

## CHAPTER 6

# A Gendered Analysis of Secondary Schooling Processes in India

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### Introduction

India is the seventh largest country in the world, with a population of more than one billion. The 35 States and Union Territories present a varied landscape as there is endless diversity of population, climate topography, religious beliefs, languages and social, economic and cultural settings. While India is recognised as one of the world's fastest growing economies, the problems of contemporary India in the key, interlinked areas of poverty, literacy, health and nutrition are extensive and continue to be influenced by caste, class and gender considerations.

Recent government reports indicate that the levels of both human and gender-related development indices went up between 1996 and 2006 in India, but gender-based disparities continue to exist. While the estimated Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.584 in 1996 to 0.648 in 2006, the Gender Development Index (GDI) score for India remained lower than the HDI score over that 10-year period. Nonetheless, GDI scores increased from 0.568 in 1996 to 0.633 in 2006, implying that progress has been made. The aggregate Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) for India was 0.413 in 1996 and 0.451 in 2006. Although this is higher than the GEM scores for India estimated by the UNDP in 1998, the values attained still reflect the existence of sharp disparities in gender empowerment. The scores also reflect that women in India have particularly low power over economic resources (Government of India [GoI], 2009).

A critical issue in the Indian context is the marginalisation of women/girls that occurs based on gender – the social and cultural definitions of 'male' and 'female'. Gender-based inequalities/disparities are deep rooted in the realm of culture, and are found across social groups and communities. The material basis and unequal power that underlie social relations between men and women influence the allocation of resources, roles and entitlements at the level of individual households and thereby influence decision-making in relation to the education of children, especially girls (Nambissan, 2004).

Ensuring gender equality in education has been a key objective of educational policy in India for more than two decades. The National Policy on Education (NPE) formulated in 1986, articulated the commitment towards 'education for women's equality' as a vital component of the overall strategy of securing equity and social justice in education. The focus was not only on providing equality in educational opportunity, but on transforming the entire content and process of education, for achieving gender equality and a realignment of gender roles, to make them more equitable and harmonious. Notwithstanding policy vision and the improvements made over the years, educational statistics in India continue to reveal gender disparities in access and achievement that sharpen particularly at the higher stages of schooling.

In the context of the above, the present study focused on exploring whether classroom and schooling processes in secondary schools question or reinforce the dominant unequal gendered patterns and how they do that in an Indian context. The study attempts to unravel the 'hidden curriculum' of gender in schools and seeks to arrive at school-based strategies to overcome the gaps. It is based on case studies of four senior/higher secondary schools in urban areas<sup>1</sup> of Jaipur city, Rajasthan, wherein the interplay of gender in schooling processes was observed at the level of everyday school practice and experience.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The introductory section gives the background of the study, while the following section presents an overview of the status of secondary education in India and Rajasthan. The chapter goes on to provide an introduction to the surveyed schools where classroom processes were observed, and then presents the main findings of the study. The concluding section makes some suggestions for policy and action.

## **Setting the Scene**

### **Education in India**

The progress towards achieving Education for All in India presents a mixed picture given the vast dimensions and diversity prevailing in the country. The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well recognised within policy and the decade of the 1990s–2000 has seen noteworthy progress in the field of elementary education. The concentrated efforts made within the education system to include girls at all levels have also brought about significant gains.

The efforts towards universalising elementary education led to huge expansion in provision of educational facilities, as well as improved enrolments in schools. According to the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012) the total enrolment at the elementary level increased from 159 million in 2001–2002 to 182 million in 2005–2006 an increase of more than 23 million. The Gross Enrolment Ratio at the elementary stage increased from 82.4 per cent in 2001–2002 to 93 per cent in 2004–2005, an increase of 11 per cent. However, the dropout rate at the elementary stages continues

to be as high at 50.8 per cent (50.5 for boys and 51.3 for girls), with dropout rates for children from socially disadvantaged groups<sup>2</sup> being higher. The social gap in dropout rates is acute with respect to girls. Two thirds of adivasi students do not progress beyond class 8. The Eleventh Plan acknowledges this challenge and the need to re-orient education programmes to meet challenges of equity, retention and high-quality education (GOI, 2008).

Secondary education is seen as a vital link between elementary and higher education. It is intended to equip students with education, knowledge and skills that will prepare them to be active citizens, as well as enable them to respond appropriately to emerging changes throughout their lives.

A review of secondary education reveals that during the decade ending 2004–2005, enrolment at the secondary level increased at an average rate of 5.32 per cent. According to the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012), there are 101,777 secondary schools and 50,272 higher secondary schools in India. There are 24.3 million students enrolled at the secondary stage and 12.7 million enrolled at the higher secondary stages. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the secondary level is 51.65 per cent and for higher secondary 27.82 per cent. The combined GER for both levels is only 39.91 per cent. However, the gender gaps are clearly evident at these stages with the GER for boys being 44.26 per cent as against 35.05 per cent for girls – a difference of 9.2 percentage points. The GER for scheduled caste (SC) students at the secondary stage is 45.4 per cent and for scheduled tribe (ST) students is even lower at 37.2 per cent. The GER for girls from these disadvantaged groups is 37.6 per cent and 30.5 per cent respectively. The Plan acknowledges that secondary education suffers from poor access and participation as well as equity and quality issues, and proposes setting up of a Mission for Secondary Education at the level of the Government of India to meet these challenges.

Several other reports and documents have pointed out to the need for a renewed focus on secondary education. The report of the Central Advisory Board of Education Committee (CABE) on Universalisation of Secondary Education (2005) calls for a significant shift in conceptualising secondary education in its structural as well as curricular dimensions. Further taking cognisance of the prevailing gender gaps, the report notes that ‘... *gender discrimination operates as a hidden curriculum at all times as an extension of patriarchy embedded in society. It is only when the school curriculum empowers the child adequately, initially to understand, then question and finally deal with inequality and justice would she be in a position to seek equality and social justice in her life after school*’. The report specifically emphasises that secondary education essentially has to be the education of adolescence and experiences in schooling have to be designed to be responsive to the needs of transition (GOI, 2005).

This renewed emphasis on universalising secondary education necessitates that gender equality concerns are brought centre-stage, to enable girls to move beyond the elementary stages and access secondary schooling.

## Regional context

The State of Rajasthan, the largest state in India, is situated in the northwest of the country. It has been traditionally identified as a state ranking low on human development. Up until the early 1980s, the state exhibited slow progress on almost all economic and social indicators. Poverty levels were high, literacy levels were low, especially among women, and health and demographic indicators were indifferent (GoR and Institute of Development Studies [IDS], 2008). This situation was largely attributed to the vastly varied geographical and ecological dimensions of the state – i.e. large desert areas, scattered settlements and poor communication systems, which made it difficult to deliver basic services of health, education and water to people.

The recent Rajasthan Human Development Report (GoR and IDS, 2008) points out that Rajasthan's ranking among Indian states improved from 12 in 1981 to 9 in the 1990s. The HDI has been calculated at 0.710. It also notes that Rajasthan might achieve some Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) like those in standards of living. The MDGs that address issues in human attainment might be more difficult to achieve. The persistence of gender-based inequalities in all spheres of life and society can be seen as influencing development outcomes – especially in areas of health, education and work. The issues faced by women in the state are wide-ranging and stem from patriarchal controls and gender discrimination, both within the private and in the public domains.

Rajasthan is also a state where several innovative programmes were implemented during the 1980s and 1990s with government and non-government partnerships. Educational programmes like the *Shikshakarmi* Programme and *Lok Jumbish* focused on new ways of addressing education challenges and forged links with civil society organisations/NGOs and communities. Both these programmes centrally addressed issues of gender inequality in education. Rajasthan in fact served as a laboratory for educational innovation during this period, producing concepts now adopted in many other Indian states including the use of para-teachers, micro-planning, school mapping and development of village education registers, and a focus on empowerment and equity (Clarke and Jha, 2006).

## Education in Rajasthan

The status of education improved remarkably in Rajasthan in the 1990s. This advancement is particularly reflected in the significant increases in literacy and enrolment in education. The Census of India 2001 indicates that the overall literacy rate in the state rose from 38.5 per cent in 1991 to 60.41 per cent in 2001. The literacy rate among males improved from 54.99 per cent in 1991 to 75.70 per cent in 2001 and among females from 20.44 per cent to 43.85 per cent. There has also been a significant increase in the literacy rates for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. However, the male–female gap in literacy in the state continues to be wide, as female literacy was still 31.8 per cent points lower than male literacy in 2001.

In Rajasthan, school education is provided by a network of government, government-aided and private schools. The state has witnessed considerable expansion in the number of schools in the past two decades, and it is claimed that all settlements have been provided with a primary school.

The annual progress report of the Department of Elementary Education states that there are a total of 12.89 million children enrolled at the elementary level in Rajasthan. Girls constitute 44.91 per cent of the total enrolment at the elementary stage (GoR, 2008a). Even though the state government has put in place various incentives to promote education of girls, the enrolment of girls has increased at a slow pace from 39.65 in 2000–2001 to 44.91 per cent in 2007–2008. While there is evidence that gender gaps are closing at the primary level, the gender gap at the upper-primary level continues to pose a challenge.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is reported to be 115.03 at the primary level (115.81 for boys and 114.22 for girls) and 109.49 at the upper-primary level. The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at the primary level is 98.50 and 98.34 at the upper primary level (GoR, Data for Elementary Education [DISE] 2007–2008). However these official figures need to be read with caution, as they often do not reflect the ‘real’ picture.

One of the major problems confronting elementary education in the state is the low level of retention in schools. A large percentage of children who enter class 1 drop-out before completing class 5. The official data indicates that in 2007–2008, the retention rate at the primary level was 83.85. The dropout rate at the primary level was reported to be 12.44 per cent and for upper primary it was 5.85 per cent (GoR, AWPB Report, 2008–2009).

A major reason cited for poor retention in schools is the quality of education imparted in government schools. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2005 noted that students’ learning levels, especially their writing and mathematical abilities, were extremely poor in Rajasthan. The report reveals 31.5 per cent of children (11–14 years) could not read a standard II level story and in basic arithmetic, 42.3 per cent of children (11–14 years) were unable to solve a division problem (3 digits by 1 digit) (Pratham, 2005).

The draft Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012) document of the Government of Rajasthan points out that:

*‘... though in the last five years issues related to access and infrastructure have been addressed to a large extent, still there are critical areas like quality of education, retention of students, gender disparity and upgradation of skills of teachers which have to be given focused treatment so as to ensure UEE [universal elementary education] and providing equal opportunities to disadvantaged groups’ (GoR 2007:3.25).*

While ensuring access to schooling is an important step towards UEE in the state, poor retention, high dropout rates and poor scholastic achievements have resulted in low enrolment ratios at the secondary level for both boys and girls.

### Secondary education

The Department of Secondary Education manages secondary education in Rajasthan. Secondary schooling comprises classes 9–10 and senior/higher secondary includes classes 11–12 respectively. Public examinations are conducted by the Rajasthan State Board of Secondary Education for classes 10 and 12.

According to the Annual Report of the Department of Secondary Education (2007–08) there are a total of 8,288 secondary schools and 5,319 senior secondary schools functioning in the state. There are 301 secondary schools for girls and 504 senior secondary schools functioning exclusively for girls in the government sector (GoR, 2008b).

In the year 2007–2008 there were 2.17 million students (1.45 million boys and 710,000 girls) in the 14–18 years age group enrolled in secondary and senior/higher secondary schools. The percentage of girls to total enrolment was 32.9 per cent. While enrolment of girls has been increasing over the years, the trend over the last five years indicates that there has been only a marginal increase in the proportion of girls enrolled each year (see Table 6.1) (GoR, 2007).

The recent Gender Responsive Budgeting Report for Education published by the Government of Rajasthan (GoR, 2006) indicates that the low enrolment rate of girls in secondary schools is reflected in the lower state expenditure on girls for secondary education. In the year 2007–2008, 32.9 per cent of the total education budget was spent on girls. The expenditure per girl student works out to be 8000 Indian rupees (Rs) per annum.

**Table 6.1.** Increase in enrolment in secondary and senior secondary schools

<i>Year</i>	<i>Boys (millions)</i>	<i>Girls (thousand)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of girls</i>
2001–02	1.04	399	1.44	27.7
2002–03	1.11	435	1.55	28.2
2003–04	1.18	475	1.65	28.7
2004–05	1.24	513	1.75	29.3
2005–06	1.30	567	1.87	30.4
2006–07	1.35	656	2.00	32.7
2007–08	1.45	710	2.17	32.9

*Source:* GoR (2007–2008)

The near lack of focus on secondary schooling is clearly evident in the state. The high level of gender disparity at the secondary and senior secondary levels between boys and girls, indicates that girls tend to disappear from education over the age of 14 years, at a crucial age when aspirations can be channelled into opportunities.

### **Government initiatives to promote girls' education**

Several initiatives have been put in place by the state government to encourage enrolment of girls in secondary education. These include:

- Girls enrolled in classes 1 to 12 are exempt from paying school fees.
- All girls studying in government schools are provided with free textbooks from class 1 to 12.
- To encourage enrolment of rural girls at the secondary and higher secondary stages, girls' hostels have been established in six divisional headquarters, each one catering for 50 girls.
- A *Balika Shiksha* (girls' education) foundation was established in 1994-95 to encourage education among girls. The foundation provides financial assistance for higher studies to deserving girls coming from poor families.
- Since 1997-98, the Board of Secondary Education, Rajasthan, has been providing cash awards to all girls who score more than 75 per cent aggregate marks in class 10. A scholarship of Rs1000/- per annum is provided to pursue education in classes 11 and 12.
- Several scholarships have also been provided for girls belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and nomadic families.
- The distribution of bicycles to girls who pass class 9 and are enrolled in class 10 has been initiated.
- Girls studying in classes 9 to 12 have also been provided with free transportation. The Rajasthan State Transport Corporation has been directed to issue free bus passes to girls studying in secondary and senior/higher secondary schools to ensure easy access to schools.
- An insurance scheme has also been introduced for girls enrolled in the secondary and senior secondary schools.

Despite the above-mentioned initiatives, gender-gaps continue to persist at all levels of education in Rajasthan and show that such gaps are bridging at a slow pace. It is evident that the socialisation of girls and gender-based division of labour continue to determine whether girls will be sent to school, for how long and why, thereby influencing educational access, participation and outcomes for girls.

# The research

## The schools and student enrolment

The four government schools identified for the research included two co-educational schools and two single-sex schools, one of girls and the other of boys respectively. Two schools were located in the urban periphery and two within the city limits. The four schools identified were:

- Government senior higher secondary school (GSHSS), HP (co-educational)
- Government senior higher secondary school, MW (co-educational)
- Government senior higher secondary school, MN (boys)
- Government senior higher secondary school, MN (girls)

All the four schools had classes from 6 to 12. The total enrolment in the surveyed schools was 1,288 (720 boys and 568 girls). There were a total of 69 teachers working in the schools (42 women and 27 men). In three of the schools, there were more women teachers than men teachers. According to government policy, no male teachers are appointed in schools that are exclusively for girls (see Table 6.2).

In all four schools, the language of instruction was Hindi. The schools offered only the humanities stream and the subjects offered in the senior classes included Hindi, economics, history, political science and geography. The lack of other streams like science and commerce were cited as being one of the reasons for students dropping out at the senior level in these schools.

A school fee is charged for all students in the schools, but varied according to the stage, sex of the child and caste affiliation. While policy pronouncements indicate that education is free for girls, girls enrolled in classes 6–12 have to contribute towards the development fund of the school. An annual sum of Rs75 (nearly US\$1.5) is charged for girl students for upper primary, and Rs101 (nearly US\$2) for secondary and senior secondary. Similarly, girls from the general category caste groups enrolled in classes 9–10 and classes 11–12 have to pay a sum of Rs200 and Rs300 respectively

**Table 6.2.** General information about the schools surveyed

School	Type of school	Level of school	Co-ed/ single-sex	Number of teachers		
				Male	Female	Total
GSHSS-HP	Govt.	VI to XII	Co-ed	7	13	20
GSHSS-MW	Govt.	VI to XII	Co-ed	11	4	15
GSHSS-MN boys	Govt.	VI to XII	Boys	9	15	24
GSHSS-MN girls	Govt.	VI to XII	Girls	-	10	10
			<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>69</b>

towards the student fund. The girls from SC/ST and OBC category caste groups have to pay half the amount charged for general category caste groups.

### School infrastructure and facilities

Physical infrastructure is an important aspect of the teaching/learning enterprise. While in recent years there has been a concentrated effort to improve infrastructure facilities in primary and upper-primary schools under various programmes, funds for improving infrastructure facilities at the secondary and senior secondary levels are usually raised at the school level, through the development fund or through individual donations.

All the schools surveyed functioned in government-owned ‘pucca’ buildings and the school buildings were relatively in good condition and belied our expectations of poor infrastructure. The number of classrooms was sufficient given the present enrolment. In all the four schools, classroom furniture consisted of wooden or iron desks, benches and stools and a table and chair for the teacher. In most schools the furniture had been purchased out of the development fund.

Drinking water facilities were available in all the surveyed schools, but there were issues raised about availability of clean water. All the four schools had electricity, but in the schools located on the urban periphery the electricity supply was irregular. Separate toilet facilities were available for boys and girls, women and men teachers in all schools. In the HP co-educational school there was no tap connection in the toilets. This issue had been raised by the women teachers time and again. The girls in the MN girls’ school complained that the toilets were unhygienic, as they were not cleaned every day (See Table 6.3).

A library facility with a separate room was available in only two of the schools (see Table 6.4). In MW co-educational school, the library was also the staff room and in the MN girls’ school, the books were placed in the storeroom. The number of books in the libraries ranged from 450–2,700. The books included reference books, storybooks, life histories and inspirational material.

**Table 6.3.** Infrastructure facilities in the schools surveyed

School	No. of classrooms	Drinking water	Electricity	Toilet facilities			
				Common	Male	Female	Water facilities
GSHSS-HP	8	Tap	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
GSHSS-MW	9	Tank	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
GSHSS-MN boys	10	Tap	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
GSHSS-MN girls	8	Tap, water cooler	Yes	-	-	Yes	Yes

**Table 6.4.** Infrastructure facilities in the schools surveyed

School	Library facilities	Separate library room	Number of books	Play-ground	Games		Computers (No.)
					Girls	Boys	
GSHSS-HP	Yes	Yes	2,700	No	Cricket, table tennis, <i>kho-kho</i> , <i>kabaddi</i>	<i>Kho-kho</i> , badminton	5
GSHSS-MW	Yes	With staff room	2,800	Yes	Cricket, <i>kho-kho</i> , <i>kabaddi</i>	Badminton, <i>kho-kho</i> , <i>kabaddi</i>	3
GSHSS-MN boys	Yes	Yes	490	Yes	Cricket, <i>kho-kho</i> , <i>kabaddi</i>	-	17
GSHSS-MN girls	Yes	With store room	450	Yes	-	Badminton, athletics, <i>kabaddi</i>	2

Computer science is a subject only in classes 9 and 10. All the schools had been provided with computers and had appointed computer instructors.

Out of the four schools, three had large playgrounds. The common games played by girls and boys included *kho-kho*, badminton, table tennis and *kabaddi*.

### Position of teachers

There were a total of 69 teachers working in the four surveyed schools (27 men and 42 women). Their educational qualifications ranged from senior higher secondary to post graduation, with a required professional degree in education (BEd). In Rajasthan, the educational qualifications required for being selected as a government school-teacher are as follows:

- Primary teacher (grade 3 in Rajasthan): 12 years of general education and Before School Teaching Course (BSTC) training (2 years) qualified to teach classes 1 to 5.
- Senior teacher (grade 2 in Rajasthan): 12 years of schooling, bachelor's degree (BA, BCom or BSc) and one-year bachelor's in education (BEd) - qualified to teach classes 6 to 8.
- Lecturer (grade 1 in Rajasthan): 12 years of schooling, bachelor's degree and postgraduate qualification (MA, MCom, MSc) and three-year bachelor's in education (BEd) - qualified to teach classes 9 to 12.

In the surveyed schools there were 15 lecturers, 24 second grade teachers and 24 third grade teachers working (See Table 6.5). An analysis of the total number of

sanctioned posts and vacant posts revealed some gaps. While teachers were in position, it was ironic that no teacher had been appointed to teach those very subjects that the school was offering as part of the choices open to students. In the MN boys' school, three second grade and three third grade teachers were on deputation to other schools, although their salaries were drawn/paid from this school. A physical training instructor (PTI) was appointed in all schools.

The poor quality of teaching/learning in the schools, inadequate numbers of teachers and teachers' lack of commitment are often seen as problems affecting the educational system across the state. Given that the schools covered in the present study were in urban areas, the problem of vacancy was not extensive. However, one of the major issues confronting the surveyed schools was that there were no teachers to teach some subjects, while there was a surplus in other subjects. Teachers' being on deputation to other schools was another problem area. It was pointed out that many of the teachers who were 'extra' or on deputation used political influence and always manipulated their postings.

### Student enrolment in surveyed schools

The total enrolment in the surveyed schools in the year 2006–2007 was 1,288 (720 boys and 568 girls). The share of girls' enrolment was 44 per cent. The share of girls' enrolment in classes 6 to 8 was 46 per cent, while in classes 9–12 it was 43 per cent.

**Table 6.5.** Number of teacher posts sanctioned and teachers by grade

Type of Post	HP		MN		MN (Boys)		MN (Girls)		Total	
	PS	Working	PS	Working	PS	Working	PS	Working	PS	Working
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
Lecturer	5	5	5	4*	5	5	3	1	18	15
Grade 2 teacher	6	5	6	6	8	8 **	5	5	25	24
Grade 3 teacher	8	8	2	2	9	9 **	5	5	24	24
PTI	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
Librarian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Vacant	4	3
OA	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1
UDC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
LDC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
Peon	5	1	4	3	5	4	1	1	15	9

PS=Posts sanctioned \*Economics lecturer post is vacant \*\* Three teachers from each grade are on deputation

PTI=Physical training instructor OA=Office administrator UDC=Upper division clerk LDC=Lower division clerk

A comparison of the enrolment figures of the surveyed schools between the years 2001–2002 and 2006–2007, indicates that while the total share of girls’ enrolment increased by 5 per cent, overall enrolment has fallen by 23 per cent over the five-year period (See Table 6.6 and 6.7). Reasons for the drop in enrolment can be attributed to the increase in the number of private schools in the vicinity, the poor quality of teaching and learning in the government schools and limited subject options.

Further, in the year 2001–2002 the ratio between boys and girls at the upper primary level was 53:47. This ratio dropped to 68:32 in classes 9 to 12, clearly indicating that there were fewer girls accessing the senior stages of schooling. In 2006–2007, while there was no significant difference in the ratio between boys and girls in the upper primary sections, the share of girls’ enrolment in classes 9 to 12, increased by 11 per cent, an encouraging trend. This increase in girls’ enrolment can be attributed to the various incentives introduced by the government to promote girls’ education in the last five years.

**Table 6.6** Enrolment in surveyed schools (2001–02)

<i>School</i>	<i>Class 6 to 8</i>			<i>Class 9 to 12</i>			<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
GSHSS-HP	159	111	270	253	83	336	412	194	606
GSHSS-MW	68	68	136	43	66	109	111	134	245
GSHSS-MN boys	185	-	185	299	-	299	484	-	484
GSHSS-MN girls	-	190	190	-	136	136	-	326	326
Total	412	369	781	595	285	880	1007	654	1661
% share of enrolment	53	47	100	68	32	100	61	39	100

**Table 6.7** Enrolment in surveyed schools (2006–2007)

<i>School</i>	<i>Class 6 to 8</i>			<i>Class 9 to 12</i>			<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
GSHSS-HP	126	57	183	221	97	318	347	154	501
GSHSS-MW	72	69	141	61	73	134	133	142	275
GSHSS-MN Boys	77	-	77	163	-	163	240	-	240
GSHSS-MN Girls	-	109	109	-	163	163	-	272	272
Total	275	235	510	445	333	778	720	568	1288
% share of enrolment	54	46	100	57	43	100	56	44	100

The enrolment of students by caste indicates that a majority of boys enrolled in the schools are drawn from the SC (33 per cent), ST (5 per cent) and OBC (28 per cent) categories, while girls from the general category caste groups and SC/ST/OBC groups taken together are almost equal. The representation of students from the Muslim minority was negligible in the surveyed schools (See Table 6.8).

The enrolment data clearly indicates that government schools are increasingly catering to children from economically and socially disadvantaged groups, especially girls. Given the changing composition of the government schools, it is imperative that specific strategies are put in place to make schooling a meaningful experience for these students, particularly girls.

## Main Findings

This section presents the main findings emerging from the case studies of the surveyed schools. These are based on observations, focus group discussions with students, teachers, and administrative staff and in-depth interviews with principals and education managers.

### Classroom and outside-classroom processes

The relationship established between the students and the teacher within the classroom has a strong bearing on the quality of education, gender and social equity. The teachers are seen in their roles as ‘knowledge providers’ who will cater to the needs of both girls and boys equally. It is also critical to bear in mind that teachers do not enter the classroom as gender-neutral personalities, but are likely to have internalised a gender ideology through years of socialisation (Muoitto, 2004). An effort was made therefore to understand whether these ideologies permeate into classroom practice.

Classroom observation was carried out in 22 classroom situations to gain some insight into current classroom processes and practices. The classes covered were classes 8, 9 and 10. The subjects covered included English, Hindi, science, mathematics and social science. Both male and female teachers were observed while

**Table 6.8.** Enrolment in surveyed schools by caste (2006–2007)

School	General caste		SC		ST		OBC		Minority		Total		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Total
HP	83	44	122	51	13	4	129	55	-	-	347	154	501
MW	39	54	42	28	16	37	36	23	-	-	133	142	275
MN-B	92	-	87	-	9		48				236	-	236
MN-G	-	177	-	27	-	48	-	47	-	2	-	272	272
Total	214	275	251	106	38	89	213	125	-	2	720	568	1,288

teaching. The non-classroom activities observed included morning assembly, a computer class and games.

While some similar patterns were discernible in all four schools, each school also revealed some differences in the approach and process of teaching and learning.

### *The classroom setting*

**Box 6.1.** A view of the classroom: extract from fieldwork

#### **In a co-educational school**

The classroom occupied by the students of class 8 in HP school was spacious with adequate light. There were 20 students present in the class, 10 boys and 10 girls. The teacher's table and chair was kept in front of the blackboard. There were three rows of iron desks with stools facing the teacher's table. Gender segregation was clearly visible. Girls were sitting on one side and the boys on the other. The primary teaching aids used by the teacher were a blackboard and chalk.

#### **In a single-sex school**

The classroom in the MN girls' school was airy and well lit, as there were several windows. A framed picture of Goddess Saraswati adorned the wall above the blackboard. The teacher's desk was placed in the middle of the room in front of the blackboard. There were several rows of wooden desks and benches facing the teacher's desk where the girls were seated. The classroom had fans, which were functional. All the girls had placed their schoolbags neatly on the back benches (Field Notes, 2007).

In the surveyed schools, the classrooms were airy, ventilated with adequate natural light, but they were poorly maintained. In the MN girls' school, the principal admitted that due to a shortage of support staff, girls had to clean their own classrooms. In the HP co-educational and MN boys' schools, the classrooms were not cleaned daily, but on a weekly basis by cleaning staff contracted to do this work.

The only teaching aids available in the classrooms were the blackboards and chalk. In two schools, some of the blackboards were in poor condition - the paint had chipped off making it difficult for students to read what was written. In some classrooms, there were no dusters to clean the blackboard and the teachers were seen using pieces of crumpled paper.

In all the classrooms, the teacher's desk and chair occupied a central place of authority. The general pattern was that the teacher's desk was placed in front of the blackboard and there were rows of desks and benches/stools (both wooden and iron) for the students facing the desk.

Sex segregation was ubiquitous in the seating arrangements in both the co-educational schools. Girls and boys sat separately in rows, an aisle acting both as a physical as well as a symbolic divide between them, a 'gender boundary' as it were. The teachers seemed happy with this arrangement and felt that mixed seating arrangements could lead to 'problems' and parents' displeasure. In the single-sex schools, the seating arrangement followed the same pattern – there were rows of desks and benches facing the teacher's desk where girls and boys sat with their friends.

According to government policy, textbooks are distributed to all students in government schools free of cost. In the surveyed schools, the prescribed textbooks had been distributed to students who had paid their fees and sought admission. Discussions with teachers revealed that a number of students had requested that they pay their fees in July, when the schools reopened after summer break. The inability of students to pay the fees was closely related to the fact that the majority students enrolled in these schools belonged to families with low earnings who could not pay the required amount on time. Some teachers also stated that they often paid the fees for students so that they could get the set of textbooks.

### ***Teacher time and attention***

As the academic session had only just begun at the time of the study, the teachers were in the process of teaching the initial lessons in all subjects. Most teachers seemed casual in their approach and were observed teaching without preparation. Only a few female teachers initiated the lesson by recalling what had been taught in previous classes.

The teacher time and attention in all four schools was contingent on the subject being taught as well as the sex of the teacher. For instance, those seen teaching social sciences were merely seen reading and dictating portions from the textbook. The transaction was mostly one way, the teacher dictating and students taking notes, with an occasional question thrown in. The science, mathematics and language teachers engaged more with the children and used the blackboard extensively.

There were nine girls present in class 10 in the MN girls' school. The topic being taught by Ms K, the English teacher, was the past indefinite tense and past continuous tense. The teacher wrote several sentences in Hindi on the blackboard and asked the girls to read out the sentences. The teacher wrote several other sentences on the blackboard and asked the girls to translate them into English, then wrote out a few 'fill in the blanks'. The girls copied the sentences from the blackboard into their notebooks. The girls discussed the possible answers among themselves. The teacher translated the Hindi sentences into English slowly so that the girls could comprehend.

It was observed that in both the co-educational and single-sex schools, teachers were familiar with the students and both women and male teachers made an effort to give positive reinforcement to both boys and girls. Most of the teachers used gender-

neutral language. Some teachers addressed the students as *beta* (son), a generic term in Hindi which is used for both boys and girls.

It was also observed the overarching concern of the teachers was that the students should pass the annual examination rather than assessing if the students had actually understood a concept/lesson or not.

### ***Student participation***

Classrooms observation revealed that students passively received what was being taught and responded only when asked a question. No student made an effort to seek clarification or raise a question on his or her own.

There was a clear gender difference in the responses of girls and boys in the co-educational schools and the single-sex schools. In both the co-educational schools, boys studying in class 10 were more active compared to girls. The girls were shy and inhibited. When a teacher asked a question, they would stand up with their heads bowed. Even when they knew the answers to the questions posed they remained silent. In contrast, the boys were eager to respond. Discussions with teachers in these schools revealed that girls often chose to remain silent, as they feared ridicule by the boys, especially if they were not able to answer a question. It was also observed that when girls were in the majority in a class, they were more responsive and answered all questions.

### ***Student–student interaction***

The student–student interaction was limited to sharing a textbook or helping each other with answers to questions posed by the teacher. In the co-educational schools, there was no interaction between boys and girls within the classroom. The gender lines were clearly drawn. The space for healthy interaction between boys and girls was limited both within the classroom and outside.

### ***Non-classroom activities***

The non-classroom activities that the students were involved in included games, computer sessions and morning assembly.

A typical day in all the surveyed schools began with a morning assembly. The general pattern followed in all schools during assembly (across the state) is that the students recite a prayer and some *shlokas*, take a patriotic oath, read the newspaper and do some warm up exercises.

In the MW co-educational school, the morning assembly began at 7.15 am. Girls and boys stood in separate rows. The physical instructor (PTI), along with two girls who were leading the morning session, stood facing the students. Other male teachers stood behind the students. The assembly began with the girls reciting the prayers, which were followed by some *shlokas* and a patriotic oath. After the girls finished, a

boy was asked to come forward and read out portions from the local newspaper. The PTI then made the students do some physical exercises. The entire assembly took 15 minutes. The assembly dispersed and the students went into their classrooms.

The games played by students in the schools included badminton, table tennis, *khokho*, *kabbadi*, racing, cricket and volleyball. Some students had also participated in school-level competitions and won prizes.

In one of the co-educational schools, it was observed that girls were playing badminton in the courtyard as there is no playground. Later discussions with girls revealed that they are not allowed to go out of the school gates during recess to play. In contrast, the boys are free to go out of the school premises and play. It was observed that even while playing the game, the girls were inhibited and shy. Their movement was restricted on the court. Discussions with the girls revealed that they also wanted to learn table tennis, but boys monopolised the table and girls never got a chance to play.

Computer education is part of the curriculum at secondary level in Rajasthan. All the surveyed schools had been provided with computers and instructors had also been appointed.

In the MW co-educational school, the computer class for class 10 was held in the computer room next to the principal's office. Three computers had been placed on computer tables along one side of the wall. There were no chairs, but benches to work on the computer. The young instructor started the lesson and informed the students he would be teaching them some basic operations related to Microsoft Word. He then proceeded to write the various steps in English on the blackboard. He asked the students to note down the steps in their notebooks. The instructor explained the various steps to the students in Hindi. He then asked four boys and two girls to sit at the computer table and demonstrated the steps to create a Folder. The instructor guided the boys and girls when they made mistakes. The teacher was friendly with the students and encouraged both boys and girls equally.

The observations clearly revealed that teaching and learning in the classroom is dry and didactic, with teachers reproducing textbook information while children listen passively. A few teachers were seen to engage more actively with the students, but this was not the norm. No effort was made by the teachers to link classroom knowledge to the everyday experiences of children. Nor was any effort made to use any teaching/learning material. Sex segregation is the accepted social norm, and is followed in most co-educational schools. The classrooms failed to provide an environment where gender differences are minimised and healthy interaction between boys and girls is promoted. The non-participation of the girls in the classroom and in games also reflected socialisation patterns wherein girls internalise a subordinate position vis-à-vis boys/men. While there was no overt gender differentiation in the attention teachers gave to students or in the use of language, the pervasive presence of gender

and the constant legitimisation of gender distinctions were visible in classroom practices and environments.

### **Teachers' expectations, perceptions, language and behaviour**

Focus group discussions with both female and male teachers clearly brought out their perceptions on gender and schooling processes. A total of 36 teachers participated in the discussions, representing both the younger and older age groups. There were teachers with experience spanning 30 years and others who had recently joined the profession. The majority had experience working in both co-educational and single-sex schools and in rural and urban areas.

#### *Identity and self-image*

Responses on self-image and perceptions regarding their own sexual identity as a male or female did not lead us far, although some of the responses were predictable and politically correct. The male teachers stated that they were proud of 'being men' and believed women and men to be equal. In their view, women and men had different sets of roles and responsibilities. Most men felt that their main role was to earn and provide for the family, and women were primarily seen in their role as 'homemakers' and 'caregivers'. Most women teachers forcefully stated that being a woman meant shouldering a whole range of responsibilities and maintaining a balance between the home and school, which was difficult due to absence of predictable support structures.

The women teachers in the MN girls' school felt that:

*'... even though we are educated, are working and contributing to the household income, the expectations within the household have not changed. If only the male members contributed to some work within the household we would feel less burdened.'*

#### *Equity issues and school policies*

There was a clear divide in the perceptions of male and female teachers regarding equity issues in the schools. While most accepted that government policies did not discriminate/differentiate between women and men and the same rules were applicable to all, staff power dynamics were clearly discernable in task allocation, mobility and facilities.

#### *Delegation of tasks*

In all four schools, most teachers stated that the principal delegated various tasks to teachers on the basis of seniority, experience and interest. In each of the schools, teachers had been put in charge of various activities – admissions, cultural activities, the school development fund, shift in charge, health and sanitation, SUPW (socially useful and productive work), art education and so on. However, there were some

voices of dissent. Some teachers felt that personal preferences and whims of the principal influenced decisions related to tasks/responsibilities. Teachers generally felt that there was a 'coterie', which operated around the principal and decided 'who gets what'. This was also true of the single-sex girls' school, where there was a female principal and female teachers.

The women teachers in all the schools felt strongly that the entire education system was 'patriarchal', and gender inequality within school structures was a reflection of inequalities persisting in society. Male teachers were put in charge of important activities, while women were given responsibility for organising cultural activities. When a woman teacher was made responsible for an important task, male teachers did not like to work under her and did not co-operate.

The women teachers felt that they ended up having a greater workload than their male counterparts. For instance, they would often have to take more classes than the male teachers. A senior woman teacher in MW co-educational school stated:

*'... there is a difference in the number of classes taken by women and male teachers. For example, according to government norms a lecturer is supposed to take 33 classes per week. The female teacher here takes 26 classes whereas the male teacher takes only about 11 classes. Similarly the second grade teachers are supposed to take a total of 36 classes. [Here] women take 30 classes, men only 22. When we discuss this issue in staff meetings it is not taken seriously.'*

On the other hand, male teachers in the MN boys' school felt that they ended up doing all the work. They argued: *'... there are too many problems with women teachers, they do not want to take responsibilities and always give an excuse and shirk work'.*

### ***Freedom and mobility***

In all four schools, women teachers stated that male teachers had greater independence and mobility than women teachers. Men could come and go as they wished; they often went out of the school for their own personal work and no one questioned them. When a woman teacher left the school, it was always noticed and they had to give 'a thousand explanations'. The male teachers meanwhile complained that all 'outside' work had to be done by them, as women refused to do outside chores. The fact that most male teachers had their own vehicles, while women depended on public transport or a taxi service was also a reason cited for not delegating 'outside tasks' to women.

### ***Facilities in school***

One of the main issues raised by the women teachers with reference to gender equity policies was related to toilet facilities. The women teachers in the HP co-educational school complained that the toilets were located right in the courtyard and there was no privacy. There was no water connection in the toilets and the teachers said that

they had made innumerable applications to the principal regarding a tap connection, but no action had been taken.

The non-availability of a separate staff room was also an issue raised by women teachers. In two of the schools, the teachers had to use the library as a staff room. In none of the schools was there any crèche facility for the young children of teachers.

### **Promotional avenues**

Another point put forward by the women teachers related to the promotional avenues for women within the Department of Education. They pointed out that the chances of promotion and upward mobility for men were faster than for women. The women said that men had all the information, as they visited the offices of district education officers (DEOs) and other officials. Few women teachers had been promoted in the past 20 years (a point corroborated by the DEO for secondary schooling). The female teachers also resented the fact that there was no woman appointed as a DEO in the Department of Education, as there were several competent women who could do the job.

### **Attitudes towards gender equality**

All the teachers were unanimous in stating that both boys and girls should receive equal educational opportunities. The women teachers in the MN boys schools were of the view that:

*'In this modern world both boys and girls must receive education and must be encouraged to study. However, in the rural areas educating girls is still a problem and discriminatory practices are more visible there than in urban areas. Girls are groomed in a manner wherein they imbibe secondary roles and postures in school. Although we want the schools to provide an equal opportunity environment, society continues to treat women and girls as subordinate.'*

Male teachers in the co-educational schools were of the opinion that:

*'In recent years, women have joined various professions, which were traditionally male dominant. In this fast-changing world it was important that girls are educated and are encouraged to be economically independent.'*

The majority of the teachers in the surveyed schools accepted that there were differences in the way boys and girls participated in the classroom. In the co-educational schools, the teachers felt that the girls were quieter in class and did not express themselves, but they worked harder and always finished their work on time. Boys were casual and had to be constantly pushed to work. All the teachers agreed that the boys always wanted to be 'one up', on the girls and were always competing with the girls. Some of the characteristics pointed out by the teachers for boys are girls are listed in Table 6.9 below.

**Table 6.9.** Gendered characteristics of students as seen by teachers

<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
Responsible	Indifferent
Quiet	Boisterous
Serious	Laidback/casual
Hardworking	Impatient
Cautious	Competitive
Disciplined	Aggressive
Regular	Irregular

The teacher descriptions clearly point towards underlying social expectations, which cast girls as being responsible, quiet and hardworking. These notions highlight the continuities between socialisation into gender roles within the family and community and gender socialisation through schooling.

### ***Teachers' expectations of students***

There was a clear social bias in teachers' attitudes towards students from poorer and socially disadvantaged groups. The predominant notion held by the teachers (both women and men) was that the quality of students who enrol in government schools is 'weak'. Many of them are dropouts from private schools and their main aim is to pass the examinations. Some teachers felt that since the majority of the students belonged to socially marginalised groups and low-income families, their behaviour was not 'refined' – they used abusive language and the teachers had to control them. The teachers felt that they had to devote a lot of time and attention to see that 'these' children did well in schools. This middle-class bias was pervasive in all the schools.

Although teachers felt that all subjects were equally important for both girls and boys, in both the co-educational schools the teachers held the view that girls were better at languages, i.e Hindi and English. The teachers' views were divided on mathematics – some teachers felt that many girls feared mathematics and performed badly, while there were others who felt that both boys and girls feared maths. Many teachers were of the view that boys performed better in science than girls.

The women teachers in the both the co-educational schools as well as in the MN girls' school pointed out that due to the pressure of work in the household and lack of support, some girls were unable to devote time to home study. As a result, they found it difficult to complete their homework. They often carried these pressures to the school, and it was reflected in their academic performance.

### ***Violence and harassment***

All the teachers were of the view that they had to be extra cautious with girls, as they are more vulnerable to harassment and abuse. Under a special programme called *Operation Garima* (dignity), which aims to curb 'eve teasing' (harassment of girls) and is being implemented in the Jaipur district, a *Garima Prakosht* (a Dignity Cell) has been set up in the co-educational schools. In the MN girls' school, it was pointed out that some boys used to wait around the gate of the school and made lewd remarks at the girls. The school had to seek police intervention and plain-clothes officers were stationed in the area; they apprehended the boys who used to harass the girls.

### ***In-service training***

There is no institutionalised in-service training programme organised for secondary schoolteachers. Some teachers had attended training programmes on computer applications, life skills education, HIV/AIDS and the Scouts/Guides. None of the teachers had received training on gender issues. They felt that introducing gender issues in pre-service and in-service training would have only a partial impact. The teachers felt that attitudes needed to undergo a change at the household level. One of the teachers recollected how when she was posted in a rural school and had talked of equality between girls and boys, the community men had confronted her and asked, '*who was the teacher who was saying that boys and girls are equal*'. They were upset that she was giving the children 'wrong ideas'.

### ***Guidance and counselling***

The guidance provided by the teachers to students largely pertained to advising children on what subjects to pursue after schooling. The teachers also counselled children who wanted to discontinue their schooling, especially girls. Teachers cited several cases where girls wished to study further, but they had been withdrawn from school by their parents and 'married off'. However, no teacher had challenged or questioned the pressure to marry faced by girls.

The teachers we met spoke of gender equality at large and the importance of education for both boys and girls. They also agreed that there has been a discernable change in the past few years in terms of the enrolment of girls. Although most of the teachers accepted that there were marked gender differences in the behaviour of boys and girls within the classroom, few had made an effort to change the gendered environment or academic expectations. At the same time, however, it is also evident that workplace cultures and institutional habits are yet to become gender friendly. Issues related to status, conditions of employment and career development opportunities for women teachers point towards gender-differentiated patterns within the educational system and the limited spaces women have for voicing their concerns.

## Gender analysis of textbooks and other learning materials

It has been argued for a long time that existing curricula in schools reinforce rather than question existing social norms and practices. A curriculum can be a gendered document in as much that it can express ideas about gender equality or it can reproduce ideas about divisions and inequalities stemming from caste, class, religion, ethnicity and national identities.

The textbooks of classes 8 and 10 were reviewed to understand how gender is represented in the textbooks with a focus on illustrations, content and pedagogy. The subjects reviewed included social science, Hindi, English and science. The textbooks prescribed up to elementary level (1-8) are published by the Rajasthan State Textbook Board, whereas textbooks for the secondary and higher secondary classes are produced by the Rajasthan State Board of Secondary Education.

An analysis by subject is presented below:

### *Social science*

There is one textbook prescribed for social science in class 8 and two books for social science in class 10; they cover topics on history, geography, political science and sociology. All the textbooks are written by men. The lessons in the class 8 textbook cover a range of topics focusing both on India and Rajasthan. A review of 48 lessons reveals:

- The lessons are packed with too much information written in a brusque, monotonous style. There is an idealisation of Indian culture, traditions and society.
- All the illustrations presented in the class 8 book are poorly depicted, adding little value to the text. Representations of women are few and far between, with illustrations in just two lessons depicting women in non-traditional roles – as doctors, an engineer, a bus driver, a painter and a woman using an automatic teller machine (ATM). In the class 10 textbooks, there is not a single illustration depicting women. The chapter on ‘Local Governance’ shows two photographs of *gram sabha* and *gram panchayat* where there are only men sitting in the meeting. There is no mention of women as political subjects.
- There is a mechanical approach to the inclusion of gender in the textbooks. Women are only mentioned in six lessons. The opening chapter in the class 8 textbook entitled ‘Social change’ tries to present the changing role of women in India. It is stated that the social system is changing fast, and women are now seen as equal to men and are participating in all walks of life. The chapter goes on to describe the status of women in society. It also has a section on the various interventions/programmes being implemented for women.
- However, after this introductory chapter, in chapter 7 on ‘Social and Economic Challenges’ the section on sex discrimination reverts to clichéd statements like ‘we need to bring harmony between men and women’ and ‘*Yatra nariyastu pujoyente*,

*tatra ramante Devata* – roughly translated as ‘Where women are revered, there the Gods reside’ – a common Sanskrit quote. In the class 10 textbook, the lesson titled ‘Social Awareness’ has a section on women’s empowerment. Here again women are deified and the virtues of several women are eulogised. Names of a few contemporary women leaders are mentioned. The same section also talks about the various institutional mechanisms set up by government to combat social problems like child marriage, bigamy and the dowry system.

- The women protagonists who find a mention include Gargi, Maithreyi (women of intellect), Jhansi Ki Rani (the great fighter women), two women who were part of the tribal movement in Rajasthan and two local women saints – Gabri Bai and Amrita Devi.
- There is a clear absence of women’s contributions in art and culture, science, mathematics and economics, the reform movement, the Indian freedom struggle etc. The contributions of male freedom fighters, leaders, local saints, scientists, mathematicians receive greater attention. Farmers are always depicted as male.
- Finally, the textbooks are full of stereotypical virtues of motherhood and clichéd concepts of femininity and women.

### **English**

The English textbook for class 8 is authored by women, while the class 10 textbooks are written by men. There are two English textbooks prescribed for class 10 – a course reader and a rapid reader. The Preface in the class 10 textbook mentions that the textbooks have been prepared keeping in mind the background and standards of children in Rajasthan. There are a total of 57 lessons in the textbooks. The analysis shows that:

- Stories and passages by well-known male writers and authors – Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Ernest Hemmingway, Rudyard Kipling and J Krishnamurthy are included in the text. Only two stories written by women writers are included in the textbook.
- There are few women protagonists as compared to male protagonists. Out of 30 chapters in the class 8 textbook, women protagonists are present in just four lessons. Only two women are presented in non-traditional roles – as a scientist/doctor and a birdwatcher – while other women are seen in the roles of wife and daughter.
- Gendered titles indicating marital status are used in the text. There is considerable use of Anglo Saxon names in various lessons, presumably because it is an English textbook.

- The stories included in the textbook have titles like ‘A Man’s True Son’, ‘The Boy Who Tried’, Jack and the Wolves’, ‘Man with a Magic Stick’, as well as descriptions of men as merchants, kings, rich men, men as rescuers and as conquerors.

### *Hindi*

Both women and men authored the Hindi textbooks. There are two textbooks prescribed for class 10 – one focuses on poetry and prose, while the other is a compilation of short stories and one-act plays. The review of a total of 62 lessons shows:

- There are 14 illustrations in the class 8 textbooks, of which six portrayed women.
- There is clear under representation of women writers/poets – in the class 8 textbook two stories are included by women writers and in the class 10 book only four stories were authored by women writers/poets out of 29 stories/plays/poems presented.
- Women protagonists are few and far between.
- The stereotype of a male provider and as a ‘*devta*’ (God) and marriage being central to a woman’s identity is presented in a lesson called *Kartavya* (duty) in the class 8 textbook. Several stories depict men/boys as being strong, valorous, having high virtues of morality and character. Women are represented as mothers, as caregivers and as being emotional. In only two lessons are women represented as exercising a choice in marriage and as a fighter.
- Male writers dominate most of the literature presented. It is evident that the male-dominated literary discourse does not take into account women’s lives, bodies or ways of being.

### *Science*

The science textbooks are all written by male authors and cover biology, chemistry and physics. The class 8 textbook has 24 lessons, while there are two books prescribed for class 10. The review found:

- There are several illustrations in the class 8 textbook showing women in traditional roles – as mothers, woman serving food, women filling water at a handpump – while boys are shown riding a bicycle and going to school. The doctor is male, whereas a nurse is female. In the class 10 textbook, there is only one illustration of a woman – a photograph of Kalpana Chawla, the space scientist.
- The lesson on reproductive health talks about adolescence, the disadvantages of early marriage, especially for girls, and the need to make the right choices in a rather didactic manner.
- While a brief biographical sketch of Kalpana Chawla forms part of the lesson on ‘Space and Information Technology’ in the class 10 textbook, the following chap-

ter on 'Life Sketch of Scientists and their Contributions' presents only male scientists.

- Women's contributions to science and technology are severely underrepresented.

The brief analysis presented above indicates that there is a trend among textbook writers to pack in as much of information or facts as possible, providing little space for self-exploration. The language used is also short and non-descriptive. Not surprisingly, the mode of communication in the classroom seemed determined by the text – dry and monotonous. In all the schools, teachers depended heavily on the textbook in the absence of any other teaching material.

Even though there have been some efforts to weave a gender perspective into the textbooks in Rajasthan, it is evident that these efforts have only led to 'token' shifts. Men continue to dominate the texts, both as writers and protagonists. Only the language textbooks in Hindi and English are authored by women, and under-representation of women is clearly evident in all the textbooks and across all subjects. There has been little effort to depict women in non-traditional roles or to portray them as capable of making choices. The textbooks are replete with traditional meanings of masculine and feminine.

It is clear that viewing gender in isolation from other hierarchies and asymmetries within society results in such tokenistic revisions. A gender perspective is not about adding a lesson on women's status or on women's empowerment, or making women visible in the text. It is important to recognise that unless a gender perspective is incorporated into textbooks, children will continue to absorb the biases of existing understandings of society and reproduce these ways of thinking in the future.

### **School management processes and practices**

In the four schools covered during the study, the two co-educational schools had male principals, and the single-sex schools (girls and boys) had a female and a male principal respectively.

#### ***Awareness of gender***

All the principals regarded gender issues as providing equal opportunities to boys and girls in schooling. They were of the view that since most of the students enrolled in their respective schools came from poor families, it was their responsibility as principals/teachers to guide the students and educate them so that they could improve their life situations.

The principals in the co-educational schools stated that their goal was to provide equal opportunities to both boys and girls and also to ensure that the teachers did not differentiate between girls and boys. They stated that in the school, girls were encouraged to speak their minds and be confident. The woman principal of the MN

girls' school felt that in a co-educational or a boys' school, the principal had to maintain greater discipline and be strict. However, in a girls' school it was not difficult to maintain discipline: *'The atmosphere in this school is homely and the girls do not create problems'*.

### ***Delegation of tasks to teachers***

All the principals were of the view that the teachers were given equal treatment in school and tasks were distributed on the basis of qualification and the teachers' interests rather than gender. The male principals pointed out that the women teachers were given extra consideration. Yet the male principals also had some reservations regarding their women colleagues. They felt that women refused to take on any extra responsibility and they also took too much leave of absence. They could not stay beyond school hours. One of the principals felt strongly that as head of the institution he had to keep a balance - *'... male principals have to be very careful as women tend to allege harassment if action is taken against them. Women are vindictive and do not even spare other women'*.

On the other hand, the female principal felt strongly that while official policies provided equal opportunities to both women and men within the Department of Education, there was a gap in implementation of these policies. Personal attitudes and preferences influenced many decisions. She also informed the research team that she was the one of the most senior principals in the district, but she had been sidelined and made a principal of an innocuous girls' school. The principal observed that:

*'I have resigned myself to the situation. Women who are bold and articulate have no support within the system and women became easy targets for victimisation and character assassination. Women teachers are forced into silence, as they fear 'Badnami' (shame).*

Her pessimism and cynicism perhaps echoed the state of women teachers within the larger system.

All the principals felt that apart from school-level responsibilities, the teachers were expected to participate in a number of government programmes: the pulse-polio campaign, census enumeration tasks, preparing and revising electoral lists etc. These tasks cut into teaching time. They felt that these added tasks disturbed the timetable, as substitute teachers had to be given teaching responsibilities.

### ***Expectations of students***

The principals were unanimous in stating that both boys and girls were intelligent and had unlimited potential. They felt that even though parents were not interested in educating girls, the girls were conscientious and hardworking, while boys were not interested in studies. They also felt that both boys and girl should be taught all subjects.

The female principal was of the opinion that socialisation patterns greatly influenced the behaviour of girls and boys in school. She felt that in a co-educational school there is a constant psychological pressure acting on the girls. Girls are scared that the boys will make disparaging remarks if they are active in class. As a result, only a few girls are able to speak up. Even if girls are knowledgeable, they are not articulate. She felt strongly that the parents were responsible for making girls 'weak'. She was of the view that since most of the girls in the school came from low-income families, they also witnessed violence around them. She stated that her aim was to provide a secure environment for girls in the school, as it was a space where they could be free from worries.

### ***Curriculum and training***

All the principals commented that there was scope for making the curriculum more gender sensitive. One male principal felt that gender issues could be taken into account in social science subjects, while in subjects like mathematics it was difficult to incorporate a gender perspective. They felt that regular teacher training and refresher courses should be organised for secondary and senior secondary teachers on various subjects, as well as on issues like gender. However, the male principals had clear reservations about introducing subjects like life skills education (LSE) and sex education in schools.

All the principals we met had years of experience behind them. Given the limited resources, the principals were all trying to make the best of their situations. They seemed committed to the idea of gender equality and improving the status of girls' education, but had done little to minimise gender differences in their respective schools. Their main preoccupation was limited to the day-to-day functioning of the school – managing school data, showing good results and steering clear of controversy. As one of the principals put it: *'... the teacher can use any technique to teach the children – our concern is that the examination result should be good!'*

### **Students aspirations, expectations, perceptions, language and behaviour**

*'My name is Pinky and I study in class 10 in the government secondary school. My father works in a shoe shop and my mother is a housewife. I have a brother who is three years younger [than] me. My parents want to educate me only up to standard 10, but I wish to study further. I wish to become a lawyer, but in our family girls are educated only up to secondary level.'*

*'My name is Rohit and I am a student of class 9. My father works in a steel factory and my mother is a housewife. I have a younger brother and a sister. I get up at 5.30 in the morning and get ready for school. After returning home from school, I have my lunch and do my homework. Thereafter I go out to play. I come back and eat with my brother and*

*sister. My brother and I rarely do any household work. My mother and sister perform all the domestic chores. I wish to study up to senior secondary level and then join the army.'*

Most students enrolled in the surveyed schools belonged to low-income families where the parents had varied occupations – drivers, tea vendors, electricians, tailors, laundry workers, painters and small traders, or they were involved in agriculture labour.

As the discussion method is rarely used in schools, a lot of interest emanated among boys and girls during the focus group discussions. While the gender divide was clearly maintained during the discussions, a noticeable difference observed was that the girls were equally articulate and forthright as the boys. The boys were eager to respond to all the issues, and it was difficult to ask them to wait for their chance to speak.

### ***Self-image, aspirations and prevailing notions***

The discussion in all the focus groups commenced by unravelling the notions of gender, self-image, perceptions and aspirations. The girls felt that they 'liked' being girls, as the government was supporting girls in many more ways than boys. The various incentives provided to the girls were making the girls more confident. However, the girls envied the freedom enjoyed by boys and wished that they could also have the same freedom and space as boys did. Some girls pointed out that, '*we cannot go alone to watch a movie. Our parents or someone older has to accompany us*'.

The girls clearly articulated that boys were given greater importance in families, as they are seen as 'heirs to the family name'. In most homes, the prevailing notion was that girls would study but get married and rear a family, while boys would study, get jobs and earn incomes. The girls felt that it was because of this image of a 'breadwinner' that boys were given more care and attention. The girls in the MN girls' schools articulated that though parents wanted to support the education of girls, if a girl failed to pass an annual examination, then invariably she was withdrawn from school. This was particularly true for the stages where public examinations are conducted, i.e. classes 8, 10 and 12. In contrast, if boys failed to pass an examination, they were given more chances to improve their performance. The girls were of the opinion that when parents are unable to pay school fees, it is invariably the girl who is withdrawn from school.

On the other hand, boys are proud to be born 'male' and did not want to exchange their sex and gender roles with girls. In the HP co-educational school, all the boys felt that they were better than the girls: '*... girls talk too much, fight a lot and have a habit of teasing*', were the comments. Most boys accepted that few restrictions were imposed on them compared to girls.

The majority of girls wanted to continue their education, and their aspirations went beyond the household domain. They were confident that their families would sup-

port their pursuit of higher education. They aspired to be doctors, teachers, airhostesses, lawyers and government officers, while one of the girls wanted to do an MBA course. A few girls in the MN girls' school and the MW co-educational school were unsure whether they would be in a position to continue their education after schooling. The reasons cited included their family's poor financial situation, pressures to marry and the perceived low importance given to education of girls.

Most boys meanwhile aspired to be postgraduates and were confident that their parents would allow them to study as much as they desired. Choices of profession ranged from being teachers, doctors, cricket players, army and police officers, to chartered accountants and even property dealers. A few boys in the HP co-educational school had low-educational aspirations, as they knew they might not be able to continue their education beyond schooling. They stated that they would have to start work due to financial constraints. The expectations from boys within the household were that they would study and start earning. All the boys wanted to get married to girls who were educated.

### ***Roles and responsibilities within households***

The discussion on the nature of roles and responsibilities within households revealed that contributing to domestic chores was an intrinsic part of the daily routine for girls. The tasks included cleaning utensils, sweeping the house, cooking and serving food. Some girls said they liked to cook, other said that they did not like washing utensils and clothes, but there was little opportunity to refuse. Only a handful of girls said that they did not do any work, as there were others in the family who helped with housework. Some girls also said that they had to complete housework before coming to school.

*'I get up at 5.00 in the morning. I sweep and mop all the rooms. I then get ready for school. I go back home and watch some television and do my homework. I then help to cook the dinner. My sister-in-law washes the [utensils]. Generally my father is served food first. My mother, sister-in-law and I eat after everyone has eaten.'* **Parvati, class 10**

*'My mother is a laundress and irons clothes from 8.00 in the morning to 8.00 in the evening. I have three brothers who are working. Since my mother is busy, I do all the household work and come to school. Sometimes I get no time to finish my homework.'* **Geeta, class 9**

In contrast, the boys said that they get up early and get ready for school. A few boys performed outdoor tasks like going to the market, but none helped with other household chores. One boy said that, *'I have tried to make rotis, but I can never make them round'*. Another commented that, *'I don't wash my clothes, my mother washes them for me'*. All the boys accepted that girls have more responsibilities at home than boys.

Boys were not convinced that all the jobs could be done girls. They felt that since men/boys are physically stronger, they could accomplish several tasks that women/

girls could not do. Both boys and girls reported that there was no discrimination in distribution of food at the household level, and that all were treated equally by their parents.

### *Within the school*

An effort was made to understand the roles and expectations of girls and boys within the school. The discussions on the distribution of classroom tasks revealed that in the co-educational schools both boys and girls were appointed as monitors. In the MN girls' school, the girls stated that a good student was chosen to be a monitor and it was her duty to clean the blackboard. The girls also revealed that they had to clean the classrooms, since there was no support staff in the school. In the HP co-educational school, the students stated that a member of the support staff carried out the task of cleaning the rooms. In both the co-educational schools the girls always led the morning assembly and recited the prayers. The girls were convinced that they could sing better than the boys. Table 6.10 outlines the gendered allocation of classroom tasks.

Both boys and girls were of the view that teachers did not discriminate in the classroom, and both boys and girls were made to work on the blackboard. It was evident that the students valued the teachers who were friendly and affectionate and disliked those who were strict and punished them. Most boys felt that female teachers were better than male teachers.

There was some difference in the subject preferences of boys and girls. The girls said they liked Hindi and English, which were followed by science and mathematics. Some girls indicated a dislike for social studies. The subjects preferred by boys included mathematics, English and science. All the boys wanted to be proficient in English as they felt it was a language that was widely used within and outside the country. The boys did not like Sanskrit, as they felt it was barely useful in everyday life.

**Table 6.10.** Gender allocation of classroom tasks

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Conducting morning assembly	-	✓(except in the boys school)
Fetching water	-	Girls serve water to visitors
Sweeping/cleaning classroom	-	✓(only in the girls school)
Monitoring class	✓	✓
Solving questions on blackboard	✓	✓
Running teacher errands	✓	✓
Serving tea for visitors	Carried out by	Carried out by
Teacher attention and behaviour	support staff	support staff

### ***Extra curricular activities***

In all the schools the students were unhappy with the limited games that they could play in school. The girls in the MN girls' school complained that there were very few games in the school, and some of the sport equipment was stored in trunks. The games girls played included *kho-kho*, *kabbadi* and athletics. Some girls had participated in tournaments in other districts. The boys in the MW co-educational school said that although they had a big playground, they played few games. The boys wanted to play volleyball and had requested that the principal get a net. A net had been put up the previous year, but it had been stolen. After that incident, a new net had not been purchased.

Under the aegis of socially useful productive work (SUPW), camps are organised in the schools in which both boys and girls participate. On national days like the Republic Day and Independence Day, girls actively participated in the cultural programmes that were organised in the school.

There is clear evidence that gender roles are sharply ingrained in the minds of girls and boys. Boys were seen as 'breadwinners' and girls as 'homemakers'. The educational aspirations of students were contingent on a variety of factors. Some students also realised that their aspirations might not be fulfilled. Subject preferences also indicate gender stereotyping – girls liked languages, while boys preferred maths and science. Individual teacher preferences were strongly linked to the affinity the teacher had with students. It is evident that schools are yet to become spaces where gender segregation is minimised and healthy interaction between boys and girls is promoted.

### **School system processes and practices**

The secondary and senior/higher secondary schools are co-ordinated by the Department of Secondary Education. The administrative network is complex as well as large. Discussions were held with the DEO (elementary, who was holding charge of secondary schooling) and the Deputy Director (elementary) of the Jaipur district, to understand their views on gender in schooling and the problems faced by them as education managers. Both of them had long years of experience and had been closely associated with the innovative programmes implemented in Rajasthan, which had a special focus on expanding schooling opportunities for girls.

#### **Gender equality and schooling**

The DEO accepted at the outset that there were a lot of challenges in translating the goals of gender equality into reality at the school level. He felt that although the situation had improved in the last decade, gender gaps continued to exist at various levels and were particularly stark at the upper primary and secondary levels. He felt that socialisation processes and attitudes at the household level and within the schooling system were responsible for the gender gaps. He argued that schools were expected to play the role of a catalyst, but had failed to do so. He also reasoned that

teachers had not worked towards minimising gender differences in schools. In his view, changes had to come about at all levels of education. The DEO strongly believed that motivational inputs were also needed for parents, so that girls could get equal educational opportunities.

#### Continuing problem areas

Several gaps were identified by the educational managers, which were seen to have an impact on enrolment, retention and performance of girls. These include:

- **Infrastructure:** The schools were lacking in gender-friendly infrastructure. A number of schools did not have clean toilets and common rooms for girls. In a recent meeting of all DEOs, a decision was taken that in schools that had common toilets, these would be converted into toilets exclusively for girls. This decision was taken because girls often hesitate to use common toilets.
- **Access:** While gender gaps were closing at the primary level, the situation at the upper-primary and secondary levels was disturbing. Even today girls are not sent to schools that are located far from home. A sense of insecurity continues to prevail among parents. In addition, in many secondary schools the numbers of women teachers are low.
- **Classroom interaction:** The two important issues at the classroom level are the curriculum and behaviour of male teachers. The curriculum needs to be improved and analysed from a gender perspective, so that the 'right message' is communicated to the students. In the co-education schools it is important that male teachers remain 'above board'. If at any point there is a sexual allegation against a male teacher, then the entire school environment is vitiated.

#### *Assessment of male and female principals*

The DEO felt that both female and male principals managed the schools efficiently. Women principals were appointed only in girls' schools, where they worked with women staff. In boys' schools, the male principals were usually considerate to women teachers. The deputy director opined that there was no difference in the working abilities of a male principal and a female principal – '*the person should have the right orientation and attitude*'. He felt that women have similar capabilities to men and can make tough decisions. They are not 'weak' managers. However, he felt that some women principals were too dependent on male administrative staff.

#### *Position of women teachers*

The DEO pointed out that the number of women teachers had increased in the last few years due to special recruitment drives, but still their percentage was low. He also agreed that there were differences in promotional avenues and opportunities between male and female teachers. For example, women teachers who entered service

in 1976 had been promoted to grade 2 only recently, while men who had joined the service in 1988 as grade 3 teachers had already been promoted.

### ***Gender-specific issues***

The education managers pointed out that the department had to be sensitive to the needs of women teachers. Women often came to them with various problems related to transfers/postings, and sometimes there were cases of harassment too. One of the common problems encountered by the DEO was related to training programmes. When women teachers were nominated to take part in training programmes, they came to cancel the nominations. He said that the department made efforts to adjust the training calendar in such a way that those women teachers could participate.

### ***Training***

Both the officers felt that it was crucial for the teachers to upgrade their skills, but no systematic trainings have been organised for teachers of secondary and senior secondary schools. The focus has largely been on training primary education teachers. More recently, with the introduction of the subject on life skills education (LSE), trainings have been organised at the regional level for both male and female teachers, including principals. Gender is an important component of LSE.

### ***Gender-friendly schools***

According to the education managers, some of the non-negotiables for a gender-friendly school are that the schools should be accessible to girls and the criteria for opening secondary and senior secondary schools should be reviewed. At present, the number of schools exclusively for girls at the secondary and senior secondary levels is just 10 per cent and 17 per cent. All primary schools should be upgraded as upper-primary and all secondary schools should be upgraded to senior secondary schools. This would help in curtailing the dropout rates for girls at the elementary and secondary stages as they would then be continuing in the same school where they had been studying.

The school infrastructure should fulfil needs pertaining to girls – toilets with water, common rooms, a playground, sports equipment and laboratory facilities. Women teachers should be appointed in all schools and should be treated on a par with men. The choice of subjects for girls should not be restricted to arts. Subject streams like science, commerce and home science should be available in all secondary and senior secondary schools.

It was also pointed out that various government initiatives and incentives provided to girls had led to an increase in girls' enrolment, but more effort was required. The continuing gender bias in textbooks also needs to be addressed. It was felt that the recent policy announcement and introduction of a transport voucher scheme to enable girls to access secondary schooling was a positive step.

The entire educational system is a network of complexities in which a range of issues is competing for priority consideration. While the educational managers we met were 'sensitive' and had the 'right' attitude, it was evident that they were surrounded by various other more pressing problems – like teacher transfers, litigation and fighting political pressures of various kinds. All these highlight the fact that 'gender concerns tend to get lost in the files' and are yet to become high-priority issues.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Conclusions*

The present study reveals that despite a pronounced mandate for ensuring gender equality in education, the situation of secondary schools in the state largely remains unchanged and presents several challenges. It is clearly evident that gender is pervasive in the schooling experience of students, and there is a constant legitimisation of gender distinctions through everyday school practices. The hidden curriculum can be seen operating at all times – the seating arrangements, the task assignment and in gendered texts and play patterns.

While most teachers recognised and admitted to gender-based discrimination in society and spoke of providing equal opportunities to boys and girls, they have a limited role in transforming the gender patterns being played out in the classrooms. The relationships among women and men teachers also reveal gender discriminatory attitudes, where women teachers are not treated on a par with their male counterparts.

The teachers do not seem to be motivated to engage with the children outside the realm of the textbooks. Consequently, the teaching learning enterprise fails to promote critical thinking. The main concern of the teachers is to deliver satisfactory examination results.

While there have been some efforts towards curriculum reform in the state, the approach adopted has been 'add women and stir'. The curriculum continues to reinforce traditional gender roles, and does not offer learners the space to imagine a different future or set of gender relations.

Discussions with students reveal that gender stereotyping is strong at the level of the household, as gender roles and expectations for boys and girls within the household are clearly defined. The notions of restraint, obedience and sacrifice are so deeply ingrained that just as girls are supposed to be obedient at home, they are also expected to obey and conform in school. For the majority of girls, the burden of household responsibilities is 'real' and continues to hamper their legitimate participation in education. The boys, in turn, have the advantage of being born male. The girls expressed a wish for more freedom and have a strong desire to study further; however, many of them understand that their aspirations may not be realised, as the main purpose of girls' education is seen to be to enhance marriage prospects.

At the level of the state, the entire educational system is caught in a quagmire of politics, hostilities and litigations and changing the situation at the ground level requires huge efforts. The remark that 'the entire educational system is patriarchal' also holds true. The individuals who recognised the persistence of gender inequalities and injustice had little space to be critical and realised that their efforts may be undermined. However, they still endorsed the official policy viewpoint that the government is specifically concerned with the status of girls' education in Rajasthan.

Finally, the study clearly points out that concentrated efforts need to be made at different levels to shift the gender discourse from the margins to the centre of secondary education in the state.

### *Policy recommendations*

Any approach for engendering development and education, in particular, must recognise the connections between universal education, social justice and equity.

At the policy level, the state needs to clearly plan the agenda for universalising secondary education. At present, the network of secondary schools is poor. A systematic mapping exercise should be initiated in the state, to assess availability of upper primary and secondary schools from the viewpoint of girls' access (and especially from the SC, ST and OBC groups).

There is a need to institutionalise the concept of **gender-friendly schools**, which meets girls' requirements such as infrastructure, teacher positions, the curriculum, games and the quality of the educational experience. Several opportunities may open up with the new mission on secondary schooling.

The quality of education imparted in schools and other institutions depends essentially on the capacity of teachers. It is surprising to note that there are no teacher-training programmes for secondary and senior secondary teachers. More in depth, systematic and professional inputs need to be planned for teachers to upgrade their skills and improve teacher capacities. A gender perspective must be integrated in teacher education and training programmes, which will enable them to understand the pervasive presence of gender and initiate changes in school policy and classroom practices.

The curriculum is key to good-quality education and the textbooks are major instruments through which children learn about social values and norms. The task of reviewing textbooks has to be undertaken on a priority basis. Collaborations with women's studies centres, the National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT), the State Institute of Education, Research and Training (SIERT) and the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) members could be sought to develop gender-sensitive curricula. The framework has already been provided by the National Curricular Framework (NCF) 2005.

An important aspect related to women teachers is the support provided to them within the mainstream educational system itself. There is a definite need to improve the status, conditions and career development opportunities for women. Creation of forums for women teachers seems essential, where they can collectively bargain and negotiate better working environments in schools.

Regular discussion forums should also be created at the school level, wherein students can be motivated to express and articulate their concerns vis-à-vis schooling and gender issues.

Finally, if education is the process of developing personhood and capacities such as independent thinking, autonomy and critical judgment, then schools must endeavour to provide gender-just institutional spaces.

### **Notes**

1. The fieldwork was carried out in April and May 2007 after the new academic session had begun.
2. Contemporary government statistics differentiate four social groups: scheduled tribe (ST), scheduled caste (SC), other backward classes (OBC) and 'others'. Scheduled tribes, also referred to as adivasis, are indigenous peoples. Scheduled castes, also referred to as Dalits, used to be regarded as 'untouchables'. The ST, SC and OBC groups were 'scheduled' or recognised in the Indian Constitution for special development efforts.

