

Research on Gender Concerns in School Education A Trend Report

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ABSTRACT

A systematic review of the research studies in the field of Gender Concerns in School Education was taken up with the objective of identifying broad themes and trends of educational researches during the period of 2001–2020. The review helped in identifying gaps in research and through critical discussion on such gaps, prompted new research projects to be conducted. The themes that came up frequently in the research analysed for this report are: Gender and Accessibility, Marginalisation, Gender and Marginalisation in Education, Gender and Curriculum, Gender and Socialisation in Schools and Policy making and their Implementation for Women Education. Each theme was further divided into sub-themes that demonstrated the diversity of researches done to understand gender and education. The report suggests the existing gaps in educational research done on gender and areas of research that can be undertaken in future by researchers working on gender and education.

Keywords: *School Education, Gender, Systematic Review*

Introduction

A discussion on the education of girls and women in India need to be placed in the context of a complex social structure of India that constantly grapples with the interface of modernity and tradition on

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the one hand, and economic and social realities on the other. Gender does not manifest in isolation but is determined by various other socio-political and economic factors. Several structural inequalities as well as regional variations compound the problem of building a comprehensive theoretical premise on the condition of education for women and children. Further, with the constant dynamism of social norms and practices alongside, rapid economic and political changes in the country, gendered conditions and situations shift from one form to another. Social inequalities and differences interact with each other across geographical regions and terrains, social, cultural and religious communities, advantaged and disadvantaged communities based on caste, class, sexuality, wealth, occupations and locations. This makes it essential for researchers to have discussion on gender and education within a specific social context.

The recognition of inter-linkages and themes of research that social scientists, and researchers contribute to the vast body of research literature is of paramount importance. It allows to identify the specific standpoints and lenses that researchers use to look at the problem of gender and education. Such recognition brings with it an acknowledgment of gaps in the research on gender and education as well. It will not only pave the path for further researches but also inform the methodology and lens used, ideologies employed in the theoretical analyses, etc.

It is with such objective that a systematic review of the research studies done in the field of gender concerns in school education was taken up. It presents themes in the existing body of research literature and trends that could be identified, making way to look at gaps in the existing research and a critical discussion around the same. The following broad themes were discerned from the reviewed literature: Access to education, gender and marginalisation in education, gender and school curriculum, socialisation of gender in schools, and policies and schemes for girls' education. Each theme is further, divided into sub-themes that demonstrate the diversity of researches done to understand gender and education within that particular theme.

Objectives

This review was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To identify the broad themes and trends of researches in the area of gender concerns in education conducted during the period 2001–2020 in the Indian context, and

2. To identify and discuss the gaps in researches in the area of gender concerns in education.

Method

A thorough analysis of the texts was undertaken from the gender lens. The materials, resources for the present review were collected based on the following criteria:

- Research conducted, articles published or presented during 2001–2020.
- Studies and published articles related to education of girls either directly or indirectly.
- Ph.D. and M. Phil. dissertations.
- Institutional research reports, books, articles published in journals and documents (International and National).

Historical Overview

In India, discussions around gender and education can be traced back to the pre-independence period that looked at education as a tool to enhance one's social status. The visibility of women into the formal education system began in the mid-nineteenth century but it got wider acceptance only in the mid-twentieth century. The push of including women in the educational system was from social reformers and revivalists whose concerns were on gender education that sought to reiterate rather than creating challenge on gender social relations. Mazumdar and Sharma (1979) points out at how the main purpose of social revivalists in educating women was not to make them active participant in the socio-economic and political spheres but it was rather to make them more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles in society as wives and mothers. However, in the post-independence era the values of equality and equity helped to shape the ideological basis of women and girls' education. There was an expansion of the school system and infrastructure and various means were adopted to bring girls into the ambit of formal education. The Constitution of the Indian Republic introduced in 1950 imbibed various such principles within it. It aided for an equitable approach towards education. Article 45 specifically, requires that the States should endeavour to ensure free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years, while Article 16 imposed non-discrimination on the ground of sex in public employment and Article 15(3) empowered the State to

make special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children that hastened access to education for girls at all levels.

It is important to trace the history of various developments on gender and education. After Independence, the University Education Commission or the Radhakrishnan Commission (1949) dedicated an entire chapter on women education. Interestingly, the views of the Commission were still steeped in the idea that a woman education is primarily to uplift her as a more capable domestic worker, who can be competent in her domestic, familial responsibilities towards the family. The following statement is quite revealing of the above made comment, “The Commission believes that a well-ordered home helps to make well-ordered men. The mother who is inquisitive and alert, well-informed and familiar with subjects such as history and literature, and who lives and works with her children at homes, will be the best teacher in the world of both character and intelligence”. Further, while the Commission elaborated on the fact that, women and men are equally capable to endure educational thoroughness and quality but it added that, it did not encourage similarity in men and women education in all aspects.

Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission) of 1953, however, made a departure from such perceptions and iterated that in a democratic country such a difference, which may lead to variations in the standard of intellectual development achieved by boys and girls, and cannot be envisaged.

One of the most significant committees formed to look particularly, into the question of women’s education was the National Committee on Women’s Education (1958–59) popularly, known as Durgabai Deshmukh Committee on Women’s Education. The committee made recommendations to the government in cognizance with the various hindrances that girls face in educational attainment.

Hansa Mehta Committee on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1962) took an unequivocal stand against curricular differentiation. It stated that the existing gaps between education of boys and girls in the country are rooted in the patriarchal, socio-cultural notions that deem girls inferior than boys in their intellect, aptitude and physique. Hence, any push towards a differentiated curriculum for boys and girls will only lead to a blatant reiteration of such gender bias and the continuation of gendered power dynamics. Besides, recommending co-education

at the elementary and secondary education, the committee also provided various vocational courses to both boys and girls.

The Kothari Commission (1964–66), endorsed the views of Hansa Mehta Committee and Durgabai Deshmukh Committee and observed that women's education needs to equip women for responsibilities that lie outside of the domestic sphere of the family and that 'equal partnership will have to continue in the fight against hunger, ignorance and ill-health'.

However, none of the above-mentioned developments critiqued the situation of women's education as radically as the Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1971 did. In a nuanced report termed *Towards Equality* (1975), it recapitulated the urgency of catering to the question of women education and many socio-cultural inequalities that hindered it. It established a direct causation between educational discrepancies and the patriarchal subordination of women in an Indian society. The report significantly affected government policy in context of promoting women welfare and empowerment. On the other hand, the findings crucially influenced a section of Indian Academia in their research and training, pushing them away from the old-approach where role of women was mainly focused on family well-being and therefore, towards a critical issue (Desai and Thakkar, 2001).

Educational Policies and its Implications on Girls' Education and Gender

Education of girls is a major concern in national agenda since Independence. Special commissions and committees were set up to assess the progress of girls' education from time to time and to propose suitable interventions, to promote their educational participation. Several strategies were adopted to promote education of girls as an integral part of the planned socio-economic development of the country.

A major conceptual shift can be noticed in the last decade in an approach to the education of girls and women. Education of girls is increasingly being seen as a basic human right and a crucial input into national development. Investment in female education is now considered a development imperative rather than a plain moral commitment. Thus, lifting it from the plain of pure ethics to that of sound economics. The National Policies are designed to reach out to girls and other disadvantaged groups in rural remote areas (Nayar, 2000).

The culmination of all the government efforts was the formulation of the National Policy on Education (1986), which made a radical statement about the transformative potential of education. The policy mentioned that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise the accumulative distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women.

This policy further acknowledges the need to address the roots of gender marginalisation to realise gender equity in education. Such commitment led to the formulation of a fascinating programme for women equality called *Mahila Samakhyain* (1987), which sought to create empowering conditions for poor women to ensure education for themselves and their daughters. National Literacy Mission also gained momentum in the country in the early 1990s and assisted in an increase in the literacy levels of women across the country. From the early 1990s, the drive for universal primary education through the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) brought gender issues to the fore in curriculum and textbook revision, gender sensitisation of teachers and community mobilisation on girls' education.

The recent formulation of the National Education Policy (2020) has given direction to the whole education system right from preparatory to higher education. It aims to achieve the overall development goals of the country. Gender equality being one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was focused by the policy. National Education Policy (2020) directs the government to equip individuals to realise their dreams and to enable all students irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system with particular focus on historically marginalised, disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Education is a great lever and is the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion and equality. Initiatives must be in place to ensure that all students from such groups despite, inherent obstacles are provided various targeted opportunities to enter and excel in the educational system. It is also important to note that the policy specifically, recognises 'transgender person' a gender category, among the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) (in Chapter 6 on Equitable and Inclusive Education) has been historically under-represented in education. Thus, it takes gender and

other social groups into historically marginalised sections and also incorporates a specific section on curbing the dropout rate (Section 3, p.10; titled '*Curtailling Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels*').

Further, National Education Policy (2020) considered sensitisation as a crucial aspect of the education system and therefore, emphasised on the sensitisations of all participants in the education system. Considering the systematic marginalisation of social groups like gender, the policy directs the school curriculum to integrate different aspects of human values, inter alia gender equality, non-violence and detailed knowledge about gender identities (section 6.20, pg. 28). In Chapter 6, 'Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All' under twenty sub-sections, the policy makes specific mention of transgender individuals and puts them under SEDGs as it states, 'Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEMGs) can be broadly categorised based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals)'. All the provisions made in the policy for SEDGs is also applicable for the transgender students. The need is to sensitise officers and personnel in the education system to take necessary steps for transgender children under these provisions to benefit them. The policy also recommends implementation of various provisions for different gender identities and directs the creation of a gender inclusion fund for these activities.

Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015) is about ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning. The target to be achieved by 2030, is to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all the levels of education and vocational training. Further, Goal 5 is about achieving gender equality and empowering all the women and girls. Keeping the SDGs in mind, Agrawal et al. (2019) conducted the study that analysed the policies on education and skill development in India and Korea. Findings of the study highlighted that in India, several strategies have been adopted to promote girls' education as an integral part of the planned socio-economic development of the country. In Korea, education has played a pivotal role in the progress of Korea as a developed country. Based on the analysis of existing policies, specific recommendations were made for both the countries and also individually for India and Korea. For example, to combat

the effects of patriarchy and gender-role expectations, Korea has made Home Science course compulsory for boys in schools. Such an initiative in schools in India can be very beneficial. Similarly, more focus on gender issues in education in the teacher education programmes and in recognition of education as a basic tool to transform society was suggested for Korea. One of the recommendations that is of immense relevance for both India and Korea is to make schools zero-tolerance zones against any form of gender violence.

Nakray (2018) presented a critique of the policies in place to supplement girls education and targeted gender disparity. It discussed the constraints of such policies pertaining to issues related to girls of marginalised communities. It critiqued policies such as Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) that was created to address the problem of gender inequality without keeping in mind, the complex and multifaceted contexts that arises on the question of girls' education in India. The author examined the constraints of Indian education policies in addressing issues pertaining to the education of girls from marginalised communities, drawing on feminist and intersectionality perspectives. Using the theoretical framework of knowledge transfer and power, the author discusses in great detail how policies borrowed from the western context evaporated before reaching the ground leaving young girls with little or no support in terms of educational benefits. The CCT policy in the western countries such as in Brazil and Mexico have worked unlike in India, where the efficacy of cash transfer in addressing early marriage, improved enrolment or learning outcomes has been rather chequered and failed to reinforce the global evidence. Such papers which constructively critique the existing policies at the national level are of immense importance to understand the trend of the kind of researches that has been done with respect to gender and educational policies.

Formation of the Discipline of Women and Gender Studies

The simultaneous formation of the academic discipline of Women Studies needs to be discussed to understand the various ways in which concerns around gender and education have transformed over time, and space. The earliest impetus of setting up Women Studies in the Indian context came from a generation of social scientists, who critically became more aware of their location in higher education. A shift was initiated from women as subjects to

be educated to 'women' as new subjects of investigation and study. Mazumdar and Sharma (1979) produced the first discussion on the scope of Women Studies that focused on the large-scale neglect of women in social science. The discipline spread to India much rapidly following the UN Mid-Decade Conference held in Copenhagen in 1980. Indian Association of Women Studies (IAWS) established in 1981 became an institution that involved in research and training of academicians and researchers in the field of gender and marked the first step towards institutionalisation of women's studies.

Women studies scholars sought to critically enquire into the structural and cultural bases that characterise the maintenance and reproduction of patriarchy in India at the familial, community and state levels. Gaining institutional support in the 1980s, women studies gained momentum by pointing towards various forms of exclusions and invisibility, recovering women voices from the margins and constantly unveiling and exploring the complex relationship between power and knowledge. There was a growing unrest due to the fact that, while organisations such as National Commission on Labour (1969), Expert Committee on Unemployment Estimates (1971) and the Report on the Committee on Unemployment (1973) were undergoing researches that highlighted issues such as unemployment, wage discrimination and general oppression of women but still no active effort was carried out in that area. The *Towards Equality Report* (1975) was the first to catalyse the growth of researches around specific issues related to gender as well as became the foundation on which the discipline of Women Studies built itself. The findings of the report led the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to fund research projects in Universities related to gender, gender oppression, etc. In 1974, a unit for research on women was set up in the SNDT Women's University, Bombay, officially becoming a centre in 1985. In 1981, the first National Conference on Women Studies was organised by SNDT Women University for incorporation of women experiences and women roles in academic studies, while the women movement concentrated on organisational issues and addressed issues of violence, the women studies meeting emphasised on agendas of research and the critique of syllabi (John, 2008).

In 1986, UGC brought out the guidelines for Development of Women Studies, formalising the discipline and the centres of gender research. Thus, academic centres as well as non-academic

centres were established. Institute of Social Studies Trust, Centre for Women Development Studies (CWDS), the Institute of Social Studies Trust in Delhi, the Anveshi Research Centre for Women Studies in Hyderabad and Chetna in Ahmedabad are some of the earliest ones.

The *Towards Equality Report* (1975) further, had a profound impact on the way that Women Studies defined its concern and the linkages that it sought with the women movement. Issues of development, violence, legal rights, and economic and political participation became central arenas of research and intervention.

However, the mandate of Women Studies has undergone various changes since, its inception. Feminist scholars challenged its limitations of treating women as a homogenous group and urged to broaden its spectrum with an emphasis on inclusivity to encapsulate gender non-normative persons, transgender people, queer and other groups. Masculinities and femininities were marginalised on the basis of their identities and sexual orientation. Feminist scholars further, pushed for the recognition on how gender oppression operates along with class differentiation and caste discrimination in the Indian society. The contribution of Indian feminists has highlighted the predicament of women multiple and overlapping marginalisation in the complex interplay of caste, class, gender, ethnicity and religion. Thus, in late 1990s, there was a gradual shift in terms of the discipline itself and thus, from Women Studies, many centres shifted to Gender Studies.

However, gender studies scholars have been extensively examining the gendered access to educational facilities, sexism in school textbooks and reconstruction of stereotypes in schools. Feminist scholarships around women education have developed deeper into the phenomena of gender bias, discrimination, exclusion, violence and the different ways they affect the access to education. They have also pushed forth theories such as the critical theories around education as a socialising agent, as well as theories of feminist pedagogies that guide many researches done today on education in India.

International Scenario

Gender equality and equity in education is a matter of concern for more than a century. Earlier, when the right to schooling was introduced, single-sex schools dominated the educational landscape in many countries. Subjects taught to male and female students differed, reflecting the expected course of life of these

children. Consequently, various subjects aimed at a certain gender group such as cooking was associated with girls (Trueman, 2015). Nowadays, fairly equal opportunities to learning have been established in the vast majority of countries for female and male students. However, the traditional patterns keep influencing the life course of male and female students in very powerful ways. For example, girls as opposed to boys still opt more for professions within the social sector and less often for sectors related to the so-called STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. These patterns can be observed with career and study choices prior to entering the work force (UNESCO, 2017).

At the international level, gender equality has been given much importance, which has led UNESCO to declare gender equality as one of the most important goal for education (UNESCO, 2015) and this aim has been incorporated within the framework of sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2018). International comparative research addressed the issue of gender differences continuously and the topic is prominent in many recently conducted international large-scale assessments in education. For example, 2015 TIMSS and PISA cycles (Mullis et al., 2016a; Mullis et al., 2016b; OECD, 2016).

One aspect of gender differences receiving high attention is related to STEM education. UNESCO (2017) report on girls and women education in STEM finds that, till date, girls are still under-represented in choosing STEM disciplines for studying and as their career paths. Also, international comparative studies observe a similar pattern. The IEA TIMSS-Advanced study on upper secondary students studying advanced mathematics and science conducted in 2015 found (far) more male students in these advanced courses in most of the participating countries (Mullis et al., 2016c). Further, male students on an average, achieved significantly higher than girls in again, most of the countries.

Scholarship in recent decades reflects scholars' simultaneous mobilisation of diverse theoretical and methodological tools to explore gendered dynamics in a range of sites and explored the expansive reach of gendered analyses of varied locations, practices, policies and processes that has broadened the understanding of gendered operations in education. Feminist theories, masculinity theories, post-structuralist theories, materialist theories have constituted the theoretical background of such research. Further,

contemporary research on education and gender also addresses sex-role theory, gender egalitarianism, anti-violence, critical and feminist pedagogy, grounded theory, cartesian corporeal agency, psychoanalytic theories, leadership theories and gender reproduction.

Recent research trends look at the theoretical and practical implications of sorting and grouping human beings by the designation of biological sex, through schools, sports teams, sexuality education curriculum, etc. Further, research has also created space for pregnant and mothering teens, students in special education, 'at-risk' students in alternative schools, sexual minority and gender non-conforming students and they have created single-sex classrooms schools for students of colour among others. Indeed, the major theme of early research on transgender issues in education focused on how to make campuses more inclusive to serve the educational needs of transgender students. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, international scholarship on transgender issues in education has shifted from central concerns regarding access, visibility and resources in higher education to the inclusion of studies about importance of inclusive curricula and pedagogy in primary and secondary schools and have engaged in research on teacher preparation and medical education. One can surely take away from such international research trends to identify particular concerns of education of transgender communities in India.

The following are the themes that have emerged from review that was undertaken.

1. Gender and Access to Education

Understanding Access

To understand access to education from the lens of gender, one need to unravel the term itself as well as need to understand how research has approached it so far. The Joint Review Mission report that was carried out under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* understood access to education by including indicators such as enrolment in school (class-wise as well as level-wise), out-of-school children, information on average drop-out, retention, attendance and transition rate across grades, physical access to school and availability of school infrastructure such as functional toilets, classrooms, etc. Yet, such quantitative indicators and the data

arising from them neither account for the ‘texture of inequalities’ of the social fabric nor do they encompass the multifarious aspects of the gendered realities of accessing education (Ramachandran, 2018). Many girls face multiple barriers because of gender exclusion making it more difficult for them to enrol in and complete primary school and continue to secondary school (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007). In other words, access to education need to be understood beyond developmental indicators. It need to include judgement of educational quality and process (what children have access to), and of educational outcomes (what competencies and capabilities are acquired and how they are valued) (Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transition and Equity, 2011). On a similar note, Ramachandran (2018) emphasised on the importance of including factors such as quality of schools and their effective functioning, availability of enough number of trained teachers, classroom experience and ways teachers cater to disadvantaged groups, non-discriminatory pedagogical practices and curriculum regular assessment and feedback to ensure high-learning outcomes and meaningful access to education (Ramachandran and Chatterjee, 2014; Ramachandran, 2018).

The paper presented a nuanced examination of various determinants of school participation based on the findings of the PROBE survey (Public Report on Basic Education, 1999) related to the main feature of schooling in North India. They identified household variables (such as parental literacy particularly, maternal education, household wealth, caste, land ownership, etc.) and school variables (such as provision of mid-day meals, teacher regularity and qualification as well as a low teacher-child ratio) as conducive factors to ensure enrolment of girls. The parental motivation proved to be a strong influential factor on the enrolment of students in primary school such as girls’ enrolment rose by as much as 30 per cent points, if her parents considered education as ‘important’ for females. Further, it was found that, the chances of completing primary education rose by 30 per cent points in the availability of mid-day meals in the primary schools. A plausible explanation of it was that it significantly reduced the ‘private’ cost of education. A significant finding was the interplay of disadvantage of belonging to scheduled castes or tribes and other backward classes that weigh heavily on the educational attainment of girls.

Ramachandran (2002 and 2003) and Ramachandran (2004) showed how an increase in enrolment did not directly lead to the empowerment of women. According to the NFHS-2 (1998–1999), overall, 15 per cent of boys and 22 per cent of girls aged 6 to 17 years of age were not attending school at the time of the survey. Nearly, 13 per cent of the respondents perceived education as unnecessary for girls. The major reasons cited for children who dropped out of school were lack of interest and the necessity for them to work at home or outside. Ramachandran placed the issues of irregularity in school attendance, dropout from schools and low learning outcomes within a larger framework of social institutions intertwined with economic factors that determined the child's ability to access and continue schooling. In her work, she identified gendered cost of education that remained hidden from plain view, i.e., school uniforms, textbooks, cost of parental investment, etc. Further, the low quality of education, lack of proper school facilities, the 'school-community-teacher-children conundrum' revealed indifferent attitude of teachers towards the socio-economic hardships faced by students of marginalised communities. It resulted in disillusionment with the entire concept of schooling in many such communities (Ramachandran, 2002; Ramachandran, 2004). Such woeful expectations from the community were compounded by the gendered effects of poverty, labour requirements of the household, agricultural and non-agricultural activities, etc.

A qualitative study was conducted to understand the factors that facilitate and impede primary school completion of students in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Results of the study revealed that factors such as the availability of schools within a reachable distance, conducive school environment including accessible infrastructure, supportive and empathetic teachers, as well as their regularity, parental educational levels and their investment in their child's education (especially, that of the mother's), supportive environment at homes that relieved students from household responsibilities (such as taking care of siblings, child labour, etc.) had provided tangible benefits of education in terms of social status, livelihood and upward mobility. Sustained education and awareness about immunisation and easy accessibility of health facilities facilitate successful primary school completion for girls as well. Being the oldest child, having siblings with disabilities, the burden of responsibilities of chores in and out

of the household, social practices of post-puberty restriction on movement, early marriages and dowry, and factors that threaten the safety of girls within schools such as teacher's addiction and drunkenness were some of the most important factors that impeded primary schooling completion of girls who belonged to diverse poverty situations.

Ramachandran (2003) underlined how girls, who belong to marginalised communities of Scheduled Castes and Tribes were worst in accessing education. Women from landless households especially, from social and economically backward communities and those living in the most backward regions of the country had been totally bypassed by educational and developmental processes. Bandhopadhyay and Subhramanian (2008) and Samson and Noronha (2007) also focused in their studies on how lack of infrastructures such as functional toilets acted as a powerful deterrent for adolescent girls to attend schools. It not only affected hygiene and privacy issues but also caused inconvenience during menstruation. Roy (2015) brought out the complex negotiations of acquiescence and contestations with socio-cultural norms of femininity. It showed how socio-economic realities, and religious and cultural norms affected girl's participation, retention, performance in the classroom and further, limited her expectations from higher education.

The studies thus, showed that access to education should not only be understood in terms of physical access pertaining to infrastructure specifically but they also need to consider functional toilets for girls and the availability of secondary schools within walking distance. Further, other factors such as quality of schools and their effective functioning, mid-day meals, availability of enough number of trained teachers, classroom experiences, teachers' behaviour towards disadvantaged groups, non-discriminatory pedagogical practices and curriculum, regular assessment and feedback also require due consideration. Additionally, the household variables in terms of parental literacy (particularly, maternal education), household wealth, gendered costs of education, caste and land ownership, parental motivation, etc., have a strong influence on the enrolment of girls at the primary stage. The high levels of absenteeism and dropouts among adolescent girls as they move from middle to secondary level education can be of many complex factors. The findings underlined the various socio-cultural aspects of gender dynamics

that determined access to education. Thus, access to education can also be understood in the context of complex socio-political norms mediated by gender.

Economic Factors Affecting Access

Kingdon (2005) analysed her study keeping household wealth as the main determinant of educational attainment and found that enrolment was contingent primarily, on wealth and stated low enrolment rates among the people from poorer backgrounds may be because of the 'high opportunity cost of schooling', i.e., the hidden cost of schooling even with very low school fees. Thus, families that require children to supplement family income need to incur high opportunity cost of schooling and therefore, were demotivated to enrol their children even in primary schooling. Such a high opportunity cost of schooling negatively affected boys more than it affected girls, owing to the strict division of labour that were followed in families. In other words, more boys were expected to participate in labour work, while girls were entrusted with domestic chores. In an interesting study (Kingdon and Theopald, 2008) observed that the demand for schooling actually depends on the economic returns to education in the local labour market. However, NSSO, 2006 data showed that, gendered ramifications on education attainment bear high on girls as they move up the level of grades. Further, one may understand that economic returns may not be sufficient to counter hegemonic ideals of femininity and gender.

Alcott and Rose (2017) attempted to understand learning disparities throughout the cycle of primary education, by modelling five characteristics that may affect learning outcomes. Findings of Annual Status of Educational Report (ASER) 2020 in rural India, endorsed the findings of earlier studies, where gender, socio-economic wealth and parents' literacy were important factors for determining learning outcomes. However, after controlling all other factors, it was found that, household wealth and parental schooling showed sizeable gaps, which keep on increasing as one went higher on the grade scale. In other words, gender, socio-economic status and parental education were non-significant in the learning outcomes at Class 1. At Class 5, however, all these variables had significant influence on the learning outcomes of children. Poverty reportedly, superseded all other characteristics as a predictor of learning disparities. Combining all the estimates,

the research findings indicated that a girl belonging to one of the poorest households, whose mother and father did not receive formal schooling, were less able to solve mathematics problems than boys belonging to a wealthy household, whose parents were literate. Further, poor girls were less able to do subtraction than poor boys. This research foregrounds the interface of socio-economic factors, literacy of parents and the institution of gender that circumscribes the experience of learning (outcomes, retention) for many girls in rural India. Such data paints a complicated scenario with respect to gender and educational access (in terms of enrolment, educational attainment, learning outcomes, etc.)

The findings revealed that interface of socio-economic factors, literacy of parents and gender affects learning, and retention for many girls in rural India. The families that require children to supplement family income and the high opportunity cost of schooling demotivated the parents to enrol their children for schooling.

Gender and Household Education Expenditure

Gender difference in educational access and attainment can be significantly attributed to economic factors that manifest in the form of intra-household expenditure on education, i.e., decision of resource allotment and investment on education differed for girls and boys that established a certain pro-male bias in the intra family educational investments. Educational investment includes a variety of economic factors: school fees, books, uniforms, transportation and other material as well as tuition fees. Further, parental investment in terms of time and energy as well as the push to attain education are some of the non-economic factors affecting access to education.

Kingdon (2005) argued that, intra-household educational expenditure can potentially affect two decisions: whether to enrol retain the child (boy or girl) in schools and how much to spend on their schooling. Such decisions were further, compounded by factors such as the gender composition of the household's child population, the age of the child, literacy of the household heads, familial and parental bias, etc. In rural India, the percentage of all-girls' households reporting positive educational expenditure was only 47.3 per cent, while the corresponding percentage for households with at least one boy was 66 per cent. Further,

all-girls households were nearly 19 percentage points more likely to report zero educational expenditure than at least one-boy household. Such findings showed a strong correlation between the gender composition of households and the household decisions to incur positive spending on education. The probability of positive educational expenditure increased in the presence of a boy in the household rather than a girl. One of the most important finding in her research was that, gender bias was substantially noted in the current enrolment rates within 10–14 and 15–19 age groups, 16 states reviewed indicates a high probability of zero educational expenditure among girls belonging to the said age groups.

The findings of the study by Lancaster et al. (2008) were consistent with the previously discussed studies. Their data analysis in underdeveloped rural Bihar, Kerala and Maharashtra presented a sharp gender bias in educational expenditure for the age groups of 11–16 and 17–60 years of age. Further, gender disparity in the allocation of budget prevailed at the lower rather than higher level of adult literacy. This took away the notion of economic backwardness being proportionate to gender bias. For example, even in the backward areas of Bihar, gender bias against girls in educational spending was mostly noted to prevail in households having lower adult (male) literacy than households with higher levels of adult literacy. There was additional evidence of significant inter-generational transmission of gender biasness in educational spending. The findings of adult male literacy having a positive impact on girls' education was further, substantiated by Vaid (2004) concerning inequality in educational transitions. Her study revealed, while education of both the mother and father played an important role in the transition of children across the educational stages, the literacy of the mother had a strong effect in pushing for the education of all the children and did not held any significant effect for only girls. However, father's literacy and gender interaction significantly showed that daughters have a better chance in accessing education, if a father is literate. Himaz (2009) found aspects of gender discrimination in Andhra Pradesh within the expenditure on education of students after being enrolled in school. The study concluded that differential expenditure was prominently found in decisions of enrolment as well as expenditure after enrolment in the age group of 10–14 years of age. Such a difference in spending on educational prospects after enrolment

was manifested majorly in the form of extra tuitions, i.e., more is spent on boys for extra tuitions than girls. In the age group of 15–19 years, however, the expenditure bias is mainly in the form of the decisions of enrolment, i.e., more boys were enrolled in schools than girls.

Thus, gender biasness in educational expenditure was reported. The probability of positive educational expenditure increased in the presence of a boy in the household rather than a girl. Gender biasness was also noted by researchers in the enrolment rates within 10–14 and 15–19 age groups. There was a high probability of zero educational expenditure (non-enrolment) as well as lower educational expenditure among girls belonging to the said age groups. Lower literacy of parents and household expenditures played an important role.

Gender and Choice of School

With globalisation, privatisation has been taking place at an unprecedented pace with private schools catering to the market values. Maitra et al. (2016) examined the extent and causes of the gender gap in private school enrolment, especially focusing on the role of individual, household and community characteristics. The study showed significant gender bias against girls in private school enrolment, which varied across the Indian regions. There was significantly a higher gender gap in northern and north-western states relative to those in the south, and the east. Research primarily showed that, it mainly depends on the ‘rational choice’ of the parents to maximise their ‘investment’ in their child’s private schooling. Thus, one may infer that gender gaps in private school enrolment were directly linked with the gender disparity in economic sectors and job markets.

In another study, Sahoo (2016) found various factors of higher preference for private schools such as gender, birth order, facilities in the private schools, remoteness of the village (farther the village is from the district headquarter, more is the demand for private schools). The report pointed out, intra-household gender gap in private school enrolment as well as school choices for children in the same household to be nearly 6 per cent. An interesting result of the research was that sex ratio had a positive effect on the cost of private schooling. A village with more men than women willingly spent more on their private schooling thus, increasing the cost of the schools and making it even more difficult for girls to access

such schools. The difference in school fees comes out to be the only factor to have a massively significant relationship with the gender gap in private school choice. Similar results were found by Goswami (2015) as well.

In a similar effort to analyse the household dynamics and behaviours of disadvantaged households in economically developing countries around girls' schooling, Srivastava (2006) examined the 'mental models' of households related to schooling of their daughters in low-fee private schools or LFPs. It was found that, maximum household members in her study were just as likely to send their daughters to LFP schools as their sons. The research suggested that, the 'mental shift' among the participants that prioritised daughter's education was driven by peer and family influence and the rapidly changing socio-economic changes in the country. However, the impetus for educating girls in low-fee private schools that caters to marginalised communities to which participants belonged to, was prominently the 'marriage market', while, some participants were eager to invest in their daughter's education with the expectation that it would supplement their household income. Ultimately, it was the marriage market that had a stronghold on the parental choices of educating their daughters. There was a higher demand for educated brides among lower-income and lower-caste groups. The research underscored how patriarchal thought processes still guide parent's choice for investing in girl's education and the type of school she goes to.

In conclusion, school choice for girls depends upon various factors such as distance, anxieties about girls' safety, prioritisation of boy's 'quality' of education than that of girls, intersection of social hierarchies such as caste, nationality, regionality, etc. The different researches showed that a simplification of parental school choice isn't possible and different forms of choices for private and public education should be localised in their respective contexts.

2. Gender and Marginalisation

The socio-political conditions that influence girls' access to education and the dynamics of schooling including policies are circumscribed by various factors that mutually influence and reinforce each other. Thus, gender inequality in education needs to be examined through diverse aspects of social and political divisions of caste, class, religion, disability and sexuality. Therefore, researches done on gender and marginalisation must look at the

aspect of intersectionality that treats each socio-political division not as exclusive entities on their own but as mutually reinforcing and intersecting with each other.

The interface of gender and multiple aspects of marginalisation severely affect educational attainment on various levels. One of them is access to education, wherein access is defined in terms of enrolment, drop-out rates, out-of-school children, etc. For instance, in 2013–2014, the average drop-out rates for boys and girls at the secondary level were 17.2 per cent and 16.9 per cent, respectively, while for scheduled castes, it was more than 19 per cent and for scheduled tribes, more than 24 per cent (UDISE 2019).

The Government of India has provided various forms of arrangement to meet disparities across caste in education. Special schemes pertaining to school education of SC or ST children currently include; free supply of textbooks and stationery at all stages of school education, free uniforms to children in government approved hostels and Ashrams schools and in some states also for children in regular schools, free education at all levels, pre-matric stipends and scholarships to students at middle and high-school stage, special scheme of pre-matric scholarships for children of castes and families engaged in unclean occupations like scavenging, tanning and flaying of animal skin, girls and boys hostels for SC or ST students and lodging facilities in hostels of backward classes including SC or ST and Ashram schools for tribal children started with the intention of overcoming the difficulties of provision in remote regions to provide an environment, that is, more conducive. In addition, several states have instituted schemes such as scholarships to SC students studying in private schools, merit scholarships, attendance scholarships for girls, special school attendance prizes and remedial coaching classes, reimbursement of excursion expenses and provision of mid-day meals.

This section aims to identify trends within researches on education and gender that bring out the nuances of the effects of marginalisation on education along four axes of social stratification namely, caste, religion, sexuality and disability.

Gender and Caste

No discussion around gender, caste and education can be enough without acknowledging the invaluable contribution in literature by feminists, who theorised the interface of gender and caste to analyse the disempowering situations of subordination that women from

lower caste groups suffer from. “Dalit feminists have theorised the oppression of Dalit women in three ways: subject to caste oppression from upper caste, subject to class-based oppression from upper and middle classes and subject to patriarchal oppression at the hands of all men, including men from their own castes.” (Chakravarti, 2018) Further, they have constantly stressed on the institutionalisation of caste and gender politics in education, workplace, labour, etc., such that oppressive conditions on women and girls from such communities, and reiterated through such institutions.

Education of girls must be seen in the context of patriarchal structures of early marriage and motherhood and compulsory productive labour. It is important to consider that, education has primarily been considered a male cultural resource and education of women is contextualised along the lines of reproductive fertility and population control. Further, informal labour market is also caste and gender segmented. Dalit women and girls are located in the dual labour market—in agricultural and caste labour in rural areas and informal low paying sector in urban areas. Combined together, the realities of reproductive (domestic) or productive (wage) labour, shape education choices of girls, which are actually choices of their families and communities. Thus, larger structures intervene to maintain serious caste or class gender differences in education (Velaskar, 2004).

Various perspectives were considered by social scientists and researchers to understand social exclusion from education at the conjunction of gender and caste. One of the most prominent one is to look at exclusion through quantitative measures of access such as figures of enrolment, drop-out, out-of-school children, educational attainment, etc.

A study conducted by UNICEF (2014) on out-of-school children in South Asia spanning the countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka suggested that girls in rural areas particularly, those from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India also had higher rates of exclusion. School exclusion was considerably more prevalent among Muslim children and older children from socially disadvantaged groups. The average rate of school exclusion for primary school-age children from scheduled caste was about 5.6 per cent and for scheduled tribe was about 5.3 per cent in comparison to the national average of 3.6 per cent. Girls from scheduled castes had the highest rates of exclusion as about, 6.1 per cent of girls being out-of-school children.

In order to analyse educational disparities in its distribution across region, gender and caste groups in Maharashtra. Paranjape (2007) analysed data from NSSO tables of the 55th round for the population in the age group of seven and above separately for males and females in rural and urban Maharashtra for different social groups, viz., backward classes (BC)—SC or ST or OBC and non-backward classes. The study reported striking statistically significant unevenness in the distribution of education across region, gender and caste groups with SC or ST women, and girls belonging to rural areas being the most disadvantaged as compared to non-backward class urban men or boys. Further, the study reported how rural areas demonstrated acute social exclusion and inequality than urban areas. However, the inequality in educational attainment was much higher among women than men in both rural and urban regions.

Placing their study in the context of the hierarchical social stratification of caste and religion, Unni (2009) asked a pertinent question related to the freedom of boys and girls in accessing education of their choice in the backdrop of the institutional dominance of caste and religion. She tried to understand how caste and religion mediate gender differences in educational capabilities. The paper emphasised on the various ways in which caste, gender and religion were interwoven to create situations that significantly curtailed the freedom and motivation to access education. The author acknowledged how girls were categorised as disadvantageous on the basis of their gender, location (rural or urban) as well as their community (SC, ST, religious minorities), which created extremely restrictive and discriminating circumstances and further, closed doors on better opportunities in the labour market. The study explored the indicators for poor school attendance and poor educational attainments based on the institutional context and identified important factors such as unavailability or inaccessibility of school infrastructure, labour market discrimination and insecurities, and need for domestic work and child labour, early marriage and childbirth, high drop-out rates, low reading abilities had severely affected attendance and educational attainments of girls. The paper explained that high child labour instances in marginalised communities were reflective of the fact that Muslim and OBC households were more likely to be self-employed rather than be in salaried jobs. Such social realities therefore, created significant dents in the motivation to

attain education and send children to school. Looking through a gendered lens, issues such as reproductive fertility, marriage and childbirth were highly influenced by caste and religion, proving to be important determinants in achieving young women educational prospects that belonged to marginalised communities.

Joshi (2010) looked at factors such as enrolment, gender parity and drop-outs at different level of school education for children belonging to Scheduled Tribe or Adivasis. The data for the year 2006–07 published by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) was analysed for all states. While, acknowledging that the enrolment of ST children had undergone significantly up in the last three decades (1980–1981 to 2006–2007), the author viewed the gross enrolment ratio figures as not being reflective of the complex socio-political and economic picture that had significant regional disparities. For example, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for ST children at higher levels of schooling (Classes IX–XII) for the year 2006–2007 was about 19.18 per cent, i.e., 23.39 per cent for males and 14.72 per cent for females. The author raised pertinent questions on how attendance is neither guaranteed by enrolment nor is the dismal picture of attendance reflected by enrolment figures.

Analysis was also done along the axis of gender by using the Gender Parity Index (GPI). The GPI among students across elementary, primary and upper primary levels was below the GPI levels of all other categories of students, showing how ST girls were worst affected in terms of access to school education. The gender parity gap was more pronounced to Classes XI–XII in these states largely because of the increased contribution of females in domestic chores along with associated social issues. Further, the study emphasised on how ST girls were kept back as child labourers to participate in agriculture, thereby, affecting educational attainment.

Javalkar and Andersob (2014) looked at the significant difference in the drop-out rates of girls belonging to SC or ST communities, viz-a-viz, an overall drop-out rate of girls in the Bagalkot and Bijapur districts in Karnataka. About 17 per cent of SC or ST children dropped out of school in Bijapur and about 12 per cent of SC or ST girls dropped out in Bagalkot in transition from Classes VII to VIII in comparison to 5 per cent of all girls in Karnataka.

However, such statistical numbers only point towards a problem without much exploration of the systemic inequalities that inhibit a complete and comprehensive schooling experience

for girls of marginalised communities. In an attempt to investigate the multiple gendered and caste-based barriers that impede SC or ST girls' participation in schools, Bhagavatheeswaran et al. (2016) examined various socio-political, economical barriers as well as enablers to education among SC or ST adolescent girls in northern Karnataka. In-depth semi-structured interviews with girls, their parents or guardians and school administrative members and teachers led the authors to broadly classify the barriers into macro-societal, educational, inter-personal and individual factors. Macro-societal factors included an overwhelming belief within the larger community that places little or zero value on girls' education, owing to their inevitable domestic responsibilities and anxieties over control on female sexuality. It led to fears of ruining reputation or by participation in schooling after puberty, girls might fall in love and can choose the wrong path. Educational factors included poor educational levels (the research found that some girls did not know how to write their name, even after completing primary school), physical and verbal abuse on caste-related issues by teachers, lack of interest of teachers in teaching lessons, students being passed even when they were not understanding what was being taught and the lack of toilets for girls. Further, sexual harassment (understood as 'teasing' in the research) by other adolescent boys compounded the anxieties of adolescent girls for schooling. Interpersonal factors mainly included high prevalence of child marriage and discontinuing of education, lack of familial as well as community support and economic burdens. Personal factors included peer influence of dropping out and getting married as well as harboring low values of education. Beyond the specific individual barriers, broader patterns emerged, which raised questions about the limited agency of girls with regard to their educational choices particularly, in contexts, where girls' education was undervalued and they were considered as economic burdens or assets.

Multiple disadvantages of girls from SC or ST communities can also be exacerbated with a lack of representation of women belonging to marginalised communities in the position of power. Halim et al. (2016) hypothesised that living in a district, where higher proportion of SC or ST women represent in state legislatures may increase SC or ST girls' primary school completion, progression and performance. For this analysis, they linked three data sources; India Human Development Survey (2005), Election Commission of India (2000–2004) and Census of India (2001) projected in the 2003–2004 District Information Survey for Education (DISE)

dataset. The authors argued that owing to their intersectional positionalities, SC or ST women legislators can play a larger role than their non-SC or ST counterparts in reducing gender-caste gaps in primary schooling. Further, the authors believed that a SC or ST woman legislator is likely to maintain a stronger sense of solidarity with members of SC or ST and especially, with SC or ST girls and women, and to be most supportive of policies benefiting SC or ST girls. Testing this hypothesis, author found a positive correlation between positive representation in the state legislatures of SC or ST women and grade completion of SC or ST girls. SC or ST women political representation was more strongly associated with their reading and overall performance than it was for non-scheduled and scheduled boys. At the same time, it was found that non-SC or ST women legislatures were not associated with SC or ST or non-SC or ST children's grade completion and age-appropriate progression. This was an interesting insight into the hegemonic caste relations that maintained the subordinate position of women and girls from SC or ST communities, and pointed towards the fact that only gendered representations are not enough but an intersectional, inclusive representation of people would combat subordination of marginalised communities.

Paik (2009) observed in her study the psychologically crippling and inerasable experiences of Dalit girls in formal institutions of education through subjective experiences of their schooling. She argued that, Dalit girls were subjected to a certain discipline, policing, control and regulation by teachers, and communities that were determined through power dynamics of caste and gender. Through in-depth interviews that brought forth the subjective experiences of schooling, the study made visible the covert as well as the overt manners in which caste and gender manifested itself in classrooms and schools. The author spoke of how classrooms became sites of creating caste inequalities that determined capability and rank of the students based on caste thereby, making Dalit girls vulnerable to hostile environment in the schools. Caste discrimination took many forms, one of which was the reprimanding and violent attitude of teachers (overwhelmingly, upper-castes) towards Dalit students. In that context, the author noted how Dalit girls, who were first generation learners were particularly vulnerable because they had to fight both gender and caste oppression. Other discriminatory attitudes brought out by the study were reprimanding for dirty uniforms, dismissing students and the value of education for them,

openly mocking them for belonging to lower castes, etc. Furthermore, the choice of school demonstrates caste and gender inequalities as well for Dalit girls were encouraged to settle for poor educational experiences in municipal and government schools. The study brought out the robust ways in which caste and gender dynamics interweave with one another to create discriminating situations for Dalit girls in their endeavour to achieve education. In her work, the author critiqued how educational research has treated girls in schools as a homogenous category, not digging deeper to bring forth the salient ways in which caste manifests along with gender.

The work by Ramachandran and Naorem (2013) on exclusion of SC and tribal children in schools through a six-state qualitative study reiterated the findings of researches discussed above on the lines of teacher behaviour, sitting arrangements in classrooms, overt discriminatory practices and mockery, etc. It further brings out nuances of caste-based practices in schemes such as Mid-day Meals (MDMs), participation in school activities, access to water as well as with respect to particular tasks assigned by teachers. The study illustrates examples of discriminatory sitting practices in MDM, where students would sit according to their caste, gender and religion. Further, in some states upper-caste students would wash their utensils and drink water before lower-caste students. Students belonging to SC or ST communities were not allowed to touch hand pumps and water pitchers in some states, and upper-caste children were needed to pump water for them. Tasks of cleaning the school premises as well as toilets were most often than not, delegated to girls belonging to SC or ST communities, thereby, demonstrating perpetuation of caste practices within the educational structures.

The study by Srivastava (2017) examined the performance of the Ashram schools at the primary stage in Chhattisgarh from a gender perspective. Textbooks were examined to see the gender representation and assess the understanding of children about the concepts in the disciplines of Language, Mathematics and Environment Studies textbooks. The study reported a lack of definite guidelines regarding responsibilities of officials for the smooth functioning of the residential schools. Infrastructural facilities provided at the hostel were also not fully functional. The study has helped in understanding the performance of the Ashram schools in Chhattisgarh by gathering perspective of students, parents and other stakeholders in the Ashram school management.

To conclude, findings of the study revealed that rural SC or ST women and girls were at the most disadvantage stage as compared to non-backward class urban men or boys. Girls in rural areas particularly, those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India have higher rates of exclusion. Studies show that the multiple disadvantages of girls from SC or ST communities can also be exacerbated with a lack of representation of women belonging to marginalised communities in the positions of power.

The wide gaps and disparities that mark the educational attainment of Muslim is a matter of a particular concern. Hasan and Menon (2004) pointed out in a survey conducted in 40 districts of 12 states of India, where roughly 60 per cent of Muslim women reported themselves to be illiterate and the school enrolment rate for Muslim girls was 40–66 per cent. The proportion of illiterate Muslim women was substantially higher in the rural north than it was in the rest of India. Less than 17 per cent of Muslim women enrolled in schools, completed eight years of schooling and less than 10 per cent completed higher secondary schooling, which was below the national average. The educational status of Muslim girls in north India was particularly abysmal, resulting in substantially lower enrolment rates at the middle school and higher secondary school levels (4.58 per cent and 4.75 per cent, respectively as opposed to the national average of 17.86 per cent and 11.42 per cent, respectively). The authors pointed out that, contrary to prevalent stereotypes about forces of conservatism being the cause for low level of education among Muslim girls. Financial constraints outweigh parental opposition for girls continuing their studies. In the north zone, financial constraints were much more important for Muslims than they were for Hindus, underlining once again the poverty of Muslim households in this part of the country, and this provided the most powerful explanation for the poor levels of women education in the north as a whole. The south presented a different picture. Girls belonging to lower socio-economic classes had as good a prospect of continuing in school as girls from higher classes. This was because of higher levels of state investment in education, a larger percentage of female teachers, extensive network of roads and good transport facilities that enabled easy access to schools. Thus, regional variations in educational attainment among Muslim girls needed to be understood against the socio-political and economic backdrop of the region itself.

In yet another study, Hasan and Menon (2005) broke the myth of inherent 'conservatism' of the Muslim community as the reason for the 'low-educational status' of 'Muslim girls' and drew attention to a plurality of social forces and state policies that shaped their educational experiences. The study attempted to capture the 'micro experiences on the ground' through a comparison of five cities, namely, Delhi, Aligarh, Hyderabad, Calcutta and Calicut. The authors argued that the educational disparity of Muslim girls was not rooted in religion but was a result of socio-economic deprivation, state neglect and increasing influence of communal politics. Low educational attainment of Muslim boys, early marriage and absence of a sizeable middle class that would use education to enter professional services were explained as community-specific factors shaping education of girls in the community.

The SACHAR Committee Report (2006) put forth the general issues based on identity, security and equity that the Muslim community faced, which further, compounded the difficulties faced by Muslim girls in achieving good-quality education. It included the feeling of insecurities coupled with traditional community and religious orthodoxies have grave, gendered impacts on women and girls' mobility on their education. The report elucidated problems of low enrolment rates, low levels of retention and high dropout rates that were primarily linked to reasons such as abject poverty and financial constraints, low access to schools, low quality of education in government schools in the vicinity, the poor state of Urdu medium schools and cultural and religious stereotypes regarding girls' education. Furthermore, security concerns in the public spaces and transport curb many girls' access to 'mainstream' schools located at a distance from their residence or result in high dropout cases, when the girls reach upper primary and middle schools. The absence of hostel facilities in school compounded with religious discrimination in availing residential facilities, made it even more difficult for girls to access quality education in far-off schools. The government schools that were accessible to such families both financially and geographically, delivered extremely low-quality education. Parents were therefore, left with no option than to send their children to Muslim denominational institutions. Gender stereotypes and bias ensured that boys were preferred over girls for private institutions, and cultural conventions and customs define Urdu education as 'culturally appropriate' for girls. Since, systemic discriminatory

policies against Urdu learning in government schools placed a major roadblock in accessing government and state schools. Madrasas became the only resource through which girls were educated.

Nuna (2003) evaluated Area Intensive Programme, a centrally sponsored Government of India scheme, with a view to provide basic educational infrastructure and facilities in areas of educationally backward minorities' concentration that did not had adequate provisions for elementary and secondary education. It was found that the efforts of state government in increasing enrolment had shown very marginal progress except in Kerala and Karnataka. One of the objectives of the scheme was to increase the participation of Muslim girls in the vocational, science, engineering and commerce courses that remained unfulfilled.

Nuna (2011) further, identified similar impeding factors in attaining secondary education in her study on barriers in secondary education (Classes IX and X) of Muslim girls in four districts of Uttar Pradesh. Some of the barriers that emerged from the analysis of household level data were lack of access to secondary stage schooling facilities, expensive cost of secondary education, socio-religious beliefs that placed less value on girls' education, familial and community discouragement and opposition, gender bias in parental attitudes towards the education of daughters and sons, non-awareness of educational development programmes and schemes particularly, targeting girls, etc.

Another study conducted by Jaireth (2011) analysed the curriculum of *Maktabs* and *Madrasas* from a gender perspective. It was found that in southern India, the *Madrasa* education was of diverse nature. In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, few *Madrasas* were also managing primary schools, which were covered by SSA. These institutions were receiving all the benefits of SSA, viz., mid-day meal, free uniform, free textbooks and teacher's salaries. In Kerala, besides the Arabic and English languages, students were also skilled in local language, i.e., Malayalam. In Kerala, there was co-educational *Madrasas*, especially in the Arabic colleges, while in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, separate Madrasas existed for boys and girls. There were separate girls' and boys' Islamic institutions in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Both men and women teachers taught in Kerala *Madrasas* and Arabic colleges, while in other two southern states, women teachers were nearly absent in boys' *Madrasas*. There were no Arabic colleges in Karnataka and Andhra

Pradesh as in Kerala. Few men teachers were also employed in girls' *Madrasas* for teaching higher Arabic literature for which women teachers were rarely found. The Malappuram *Madrasa* had highly developed infrastructure to the level of advanced institutions with computer technologies and subjects like Islamic banking, etc., opted by both girls and boys.

Gupta (2011) attempted to understand the process of creation of religious and logical identity in the context of Muslim girls. It was observed in the study that, religious and sexual identities work together under social pressure. The study also showed how religious and sexual identities played a role in the context of educational experiences and life desires of Muslim girls.

Bassi (2020) brought out the complex interplay of gender and religion in circumscribing the realm of education for girls. Placing itself in the historical context of girls' education in Punjab, the study demonstrated how religious education became intertwined with girls' education. While, such a prospect resulted in fostering favourable conditions concerning girls attaining education, the study analysed how such religious education created 'obedient' and 'religiously oriented' Sikh women, who may further enrich the Sikh family, its values and customs properly. The article demonstrated how religious socialisation happens through certain school processes and practices, generating religious identities that are mediated through notions of gender. The study provided an interesting case study for understanding how education for girls is perceived, visualised and the factors that allow girls to access education.

The above discussion indicates several dimensions of low participation of girls belonging to the Muslim community in the education system. The reasons were manifold, which ranged from prevalent stereotypes and financial constraints, inadequate access to schools, low quality of education in government schools in the vicinity, the dismal state of Urdu Medium schools, stereotyping based girls' education, early marriage and absence of a sizeable middle class that would use education to enter professional services.

Sexuality and Education

The identity of an individual is often determined by the moral dictates and judgments of the society. However, individuals who seek to challenge these with their personalities, sexual orientations

and inclinations are often shunned, abandoned and treated as the other. Gender identity and sexual orientations are often so stringently boxed up in the binaries of men and women, that any gender expression beyond the binary invites immediate contempt from society. Such as the case with transgender persons, who have to wage a regular battle to have their identity acknowledged.

Leading lives in fringes, they regularly face discrimination in workplaces, jobs, public places and services such as health and education. The abominable state of the transgender persons worsened with the society viewing and treating them as 'different' people not capable of fitting into the prescribed sanctimonious structure of the family in spite of having legal acknowledgement and sanction.

Further, in the Indian context, one has to be cognizant of the intersections of caste, class, gender and sexuality that create multiple disadvantages for sexual minorities. Discrimination on the basis of class, gender and sexuality not only limits the choice of profession and the possibility of economic advancement but also impedes access to education and information about lifestyle choices of sexuality of minorities. Census, 2011 data revealed for the first time the low literacy level in the transgender community, just 46 per cent, compared to 74 per cent literacy in the general population. According to Asmy and Nagaraj (2015), this may be due to the inability of the educational structure to facilitate skill acquisition, especially at the secondary level. In India, as the children move to the higher classes, the learning gap increases, especially among weaker sections and disadvantaged groups, which either results in higher drop out or creation of an unproductive workforce with little skill to sustain in the job market. The authors argue for affirmative action and rigorous sensitivity programmes to ensure higher participation in educational institutions and mechanisms.

Mitra (2017) discussed that othering of transgender people in itself is a human right violation that impedes in achieving complete self-expression and fulfillment of basic rights. With respect to education, the study identified major problem areas such as exclusion from educational opportunities till 2004, poverty stemming out of the fact that transgender persons are forced to resort to begging, sex-work or socio-cultural rituals to make their ends meet, constant systemic violence in forms of overt discrimination, corrosive language and deliberate exclusionary

practices, lack of access to restrooms, etc. The author recommended to future teachers to acknowledge how harassment and disrespect in terms of sexual orientation is one of the root causes of lower literacy rate in the transgender community as well as to accept and be empathetic towards transgender students.

In a study determining the various forms of educational discrimination faced by transgender people in Tamil Nadu, Sathya and Thasian (2015) found that, out of 24 sampled transgender persons, only 50 per cent of the respondents got primary education and 4 per cent got higher secondary, 67 per cent of the respondents were doing sex work and 25 per cent were involved in begging work. The monthly income of 54 per cent of the respondents was ₹5000–10000 and 46 per cent got below ₹5000. Further, the study brings-forth the apathy of educational institutions, people in positions of authority and teachers, who do not have much knowledge (or sensitivity) about transgender and transgender behaviour, lack to identify transgender students or transsexual behaviour person. None of the schools of the respondents reported giving counselling to transgender students about their changing gender and sexuality. Furthermore, many transgender students were forced to experience sexual harassment by their school teachers, creating hostile and unsafe environments that force them to discontinue their education and create fear to appear in higher education. The author suggested introducing a comprehensive sexuality education programme at various learning levels.

In her study among transgender communities in Kolkata, Sinha (2016) found that most of the respondents were uneducated, since they had been disowned by their families' right at birth. On the other hand, those who were being brought up as males till the age of 14 or 15 got a chance to attend high schools. Such an observation threw light on the way access to education was mediated through hegemonic institutions of gender and sexuality. The study also found that, a few individuals were transgender who had a progressive family and were fortunate enough to attend college.

Arora (2019) also reported instances of abuse, verbal or otherwise in case of transgender persons and their experiences of feeling like a social outcast was recorded in the study. The abuse they suffered was from both the students as well as the teachers, which ultimately led to absenteeism, poor academic performance and even school dropouts. Thus, the school became an unsafe

space that compounded the vulnerability which transgender people face.

Very few studies are in the area of sexuality and education as different sexual orientations and inclinations are often shunned, abandoned and not treated as normal. This forced exclusion led transgender students to quit education and thereby, limit their career opportunities. Further, the education structures at the secondary stage did not provide them such skills, which will make them economically independent. This exclusion led to poverty and the transgender persons resort to begging, sex-work or socio-cultural rituals to make their ends meet. There is constant systemic violence in forms of discrimination, corrosive language and deliberate exclusionary practices, lack of access to restrooms, etc. The people in positions of authority and teachers are still not sensitive to the needs of transgender students. Furthermore, many transgender students were forced to experience sexual harassment by their school teachers and students, creating hostile and unsafe environments that force them to discontinue their education and create fear to continue their higher education.

Gender, Disability and Education

In India, girls with disabilities are at the intersection of various forms of discrimination. Parental prejudice surrounding their ability and value, continue to perpetuate the view that educating them is futile. Further, girls with disabilities are not considered an educational investment because they will not be able to participate in the labour economy effectively. As a result, 68 per cent of girls with disabilities are not in school. Girls with disabilities have a lower enrolment rate in school than boys with disabilities across many sectors: urban versus rural, by type of schooling, by level of the schooling and in primary versus secondary schooling (Kohama, 2012).

Hans (2015) skillfully intersected in her book three concepts—disability, gender and power. It highlights how each of these different concepts can traverse across and cast an irrefutable impact on each other. It probed into diverse elements such as geographical and socio-cultural differences that had a profound effect on the physical and mental health of women with disabilities which further, escalates their invisibility. She strongly emphasised the need to shift the focus from highlighting the victimisation of women with disabilities to the need to accord recognition to women agencies. She

took initiatives to develop deeper into understanding the discourse of feminist disability and pointed out the need for restrictive power which strongly advocates prevention of violence since, in most cases violence was manifested in and through the power structure.

According to Census (2011), about 61 per cent of Children with Disabilities (CwDs) aged between 5 and 19 years were attending an educational institution, compared to the overall figure of 71 per cent. About 12 of CwDs dropped out of school, which was comparable with the overall percentage of dropouts among all children. About 27 per cent of CwDs never attended any educational institution as opposed to the overall figure of 17 per cent, when the entire child population was taken into account. This clearly demonstrated the state of marginalisation of disabled children with respect to their education.

The condition worsens when a gender lens is employed to understand the barriers faced by CwDs to access education. The girls with disabilities face multiple, layered and structural obstacles to access education in spite of the Right of children to free and compulsory Education (RTE Act, 2009) which ensures quality education to all children. They are largely invisible within the discourse of Education for All (EfA) and such forced invisibility poses a major challenge for girls with disabilities. Adding a gender dimension, the analysis of 51 countries included in the World Bank and WHO report showed that 50.6 per cent of males with disabilities had completed primary school as compared to 61.3 per cent of males without disabilities. Females with disabilities reported 41.7 per cent primary school completion compared to 52.9 per cent of females without disabilities, a difference of 8.9 per cent between males and females with disabilities (World Report on Disability, WHO, 2011).

In an article highlighting the inequalities in education with respect to women in India, Dawn (2016) underlines the multiple factors that affect access to education for girls with disabilities. Some of which being the type of disability, the socio-economic status of their family, race and ethnicity, their area of residence (rural or urban). She further accentuated in her article the significant hurdle that poverty causes for girls with disability. For families with scant resources, they were likely to prioritise the male counterparts of the girls with disabilities in terms of basic necessities of food, medicines, aid equipment and education. This was further, underscored by the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011), which stated that the

correlation between low educational outcomes and disability was stronger than any other marginalising characteristics.

A barrier-free school environment is pivotal for realising the goals of inclusion. One of the barriers to such an education is accessibility. Physical accessibility refers to facilities that provide easy access not only till the school building but also, within the school as well as facilities such as toilets that allow the child to participate in their education in a wholesome manner. Yet, it is access that becomes the biggest barrier in case of children with disability. According to the research done by Bakhshi et al. (2017), where they interrogated the causes of exclusion of children with disabilities in educational institutions, persons with multiple disabilities were 1.82 times less likely to have access, while persons with a severe disability were 1.79 times less likely to have access to high school compared to non-disabled persons.

Physical accessibility proves to be a major challenge particularly for girls with disabilities. Large distances between home and school along with poor commuting facilities generally stand between education and CwDs especially, in rural India but it is further compounded by gender issues such as the fear of sexual violence on girls with disabilities, creating public spheres a hostile space for them. This deters parents from sending their girls to schools far away from their residential places.

According to the Secondary Education State Report Cards, Provisional (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016–17), accessible toilets were provided in less than about 20 per cent schools across 12 states. This was further, compounded in case of girls with disabilities, where lack of proper toilet facilities and other infrastructural support to maintain menstrual hygiene along with cultural conditioning, lack of hygiene knowledge, inability to change sanitary napkins, need for privacy and logistic support in terms of trained female staff is needed by girl children with disabilities that lead to high rates of drop-outs among them (Women with Disabilities India Network, 2019).

Another aspect of access to education for CwDs are aids and appliances. According to research by Limaye (2016), the government of India has many schemes, policies, programme for children with different disabilities but such facilities do not reach many families especially, those who stay in villages or remote areas. Research suggested that, aids and appliances were concentrated in urban areas. Most of the appliances distributed however, were rendered

non-functional and were mostly discarded. Even in this aspect, however, a striking gender disparity was noticed. According to the 42nd Annual report in 2014–2015 by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), out of 70,765 beneficiaries, a mere 27.59 percentage are girls. This ratio was slightly better in the North-eastern states compared to the rest of the country. Even in the case of ADIP camps conducted in schools through SSA, the percentage of beneficiaries was around 36.

Other than accessibility, Women with Disabilities India Network recognised the physical, psychological and sexual violence against girls with disabilities within families as well as public institutions as one of the biggest hurdles in the way to education. Further, institutional neglect and abuse amplifies the situation. It was also noted that, abuse towards disabled children especially girls, is less likely to be investigated or persecuted, which means abusers know it is easier to escape consequences even if the abuse is discovered (Women with Disabilities India Network, 2019).

The studies revealed that girls with disabilities face multiple, layered and structural obstacles to access education in spite of the Right to Education Act, 2009 that ensure quality education for all children. Further, institutional neglect and abuse amplified the situation. It was also noted that, abuse towards disabled children especially, girls was less likely to be investigated or persecuted. However, the new National Education Policy, 2020 has given sufficient emphasis on the need to accelerate and facilitate quality education for children with disabilities including those with learning disabilities. While, NEP 2020 aims to provide quality education to disabled students at par with other students, it also underscores the importance of having special educators, who would not just be proficient with their subject but be trained sufficiently to cater to the individual demands of disabled children.

3. Gender and Curriculum

Curriculum provides a systematic structure through which knowledge is disseminated and acquired by learner with the change in educational objectives. There has been change in the meaning and understanding of the term curriculum. It is considered as the heart of any learning institution. Earlier, it was limited to only classroom teaching. Now, it refers to the overall learning experiences provided to the students inside as well as outside of a classroom for their mental, social, emotional and psychological development

(Jaiswal, 2020). For the purpose of the present trend analysis, the researchers have considered papers from diverse point of views, including the studies, which have highlighted feminist pedagogy and its role in transacting the curriculum.

A discussion on gender and curriculum in India, however, demands a look into how various National Curriculum Frameworks have addressed the nuances of gender in curriculum. The National Curriculum Framework, 1975 stipulated the 10+2+3 system, wherein the first 10 years would comprise a common curriculum for all students. This resolved the debate on differentiation of curricula, at least at the policy level and underlined the central argument of the Education Commission that adopting science and technology education was essential for social and economic transformation. While doing so, however, it laid the basis for linking girls' and women's education to the instrumentalist vision of development in modernising the nation-state. This was in keeping with the explicitly instrumentalist approach to women education evident in the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969–74), where the benefits of women education were linked to lower fertility and improved nutritional status of children.

National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework (1988), devoted a special section on Curricular Concerns, which addresses equality of education and opportunity, wherein it had been specifically stated that there is a need to remove disparities and equalise education opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those, who have been denied equality so far, a concern later reflected in the NPE, 1986. The curriculum further elaborated by stating that, "to promote equality it is necessary to provide for equal opportunity to all not only in access but also in the condition for success". In post NPE (1986) however, education was seen as an agent of social change and textbooks were revised at various levels following the NPE's recommendations. The NCERT also brought out a series of teachers' handbooks to address gender equality in classrooms through curricular transactions. NPE Review Committee pointed out that although, the NPE (1986) gave prominent space to education for gender equality, there was no reference to gender in the entire chapter on the 'Content and Process of School Education' except for a mention that 'equality of the sexes' is to be one of the ten core curriculum areas. The review committee therefore, recommended that gender equality be built in the very essence of curriculum (including hidden

curriculum) instead of following a simple approach of ‘adding’ concerns of gender inequality (Position paper on Gender Issues in Education, 2006).

National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2000 addressed gender bias in curriculum formation but in a limited manner. This is evident in the way in which the section on ‘Education of Girls’ appeared under the broad heading of ‘Education for Social Cohesion’ (rather than, say, change or progress) in the framework document. The section provides an abstract statement on gender equality and then, quickly reduces itself to emphasise on gender-specific roles. “There is a need to develop and implement gender inclusive and gender sensitive curricular strategies to nurture a generation of girls and boys, who are equally competent and are sensitive to one another and grow up in a caring and sharing mode as equals and not as adversaries” (NCFSE, 2000). Thus, the NCF was simply accommodating the “idea of equality within the pervasive instrumentalist view of education for girls and women, in which women were seen primarily as reproducers” (Position Paper on Gender Issues in Education, 2006).

As part of development of National Curriculum Framework (2005), Position Paper on *Gender Issues in Education* was brought out. The paper stated that, gender need to be portrayed in curriculum in a manner that does away with biases, sexism and stereotypes. It further argues how creating a ‘quantitative equality’ in the curriculum by simply depicting ‘role reversals’ of men and women is not the right approach. It advocates that for gender to be depicted properly, the curriculum cannot continue perpetuating masculine and feminine traditional roles but need to be repositioned with respect to gender and how it operates in society. The Position paper underscored the fact that, a gender-just and empowering curriculum should have the potential to enable students to critically engage and challenge unquestioned forms of knowledge about gender identities. It underscored the possibility of integration of gender in the curriculum, without sidelining gender issues as ‘marginal’ and ‘incidental’. The section on *Gender and Curriculum*, looked at how different research works have addressed the issue through various perspectives and how they pave model ways of new researches around education needed to be taken up in future.

International studies have focused much on how subjects, their pedagogical teaching-learning processes and the choice of subjects

by students were entrenched in gender dynamics. Weinrich (1981) reported that, 13–14 year old pupils rated woodwork followed by physics and chemistry as the most masculine subjects and cookery followed by typing, english and french as the most feminine. Similarly, Archer and Freedman (1989) found that, A-level students rated engineering, physics, chemistry and mathematics as masculine and english, biology, psychology, french and sociology as feminine. However, a later study by Archer and MacRae (1991) showed that, children aged 10–11 showed less pronounced stereotyping of school subjects than was evident in the earlier studies, in that only three subjects namely, Craft Design and Technology (CDT), Information Technology (IT) and physics were rated as significantly masculine. While, there has been considerable investigation of subject stereotyping by pupils and while there is also evidence of considerable stereotyping of school subjects by teachers (Gilborn, 1990; Lightbody, 1994). There has been rather less investigation of gender differences in the liking of different school subjects though, it is usually presumed that gender differences in liking reflect gender linked subject stereotypes. In her study of third-year pupils at 10 co-educational schools, Archer (1992) found that girls aged between 10 and 15 reported liking most the three subjects usually regarded as stereotypically ‘masculine’: mathematics, science and games. On the other hand, Lawrie and Brown (1992) indicated that in their study of 248 fourth-year pupils at both single and mixed-sex schools, boys were significantly more likely to report liking chemistry and games than were girls.

From a feminist critical stand point, Raveendran and Chunawala (2015) challenged the mainstream, positivistic scientific discourses that perpetuate an overwhelming masculine and patriarchal point of view. The paper argued the way, science curriculum documents and the NCERT Class XII textbook reflect the masculine, positivist discourse of science.

The Central Advisory Board of Education Committee (2011) critiqued the feminisation of certain subjects based on the patriarchal concept of masculine objectivity and feminine subjectivity. It stated, “instead of playing into society’s expectations, schools should play a reformatory role”. Similarly, topics like reproductive health and courses like food processing should be offered to both sexes and should be combined with inputs on right to education and empowerment. Knowledge construction needs to be interrogated from the purview of the rights of women.

Textbooks form the primary basis of school curriculum and therefore, the portrayal of women in textbooks is of concern. Blumberg (2008) argued that gender bias in textbooks is an, “invisible obstacle on the road to gender equality in education— an obstacle camouflaged by taken-for-granted stereotypes about gender roles (IBID)”. Through, case studies across the world, it was found that such a phenomenon was nearly, universal. Blumberg thus, argued that combating gender bias in textbooks need to be given priority since, textbooks occupy more than 80 per cent of the classroom time. Further, such biases further reiterate the traditional roles of gender, which is socially and culturally sanctioned and remains ‘hidden in plain sight’ for the content of school textbooks.

Department of Gender Studies (DGS), NCERT (1980) had developed a number of handbooks for teachers at various stage of school education. These handbooks primarily highlighted status of women and women’s equality and empowerment through curriculum. Thereafter, periodic gender auditing of textbooks was also done, wherein school textbooks of various states as well as those of NCERT were reviewed from a gender perspective. Various processes through which gender bias manifested in learning materials was elucidated as invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance, and selectivity in training material for Teacher Educators on Gender Equality and Empowerment (2013). Textbooks selective interpretation of events primarily, focused on dominant narratives and excluded alternative perspectives and experiences thereby, eluded the complexity of the said events.

Department of Gender Studies (2014) analysed NCERT textbooks of Environmental Studies, Maths, English and Hindi at the primary stage of Classes I to V. It was noticed that, some of the content of textbooks questioned social practices like child marriage, dowry and involvement of men or boys in sharing household chores, child-rearing responsibilities and caring practices. The teacher’s pages in the textbooks encouraged the creation of an inclusive classroom environment through group work, project work, discussion and learning together. However, even though, all the textbooks attempted to highlight gender concerns, there were certain elements of stereotypes presented in some textbooks. Men were shown in diverse professions, whereas women were mainly shown as home makers, teachers, nurses and doctors.

In another report (DGS, 2017) on Textbook Analysis at the Elementary stage of NCERT and for the states of Assam, Bihar,

Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Manipur and Rajasthan, it was noted that most of the state textbooks reflected the various forms of biases mentioned above. Women were relegated to feminine jobs and responsibilities that cater more to care-work and nurturing, while men were associated with masculine jobs and opportunities. Women contribution in various different fields for example, freedom struggle or as social reformers were mentioned albeit in a limited manner. Further, men and women were shown in relational category as father, mother, brother, sister, son and daughter, and as uncle and aunt.

Gender-based analysis of twelve NCERT textbooks of Classes I to V by Dawar and Anand (2017) concluded that textbook writers need to be careful not just about having equal representation on the cover of the textbooks but also inside the chapters. Females not only need to be represented more but their portrayal need to be in sync with the contemporary roles that they have been taking up in our social set-up. Such representation and portrayal of both females and males can help young children to get exposure to and identify role models for them. It is important to realise that, if we need to change the portrayal of females in textbooks, the portrayal of men need to be changed. They both are inter-connected and none of them should be shown as subordinate to the other. Since, students already enter the school with pre-conceived notions of gender-roles for women and men, textbooks in schools must help to challenge those stereotypical images in their young impressionable minds. However, one need to be critical of such techniques since, a simple role-reversal is insufficient to challenge gender biases. Equitable and gender-just curricula need to factor in the ways in which gender works.

Bhog (2002) pointed out that, in her review of 75 lessons in the language textbooks barely, three made a genuine attempt to represent women in a different light. One of the example is the lesson on Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, whose story provided enormous potential for challenging traditional stereotypes of women. However, Bhog showed that, while qualities such as 'courage', 'strength' and 'struggle' were valued highly in narratives of 'great men'. Laxmibai was depicted as 'a great rider and fighter' but nonetheless 'vulnerable', 'prone to depression' (at the death of her husband and son) and 'doubt'. The analysis of textbooks suggested that, school knowledge plays an important role in reinforcing and 'naturalising' identities of male and female. They are based on

distorted portrayals of gender roles that bear little resemblance to the diversity of roles that women play in society and they offer poor role models for girls.

Bhog (2010) pushed further, the understanding of gender and curriculum in textbook with a certain domain of enquiry related to the way current policy debate remains in contrast with earlier historical debates, when educated girls and women were tied to face the challenge in social order or in majority of instances, in conserving it. The study observed that, these textbooks served as an important vehicle for the promotion of national and regional values and gender was constructed only as a trope for defining these values. It was noted that, in the regional-language textbooks, the nation was represented in metaphors of idealised womanhood and the language itself was identified with essential notion of purity and chastity of women. With regards to the English-language textbooks, the study concluded that accessibility to English itself was gendered since, women and girls had only limited access to this subject. The construction of gender in these textbooks as the study notes, was within the ambit or framework of the moral and political values that define upper-caste modern Indian identity and did not relate to the live realities of the learners themselves (Bhog et al., 2012). The school played a key role in creating and normalising gendered norms, values as well as gendered understanding of the nation and concepts like tradition and modernity. It attempted to interrogate from a feminist lens the discipline of geography as is taught in schools to understand exactly, which domains were explored and which were marginalised in the normative understanding of geography.

Chauhan (2012) brought out interesting conjunction between institutions of gender, communalism, and education in their function of constructing the feminine identity of girls and women. The research aimed to understand how education plays a pivotal role in the gender socialisation process by cementing gender identities, norms and values through the curriculum being taught at school. The study analysed school textbooks of Saraswati Shishu Mandir School from Nursery to Class V and then their varied components till Class VII. It grappled with gendered representations in textbooks and the normative, patriarchal imagery it created for young girls and women about their identities and functions.

A report of the committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education (2005) on 'Regulatory Mechanism for Textbooks and

Parallel Textbooks taught in schools outside the Government System' examined a selected sample of textbooks in Social Science and Hindi, regional languages and English in the state of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Besides other parameters, the textbooks were also analysed from a gender perspective. The West Bengal report mentions the neglect of the representation of women. The Kerala report criticised the use of the term 'men' and suggested to include women as men outnumbered the women in visuals. The Maharashtra report highlighted that Geography books do not contain content on women's labour. History did not portray the courage, accomplishments and social participation of women in historical processes. There is a need to consciously engage students with women's struggles against patriarchy. The sex segregated curricula in *Madrasas* taught women their domestic roles, while there is no mention of men's domestic responsibilities. Such literature advised Muslim girls to follow proper etiquette and moral virtues, essentially dictating what a Muslim woman should be like.

Jeffrey et al. (2004) demonstrated how a particular Urdu course book named *Ladkiyon ka Islami Course*, gives emphasis to the domestic competence of a woman, along with defining respectable women as demure, controlled and distancing from 'lower-order'. Such gendered anecdotes assure a proper condition according to religious and cultural conventions, leaving little or no space for gender equity to feature. However, the study also points out that the choice of being educated in *Madrasas* is a matter of inadequate alternative educational provisions, especially in rural and poor urban areas, where *Madrasas* acquire significance in Muslim formal education.

To conclude, studies showed that textbooks serve as an important vehicle for the promotion of national and regional values and that gender is constructed only as a trope for defining these values. Some studies have shown that even though the textbooks had attempted to highlight gender concerns, there were certain elements of stereotypes present in some textbooks. Most of the state textbooks reflected the various forms of biases, wherein women are relegated to feminine jobs and responsibilities that cater more to care-work and nurturing, while men are associated with masculine jobs and opportunities.

4. Education and Gendered Socialisation

Schools have been understood by sociologists as site of social reproduction and socialisation of children into members of the society. Such a socialising process also fits children into the binaries of gender and perpetuates the gendered norms and gender constructs prevalent in that particular society. The students then, become gendered individually, in a way that they internalise gendered ways of living, norms and limitations, stereotypes and even the hierarchy of gender. Thus, it is imperative to see how aspects of school education mold each child into the socially sanctioned notions of femininity and masculinity, and how that, in turn, affect their educational access, retention, participation and outcomes. On the other hand, gendered interactions and beliefs also shape the educational experience of the child as well as their parent's choices of enrolment, continuation, discontinuation, absenteeism of education.

Kumar (2010) urged that girl's education should be looked at in a far wider and more complex perspective than what is generally applied with reference to social policy, goals specific to education such as closing the 'gender gap' or giving equal opportunity to the girl child. The look at how gendered socialisation begins from the family itself in the sense that how the family perceives the child, and the child involvement to family's work and livelihood. He argued that for a girl child, her involvement in the family's livelihood through domestic chores is rendered invisible, which ultimately contributes to the social invisibility of the girl child. A girl child thus, internalises self-denial and the restrictions and regulations that come with her gender. Expected educational outcomes lie in sharp contrast to the socialisation of girls as submissive and docile subjects, and whose goals are defined by the social structure to the marriage and motherhood. Its emotional content and the reasoning on which it is based, the agenda of cultural imprinting on girls' minds sharply contradicts the objectives of child-centered education.

Kumar (2017) further, noted that educational policies and the push for universal elementary education from the state are based on the understanding of equality of sexes as being equivalent to a balanced presence of girls and boys in the classroom. The subjective experiences of boys and girls and how they differently perceive the school, the teacher, the pedagogy, etc., were left out

of state documents. Thus, he argued, state policies need to bring into the factor of girlhood, while designing policies for effective educational attainment for girls.

Manjrekar (2013) attempted to ethnographically capture the process of socialisation of children into the ideal of labour in the modern nation through examination of one lesson in a textbook for Class IV and its transaction in a classroom in an urban government primary school in a city in Gujarat. It exemplifies the complex ways in which gender, class and nation interweave in dominant constructions of what constitutes 'work', and helps us understand the significance of these constructions to the life world of children. Interviews of children revealed that the participation of children in the discussions around the chapter titled '*Kaun Kya Banega*' was informed by their social experiences. Such insights from school ethnographies can enhance our understanding of how identities are critical to the sociology of childhood within the modern nation-state as well as guide alternate framework to address the challenges of more socially inclusive school curriculum and pedagogy.

MacDougall (2005) explored the social aesthetics of Doon School in Dehradun to explore the ways, masculinities are constructed and preserved. He looked at the ways, activities—educational or co-curricular had an objective of subverting the colonial image of the Bengali effeminate man and a new masculine Indian was to be built upon a regime of bodily practices borrowed from British schools, not only on playing field but in the dormitory, classroom, assembly hall and dining hall. The boys boarding school emphasised on their physicality, physical actions and gestures, appropriate clothes, the importance of acting boldly. The author states that the aesthetics of power creates particular masculine relationship between boys, wherein certain dominant groups exercise power over other groups. Through such aesthetics, therefore, the author paints a nuanced picture of how different aspects of the school, uniforms, dormitories, corridors, appropriate behaviour and punishments help in shaping students into gentlemen, thereby, socialising them into the ideal man in the society.

Benei (2005) provided interesting insights into the role of schools in gender construction by suggesting that the processes of gender construction in schools may be far more complex than the way we understand gender socialisation particularly, in the context of modernity. The author analysed the processes of

schooling within a same-sex military school in Maharashtra. Such schools had high appeal on the basis of the masculine, military tropes of soldiers and army men being the loyal servants of India. The increased emphasis and rigour of self-discipline (celibacy and control over one's emotions), self-control, order and appearance created military schools as the ideal space for a particular form of masculinity, where gender relations within and outside the schools with the same-sex and opposite sex are cultivated strictly in a hierarchical fashion.

Anand (2018) examined the gendered biases that school teachers perpetrate in their regular communication and relationship with their students. It further, compares it with the notions of femininity and masculinity that children have internalised themselves. It informs about their subjective experience of the school settings. The research treats the school as an institution vital in its function of transmitting cultural norms of the larger society. This makes the subject of inquiry important for feminist research to understand how teachers perceive important issues such as gender and gendered norms, and how gendered dynamics within schools and experiences of schooling can lead to gender socialisation. The research findings found that teachers harboured traditional and normative ideas of gender roles and often perpetuate similar stereotypes in their engagement with their students.

Narwana and Rathi (2019) debated between co-education and same-sex educational institutions in their relative effectiveness in ensuring accessibility, participation, choices and participation in education as well as combating gendered stereotype and discrimination. The authors base their research on a comparative study between two co-educational schools (one rural and one urban) to foreground the importance of socio-cultural settings in influencing the dynamics within a social institution like the school. The research focused on the complex interplay between factors such as familial norms and concerns, culture, caste, socio-geographical context (rural or urban), peer culture that define a gendered experience for the students in the school setting. The research findings suggested that, school institutions are agential spaces that may play an important role in challenging gender stereotypes. Reversely, one may also look at school institutions as sources of secondary socialisation of children in their respective gender norms.

In conclusion, researches have shown that the intersectionality among gender, class and caste, influence the life worlds of children

as well as how they experience schooling. Teachers are socialised into traditional and normative ideas of gender roles and often perpetuate similar stereotypes in their engagement with their students. School spaces too influence gender conditioning and socialisation, and become sites, where students become man or woman through various pedagogical processes.

5. Schemes for Girl's Education and Empowerment

Several studies were adopted to promote education of girls in independent India. Theoretically, all formal and non-formal education and training programmes are open to women. In addition, provision exists for opening of separate institutions or separate wings for women or girls exclusively. Education is free for girls upto higher secondary stage and several states have made education free for girls right up to the university level. Besides, free education for all children up to the age of fourteen, there are incentive schemes like free noon meals, free books, free uniforms and attendance scholarships for girls and children from disadvantaged groups (Nayar, 2000).

The improvement of educational status among Indian girls is a persisting challenge for both the Union Government as well as State Government. A study by Nuna (2012) on post-primary education of scheduled tribe girls under National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL) was conducted to analyse and evaluate the impact of NPEGEL on post primary education of Scheduled Tribe (ST) girls in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Findings revealed that in Assam, the district authorities had taken several efforts under the NPEGEL, for example, provision of alternative schooling through bridge courses to provide schooling facilities to out-of-school girls, preparation of training modules on gender sensitisation, conducting gender sensitisation workshops with teachers, community mobilisation as well as providing vocational training to girls. In Arunachal Pradesh, funds were used for construction of a room and purchasing of a teaching-learning material. Several steps were taken like remedial teaching for girls, whose academic performance was found poor in the mid-term examination in Class VI, life-skills training and local need-based incentives, etc. Hence, the study suggested the need to sustain such programmes for a longer period of time by ensuring regular and in-time financial support to schools.

In a similar context, Rout (2013) analysed the performance of the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme in the Keonjhar district of

Odisha. The paper enumerated the reasons for lower educational levels of girls in the state. Since, SSA had limited financial provisions for girls' education in the form of innovations at district level, the paper discusses the performance of the NPEGEL and the KGBV scheme in the Keonjhar districts. In spite of the existence of such scheme's factors like poverty, early marriage, economic instability influences the girls from discontinuing education. The paper thus, stressed on the need for ground-level percolation of the policies and the paper suggested on a participatory approach needed to be adopted, whereby the community leaders, locals, school teachers, students, social scientists and the NGOs could be involved to raise awareness among families on the importance of educating the girl child. Such scholarships brought about nuanced understanding of what happens in the social contexts at the grass-root level.

A study by Yadav (2013) on the Implementation of KGBV Scheme in the Muslim concentrated districts of four states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan) in India assessed the availability and quality of infrastructure, and participation of Muslim girls in the KGBVs that were operational. The study showed that the presence of KGBVs in all the states had enhanced the enrolment and retention of Muslim girls. However, retention was still an issue in some of the KGBVs. The parents were satisfied with the scheme and wanted it to be up-scaled to Class XII. Community participation was found positive and girls were enthusiastic to continue their education in the KGBV. Most of the girls of Muslim community in these KGBVs were first generation learners. For them, staying in hostel with all facilities like cooked food, playground, television, and quality time to interact with peers and friends served as a good incentive. This study is very pertinent in generating an understanding of the functioning of the KGBV scheme and it will help in providing suggestions for further effective implementation of the scheme.

Srivastava (2015) studied the strategies adopted for enrolling girls in *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* managed by different agencies in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat. It examined the methodologies used for enrolling the drop-out and never enrolled girls in the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* in the said states. The findings highlighted those multiple strategies were adopted by States for enrolling girls. Some of the popular strategies adopted were using local media, door-to-door campaign, and inter-personal contact of teachers with parents and community members,

pro-active role of state officials and panchayat members. There was no documentation of procedures related to enrolling girls from 'hard to reach' groups. In all the states visited, the enrolments included girls from marginalised communities, CWSN girls and girls of single parent, orphans and victims of domestic violence. The study showed that the scheme had acquired community support and popularity. Vocational courses in unconventional areas could be introduced for enhancing the skill of the girls for the purpose of employment as well as for personality development and entrepreneurship.

Yadav et al. (2021) examined the infrastructure of the KGBV hostels in Assam, Gujarat and Telangana in terms of the role of the scheme in enhancing the enrolment, and retention of SC girls in the catchment areas of the villages, in and around the block. Findings revealed that the scheme helped in enhancing the enrolment and retention of girls from the SC community. Both parents and students were satisfied with the facilities provided at the hostel. Students thus, felt that hostels provided a safe space for them to continue their education. The girls did not experience any caste-based alienation during their stay. However, need for trained female security guards for the safety and security purposes were expressed by the warden and parents. They also expressed the need for facilities like sports, library, coaching and recreational activities in the hostels.

Wadhwa and Anand (2020) emphasised that the rapid increase in girls' enrolment rate in elementary education could be attributed to the policy focused on residential schools and bridge camps that help to integrate out-of-school girls to formal schooling. The research specifically, focuses on the role of KGBV scheme in furthering the objective of inclusive and quality education. Though, KGBVs have aided in increasing the representation of adolescent girls from SC, ST and OBC communities, representation from Muslim communities is still very low. At the micro-level, one teacher for over 30 students creates numerous challenges in the residential setup including learning levels. With significant administrative challenges, there was a significant difference in the satisfaction of students and teachers with educational resources and infrastructural facilities. While, upper primary KGBVs have been functioning since 2004 in India, the strategy of introducing secondary level KGBVs was introduced much later in 2018. It poses a major challenge for smooth transition of girls to secondary level

of education. The study finding clearly asserts gender biasness towards having son, irrespective of the number of daughters in the family. Due to the financial support offered by *Ladli* schemes, majority of the beneficiary girls wanted to continue their education and aspired to make a career for themselves. Being financially independent, to be able to help family after marriage as well, have high self-esteem, feel empowered and be able to take decisions were the major factors that gravitated beneficiary girls to have high educational and career aspirations.

Conclusion

The report categorises the research into five major themes; access, curriculum, gender and marginalisation, gendered socialisation and scheme. It is important to note that, no theme is mutually exclusive and interact with each other in one way or the other.

The research within the theme 'Gender and Access to Education' brings forth a variety of factors that allow girls to access educational facilities. The concept of access, therefore, is expanded beyond a physical reach to educational system and infrastructure, and includes completion of grades and fulfillment of educational aspirations within it. Much of the research caters to access in terms of school attendance and educational attainment, subject to factors such as parental literacy, household wealth, land ownership, gendered costs of education, familial and community support, etc. Further, biases in the choice of schools, i.e., preference given to government schools over private schools are also taken by many researchers to underline how gender discrimination seep into the choice of expenditure on education that have ramifications on access to proper educational facilities. However, access to education can be taken up from a socio-political perspective as well. There were few researches that elaborate how social and cultural aspects such as child, early marriage, practice of dowry, early pregnancies, cultural stereotypes around menstruation, increased anxieties around the control of female sexualities, discriminatory practices in schools, harassment and gendered abuse and peer pressure affect access to schooling.

The theme of 'Gender and Marginalisation' brings out the multifarious ways in which marginalisation across social, economic, and political axes compound the gender experiences of schooling. In the sub-theme of caste, gender and education, researchers painted a complicated picture of how caste practices manifest along with

gendered norms and regulations through discussions around the distribution of educational resources, exclusionary practices within schools, labour requirements from children belonging to lower caste and tribal groups. However, one would have expected detailed analyses of the particularities of power dynamics that impede SC or ST girls from achieving high level of education. Attention could be given to particular situations that demonstrate hierarchical gender and caste-power equations such as caste and gender-based harassment in different types of schools (rural or urban, private or aided or government), the hegemonic imposition of a particular way of education, dismissing alternative forms of teaching and learning that seem more accessible to marginalised girls, the role of schools in re-establishing dominant caste and gender power relations and hierarchies, and the way it may affect schooling of girls from marginalised communities. One would encourage for researches to be taken up to explore the intersection of caste and gender from a feminist point of view that identifies the double discrimination of *Dalit* and *Adivasi* women face, and therefore, critically examines the minute details of how they circumscribe the experiences of schooling for such women.

One can extend the above-stated discussions in the sub-theme of gender and religion. Much of the researches explored the ways in which educational backwardness is maintained in Muslim women. Further, explorations on other socio-religious communities such as Jain, Christians, Parsis, etc., can be taken up to understand the complexity much better. At the same time, feminist analysed of Muslim women and their educational possibilities need to be more nuanced and detailed.

Another extremely important area that needs to be urgently taken up by researches on gender and marginalisation is the effect of gender on educational access for highly marginalised groups of children such as street children, children without adult care and protection, children in conflict with the law, child workers, children of parents in stigmatised occupations like sex work, waste picking and manual scavenging and children engaged in these occupations, HIV positive children and children of HIV positive parents, migrant children, children from de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, and particularly, vulnerable tribal groups and children living in conflicted areas, etc.

In terms of sexuality, one feels that there is a lacuna of research. Literature can address issues of sexuality and gender

and how heterosexist norms are reiterated in schools by practicing exclusion towards anyone, who does not fit the binary of gender and sexuality. Researchers can take up the educational concerns of sexual minorities and may focus on aspects such as access, visibility and resources in higher education to include studies about the importance of inclusive curricula and pedagogy in primary and secondary schools, and about teacher preparation.

In the theme that caters to curriculum, one may expect researches to further explore the gender in which curriculum is developed, the aspects of 'hidden curriculum' that are an integral part of the schooling experience and how they assist in moulding students in a certain gendered fashion that also falls in line with the dominant structures of caste, class, sexuality, etc., gendered transaction of written curriculum. Socialisation of gender also provides promising field of further exploration particularly, with regard to boyhood students. Moreover, researches are needed from the perspective of feminist standpoint specially related to marginalised groups' access to quality education to bring into focus their specific needs for integration into the society.

A particular lacuna in educational research of gender is that of gender-based violence and schooling experiences, while, ample research has been done on School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) in South-African countries. Researches in India has not been able to specifically look at instances of gendered violence and its effects on educational attainment and learning within schools itself. If anything, the instances of violence have been subsumed under larger axes of caste, class, religion, etc. Leach (2007) conducted exploratory research on sexual harassment and abuse faced by adolescent school-going girls in South India identified how in spite of GBV being a severe barrier to increasing girls' educational participation, it was kept hidden under layers of shame and taboo that is accorded to any sexual matter. However, apart from this particular study, no substantial study has been taken as its object of enquiry GBV in understanding girls' educational enrolment, participation, retention, absenteeism, drop-out rates, etc.

Further, issues of cyber crime can be interrogated as to how cyber harassment affects school going children and their educational experiences. One cannot stress enough on the importance of studies that may suggest ways of combating forms of violence in and outside schools through inclusion of sexuality education in their curriculum that addresses aspects of gender, sexuality, violence, etc.

COVID-19 has affected learning in an unprecedented scale. Women and children bore the brunt of the pandemic with respect to health, safety, education, nutrition, etc., which has exacerbated social inequalities and hierarchies (UNICEF, 2020). Such disruption of the social life further, adds on to the gender inequalities within educational systems and unfortunately, reverses whatever progress of gender equality in education has been made till date.

A policy brief on the gendered impact of COVID-19 on education of school-aged children in India by Right to Education Forum states that girls, who are marginalised at various levels of caste, class, religion, community and other structural hierarchies, have limited access to technological devices and therefore, the digital forum itself encapsulated the entire process of education during the pandemic. The policy briefly reports in its findings that home proved to be a non-conducive learning environment with an alarming majority of girls (71 per cent) being employed in care work (National Policy Brief on girls education: Gendered impact of COVID-19 on education of school-aged children in India, 2021). Further, one also needs to be cautious of the various vulnerabilities that girls are subjected to because of the pandemic lockdown. High risk of drop outs may directly translate into early marriage for some and for others, the family becomes a hostile space, where they may face domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence. Even more vulnerable are people belonging to transgender communities since, the pre-COVID is already dismal. The pandemic further, isolates them from educational services.

It is in this context that one suggests thorough research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school-going girls as well as students from transgender communities. It is imperative that action research need to be done in this field so, post-pandemic situation of gendered access to education can improve.

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