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Understanding and challenging boys' disadvantage in secondary education in developing countries

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Understanding and challenging boys' disadvantage in secondary education in developing countries

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(With Inputs from Shubhashansa Bakshi for all country case studies except Brazil and Ernesto Martins Faria for Brazil)

1. Introduction

EFA Goal 5 demands gender parity and equality in primary and secondary education. In those countries where these have not been achieved, girls remain more likely to be disadvantaged. However, in a significant number of countries, particularly in secondary education, it is boys who fare relatively poorly, with respect to enrolment, attainment, and learning achievement. The trend of boys lagging behind girls in terms of completion as well as learning achievement rates had been clearly visible in developed countries since the 1990s. But now it is increasingly becoming more common in some middle-income countries and in some cases, even in low-income countries. Over the years, the number of countries experiencing this trend has grown and the gaps have widened in many of those countries where it already existed. Initial data for 2009 shows that there are 54 countries where the gender parity index (GPI) of the gross enrolment ratio (GER) is greater than 1.03, and 17 where there are fewer than 90 boys for every 100 girls. While Bangladesh is the sole low-income country, there are 17 lower-middle income countries on the list. Twenty-one of these are in the Latin America and Caribbean region. A number of countries from East Asia and Pacific region and three from Southern Africa also figure in this list. (Figure1)

Figure 1: Distribution of 52 countries by Income Levels and Gender Parity Index (GPI)*

Gender Parity Index (GPI)	1.03-1.05	1.06-1.10	1.11-1.20	1.21-1.30	1.30<
Income Level					
Low Income			1 (Bangladesh)		
Lower middle Income	3(Marshall Islands, Paraguay, Jordan)	8(Vanuatu, Philippines, Belize, Tunisia, Thailand, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mongolia, China)	4(Cape Verde, Nicaragua, Samoa, Kiribati)	1 (Honduras)	1 (Lesotho)
Upper middle	5 (Botswana, South Africa, Seychelles, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)	9(Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic of Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Fiji, Malaysia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Dominica)	6(Namibia, Argentina, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Brazil)	1 (Suriname)	
High	7(Finland, Spain, Portugal, San Marino, New Zealand, Croatia, Bahrain)	4(Cayman Islands, Andorra, Trinidad and Tobago, Ireland)	1(Bermuda)		1(Qatar)

*Does not include Nauru (GPI 1.20) and Cook Islands (GPI 1.10), as WB income classifications not available for those.

Source: UIS estimates for GPI, World Bank Income Classification for Income Levels

Figure 2: Distribution of 54 countries by Male GER and Gender Parity Index (GPI) at Secondary Education Stage

Gender Parity Index (GPI)	1.03-1.05	1.06-1.10	1.11-1.20	1.21-1.30	1.30<
Male GER					
35-55		1 (Vanatau)	1 (Bangladesh)		1 (Lesotho)
56-70	1 (Paraguay)	2 (Panama, Malaysia)	2 (Namibia, Nicaragua)	3 (Suriname, Honduras, Nauru)	
71-85	2 (Botswana, Marshall Islands)	10 (Cayman Islands, Cook Islands, Venezuela, Philippines, Belize, Andorra, Thailand, Fiji, Occupied Palesitnian Territory, China)	8 (Cape Verde, Bermuda, Argentina, Uruguay, Samoa, Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Kiribati)		1 (Qatar)
86-100	6 (South Africa, Bahrain, Croatia, San Marina, Jordan, Jamaica)	7 (Colombia, Tunisia, St.Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Mongolia, Mexico, Costa Rica)	1 (Brazil)		
100<	6 (Finland, Seychelles, Spain, Saint Vincent, New Zealand, Portugal)	2 (Dominica, Ireland)			

Source: UIS estimates

Three of these countries have male GER lower than 55 and an additional eight have GER lower than 70. These eleven countries belong to different income levels, one is low income, five are lower middle income and four are upper middle income countries. The countries with low male GERs and high GPI face the double challenge of raising the enrolment levels of males as well as females while ensuring that the parity is also achieved. Qatar is a high income country with high GPI but not so high male GER of 72 percent. This distribution makes it clear that this phenomenon of male disadvantage in education cannot be simply explained by income level and GER levels alone.

The debates surrounding gender issues in education have largely concentrated on the aspect of female disadvantage. The emergence of boys' disadvantage in secondary education adds another and a fairly new dimension to the issue of gender disparity and inequality in education. Although the issue has caught attention in some countries and a number of writings have appeared in the popular media, it is yet to become a subject of serious research in most countries, especially in the developing world. Based on whatever could be accessed in the public domain, the present paper attempts to review the extent, nature, causes and consequences of boys' disadvantage in secondary education in some developing countries, and to identify policy responses as well as other good practices in challenging such disadvantage. The paper is largely based on six country case studies while using relevant evidence from other developing and developed countries as well. These six

countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, Jamaica, Lesotho, Samoa and United Arab Emirates (UAE) – provide a good spread across regions, population sizes and income levels.

Table 1: Background Information on Six Case Study Countries

	Bangladesh	Brazil	Jamaica	Lesotho	Samoa	UAE
World Bank Income Classification	Low	Upper Middle	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Lower Middle	High
Population (in '000)	166616	197041	2741	2101	179	4811
Region	South Asia	Latin America	The Caribbean	Southern Africa	The Pacific	Arab States
Economically Active children (5-14 years) 1999-2007* (%)	13	6	6	23	--	--

*data for the most recent year.

Source: Statistical Tables (collated from various sources, as provided by the GMR team)

Original sources could be added depending on the format we want. JJ

2. The Issue

Schooling participation

The nature of disadvantage as well as the stage at which it starts is not the same in all the countries where this trend is visible. The disadvantage occurs at different stages and at different levels of schooling participation rates. Two kinds of broad trends are visible. One is where the disparities start early and become visible soon after primary stage of schooling. This, usually, though not necessarily, happens at low levels of participation rates for both boys and girls. For instance, Bangladesh and Lesotho have low GERs for both boys and girls, and within this low participation rates, boys have significantly lower GERs than girls. The disparity for boys starts at lower secondary level itself and becomes visible in the transition rates from primary to secondary level, this being higher for girls than boys. While the disparities continue at higher secondary level in some countries such as Lesotho, the difference narrows down quite significantly in others such as Bangladesh reflecting that girls also start dropping out almost at the same rate at the upper secondary level.

The second kind is where the disparities set in only at upper secondary stage. This trend is generally visible in most countries that have reached a high level of participation rate for both boys and girls. For example, the GERs are relatively higher for both boys and girls, and the differences, if any, are only marginal at lower secondary level in UAE, Brazil and Jamaica but this picture changes at the upper secondary level where the GERs for boys become significantly lower than those for girls. However, this trend of marginal difference in the GERs at lower secondary coupled with high disparities at upper secondary level also exists in some countries such as Samoa where the GER levels are not as high.

The proportion of repeaters among those enrolled is higher for the first set of countries where the disparities set in at low levels of participation and at lower secondary stage. This could be an indicator of perceived low quality of education being reflected in lower survival rates for boys who move to options that are considered more rewarding. This aspect is being explored in detail at a later stage. The proportion of under age and over age students is high for both the sexes with no notable difference between boys and girls in most countries implying the insignificance of this aspect in explaining the boys' disadvantage. (Annex Table 1)

Learning Outcomes

Difference in learning outcomes is another dimension of the boys' disadvantage at secondary level. Girls outperformed boys in reading in all 34 OECD and more than 30 non-OECD

countries participating in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2009, an international evaluation of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance, performed first in 2000 and repeated every three years. Between 2000 and 2009 the gender gap in reading has widened in some countries, but it did not narrow in any country. This increase was largely due to greater improvement in girls' performance as compared to boys' performance in majority of these countries.ⁱ Boys tend to outperform girls in mathematics but the gender gap is far wider in reading than it is in either mathematics or science, and this has been true since the first PISA assessment in 2000.

Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) test results in selected African countries show similar gender gaps. SACMEQ 2007 results did not show any notable difference in the trends as compared to 2000 results. Girls outperformed boys in reading (Seychelles, Mauritius, Botswana, and South Africa), and boys outperformed girls in mathematics (Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique) in the same set of countries as before. The magnitude of these differences was also consistent regardless of changes in overall achievement across time. This is slightly in variance with PISA results in case of mathematics where strong boys' domination in earlier years has been diminishing and results are becoming more mixed.ⁱⁱ Based on evidence from various rounds of tests conducted through PISA, SACMEQ and a number of other international and regional tests following various periodicitiesⁱⁱⁱ Ma 2007 arrived at the following conclusion that remain valid even now after the next rounds of tests:

The first theme is that girls have kept their advantage in language across all regional and international student assessments, with the female advantage being not only widespread but also substantial. The second theme is that girls are catching up with boys in mathematics achievement with historical female breakthroughs in this traditionally male domain in both regional and international student assessments. The third theme is that although boys manage to hold on to the male advantage in science, girls have gained ground, with historical female breakthroughs beginning to take place in this traditionally male domain. (Ma 2007)

Socio-economic status, wealth, location and ethnicity

Evidences from various parts of the globe including developed countries clearly show that the issue of boys' disadvantage in education has close links with socio-economic status, wealth, location and ethnicity although there are some exceptions as well. Girls despite being disadvantaged against their counterparts in the higher income groups perform better than boys from the same socio economic backgrounds. A DFID study in Botswana and Ghana showing the relationship between economic disadvantages and boys' underperformance revealed that even in situations where boys are generally not at a disadvantage, girls in poorer areas and semi-urban schools outperform them.^{iv} Traditional occupational practices play a major role in some countries such as Lesotho. Herdboys are the biggest group remaining outside the fold of education in Lesotho and most of them come from poor family backgrounds. Such linkages have also been reported from other Southern African countries such as Botswana and Namibia where cattle-grazing is a common practice for boys.^v High incidence of child labour for boys in some countries has also been linked to poverty and the consequent early exit from schooling. For instance, the National Child Labour Survey (NCLS), conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2002-03 showed that the proportion of boys among the total of 7.4 million working children in the age group of 5-17 years was almost two third (73.5%) of the total.

Boys' underachievement in Latin America and the Caribbean region has been associated with the call of street culture and gang peer pressure and ethnic origin. Miller (1986, 1991) argued that structural contexts were designed to ensure that native African-Jamaican males

were excluded from schools and schooling.^{vi} A good amount of literature emanating from UK, Australia and New Zealand has highlighted the concentration of boys from a particular ethnic background being highly represented among boys who are under achieving. The literature from UK particularly refers to Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Turkish boys. Much of the literature coming from Australia in this regard refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys, and from New Zealand refers to lower achievement among children of immigrants from Pacific islands as well as the Maori community (Jha and Kelleher 2006).

A number of studies in different settings have highlighted the importance of location. Trong 2009 based on the analysis of PIRLS results for 2006 also suggests that readers most at risk are rural and poor boys.^{vii} An analysis of SAQMEC 2007 results at more disaggregated levels showed that only in more advantaged settings (urban schools and high socio-economic groups) was there a reasonable improvement in the gender equality in learning achievement between 2000 and 2007.^{viii} In the context of UAE, Ridge 2011 concluded that while UAE males in general are at risk of not participating in higher education, males from poorer emirates, more isolated emirates are at an even greater risk because schools located in those areas are likely to get less competent and less interested teachers. Based on school level analysis in Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean, some studies have highlighted the fact that all schools do not report gender differences but a higher number of schools reporting high gender differences in favour of boys are located in the rural areas (De Lisle, Smith, and Jules 2010, De Lisle 2010).^{ix}

Representation in vocational / technical streams

The incidence of boys being pushed to choosing certain vocational subjects at the secondary level is more evident in developed countries as compared to developing countries where the trends are mixed. In the UK, for example, much has been written about deliberate pushing of Afro-Caribbean and Bangladeshi boys to vocational and soft streams in high schools with adverse implications for their higher education, employability and life chances.^x On the contrary, in Jamaica, girls are better represented in vocational and technical courses, and policy interventions are trying to bring changes that encourage more boys to join such courses that have higher employability.^{xi} However, it also needs to be noted that women are largely clustered around vocational courses that offer low paid, low status jobs.

Therefore, what emerges is that in developing countries boys are not necessarily being pushed to vocational streams because of their failure in academic streams, a trend that continues to be true in many developed countries. In fact, suitable vocational /technical education is perceived as a solution for constructive engagement of boys to address the issue of boys' disadvantage in most of these countries.^{xii} A little caution is needed here if trends from the western world are any indicator where this has led to the higher concentration of boys from poorer backgrounds and marginalised ethnicity in these streams. This becomes especially relevant in contexts where technical and skill education at secondary or post secondary levels are being expanded. Brazil offers one such example where the number of Brazil's technical institutes has nearly tripled and the annual budget for vocational institutes has recently gone from \$385 million to \$3.8 billion in less than a decade. The scope of such institutes has been widened to include more modern and relevant subjects but it still faces the problem of being low in status as compared to university degree and that needs to change.^{xiii}

Implications for employability and engagement in crime and violence

Another important question in this context is what the implications of boys' disadvantage in secondary education are for the society and economy. Overwhelming evidence in this respect are available from the Latin America and Caribbean region. The high incidence of crime, drug abuse, narcotics trafficking and violence in this region is often attributed to boys'

disadvantage in education. The region has one of the highest murder rates in the world and the youth are disproportionately represented among those committing these crimes. For instance, in 2002, young males from 15–29 years of age was responsible for 80% of the violent crimes, 75% of the murders, and 98% of all major crimes committed in Jamaica.^{xiv}

Although it is difficult to establish direct and definite linkages, engagement in youth violence, easy access to guns and drug related job opportunities appear to be both a cause and impact of boys' disadvantage in education.

Evidences from some countries suggest that even though labour market participation rates for males remain relatively higher in comparison of females in these countries, low educational attainments adversely affect the prospects for employment. This appears to be more evident in cases where domestic labour is competing with imported labour or domestic labour is migrating to face international competition. For instance, the study by Al-Ali, Kumar Shee and Foley (Year not specified) point out that under qualification and low fluency in English result in their lack of competitiveness in labour markets that are dominated by imported labour force causing low employment of Emiratis in UAE.^{xv} The rate of international migration from Samoa, especially to New Zealand, is high and the absence of formal degrees puts Samoan youth at a disadvantage (Sina M. and Manila-Silipa 2007).^{xvi}

3. Beneath the Issue

What explains boys' disadvantage in education in these countries? Popular as well as academic literature have tried to answer this question especially in countries where this has been a persistent trend, i.e., Latin America and the Caribbean, and developed countries such as UK, Australia and the US. Popular and academic literature emanating from these countries do not necessarily agree in their interpretations. A close perusal of the literature and analysis of trends suggest several pointers, out of which some come out as more credible than others. What also emerges is that the disadvantage in performance can be explained more universally whereas the disadvantage in participation has more country specific explanations in addition to some general ones.

Feminisation of teaching force and absence of male role models

One common explanation that many writings refer to is the feminisation of teaching force and the resultant absence of role model for boys. It is difficult to decide at what level of proportion the teaching force can be referred to as being feminised. Following OECD definition and other common practices, one could consider the proportion of more than 70 percent female teachers as highly feminised, and those between 50 to 70 percent as low to medium level feminised. At primary level, the teaching force can be referred to as highly feminised in countries such as Brazil, Jamaica, Lesotho, Samoa and UAE, where the proportion of female teachers is more than 75 percent. The proportion goes down at secondary level; yet it remains between 60 and 70 percent in Brazil, Jamaica and Lesotho. The teaching profession in Bangladesh is not feminised at either primary or secondary level. (Table 3)

Table 3: Teaching Staff in school year ending 2009

	Bangladesh	Brazil	Jamaica	Lesotho	Samoa	UAE
% female teachers in primary education	43	91	88.16	77	77.3	86
% female teachers in secondary education	20(z)	68	69.7	64	52.3	58

Source: UIS data 2011 except for Jamaica and Samoa. For Jamaica, Educational Statistics, 2009-10, Government of Jamaica, For Samoa: Kelleher 2011

(z) Data are for the school year ending in 2008.

It is common to indict female teachers for not knowing how to deal with boys and therefore leading to their underperformance. The overwhelming presence of women makes boys think that 'only women teach' (West 2002).^{xvii} The Woman's ability to maintain discipline in the classroom is also often questioned with implications for boys' under performance. However, a recent study provided varying evidence in this context and concluded that direct correlations between the gender of teachers and actual educational outcomes still remained inconclusive and difficult to prove. For instance, while in Lesotho, both male and female teachers felt that male teachers were needed for issues of discipline and role modelling, in Dominica, they did not concur fully with the more widely held adult views that male teachers were better disciplinarians or better role models for boys than women teachers (Kelleher 2011).^{xviii}

Increasing evidence now support that the presence of female teachers is not linked to the underperformance of boys. Francis et al. 2008 in their fairly large qualitative study in the UK reject gender as a salient factor in primary pupil–teacher relations, or as an issue in engaging boys in schooling. This study reinforces the findings of other studies that children's concern is with the quality/ability of the teacher, rather than whether they are male or female.^{xix} Page and Jha 2009 based on a study in seven countries including Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia, Pakistan, India and Nigeria concluded that **it is not the sex of the teacher but her / his gender sensitivity and other competencies that play a role in being able to engaging both boys and girls meaningfully**. All the country case studies in this research indicated towards the presence of gender stereotypical expectations among both men and women teachers – teachers in India, Pakistan and Nigeria (where teaching force is not feminised) expected boys to perform better and those in Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, and Malaysia (where teaching force is feminised) expected girls to perform better. The exceptions also came from both men and women teachers who moved away from these stereotyped notions.^{xx} The example of Samoa also demonstrates that female teacher numbers cannot be held accountable for male underachievement at secondary level, as male teachers are almost fifty percent in that sector.

Some evidences from varying contexts indicate positive linkages between female teacher and student's learning outcomes. However, most of these have not necessarily explored these linkages from the perspective of student's gender. A recent study based on quantitative analysis from India looking into the issue of teacher gender and students' learning achievement found that being in a female teacher's classroom is advantageous for language learning but teacher gender has no effect on mathematics learning. The study also found that male and female teachers significantly differ in terms of their classroom management practices and their belief in students' learning ability. While male teachers are more likely to emphasise the need for authority and therefore bring in the element of fear female teachers in the classroom female teachers are more likely to believe in the capacity of all students to learn well (Chudgar and Sankar 2008). Luschei and Chudgar 2009 analysed TIMMS results from 25 countries from developed and developing world and found a negative correlation between the proportion of male teachers and students' achievement in two-third of these countries, this being statistically significant in five of them. The difference remains significant in two of these countries even after adjusting for factors such as students' SES and positioning of male teaches in low achieving areas.^{xxi}

The evidence from gender-segregated classrooms are also mixed. Aslam and Kingdon 2009 found that in Pakistan where public schooling is largely gender segregated, female students performed significantly better in subjects being taught by female teachers and surmise that given the country's cultural context, this could be explained by the role model argument.^{xxii} Some evidences from the Middle East / North Africa region also supports the argument that single sex environment might be playing a role in female students' better achievement in Mathematics in TIMMS results though the same does not appear to be true for male

students. In Middle Eastern countries such as Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Saudi Arabia, where virtually all secondary schooling is gender-segregated, girls outperform boys in Mathematics, while in countries with mixed classrooms, such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon, it is the boys who outperform girls in grade 8 TIMMS testing.^{xxiii}

Ridge 2010 using the UAE example argues that teachers' training and working conditions rather than gender plays a significant role in boys' under-performance in UAE where public schooling is largely gender segregated. Women teach in both boys' and girls' schools at the primary level, while at the preparatory and secondary levels, boys are taught by men and girls are taught by women. However, male teachers in the UAE are overwhelmingly expatriate teachers, with estimates of up to 80% of male teachers being from outside the UAE. These teachers are contract teachers with low job security, lower salaries, fewer benefits and limited promotion opportunities compared to Emirati teachers. They are therefore not as committed to the job. In addition, they lack pedagogical training as they largely come from countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria where this aspect is weak in teaching training programmes (Ridge 2010).^{xxiv}

Therefore, what seems to determine the teachers' attitude and performance is the training, preparedness, and job security and conditions rather than their sex. Also important to note is the fact that teaching remains a relatively low paid, low status jobs in many of these countries and even though teaching profession is 'feminised', women's representation on leadership and managerial positions even within education sector is low. This reflects that male disadvantage in education does not necessarily lead to their disadvantage in labour market and power positioning in society.

In the Caribbean, the issue of male role model has been raised not only on grounds of predominantly female teachers but also because of a high proportion of single (female) headed households. Boys seek negative male role models allowing them to explore negative masculine identity (Figueroa 2000; Hunte 2002).^{xxv} This aspect is linked with wider socialisation and gender identity issues that are being discussed in the next section.

Gender Norms, Socialisation and Peer Pressure

Conformity to 'masculine' gender identity that clashes with the demands of so called 'feminised' education emerges as the most important and common reason to explain boys' underperformance in general, and in humanities and reading in particular (Jha and Kelleher 2006). Most evidences coming from the Caribbean, Australia, UK and some other developed countries support this hypothesis strongly. The notion of masculine identity has evolved in a manner that anything that is considered 'feminine' is not 'masculine'. It takes rather extreme form in the Caribbean where recent research "adds additional data concerning the role of masculine taboos in creating a range of pressures that create social 'no-go zones' for young men – one of which increasingly seems to be education" (Plummer 2007). Peer pressure to conform to the prevalent masculine identity is generally immense. In that context, Plummer 2007 based on his research in a number of Caribbean countries^{xxvi} concludes that:

Education seems to have become increasingly associated with feminising and homophobic taboos. This may well have coincided with the progress made by girls in education, but there would seem to be no reason why this has to be the case: greater access by women to education does not explain why males should necessarily have lesser access, unless it becomes taboo. It is the misogynistic and homophobic taboos that alienate boys from large areas of social life that they would be much better off having access to. Central to this process is how peer groups police certain activities that do not accord with peer-endorsed norms of manhood and/or they come into tension with prevailing taboos. These norms and their associated taboos are endorsed and manufactured by the peer group. While this occurs in the

context of wider social expectations of masculinity, the groups themselves actively manipulate masculinities as our highly visible youth cultures constantly demonstrate.

Although not as obvious and visible as in the Caribbean, similar notions, albeit to a lesser extent, seems to operate in other countries as well. Page and Jha 2009 clearly bring out the fact that though the notions regarding what is masculine and what is feminine are fairly universal, a major difference between countries where boys face disadvantage in education and where they do not is that education has still not entered as a 'feminine' activity in the latter. Education continues to have a high premium for boys in countries such as India, Pakistan and Nigeria, and gets reflected in the fact that they do not face the same disadvantage as visible in other countries.

The issue of negative masculine identity, however, does not appear to be strong in countries like Bangladesh. The prevalent gender norms there are similar to other South Asian countries such as India and Pakistan. But it is also important to note that the nature of boys' disadvantage in such cases is qualitatively different from most other countries as the completion rates at secondary level are still low for girls in comparison of boys. In fact, some researches clearly suggest that girls faced discrimination when it came to time spent on studies at home and investments in private tutoring (Amin and Chandrashekhar 2009).^{xxvii}

Schooling processes, teachers' expectations, curriculum, pedagogy and gender stereotyping

Educational processes are important to understand the issues of participation and attainment in education. Although it is difficult to apportion, it is increasingly being recognised that a significant proportion of drop outs as well as low performance may be related to non-access issues such as teacher student relationship, peer behaviour, teachers expectations, etc. Therefore, it is important to see the link between classroom processes including the teaching materials being used, pedagogy being practiced and course content being taught, peer as well as other relationships operating in the school sphere, and their impact on boys' participation or performance in the countries where they are facing disadvantage. (Jha and Kelleher 2006; Page and Jha 2009)

Most research studies available on the issue of what goes on in schools in the context of gender from various parts of the world report that schools in most cases reproduce the dominant gender stereotypes and regimes. This often means that schools reinforce the dominant notions associated with masculine and feminine identities and behaviour with implications for the performance of both boys and girls. This could mean low academic expectations from boys in Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia and Samoa, or boys being perceived as more naturally intelligent though lazy and girls not as intelligent but hardworking in India, Pakistan and Nigeria; boys being perceived as active learners while girls being seen as learning thorough rote learning in most countries (Page and Jha 2009). It is obvious that these have links with gendered disadvantages in these countries. In Jamaica, one study found that boys were continually told they were lazy and inattentive to their studies leading to low self-esteem and poor academic achievement and test results (USAID 2005).^{xxviii} The examples of schooling processes questioning and challenging these norms also exist but they are very few. Almost all evidences point out to ready acceptance of teachers about girls' 'care' role in school as well as in homes.

Boys are expected and accepted to be more aggressive and therefore less 'disciplined'. The studies from various countries including Mongolia, Seychelles, Thailand, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Australia showed that boys are also likely to receive greater physical punishment / violence both at the hands of teachers and peers (Plummer 2005, Figueroa 2000, Page and Jha 2009, UNGEI 2011, Smith and Green 2007).^{xxix} A study from UK revealed that the teacher racial stereotypes were also gendered, with the idea of a violent

masculinity generalized to all Black male pupils (Gosain 2009).^{xxx}

The curriculum, textbooks, learning materials and pedagogical approaches were found to be oriented towards reproduction in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Lesotho and Nigeria as against the elements of knowledge creation and questioning were more visible in Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Malaysia (UNICEF 2003, UNICEF 2009, Page and Jha 2009).^{xxxi} A review of gender related policies and initiatives in education in Asia and Pacific showed that there is now greater awareness among curriculum makers and textbook writers of the value of designing more gender-sensitive educational inputs but these initiatives are generally confined to donor-funded projects (UNICEF 2009). However, changes in textbooks or curriculum alone are not enough without changes in the classroom processes. Page and Jha 2009 showed that teachers' attitude and classroom processes played an important role in reinforcing the stereotypical expectations and behaviour. Certain classroom management processes such as streaming of 'better performing' students in one section tends to label students and has negative impact on students', especially boys' performance in certain cases. Their concentration in lower performing streams further strengthens their 'masculine' anti-education notions. They seek peer approval of this 'masculine' achievement to deal with the negative labeling emanating out of the label of poor performance.

Learning processes are important not only for the stereotypes related issues but also for the quality and perceived quality. Low level of quality and absence of clear linkages with education with future earnings, either real or perceived, could play a role in deciding for or against schooling, especially in circumstances where poverty is high and labour market opportunities are available for uneducated children and adolescents. Broecke and Hamad (2008) in a study on male under-participation in higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) found that poor achievement in secondary school was the most significant factor in explaining why males did not choose to go on to university. They found that if prior attainment was controlled for then the gender differences disappear. Abdulla and Ridge 2011 use the same argument to explain male under participation in secondary schools in UAE. In such cases, the quality at primary level also becomes important for understanding the participation trends at secondary stage. Bangladesh provides one such example where a review of studies on the quality of primary education asserted that they "generally point to low levels of learning achievement, poor literacy and numeracy skills acquired during the primary school cycle (World Bank 2008).^{xxxii}

Poverty, economic pressure, labour markets and wage returns

How poverty and economic pressures act against a particular gender, in this case boys, depends on a combination of factors in a particular context. UNICEF 2004 shows that poverty plays a pivotal role in the underachievement of both males and females but boys are more likely to be affected in the Caribbean and Latin American countries. It appears that negative or hegemonic masculine identities, as some prefer to refer to it, impact boys from lower poorer income groups in much more adverse manner in this region. Economic hardship enhances youth susceptibility to gang membership, violence and crime in the Caribbean (Smith and Green 2007). Jha and Kelleher (2006) found that the research heavily indicated an interaction between socio economic class and gender: while a preponderance of narrow constructions of masculine identity particularly among working class and poorer income groups led to an anti-'feminine' and anti-school attitudes that found those boys representing a disproportionate amount of those underachieving, the availability of a "muscular intellectualness" inherent within middle-class hegemonic masculinity provided avenues for middle class boys to start achieving better in mid to late secondary education.

The relationship between boys' disadvantage in secondary education and labour market participation appears to be mixed and uneven in different countries. As in the case of crime and violence, it is difficult to determine if labour market trends are causes or results of boys'

disadvantage in education. A relationship between poverty, high demand for child labour and boys' under participation in schooling exists in countries with low-income or high socio-economic disparities such as Bangladesh. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) overview note on Bangladesh mentions that nearly 50 per cent of primary school students drop out before they complete grade 5, and then gravitate towards work, swelling the number of child labourers.^{xxxiii} As seen earlier, boys far outnumber girls among children engaged in economic activities in Bangladesh. Ahmad and Ray (2011) found that children' work, even in limited amounts, does adversely affect the child' schooling, and is reflected in reduced school attendance and age-adjusted school attendance rates.^{xxxiv}

Similar situation exists in Lesotho where the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research (MUSTER) project showed that the causes of male dropping out in the country was more often in order to fulfil work obligations due to hard economic circumstances (Jobo et el, 2001 as cited in Jha and Kelleher 2006). Nearly 68 per cent of Lesotho's population remains below the national poverty line. Poverty coupled with pastoral nature of the economy leads to boys' engagement in cattle grazing. Livestock are an important part of Lesotho tradition and boys are engaged in looking after them from a young age (Jha and Kelleher 2006). Mongolia is another country where boys are often co-opted to work full-time to earn money, where they contribute to household incomes by working with livestock (UNGEI 2011). Similar trend of young boys being engaged in cattle or agriculture related can be observed in a number of Asian and African countries with low income or with high income-disparities.

Labour market in most countries remains gender segregated and youth unemployment rates are higher for females (Table 5). Men continue to dominate in high status, high paying sectors and women remain concentrated in low paying, low status jobs often with lower average wages. This pattern of occupational segregation is partly determined by the sex-segregation of the technical- vocational curriculum in countries like Jamaica that results in females being clustered in the lowest paying sectors of the market and ultimately in having lower average incomes than men.^{xxxv} Brazil presents a similar scenario where the continuous growth of female labor force participation coexists with the persistence of positional inequalities. Women are still overrepresented in the service sector and manage to displace male workers in some formal, more structured and 'superior' occupations usually by accepting a more modest salary.^{xxxvi} It could be surmised that labour market trends play a role in creating a sense of complacency among boys that even with the lower educational achievements they would find a livelihood and earn more than their women counterparts and this acts as a de-motivator for boys in performing well in schools.

Table 4: Youth Unemployment rates

	Banglade sh	Brazil	Jamaica	Lesoth o	Samoa	UAE
% youth unemployment male	8	14	22	21.2	-	8
% youth unemployment female	14	23	33	24.6	-	22

Source: UIS data, 2011Unemployment Youth rate- as per cent of total labour force aged 15-24 years (Based on World Bank 2011 data)

- (a) Data are for the most recent year available during the period specified. For more details see UNDP (2010)
- (b) Source: Table L.1 Population aged 15 years and above by employment status, sex and district (page-64) Bureau of Statistics, Lesotho

It is obvious that a range of causes using varied and mixed theoretical frames have been used to understand and discuss the issue of boys' disadvantage in education. It is important to understand that (i) the context plays an important role, and (ii) Social, economic, educational institution based and community related these reasons work in combination, rather than in isolation, to make the phenomenon happen. Broadly speaking, two kinds of explanations can be identified from among developing countries. One is primarily a

sociological explanation similar to what is seen in developed countries and more prevalent in Latin America and the Caribbean – the emergence of masculine identities that consider education, especially reading, a feminine achievement and therefore preventing boys from making efforts to do well. Sociological explanations also refer to the aspect of socialisation at home where boys experience privileging, as they are not expected to have any domestic responsibilities and therefore have not learnt self-discipline required for academic rigour. The other is primarily economic explanation where poverty and occupational demands pull boys out of schooling and make them work from an early stage. The negative masculinities are also stronger for poorer and disadvantaged ethnic groups in particular contexts, and therefore these two are not exclusive. Schools strengthen rather than weaken such trends in both the cases. School management as well as pedagogical practices, teachers' expectations and behaviour – all tend to reinforce prevalent stereotypes and gender norms.

What also emerges clearly is that neither feminisation of teaching profession nor multi-sex classroom situations can be universally held responsible for boys' disadvantage. It is also important to understand that **unlike female disadvantage in education, male disadvantage in education is not a result of any structural or historical marginalisation.** The fact that men continue to experience advantages in labour market bears testimony to this. Men in none of these countries experience secondary positioning and face discrimination as women have in almost all patriarchal societies.

4. How to address the Issue?

Boys' disadvantage in education is indeed a growing problem that requires policy attention. However, it "should not divert attention from the continuing issue of low access for girls to primary and secondary education in many developing countries" (UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007). **A perusal of policies / programmes / literature from various countries shows that no country can be credited with developing a comprehensive set of policies and interventions in place though many have tried to introduce some interventions or the other, and their analysis offer some useful insights about possible solutions.** Some small initiatives, mostly being implemented by non-governmental organisations and have having been tried by school, also indicate towards some interventions that have worked and have potential for up scaling and replication.

Developing suitable policies in this respect is not easy and straightforward. **Male disadvantage is a more complex phenomenon than female disadvantage as in most cases it coexists with higher social and economic positioning, and privileging within family.** In addition, unlike in the case of girls where peer support for education and education as an individual or collective aspiration has not been an issue, peer notion and pressure of viewing education as an undesirable process makes it much more difficult in case of boys. Policy development and implementation have to take note of these complexities. The policies and strategies are located in education sector but some could also be located outside the education as well. The context plays an important role in making a policy suitable or effective, and therefore the choice must be linked to the specific situation.

De-streaming classes

A number of countries (such as Seychelles, Jamaica, Samoa) practise 'ability' based 'streaming' at secondary level whereby all high performing students are put together in one section, and the low performing students are put together in one section. Since boys in most cases in these countries are already underperforming, it means higher proportion of girls going towards top streams and higher proportion of boys in lower streams in most cases. This practice proves to be self-defeating in most cases, as it labels these students. Most studies clearly show that such practices reinforce negative perceptions and self-images, leading to behaviour that encourages low performance (Afamasaga 2009, Pardiwalla 2009,

Reid 2011).^{xxxvii} Seychelles attempted to de-stream classes in selected schools by developing clear and transparent criteria of dividing students into sections and ensuring that all sections are mix ability and gender balanced. Within a year they noted positive changes in terms of friendships, positive behaviour and reduced need for 'disciplining' boys. Both teachers and parents approved of the change as desirable (Athil and Jha 2009).^{xxxviii}

Gender Review of Curricula, syllabus and textbooks

Mongolia, Thailand and Maldives have conducted gender audit of textbooks to remove stereotyping of sex roles. Mongolia did so in 2005, and in 2007, Thailand carried out a comprehensive review of student textbooks through secondary education, eliminating both the paucity and passivity given to girls and portraying more women as role models in non-traditional areas. Reviews of curricula in the Maldives are designed to teach teachers to change their teaching style and encourage them to adopt more activity based, student-centred methods (UNICEF 2009). Although the impact of such exercises cannot be clear in short run, these are important especially considering that women still have secondary position in these societies. Many of these countries have a higher proportion of women teachers, it is important that they are depicted in positive light in textbooks. However, it is also important that such reviews are comprehensive and do not remain tokenistic and iterative. These also must address the issues related to the notions of 'hegemonic' masculinities and they way they operate. Most gender reviews tend to focus only on women's issues and therefore these issues remain unaddressed.

Skill based technical / vocational / other options

Examples from many countries, especially those emanating from non-government organisations, suggest that modern skill-development courses, with greater employability potential help in raising the aspirations and earning capacities. Strategies to modernise / include relevant skill based education at upper secondary and post secondary levels have helped in reducing boys' disadvantage, and be considered as an important policy intervention. Some skill-matching exercise with labour market trends and needs would also help. However, caution is needed in preventing such options to be the only choices being available to boys coming from poorer backgrounds, and therefore closing the academic options.

Teachers' attitude, expectations and sharing among teaching

Various researches made it clear that it was not the presence of female teachers but teachers' attitude, whether male or female, made a difference. Therefore, reflective training of teachers where they are encouraged to develop more balanced and supportive attitude towards both girls and boys is critical. Regular opportunities to share and discuss, and facilitated discussions help teachers in developing their own solutions and taking initiatives. Inter-school groups also help in exchange views and experiences, and act as support group for teachers (Younger and Warrington 2005; Jha and Kelleher 2006; Athil and Jha 2009).

School environment, management and pedagogy

Experiences show that a combination of strategies work at school level to raise boys' participation and achievement without putting girls at disadvantage. These include pedagogic, individual, school management and school environment related practices. The following principles emerge from the analysis of experiences of a number of school and community based initiatives in different kinds of settings in the Caribbean, Latin America, UK, Africa, East Asia and Australia (Younger and Warrington 2005; Jha and Kelleher 2006; Athil and Jha 2009, World Bank and Commonwealth Secretariat 2009).^{xxxix} Many of these are known principles for running an efficient and effective school of high quality, yet it is

important to reiterate those as these are especially relevant in the context of boys' disadvantage.

Classroom-based approaches with a focus on active learning and respect for students help in engaging students more creatively. Small action research based projects help teachers in developing new approaches. At individual level, a focus on target-setting and mentoring goes a long way. Mentoring emerges as an important and effective process for engaging boys and raising their self-belief and confidence. The mentor needs to be credible, collaborative and supportive on the one hand, but also assertive and demanding on the other. A focus on developing a sense of achievement and being useful also helps boys. Inclusion of social/life skills development activities and exercises also help.

The school ethos and classroom environment needs to have an emphasis on co-operation, confidence building and conflict resolution in order to help create an enabling environment. Non-threatening and non-judgemental school environment works against negative behaviour. It also means doing away with the practice of corporal punishment commonly practised in many countries. School ethos and processes should be such that they question prevalent gender stereotypes and develops positive gender identities. It is important to be consistent in the approach so that conflicting messages are not conveyed to students and teachers. School leadership plays a major role in setting the school culture and ethos.

Active Dialogue and engagement with community

Active dialogue and engagement with community helps in developing an enabling relationship and getting their support for various reforms that the school / other institution needs to introduce. Almost all school and non-school based successful experiences from various corners of the globe discussed emphasised this aspect. The same principle that works with students also work with parents / community, i.e., respect, mentoring, focus on conflict resolution, engagement in decision making and keeping them informed, being non-judgemental, etc. These aspects are important as majority of such boys come from poorer, working class background, and therefore parents / community need greater support. Community empowerment programmes that help in questioning the prevalent notions of masculinities also help.

A recent World Bank study on crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean identified the early childhood development and mentoring programs, interventions to increase retention of high-risk youth in secondary schools, and opening schools after-hours and on weekends to offer youth attractive activities to occupy their free time as some of the possible effective strategies to prevent the engagement of youth in violence and crime.^{x1}

Single Sex school?

It is common to blame co-educational school for boys' low performance and therefore, single sex school is being suggested as possible solution in some corners. However, no consistent body of knowledge exists to support that single sex schools help in raising the participation or performance of boys or girls. Some evidences suggest that single sex environment can be worse, as they happen to be more rigid and stereotypical. Younger and Warrington 2005 based on their work with many schools in UK concluded that while single sex schools are not desirable, single sex classes could help in creating certain situations where they are uninhibited and do not have to be defensive. Single sex classrooms have helped women and girls in many programmes for several reasons. However, caution is needed so that it does not turn into a 'boys versus girls' situation. Trinidad and Tobago has introduced gradual conversion of 20 secondary schools into single-sex institutions in 2010. Lisle 2010 rightly critiques that this policy choice is not based on authentic body of evidences or wide consultations, and therefore could be counter-productive.

Abolition / rationalisation of school fees at secondary level

Abolition of school fee helped in raising the enrolment at secondary level in many regions, especially in Africa. High fee at secondary level acts as a deterrent in some countries, especially where the alternative is to enter labour market and work. Certain countries are now rationalising their fee structure at secondary stage but the impact is yet to be seen.

Conditional cash/ kind transfers

The conditional cash transfer schemes linked with conditions of school attendance of children have demonstrated positive results in raising the participation level at primary level. However, the impact is less obvious for its impact on different gender and also less clear at secondary level except in case of FSSP in Bangladesh where it was targeted only to girls at secondary level. But it is now being cited as having caused a negative impact on boys' enrolment. Therefore, caution is needed before adopting such a policy and the design must address the concerns that could emerge in future. In countries, where the trend of boys' disadvantage is strongly linked with poverty, these interventions might help. But in countries where it is also strongly linked with notions of masculinities, this alone might not have significant impact. It would need to be complemented by other interventions that help community as well as school to challenge such notions.

5. Country Case Studies

5.1 Jamaica

5.1.1 The Issue

Global Education Digest (GED) 2010 places Jamaica in the list of nations that have achieved gender parity in primary education in 2008 but is at risk of not achieving so in secondary education by 2015 because of increasing gender disparity trends against boys. Jamaican youth is found to be increasingly involved in violence and lack of interest towards attainment or continuation of secondary and tertiary education. The disparities start showing at upper secondary level, which get worse at tertiary level. What is more worrying is that the disparities are increasing rather than decreasing in recent past at both these levels. The GPI in upper secondary education was 1.07 in the year 1999 but it worsened at 1.11 in 2009 (Table 5). The Jamaican Adult Literacy rates in 2009 show a ten per cent points difference in the male and female literacy (male literacy is 81.2 per cent and female stands at 91.1 per cent). The Youth Literacy too shows boys at a disadvantage with only 92 per cent male literate while 98 per cent females are literate.

Table 5: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in Jamaica: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		Latin America and the Caribbean regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary	94	94	95	92	119	115
GER Lower Secondary	97	96	95	95	100	104
GER Upper Secondary	73	74	80	89	69	80
GER Tertiary	12	26	15	33	33	41

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in Jamaica.

As discussed earlier, boys' disadvantage is not limited to under participation but extends to learning outcomes and performance in various subjects as well. The World Data on Education (2010/11) mentions that girls outperformed boys in all subjects in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) in 2006. Similarly, the 2005 results of Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate administered by the Caribbean Examination Council showed that the absolute number of girls receiving highest three grades in 29 out of 35 subjects (barring six which belong to the technical/vocational category and Mathematics) is significantly higher than boys. This included all the science subjects. Therefore, girls in Jamaica are outperforming boys not only in reading but also in the sciences and other subjects, and boys retain some advantage only in Mathematics and a few technical subjects.

5.1.2 *Beneath the Issue*

In many ways, Jamaica presents a typical case of boys' disadvantage in the Caribbean. Bailey (2000), reviewing alternative explanations of male underachievement in Jamaican context classified them as follows^{xli}:

- Explanations that centre on notions of schools failing boys because of the emphasis on continuous assessment in some school systems, their failure to use methodologies that pay more attention to boys, teachers who relax standards for boys, and the poor quality of children's literature aimed at boys (Skelton 1998).
- Explanations that focus on the socialization practices of homes that create dissonance with the academic success expected in schools. Boys get less exposure to task in the homes that build self-discipline, time management and a sense of process (Figueroa 1998).
- Explanations that use wider social changes and their impact on gender as their main construct. Changing gender identities and relations, changing labour processes and labour markets, and changing family forms are among the interrelated factors that fuel social changes impacting on boys in schools.

Boys' disadvantage in education seems to have some linkages with high involvement in risky behavior, crime, violence and homicides among Jamaican youth. In 2000, Jamaica ranked third in the world in murders per capita and in by the end of 2005, police crime data indicated a record number of annual homicides (63.0 per 100000 inhabitants), a rate greater than three times the global average of 19.4 per 100000. These statistics are in addition to the high rates of rape, stab wounds and other injuries, and assaults. Young adults are disproportionately represented among convicts and undertrials. A case study on the prestigious Blue Mountain High School in Jamaica (Jha and Kelleher 2006) shows the depth of the problem. There are clear evidences of inter-school rivalry and conflict, student indiscipline and insecurity stemming from poor family relations, low level of teacher motivation and commitment, non-facilitative internal structures and procedures, 'cliquism' among teachers and lack of effective staff development programmes to make teachers able to address such issues.

Based on an extensive analysis of existing literature in Jamaican context, Smith and Green (2007) analyses the causes for violence among youth and some of these are relevant for explaining boys' disadvantage in education as well. These included the use of the extreme disciplinary corporal punishment both by parents and teachers. It is utilized both as a disciplinary ritual and a pedagogical strategy in schools. In one study, 91% of the teacher-respondents reported using corporal punishment. It was hypothesized that the indiscipline, lack of social responsibility, and belligerency evidenced in Jamaican youth were directly linked to the harsh treatment, specifically corporal punishment, administered to children by teachers, as such treatment created distress, anger, and rage in pupils.

Evans (1999) in a study of the academic achievement of 3,719 students in four different types of secondary schools in Jamaica, concluded that boys and girls existed in a gender-coded school environment and differed on almost every measure examined. She pointed out that many school practices demeaned students, particularly boys. Her ethnographic

observations revealed that boys actively and continuously constructed definitions of themselves as irresponsible, unreliable, and uninterested in schoolwork.^{xliii} A later study confirmed this assertion by reporting that boys were continually told they were lazy and inattentive to their studies. This resulted in low self-esteem and poor academic achievement and test results (USAID 2005).

Most schools in Jamaica practice streaming, which has been identified as a barrier to effective performance. As the boys fall behind, they become overrepresented in the lower streams leading to a negative effect on attitudes to and interest in schoolwork. Lack of sufficient school places and location of schools being far from each other has cost implications, though it is not clear why this feature affects boys more negatively than girls (Reid 2011).

Brown 2001 mentions boys are affected differently by economic and class issues within the society, such as the tendency towards engagement in crime.^{xliii} Figueroa 2000 explains that the minority of boys who do very well in school in Jamaica start their education within the privilege of the private preparatory school. Poverty inhibits families' capacity to provide basic needs and engage in nurturing behaviour required for the children's development, and pushes youth towards crime and violence (Smith and Green 2007).

A close analysis of employment rates shows that despite having lower literacy levels, males have higher employment rates than females. This apparently leads to a sense of complacency among boys, and also shows that the disadvantage in education does not necessarily get converted into disadvantage in labour market.

4.1.3. How to address the Issue?

The Caribbean region has been active in raising this issue on international fora and attempting to find solutions nationally and regionally. The Task Force on Economic Reforms 2004 came up with some major recommendations like establishment of Education Transformation Team following whole school approach with a component of behavior change involving community and other stakeholders. The Jamaican Ministry of Education has adopted some policies that could be viewed as having potential to address this issue directly or indirectly.^{xliii} Some of these are:

- Abolition of secondary education fees in 2007 by the government had a potential to bring boys of poorer families to schools, as they were more likely to discontinue education.
- Implementation of the Program of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) and the School Feeding Program too was meant to provide safety nets to vulnerable families in retaining their children in schools.
- Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) project aimed at improving the access and equity issues in secondary education. This had a specific goal of tackling anti-social behavior in the schools. One strategy was the development of a common Grades 7-9 ROSE curriculum in 13 subject areas to address the issues of equity, access, quality and productivity.
- Implementation of inner city project which aimed at addressing access and equity issues
- The policy on mainstreaming the Technical and Vocational in secondary education would help in giving secondary school graduates at least one certificate in any of the vocational courses. This too was aimed at tackling the problem of unemployment for secondary school male graduates who fail to continue with tertiary education owing to a variety of reasons.
- The Culture in Education Programme places culture as context, content and methodology for learning. This means that the CIEP is a mechanism within the classroom to enrich curriculum delivery. It is also a tool for building clubs and

societies as well as a device for giving meaning to the performing arts programme of the various institutions. This is expected to have positive affect on self-image and pride among adolescents.^{xlv}

- High School Equivalency Programme (HISEP) targets those persons who have not completed secondary education beyond grade 9. The High School Equivalency Certificate (HISEC) is a certificate to be issued by the National Council on Technical and Vocational Education (NCTVET) which will be equivalent to a grade 11 qualification such as the Caribbean of Education Council's certificate of secondary education (CXC), and the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (GCE) issued to those who have completed grades 1-11 in the formal education system but for various reasons have not received certification. There are others who have not completed grade 11.^{xlvi}
- Expanding secondary education access by opening new school leading to creation of additional school spaces between 2005 and 2007.
- National textbook loan scheme at the secondary level with provision of approximately 590,000 free textbooks to students at grades 7-11 across 270 secondary schools island-wide.

Although it is difficult to comment on the efficacy of these interventions in absence of any evaluation in public domain, some feel that the gender gap has mostly been ignored in education reform (Bailey 2004, Lisle 2010).^{xlvii} Lisle 2010, for example, noted that Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE), the highly successful large-scale education reform project in Jamaica, which consisted of several interlocking initiatives, did not specifically target the gender achievement gap (Lisle, 2010). The fact that gender disparity at secondary level has either remained constant or worsened in the country reflects that these have had no or very limited impact on this aspect so far.

In this context, it would also be important to mention several small initiatives that have shown promising results. Jha and Kelleher 2006 presented a detailed case study of 'Change from Within' initiative, which was started with inputs from the University of West Indies, and led to creation of circle of friends bringing together a number of schools to discuss, find solutions, act and share experiences relating to the issues such as raising the self esteem of inner city boys, reducing the violence, etc. It did help in breaking the isolation and developing certain effective strategies but needed greater support and push to continue and sustain.

Box 1: Keeping Boys Out of Risk - Three Promising Practices

1. The Civil Society Organisation **Dispute Resolution Foundation** is working to enhance existing youth appropriate services and continue to mitigate the impact of violence through the provision of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services and training targeted to at-risk adolescents. Participants are equipped with knowledge and skills to choose and use alternative, positive methods of conflict resolution and mediation to deal with violence in their homes, schools and communities; and given a 'safe space' to discuss and develop life choice options such as career paths and access to school / skills based training.

Key Enabling Factors for Success

- Training young people as Youth Peace Facilitators has proven to be an effective way to share non-violence messages and services to youth at risk by addressing basic needs like home work assistance and mentoring, participants are more likely to choose peaceful solutions rather than conflict, and are also more likely to improve school attendance.
- Involved families and communities key to success and sustainability, therefore interventions also target Parents/Caregivers and teachers by providing training in how to detect, manage and mitigate conflict.
- Peace and Justice Centres located within communities offer safe, neutral places for adolescents in volatile communities, and allow direct interaction between the Centres and the community.

2. The **Male Awareness Now (MAN) Project** is managed by the Non-Governmental Organization Children First Agency in Jamaica. The main objective of the project is to address the impact of culture and the need for re-socialization of young men's behavior and attitudes. The project provides young males from communities where poverty is high and there are many social problems with vocational skills training and life skills education. Out-of-school youngsters are provided with training and guidance to enter into formal schools and/or training programmes or employment opportunities based on their expertise in the chosen vocational skill areas.

Key Enabling Factors for Success

- Active participation in the design has led to a sense of ownership of the project by the young males, and provided them with the opportunity to identify key issues for discussions; to share the project model and their experience with adults; and to monitor and evaluate the project implementation.
- Ongoing involvement of the parents in the project provides space for dialogue and bonding amongst the children and the parent(s).
- Community "buy-in" fosters community spirit and interest in the project. Also, community activities such as career expositions offer both adults and young people to explore employment and educational opportunities.
- The skills component of the project is important since it instills a sense of pride and accomplishment in participants.

3. The objective of the **Jamaican Non-Governmental Organization People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT)** is to facilitate full participation and involvement of unattached youth within inner-cities. The aim was to contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty for unemployed 15 to 25 year old males who were not attending school nor engaged in any meaningful activity, but vulnerable to risky behavior, by equipping them with the appropriate livelihood skills and the opportunity to develop positive attitudes required for the world of work, family and community life. Program components included mentoring, remedial education, swimming instruction, micro-business training, music instruction, training in job seeking skills, field trips, and motivational speakers.

Key Enabling Factors for Success

- Integrated approach that combined educational development with skills training and business development, personal development and community involvement.
- Continuous exposure to positive male role models from private and public life through motivational sessions, one-to-one mentoring, workshops, etc.
- Making apprenticeships and part-time employment accessible, combined with opportunities for tertiary education in their respective fields.
- Neutral environment where the young men could feel comfortable and share their feelings without the danger of being criticized fostered by one-to-one relationship between the PACT team and the participants.

Source: Conference report of 'Keeping Boys Out of Risk', Regional Caribbean Conference organised by the World Bank and Commonwealth Secretariat in Jamaica, May 2009 (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/EXTLACREGTOPPOVANA/0,,contentMDK:22244786~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:841175,00.html>)

The high-level Regional Caribbean Conference on Keeping Boys Out of Risk, held in Jamaica in May 2009, as part of the joint World Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat's Regional Caribbean Initiative on Keeping Boys Out of Risk also organized a regional contest to identify and promote existing best practices that target youth-at-risk, highlight the importance of human development and focus on empowerment of youth. Submissions from 11 Caribbean countries showed a remarkable diversity in approaches and activities focusing on youth at risk in the region. Seven initiatives were identified as finalists after levels of scrutiny and three of them came from Jamaica (Box 1). These were small-scale initiatives but provided important pointers for policy interventions. One common thread is the focus on mentoring and developing a sense of self-worth among adolescents and youth, something important for schools to learn from. Second is the focus on community / parental engagement in the process of developing and implementing the programme, another lesson

for teachers and school administrators.

5.2 Brazil

5.2.1 The Issue

Global Education Digest (GED) 2010 places Brazil in the list of nations that have achieved gender parity in primary education but is at risk of not achieving so in secondary education by 2015 because of increasing gender disparity trends against boys. Disparities start showing at lower secondary stage, which gets much worse at upper secondary and tertiary levels. The disparities are showing some signs of waning but there is still a long way to go (Table 6). According to the National Household Survey, of the total out of school population in the age group of 4 to 17 in 2009, 1.7 million were female and 2 million were male.

Table 6: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in Brazil: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		Latin America and the Caribbean regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary	155	146	132	123	119	115
GER Lower Secondary	112	118	106	109	100	104
GER Upper Secondary	70	87	82	102	69	80
GER Tertiary	36	86	48	79	33	41

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in Brazil.

Note: Enrolment for the most recent year is lower than in 2005 mainly because the data collection reference date was shifted from the last Wednesday of March to the last Wednesday of May to account for duplicates (enrolments), and transfers of students and teachers (from one school to another), common features at the beginning of the year. At this point of the school year, it is believed, the education system becomes stable, so the data collected should represent the current school year.

Table 7: Attainment of young people between 16 and 19 years

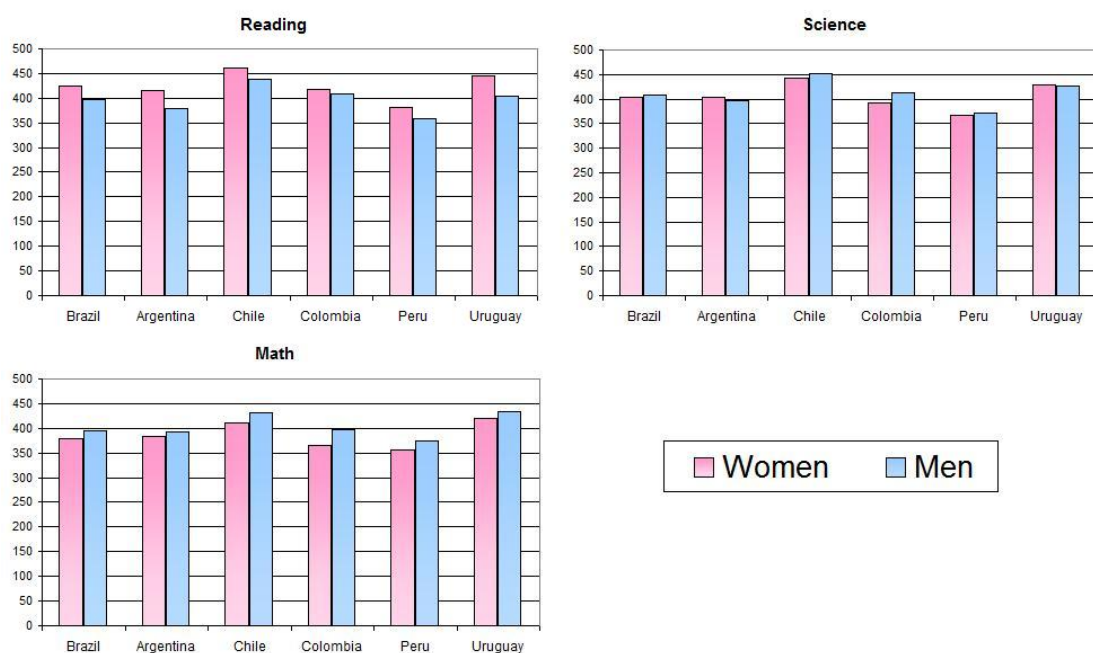
	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009
16 years – Completed elementary education								
Men	25%	27%	36%	41%	49%	51%	54%	57%
Women	34%	40%	46%	52%	60%	62%	68%	70%
19 years – Completed upper secondary education								
Men	14%	18%	24%	28%	31%	34%	39%	43%
Women	20%	23%	29%	36%	42%	45%	50%	56%

Source: Pnad (National Household Survey) 2009 (IBGE- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística)/ *Todos Pela Educação*.

Table 7, which is based on household survey as against the school based data, shows that (i) the educational attainment completion rates are much lower than enrolment rates, and (ii) gender disparity has not increased and the overall attainment rates have improved over the years (1995-2009). In addition to enrolment and attainment rates, gender disparity is also present in favour of girls for the performance, especially in reading. However, the differences are not as high. Figure 1 shows the scores of Brazilian students alongside other countries that

were included in PISA 2009. PISA assesses 15/16 years olds in reading, math and science. Boys performed better than girls in science and girls performed better than boys in reading in all these countries. In Brazil the girls got 28 points higher than boys in reading (425-397) and the boys got 15 points higher than girls in mathematics (394-379). The results are mixed in the science. The analysis of PISA 2009 results for equity issues showed that Brazil is one of those countries where the absolute number of poorly performing students is high, with 40% or more of 15-year-olds performing below level 2.^{xlvi}

Figure 3: Scores in Pisa 2009 of the South American countries by gender



Source: Pisa 2009 (OECD).

An important aspect is that despite considerable growth in enrolment rates in the last decade the inequalities related to race and socio-economic status persist. The highest rate of enrollment is of white girls followed by white boys, black women, and, finally, the black boys. This is despite the fact that Brazil is one of those countries that have reached gender parity at primary level even in the poorest quintile (GED 2010). Still, in Brazil too, boys' problems with education are difficult to disentangle from their social class and ethnicity.

2. Beneath the Issue

The issue of boys' disadvantage in Latin America and the Caribbean has often been linked to gang culture. International Labour Organization Study that looks at what it means to be in a Brazilian youth gang, *acomando*, describes a vivid picture of the call of the streets. In this kind of peer group a premium is put on actions and behaviour that are not likely to fit very easily into the average classroom, particularly in low-income areas. In addition, analysis of income data indicates that boys from poorer areas would have justification in thinking that schooling may not reap them sufficient financial rewards. People from low-income areas need to have 11 years of education before they reach the average earnings of people with just four years of schooling in metropolitan Rio de Janeiro as a whole. Of course there are individual differences, yet there is a clear trend that shows linkages between street culture and boys' disadvantage in education (State of the World Children 2004, UNICEF).

The data of Censo Escolar 2009 shows that about 82% of teachers of Basic Education are women. This percentage is close to 97% in Early Childhood Education. A number of studies

have gone into this aspect but a perusal suggests that it is difficult to be conclusive in this regard (Carvalho, 2003; Rosenberg, 2004; Silva, 2004; Brito, 2006; Pereira, 2008).^{xlix}

Many researches consider child labour as one the labor the main cause of the disadvantage of boys in relation to enrollment and the completion of secondary education in Brazil. The number of working children for 10-13 year old was 5.1 million in 2006, among which 10.5 percent were boys and 5.8 were girls. Artes and Carvalho (2010) tested the relationship between work and studies among children taking gender into account using a statistical model. The results indicated that factors related to work effectively affect boys more than girls.ⁱ

There is widespread evidence that children's working hours differ significantly across sector of employment (Guarcello, et al. 2004). Around one in three working children in commerce, services and manufacturing sectors put in a work-week of at least 40 hours (Guarcello, et al. (2004).ⁱⁱ This is at times used to argue that children working in less demanding sectors could continue their studies.

Several studies on Brazil also indicate that there are intra-school and intra-home factors that are influencing the disadvantage of boys. Boys and girls are treated quite differently in the educational process as a whole, at home, at school and on the street. Negative discrimination in the form of punishments is particularly identified as having adverse impact on boys (Carvalho, 2008).ⁱⁱⁱ

A perusal of adult labour force participation trends in the country suggests they are still overrepresented in the service sector and have limited participation in other activities: 50 percent of the employed women in 2007 (16 years old or older) were engaged in domestic- 'social' (33,6 per cent) or trade (16,5 per cent) activities. A closer look at industrial occupation also reveals the highly gendered dimension where 65 per cent of the industrial workers were male. The remaining 35 per cent accounted for female industrial workers segregated in branches such as textiles and shoe wear – that are more frequently subject to subcontracting processes in which low paid, precarious jobs are the rule, not the exception (IPEA, 2009).ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The distribution of the employed population by monthly earnings in 2006 pointed out that female workers are relatively less represented in higher occupation or salary (Martins and Lindôso 2010). This again leads one to surmise that **advantages experienced by men in the labour market makes them complacent about their educational attainments and achievements at various levels including secondary.**

3. Addressing the Issue

At first look it appears that there has not been any major policy intervention to address this issue directly in Brazil. To some extent that is true. Nevertheless, some other interventions, though not directly intended to this issue, has helped in reducing the gender disparity, albeit, to a limited extent. The country has made major efforts to increase enrolments at basic education level, which was low regardless of education, and succeeded to in making substantial gains. There has also been major focus on quality enhancement strategies. Some of these have clear and positive links with boys' disadvantage as well but these alone are not enough. A conscious integration of this issue in all the strategies can go a long way. However, some of the policy interventions can be termed as having been helped in absence of which the situation would have perhaps been much worse.

Technical and vocational education

Increasing opportunities for relevant vocational and technical training is viewed as a solution for enhancing employability and livelihood security of poor boys living in slums, and also helpful in moving them away from prevalent, hegemonic notions of masculinities. Brazil has a long established tradition of vocational / technical education primarily working through Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial (SENAI), which runs one of the world's largest

integrated vocational systems, administered by the Confederação Nacional da Indústria (National Confederation of Industry) (SENAI (2009), as given in EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010). However, in recent years, with very high emphasis on technical and vocation education placed by the last two governments, the number of Brazil's technical institutes has nearly tripled the annual budget for vocational institutes, which has gone from \$385 million to \$3.8 billion in less than a decade. The scope of such institutes has been widened to include more modern and relevant subjects. However, it still faces the problem of being low in status as compared to university degree and that needs to change.^{liv}

Conditional cash transfers

Conditional cash transfer programmes such as *Bolsa Escola* and *Bolsa Família* have also helped reduce the disadvantages of boys in primary and secondary education. Under this, the government pays a benefit to poor families with a condition linked to school attendance of school-age children. As boys tend to leave school to work in greater proportions than girls, the *Bolsa Escola* is one way to encourage families to continue sending their children to schools regularly. *Bolsa Escola*, which was universalized in 2001 was later merged with *Bolsa Família* program in 2003. It has several health and education related conditions including: (i) minimum 85% attendance at school for children and adolescents aged 6 to 15 years, and (ii) minimum 75% attendance at school for adolescents 16 and 17 years. The conditionality related to the higher age group, 16 to 17 year olds, was added later.

It is surprising that most evaluations carried out to gauge the impact of these CCT schemes on schooling in Brazil have not looked at gender as a separate variable and therefore it is not easy to understand the impact on boys' participation in secondary schooling. A number of evaluations cover the period when only the age group up to 15 years was included. Nevertheless, what emerges from the available information is the following^{lv}:

1. For grades I-IV, the positive impact on enrollment is stronger for girls than for boys, and the negative impact on dropping out is stronger for girls than for boys. In contrast, the positive impact on grade promotion is somewhat smaller for girls than for boys. Similar results are found for children in grades 5-8 where this programme. The estimates also indicate that the program reduces dropout rates, and raises grade promotion rates, by about 0.3 percentage points for the population as a whole, and by about 0.7% of the eligible poor population. (Glewwe and Kassouf 2010)
2. The impact on enhancing school attendance and reducing the incidence of child labour among poor families is much greater in rural areas than in urban areas. It is surmised that the role of the family and the nature of child labour is different in two settings: the reasons are cultural and the families send their children to work in agriculture, which can be easily influenced through cash transfers but in urban areas children earn through a variety of activities, what are not so easy to influence. (Elduradao 2010)
3. The feedback on the impact on secondary education is mixed. While some studies point that the impact is stronger on increasing enrollment and reducing drop out for the first five year of schooling after which the impact is less clear and weak, and the impact on child labour for population above 15 years is also not strong (Souza 2005; Schwartzman 2005), others conclude that the positive impact is high for both younger (primary) and higher (secondary) age groups (Janvry, Finan and Sadoulet 2006; Vadwa 2001)

It clearly emerges that the results on the impact on male schooling at secondary level is far from conclusive, and we need more research in that area.

Brazilian Campaign

A number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have joined the Brazilian Campaign for non-sexist and anti-discriminatory education, coordinated by the Committee of Latin

America and the Caribbean for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM) and produced a research on the relationship between gender and education in Brazil and 13 other Latin American countries. The study made several recommendations that were initially suggested by the Brazilian Campaign. This included emphasis on the importance of ensuring the contents for the social relations of gender and sexuality in the initial and continuing training of teachers, promoting actions to stimulate greater entry of women in science and men in social and care services, and the implementation of the law that makes it mandatory to teach history of African culture and African-Brazilian culture for better understanding of the disadvantage of the black boys. Some reflections can be found in new curriculum and textbooks. A nuanced treatment of gender includes references to welcoming diversity in the behaviour of men and women in the school curriculum in Brazil (Vianna and Unbehau, 2006).^{lvi}

5.3 United Arab Emirates

5.3.1 The Issue

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 places UAE as likely to achieve gender parity in secondary education by 2015. This is due to tremendous strides made by Emirati women in achieving parity in secondary and tertiary education (Ridge, 2009), not matched by men. The Emirati boys and men are showing trends of markedly lower performance in secondary and tertiary education when compared to Emirati girls and women. Participation rate as well as gender parity has improved in primary education. Girls are at slight disadvantage at lower secondary stage. But this situation changes at upper secondary level where boys lag behind girls quite significantly in gross enrolment rates though the difference has slightly reduced between 1999 and 2009. Both Emirati males and females are, however, far ahead of the Arab states regional average.

Table 6: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in UAE: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		Arab states regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary	91	88	106	105	101	93
GER Lower Secondary	84	83	103	99	91	82
GER Upper Secondary	63	73	83	90	49	47
GER Tertiary	10	29	22	41	23	22

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in United Arab Emirates

Note: a. Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website for more information (www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/)

b. Lower secondary and upper secondary refer to ISCED levels 2 and 3 respectively. For UAE, primary education is of 6 years of schooling followed by 3 years of preparatory schooling for secondary and another 3 years of secondary general/technical education.

In UAE, the issue of boys' under participation is further worsened by their underachievement in secondary education in comparison to those of the girls. In 2007, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that girls had outperformed boys in all subjects in the final Grade 12 exams held at the end of the 2006/07/ academic year. The same dataset show that ten per cent of boys from grades 10 to 12 failed their examinations in comparison to only five per cent of girls. (Ridge, 2009)^{lvii}

5.3.2 *Beneath the Issue*

While UAE males in general are at risk of not participating in higher education, males from poorer emirates, more isolated emirates are at an even greater risk. All public schooling there is segregated by gender. Women teach in both boys' and girls' schools at the primary level, while at the preparatory and secondary levels, boys are taught by men and girls are taught by women (Ridge 2010). Male teachers in the UAE are overwhelmingly expatriate teachers, with estimates of up to 80% of male teachers being from outside the UAE. These teachers are contract teachers with low job security, lower salaries, fewer benefits and limited promotion opportunities compared to Emirati teachers. In addition to this, male expatriate teachers are more likely to be the sole wage earners, supporting typically not only their immediate but also their extended family. These teachers, therefore, are likely to actively look for additional employment opportunities, such as giving private tuition to their own and other students, and/or undertaking other kinds of wage supplementing employment such as driving taxis in the evening (Lewis and Shaeen 2010)^{lviii}. Ridge 2010 identifies these as to argue that poor quality of teaching in male schools in UAE is partially due to the non-engagement of male teachers.

The three main countries from which the UAE brings its teachers are Egypt, Jordan and Syria where teacher training do not emphasise on any pedagogical training. (Ridge 2010). The relationship between the mostly expatriate teachers and local students was found to be ambivalent at best and openly hostile at worst. In contrast, girls' schools were welcoming places of engagement, with high expectations of students. Poor quality of teacher means poor quality of teaching and low performance. Poor teaching leading to poor attainment at primary level itself becomes a cause of non-continuation at secondary level (Ridge 2010, Abdulla and Ridge 2011).

Some regions within UAE have identified "Extended absences" as the reason for dropping out. While it is not clear what these absences relate to, it could well be that they are due to family obligations or to schooling being perceived as an increasingly irrelevant activity (Ridge, 2009). The National Admissions and Placement Office for Higher Education, UAE (2005) mentions that nearly 33 per cent of no show by males in higher education is owing to their joining public sector jobs in either military or police and another 30 per cent stay at home or look for work. With regard to male participation in higher education, Fattah et al (2000) state that in societies where the quality of education is low and public sector employment high individuals often make distorted educational choices. One significant factor that could be affecting the decisions of males regarding attending higher education is a perceived lack of economic benefits from undertaking higher education. (Ridge 2011).

Heavy dependence on imported work force by private sector also apparently works as a deterrent for male education. The study by Al-Ali, Kumar Shee and Foley (Year not specified) point out that under qualification and low fluency in English are the causes of low employment of Emiratis in UAE. The public sector employs nearly 86 per cent of nationals on higher wages, shorter working hours and early retirement benefits due to huge investments in oil producing activities. The over-investment in the public sector distorts the perceived returns to education and can lead to the lower productivity and educational attainment in countries, such as the UAE, where competition for public sector jobs is low (Abdulla and Ridge 2011). Minnis (2006) believes that educational underachievement in the Gulf States may be linked to this rentier mentality which is characterized by a disjunction between educational effort and probable reward.^{lix}

Godwin 2006 refers to UAE as a third world country with first world money implying that the economic growth has not led to commensurate changes in political, cultural and social lives. Some studies have shown negative effects of polygamy on prior wives and children, including poor performance at school.^{lx} If the father leaves an earlier wife or adds a new one,

there is often a burden placed on the oldest son of the previous wife to look after his mother and siblings, especially in poorer families (Ridge 2009). Although not supported by enough evidences, it is possible that various restrictions placed on women in terms of their public lives including limited opportunities in labour market forces them to continue with their education which is highly gender segregated, and therefore non-threatening for the prevalent gender norms and practices.

5.3.3 Addressing the Issue

It is also not clear if educational disadvantage is really seen as a disadvantage by the policy makers, as there is very little evidence of policy interventions in the area. In addition to making two recommendations about raising the quality of male teachers and raising educational expectations from boys, Ridge 2008 suggests initiating more well-targeted research studies to understand the phenomenon better and then develop appropriate policy solutions.

One employment related policy intervention which could have some impact in this respect is Emiratisation. Emiratisation is a major affirmative action based on quota driven employment policy that ensures UAE nationals’ employment opportunities in the private sector (Godwin 2006).^{ixi} However, working in private sector is a newer trend and would require better educational capacities of local Emiratis for being hired by the private sector even under the Emiratisation policy.

5.4 Samoa

5.4.1 The Issue

The Education For All Mid Decade Assessment 2007 identified males as one of the three disadvantaged groups in Samoa the other two being premature school leavers and children with special needs. Jha and Keheller 2006 also pointed in a later study that Samoa has achieved gender parity in primary education but boys seem to be at a disadvantage in secondary education. The gender disparities in participation start setting in at lower secondary but become really high at upper secondary level. The GPI is 1.02 for lower secondary while it is 1.21 for upper secondary. Although a number of countries in East Asia and Pacific face the issue of gender disparity in favour of boys at secondary stage, the difference between male and female enrolment rates at upper secondary stage in Samoa is higher than the regional average. The region had a GPI of 1.03 and 1.07 for lower and upper secondary education respectively in 2009 as against the figures of 1.02 and 1.21 in Samoa.

Table 7: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in Samoa: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		East Asia and the Pacific Regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary	99	97	101	99	110	111
GER Lower Secondary	95	99	95	97	89	91
GER Upper Secondary	68	77	61	74	64	68
GER Tertiary	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in Samoa
 Note: Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website for more information (www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/)
 NA: Not Available

According to the national level statistics emanating from sources other than School Census, participation rates for the secondary age population group is much lower than the reported enrolment ratios. The presence of underage and overage students also does not explain this difference fully (Please refer to Table 8, 7 and 1). However, the gender disparities remain as sharp. According to this statistics, the participation rate was only about 52 per cent for boys in 15-19 year age group as against 66 percent for girls.

Table 8: National Participation Rates, 2010

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Male age 5-14	96	95	97	96	95	94	94	98	97
Female age 5-14	96	95	96	95	95	95	99	96	95
Male age 15-19	39	44	42	42	41	42	49	53	52
Female age 15-19	46	53	49	49	48	49	57	61	66

Source: Education Statistical Digest 2010, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESCS), Samoa

5.4.2 *Beneath the Issue*

The issue of boys' disadvantage in education in Samoa has not received much attention for research and therefore the information available is sketchy. Afamasga, Moli and Kruse-Vaai 2005 mention that Samoan children leave schools prematurely due to variety of reasons including inability of parents to pay fees, lack of parental support and low placed priority to education, peer pressure to drop out of school, chronic health problems and misbehaviour of child in school.^{lxii} This, however, does not give much insight on the gendered nature of the trend. The Population and Housing Census Report 2006 brings out the reasons for not attending school for population 5-19 years. 35 per cent of young adults aged 15-19 were not at school at the time of the Census of which 19 per cent already worked in paid jobs, 34 per cent were assisting in economic activities like subsistence production or business ventures while the majority consisting of 43 per cent were engaged in housework such as caring for the young and the elderly. Greater concentration of boys in paid jobs and girls in care jobs was also reported. The older age group 18-19 had higher proportion of those working in paid jobs and earning their own salary/wages than younger persons aged 15-17. This to some extent explains the low participation of boys at upper secondary level.

The Samoan culture has a complex construction of male gender identity masculinity which is linked with strong family and societal responsibilities. The culture as well as political system is based on fa'amatai, a system of village government by chiefs. A hierarchy works when it comes to the views of youth reaching the years of village councils. Gender specific roles are very strictly defined and followed. The village council still has remarkable powers which are now coming in conflict with features of modern lives. Women have a high social status but at the same time men are viewed as protectors and providers and the expectations to perform accordingly are very string. Kinship is very important in defining the status as well as relationships. Boys and adolescents could feel alienated and disenfranchised in such situations though evidences are not very clear. The country has a high suicide for young boys but it is not clear if it has any link with boys' disadvantage (Jha and Kelleher 2006, Afamasaga 2009).

The historical evolution of education in the country has been such that school is viewed as an institution delinked from the Samoan society. Modern education started after the advent of Christianity and the school has been looked at as a place to promote English and European ways of life. Although this orientation changed after independence in 1962 and Samoan

language and cultural issues have been integrated to the curriculum, the reminiscences are still seen. The Church continues to hold very important place in Samoan society, and the Church run schools tend to promote very gender-stereotypical socialisation. Gender notions of what is feminine and what is masculine are very strong, and schools, especially those run by the Churches, tend to reinforce those in every respect (Afamasaga 2009).

Afamasaga 2009 provides important insights into the single sex schools for girls run by Church, which continues to play an important role in Samoan education. Gender was considered a non-issue and gender stereotypical expectations from girls were much stronger as compared to co-educational schools. The study also found that boys are placed in an unequal position in classroom seating arrangements, interactions and teacher expectations. All teachers, men and women, working in single sex or co-educational schools covered by this study, had higher expectations from girls. Schools practice streaming practices. Afamasaga 2009 through her case study of a few secondary schools in Samoa shows that all top performing streams have higher concentration of girls and the lower ones has higher concentration of boys. This, along with teachers' low expectations from boys perpetuates the disparity and boys tend to perform even worse as they progress to the higher classes.

Low attainment at primary level also appears to be one of the reasons for perpetuating further disparity at secondary level. Table 9 shows that a much higher proportion of male students have been identified as at being risk both in English and Numeracy based on the results of the national level tests held at year 6. It also shows that while the proportion of girls being at risk in Numeracy has gone down over a period of seven years the proportion has remained almost the same for boys during the same period, leading to widening of the gender gap. The proportion of both boys and girls have remained almost the same over the same period in English, and therefore the gender gap has remained roughly at the same level.

Table 9: Proportion of Primary Students identified as at Risk, Year 6

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
English (Male)	68	69	69	60	67	73	71
English (Female)	42	44	45	45	45	47	41
English (Total)	55	56	57	53	56	60	56
Numeracy (Male)	77	76	75	63	67	68	56
Numeracy (Female)	64	58	59	52	51	51	39
Numeracy (Total)	71	67	67	58	59	60	48

Note: Results from SPELL¹ Two Test

Source: Education Statistical Digest 2010, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC), Samoa

Like most other countries, the employment trends in Samoa suggest that though boys are facing disadvantage in education, men continue to dominate in the labour market participation (Jha and Kelleher 2006). Within education sector, while women occupy more teaching positions, especially in primary education, men occupy a higher number of leadership and managerial positions (Kelleher 2011). The proportion of women teachers in secondary education is 53 percent and therefore, the schools cannot be referred to as feminised institutions.

5.4.4 Addressing the Issue

¹ A test taken by all year 6 students in Government schools. Most non-Government schools also participate, but it is not compulsory. It provides an indication of the students whose learning outcomes are identified as being at risk so that they receive attention from teachers in their reading and numeracy programmes

A perusal of existing information indicates that though the issue has been recognised it has not received much attention in terms of appropriate policy response. Certain general interventions are impacting boys more because of their concentration among the target group. For instance, the Government of Samoa is running schemes like Second Chance schools that provide basic numeracy, literacy and life skills for early school leavers, which largely consists of boys. The Commonwealth funded and MESOC supported program is working on developing curriculum for second chance students. (Education For All: Mid decade Assessment Report Samoa, 2007). Samoa is also trying to give increased attention to expanding post secondary vocation, technical and university educational opportunities and making them more relevant so that they are better suited to labour market opportunities both inside and outside the country. A good number of Samoans migrate to the neighbouring countries for job opportunities and some investigations suggested they face skill mismatch there as well.

It seems that the country is still at an early stage of recognising this phenomenon. It is obvious from the manner in which this issue is referred to in various government reporting. The Mid-decade Assessment Report for EFA in 2007, for instance, reported gender disparities and identified boys' underachievement as an issue but acknowledged that 'the achievement of boys in Samoa does not have documented profile to any extensive level'. The reference to this issue in the same report is highly gender stereotypical when the under participation of boys in secondary and post secondary educational opportunities is linked with their 'diminished capacity to fulfil traditional expectations of provider, server and leader, and diminished power to take control of lifestyles and living conditions'. Such approach among policy planners could be a constraint in developing suitable policy responses to this complex issue.

The gender related interventions with reference to removing / reducing gender disparities in education have responded largely only to women related issues. Considering that gender norms for women are very stereotypical in the country constraining their life choices, it is also justified. But it is also important to view and understand gender in a more comprehensive manner by including the notions of masculinity and how those are linked with the notions of what is feminine, and could impact boys' educational participation and outcomes.

5.5 Lesotho

5.5.1 The Issue

According to Lesotho Overview of economy (2010,) the economy of Lesotho greatly depends on subsistence agriculture, livestock, manufacturing and remittances from migrant labour in South Africa. The Church has had and continues to have an important influence on education. The estimated prevalence of HIV among adults in Lesotho is 23.2%. 266,000 adults and 16,000 children under 14 years of age are estimated to be infected (National AIDS Commission, Lesotho, 2007). Under such The Global Education Digest 2010 places Lesotho as one that has achieved gender parity in primary education 2008 but is not likely to achieve gender parity in secondary education in 2015.

The real challenge faced by boys is their survival up to last grade of primary education and their transition to secondary general education. The survival rate for the last grade in primary education for boys is 38 per cent while it is 56 per cent for girls (UIS Lesotho). The situation gets worse at upper secondary level. These trends are in contrast with the regional average of Sub-Saharan Africa. This is obviously because of the presence of a large number of countries with gender disparity against girls in the region. According to SACMEQ results, girls outperformed boys in Lesotho in reading both in 2000 and 2007 though the difference was not as high as in few other Southern African countries.

Table 8: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in Lesotho: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		Sub Saharan Regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary	98	105	105	104	101	106
GER Lower Secondary	32	44	47	67	48	39
GER Upper Secondary	23	30	23	30	31	24
GER Tertiary	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in Lesotho

Note: Some data cover specific years or are an estimate. See the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) website for more information (www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/)

Tertiary education had scanty presence, which is now changing as the government is starting a university and investing in post secondary education. Lack of opportunities for pursuing post secondary education could also be a reason for low participation at secondary level of education.

5.5.2 *Beneath the Issue*

Boys' disadvantage in education is partially explained by poverty, traditional occupational choices and the highly mountainous rough terrain. More than 85% of the population of 2 million lives in rural areas mainly engaged in agriculture and informal activities. About one third of population lives in highlands in small and isolated villages. High incidence of child labour is largely on account of pastoral nature of the economy and boys' engagement in cattle grazing. Studies show that traditional Basotho boys work as herd boys to oversee Lesotho's traditional wealth of livestock while men work in mines. Livestock are an important part of Lesotho tradition and boys are engaged in looking after them from a young age. This can be traced to the traditional practice of assessing wealth by the measure of the number of livestock a family had.

Poverty is high and that too acts as a push factor for boys to work and earn for the family. Schooling is free at primary stage since 2000 but the fees are high at secondary level. The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005-2015 by the Government of Lesotho mentions that with deepening poverty in Lesotho, particularly in the rural areas as more Basotho men are retrenched from South African mines, many families can no longer afford to pay the fees demanded by schools. Girls also go to schools only if their labor is not required in the houses (Jha and Kelleher 2006, UNICEF 2003).

Jha and Keheller (2006) mention lack of adequate schooling facilities and teachers in rural areas as a constraint though it is not clear how it affects boys more than girls. Lack of higher education opportunities could act as a disincentive but enough evidences are not available in this regard. The presence of women teachers has been referred to as a probable reason but evidences do not support this argument (Kelleher 2011).

Poor quality of schooling could be a reason where alternative engagements are considered more beneficial for boys, but necessarily for girls due to cultural constraints. Teaching and school activities in rural primary schools in Lesotho have changed very little in the past 30 years, and that teachers' understanding of child-centered pedagogies is limited (Schweitzer 2007).^{lxiii} Gender stereotyping is common in subject choice is common which makes boys take up mathematics, science and technologically oriented subjects while girls are encouraged to take up humanities and language. Women have a weak position in societal

structure and they are considered minor by the law. This is yet to change despite their advantageous position in education.

High prevalence of HIV creates a high disease burden. Among the key drivers of the epidemic are believed to be poverty and food insecurity, underemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, gender inequality and gender-based violence, migrant labour and multiple sex partners and intergenerational sex often involving transactional sex (National AIDS Commission, 2007). Although existing literature has not looked into the relationship in Lesotho, some of these have had clear linkages with boys' advantage in education.

5.5.3 Addressing the Issue

The paucity of secondary school places as a result of high enrolment at primary level due to abolition of school fee, high fee at secondary level and the pressures caused by the high HIV prevalence in terms of teacher attrition, changing role of teachers and high number of orphans are recognised as some of the biggest challenges by the Government of Lesotho for secondary education (MOET 2006). This issue does not figure as a major challenge. Some policy and strategy documents recognise this issue and express concerns over the historical preponderance of girls in the formal education system (Report of the Gender Audit on the Education sector, Lesotho, 2003; Education Sector Strategic Plan 2005-2015). The policy responses, however, do not appear to be focussed and comprehensive.

The Strategic Plan for the education sector 2005-2015 maps three activities to correct disparities: 1. Develop and disseminate a gender policy, 2. Ensure that there is parity in enrolments between males and females, and 3. Revise curricula to make it gender responsive. No information is available on the Ministry's website or any other source in public domain regarding gender policy and revised curricula.

Jha and Kelleher 2006 had examined the case of NFE programme to address the demand for less-formal training and retraining among disadvantaged groups such as herd boys, out of school youths, adults who missed on formal education, and retrenched miners through open and distance learning modes. It concluded that though it played some role in providing literacy skills to under privileged there was need for a more comprehensive approach that promotes proper education of high quality. Yates 2008 reviewed the Open Education policies in Lesotho with an objective of assessing the potential for using this means to retain children in school, and concluded that Lesotho lacks a suitable policy or institutional framework that could allow open distance and flexible learning modes to succeed.^{lxiv}

The Government of Lesotho has recently introduced rationalisation of fees at secondary level fixing the caps for fees for different kinds of schools. This is to ensure that fee does not become a major hurdle in accessing secondary education. This measure will come in practice from 2012.^{lxv}

5.6 Bangladesh

5.6.1 The Issue

Bangladesh, a low-income South Asian country is an unusual name for this list. What is important is that gender disparity against boys seems to be now taking place even at primary level though it becomes much more pronounced at lower secondary stage. Over the period, 1999 -2009, male disadvantage seems to have grown worse. These trends are at variance with the regional average where gender disparity against girls in common at all stages.

Table 9: Educational Participation Rates at Various Levels in Bangladesh: 1999, 2009

	1999		2009		South and West Asia Regional average 2009	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
GER Primary			93	97	113	108
GER Lower Secondary	55	60	51	62	74	69
GER Upper Secondary	34	28	31	32	47	40
GER Tertiary						

Source: UIS website, Statistics in Brief, Education in Bangladesh

The case of Bangladesh is different from others, as despite these differentials in enrolments, considerable gender disparity exists in favour of boys beyond the first ten years of schooling, with girls dropping out at a faster rate than boys. Girls' advantage at lower secondary stage seems to wane at upper secondary stage. For instance, only 10 percent of girls who completed primary school passed the secondary school certificate examination, compared to 25 percent of boys in 2005. Poor secondary school completion rates are cause for concern because school certificates are often an important determinant of successful transition into the labor force. This shows that the male disadvantage in education is not as clear as in most other countries.

5.6.2 Beneath the Issue

The above situation implies that though the number of boys attending schools is less, they tend to continue, complete and perform better. What, in that case, explains the lower enrolment rates? High incidence of child labour among boys appears to be one explanation. The National Child Labour Survey 2002 showed that the proportion of boy and girl child workers was 73.5 per cent and 26.5 per cent respectively in the total of 7.4 million working children in the age group of 5-17 years. Ahmad and Ray (2011) examined whether there is any trade-off between child labour hours and child schooling outcomes. Based on Bangladesh NCLS data, the study found that children' work, even in limited amounts, does adversely affect child human capital. This is reflected in reduced school attendance and age-adjusted school attendance rates.

Bangladesh has only limited provision for pre-vocational/vocational skills training and there are related constraints such as the quality of the skills training, market and employment linkages and certification. While this could be an attractive option to working/ disadvantaged children and their families, neither the Government of Bangladesh nor many of the non-governmental organizations have the institutional capacity and technical expertise required to deliver skills training facilities effectively (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour 2004).

Quality at primary level is low and often seen as a major concern (World bank 2008). Poor quality of education, perceived or real, can be a de-motivator for boys as the alternative of joining labour force could be more attractive than continuing in a system, which is not assuring definite future returns.

During mid-1990s, Government introduced the Female Secondary Stipend Programme (FSSP) in rural Bangladesh. While this programme is almost universally acknowledged as having contributed to enhancement of girls' participation in secondary education, it is also cited as one reason for boys' declining enrolment in coeducational institutions.^{lxvi} The much celebrated FSSP focussed on the: a) increase girls' enrolment in secondary school and retain them in secondary education; b) assist them in passing the Secondary School

Certificate examination to enhance their employment opportunities as primary school teachers, extension workers, health and family planning workers and NGO workers; and c) delay girls' marriage. The cash was transferred directly to the bank accounts of the girls going to secondary schools. This strategy was meant for all girls and not targeted to a particular section. To be eligible for a stipend a girl must attend school for at least 75 percent of the days of the school year, she must achieve at least 45 percent marks on her evaluations and examinations and she must remain unmarried. The intervention boosted the enrolment and retention rates of girls in secondary education and the project received a number of international awards and accolades. However, the evaluations show that the programme did not have much impact on completion and quality of education and empowerment of girls though it succeeded in improving the attendance.^{lxvii}

5.6.3 Addressing the Issue

The issue of male disadvantage is complex everywhere and perhaps more so in Bangladesh. This is hardly recognised as an issue by the Government of Bangladesh. However, certain initiatives can have indirect relevance for the trend. Under the overall guidance of Ministry of Secondary Education, the Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education has been implementing a large number of development projects focussed for improving enrolments and quality in secondary education. It includes Secondary Education Stipend Project (SESP), Life Skills Based Reproductive Health Education of in-school Youth and Adolescents through Peer Approach Project (LSBRHEIYAP), Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP), Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project [SEQAEP] and Higher Secondary Female Stipend Project (HSFP).^{lxviii}

SESDP, implemented first in 2007 and SEQAEP, implemented first in 2008 focus on raising the quality of secondary education. The LSBRHEIYAP implemented first in 2006 also has direct relevance as it aims to provide life skills based reproductive health education for youth and adolescent boys and girls. This would in turn make them empowered so that they could protect themselves, especially against STIs and HIV & AIDS. These could have linkages with boys' disadvantage in education but this has not been a deliberate state objective.

SESP, first implemented in 2009, has direct relevance for boys' education, as it is basically an extension of FSSP to boys as well. It aims to increase the enrolment of boys and girls in secondary level institutions through continued financial assistance. It is being implemented in selected geographical areas and it is too soon to see any impact.

6. Conclusion

The phenomenon of boys' disadvantage in secondary education has not shown signs of waning and is no more limited to countries with high income or high GER alone, and therefore deserves greater and immediate attention. The nature and underlying reasons are universal to some extent but highly contextual in some cases. The evolution of masculine identity and gender norms in some countries / regions in a manner that education itself is viewed as a 'feminine' and therefore undesirable for boys appears to be an important explanation. Poverty also acts as a reason in contexts where it is widespread, and the pressure on boys to earn is high. The negative masculine notions also get more pronounced among men in poor families, ethnic groups and locations as compared to other socio-economic contexts where alternative masculine expressions also operate and act as counter. Schools usually reinforce rather than counter these notions. Culture and tradition add to these in some situations in terms of particular occupational choices and behaviour norms. Crime and violence is also closely linked though it is difficult to decide whether these are cause or effect of this phenomenon. Men continue to be privileged in labour market both in terms of lower unemployment rates and higher average wages, and could be causing complacency among boys.

While some countries recognise this as an important issue, all do not. Even those who do recognise the issue have not succeeded in developing a comprehensive and demonstrable policy approach. Male disadvantage in education is more complex to understand and address, as it coexists with their higher positioning within and outside the family. Also, the strategies that worked at primary level are not necessary to be effective at secondary level, as the expectations from this particular age group are very different. Identity issues are also much more important for this age group making policy choices more difficult and complex. Nevertheless, experiences from various contexts suggest that schools have tremendous potential for acting as transforming institution if they decide to. However, schools will have to act differently with a much greater focus on mentoring, active and engaging classroom processes, developing an enabling school culture and ethos, and suitable and continuous teacher development exercises. Abolition of certain common practices such as streaming and corporal punishment would be important. Certain policy interventions such as school fee abolition and conditional cash transfers could also help if designed and delivered effectively. In the end, what any country would need is a suitable combination of policies as any one policy might not be affective in isolation.

Final Editing to be done if required

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Annexure 1

Table 1: Selected Schooling Participation related Indicators (2009) for case study countries

Percentages (unless otherwise specified)	Bangladesh (z)	Brazil (z)	Jamaica (z)	Lesotho	Samoa	UAE
GER (General Secondary –total)	42	101	91	45	76	95
GER (General Secondary-male)	40	96	89	38	72	95
GER (General Secondary-female)	45	106	93	52	81	96

GPI (GER-general secondary)	1.12	1.11	1.04	1.38	1.13	1.01
GER (Lower Secondary –total)	56	107	95	57	96	101
GER (Lower Secondary – male)	51	106	95	47	95	103
GER (Lower Secondary – female)	62	109	95	67	97	99
GPI-GER (Lowe Secondary)	1.21	1.03	1.00	1.42	1.02	0.97
GER (Upper Secondary –total)	31	92	85	27	67	87
GER (Upper Secondary male)	31	82	80	23	61	83
GER (Upper Secondary –female)	32	102	89	30	74	90
GPI (GER-Upper secondary)	1.01	1.24	1.11	1.30	1.21	1.08
NER (General Secondary –total)	NA	82	77	29	NA	83
NER (General Secondary-male)	NA	78	75	22	NA	82
NER (General Secondary-female)	NA	85	79	36	NA	84
GPI (NER-general secondary)	NA	1.10	1.05	1.63	NA	1.02
Out of school adolescents ('000) (Male)	2006*	NA	21	21	NA	7
Out of school adolescents ('000) (female)	1595*	NA	17	14	NA	7
*Transition from primary to secondary general – male	95(y)	NA	NA	72	NA	98
*Transition from primary to secondary general – female	100(y)	NA	NA	74	NA	98
*Repeaters in secondary general education – male	8.8(y)	NA	1.6(z)	12.2	2.5	3.8
*Repeaters in secondary general education – female	8.3(y)	NA	0.5(z)	11.4	2.1	2.3
% female in post secondary non-tertiary education**	15	NA	54	NA	NA	NA
% female in post secondary technical and vocational education**	13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: UIS estimates 2011 unless otherwise specified

Notes:

(a) The data on Out of School Adolescents reflect the actual number of adolescents not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific or adjusted net enrolment ratio (ANER) of lower secondary school age children, which measures the proportion of those who are enrolled either in primary or in secondary schools.

(b) For Brazil: Enrolment for the most recent year is lower than in 2005 mainly because the data collection reference date was shifted from the last Wednesday of March to the last Wednesday of May to account for duplicates (enrolments), and transfers of students and teachers (from one school to another), common features at the beginning of the year. At this point of the school year, it is believed, the education system becomes stable, so the data collected should represent the current school year.

(y) Data are for the school year ending in 2007.

(z) Data are for the school year ending in 2008.

*Data is for school year ending in 2008