant proportion of children and young people out of school. In 2015–2016, 22.64 million out of 51.7 million children aged 5–16 were out of school, of whom 12.11 million were girls and 10.53 million boys (NEMIS-AEPAM, 2017). A gender-disaggregated analysis of key education indicators is presented in Table 3.1 for an overview, although the reliance of these statistics on gender binaries reinscribes such binaries. Table 3.1 reveals

TABLE 3.1 Pakistan – Key education indicators by gender 2012

Indicator	Female	Male
Literacy rate (Age 10+)	47%	70%
Primary school completion (15–24 Years)	58%	72%
Lower secondary completion (15–24 Years)	41%	54%
Upper secondary completion (20–29 Years)	17%	22%
Mean years of education (20–24 Years)	5.54	7.23

SOURCE: UNESCO (n.d.-b)

disparities at the expense of girls. However, income disparities are much bigger than gender, and gender intersects with household income, location (rural and urban), and region/provinces (Durrani et al., 2017; UN Women, 2018). When the intersections of gender with location and income are taken into account, gender disparities almost disappear for the richest households in urban areas, with the exception of Balochistan (UNESCO, n.d.-b).

The literature links gender disparities to supply and demand, although this resonates with human capital theory, rather than recognising the power of the sociohistorical context. On the demand side, there is a persisting pro-male bias in parental decisions to enrol and spend on education (Aslam & Kingdon, 2008). On the supply side, the number of boys' schools is proportionally greater than girls' schools across provincial levels and rural and urban areas (Durrani et al., 2017). Likewise, the supply of teachers shows an enduring shortage of female teachers for high/secondary schools, especially in science and mathematics, in remote rural areas. Provinces with the largest gender gaps in education also have the lowest proportion of female teachers (Halai and Durrani, 2018).

Over the last two decades several reform initiatives have been taken to improve girls' participation in education, including waiver of tuition fees, free distribution of textbooks, and stipends for adolescent girls (Durrani et al., 2017). However, opportunities for women in terms of access to higher education, employment, and other resources are limited. Aslam and Kingdon (2012) estimate that schooling beyond 8–10 years can counter the effects of the economically gendered culture, but in Pakistan, only one in five women has at least 10 years of education. The completion of 12 years of quality compulsory education, enshrined in SDG 4 would, therefore, help ameliorate the economic marginalisation of women in Pakistan.

The next section presents a description of our empirical case study of gender equality in education in Pakistan.

## 5 The Case Study of Pakistan

This study, conducted in 2015–2016, sought to explore how gender equality informs policies and perspectives in two of Pakistan's provinces – Sindh and KP – that is, how these compare with policies and perspectives at both the federal/national and global level in order to highlight areas of tensions and overlaps in relation to gender equality. The distinction between these three levels – local, national, and global – is an analytical tool to unmask persistent barriers to gender equality and illuminate ways of promoting gender equality

in and through education both in Pakistan and other contexts of postcoloniality. Nevertheless, we understand that in such contexts the boundaries between the local, national, and global are blurred as contemporary relations of inequality – gender, class, religious, national, racial, and ethnic – are actively shaped by colonial and neo-colonial relations, including global imperatives in education, such as the SDGs, and the resistance they provoke.

A comparison of the southern province of Sindh and the northwestern province of KP is particularly illuminating as these have quite different historical legacies and sociodemographic compositions as summarised in Table 3.2. Sindh became part of the British Raj in 1843, receiving little attention in terms of development and ‘modernisation’ (Cohen, 2005). At independence, Sindh’s social structures and leadership, along with a repressive feudal order, remained intact. Sindh is Pakistan’s second most populous and the most urbanised province (PBS, 2017a). It has the highest proportion of non-Muslim population and is ethnolinguistically diverse, although Sindhi is the largest ethnic group (60%), followed by Urdu-language speakers (21%) (GoS, 2014).

KP was part of Punjab province after annexation by the British in 1849. In 1901 it was given the status of a province and named the North-West Frontier Province. It was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010 (GoKP, 2012). KP is the third most populous province, the least urbanised (PBS, 2017a), and the most religiously homogenous (PBS, 2017b). In terms of ethnicity, around two-thirds (74%) of KP inhabitants are Pakhtuns, who are largely governed by the

TABLE 3.2 Comparison of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)

	Sindh	KP
Population size <sup>a</sup>	47.8 million national share = 23.04%	35 million national share = 14.69%
Rural/urban distribution <sup>a</sup>	Rural = 48% Urban = 52%	Rural = 18.7% Urban = 81.3%
Demographics <sup>b</sup>	Muslim = 91.31% Non-Muslim = 8.69%	Muslim = 99.44% Non-Muslim = 0.56%
GPI primary (gross enrolment rate) <sup>c</sup>	0.78	0.75
GPI secondary (gross enrolment rate) <sup>c</sup>	0.78	0.48

a SOURCE: PBS (2017A)

b SOURCE: PBS (2017B)

c SOURCE: NEMIS-AEPAM (2017)

tribal/ethnic code of *Pakhtunwali* – a highly patriarchal code requiring gender seclusion and segregation that restricts women to the domestic sphere (Dunne et al., 2017). KP is the province most affected by the Soviet invasion of Pakistan and the ‘War on Terror’. In general elections, religious parties consistently manage to secure a high share of votes in the province.

Key sites for the study comprised teacher education institutions (TEIs), as teachers are central to promoting a gender transformative agenda or the sedimentation of unequal gender regimes (Halai & Durrani, 2018). A study of teacher education in Pakistan is particularly insightful, as the country has made significant investment in reforming teacher education over the last 15 years (Durrani et al., 2017). In total, five TEIs were accessed, four in Sindh and one in KP. The uneven distribution of TEIs across the two provinces reflects both the proportional size of the education sector in the two provinces and budgetary constraints. Perspectives of key stakeholders responsible for implementing the curriculum, including student-teachers, teachers, teacher educators (henceforth lecturers), and curriculum and textbook personnel, were collected (see Table 3.3). Data collection methods included individual interviews, focus group discussions, a survey with both structured and open questions, a limited number of lecture observations (see Table 3.3), and policy analysis.

The selection of sites, participants, and methods was purposeful, aiming to obtain a comprehensive picture of gender equality and education with socio-cultural diversity, including social class, religion, ethnolinguistic identity, and

TABLE 3.3 Summary of participants by methods and gender

Participants	Methods	Male	Female	Total
Teachers	Focus Group	9	8	17
	Questionnaire	91	82	173
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>190</b>
Student teachers	Focus Group	10	9	19
	Questionnaire	37	56	93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>112</b>
Lecturers	Interviews	12	2	14
	Classroom Observations	2	1	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
Curriculum experts/ Personnel	Interviews	13	11	24
International development actors	Interviews	3	9	12

TABLE 3.4 Policy texts analysed by level

Global	National	Local/Provincial
World Bank Group Gender Strategy (Fy16–23)	The White Paper 2007	Sindh Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2014–18
The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration	National Education Policy 2009	KP ESP (2010–15)
Global Education Monitoring Report 2016	National Education Policy 2017–25	KP ESP (2015–20)
<i>Global Education Monitoring Report 2017–18</i>	Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum	Pakistan Studies Textbook in use in Sindh
	National Curriculum in Pakistan Studies <sup>a</sup>	Pakistan Studies Textbook in use in KP

a A compulsory and assessed subject dedicated to enhancing social cohesion and national unity, studied by all young people in public and private schools in grades 9 (14–15 years) and 10 (15–16 years).

rural/urban location. Policy texts listed in Table 3.4 were critically analysed as a prelude to our engagement with the perspectives of teachers and other key stakeholders.

The analysis of primary data and documents focuses on gender for analytical clarity, but we understand gender as only one challenge for equality in education. Gender intersects with other axes of marginalisation, for example, displacement and disability, the latter of which is discussed at length in Chapter 4 by Christopher Johnstone, Matthew Schuelka, and Ghada Swadek. We bring together data from all sources to study how gender equality was taken up within policies and was understood by actors at local, national, and global levels.

## 6 Gender Equality: Policy and Perspectives

We first present the analysis of policy documents undertaken as part of the Pakistan case study with respect to gender equality at different levels before reviewing the ways gender equality is understood on the ground.

## 6.1 *Gender Equality as Portrayed in Policy Texts*

### 6.1.1 Global Level

The World Bank Group's (WBG) latest gender policy framework justifies investment in women and girls as 'smart economics' in the pursuit of poverty reduction and accelerating growth through increased women's labour market participation and earnings (WBG, 2015). 'Income, employment, and assets' are seen as vital to women's empowerment and beneficial to men, children, and society as a whole (WBG, 2015, p. 12). By contrast, a lack of women's economic empowerment is viewed as detrimental to growth, poverty reduction, and health outcomes for children, and associated with the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and poor governance. Drawing largely on human capital theory and neoliberalism, the overriding concern of these notions of gender is to instrumentalise women, rather than transform gender relations, and to exploit their economic labour under the gloss of empowerment.

The *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* frames gender equality as central to SDG 4 and commits 'to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning, and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools' (WEF, 2015, p. 8). Furthermore, it calls upon governments to review their education sector plans, budgets, curricula, textbooks, and teacher training to ensure the elimination of gender stereotypes and discrimination. Nevertheless, it acknowledges that, since gender inequality in education reflects gender norms and discrimination in the wider society, corresponding gender-sensitive policies are required in other areas if gender equality is to be achieved.

The SDGs have a more extended focus on gender equality than the MDGs, both in the stand-alone goal on gender equality, SDG 5, and the mainstreaming of gender equality into numerous other goals. With respect to SDG 4, gender equality is embedded in several indicators measured through the gender parity index: indicators 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.5.1, 4.6.1, and 4.c.1 (UIS, 2018e). (See Appendix 1 of this book for details.) While this indicator framework continues to narrow the goals, practices, and measures, the evolving discourse acknowledges that a more nuanced notion of gender equality is needed that does not equate gender with girls, that acknowledges that tackling gender asymmetries necessarily requires the engagement of men, and that takes into account how notions of masculinities and femininities impact institutional practices and norms (UNESCO, 2016b). Nevertheless, SDG Target 4.1 measures only literacy and numeracy, and does not focus on knowledge, skills, behaviour, and attitudes relevant to gender equality. Additionally, SDG 4 and 5 targets and indicators exclude those who do not fit the male/female gender binary. Finally, SDG



5 does not mention education, despite the significance of education to gender equality, and its targets only focus on women and do not include men (UNGA, 2015b, p. 18).

Despite the more nuanced understanding of gender equality, the SDG discourse tends to position girls' education as a solution to a range of development problems: 'Education, especially of girls and women, is the single most effective means of curbing population growth, by increasing people's autonomy over fertility-related decisions and delaying pregnancy' (UNESCO, 2016b, p. 24). This instrumentalist view of girls' education frames girls as 'mothers of development' and not as 'human beings deserving of dignity and respect in their own right' (UNESCO & MGIEP, 2017).

The comparison of global gender equality policies with national level, i.e., in Pakistan, is important as UN Women (2018) have identified variations in national-level commitments to gender equality policies.

### 6.1.2 National Level

Historically, at national level, Pakistan's education policies have not addressed gender equality in a systematic way. As a precursor to National Education Policy (NEP) formulation, a White Paper (WP) was produced in 2007. It traces the significance accorded to gender in education policies since 1947 and notes that policies mostly paid only marginal attention to gender (Aly, 2007). Nevertheless, several education policies are cited as advocating single-sex institutions at secondary or postcompulsory education levels to address the concerns of parents, who, for sociocultural reasons, are reluctant to send daughters to coeducational schools (Aly, 2007). Increasing the number of female teachers was another policy measure recommended to encourage girls' education (Aly, 2007). The WP contends that policy rhetoric surrounding girls' schools was 'not matched with financial and social investment in the cause of female education' (Aly, 2007, p. 29).

The NEP 2009 acknowledges that disparities in access to education across 'gender, ethnic minorities, provinces, regions, and rural-urban divides' is a challenge with 'serious implications for sustainable and equitable development in the country' (GoP, MoE, 2009, p. 66). To support girls' access to schooling, the NEP 2009 recommended waiving the maximum age limit for recruiting female teachers (GoP, MoE, 2009). The most recent NEP, 2017–2025, similarly acknowledges gender disparities, alongside regional gaps and aims, and resolves 'to achieve gender parity, gender equality, and empower women and girls within [the] shortest possible time' (GoP, MFEPT, 2017, p. 13). However, the policy has no dedicated subtheme on gender, and there is no detail of

strategies or actions that would be put in place to achieve the empowerment of women.

The curriculum and teacher education are key policy sites for promoting gender equality, and we look at each in turn to analyse how they address gender equality. Pakistan revised its national curriculum in 2006 in a bid to promote education quality by replacing a content-driven curriculum with a competency-based one. The revision was funded by USAID and led by the Curriculum Wing of the then Federal Ministry of Education, in consultation with the four Provincial Bureaus of Curriculum and a range of stakeholders. An additional objective of the reform was to make education purposeful by focusing the curriculum on 'important social issues' (GoP, MoE, 2009, p. 42). Gender equality is not mentioned as an area of focus. Looking specifically at the Pakistan Studies curriculum, the only specific reference to gender is the 'gender composition of population in Pakistan' (GoP, MoE, 2006, p. 13).

Alongside the overhaul of the curriculum, teacher education has received policy interventions over the last 15 years aimed at improving education quality (GoP, MoE, 2009). However, as highlighted in Chapter 9 by Yusuf Sayed and Kate Moriarty, global attention to quality has been reduced to pedagogical/technical concerns that appear to neutralise attention to issues such as gender. In the post 9/11 context of the US-led 'War on Terror', much education reform has been driven by the funding support and technical advice from international donors and development agencies, notably USAID. The revised Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum positions teachers as reflective practitioners enacting critical thinking and analysis to develop their practice in order to 'facilitate the process of multiculturalism and pluralism ... to bring about social transformation' (HEC, 2010, p. 15). Although gender equality is not explicitly referred to, multiculturalism and pluralism could implicitly incorporate it. The analysis of the revised ITE curriculum revealed no dedicated module on 'gender' out of a total 45 modules covered over four years, while two modules have at least a unit or a topic relevant to gender equality. These were the 'Foundation of Education' and 'Contemporary Issues and Trends in Education' (HEC, 2010). This peripheral focus on gender equality is unlikely to support teachers effectively in promoting gender equality.

In summary, policies at national level superficially include gender equality and predominantly frame it as a matter of redistributing access to education. Gender is silenced first by technical concerns about pedagogy and second by being flattened within discourses of diversity/multiculturalism. Policies do not engage with the gender and sociocultural norms that would need to be challenged if gender equality is to be promoted in and through education.

### 6.1.3 Local/Provincial Level

From the national policy arena, we now move to local/provincial policies, analysing policy developments with respect to the curriculum and teacher education in Sindh and KP. While we are using the two terms – local and provincial – interchangeably, we recognise there might be differences depending on the positioning of the ‘local’ within the province.

In 2010, Pakistan devolved planning and management of education to provinces, empowering provinces to make their own education policies, including the development of curriculum. However, all provinces have decided to keep the 2006 curriculum, with some minor adjustments (Durrani et al., 2017). The 2006 curriculum, despite bringing some elements of internal diversity, has largely left its gendered dimension ‘untroubled’ (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Halai & Durrani 2018).

Starting with policy developments in Sindh, we analyse the Pakistan Studies textbook prescribed for use in state schools at the time of fieldwork. The textbook portrays a gendered national imaginary established through the exclusion of women from the historical narrative and their restriction to the domestic sphere:

[The] male member has acquired a unique status in Pakistani culture. He is the head of the family. He is the dominant member. But a woman is also considered an important part of the family who governs and manages all family affairs within the four walls. Household keeping and upbringing of children is [sic] entrusted to her. (Khokhar, 2013, p. 134)

Similarly, and importantly, men are excluded from the domestic sphere. The consumption of such a policy discourse by students, both males and females, is likely to perpetuate gender hierarchies and maintain existing gender relations, particularly as teachers in Pakistan have been reported to relay the curriculum without challenging its gendered content (Durrani, 2008).

Following devolution, Sindh has produced one Education Sector Plan (ESP) (2014–2018) with the funding support of Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the European Union (EU), and UNICEF. At the time of our fieldwork, implementation of the ESP was in its infancy. The document identifies ‘gender attitudes’, the practice of ‘early or forced marriage’, and ‘mother illiteracy’ (but not father illiteracy) among the main reasons behind the exclusion of a large number of children and youth from education. In contrast to the peripheral attention to and narrow understanding of gender at the national level, the Sindh ESP has included gender as a cross-cutting theme and recommends the

revision of teacher education policies with a 'special focus on gender sensitivity' (GoS, 2014, p. 191). It recommends:

Provincial textbook boards shall ensure elimination of all types of gender biases from textbooks. Also adequate representation of females shall be ensured in all curriculum and textbooks review committees. (GoS, 2014, p. 205)

The document acknowledges the multiple and intersecting nature of gender inequalities and recommends 'a comprehensive plan and implementation strategy so as to meet the needs both of girls who have no/limited access to educational provision and related opportunities, and of female teachers working in the Department of Education (including in management positions)' (GoS, 2014, p. 245). The Sindh ESP recommends embedding gender sensitivity in classroom pedagogies, the curriculum, and overall teaching and learning environment. Thus, the Sindh ESP appears to be more aligned with global policy discourses. The greater integration of gender equality in Sindh is to a large extent the result of UNICEF's Conflict and Resilience programming in Pakistan (Durrani et al., 2017), and the fact that UNICEF was also the 'Managing' Agency for the production of the Sindh ESP (GoS, 2014, p. 12).

Since devolution, our second sampled province, KP, has produced two ESPs for 2010–2015 and 2015–2020, respectively. The first KP ESP (2010–2015) was developed with the technical assistance of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). It highlights a range of reasons behind gender disparities in education, including religious conservatism and conflict resulting from the 'War on Terror' (GoKP, 2012). The ESP claims that, while local religious practices ignore Islamic injunctions regarding mandatory education for both men and women, the ongoing Western violent interventions in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the ensuing militancy make girls' schools a target as they symbolise 'Westernisation' (GoKP, 2012, pp. 33, 92). The economic rationale for girls' education underpinning the global discourse is seen as a factor that discourages girls' education. It is argued that because most communities do not expect or want their women to have jobs, the association of employment with education leads communities to the 'wrong conclusion' that girls 'are not in need of education' (GoKP, 2012, p. 5). The recommended strategies to promote girls' education speak exclusively to redistributive aims: 'incentives to increase access and participation of girls in mainstream education through free textbooks, stipends for girls at secondary level, voucher scheme, scholarships, hostel facilities for female teachers' (GoKP, 2012, p. 39).

No substantial measure is offered to disrupt the gendered norms, for example, through the curriculum, pedagogy, or social relations in schools.

The second KP ESP (2015–2020), developed through the financial support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the technical support of its implementing partner Adam Smith International, has incorporated all the SDG 4 targets and indicators, including Target 4.7, which requires the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to ‘gender equality’ and ‘human rights’. However, it has excluded curriculum development on the grounds that the department first needs to develop a stronger institutional framework prior to introducing curriculum interventions (GoKP, 2015). Apart from the elusiveness of what a stronger institutional framework means or how and when it will be achieved, without any curricular inputs, it is hard to understand how progress toward SDG Target 4.7 can be achieved.

In the Pakistan Studies textbook authorised by the KP Textbook Board Peshawar, the national iconography again revolves around male heroes, and women’s subordination is legitimised: ‘In Pakistani society men have a pre-eminent position because he is [*sic*] responsible for the livelihood of the family’ (*Pakistan Studies for Class 10th*, n.d.: 104). This reinforces the expectation that women will be in the home, rather than in employment.

In concluding this section, we draw attention to differences in the incorporation of gender equality in policy documents at different levels.

First, while the global policy discourses offer the rationale of the links between girls’ education and economic growth, at the national and local level in Pakistan, policy discourses tend to overlook the contribution of women to national and household economic growth and instead to relegate women to the private/domestic sphere to establish and legitimise male dominance. The exclusive focus on the economic justification of girls’ education at the global level may discourage, rather than encourage, local communities to send girls to school.

Second, while gender equality is embedded within SDG 4 targets and indicators, the national and KP policies only focus on redistributing educational access to girls, without challenging the deep-seated gendered norms and the gender stereotypes prevalent within textbooks. By contrast, the Sindh ESP offers a more integrated and nuanced approach to gender equality. However, the extent to which gender equality policy is implemented is yet to be seen. The translation of policy into practice, particularly in local contexts, is always uncertain. A lack of commitment to implementation at the local level leads to notional compliance. The commitment of KP to SDG 4, while ruling out curriculum reform, is suggestive of this. For both Sindh and KP, the extent to which any gender-related reforms will be implemented is open to question.

## 6.2 *Gender Equality: Issues in the Translation from Policy to Practice*

The translation of gender policies into practice is linked to how actors interpret gender equality on the ground, as well the effective monitoring of policy implementation. This may lead to tensions or overlaps between policy as text and policy as practice within and across the global, national, and local levels. We explore such tensions and overlaps in the domains of school curriculum and textbooks.

### 6.2.1 Global Level

The SDG agenda is not legally binding and the 'SDG follow-up and review mechanism consists of voluntary national and non-government reporting' (UNESCO, 2017b, p. 1). While countries are encouraged to submit their national reviews voluntarily, only time will tell the extent to which such a country-led, hands-off approach to promoting the 2030 Agenda is effective.

The annual Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), hosted and published by UNESCO, is the key mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4. Nevertheless, these reports only illuminate broad trends at best, and 'they can misguide subsequent action' or even 'generate negative repercussions' (DeJaeghere, 2015, p. 74). For example, an indication of gender parity in access can wrongly transfer funds to other areas or can spark negative reactions to programmes that exclusively focus on girls and women (DeJaeghere, 2015).

Furthermore, other markers of inequalities intersect with gender, producing compound gender-based inequalities. The aggregate statistics of gender inequality render the most marginalised groups invisible in national statistics (UN Women, 2018). While household wealth, ethnicity, ability, age, race, location of residence, and migration are all important structures of inequalities, gender identity, and sexual orientation, particularly relating to students and teachers who claim nonbinary gender/nonheterosexual identities are precisely where inclusion in relation to gender becomes a major challenge. Although these hidden minorities experience the most acute form of disadvantage, mainstream policy tends to ignore them. The preceding critique highlights the significance of complex theories of gender, as elaborated on in a previous section, which pay attention to the performance of gender by girls, boys, and those with non-binary gender identities.

### 6.2.2 National Level

Each context has its unique obstacles to policy implementation, including policy on gender equality. In Pakistan, the curriculum revision was undertaken with the involvement of international donors. The participation of USAID and other international donors in the curriculum revision process, amidst the 'War

on Terror', resulted in resistance to implementation by religious and nonreligious groups (Durrani et al., 2017). Terms such as 'tolerance' became a discursive battleground for ideological wars between different groups, as recounted by a female participant in our research who worked for an international donor:

He [a Curriculum Wing staff member] said, 'What do you mean by tolerance? ... Does it mean that somebody would attack us and we just tolerate that; attack us with drones and we tolerate them?'

At the national level, teachers were offered in-service training to support the implementation process, largely through funding and/or technical support of donors. However, new vocabulary such as 'peacebuilding' and 'anger management' was treated with suspicion. A female consultant at an international agency stated:

[A teacher receiving training in the workshop] said, 'You have one whole chapter on controlling anger and do we really want our children to be controlled? Why are we teaching our children to be fearful?'

The control of violent masculinities or management of anger/aggression were seen by some not as promoting gender equality but as compromising the nation, as communities 'on the receiving end of strategies for gender equality are also on the receiving end of the "War on Terror"' (Purewal, 2015, p. 52). The above statements point to a major disjuncture between international education policy discourses, with their promotion of modern concepts such as tolerance and equality, and the realities of international geopolitics.

At the national level, education policy development has largely adopted a gender-blind approach (Durrani & Halai, 2018). The implementation of teacher education reforms, which have focused on technical issues of pedagogy and quality, and which deflect attention from more complex sociological concerns, has not triggered the same resistance as the curriculum. However, a main concern has been teacher educators' own capacity to promote gender equality to translate policy into practice on the ground (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

### 6.2.3 Provincial/Local Level

Although Sindh has been an ardent supporter of the devolution, implementation of translating the curriculum into textbooks was slow, despite the fact that the same political party, Pakistan Peoples Party, a centre-left, socialist party, has led the provincial government since 2008. Nevertheless, in early 2014, an advisory committee on curriculum and textbook reform was established with

the remit to promote communication between the Bureau of Curriculum and the Textbook Board and to incorporate local context in textbooks. Discussions with actors engaged in the implementation of curriculum reform indicated a deep understanding of gendered representations in the curriculum texts. A female member of the Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Textbooks stated:

We have to look hard to find them [women in textbooks] ... the multitude of representation that can be included, that needs to happen and to see the multiple roles women play and can play instead of confining them to childcare and housework.

There appeared to be a strong intention to shift the gendered representations of the nation in ways that could potentially promote gender equality. This entailed both excluding texts emphasising dominant masculinities and including multiple femininities. According to a male member of the Textbook Board:

We suggested removing gender bias ... and there was too much of glamorising the military and the militarised culture. ... We raised the question why can't it be otherwise; that the girl comes [home] after playing and the mother asks the boy to go and get food for his sister.

Such voices are laudable, but the extent to which this may lead to any substantial change is a question that warrants further research using ethnographic/qualitative case studies of relevant institutions – schools, TEIs, curriculum bureaus, and textbook boards.

There was also evidence of strong resistance to change from actors in wider society, unrelated to curriculum and textbooks. A male member of the Bureau of Curriculum stated:

[A political-religious party] called and said that they wanted to have a meeting with us, but when they arrived ... they were fighting with us; we were shocked, and we told them, 'Please don't fight and give us your suggestions and we will look into it'.

Considering the translation of gender equality policy to classroom level, practised within TEIs in Sindh, only eight out of 266 respondents whom we surveyed indicated that there were particular modules or topics in their training that specifically dealt with gender. The subject that student teachers identified as the most important in promoting their understanding of gender equality



was *Islamiat* (Islamic studies). According to a male student teacher, 'The *Islamiat* book states that Islam gives equal rights to every male and female'.

In response to other open-ended questions, both student teachers and in-service teachers indicated that *Islamiat* offers a positive model of gender equality. Lecturers concurred with this view of the significance of *Islamiat* in promoting gender equality. This contradicts dominant perceptions of the relationship between religion and gender held in secular/modern literature, which often portrays religion as necessarily antagonistic to gender equality.

An additional constraint on undoing prevailing gender stereotypes was the institutional gender regime, which, while supporting a redistributive agenda for women, offered little scope for shifting gendered norms. The hidden curriculum in teacher education institutions reproduced and perpetuated gendered norms. The 'protection' of female students from the 'gaze' of male students appeared to be a dominant practice in three out of four TEIS studied. All had enrolled male and female student teachers, but two offered a gender-segregated provision so that parents would not object to enrolling their daughters. As such, the practice was intended to redistribute access to female student teachers. Nevertheless, this practice failed to capitalise on the mixed gender environment to promote respectful and dignified social interactions across gender boundaries. Despite coeducation in the third TEI, the teacher educators strictly regulated male/female gender boundaries. This was potentially counterproductive to collaborative and communicative practices that student teachers were expected to develop and practice. A male student teacher commented:

Initially, girls and boys behave very well, work together, but our teachers [lecturers] have made it difficult for us. If they see any male talking to a female then the teachers behave very strangely.

Stakeholders – student teachers, teachers, and lecturers – regarded education highly in the promotion of social harmony, including gender equality. Education was considered vital to nation building and to the 'desired' role of women in society 'because the [educated] girl will become a mother and will teach and train her children properly' (male teacher respondent). However, with few exceptions, there was little understanding among student teachers, teachers, and lecturers of the gendered construction of the nation or the ways gender norms are entrenched through everyday life or education. This was particularly problematic in the case of lecturers, who largely failed to recognise how gender norms were embedded in their imaginaries of social cohesion, despite showing a nuanced understanding of other markers of marginalisation – religion,

ethnicity, and social class. In addition, a dominant perception among stakeholders, especially lecturers, was that gender parity in access was synonymous to gender equality, and therefore, once access is ensured there are no other issues to be dealt with. A male lecturer commented:

In the remote areas of the interior, especially for girls, parents are not able to send their kids to schools for many reasons like secure and safe transportation. So, to encourage the parents, we have given funds to create a transport facility so the young children and girls of remote areas in interior schools can hire a vehicle on a daily basis to go to school.

Thus, gender was predominantly understood as a noun, and gender inequality was equated with issues of redistribution. The small number of stakeholders who expressed an understanding of gender as an adjective and a verb, and gender inequality as linked to structures, power asymmetries, and identities, also showed awareness of the crucial role that education plays in the reproduction of gender inequalities. For example, according to a female teacher: 'One should not specify certain gender roles, like some professions are only for males, indoor activities are for females, these should not be part of the curriculum'. The few gender-aware respondents were predominantly, though not exclusively, female teachers and student teachers. Those who expressed agency to subvert the gender power asymmetries within their local communities and schools drew on Islamic discourses, rather than on human rights or women's rights discourses. A female student teacher declared:

When I become a teacher, I will take out all the topics from the curriculum that indicate gender discrimination. ... I will publish Islamic and Moral literature which will develop a sense of respect towards women among people.

In KP, the provincial government led by the Awami National Party (ANP) in the years 2008–2013 was quick to seize the opportunity offered by devolution by actively pursuing textbook revision to align textbooks with the new curriculum and incorporate local/Pakhtun context into textbooks. In addition, massive investment, time, and inputs were spent to produce the best possible teacher manuals that would help teachers in the delivery of the revised curriculum. This overall support for textbook revision, however, did not necessarily equate to supporting gender equality.

The textbook revision process lost momentum with the change of government in 2013. The secular, centre-left ANP was unseated by the centrist Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and their right-wing coalition partner, Jamaat-e-Islami. As mentioned earlier, the current KP ESP, produced by the PTI and Jamaat-e-Islami government (2013–2018), has excluded curriculum and textbook revision. According to a female staff member of an international donor:

Now the current leadership of the department has decided that they would delay working specifically on the textbooks and curriculum until the next sector plan. ... My reading of that is that it's too political for the department to deal with in the current climate.

In contrast to Sindh, where a strong intention to bring about gender equality messages in textbooks was evident, in KP, where conservative gendered norms are an essential part of the Pakhtun cultural code, expressions of gender egalitarianism were rare. For example, a member of the Textbook Board showed the manuscript of a grade 3 English textbook that depicted the picture of a girl child wearing a frock holding a microphone in her hand alongside the text, 'She is singing a song'. The member expressed amazement at the naivety of the author, saying there would be much political opposition to this on two grounds: first, the girl is wearing Western attire; second, she is engaged in an unIslamic activity (singing). Local actors largely maintained that the depiction of women should adhere strictly with their interpretation of a 'good' Muslim woman:

Similarly, being Muslim, females should observe purdah, so the pictures shown in there, women were wearing Western attire. And we gave our recommendation that it should be replaced by the things which are according to our norms and society. (Male lecturer)

In the TEI observed in KP, gender regulation was very tight, with all core classes being single-sex, despite a coeducational organisational structure. In elective classes, with small numbers, classes were coeducational, but males and females occupied separate parts of the classroom, with a vast majority of female students veiled in and outside the classroom. The erection of spatial boundaries between male and female student teachers, while protecting females from potential gender-based violence, offered little promise for challenging gendered norms and gender inequality. There was also evidence of the attire and behaviour of female student teachers being monitored by lecturers. For example, a male lecturer admonished some female students for having long nails.

The gender regimes practised in the TEIs are bound up with different stakeholders' perceptions of the significance of education for 'perfecting' women and men for their expected roles in society. Most stakeholders – student teachers, teachers, lecturers, and policymakers – considered girls' education key to nation building. According to a male student teacher, 'Behind every great man there is a great mother. So if mothers are educated they will help bring up better children'. Girls' education was seen as central to the reproduction of national culture. The 'educated woman' was a desired identity position but not an 'emancipated' woman, who participates in the public sphere or the labour market. Her incorporation in the nation is to support the national 'man' in performing the role of provider and protector. A male textbook writer argued:

Why do we study these topics? Because all these people are our national heroes, they sacrificed their lives for the sake of Pakistan. ... We explain each and every aspect of history, how India attacked Pakistan and these heroes at that time protected their nation; they gave up their lives but didn't let anyone invade Pakistan.

There were many overlaps and tensions in policies and perspectives across the different levels. The first overlap lies in the use of an instrumental justification for girls' education. Global, national, and local policy actors frame female education in instrumental terms, though they offer different reasons for the significance of girls' education. While global policy highlights the benefits of girls' education to the economy, national and local policy actors see education as vital to the production of the 'good' society with highly differentiated gender roles. It is not surprising therefore to see why curriculum contents dealing with gender equality have become discursive battlegrounds for ideological wars, particularly as national policy actors see the nation under siege from foreign interventions in the 'War on Terror'.

Another commonality across the global/national/provincial levels lies in the predominant association of gender equality with redistribution and gender parity and therefore with strategies promoting access and participation. This obscures the ways gender equality can remain unrealised, despite having equal numbers of males and females in educational institutions. The above overlap also associates gender equality with girls' education and, across the global, national, and provincial levels, takes attention away from the education of students with nonbinary gender identities and boys. Unless boys and men, who are dominant in the gender hierarchy, are given an education that radically seeks an egalitarian gender order, gender equality will remain an

unaccomplished dream. Additionally, while global policies emphasise mainstreaming gender equality across education provision, although to a lesser extent, the complete preoccupation of national and local policy actors with redistribution contributes to a neglect of how gender norms and relations are perpetuated or could be transformed through the curriculum and teacher education. Our analysis points to the limited disruptive effect of liberal theories of gender that leave it equated to male-female binaries, rather than how gender is performed.

Tensions and overlaps are also evident between the national and local levels. Although the size, influence, and remit of the national policy actors have largely diminished since devolution, there appears a strong overlap between the national and KP policy actors with respect to gender equality in the curriculum and the relationship between education and national imagination. In KP, views on gender and gender equality appeared to maintain the image of the 'ideal' Pakistani woman as a key symbol of the national imaginary in ways that have been unhelpful for promoting gender equality. Furthermore, the dominant discourses of the nation prevalent in the province worked to silence stakeholders who had the potential to undo gender. In Sindh, curriculum policy actors showed deep understanding of the gender/nation couplet and expressed the intention to undo it in ways that seemed potentially supportive of gender equality.

## 7 Conclusions

This chapter has engaged with the role of education in promoting gender equality in postcolonial countries through a study of the promise of national-level education reforms in promoting gender equality in Pakistan, a country with pronounced gender gaps in education at the expense of women. Comparing policy and perspectives regarding gender equality at global, national, and provincial (Sindh and KP) levels, we have identified both overlaps and tensions. While the instrumental use of girls' education is evident across levels, in contrast to the economic efficiency rationale that is predominant globally, both nationally and locally the primary purpose of girls' education is viewed as the 'perfection' of women for maintaining the nation's distinction and ensuring its cultural and biological reproduction. In a context that is at the receiving end of the 'War on Terror', gender boundaries are strictly regulated to 'protect' the ideological frontiers of the nation. Nevertheless, ruptures are also apparent between the national and the local. While the perspectives of stakeholders in KP are in alignment with the national actors in the deployment of education

for maintaining and legitimising existing gender relations, curriculum actors in Sindh are largely in favour of deconstructing gender hierarchies in textbooks and promoting gender equality.

We have illustrated that educational reforms are formulated into policy and put into practice through complex and competing political and ideological interests at global, national, and local levels. We contend that global policy discourses are understood in the local and national contexts where education stakeholders negotiate their meaning and enact them in ways that make these policies intelligible to them. Furthermore, perspectives on gender equality and gender regulation vary, contributing to conflicts and tensions in the enactment of gender equality goals. These fissures raise questions regarding the sustainability of any gains made with respect to gender equality. The chapter argues that in postcolonial contexts, such as Pakistan, educational policies and their implementation work out in ways that reproduce existing gender hierarchies. In our research, opposition to these hierarchies was evident, but those opposing existing gender hierarchies have experienced aggressive attacks. Hence, a strong political will and movement driven from within Pakistan's regions and provinces would be key to making any inroads into dismantling gender inequality.

Our study offers wider implications for global policy implementation in national and local settings with respect to gender equality targets relating to SDG 4. The differences over gender equality in the two provinces under a devolved system suggest that monitoring of progress on SDG 4 targets and indicators would need to be conducted at subnational level. That would allow a fine-grained analysis, as the national macro-level data are likely to obscure multiple and overlapping (gender) inequalities, as reported by UN Women (2018). National macro-level data may also obscure tensions in policy and practice between the national and the local levels.

While we have critiqued the use of gender as a noun, if the gender parity index is to be used in the monitoring and measurement of gender equality, it must disrupt the gender binary, including nonbinary gender identities, and take into account contextually relevant markers of disadvantage to put a spotlight on the most marginalised but often invisible social groups. Such intersectional methodologies have been used in a recent report published by UN Women (UN Women, 2018), although the report has failed to disrupt the gender binary.

The expanded list of potential indicators for monitoring gender equality is a step in the right direction. Some of these indicators include the mainstreaming of gender equality in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment, and teacher and student gender-related attitudes

and interactions (UIS, 2018e). However, quantitative, technical indicators of phenomena such as gender sensitivity in teacher education will say nothing about how understandings of gender might change and how practices might shift, or indeed retrench, within particular educational contexts. Global development agendas such as the SDGs rely on a preoccupation with measurement and international ranking, which often misses the most important aspects of gender equality because those aspects cannot be quantified (Unterhalter, 2017). For example, the quantification of male and female characters or visuals in textbooks or the inclusion of topics on gender equality may make it possible to rank and compare countries. But it misses important knowledge associated with gender equality, for example, features of gender relations, sexualities, and aspects of power, because these are not quantifiable. The distribution of male and female characters in texts and images frames gender as a noun and a binary, excluding nonbinary gender identities. It may say little about how gender is positioned as a verb or how texts construct gender. For example, Balagopalan (2012, pp. 320–321) notes that, in India, ‘the increased numerical representation of girls in textbooks had done little in terms of altering the patriarchal and misogynist contents of these books’.

As a potential indicator for measuring gender equality, UNESCO (2016b) has proposed the percentage of teachers receiving training in gender sensitivity. As this study has identified, the capacity of teacher educators for promoting gender equality is often limited and is much neglected in educational reforms. Given that student teachers are reported to emulate their lecturers (Akyeampong et al., 2013), they are significant actors, and any training in gender sensitivity must begin with them (Durrani & Halai, 2018).

Measuring the unmeasurable would necessarily require the use of methodologies hitherto excluded in the measurement of development targets. Capturing practices in schools, classrooms, and other institutions, such as curriculum and textbook boards and teacher education institutions, may better illuminate progress toward gender equality through ethnographic and qualitative methods, particularly as these are the spaces in which policies formulated at different levels get negotiated and translated by actors on the ground. These methodologies would allow attention to how gender is performed, and therefore illuminate the possibilities of how unequal gender relations could be undone (Butler, 1990). Qualitative methodologies would be insightful in the identification of friction in the enactment of policy discourses. They may also reveal how local actors could appropriate the rather limited views of gender equality underpinning global and national policies in ways that pay specific attention to the sociocultural environment in which the school is embedded. A better understanding of the experience of gender inequalities as well as their

redressal can be achieved through insights into local knowledges, experiences, and practices (DeJaeghere, 2015).

Educational interventions that seek to achieve gender equality need to be supported by laws and policies in other domains, for example, social, economic, and political, as well as the involvement of local communities (Ackerman & Scott, 2017). Working with local actors can be particularly useful in addressing the deep-rooted obstacles to girls' education. Given their credibility in local communities, they are better placed to question 'traditions, laws or social institutions that impinge on girls' rights', particularly in communities at the receiving end of global interventions linked to conflict, where 'any effort suspected to be externally driven would likely be rejected' (Ackerman & Scott, 2017, p. 135).

This chapter has argued that understandings of the nation in postcolonial contexts, such as Pakistan, transverses educational discourses in ways that sustain existing gender hierarchies. It has highlighted the limited ways in which gender is understood in policy discourses and by actors at global, national, and local levels, underscoring the need for more complex theories of gender for challenging the reproduction of gender hierarchies within education and more widely.

### Notes

- 1 In the colonial era 'India' incorporated present day Pakistan. The discussion below relates directly to the history of the territory that became Pakistan and India after Partition in 1947.
- 2 International development agencies vary in their focus on gender equality and their conceptualisations pull in different directions. For example, the smart girls economic/human capital priorities of the World Bank markedly vary from the more liberal/humanist interests sometimes reflected in UN/UNESCO and SDG discourses.