Review of Research Literature on Girls’ Education in Nepal

Dr. Min Bista

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Dr. Min Bista
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ACRONYMS

DEO         District Educational Office (Officer)
DOE         Department of Education
ECD         Early Childhood Development
FHP         Feeder Hostel Programme
GER         Gross Enrollment Ratio
MOES        Ministry of Education and Sports
NER         Net Enrollment Ratio
PTTC        Primary Teacher Training Centre
RC          Resource Centre
SMC         School Management Committee
TOR         Terms of Reference
Executive Summary

The main aim of this study was to review the existing research on girls’ education in Nepal. The study examined the role of educational research in policy-making in relation to girls’ education. The review included research reports and evaluation studies exclusively devoted to girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education. More specifically, the review attempted to accomplish the following objectives: (a) to prepare a profile of studies carried out in Nepal on the topic of girls’ education/gender disparity; (b) to describe the key findings of the research; (c) to identify the areas that have been over or under-researched; (d) to assess the overall quality, validity and reliability of the studies; (e) to examine the soundness of the research findings; (f) to assess the extent to which these findings have been disseminated to and shared with policy-makers; (g) to assess the impact of studies on policy-making; and (h) to make recommendations as to how more evidence-based educational policies can be designed and adopted. In recent years, several studies have been undertaken to examine the extent of girls’ participation in formal education and to identify barriers to schooling. Evaluation studies have been undertaken to evaluate the impact of several interventions on girls’ schooling, the supply of women teachers and gender equality. However, little has been done to systematically document and review these various studies.

The review was commissioned by UNESCO Bangkok. It brings together a collection of research and/or evaluation literature prepared in Nepal between 1990 and 2004. The literature was identified through a three-stage process: (a) a perusal of publication catalogues of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), donor agencies and research firms; (b) an examination of references in research reports; and (c) personal contact with educational researchers, consultants, university professors, senior officials of the MOES and local officials of donor agencies. The review included a total of 20 research/evaluation reports. Most of the studies (16) were conducted in the last ten years or so, although the review was to include studies conducted from 1990 onwards. Eighteen out of the twenty studies were funded and/or commissioned by external agencies. UNESCO has played a major role in the production of knowledge on girls’ education. Of the twenty studies reviewed, UNESCO alone had sponsored seven of them.

Like many other sectors of the society, educational research and evaluation has been a male dominated activity. Most research is led and managed by men. Six of the twenty studies were desk studies, while the others used field methods. The studies reviewed were descriptive (10), evaluative (7) or analytical (3). In the main, they covered the following four areas of girls’ education: (a) barriers to girls’ schooling; (b) the role of women teachers; (c) scholarship and incentive programmes; (d) gender disparity in education. Most research reviewed here was conducted at the national level. There was virtually no research conducted at the regional and district levels.

Seven of the twenty studies examined barriers to girls’ schooling. As reported by these studies, girls face numerous barriers in their efforts to acquire formal education. These barriers have been grouped into nine major categories:

- Social and cultural barriers
- Economic barriers
• Psychological barriers
• Institutional barriers
• Barriers caused by poor teaching-learning conditions in schools
• Barriers caused by family circumstances
• Geographic barriers
• Mental and physical barriers
• Barriers caused by armed conflict

Five studies attempted to investigate the reasons for hiring women teachers, public perceptions of women teachers, the implementation status of policy supporting women teachers, the impact of women teachers, the role of feeder hostels in producing women teachers, women teachers’ perceptions of their own profession and work environment, and women teachers’ participation in teacher training and professional development activities. Parents, students, school administrators and community members seemed to agree that the presence of women teachers is beneficial in many ways. Girls feel secure and confident when women teachers are around. Many see women teachers as role models. It is essential to hire women teachers for psychological, sociological and pedagogical reasons. Public perceptions of women teachers were mixed. Some characterized them as being caring, affectionate, loyal, obedient, punctual and accountable, while others portrayed them as being lazy, irresponsible, disobedient and talkative. Although a policy in support of women teachers does exist, it was found only on paper. For the most part, the policy was not enforced. Many studies reviewed have documented the finding that the presence of women teachers boosts parents’ confidence, encouraging them to send their daughters to school, especially in rural and conservative areas. The respondents seemed to believe that schools with women teachers differ from those without them in terms of student enrollment, repeating grades, dropouts and promotion. Studies have reported that feeder hostels have made a positive contribution to girls’ education by providing educational opportunity and access to girls. The studies have, however, pointed to the need to improve the management and financing of these institutions.

Female teachers find their male colleagues to be generally supportive, helpful and cooperative. The work environment does not appear to be very hostile to them. Some studies, however, have reported that the physical conditions in schools were not very friendly to women. The participation of women teachers in teacher training was low for various reasons. Women teachers are reluctant to participate in residential training programmes. Family expectations and responsibilities, fewer teachers in schools, the lack of day-care facilities at training centres, insecurity, and a male-dominated training environment are cited as barriers that discourage women from participating.

The review revealed that the scholarships given to girls and disadvantaged children were inadequate both in terms of amount and number. They were also poorly managed and coordinated, and lacked clearly defined criteria and procedures. The impact of scholarships in terms of raising enrollment was minimal because they were given to those who were already in school rather than to those who were not enrolled. Children received money only at the end of the school year because the budgeted funds were never released in time. The misuse of scholarship money was reported to be common mainly because there is no monitoring and
supervision at the local level. There was no evidence that needy and deserving children were benefiting from the scholarship and incentive programmes.

The studies have shown gender disparity in terms of participation, learning conditions and funding. The representation of women in decision-making and leadership positions was almost non-existent. Educational policies, acts and programmes were not prepared in a gender sensitive manner. The curriculum, text materials, teacher training and examination practices did not favour girls.

The review indicated that most of the studies on girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education centered around issues of barriers to schooling, the impact of scholarship and incentive schemes on girls’ enrollment, and the supply of women teachers. Studies were lacking in a number of areas such as girls’ security in the school environment, systemic barriers to girls’ schooling, the classroom experience of girls, the lives of women teachers, the relationship between women teachers’ presence in the classroom and the learning achievement of children, the impact of armed conflict on girls’ enrollment and school attendance, the psycho-social impact of such conflict on children, the benefits of girls’ education, and teachers’ attitudes and expectations about girls’ abilities and roles.

The overall quality, validity and reliability of the studies reviewed appeared to be questionable. Studies were conducted on very small and biased samples. These samples were selected according to convenience or opportunity. These two factors (very small sample size, intentional and/or convenience selection of subjects) mean that a study is of low external validity and/or low generalizability. In addition, studies attempted to accomplish too many and often vaguely stated objectives. Data analysis was carried out poorly. Most recommendations were based on personal judgments rather than the actual data. Recommendations were also too general and superficial. The studies did not build on the work of previous researchers.

For the most part, the findings and conclusions of the studies seem to be sound, logical and representative of reality. However, their soundness is not fully assured.

The impact of educational research and evaluation on policy-making was measured in terms of the number of recommendations adopted into policy. Collectively, 20 studies made 95 recommendations, out of which 13 were adopted into policy, while 40 of them were under consideration, and the status of the rest of the recommendations was unknown. Those transformed into policy include the following recommendations:

- Introduce alternative schooling programmes to all girls and other children who cannot attend full-time, formal primary schools.
- Provide increased incentives (scholarships, free textbooks, uniforms and nutrition) for girls and disadvantaged children.
- Give local schools the authority to reschedule school hours to fit local lifestyles.
- Establish schools within short walking distances for children.
- Give clear guidelines to local authorities regarding the selection of girls.
- Supervise and monitor feeder hostels regularly.
- Appoint at least one woman feeder teacher to every primary school.
Increase the amount of the stipends to be paid to girls at feeder hostels.
Increase the budget for the regular upkeep and maintenance of feeder hostels.
Increase the size of scholarships so that the money is sufficient to meet educational costs.
Increase the number of scholarships to be commensurate with actual enrollment.
Establish committees at the local level to identify children eligible for scholarships, distribute the scholarships accordingly and monitor how they are used.
Institute a system of reward and punishment to make teachers accountable for their performance and to encourage a better work ethic in the profession.

Although research has a role in policy-making, the relationship between research and policy-making is not a linear one. Often research findings are not accepted and used automatically. The users of research have their own priorities and agendas, and research findings will inevitably be interpreted in the light of these factors. In addition, policy-makers are unlikely to make a policy or decision solely on the basis of a single piece of research.

A number of factors serve to limit the contribution of research to policy-making and practice. These factors include (a) the perceived incompetence of researchers to produce good quality research, (b) a tendency to use research findings to reinforce one’s arguments, (c) the non-appealing language of research reports, (d) the poor research capabilities of policy-makers and administrators, (e) bureaucratic culture, (f) too simplistic, irrelevant and impractical recommendations, (g) excessive reliance on personal judgment on the part of policy-makers, (h) the inability to make research findings available in time, and (i) frequent changes in the bureaucracy.

On the whole, it was clear that the reporting and dissemination of research findings received little emphasis. Research reports were largely unavailable to the policy-makers. In addition, there were few attempts to involve policy-makers in the design and execution of research. Dissemination efforts were confined to the central level. Field-level personnel did not benefit from research.

In order to create a culture of evidence-based policy-making, radical changes are necessary in the way research is planned, organized, conducted, written and disseminated. Practitioners and policy-makers must take an active role in shaping the direction of educational research. Dialogues amongst researchers and stakeholders can help identify research issues. A greater involvement of practitioners and policy-makers in the design and implementation of research would enhance the practical relevance of such research. Likewise, appropriate methods for communicating research findings to users will need to be developed. The following actions could be taken to promote the formulation of evidence-based policy-making:

- Establish/strengthen linkages between policy-making, planning, implementation and research.
- Identify research/evaluation issues through joint efforts.
- Present the new knowledge generated from research in a usable and understandable form.
- Organize training courses in educational research and evaluation.
• Improve educational researchers/evaluators’ understanding of the policy-making process and educational practice.
• Prepare policy briefs to inform and update senior policy-makers.
• Prepare summary reports annually.
• Improve the presentation of research findings.
• Make knowledge available when it is needed.
• Use the media to communicate research findings.
1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and Questions

The main aim of this study was to identify and review existing research on girls’ education. In addition to identifying the current range of information and findings related to girls’ education, the study aimed at examining the role of educational research in policy-making in Nepal related to girls’ education. The review includes research reports and evaluation studies exclusively devoted to girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education. The review attempts to provide research-based information on the issue of girls’ education and gender disparity.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the study suggested the following research questions:

- What is the profile of research/studies that have been carried out in Nepal on girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education?
- What are the key findings from the research?
- What areas have the studies focused on?
- What issues/areas are most researched?
- What areas of girls’ education/gender disparity have been neglected?
- What are the overall quality, validity and reliability of these studies?
- How sound are the study findings?
- To what extent have the study findings been disseminated to and shared with policymakers?
- What has been the impact of these studies on policy-making?
- What recommendations can be made to ensure that more evidence-based educational policies are designed and adopted?

1.2 Scope and Focus of the Review

This review brings together a collection of research and/or evaluation literature relating to girls’ education produced in Nepal between 1990 and 2004. The year 1990 has a special significance in the history of Nepal, not only politically but also educationally. It was the year when a democratic form of government was established as a result of the people’s movement against the then so-called Panchayat system that was based on direct rule by the King. With the establishment of a democratic form of government, Nepal entered into a new era of modernity, liberalization, democratization and socio-economic development. Within the new political climate, education, but more particularly basic and primary education, was accorded a very high priority. There was overt recognition that it was almost impossible to achieve the national goals of poverty reduction, economic growth, gender equality, and the mainstreaming of women, ethnic and linguistic minorities without improving the education system. School reform captured greater political attention following the Jomtien Conference, and a new era of school reform began in Nepal. When internal resources did not permit the massive task of providing basic and primary education to all, Nepal looked for external support. Consequently, a number of initiatives were launched with the financial support of various bilateral and multilateral agencies. With the flow of external support in education, opportunities for educational research and
evaluation came to exist in a number of areas, including girls’ education. For this very reason, it was decided that the present review would include studies undertaken in 1990 and thereafter. The requirement of the TOR was to review studies conducted during the last ten years.

For the purpose of this review, ‘literature on girls’ education’ is defined to include studies and evaluations that have their primary focus on gender disparity in education and/or girls’ education. This review only includes formal studies and evaluations conducted by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), donor agencies and research firms. Dissertations and theses prepared by scholars and university students, journal or newspaper articles, textbooks and any other kind of literature have been excluded. Only those studies or evaluations that involved a systematic investigation of issues related to girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education using a formal research methodology were considered qualified for the review. Since the primary focus of the review was on girls’ education, any literature on women’s education with a focus on literacy, adult education for women, or non-formal education programmes for women has been excluded. Likewise, a number of sub-fields within education such as tertiary education, teacher education, technical and vocational education have also been excluded. Throughout the literature reviewed for this report there is a lack of conceptual clarity about girls’ education and women’s education. At times, women’s education and girls’ education are used synonymously. Women’s education and girls’ education are not necessarily the same thing. For this reason, literature on women’s education has not been included.

Any research can be divided into two categories in terms of its utility: scientific and practical. Scientific research refers to inquiry designed to contribute to a body of disciplinary knowledge, for which the immediate audience is fellow researchers. On the other hand, practical research is specifically designed to provide information that is needed to deal with some practical problem. The immediate audience for the latter consists of people with a practical interest in the issue, i.e., policy-makers, administrators and practitioners. If the studies reviewed here are to be classified using the above framework, they might be labeled as ‘practical research.’

1.3 The Review Process

Literature for the present review was gathered through a three-stage process. Educational research undertaken in Nepal has not been organized into any electronic database (e.g., ERIC,); hence there was no point in undertaking an electronic search of databases. The first step in the research process, therefore, was to go through the catalogues or lists of studies published by research agencies, universities and private research firms. This activity resulted in a bibliography of research/evaluation reports on gender disparity/girls’ education. Second, the references included in these reports were carefully examined to see if there were additional studies/reports not in the catalogues or on the lists of publications at hand. As a result of examining the reference sections of the research reports, it was possible to add a few more study reports on the topic of girls’ education. Third, educational researchers, consultants, university professors, senior officials of the MOES and the local officials of donor agencies were contacted to learn about their work in the field and to receive further guidance in the identification of additional literature. They were provided with the bibliography and asked if any study or studies in the areas of investigation were missing. Many of these contacts were in person; however, telephone interviews and e-mail also served as the main avenues of contact with some. Once
collected, the information and literature was reviewed. A final list of the studies reviewed is provided in Annex 1.

1.4 The School System in Nepal

Nepal’s school system consists of three levels: primary (Grades 1-5), lower secondary (Grades 6-8) and secondary (Grades 9-10). Early childhood development (ECD), also known as preschool education, has appeared as a recent practice mostly concentrated in urban and suburban areas of the country. A higher secondary level (10+2) has been recently added in order to make the school system more or less comparable with the regional and international system. Schooling starts at age 6. The first level of education (primary education) is officially free of charge.

According to the school level educational statistics published by the Department of Education (DOE, 2002), there are altogether 26,796 schools in the country – 26,638 at the primary level, 7,917 at the lower secondary level, and 4,541 at the secondary level. These schools are predominantly public (government-owned) – 95.4 per cent primary, 96.1 per cent lower secondary and 82.6 per cent secondary.

Total enrollments at the three levels are respectively 3,928,684 (girls 1,783,366; 45.4%) at the primary level, 1,137,101 (girls 488,259; 42.9%) at the lower secondary level, and 480,596 (girls 204,090; 42.5%) at the secondary level.

A total of 161,086 teachers are currently employed in the country’s 26,796 schools, of which 38,339 (24%) are women. The share of women teachers in the primary, lower secondary and secondary teaching force is 29, 16 and 10 per cent, respectively. Women are thus seriously under-represented in the teaching profession, but more particularly at the lower secondary and secondary levels. Of the total teaching force of the country, only 21 per cent is fully trained (10 months training), the corresponding figure for women teachers being 16 per cent. The presence of women in leadership positions is almost non-existent: at all levels of schooling less than 5 per cent of the leaders are female (Bista and Carney, 2001). For example, at the primary, lower secondary and secondary levels the percentages of women holding the post of school principal are 3.4, 1.3 and 3.7 respectively.

Gender disparity is evident in the enrollment data as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Enrollment at different levels</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
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<td>--------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Enrollment Ratio (NER)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1.5 Organization of the Report

The report is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the key research questions and the review process adopted in the present study. It also presents a brief introduction to the school system of Nepal. Chapter 2 outlines the major findings of the review. Chapter 3 discusses the impact of research and evaluation on educational policy-making in Nepal. Chapter 4 examines the extent to which study findings are disseminated to the stakeholders. Finally, Chapter 5 suggests a way forward toward the formulation of evidence-based education policies.
2. Review Findings

2.1 Profile of Research Studies

The purpose of this section is to present a brief profile of the literature that was reviewed for the present study. The study is based on a review of 20 research/evaluation reports. Of the 20 studies, 4 were undertaken between 1990 and 1994, 7 between 1995 and 1999, and another 9 between 2000 and 2004. More studies have been undertaken in recent years as compared to the past. If the figures signal anything, they mean that the issue of girls’ education/gender disparity has been gaining ground in recent years. Perhaps a tendency is on the rise where policy-makers and administrators have begun to ask for research findings. The issue of the utilization of research findings will be examined later. The aim here is to introduce the reviewed literature. Key features of these studies are described below.

Research agenda. Each piece of research has an audience that initiates and finances the study, and finally makes use of the study’s outcomes. The primary audience of most research on girls’ education has been the donors and educational policy-makers and administrators at the MOES. Except for two, the studies (18 out of 20) were funded and/or commissioned by external agencies (Table 2). UNESCO has been a major player in the production of knowledge, followed by UNICEF and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. It is fair to say that most research on girls’ education in Nepal was undertaken to meet the information needs of the funding agencies. Research on girls’ education has thus been a priority for the supporting agencies.

Table 2: Agencies sponsoring studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Number of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint UNESCO/UNICEF</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint EU/DANIDA/UNICEF</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His Majesty’s Government of Nepal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEP (World Bank, DANIDA, Norway, EU, FINNIDA)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Composition of the research team. An examination of the composition of the research teams in terms of the team members’ gender reveals that educational research and evaluation, like many other sectors of the society, has been a male dominated activity. A total of 106 researchers (not counting those who were involved in fieldwork) were employed to conduct the 20 studies under review, of which 74 (70%) were male and 32 (30%) were female. In six studies, there were no female members at all. Not surprisingly, most studies were led and coordinated by men. Three of the twenty studies were, however, led and coordinated by women researchers.
Study methodology. Ten of the twenty studies reviewed used field survey methods, while six of them used a combination of desk study and field survey. The remaining four studies involved deskwork using mainly information gathered from secondary sources.

Type of study. The studies reviewed in this report can be classified into three broad categories in terms of their primary focus: descriptive, evaluative and analytical. Descriptive studies are those that merely describe the existing status of girls’ education in Nepal, either based on secondary information or field data. Evaluative studies are those designed primarily to evaluate the effectiveness and/or impact of girls’ education or its sub-components. Under the category of analytical studies come those studies that assess and examine aspects of girls’ education using a particular framework (e.g., gender auditing). Descriptive studies are more popular than other kinds of studies, followed by evaluative studies (Table 3). Studies in the third category are rare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Major areas of the studies. The themes/areas of the research studies under review can be grouped into four categories: (a) barriers to girls’ schooling; (b) the role of women teachers; (c) scholarship and incentive programmes; (d) gender disparity in education (Table 4). Seven studies focus on the status of girls’ education in Nepal. The role of women teachers has been examined in five studies, while four studies each address issues involving scholarship and incentive programmes and gender disparity in education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research theme</th>
<th>Number of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to girls’ schooling</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of women teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship and incentive programmes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender disparity in education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most research reviewed here was conducted at the national level. In general, there are no studies conducted at the regional, sub-regional or district levels. In recent years, small amounts of funding have been allocated to encourage districts to undertake action research in areas identified locally.

The following sections of this report will discuss the findings of the studies reviewed for each of the four key themes/areas listed in Table 4 above.
2.2 Barriers to Girls’ Enrollment, Retention and Learning Achievement

Although almost every study reviewed has touched upon the barriers to girls’ education, retention and learning achievement, seven studies in particular have made an in-depth investigation into these issues. As reported in the studies, girls face numerous barriers in their efforts to acquire formal education. These barriers can be grouped into nine major categories:

**Social and cultural barriers.** Social and cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes often do not favour girls in their pursuit of education to the same extent as boys. Discriminatory values and norms against girls and women are deeply rooted in Nepali culture and society. A tradition of early marriage, social norms and values that undermine the importance of educating girls on an equal footing with boys, preferential treatment of the male child, perceived dubious benefits of educating girls, the traditional view of girls as someone else’s property -- all conspire to limit girls’ enrollment and school attendance. ‘Why invest in a resource that will soon be someone else’s?’ is the common attitude to be found in most communities. Untouchability is also identified as a factor influencing non-enrollment or withdrawal of ‘untouchable’ girls from school. Untouchability is still rampant in some parts of the country. Parents are largely unaware of the benefits of girls’ education. It is often difficult for people to see a connection between women’s education and economic development, better health, child development, family welfare and overall social progress.

**Economic barriers.** Nepal is predominantly an agricultural country, with almost 85 per cent of the population earning their living from subsistence farming. The annual per capita income is USD 220, with nearly 40 per cent of the population estimated to be living in absolute poverty. The incidence of poverty is acute in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives. Poverty discourages families from sending their children to school. Schooling requires a substantial commitment of time and resources, as well as sacrifices related to household production. Child labour is important for the economic survival of families. Girls contribute at least 50 per cent more labour than boys, and this contribution increases with age. Although primary education is officially free of charge, in essence it is not free because schools charge different kinds of informal fees (e.g., exam fees, admission fees, readmission fees). The direct costs of schooling such as school uniforms and supplies can be beyond the means of the poor. The opportunity costs of schooling can be even higher because poor families are not able to sustain themselves without the involvement of children in agricultural production and household activities. Daughters are traditionally expected to do more chores at home than sons. As they are expected to do more, the opportunity costs of educating a girl can be higher, and so they are kept at home. The high opportunity costs combined with informal fees make schooling too expensive, which undermines the demand for girls’ education.

**Psychological barriers.** Schools are not always girl-friendly. They do not protect girls’ privacy and safety and do not meet cultural expectations. As girls become older, having separate latrine facilities in schools is essential. Most schools in Nepal do not provide separate latrine arrangements for girls. The studies also seem to suggest that where private toilet facilities are not available at school, the majority of young girls, especially at the secondary level, do not attend school during menstruation. Where toilet facilities are available they must be shared with hundreds of children. The absence of women teachers also makes schools unsafe places.
Parents do not feel safe sending their girls to male-dominated environments. They may be concerned that sending girls to school will expose them to physical or sexual abuse from teachers or boys. Educating a young girl does carry heavy risk in a male-only school environment.

**Institutional barriers.** Families are asked to produce parents’ citizenships or children’s birth certificates at the time of enrollment, documents many poor families do not possess. School admission must take place during the first two weeks of the new academic calendar. The rigid school hours (from 10 AM to 4 PM) do not suit most families. Children in some communities find the language of instruction used at school different from Nepali. Primary education, although officially free of charge, is not free in effective terms. Schools charge all kinds of informal fees making the schooling of poor children virtually impossible. The inability of the government to make primary education compulsory by law is also a major barrier. The existing system of teacher recruitment does not encourage women to work in rural areas, although there are quotas for the recruitment of women teachers. These quotas are thus swallowed up by men teachers.

**Barriers caused by poor teaching-learning conditions in schools.** Public schools in Nepal are not properly managed. Teachers are not qualified, dedicated and motivated. Teacher absenteeism is very high. Teachers do not always show up at school. In most schools, a physical learning atmosphere is lacking. Instruction is not stimulating. Public schools are perceived to provide irrelevant and low quality education. Parents see the school curriculum as being too theoretical. The studies have shown that the lack of learning is the top reason given for children withdrawing from school. The quality of teaching influences demand for girls’ education even more than for boys. As a result of the poor performance of public schools, there has been a substantial growth of private schooling in Nepal. Private schools are perceived to be superior to public schools in terms of their standards and quality. There is a growing tendency among parents to choose expensive private schools for boys and public schools for girls. The two-tiered system of schooling is creating a further divide in the society, and is certain to increase inequality and the gender gap.

**Barriers caused by family circumstances.** The studies have shown that younger children have a better chance of being in school than older ones. Being the eldest in the family means taking additional responsibility to support the family, which can lead to failure to enroll or to continue attending school. In addition, often the absence of male members or adults in the family can be discouraging to young children.

**Geographic barriers.** Nepal is a mountainous country with diverse terrain. The difficult topography makes the task of providing services to people almost impossible in the mountains and hills. Communities are widely scattered, limiting their access to services including education. Most disadvantaged communities, linguistic minorities and ethnic groups live in the hills and mountains, which are remote and alienated from the rest of the country. The lack of transport makes accessibility to services like education a challenging task. Unfortunately, schools in Nepal are established on political grounds rather than on the basis of any scientific mapping. This has resulted in an inequitable distribution of schools. In some communities, there are no schools at all, while in many others one can find more than one school. Distance to school usually matters for all children, especially for girls. At times, parents do not allow girls to
attend schools located in places that are socially unacceptable. Having a school nearby can boost the enrollment of girls not only because of the short distances but also because parents feel more comfortable with a school in their own neighbourhood.

**Mental and physical barriers.** It is estimated that some 10 per cent of the total primary school age population have some kind of physical or mental disability. A large majority of these children are not in school. Schools in Nepal do not offer conditions where children with disabilities can learn and grow.

**Barriers caused by armed conflict.** Some recent studies have suggested that fear of abduction or forced recruitment by Maoist insurgents also contributes to non-attendance or irregular school attendance.

### 2.3 The Role of Women Teachers

Five of the twenty studies focused on different aspects of women teachers. Both policy-makers and donors supporting school reform in Nepal are operating on the hunch that more women teachers in school will attract more girls, ensure that girls remain in school, and enhance their learning achievement. The studies have examined the following issues in relation to women teachers:

- Reasons for hiring women teachers
- Public perceptions of women teachers
- Implementation status of policy on women teachers
- The impact of women teachers
- The role of feeder hostels in producing women teachers
- Women teachers’ perceptions of their own profession and work environment
- Women teachers’ participation in teacher training and professional development activities

The details of findings on each issue are presented below.

**Reasons for hiring women teachers.** Although none of the studies had the declared objective of identifying reasons for hiring women teachers, some of the studies did try to answer the question of why it is important to hire them. There were many answers. Parents seemed to feel that the presence of at least one teacher who is female makes both parents and girls feel secure and confident. Parents found it more comfortable to relate to women teachers rather than men. These women provide role models for girl students. In some studies, school principals are reported to have said that women teachers are more sincere and hardworking than men. The studies repeatedly show that male teachers are more likely to be involved in politics than women. Some studies have also demonstrated that women teachers are better prepared to provide the care, love and affection that children need in their formative years.

**Public perceptions of women teachers.** There were both positive and negative observations about women teachers. On the positive side, women teachers were characterized as caring, affectionate, loyal, obedient, punctual and accountable. One study reported that women teachers were perceived to be as competent as their male counterparts in terms of teaching ability and
ability to organize extracurricular activities. On the negative side, women teachers were portrayed as being lazy, irresponsible, disobedient and talkative.

Implementation status of policy on women teachers. Some studies examined the implementation status of the government’s policy on women teachers that states that there shall be at least one woman teacher in each primary school. For the most part, the implementation of that policy was found to be ineffective due to inadequate teacher quotas, the lack of clear policy guidelines, the unavailability of women teachers in the local community, the lack of proper coordination among different local actors such as District Education Officers (DEOs), school principals and SMC members, poor implementation guidelines, preference for men teachers and the reluctance of women candidates to go and live in rural areas. The evidence tends to suggest that rural schools are finding it extremely difficult to recruit women teachers. This is evident in the rural-urban gap in the proportion of women teachers. The shortage of qualified women candidates from rural areas and the lack of motivation on the part of women teachers to work in rural or remote areas have been reported as major constraints. In some cases, despite the availability of qualified women, rural schools were still without women teachers due to the community or school principal’s preference for male teachers, family reluctance to permit women to join the teaching profession, the lack of incentives for schools to hire women, and the absence of follow-up and monitoring.

The impact of women teachers. The findings of the studies reviewed seem to suggest that the presence of women teachers in schools boosts the confidence of parents, encouraging them to send their daughters to school, especially in rural and conservative areas. The respondents seemed to believe that schools with women teachers differ from those without them in terms of student enrollment, repeating grades, dropout and promotion. One study reported that enrollment rates do improve and dropout rates decline with the presence of women teachers. The same study found a high promotion rate for girls in comparison to that of boys in schools with women teachers. But, interestingly, there was no difference between the two types of schools in terms of boys and girls repeating grades. Thus the presence or absence of women teachers does not make any difference in regard to whether girls repeat grades or not. This is probably due to the fact that the problem of repetition has to do with the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom and the ability of children to learn, rather than the gender of the teacher.

The role of feeder hostels in producing women teachers. The Government of Nepal has been running the Feeder Hostel Program (FHP) for over three decades, with initial support coming from the Government of Norway. There are 18 hostels located in different parts of the country. The FHP is not a teacher training programme in itself, but its objective is to prepare local girls in rural areas to become primary school teachers. As part of the programme, girls from rural areas are brought to feeder hostels to live while they receive secondary level schooling. The government bears the expenses of boarding, lodging and educating these girls. Selection occurs on the basis of the remoteness and economic conditions of families. Girls attend local secondary schools. The hostels are also supposed to provide tutorial support and guidance in addition to free accommodation and meals. Most studies reported that the feeder hostels have made a positive contribution to promoting girls’ education by providing educational opportunity and access to girls. However, a number of problems remained. First, the selection of girls was not
carried out in an equitable and transparent manner due to the absence of clear guidelines and instructions. Second, girls were deprived of academic support at feeder hostels due to the lack of qualified tutors and relevant learning materials. Third, hostel supervisors/tutors who were supposed to manage the hostels, organize curricular and extra-curricular activities, run skill-based training, provide tutorial support and counseling, and motivate girls were not doing so. Fourth, the amount of the stipends given to schools was very small, and hostels did not have sufficient physical facilities and funds. Fifth, many girls were not prepared to go back to rural areas to serve as teachers after the completion of their education. The studies concluded that the FHP as a means of producing and supplying women teachers to rural and remote primary schools has not been very effective. Some studies, however, reported that the FHP was instrumental in increasing rural girls’ access to secondary education, benefiting many who would otherwise never have been educated.

Women teachers’ perceptions about their own profession and work environment. The studies reported that women teachers found their male colleagues generally supportive, helpful and cooperative. The work environment was not hostile to them. Some studies, however, observed that the physical conditions in schools were not very convenient for females. A few women teachers stated that the amount of help and support that they were receiving from their community, administration and colleagues was inadequate.

Women teachers’ participation in teacher training and professional development activities. Two types of training courses are conducted for primary school teachers: certification training and recurrent training. Certification training is provided through Primary Teacher Training Centres (PTTCs), of which there are nine in number located in different parts of the country. These are residential courses, and teachers must leave home and their work to be able to participate. Recurrent training is provided locally through the Resource Centres (RCs). Teachers can normally attend such courses from their homes. The studies reported a low participation rate for women teachers in teacher training as a whole, most particularly in the PTTC-based residential courses. Women are reluctant to participate in residential training programmes. Family expectations and responsibilities, fewer teachers in schools, the lack of day care facilities at the training centres, insecurity and a male-dominated training environment were among the reasons cited for the inability of most women to participate.

2.4 Effectiveness of Girls’ Scholarship Programmes

The Government of Nepal has been using scholarships as a means of promoting access to primary education for girls and children coming from poor households. There exist a number of scholarship/incentive schemes such as the Primary Girl Scholarships, Dalit Scholarships, Local School Scholarships, Upgrading Scholarships for Girls, Campus Girls’ Scholarships, Martyrs’ Children Scholarships and the Scholarships for Disabled Children. In addition, two other initiatives, such as the Education Incentive Program for Girls and Education for Special Focus Groups are being implemented as pilot scholarship programmes. The provision of scholarships is believed to boost the educational participation of girls and disadvantaged children by mitigating economic barriers. Four studies examined the effectiveness of the scholarship programmes. Two of them were internal evaluations conducted by the implementing agency

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itself, while the other two were external evaluations. These studies basically looked at the following:

- Adequacy of the scholarship
- Criteria and procedures for identifying the recipient children
- The distribution system
- How the scholarship money was used
- The impact of scholarship programmes

Adequacy of the scholarship. The amount of the scholarships was reported to be minimal (less than USD 4 a year) and in no way helps families meet the most essential educational costs, let alone the costs sacrificed by poor families due to their children’s schooling. The available quotas/number of scholarships are very limited given the number of children who need financial support. The scholarship quotas were so small that each school ended up getting only five or six scholarships. School principals sometimes did not know what to do with the money because the number of children who needed financial support was substantial.

Criteria and procedures for identifying children. The criteria and procedures for identifying eligible children were perceived to be vague. In some schools, scholarships were awarded on the basis of family economic status, while in others economic status and intelligence (measured in terms of academic performance) were used. There were cases where the total scholarship money was divided amongst the entire pupil population equally, with each child ending up getting a penny. At times, children were handpicked by the SMC. The schools sometimes had no central guidelines. Even when they were available, they were not properly followed. Sometimes, local actors chose their own way of distributing scholarships. District and local officials had limited understanding of the programme.

The distribution system. Parents and community members were found to be largely unaware of the various scholarship/incentive programmes. The existing centrally planned, implemented and controlled incentive system does not give any role to local authorities. The budget is not released in time and consequently children do not get scholarships at the beginning of the school year. A delay in the arrival of scholarship funds makes little sense because either the budget remains idle or the money is less likely to be used. The studies have reported cases of recklessness on the part of district officials. Even if the budget was released on time from the centre, district officials did not take prompt and timely action because they never realized that scholarship distribution was a priority. There was a lot of overlap and duplication between government and INGO incentive programmes due to the absence of a coordinating mechanism at the district level.

How the scholarship money was used. The incidence of the misuse of scholarship money was reported to be common mainly because there is no monitoring and supervision at the local level. Both parents and teachers are at fault. Some studies reported that parents often use children’s scholarship money to buy cigarettes or alcohol or to meet family expenses. There are also reports of the misappropriation of scholarship funds by teachers and principals.
The impact of scholarship programmes. The present incentive system does not contribute to bringing out-of-school children into the classroom because the scholarships are directed to those already in school. The distribution system does not ensure that poor and deserving children will continue to receive scholarships until they complete primary education mainly because the decisions to award scholarships are taken annually. The studies conclude that the impact of scholarship programmes is minimal for increasing enrollment and retaining children in school due to the very limited amount of financial assistance, limited scholarship quotas (less than 3 per cent of all girls in schools), the failure to distribute scholarships in time, and the lack of transparent criteria, among other reasons. There was no difference between children receiving scholarships and those who did not in terms of their school attendance and aspirations for higher education. On the whole, there was no evidence that needy and deserving children were benefiting from the scholarship and incentive programmes.

2.5 Gender Disparity in Education

Gender-based inequality and discrimination in education are a reality rather than an accident. They are a part of the deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices of a patriarchal society. The studies have examined the different forms of gender disparity in education. More particularly, they have looked at the following:

- Disparity in participation
- Disparity in learning conditions
- Disparity in funding
- Under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership positions
- The gender neutrality of educational policies, acts and programmes
- Discrimination against girls through educational materials and examinations
- The lack of gender mainstreaming skills and commitment

Disparity in participation. Although girls’ participation in primary education has steadily increased over the last two decades, a substantial proportion of all primary age girls is still outside the school system. In particular, girls living in remote and rural areas, and in the districts of the Midwest and Far West, as well as those belonging to Dalit (‘untouchable’) and disadvantaged communities, are excluded. The incidence of school dropout is higher for girls than for boys. There are cases in urban and suburban areas where this incidence is higher for boys than girls because parents pull their sons out of public schools to put them in expensive, private boarding schools. The school attendance of girls is irregular owing to their involvement in domestic activities. The studies surveyed in this review seemed to confirm the national, regional and district level educational statistics that show the much lower participation of girls at all levels of education as compared to that of boys.

Disparity in learning conditions. Teaching in schools was highly teacher-centered with no opportunity for children to participate in discussion or other activities. Gender segregation was common in classrooms as boys and girls had separate seating arrangements. Furthermore, boys interacted more often with male teachers while girls could not do so. Teachers paid little attention to girls’ performance in schools. There were fewer opportunities for parents to interact with their children’s teachers. Schools never invited parents to school. Interaction between boys
and girls was almost non-existent. Teaching methods did not promote interaction and dialogue between boys and girls. Girls did not take part in extra-curricular or outdoor activities. Girls’ participation was greater in classes taught by women teachers.

**Disparity in funding.** One study reported that education programmes for girls and women constituted about one per cent of the total education budget for 2000/01. This amount is obviously too small to cover the need.

**Under-representation in policy-making and leadership positions.** Schools were no different than the larger society. Like the society, the management and organizational practice of the school showed the dominance of males. Women’s representation in decision-making positions throughout the educational bureaucracy was almost non-existent, resulting, in part, in gross neglect with regard to providing measures for gender equality in the education acts and regulations promulgated by the government. Available statistics indicate that women constitute only 7.5 per cent of the total work force in the Nepalese bureaucracy. The elitist, hierarchical and competitive nature of the Nepalese bureaucracy makes it one of the least representative work places in the country.

An institutional analysis reported that women play a marginal role in the management of the MOES (Bista and Carney, 2001). The study confirmed that men have markedly higher early advancement rates than women. The study also showed that women have fewer chances of earning higher level academic degrees and of being selected for in-country and overseas courses and study tours, both of which are important for promotion opportunities. Among the male staff, there is a perception that women officials are deficient in the necessary managerial traits and skills required for success in administrative leadership. There is no significant constituency within the MOES prepared to promote the view that women are as competent as their male colleagues. The unacceptable attitudes and practices of male managers are supported and reinforced by women managers themselves who undermine their own self-image.

**The gender neutrality of educational policies, acts and programmes.** Educational policies are not stated in a gender sensitive manner. Acts and regulations do not explicitly discriminate against women. However, the gender neutrality indirectly perpetuates the low participation of girls and women in education. Likewise, project documents also were found to be neutral when referring to teachers, children and trainers. There is no specific reference to women aiming at their inclusion. The review of policies and programmes gave no evidence that there was a strong political will to eliminate gender disparity and inequality in education.

**Discrimination against girls through educational materials and examinations.** The curriculum development process in Nepal has long been a male dominated activity. Most curriculum and textbook writers are males who are not sensitive to gender issues. In textbooks, male figures occur far more times than female figures. Science and mathematics textbooks contain more gender-neutral words than other subjects. Textbooks do not include topics or lessons chosen with the explicit aim of bringing about gender balance in the family, society and nation. In curriculum materials, males are presented as ‘heroes,’ while females have a low profile. There are instances where fathers are projected as important persons, while mothers’ roles are kept obscure. Men are normally shown as breadwinners, doctors, principals and
scientists, and women as nurses, teachers and servers of food. Likewise, examination questions are biased against girls. In most cases, the location of examination centres was inconvenient for girls. Often girls had to travel alone or rent space close to the examination centre. Boys at times harassed girls. Most examination supervisors were males and examinees found the centres to be intimidating. The environment of SLC examinations, which was guarded and patrolled by the police, was intimidating to students in general and to girls in particular.

**The lack of gender mainstreaming skills and commitment.** One study reported that education officials were generally aware of the gender issues and held progressive views about many of them. However, they lacked gender mainstreaming skills and commitment. The other studies did not confirm this finding. In their analysis of the MOES, Bista and Carney (2001) reported that educational planning in Nepal does not take adequate account of gender analysis due to the lack of skills to analyze, plan and examine gender issues. Gender-inclusive strategies that aim to gain male support for gender equity in teaching and educational management are lacking.

### 2.6 Areas Most Researched or Under-Researched

Historically, girls’ education/gender disparity in education has not been a very popular topic among policy-makers, donors and researchers. In recent years, however, it is increasingly being recognized that the existing knowledge related to girls’ education and/or gender disparity is limited; hence more studies are needed on gender and education. The amount of evaluation research has also increased lately because of the need to evaluate educational programmes launched directly targeting girls and women. This increase suggests that both donors and educational policy-makers are now beginning to pay attention to gender issues in education.

Most of the research studies on girls’ education and/or gender disparity in education center around issues of barriers to schooling, the impact of scholarship and incentive schemes on girls’ enrollment, and the supply of women teachers. Although existing research on girls’ education may have covered many areas, it suffers from the lack of adequate evidence. The research evidence gathered so far is not convincing and solid enough to categorically confirm what stands as a barrier to girls’ schooling, what makes scholarship effective or ineffective, and how the shortage of women teachers in rural and remote schools of Nepal can be met. On the whole, there is an over-reliance on anecdotal evidence. Therefore, these topics should continue to be areas of concern. Future researchers should look into the following areas, which are under-researched.

**Girls’ security in the school environment.** Often there are anecdotal reports in the media dealing with sexual and other kinds of harassment of female students by male students and male teachers, and the subsequent anxiety and fear amongst girls and parents. As a result, parents are afraid of sending their daughters to school after they reach a certain age (e.g., puberty). What is the nature and magnitude of sexual abuse and violence? What are the various forms of abuse and harassment? Although there is a national drive to bring more girls into schools, nobody knows whether these schools are safe for girls.

**Systemic barriers.** While a substantial amount of research has examined barriers to schooling existing at the family and community levels, barriers imposed by the system have received less
attention. It is always the society, culture and poverty that are blamed for gender disparity and the low participation of girls in education, while the institutional setup and policies engendering the disparity are least blamed. There exists little or no information on how the system itself creates barriers and promotes disparity.

The classroom experience of girls. Much research in Nepal has focused on why girls do not enroll and why they leave school without completing the full course of study. Many pertinent issues remain unresolved. What are the classroom experiences of girls who stay? How do they view their experience in school and in classrooms? Are there equal learning opportunities for both boys and girls? Classroom studies examining teaching and learning practices, student engagement, teacher interaction, and reinforcement are largely lacking. Classroom-based research can provide rich information on the actual learning atmosphere and the opportunities provided to learn.

Lives of women teachers. Most studies have concentrated on the supply of women teachers. Their actual experiences have been very much neglected and under-represented in research documents. There has been no attempt to understand the concerns, anxieties, hopes and aspirations of women teachers as distinct human identities.

Women teachers and the learning achievement of children. The studies have confirmed that the mere presence of women teachers increases girls’ enrollment and decreases the incidence of girls leaving school; however, no studies have been conducted to determine whether the presence of women teachers improves learning achievement as well. The link between women teachers in the classroom and the academic performance of children has not been investigated.

The impact of the ongoing armed conflict. The current armed conflict in Nepal is reportedly hindering the enrollment of children, especially of girls and disadvantaged children. Hundreds of thousands of children have been displaced. Schools are closed. Teachers are extorted, killed and humiliated. It is highly unlikely that Nepal will attain the EFA goals under the current political circumstances. No research has been conducted so far to assess the impact of conflict on education in general and on girls’ education in particular.

The benefits of girls’ education. Global research elsewhere has asserted that education, especially of girls, has enormous economic and social benefits. These studies identify girls’ education as one of the most productive and useful investments any country can make. They have demonstrated the positive impact of girls’ education on family size, family well-being, infant mortality, children’s health and education, agricultural productivity, economic growth, empowerment in both the family and society, HIV prevention, and other variables. Such studies are completely missing in Nepal. As a result, the value of girls’ education is not fully recognized. Often, policy-makers and others do not see a direct connection between girls’ education and multiple benefits associated with it. It is difficult to assume that policy-makers would allocate resources unless they are convinced that girls’ education brings numerous benefits.

Teachers’ attitudes and expectations. Teachers’ attitudes and expectations about girls’ abilities and roles influence how they will deal with them in the classroom. Educational research
in Nepal has not looked into male and female teachers’ expectations of both boy and girl students. One should note that the mere presence of women teachers does not contribute to a girl-friendly school environment. At times women teachers can create an environment of discouragement just as men do. Rather than just their physical presence, teachers’ classroom actions and attitudes are more important in creating a girl-friendly environment. None of the studies reviewed have examined gender attitudes and classroom practices that are harmful to girls or boys.

2.7 Overall Quality, Validity and Reliability of Studies

The overall quality, validity and reliability of the studies reviewed appears to be questionable for the following reasons:

Poor description of programmes. Seven of the twenty studies are evaluation studies. Such studies differ from other research studies in that they focus on outcomes and impact. Evaluation studies generally demand a description of programmes so that readers know what is being evaluated. These descriptions were completely missing in the reports. Researchers operate under the assumption that readers are already familiar with the programme being evaluated.

Poor description of methodology. In some studies, the methodology chapter does not describe what procedures were adopted in the selection of schools, nor does it describe the characteristics of different categories of respondents. There is no mention of how many respondents were interviewed and how they were selected. What procedures were adopted for data collection? Who was involved in data collection? What instruments were used in collecting data? How were these instruments validated? How reliable were the instruments? How was the data analyzed? Many of these methodological questions remained unanswered in some of the studies. Most studies did not discuss the limitations of design, sampling, data collection and so on.

Biased samples. A biased sample is one that consistently misrepresents the population from which it is drawn. Such a sample can be systematically and consistently different from the population. The only way to be certain that a sample is representative is to use a truly random sample. This presumes a complete list of the population, and a systematic procedure that allows everyone in the population an equal chance of being chosen for the sample. A random sample assures that it is equivalent to the population with respect to several variables considered important to the research. Randomly chosen samples are largely missing in these studies. Most studies are based on biased samples. One source of biased samples is the use of convenience or opportunity sampling.

Low generalizability. One fundamental question in any research is whether the findings and conclusions can be generalized beyond the population sampled and setting studied. A study has external validity to the extent that its results can be generalized to other situations in which the same variables operate. The very small size of samples and the intentional and/or convenience method of sample selection are indications of low external validity and/or low generalizability. External validity can also be determined by comparing the findings of different pieces of research about the same variables. There is an abundance of inconsistencies in the findings of the studies, again suggesting low generalizability.
**Low internal validity.** Validity means that the information yielded by a research instrument is accurate. A study has internal validity to the extent that the data support its conclusions. To evaluate a research report, one must identify the researcher’s conclusions from the evidence and compare them with other possible conclusions (alternative explanations). Internal validity increases as these alternative explanations can be ruled out. For many of the findings in the studies, it is possible to provide alternative explanations. For example, girls’ non-participation in education is the function of multiple factors: social, cultural, economic, political and institutional. Most studies have focused only on one or two factors, ignoring the others. This restriction suggests that it is not possible to rule out alternative explanations. The methodology does not discuss the procedures adopted to assure validity. Most studies have not provided the instruments used to collect the data. It would have been possible to quickly check the face validity, which refers to how a measure appears on the surface, had the study reports provided their instruments in the annex. Face validity can be examined by asking simple questions: Have all the needed questions been asked? Does the instrument use the appropriate language and language level to do so? The researchers do not provide any evidence demonstrating that the instruments developed and used by them measured the variables of concern accurately and honestly.

**Unknown reliability.** A reliable measure is one that gives consistent results on repeated occasions. Lack of reliability can occur for many reasons. Sometimes respondents do not understand the question or understand it differently due to poor question wording. If two or more researchers or interviewers are involved, they can elicit different answers. The age, gender, class and ethnicity of an interviewer and interviewee can influence responses. In other words, respondents may say different things to different interviewers depending on the interviewer’s age, race, gender or other characteristics that act as extraneous variables. Often people do not understand questions in the same way because of varying levels of vocabulary and reading ability. Asking questions about which people have no opinion or have insufficient information, or which require too precise an answer, can lead to generating unreliable data. The answers to some questions can be affected by mood and by the particular context in which they are asked. The studies reviewed do not provide any evidence that data collection instruments were consistent and reliable. A few studies reported having trained the interviewers or data collectors prior to sending them to the field. Some also reported having piloted the instruments. In sum, the reliability of instruments is mostly unknown.

**Too much faith in perceptual data.** For the most part, the studies have gathered people’s perceptions, opinions and views. Even to prove the impact of scholarships and women teachers on girls’ enrollment, retention and learning achievement, the studies have relied on perceptual data instead of using hard data gathered from households or schools. The impact could have been better assessed by using the real evidence.

**Lack of verifiability.** One key feature of any research is its verifiability. This means that it should be verifiable through careful examination or investigation. The verifiability can be assured by accurately describing the methodology adopted and presenting the research tools and instruments. The studies reviewed left no opportunity for verification. First, the methodology adopted in each study was not sufficiently explained. Second, the studies did not present the different tools that were used to collect the data.
Too many research objectives or questions. There was a tendency to set too many research objectives, and find answers to only one or two of the objectives while keeping silent about the rest. Most studies sought to accomplish as many as five or six research objectives. Research objectives/questions can be grouped into primary and secondary categories. Not all research objectives should carry equal importance. In many cases, no such distinction is made.

Vaguely stated objectives. In some cases, the study objectives were too vaguely formulated. Here are some examples:

- ‘To identify the teaching and other female welfare potentialities latent in trained female teachers and evaluate catalytic roles such teachers play in the communities.’
- ‘To find out the strategies, modalities and approaches used by women teachers to increase girls’ enrollment.’
- ‘To review the efforts made by pertinent agencies and institutions in providing training, workshops and/or orientations to female teachers.’

Poor data analysis. Most of the studies reviewed suffered from poor data analysis. In some studies there was hardly any interpretation of data. Responses gathered in the field from different categories of respondents were reported as they were mentioned. There was little effort to analyze and interpret these data. The studies tended to look like a collection of field anecdotes. The nature and type of data collected were not explained, nor the unit of analysis clearly specified. Data were presented in raw numbers or percentages. None of the studies conducted any statistical tests to determine differences between and among groups, even where possible.

Recommendations based on professional judgments. Most studies have ended up with a long list of recommendations. The researchers have relied more on their personal judgments rather than on the empirical data in making these conclusions and recommendations. Most recommendations did not follow from the study findings. Moreover, most recommendations looked too remotely possible to implement.

On-stage effect. In two of the twenty studies, a process that is generally called ‘the on-stage effect’ could be noted. The on-stage effect occurs when respondents frame their responses to keep the interviewers happy or to damage the study. Two evaluation studies conducted by the Ministry itself that were designed to assess the impact of scholarship programmes suffered from this on-stage effect. These two studies failed to detect the problems involved in the distribution of scholarships. It may have happened because the implementers themselves were involved in the collection of data.

Superficial and too general nature of recommendations. Practitioners do not benefit much when recommendations are too general and superficial. Normally, policy-makers and administrators would look for answers to the following questions. Is the recommendation implementable? Is it cost effective? Is it politically, culturally and socially desirable? At times, researchers prescribe recommendations that seem stated for the sake of recommendations. Very little effort is made to examine the institutional, economic and political ramifications of
recommendations. On the whole, the recommendations seem vague, for they go without any measures for implementing them. Here are some examples:

- ‘Parents should be encouraged to send their children to schools.’
- ‘Introduce free and compulsory primary education.’
- ‘Political influence in education should be avoided.’
- ‘Decentralization policy should be enforced quickly.’
- ‘Give greater emphasis on gender equity.’
- ‘Effectively implement female teacher policy.’

Confounded definitions. The studies have used concepts and variables that can mean more than one thing at a time. This can be avoided by providing operational definitions of concepts and variables. None of the studies has bothered to provide operational definitions of terms, concepts and variables used in the study. For example, ‘status of girls’ education,’ ‘school dropout,’ ‘repeater,’ ‘irregular,’ ‘participation,’ ‘effectiveness,’ ‘efficiency’ and ‘academic performance’ are terms that can be interpreted in various ways. A lack of conceptual clarity was abundantly found. For instance, ‘girls’ education’ and ‘women’s education’ were treated equally. Throughout the literature reviewed, there was the mistaken impression that ‘gender’ means the same as ‘women’ or ‘girls.’

The non-cumulative nature of research reports. Good research should be cumulative in nature, meaning that it actively seeks to build on the work of earlier researchers, confirming or improving or refuting their findings. A review of prior work, besides assuring continuity, provides a rationale and focus for the study. A research study that does not review the previous work may repeat long-settled questions or pursue an inquiry that has proved fruitless. Small-scale investigations of an issue (e.g., scholarship programmes), which are never followed up or compared, produce inconclusive and contestable findings. Only one out of the twenty studies tried to document and review previous research.

The limited scope of the studies. The scope of most of the studies was rather limited, and they did not represent a national perspective. It is therefore not possible to get a complete picture of the status of girls’ education in Nepal. As a matter of fact, there has not been a single study on the topic carried out with an extensive sampling of the multiple population groups that make up the nation. As such, national perspectives both at the aggregated and disaggregated levels are clearly lacking.

Poor organization and presentation. Most of the reports were not systematically organized and suffered also from other deficiencies with regard to the presentation of research findings. Some studies appeared like a free-style paper rather than a true research report.

2.8 Soundness of Findings and Conclusions

For the most part, the findings and conclusions of the studies seem to be sound, logical and representative of reality. However, their soundness can be challenged on the following grounds:
Technical conclusions regarding political problems. Researchers tend to resort to technical solutions to political problems. For instance, some studies relate gender disparity in education to a lack of training, and recommend that gender sensitization and/or orientation training be provided to education personnel at all levels. However, gender disparity is essentially a political problem, and training, which is a technical solution, will not necessarily solve this problem alone. More training is simply not the answer. Gender disparity should be understood within the broader socio-political, economic, historical and cultural context.

Lack of a clear gender perspective. The studies reviewed assume a ‘women in development’ approach where girls and women are seen as helpless subjects, and development is considered as the distribution of inputs for their welfare. An approach that enables girls and women to take their rightful place in society is missing.

Unsupported assertions. Unsupported assertions are commonly found in the reports. The authors do not provide any support for many statements such as the following:

- ‘The education scenario is at dismay (sic), the education policy is not clear, the education system is not relevant to the present times, it has no direction, the present education system is only a factory for producing unemployment.’

- ‘Presently indiscipline, a lack of ethics, can be seen on the rise. Everywhere, there is arrogance, no one listens to anyone, and nobody understands the responsibility vested in them and has found an easy solution by blaming the government.’

Exaggerated and contradictory findings. Most studies on scholarships for girls have reported serious problems with respect to the identification of recipients, selection criteria and procedures, the distribution of scholarships, their utilization, and impact in terms of enrollment, retention and learning achievement. On the contrary, the findings of two studies included in the present review give a different picture. These studies reported a fair and impartial distribution of scholarships, effective utilization, the proper selection of children, and a positive impact on enrollment, retention and learning achievement. These two reports are written in hyperbolic language, with much exaggeration of the reality.

An incomplete picture. Some studies provide an incomplete picture of reality. For instance, one study that aimed to detect problems faced by women teachers reported ‘lack of teaching materials,’ ‘lack of physical facilities’ and ‘weak school management’ as problems. The real problems of discrimination, sexual abuse and inequality remained largely unexamined.

Findings not supported by data. The findings of some studies stated that the presence of women teachers in schools helped to increase girls’ enrollment and retention. The data reported do not support this finding.

Untrustworthy findings. Some findings simply cannot be trusted, and will require further verification (e.g., administrators, men teachers, colleagues, parents, students and community members demonstrating positive and cooperative attitudes toward women teachers).
Selective reporting. Selective reporting occurs when researchers highlight certain aspects or portions of their findings and ignore others. Often researchers have a tendency to report findings that are in line with their expectations, and anything that goes against their expectations will not be reported. This tendency was observed during the present review. For instance, some data seemed to suggest that the lack of women teachers in rural schools was in part the result of the government’s failure to enforce existing policy on women teachers. However, the researchers spent time highlighting the lack of qualified women in the villages, assuming that had there been more qualified women there would be no shortage of women teachers in rural schools.

Sweeping statements. Some of the studies made firm definite statements without careful attention to the relevant facts and details. Here are some examples of sweeping statements:

- ‘Women are unwilling to go to remote areas due to several reasons.’ However, the reasons were not given.

- ‘A lot of improvement is needed in the programme.’ There is no further elaboration of the kind of improvement needed.

On the whole, it is clear that there is sufficient room for refining the soundness of the findings and conclusions. Most of the educational research/studies undertaken in Nepal have been donor-supported. And donors usually view such research in a limited perspective, limited in the sense that they are interested in the assessment of projects funded by them. Evidence shows that there have been practically no serious studies on many persistent problems of education, including girls’ education. A small amount of research money has resulted in several research reports of transitory importance. If donors are concerned about building a research culture both in the Ministry and in academia, they need to become involved in significant long-term education studies of national importance.
3. The Impact of Research and Evaluation on Educational Policy-Making

The ultimate aim of all research is to produce knowledge that is practically relevant to the world of policy-making and practice. Unlike basic research, most policy research and/or evaluation studies are undertaken for the immediate consumption of findings and conclusions. Studies are undertaken in direct response to the identification of a problem. The results are then expected to feed back directly into decision-making.

Much policy research is grounded on the assumption that the availability of research evidence would lead to better educational policies and decisions. Policy-makers and practitioners are likely to expect that research should provide them with all the knowledge to solve their practical problems. Similarly, many researchers and evaluators will also want their work to have a direct and specific impact on policy-making or practice. But one should note that the relationship between research and policy-making is not a linear one. At times, it is naïve to think that the research findings will be accepted and used automatically. The users of research, whoever they are, have their own priorities and agendas, and research findings will inevitably be interpreted in the light of those agendas. The findings will be accepted if they confirm existing beliefs and validate existing practice. In addition, policy-makers are unlikely to make a policy or decision solely on the basis of a single piece of research. However, they may well use or misuse the research to justify a decision for which there are other pressures or arguments. A policy decision or a change is the outcome of a number of factors. Therefore, it can be difficult to trace the contribution of research to policy-making. It should also be remembered that research too has some limitations. Research alone cannot tell what is right or wrong about a situation, and what should be done to correct it.

The extent to which research will be used in policy-making also depends on the extent to which there exists a favourable environment for evidence-based policy-making. The policy-making environment in general and educational policy-making in particular in Nepal is highly politicized and bureaucratized. Often political considerations and policy-makers’ personal choices have played a major role in policy-making. Therefore, it is unrealistic to believe that it is possible to use all knowledge that research produces. The impact of educational research and/or evaluation in policy-making in Nepal should also be understood and examined against this backdrop. Whatever recommendations have been adopted into policy are not necessarily the outcomes of research alone.

In analyzing the impact of educational research/evaluation on policy-making, the following steps were taken. First, a universe of recommendations was prepared by reviewing the reports under scrutiny. Second, recommendations that were too general (e.g., poverty must be eradicated, the quality of education should be improved) and not relevant to the issue of disparity in education and/or girls’ education were eliminated. This exercise yielded a total of 98 recommendations from an initial list of 136. Third, these recommendations were classified into 13 different categories based on their nature (Annex 2).

The impact of educational research/evaluation can be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In doing this, education acts, regulations, circulars and major decisions of the government were reviewed. The review helped establish which of the recommendations had
been adopted as policy decisions. Following this, key policy-makers and administrators in the MOES and DOE, along with researchers involved actively in educational research and evaluation in Nepal, were interviewed to find out which of the recommendations were already transformed into policy decisions, which ones were being considered for policy-making, and which ones were not considered at all. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Categories of recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Adopted</th>
<th>Being considered</th>
<th>Not considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Removing barriers to girls’ enrollment and retention</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increasing girls’ learning achievement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increasing the supply of women teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Improving the quality of teacher training and increasing women’s participation in training</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Improving curriculum materials to make them gender-friendly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Restructuring feeder hostels to increase the supply of women teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strengthening community mobilization, advocacy and communication for promoting gender education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Strengthening educational management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Strengthening educational planning, implementation and monitoring</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Improving physical facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Improving the distribution of scholarships and incentives</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Fostering gender-sensitive policy and management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Creating a gender-friendly school environment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(100.0%)</td>
<td>(13.3%)</td>
<td>(40.8%)</td>
<td>(45.9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 5, not all of the results of educational research and/or evaluation have gone into policy. Of the total recommendations, only 13 have been adopted into policy, while 40 of them are under consideration, and the status of the rest of the recommendations is unknown. The following recommendations are now a part of policy:

- Introduce alternative schooling programmes to all girls and other children who cannot attend full-time, formal primary schools.
- Provide increased incentives (scholarships, free textbooks, uniforms and nutrition) for girls and disadvantaged children.
- Allow local schools the authority to reschedule school hours to fit local lifestyles.
Establish schools at short walking distances for children.
Give clear guidelines to local authorities regarding the selection of girls.
Supervise and monitor feeder hostels regularly.
Appoint at least one woman teacher to every primary school.
Increase the amount of stipends to be paid to girls in feeder hostels.
Increase the budget for the regular upkeep and maintenance of feeder hostels.
Increase the size of scholarships so that the money is sufficient to meet educational costs.
Increase the number of scholarships to be commensurate with actual enrollment.
Establish committees at the local level to identify children eligible for scholarships, distribute the scholarships accordingly and monitor how they are used.
Institute a system of reward and punishment to make teachers accountable for their performance and to encourage a better work ethic in the profession.

Research work can generally be classified into two broad categories: assigned and non-assigned. Assigned research is usually action-oriented and is assigned by agencies. On the other hand, non-assigned research is usually academic in nature and is carried out by individuals. Normally, one can expect a higher rate of application for the results of assigned research. In the present case, the rate appears to be unacceptably low.

During our discussions with policy-makers and administrators, we identified a number of factors that limit the contribution of research to educational policy-making and practice. These are presented below:

- First, policy-makers do not seem to have much faith in what educational research has produced. They believe that much research is not of good quality and has little to offer to educational practice. The lack of faith in research findings was clear during interviews. At times, the findings of studies are not directly relevant to policy-making and implementation. The relevance of research is threatened if research problems or topics are externally identified.

- There is a tendency to use research findings to reinforce one’s arguments or to rationalize decisions. If the findings do not support one’s beliefs or arguments, these findings are likely to be ignored. Policy-making is value-laden activity. Despite the availability of evidence, one is likely to act according to his or her belief or value orientations.

- Often research reports are not written in ways that will appeal to policy-makers. It is necessary to develop in researchers an appreciation that they must do more than simply produce a written report to increase the prospect of their findings being utilized. Recommendations are often too general. They do not suggest what actions need to take place, how, with what means, by whom, and when.

- Most policy-makers in Nepal are highly qualified. But not all of them are properly trained in educational research, evaluation and data based policy-making. There are few or limited opportunities for policy-makers and administrators to upgrade their research capabilities.
• Traditionalism and *ad hocism* are so well entrenched that research findings are given less importance in decision-making. Research will not make much impact unless greater receptivity to research findings is encouraged.

• At times, research fails to make any impact on policy for the reason that the recommendations provided are too simplistic, irrelevant and impractical. For instance, one study recommended leaving teacher posts vacant until women teachers are found. Such a recommendation can be detrimental to child learning. Schooling should continue even when women teachers are in short supply. Most researchers in Nepal are good academics, but have little knowledge of the world of educational policy-making and practice. This ignorance of the reality often results in the framing of simplistic, irrelevant and impractical suggestions.

• Research at times generates too much information, or information that is too detailed for the practical purpose concerned. Paying attention to all the knowledge that exists can be costly in terms of time and resources. The best bet for policy-makers is then to avoid or ignore research and rely on personal judgment or insight.

• Recommendations should normally urge specific actions with respect to policy, practice, theory or subsequent research. Most recommendations do not provide any guide to policy-makers. Often new knowledge produced by research is not organized and presented in an understandable and usable manner.

• The nature of research is such that it tends to complicate matters rather than simplify. For example, the phenomenon of education is caused by a number of factors. The purpose of research is to expose the phenomenon by examining all dimensions and aspects. The world may be much more complicated than administrators and decision-makers tend to think. For a long time the low enrollment of girls was understood to be the result of a lack of parental awareness, but recent research suggests that it is caused by a multitude of factors. At times the complexity that results from an abundance of information can discourage or paralyze policy-makers. Advanced statistical operations are required to explain and predict the factors associated with enrollment, retention or achievement.

• If the findings of research are not available to policy-makers and administrators at the right time, its applicability and acceptability will be seriously impaired. Sometimes policy-makers cannot wait for research findings. If they are under public or political pressure to take certain decisions, they will do so without considering or waiting for the research findings. It so happens that by the time research is completed, decisions have already been made.

• The effective utilization of research findings demands a stable, efficient and competent educational bureaucracy. A frequent turnover of personnel due to promotion, transfer or restructuring often leads to research findings and recommendations being held up or simply stored on the shelf.
• Not all researchers engaged in educational research and evaluation are fully trained and capable enough to design, execute and prepare high quality studies. At times decision-makers are unwilling or slow to accept research studies or evaluations prepared by mediocre researchers or evaluators.

• No knowledge is context free. The context of research can be different from the context of practice. Research might fail to provide any guidance to practice if the context is different. In other words, research sometimes cannot meet the knowledge requirements of the practitioners. The type of knowledge demanded can vary across the different contexts.

• Too much faith in authority is also an obstacle to the use of research. Often senior officials’ viewpoints are taken for granted. There is very little or no attempt to challenge or verify them.

• Nepal has a very strong oral culture where most knowledge is produced and transmitted through oral means. There is no tradition of reading lengthy research reports. Research information is not properly stored and documented with the view of making it readily available and accessible to policy-makers.

• Finally, faulty or ambiguous research findings also limit their acceptability and use. There is no such thing as final or true knowledge. Research is fallible, meaning that it does not always create true or perfect knowledge. The findings of research are open to contestable interpretations and cannot easily be translated into action.

Translating research findings into policy and practice is no easy task. This is not to suggest that research can make no contribution. It simply means that conditions must be created where research can play a role in policy-making and practice.
4. The Dissemination of Study Findings

For any research, the challenge is how best to make the results widely available. If research findings are to be considered for possible utilization, appropriate dissemination strategies must be worked out right from the very beginning. Proper dissemination increases the usability of research findings. As mentioned earlier, each research project has an audience, primary and secondary. The first category of audience consists of the people who identify the need for undertaking the study and who commission the research. The second category of audience comprises those who use the new knowledge for their academic or personal advancement. The dissemination strategy should identify the audience first. The aim should be to reach as wide an audience as possible.

The extent to which research findings are disseminated can be established in a number of ways: 
(a) the availability of research reports to policy-makers and administrators (or the primary audience for research);  
(b) the understanding of key research findings, conclusions and recommendations by policy-makers and administrators;  
(c) the involvement of policy-makers and administrators at critical stages of research;  
(d) the preparation of a written executive summary that directly targets the primary audience;  
(e) conducting dissemination workshops;  
(f) the preparation and distribution of research reviews;  
and (g) the language of the report.

**Availability of research reports.** The heads of departments or sections of central departments of the MOES were asked if they had copies of the studies under review. Two of the ten respondents reported having possessed copies of a few study reports, while many did not have copies of any of them. It is often difficult to locate completed research works due to the lack of library and documentation services.

**Understanding of research findings, conclusions and recommendations.** Although no systematic research was undertaken to assess the understanding of research findings, conclusions and recommendations within the system, informal discussions with some individuals revealed that educational policy-makers and administrators in the Ministry have little knowledge of educational research and/or evaluation related to girls’ education. They were found to be knowledgeable about one or two most recently conducted studies (e.g., the gender audit), but did not have a clue about the findings and conclusions of many of the other studies under review. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of these studies were largely new to the respondents. There was one case where a single respondent had a fair understanding of the Gender Audit Report.

**Involvement of policy-makers and administrators at critical stages of research.** Policy-makers’ and administrators’ involvement in research design and execution can be useful in many ways. In nine of the twenty studies, senior officials of the MOES were represented on the steering committees, advisory committees or study support groups. In many other studies, no formal structure was created to involve policy-makers and administrators. Very recently, under the Formative Research Project (FRP) funded by the Government of Norway, young educational researchers and MOES officials, along with other practitioners, collaborated in designing and executing the studies.
Preparation of an executive summary. Among many other things, executive summaries written in simple language can help to make policy-makers more likely to translate research findings into policy. Of the 20 studies reviewed, only 12 of them had executive summaries.

Conducting dissemination workshops. One effective way of reaching the audience is to conduct dissemination workshops where research findings and conclusions can be directly shared with the relevant practitioners. For 11 of the 20 studies, dissemination workshops were organized to share the findings of research. Most of these workshops took place at the central level. The number of participants ranged from 30 to 40. Those who participated in these workshops were officials working in central institutions of the MOES. There was one case where research findings were shared with community members and district officials. Overall, research findings are largely inaccessible to field level education personnel such as teachers, principals, supervisors and district level officials. Very recently, the Department of Education (DOE) has started sharing research findings at the regional level. For the first time, in 2003 four regional workshops were organized to share the findings of studies undertaken that year.

Preparation of research reviews. The main channel of communication between researchers and the larger audience occurs by means of reviews of entire fields of research, rather than the reports of single studies. The publication of research reviews can be a good step toward informing both practitioners and academics about the findings of studies and evaluations. This activity can improve communication between the producers and consumers of information and knowledge. Nevertheless, preparing research reviews is a rare activity in Nepal. The DOE, for the first time, produced a synthesis of research studies conducted in 2003.

The language of the report. The extent to which educational research will have an impact on policy-making and practice can depend on the language used in the report. Because donors have funded most of the research/evaluation, they are the primary audience for the research findings. Naturally, therefore, these reports are written in English to suit the convenience of donor agencies. Almost every report reviewed was prepared in English. It is safe to say that most research on girls’ education is directed at donors and high-level ministry officials.

On the whole, it is clear that the reporting and dissemination of research findings have been given little emphasis.
5. **Major Recommendations for the Formulation of Evidence-Based Educational Policies**

In order to create a culture of evidence-based policy-making, radical changes are necessary in the way research is planned, organized, conducted, written and disseminated. It goes without saying that practitioners and policy-makers must take an active role in shaping the direction of educational research. Dialogues amongst researchers and stakeholders would help identify research issues. The greater involvement of practitioners and policy-makers in the design and conducting of research would enhance the practical relevance of research. Likewise, appropriate methods for communicating research findings to the users will need to be developed. There are a number of actions that could be taken to promote the formulation of evidence-based policy-making.

**Establish/strengthen linkages between policy-making, planning, implementation and research.** The world of research and the world of policy-making and practice are sometimes at odds. An evidence-based policy-making calls for the need to strengthen the links between policy-making, planning, implementation and research. This will require the establishment of formal mechanisms for communication and dialogue between policy-makers, planners, managers and researchers.

**Identify research/evaluation issues through joint efforts.** Researchers and practitioners must sit together to identify problems. Practical/commissioned research must be carefully planned and executed. Researchers must comprehend the key issues and questions to be examined so that they know where the focus and emphasis of the research should lie.

**Present the new knowledge generated from research in a usable and understandable form.** Sometimes research reports do not communicate with the policy-makers and practitioners. Reports written in too technical or academic language can cause particular problems. The Gender Audit Report of BPEP II has identified ten specific actions required to integrate and mainstream gender in education. These actions are written in simple and understandable language. This is not the case with the other studies.

**Organize training courses in educational research and evaluation.** Policy-makers and administrators would be more receptive to research findings if they have received training in educational research and evaluation.

**Improve educational researchers/evaluators’ understanding of the policy-making process and educational practice.** Often researchers/evaluators have little knowledge of the educational policy-making process and educational practice. Courses could be designed to help them learn more about the making of policy and how it should be put into practice.

**Prepare policy briefs to inform and update senior policy-makers.** Senior policy-makers often do not have time to go through voluminous study reports. Often knowledge is scattered, and not within the reach of policy-makers. The opportunity for evidence-based policy-making increases when research knowledge is readily available. New knowledge can be made available.
through policy briefs, which contain key research findings on specific educational issues. The briefs should bring all available knowledge on specific issues together so that policy-makers can make informed decisions. The idea is to make all the knowledge available needed for decision-making, not to create any information overload. Sometimes too much information can overwhelm decision-making by confusing the policy-makers. Policy briefs assimilate the information produced by research.

**Prepare summary reports annually.** Research firms or research and development sections of the MOES should be asked to prepare annual and bi-annual summary reports by reviewing educational research completed in different fields of education.

**Create a mechanism for the storage and documentation of research reports.** The lack of systematic storage and documentation makes research information inaccessible and eventually contributes to research findings being unused. One major step toward the use of research findings is to establish a mechanism for the storage and documentation of research reports.

**Improve the presentation of research findings.** Researchers and evaluators must prepare their reports in ways that will appeal to specific audiences. Bulky reports often scare people and are never opened. It is not necessary to include all the details in the report. Research findings presented in economical ways can find readers.

**Make knowledge available when it is needed.** The production of the research findings should be timely so that new information is readily available to policy-makers and planners.

**Use the media to communicate research findings.** The mass media can be an extremely powerful and effective method for communicating research findings to a very large audience.

**Conduct policy forums.** Policy forums should be planned and organized where both policy-makers and researchers can meet to discuss key policy issues and how research can help resolve them.

**Encourage university students and professors to undertake research in areas where research is required.** Research is always a costly business. Countries like Nepal cannot afford expensive studies. The amount of research and evaluation undertaken annually will certainly decline as soon as there is a decline in external support. The process of knowledge production, however, should not stop or decline. Therefore, the MOES should prepare a list of issues and questions that require systematic investigation, and ask university professors and graduate students to select from this list topics for theses/dissertations. Academics will have an opportunity to contribute to the practice of education, while policy-makers will have access to research-based information with little or no cost. Where resources permit, small research grants can be awarded to encourage young researchers to undertake studies in areas specified by practitioners.
References


### Annex 1: List of Studies Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Author/Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Role of women teachers for promotion of universal primary education for girls</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Chelibeti program: an evaluative study</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A report on women’s education scholarship programs</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>WEU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Promotion of girl's education through recruitment and training of female teachers in Nepal: a country case study</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>A report on women’s education primary school scholarship programs</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>WEU/BPEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Gender assessment in the education sector</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>New Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Evaluation and review of incentive schemes to encourage participation of girls and women in basic education</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Girls' education incentive programs</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Increase of female teachers in rural schools of Nepal: a study report</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>A study report on analyzing female teacher recruitment and deployment policy</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>MITRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>A study report on increasing the supply and quality of female teachers through revitalizing the feeder hostel</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>MITRA/BPEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>A study of girls and children from disadvantaged groups and their access to education</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Megh Ranjani Rai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Community based action research on girls' education in Nepal</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Org-Marg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Situational analysis of girls' education in Nepal</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>SASU Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Gender experiences in the public schools of Nepal: a study report</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>CERID</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Summary of Key Recommendations of the Studies Reviewed

1. Recommendations related to barriers to girls’ enrollment and retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduce alternative schooling programmes to all girls and other children who cannot attend full-time formal primary schools.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Provide increased incentives (scholarships, free textbooks, uniforms and nutrition) for girls and disadvantaged children.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Allow local schools the authority to reschedule school hours that fit local life styles.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Establish open schools so that those who cannot continue their formal education after completing primary schooling can do so.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Establish schools at short walking distances for children.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Enact and enforce the Compulsory Primary Education (CPE) Act.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Provide financial and material support to poor families to motivate them to send girls to school.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Integrate the Muslim schooling system, the <em>madrasas</em>, with the national education system.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Exempt poor families from the requirement to submit citizenship or birth certificates or other kinds of papers while enrolling their children.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Introduce free education up to the secondary level for girls.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 Establish secondary schools in unserved areas to provide girls with access to secondary education.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Recommendations related to increasing girls’ learning achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Assess girls’ school achievement on a regular basis with a focus on identifying the factors behind their low achievement.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Implement remedial measures to help boost girls’ academic achievement.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Maintain a class size of 30 for effective learning.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Promote the participation of parents in school activities and child learning.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Recommendations concerning women teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Appoint at least one woman teacher to every primary school.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Give priority to women in the teaching profession.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Provide residential facilities and additional incentives (possibility of job promotion, opportunity to upgrade academic qualifications, opportunity to join training courses, security) to attract qualified women to stay and work in remote and rural areas.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Develop guidelines for district and local authorities to use when recruiting women teachers.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Make provision for appointing at least two women teachers to each school.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Extend the current policy of employing at least one woman teacher per school to lower secondary and secondary schools as well.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Organize public awareness campaigns to make people aware of the need for and importance of women teachers.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Create teaching posts for women to prevent men from occupying these posts.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Recommendations related to teacher training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Review existing teacher training packages to include gender issues and to avoid any gender bias.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Develop module topics on gender sensitization and awareness to be included in teacher training courses.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Organize gender sensitivity training to all teachers with high priority.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Give scholarships to girls who wish to study science, mathematics and English in teacher training courses.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Increase female participation in inservice and preservice training courses.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Provide residential facilities, common mess system, childcare centers, reading room, library facility, toilet facility and security arrangements appropriate for women teachers.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Organize short-term training courses for women who cannot remain away from home for long periods of time.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Organize mobile training courses making it possible for women to take part in training.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 5. Recommendations related to school curriculum and textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Redesign the primary school curriculum to make it more diverse so that it meets the special needs of rural children, especially girls.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Introduce local language as a core subject of the school curriculum.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Introduce a work-oriented school curriculum so that girls can learn skills that are useful in their daily lives.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Revise curriculum materials to avoid any gender bias.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Ensure that textbooks represent both male and female figures in a balanced manner.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Ensure that textbooks enhance gender equality and mutual understanding between men and women</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Show women in more positive and strategic roles in all learning materials.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Establish examination centers within walking distance from home.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 Appoint women teachers to function as supervisors during examinations.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 6. Recommendations related to feeder hostels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Disseminate information about the feeder hostel programme widely.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Give clear guidelines to local authorities regarding the selection of girls.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Appoint a full-time woman tutor who can promote a learning environment in each feeder hostel.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Supervise and monitor feeder hostels regularly.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Maintain coordination among district education officials, school management committee members, school principals and hostel wardens.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Provide hostel management training to wardens.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Increase the amount of stipends to be paid to girls in feeder hostels.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Increase the budget for the regular upkeep and maintenance of feeder hostels.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Arrange for a common reading room with sufficient reference materials at each feeder hostel.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.10 Appoint qualified teachers in feeder hostels who can support learning.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11 Expand the number of feeder hostels to serve all remote districts.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **Recommendations related to community mobilization, advocacy and communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Launch publicity campaigns involving the use of mass media and audio-visual aids to create a favourable environment for girls’ education targeting rural families.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Launch advocacy and awareness programmes critical of early marriage, the dowry system and other negative social practices.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Make parents aware of their responsibility to ensure that their children (including girls) complete primary education.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. **Recommendations related to strengthening management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Establish a girls’ education unit at the District Education Office for coordinating activities involving girls’ education and mobilizing women teachers in the promotion of education for females.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Define the roles and responsibilities of different actors in relation to girls’ education.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Revise the role of the Women’s Education Section (WES), shifting it from an implementing agency to that of a Gender Focal Point with a focus on policy formulation, advice, monitoring and evaluation.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 Integrate gender into all departments, divisions and sections of the MOES and DOE, and encourage implementing agencies to do the same.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 Establish a system for coordinating gender mainstreaming efforts in the education sector.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Recommendations related to planning, implementation and monitoring of girls’ education programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Address socio-cultural practices that do not support the education of girls through proper educational planning.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Design and implement a special programme of girls’ education in districts with low enrollments of girls.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Adopt a more participatory approach to planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating educational programmes to promote girls’ education.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 Implement programmes for the promotion of gender equality in a decentralized manner so that local authorities plan and implement them according to their needs and local realities.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. **Recommendations related to physical improvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Develop schools in rural/remote areas so that they have a minimum of</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical facilities (e.g., sufficient classroom space, toilets, drinking water) required for learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Ensure that each school has a toilet and a changing room for women teachers.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Arrange for the separate provision of toilets for girls.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **Recommendations related to improving the distribution of scholarship and incentive programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.1 Develop transparent criteria for the selection of girls for scholarships.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 Inform people about the provision of scholarships using radio and other means of communication.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3 Increase the size of scholarships so that the money is sufficient to meet the educational costs.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4 Increase the number of scholarships to be commensurate with actual enrollment.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5 Continue to provide scholarships for children until they complete their primary education.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6 Distribute scholarships prior to the beginning of or during the school year.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7 Redesign incentive programmes so that children who are not in school are also eligible for scholarships.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.8 Give authority to local authorities to manage the incentive programmes.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9 Establish committees at the local level to identify children eligible for scholarships, distribute the scholarships and monitor their use.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10 Establish a functional mechanism at the district level to ensure better coordination between government and non-government organizations distributing scholarships.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.11 Establish a database on children who are not attending school so that they can be traced, targeted and supported.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.12 Organize income-generating activities for parents or family members so that they are able financially to support the education of their children.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.13 Establish a scholarship fund in each school and in each VDC to support needy children on a sustainable basis.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.14 Provide scholarships to the best performing students in all grades of primary education in order to improve the quality of education.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15 Provide scholarships to girls from disadvantaged and low-income groups to allow them to pursue secondary, higher secondary and higher education degrees and join the fields of science and technology.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. **Recommendations related to gender-sensitive educational policy and management**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.1 Formulate a gender policy that will provide a clear vision and direction for the education system as a whole.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 Formulate a policy that requires the elimination of gender bias from the curriculum, textbooks, training materials, educational practices, schools and classrooms.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3 Establish a gender audit system in the education sector as a core function of educational policy-making.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.4 Stop the current practice of implementing programmes for girls through a separate office (e.g., the Women’s Education Section) and adopt a strategy where gender is integrated into the policy and practice of all divisions and sections.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5 Train male and female staff of MOES in gender and strategic planning.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6 Organize gender sensitization courses to help trainers, teachers, textbook writers, policy-makers, planners and other education personnel to develop gender-balanced perspectives on their part.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.7 Formulate a gender-sensitive teacher recruitment and deployment policy, e.g. appointing women to schools closer to their own villages, and facilitating both husband and wife to work in the same village or district.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.8 Review civil service regulations and appointment procedures to promote the recruitment of female staff and the introduction of family friendly policies to benefit both men and women.</td>
<td>Being considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.9 Develop a critical mass of women (33%) in decision-making and leadership positions.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10 Reserve 33% of all positions at all levels of employment for women.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. **Recommendations related to creating a gender-friendly environment in schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.1 Organize gender awareness activities involving teachers and parents with the aim of causing attitudinal changes toward girls’ education.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2 Improve and modernize teaching to make it student-centered and girl-friendly.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3 Prepare a code of conduct that prohibits teachers from discriminating against students by gender.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.4 Allow space and time for women teachers to prepare lessons, as both are often not available at home due to household and childcare burdens.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5 Provide childcare to those women teachers who have young babies.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.6 Organize gender sensitive awareness programmes for men teachers.</td>
<td>Not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.7 Institute a system of reward and punishment to make teachers accountable for their performance and to encourage a better work ethic in the profession.</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>