Literature Review on Equity and Access to Tertiary Education in the South Asia Region

This literature review on equity in South Asian tertiary education has been produced as a background note for the overall World Bank “Equity of access and success in tertiary education” study.
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Introduction

Tertiary education, including both vocational and academic education, is a key factor in building the economies of developing nations. Priority has to be given to the reduction of poverty through sustainable economic growth for which higher education is critical. However, in most developing countries, the higher education systems are in a sad state. The challenge is to make the system more inclusive for the disadvantaged and improve the quality. This requires large financial outlays. The state usually has to take the primary responsibility at least for school education but looking at the magnitude of the problem, innovative financing may be required at all levels.

In this study, an attempt has been made to look at tertiary education in seven South Asian countries – Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. India has been analyzed in greater detail as I have first hand knowledge of it. For the others, reliance has necessarily been placed on the documents and statistics available. A more elaborate study would naturally require a hands-on experience which can only be gained through a one-to-one interaction with the various stakeholders in these countries.

In any case, tertiary education cannot be seen in isolation. The kind of schooling, or even pre-school care, determines what opportunities would be available in tertiary education. The quality and cost of schooling reduces not only enrolment rates at this level but also affects retention and completion. Connected with it are a whole spectrum of challenges – poverty, the rural urban divide, urban deprivation, gender, cultural mores and norms, regional disparities and above all political will and ethics. The disparities are especially pronounced in the countries dealt with because these are ‘developing’ countries where there is a perennial resource crunch and education usually becomes one of the many competing social goods. This necessitates efforts by both the state and private individuals and organizations. However, scarcity and over regulation can encourage exploitative private players. Lack of educational facilities drive the demand and stifling regulatory frameworks encourage unscrupulous private players or at least unscrupulous practices. This is where the political will to enforce transparency and accountability comes in. It, in turn, demands integrity in those trying to bring probity in the field of education which is at times found wanting.
As the higher education systems are organized today, they are likely to concentrate opportunity amongst the relatively privileged groups because of the vast societal inequalities in resources and opportunities. These determine the kind of care and schooling that the child will get and on it will depend not only the access to tertiary education but also its quality which nature in terms of its quality and consequent opportunities that it will provide. The under represented groups like the women, the marginalized because of caste, creed, region, the physically challenged, all will have to be included if higher education has to be truly transformative and not reproduce the inequities and inequalities in ever increasing dimensions.

Affirmative action policies have been implemented in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka in terms of castes and regions. Attempts have also been made to deal with gender disparities. However, affirmative action does not come without its challenges. Mandating a certain number of places to particular groups perceived to be disadvantaged may take its toll on quality and also discourage competitiveness in that group. Such policies need continuous evaluation and course correction to ensure that the really needy benefit. However, the policies usually get highly politicized as vested interests develop and breed their own inequalities.

This review has been organized around four key areas: inequities in accessing and completing education; barriers to entry (both monetary and non-monetary); equity promotion policies; and equity impact on quality and relevance.

**Educational Structure and Inequities in Access**

Tertiary education cannot be seen in isolation. The kind of schooling, or even pre school care, determines what opportunities would be available in tertiary education. Since the challenges of tertiary education form a part of the challenges of the system as a whole, the study has attempted an overview of the overall structure of education in each one of the countries. The quality and cost of schooling reduces not only enrolment rates at all levels but also affects retention and completion. Connected with it are a whole spectrum of challenges – poverty, the rural urban divide, urban deprivation, gender, cultural mores and norms, regional disparities and above all political will and ethics. The disparities are especially pronounced in the countries dealt with because these are
`developing' countries where there is a perennial resource crunch and education usually becomes one of the many competing social goods.

Vertical and horizontal dimensions of equity are equally deserving of further analysis, particularly as these issues impact different systems depending on their level of educational development. In South Asia, much of the information is focused on the equity of opportunity within and between the primary, secondary, and tertiary segments of education. For example, the limited opportunities available to women in tertiary education is highly reflective of gender disparities that originate in the primary and secondary education segments.

Whereas the vertical dimension follows the experience of students from enrollment to the completion of various stages of their education, the horizontal dimension, which is not as studied or discussed in South Asia perhaps due to its limited range of institutions, often extends academic ‘tracking’ or ‘streaming’ from primary and secondary education into tertiary. This ‘tracking’ or ‘streaming’ of students becomes an increasingly powerful channel of inequality, as equity concern encompass not only how many students enroll into and complete tertiary education, but what kind of institution they attend and what labor market opportunities various types and levels of degrees then offer to graduates.

Gender inequality in tertiary education also persists in many parts of the developing world, particularly in South Asia. Even in the few countries where gender parity has been achieved in tertiary education, “gender streaming” of women toward specific types of non-university institutions and/or toward specific disciplines leading to low-paying occupations can be observed.

BHUTAN

Bhutan has adopted a 7-year primary education cycle followed by 6 years of secondary education leading to tertiary education. The basic education level has been defined to include 11 years of free education (Pre-Primary + Primary + 4 years of secondary or until the end of class X). For most schools, the formal structure is 7+2+2+2. That is, seven years of primary education including a year of pre-primary, two years of lower secondary, two years of middle secondary, and two years of higher
secondary school. Net enrolment at the primary level is estimated at 82 per cent, 23 per cent at lower, 19 per cent at middle and 11 per cent at higher secondary levels.

The Bhutanese education system is built upon the concept of free services from primary to tertiary level. Students are not only given free tuition but also provided with many facilities, like stationery, textbooks, sports-items, boarding facilities and food based on need. The policy trend during the last few years is, however, to work towards cost-sharing with parents, especially amongst those populations that can afford it. Accordingly students studying in the urban areas have had to buy their own stationeries since 1993.

Basic education extends from class Pre-Primary to class X, and is available to every citizen in the country. Access to post-basic education (class X onwards) in government administered schools is based on the performance of the students in the national examinations at the end of Class X. After the completion of general education up to class X, students choose from the three streams of study at the higher secondary level—arts, commerce and science -- which determines what profession they will pursue thereafter.

Those who do not qualify for higher secondary education repeat or seek admission into vocational training institutes. Others who can afford the fees, go outside the country for Class XI or join private higher secondary schools that offer Class XI.

After completion of high school, students that qualify receive government scholarships to continue their education at the tertiary level with the Royal University of Bhutan. A limited number of students are selected for government scholarships for pursuing professional studies abroad, while others who can afford it fund tertiary education both at home and abroad.

Tertiary education includes higher education but is not synonymous with it as it encompasses both degree and diploma programmes, including undergraduate diploma programmes. Professional and general programmes are offered at different levels of diploma, degree, and postgraduate. They are taught through different modes of study, full-time, part-time, short duration and distance learning provision. Although degrees in research and Ph.D.s are not offered at the moment, there are plans to institute them in the near future.
Tertiary education is imparted by the Royal University of Bhutan to 4,190 students (2,806 males, 1,384 females). Another 3,358 students (both male and female) were studying in India and other countries abroad. Bhutan lacks a critical number of tertiary institutions, and that is why the same number of students go to tertiary institutes outside the country as those who remain behind.

Since 2006, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with private higher secondary schools, has initiated a continuing education programme, to allow school drop outs the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications.

**INDIA**

India employs a standard educational structure based on a 10+2+3-year model. The first ten years were to be non-selective and provide a well-rounded general education available to all children. After the first ten years of general education the system would become highly selective and provide opportunities in both the academic and vocational streams.

India's primary education sector continues to face considerable challenges, as underlined by the concluding remarks of India's Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007): "Our performance in the field of education is one of the most disappointing aspects of our developmental strategy." Access to education remains stratified across and within states, with educational opportunities and outcomes differing considerably between girls and boys; between the poor and the better-off; and between children of scheduled castes/tribes and other children. High drop out rates remain a reality of the education system as children from poor families are required to earn an income, the quality of schooling is rather poor and a large numbers of rural areas still do not have reasonable access to schools. The current reality, however, is that 60 per cent of all students who enter the primary cycle drop out by Standard V, while an estimated 23 per cent receive no formal schooling at all.

Secondary education is divided into two, two-year stages: lower (Standard IX to X) and higher (XI to XII). After both stages, students take examinations controlled by state and central examination boards.
Upper secondary education allows for diversification and specialization, while also preparing students for higher education. Broadly speaking, students select a vocational or an academic stream. The vocational stream prepares students for a variety of occupations at technical high schools and centres in fields such as agriculture, commerce, technology, paramedical services and home economics. Transfer from the vocational stream to the academic stream is generally not encouraged. Students who have successfully completed the academic stream are eligible for admission to university first-degree programmes. Entry to certain disciplines and institutions is by competitive entrance examinations.

The Indian higher education system is also based on the British model consisting of a three-tier degree structure (bachelor, master, doctorate) and a system of affiliated colleges or universities. According to the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, there were 342 degree-granting institutions and over 17,000 colleges in India in 2005. Most Indian universities are public institutions. The central government provides just one quarter of funding for higher education, with much of the rest made up by the states. A number of states have passed their own legislation to ensure quality and legitimacy in the establishment of private universities. Ministry figures for academic year 2004/05 estimate the total enrollment of tertiary-level students at 10,481,000 and faculty at 457,000.

Admission to the country’s most prestigious and highly competitive institutions is based on the results of the centrally administered Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). Every year approximately 200,000 candidates are tested in physics, mathematics and chemistry, from which just 5,000 students are accepted to the nine schools that administer the JEE. Therefore, just one in every 40 candidates who takes the JEE is admitted, making it one of the world’s most selective university admissions examinations.

Special provisions (or quotas) are set aside for candidates from disadvantaged groups, such as those from scheduled castes and tribes, or those with disabilities. For competitive examinations such as the JEE, students from these groups generally receive a five per cent leeway in the marks they must achieve for admission.

But before caste-based quotas and their expansion can be accepted or rejected, it must be evaluated in a systematic manner which unfortunately has not been done. Prof.
Thorat’s Nehru Memorial Lecture to the University of Mumbai in 2006 raises some vital issues of concern. He points out that although the reach of higher education has increased dramatically since independence, it still leaves a lot to be desired at all levels of access, inclusiveness and quality.

Thorat cites from three alternative methods used to estimate the extent of access to higher education: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) and Enrolment of the Eligible Ratio (EER). GER measures access by taking the ratio of persons in all age groups enrolled in various programmes to total population in the age group of 18 to 23. EER measures the level of enrolment of those who completed the higher secondary level of education. Data on student enrolment is provided mainly through three sources: Selected Education Statistics (SES), National Sample Survey (NSS) and Population Census (PC).

Accurate data is a problem. For example, GER based on the SES was 8 per cent in 2000, but the National Sample Survey (NSS) and Population Census (PC) put it at 10 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. The differences could be for two reasons: SES does not take into account enrolment in unrecognized institutions and also some State Governments do not report their enrolment annually. The NSS and PC report higher percentages because their data is collected from households and hence may include those who are doing diploma or training programmes like computer training in unrecognized institutions. The PC data also does not distinguish between professional degree and diploma programmes.

Thorat studies disparities under seven heads: (i) rural and urban; (2) inter-state; (3) inter-caste; (4) inter-religion; (5) male-female; (6) occupation group; and (7) poor and non-poor. The disparities revealed show that caste cannot be considered as the only factor in ascertaining deprivation although caste can be an important factor in these indicators.

The inter-caste data of 2003-04 shows that the overall GER was about 13.22 per cent. However it was much lower for ST, SC and OBC being only 5 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 11.34 per cent respectively compared to 24.89 per cent for Others. Between SC/ST and OBC the GER was higher for OBC and between SC and ST, the GER was higher for SC by about 2.5 per cent point. Thus the GER was the lowest for ST.
The Population Census figures reveal a similar disparity in GER. The general Hindu population has a GER of 15.57 per cent and for SC and ST, it is 8.39 per cent and 7.46 per cent respectively. The EER, however, reveals a different pattern. In 2003-2004, it was 54.4 per cent for ST, 57 per cent for SC, 54.8 per cent for OBC and 62.5 per cent for the Other Hindu population. This shows that the general Hindu population has a higher EER compared to SC, ST and OBC but the difference among them is marginal. It indicates that once the school level has been crossed, there is greater convergence in the proportions that enter higher education. Hence it is necessary to strengthen the system at the school level so that more people become eligible to enter higher education. The figures also show that based on GER the OBCs, have a higher enrolment rate compared to SC and ST, but a smaller proportion of them enter the higher education stream after completing the higher secondary stage than the higher castes. It raises the question on whether there can be other factors besides caste that influence decision-making in this regard, for example like socio-economic factors.

Thorat provides data on some other relevant factors besides caste and also points to the interlinkages between caste and rural areas, occupation, and location. Disparities are evident between rural and urban areas using data from any source. In 2003-2004, the GER for rural and urban area shows a wide gap being 7.76 per cent and 27.20 per cent respectively. Hence the GER in urban areas is four times higher than rural areas. The Population Census figures of 8.99 per cent for rural areas and 24.52 per cent for urban areas in 2001, also indicate that the rural area enrolment is three times lower than the urban area. The EER worked out to 51.1 per cent for rural and to 66 per cent for urban areas showing the latter to be about 15 per cent higher.

Second, there are wide inter-state variations. The GER at the aggregate level is 13 per cent but there are states like Nagaland (38.6%), Goa (27.3%), Kerala (24.2%), Manipur (24.7 per cent), Himachal Pradesh (20%) and Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry (18%) that show more than the national average. On the other hand, there are States like Tripura (3.2%), Assam (6.6%), Meghalaya (7.2%), Chhattisgarh (7.6%), Orissa (8.2%), Jharkhand (10.3%), West Bengal (9.7%), Bihar (10%), Sikkim (10.8%) and Rajasthan (11%) where the GER is lower than the national average.
The EER is a useful indicator as it estimates the access to education to those who have completed the higher secondary stage. In 2003-04, 59 per cent of those who completed the higher secondary entered higher education. The ratio is much higher in states like Mizoram (87.1%), Manipur (87.7%), Nagaland (85.6%), Jammu & Kashmir (76.6%) and Kerala (70.6%). By national comparison the ratio is much lower in Tripura (37.8%), Chhattisgarh (49.65), Orissa (50.2%), Arunachal Pradesh (53.5%). In the rest of the States, it was around the national average of 59 per cent. This again indicates that it is imperative to strengthen access and retention at the school level. Merely expanding higher education is not likely to solve the problem of access at the level of higher education.

Third, the access varies among the various religious groups as can be seen in the 2003-04 figures. The GER is the highest for Jains followed by Christians, Sikhs/Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims which stand at 57.43, 27.29, 15, 13.47 and 8.19 per cent respectively. The EER is similarly varied with Jains and Christians on the top, their EER being 74.7 and 71.3 per cent respectively. Next are the Buddhists and Hindus with about 60 per cent. The EER is low for Sikhs, being 52.8 per cent.

Fourth, gender impacts the access to higher education. It is lower for girls than for boys and this is more pronounced in rural areas. Significant male-female disparities also exist in EER. In 2003-04 the overall EER was 62.9 per cent for males and 54.1 per cent for females indicating that the girls are 9 per cent points lower than boys. The gender disparity is aggravated by caste and religion. For instance, in 2000 as against the overall average of 9.4 per cent for females, the GER for females in different categories was 2.4 per cent for ST followed by 4.7 per cent for SC 7.6 per cent for OBC and 17.2 per cent for other females. In case of religious groups, the GER of Muslim females was 6.3 per cent compared to 10.8 per cent for Hindu and 12.7 per cent for Sikh/Buddhist females. If EER is taken, we see that it is 50 per cent for SC/OBC females and 57 per cent for ST/other high caste females. At 48 per cent it was the lowest for Muslim females compared to females belonging to other religions being 54 per cent for Hindu/ Buddhist females, 56 per cent for Sikh and about 69 per cent for Jain/Christian females.

Poverty also creates disparities. In 1999-2000 the GER for the poor was 2.4 per cent as against 12.91 per cent for non-poor, the average being 10.10 per cent. Similar
disparities are seen for the poor in rural and urban areas. The GER for poor and non-poor in rural areas was 1.30 per cent and 5.51 per cent compared to the poor and non-poor in urban areas – 7.12 per cent and 27.15 per cent respectively. Poverty is also tied into caste and location, that is, rural and urban areas. Among the poor, the GER was the lowest for ST and SC followed by OBC and others. The GER for the poor belonging to ST, SC, OBC and others is 1.55 per cent, 1.89 per cent, 2.30 per cent and 3.58 per cent respectively. A similar pattern is observed for the poor in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the GER is the lowest for ST being 1.11 per cent followed by 1.35 per cent for SC, 1.13 per cent for OBC and 1.66 per cent for others. The overall GER in rural areas is 1.30 per cent. In urban areas, the GER for the urban poor is 3.86 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 5.10 per cent and 7 per cent respectively for SC, ST, OBC and Others – the average being 5.51 per cent. Among the non-poor, the GER for ST, SC and OBC is lower than for Others. The GER for SC, ST, OBC and Others is respectively 6.68 per cent, 9.7 per cent, 8.69 per cent and 19.73 per cent respectively. The all India average is 12.81 per cent.

Occupation is another factor, and can be clearly seen across occupation groups in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the GER is 5 per cent being generally higher for self-employed households engaged in farm and non-farm economic activities compared to 1.41 per cent for those who worked as farm wage labour and 3 per cent in non-farm wage labour activities. Similarly in urban areas, the GER was much higher for those engaged in business, regular salaried and other activities compared to casual labour. The GER 28 per cent, 15.74 per cent and 3.21 per cent respectively for self-employed, regular salaried and casual wage labour. Thus in both rural and urban areas, the enrolment of the casual wage labour was the lowest as compared to the self-employed and regular wage earner. The GER was particularly low for farm wage labour.

Occupation can be correlated to caste. The GER is generally low for wage labour and particularly low for SC/ST compared to other groups. For instance, while an overall level for wage labour in rural areas is 1.41 per cent, that of the ST, SC, OBC and Others in this group is 0.67 per cent, 1.63 per cent, 1.16 per cent and 1.93 per cent respectively. In the urban areas, the GER for casual labour is 3.26 per cent at overall level as against
1.53 per cent, 2.61 per cent, 3.34 per cent and 4.30 per cent for ST, SC, OBC and Other wage labour.

Similar inter-caste differences are observed in the case of self-employed cultivators in rural and urban areas. The overall GER in rural areas for self-employed in agriculture is 3 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 4.21 per cent and 8.33 per cent for ST, SC, OBC and Others respectively as against an overall average of 5.64 per cent. The GER for self-employed in business in rural areas is 2.53 per cent, 3.77 per cent, 3.97 per cent and 7.73 per cent for ST, SC, OBC and Others. In urban areas, the GER for self-employed among ST, SC, OBC and Others works out to 6.15 per cent, 7.37 per cent, 10.0 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. Among the self-employed and wage labour, the enrolment is particularly low for the poor among them.

Similarly in the urban areas while the enrolment rate at overall level is 15.74 per cent, 28.10 per cent, 3.26 per cent, 50.15 per cent for self-employed, regular salaried, casual labour and other households respectively, it is 4.59 per cent, 6 per cent, 2.38 per cent and 14.39 per cent respectively for poor households belonging to self-employed, regular salaried, casual labour and other households. In other words, the enrolment is lowest among the poor casual wage labour household in rural and urban areas. It works out to 0.86 per cent, 0.37 per cent and 2.38 per cent respectively for agriculture labour, other labour in rural areas and other labour in urban area. It is particularly low among the same poor group for the ST/SC/OBC. The enrolment rate for agricultural labour for ST, SC, and OBC is 0.9 per cent, .01 per cent and 0.93 per cent. Similarly, it is nil for ST and SC and only 0.52 per cent for OBC casual non-farm wage labour in rural areas.

All the above data shows that the access of SCs (scheduled castes) and STs (scheduled tribes) to higher education is low. Caste factors are undoubtedly important but equally important are other factors like occupation, gender, poverty and the disparity in the rural and urban areas of development. Caste also aggravates the deprivation caused by other factors.

There are practically no studies available on the outcomes at the Tertiary education level in India. There is little or no tracking of students through their undergraduate careers to see how many succeed and so it is difficult to put measures into place to facilitate success. Often it is not possible to even do this as at the time of
admission, the students’ category is known but the results do not indicate it. So the correlation between admission and outcome is difficult to do.

NEPAL

There now are 28,000 schools including higher secondary in the 400 villages of Nepal with 98,000 teachers and 4.5 million students. Net enrolment in primary schools is nearly 90 per cent, and there is now a reasonable gender parity with 48 per cent students being girls. Almost 91 per cent of Nepal’s households are within a 30 minute walk from a primary school. This is not a small achievement considering the rugged topography of Nepal. While ten per cent may not seem a large number of out-of-school children, they are comprised mostly of historically, geographically, economically and socially deprived and marginalized communities. Only 35 per cent children from indigenous communities, 18 per cent of Dalits and a mere 1 per cent of disabled children are believed to be enrolled in Primary Schools.

Legally, there are two types of schools in the country: community schools and institutional or private schools. Community schools receive regular government grants whereas institutional schools are funded by the school’s own or other non-governmental sources. Institutional schools are organized either as a non-profit trust or as a company. A third type of school is the school run by the local people enthusiastic towards having a school in their localities. They do not receive regular government grants and most of them do not have any other sustainable financial source. Supported and managed by the local people, they can be termed as the real community schools.

Disparities across urban/rural areas are quite severe. Relative to rural areas, urban areas have a much larger school attendance rate (70 per cent versus 41 per cent) and mean years of schooling (9.2 versus 6.9). However there are minor differences among rural areas. Among development regions, the West has the highest attendance rate while the Central region has the highest mean years of schooling. Among ecological zones, Hills have the first rank in both indicators. There is a distinct pattern across consumption quintiles. Attendance rates rise sharply moving from poorer quintiles to richer ones and so does the mean schooling. By age-groups attendance rate is higher among younger
cohorts and mean years of schooling is higher for mid-aged ever attendees.

The castes and ethnic groups vary in size from the Chetri, who number 3,593,496 and constitute 16.1 per cent of the population, to the Kusunda, of whom there are a bare 164. The two largest groups—the Bahun and the Chetri—who account for about 29 per cent of the population, along with the Newars (5.6 per cent) are the dominant communities in Nepal in that they control the three branches of the state, the legislature, executive and the judiciary. They occupy senior positions in political parties and non-governmental organizations; have more education and are generally wealthier than the other communities. Democracy does not seem to have redressed this inequality between different communities.

Nepal is characterized by considerable differences in educational attainment between girls and boys. This is particularly because of unequal allocation of household resources among children by gender continues to exert pressure on parents to invest in the long-term economic viability represented by sons over that of daughters. Thus, when resources are limited, families try to have at least one child educated, while delaying or denying formal education to the other children in the family. In such a situation, girls are unlikely to be the recipients of such investments.

Hence, quite expectedly, of the poorest two thirds of the population, 43 per cent of males and less than 11 per cent of females were literate. Similarly, at the levels of higher education, the difference is more pronounced with females constituting only 20 per cent of the total enrollment in higher education. Further, while the total Gross Enrollment Ratios are themselves not very significant at the higher levels (between 4 and 5.3 per cent between 1990 and 2002), the gross enrollment ratio for females has been between 2 and 3 per cent compared to 6 to 8 per cent for males.

Almost 80 per cent students enrolled in higher education come from the wealthiest one-fifth population while only 0.4 per cent students are from the poorest and only 6 per cent from the poorest half. The Government of Nepal is aware that the access to higher education is low, being only 6 per cent and usually it is students from high economic group that are able to take advantage of it.

PAKISTAN
Modern education in Pakistan is divided into five levels: Primary School is from grades 1-5, Middle School from grades 6-8; and High School from grades 9-10, leading to the Secondary School Certificate. The Intermediate grades are 11 and 12, leading to a Higher Secondary School Certificate; and University programmes lead to graduate and advanced degrees. Secondary school in Pakistan begins from grade 9 and lasts for four years.

Upon the completion of grade 10, students are expected to take a standardised test administered by a regional 'Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education' after which they are awarded a 'Secondary School Certificate' or SSC. This used to be called matriculation certificate or matric for short. Students then enter a college and complete grades 11 and 12. Upon completion of grade 12, they again take a standardised test which is also administered by the regional boards after which they get the 'Higher Secondary School Certificate' or HSSC. This used to be called the F.Sc./F.A. or 'Intermediate'. There are many streams from which the students can choose for their 11 and 12 grades, such as pre-medical, pre-engineering, humanities, social sciences, business and theology. Some technical streams have also recently been introduced for grades 11 and 12.

A “Compendium on Gender Statistics 2004” was brought out by the Statistics Division of the Government of Pakistan. It gives the year wise number of primary schools and enrolment figures. Most of the schools appear to be gender segregated. There are 32.3 per cent girls’ schools to 55.1 per cent boys schools. The balance, 12.6 per cent schools are mixed. The gender pattern for middle schools is similar to that of primary schools and the number of mixed schools seem to be coming down.

Longitudinally, the number of high schools follows the overall pattern of primary and secondary schools. Both boys’ and girls’ schools have been gradually increasing but the number of schools for girls is almost half of the number of boys’ schools at any point of time.

A 2005 study indicates that there is a big decline in student numbers between the primary and the middle levels, where most of the enrolment is lost. Only about 25 per cent of the enrolled primary school students enter middle schools, whereas only about 40 per cent of the middle school students enter high/higher secondary levels. From 74 per
cent enrolment at the primary school level, only 3 per cent students reach the university levels.

The draft National Education Policy (2009) of Pakistan gives the latest figures. It acknowledges that despite the progress made, the participation and attainment levels even in 2005-06 were low. About one-third of the primary school age children remained out of school while the proportion rose to almost three-quarters for the secondary school children.

Pakistan has a special problem because it has multiple parallel systems of education. First, there is the well-known division between the so-called English Medium and Urdu Medium schools that exacerbates existing social and economic divisions and leads to a virtual system of educational apartheid in the country. This division has both deepened and broadened over recent years as further differentiation has emerged both within the Urdu medium schools and the English Medium schools. The government runs English medium schools; and there are also semi-autonomous schools. Both are governed by a national curriculum. Further, there are ‘elite’ private schools that specifically cater to the training of the children of the very rich for a college education abroad and are consciously distant from the realities of Pakistan. When such divisions are made only on the basis of economics and social class, it becomes one more means of consolidating and perpetuating economic and social disparities. In a society already torn by stratification, this builds yet one more layer of walls between people.

Second and equally important is the divide between the ‘formal’ educational institutions, that is those which are under some nominal supervision of the national educational authorities and the ‘informal’ institutions, especially the Madaris. The madarsa system differs from the formal educational system in every respect -- the underlying approach to education, the values to be espoused, the literatures to be studied, the philosophical bases of pedagogy, and the social and political priorities. Although the graduates of the two systems have long been active in the social, cultural, and political life of the country, their relative proportions, economic prospects, and their attitudes towards each other have changed dramatically.

Almost 1.2 million skilled graduates come out of Pakistani universities annually. The government has announced a $1 billion spending plan over the next decade to build
six state-of-the-art science and engineering universities. The scheme would be overseen by the Higher Education Commission. There were 55 public and 51 private sector recognized universities and degree awarding institutions in 2003-04.

Enrolment in all engineering and technology programmes was 38 per cent of the total enrolment in the professional subjects. This was closely followed by enrolment in all medical programmes which was 29 per cent of the total enrolment in professional subjects. Of the total 4,681 students enrolled in the PhD programmes, the share of the private sector was limited to 207 students.

Arts and science colleges have been increasing for both sexes and the gender inhibitions evident at the school level are not particularly sharp at the tertiary level. This could be because of the societal perception that tertiary education is inherently the preserve of the privileged class.

Pakistan had a total of 325,993 students enrolled in degree colleges (2005-2006) all over the country and in all degree level institutions, public or private. Women comprised the greater number at 198,208. However, if an urban-rural breakup is given, then it becomes evident that in the rural areas, the higher figure for enrolment in degree institutions is among males. For example, out of the total 301,367 students enrolled in degree-awarding institutions in urban areas all over Pakistan, female students comprised the higher number at 188,769; in degree institutions located in the rural areas, for the year chosen, out of a total of 24,626 students enrolled, male students were 15,187, and female students were only 9,439. According to the Higher Education Commission website, enrolment at Universities/Degree Awarding Institution excluding the affiliated colleges was 276,274 students in 2001-02 which has gone up to 741,092 students in 2007-08, with women comprising a major chunk of those enrolled.

More female students (53 per cent) than males were enrolled in the M.A./M.Sc./M.CS. programmes. The enrolment of female students as a percentage of the total enrolment in all public and private sector universities was a healthy 46 per cent. The attainment of gender equity at the level of tertiary education is becoming visible.

Female candidates represented 22 per cent of the total enrolment in all Ph.D programmes. Female enrolment in the case of medical programmes was 52 per cent of the total enrolment in this discipline. All data is for the year 2003-2004.
MALDIVES

In Maldives, seven years of schooling is compulsory starting at age six. All administrative atolls have government primary schools and an education centre providing education for all age groups. Most of the many private schools receive state subsidies and are run by the community.

By 2002, enrolment at the primary levels had reached 100 per cent. Secondary school enrolment also improved significantly, with about 80 per cent progressing to secondary level. Lower secondary schools (grades 8 through 10) are located on 138 islands. Only a small proportion of children leave school with a qualification, and "Ordinary level" pass rates at the end of grade 10 are low for those who opt to take the examination. The government intends to make 10 years of education available to all before 2010. Access to higher secondary schools (grades 11 and 12) is limited as schools are located only on 14 islands (as of mid-2007). Access to tertiary education is even more limited.

Whereas there is no gender bias at the primary and lower secondary school levels the upper secondary and tertiary education shows a bias in favor of boys. According to Hon. Rashida Yoosuf, Maldives Minister of Women's Affairs and Social Security, equal opportunities are given to girls and boys at all levels of education. There is parity in the primary and secondary school enrolment with 49 per cent of girls and 51 per cent boys. However, higher secondary and tertiary enrolment figures show a considerable decrease in the number of girls presumably because of lack of girls' mobility as higher secondary and tertiary education is available only in the capital Malé, and abroad respectively.

Youth and adults who have not been able to profit from the formal education system are provided with opportunities to complete the extended basic education at an accelerated rate through non-formal education. Non-formal educational programmes, particularly in the fields of population and health education, are targeted at students of primary and secondary schools, out-of-school youth, teachers and community leaders and adults. Under the Condensed Education Programme implemented by the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC), out-of-school youth and people beyond school age can complete Grades 1-VII in three years. The course is usually offered at an Atoll Education
Centre (AEC) and is usually taught by primary teachers in the evenings. The NFEC also conducts courses in Thaana and Arabic Calligraphy, Dhivehi, and Thaana typing. Short skill development programmes like Embroidery and Sewing, First Aid, Carpentry and others are also conducted. Other institutions such as the Institute of Health Sciences, the Institute of Hotel and Catering Services and the Maldivian Institute of Technical education too conduct short-term vocational education programmes.

The tertiary education system in the Maldives comprises of one major public institution Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE), one smaller public institution, College of Islamic Studies (CIS), and a number of private training institutions, including one that has lately attained college status. A state scholarship scheme funds tertiary education abroad. Vocational training is available in health sciences, teaching, hotel and catering skills.

Compared to MCHE, CIS is a much smaller operation catering to the Islamic studies and Arabic medium education. MCHE faculties include Health Sciences, Education, Hospitality and Tourism, Management and Computing, Engineering Technology, Shari’ah and Legal Studies, Maritime Studies and Arts. The staff profile shows significant differences amongst the MCHE Faculties. Whilst some Faculties have a high proportion of graduate staff amongst their academics, the majority of staff in the other Faculties holds sub-degree level qualifications.

Enrolment in the public institutions has shown a steady increase in the last two years. Female enrolment however which was 59 per cent in 2007 in public institutions has declined to about 51 per cent. Presently, about 5,000 students are enrolled in MCHE and CIS's long-term courses (i.e. courses that are up to or longer than one-academic year). About 2,500 students enroll annually in short-term courses.

Participation rates in higher education among various socio-economic levels are unavailable. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that those from the outer islands are greatly disadvantaged in enrolling in tertiary education courses as they have to leave their residential islands and travel to other islands. This imposes an excessively high cost on them which most of them cannot bear.

The government of Maldives had taken a decision a decade ago to establish a university in the country by bringing together MCHE and CIS. The establishment of
MNU would pave way for a more autonomous framework for the delivery and expansion of university education in the country. It is also envisaged that this would increase greater accountability to the public. The main difficulties in introducing higher level courses are lack of adequate number of teachers with appropriate qualifications, preoccupation or concern with running lower level programmes because they are in high demand and there is also national need for them, and scarcity of eligible students seeking higher qualifications. Other challenges include availability of scientific apparatus to conduct experiments and the high unit cost associated with them due to the fewer students who opt for them.

There are several private post-secondary education providers registered in the country. Until recently, many of them were involved in providing language courses for adults and preparing youth and adults for the local professional examinations. In recent years, a number of these institutions have started offering short term computer literacy courses generally lasting two weeks to three months. Among the many private institutions registered, only a few offer long term (i.e. equal to or longer than one academic year) courses.

The number of grade 12 students seeking entry into one of the in-country tertiary education programmes is increasing and is likely to grow further with the projected growth of the grade 12 cohort. In turn this will generate further pressure on grade 10 students to strive harder to gain access into the sector. While it will increase the reach of education beyond grade 10, it will also in turn add pressure on the tertiary programmes available necessitating their expansion. The rising social demand for higher education can be envisaged from the rapid rise in secondary enrolments over the past 10 years. It increased nearly threefold, from 12,281 in 1998 to 31,259 in 2008. Over the next three years, it is projected that over 29,000 young people will complete secondary education accounting for dropouts and failures. A significant number of school leavers will continue to tertiary education and at least 40 to 60 per cent of them will potentially enter the labour market annually.

Higher education for secondary school leavers has been largely provided in the past through scholarships funded by the Government and through overseas donors including friendly countries. Over time such assistance has declined while the secondary
school leavers have rapidly increased. Hence, more recently the government had borrowed loans from international banks like the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank to finance scholarships. With increasing numbers of students to serve the debt burden will go on increasing. That is why in recent times, privately funded overseas study like the Villa Scholarship Scheme has become an important avenue for students pursuing overseas higher education.

**BANGLADESH**

Education in Bangladesh has three major stages - primary, secondary and higher education. The government is the major provider of primary and basic education in Bangladesh. Primary education is a 5-year cycle while secondary education is a 7-year one with three sub-stages: 3 years of junior secondary, 2 years of secondary and 2 years of higher secondary. The entry age for primary is 6 years. The junior, secondary and higher stages are designed for age groups 11-13, 14-15 and 16-17 years. Higher Secondary is followed by graduate level education in general, technical, engineering, agriculture, business studies, and medical streams requiring 5-6 years to obtain a Masters degree.

According to the government statistics of 2005, 18.2 million children were age-appropriate for primary school, of which 90 per cent or 16.2 million (out of which 8,134,437 were females) attended primary schools of all types, public, registered, non-registered, experimental and private.

In the same year, 17 million students were between ages 10 and 14; of those 44 per cent or 7.4 million (out of which 3,868,014 were females) attended secondary school. Approximately 1.3 million students 10 per cent of 13 million attended college at 3,150 colleges where 90,401 teachers taught. And a very small percentage, 1.6 per cent of 13 million students of the university going age attended the 74 higher educational institutions/universities.

A CAMPE survey of 1999 found that the net enrolment in primary education was 77 per cent. This meant that 23 per cent of all children between the ages of 6 and 11 years did not have continuous access to primary education. The corresponding figure was 26 per cent in the Chittagong region and deprivation could be as high as 40 per cent in the slums of Dhaka. The left out children included working children from extremely poor
households, physically and mentally challenged children, urban slum dwellers, residents of inaccessible rural areas, tribals, adivasis and others. Hence, it was vital to make education as inclusive as possible at the primary level. But only ensuring primary education would not be enough as secondary education had become a part of basic education in a world of global competition.

The CAMPE study also shows that the largest enrolment gains are for boys in urban private schools because scarce resources are more likely to be spent on boys rather than girls. This reflects a growth in socio-economic disparity and persisting gender bias. Undergraduate education of various durations of two to four years is offered to students aged 18+ at a number of public and private universities, degree and honors colleges, technical colleges, and specialized institutions. Successful completion of a degree course is a prerequisite for appointment to a white-collar civilian job. Girls appeared to have a much lower access to tertiary education. At the degree and masters level, they accounted for 32.6 and 26.3 per cent of degree-seeking students, respectively. Hence, a major effort is required to expand higher education and address issues of access and equity with regard to gender.

Women in Bangladesh may also go to *Madarsas* (traditional religious schools which teach the Qur’an, basic arithmetic, and the ability to read and write Dhivehi), but are not allowed to get the same degrees as their male counterparts because they are mainly taught the scriptures and traditional female role occupations.

**SRI LANKA**

Sri Lanka’s education structure is divided into five parts: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate and tertiary. Primary education lasts five to six years (Grades 1-5) and at the end of this period, the students may elect to write a national exam called the Scholarship exam. This exam allows students with exceptional skills to move on to better schools. After primary education, the junior secondary level also referred to as middle school lasts for 4 years (Grades 6-9). This is followed by 2 years of the senior secondary level comprising of grades 10 and 11 which is the preparation for the General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) Ordinary Level (O/Ls).
According to the Sri Lankan law, it is compulsory for all children to go to school up to grade 9 or till the age of 14 after which they can choose to continue their education or drop out and engage in apprenticeship for a job or farming. The majority of households have a primary school within 2 km of their homes. Most of these schools are maintained by the government as a part of the free education programme.

The Ministry of Education strongly advises all students to continue with their studies at least till the G.C.E O/Ls. Students who wish to pursue tertiary education must pass the G.C.E O/Ls in order to enter the collegiate level to study for another 2 years (grades 12-13). This caters to the age groups of 16-17 and 17-18 years respectively at the end of which students sit for the G.C.E Advanced Level. On successful completion of this exam, students can move on to tertiary education. The GCE A/Ls is the university entrance exam in Sri Lanka.

With the establishment of the provincial council system in the 1980s, the Central Government handed over the control of most of the schools to the local governments. It only retained some old schools which had been around since the colonial times thus creating two types of government schools: the National Schools and the Provincial Schools. National Schools come under the direct control of the Ministry of Education and are therefore funded directly by the ministry. Provincial Schools consist of the vast majority of schools in Sri Lanka. Funded and controlled by the local governments. Many of them suffer from poor facilities and a shortage of teachers.

The number of private schools in Sri Lanka increased considerably due to the emergence of the upper-middle class during the colonial era. Many of them have access to newer facilities than the state run schools. Currently there are 66 Private schools which were registered before 1960. Of these, 33 are non-fee-levying Assisted Private Schools which are also known as semi-government schools and 33 are fee levying autonomous Private Schools. The private schools are in addition to the government schools.

International schools in Sri Lanka are not restricted to the expatriate community. Anyone who can pay can join them. Mainly for the children of the expatriate community, these schools charge high tuition fees because of which they are able to provide good facilities and have high standards.
Tertiary education ranges from certificate courses of one year or less or a diploma involving one to two years of study. The Bachelor’s degree can require three or four years, the General Degree consisting of coursework without a major. The bachelor Honours degree can be a General degree involved four years of coursework and research with a major or specialization in a particular field. The Masters degree is undertaken after the completion of one or more Bachelors degrees. It deals with a more advanced study of the subject than that at the Bachelors level and can consist of either research, or coursework, or of a mixture of the two. Ph.D. can be undertaken after an Honours Bachelors or Masters degree, by an original research project resulting in a thesis or dissertation. There are currently only 17 state universities in Sri Lanka.

Education in Sri Lanka has been widely recognized as a basic right and as an instrument of upward socio-economic mobility for over sixty years.

While general access to tertiary education is low, the percentage of women in it is increasing. There were 50.9 per cent women entrants in 1997-98 which rose to 53.9 per cent in 2006. Almost 80.6 per cent of women entered the Law Faculty and 71.9 per cent to Arts and Indigenous Medicine Faculty in 2006. They were under represented in Engineering being only 20.4 and 33.3 per cent respectively in Computer Science and Information Technology. Substantial percentage of women are formed in the Law College, National Colleges of Education, Institute of Social Development, National Institute of Library studies, Institute of Chartered Accountants and Institute of Management and Accountancy. However, the percentage of women is very low in Advanced Institutes of Technical Education and in the Institutes of Information Technology. This is probably because of the cost of equipment or difficulties in accessing centres that provide these facilities. A positive recent development has been the promotion of distance education through online learning for those who are unable to attend formal tertiary educational institutions.

In the State wide network of technical and vocational institutions, about 35 per cent enrolment was that of women. However, gender imbalance be seen in the courses offered by women. Very few women are enrolled in courses pertaining to technical trades. They are preponderant in textiles and secretarial courses thus reinforcing
traditional roles in secretarial work, accounting, nursing and languages. (Ministry of Vocational Training, Department of Technical Education, 2006).

**Barriers to Entry**

There are both non-monetary and financial barriers to entry into tertiary education. Academic ability, information access, motivation, inflexibility of university admission processes (Gerald and Haycock, 2006), and family environment and others forms of cultural capital are some of the non-monetary reasons that have been recognized as important factors in explaining poor participation of low-income individuals in tertiary education (Nybroten, 2003; Finnie et al, 2004).

**BHUTAN**

The successful expansion of primary education is now placing enormous pressures on the secondary and post-secondary levels with an ever-increasing number of students moving up the education ladder. It is calculated that while only about 20 per cent of the students pass class XII, the Bhutan government is only able to cater to the needs of just about 10 per cent of the class XII graduates for tertiary education on full government scholarships. The other ten per cent pursue their tertiary education abroad.

The fundamental challenge to universalizing basic education in Bhutan will be to enroll and retain children who, for various reasons, have been unable to enroll in school. These include those living in “very remote parts of the country, children with disabilities, children facing learning difficulties, and those requiring other forms of special care and attention. An inclusive education strategy will need to incorporate special provisions for facilities, structure and curriculum to accommodate the learning needs of all children.”

**INDIA**

The cost-benefit barrier occurs when an individual decides that the costs of attending university (including tuition and living expenses as well as opportunity costs of not working during the duration of the course) outweigh the returns to their education.
As the examples and statistics below suggest, the cost-benefit barrier in India may merit further study.

The Indian Labour Report 2007, by Team Lease Services states that while poverty is declining in India, inequality is rising and 57 per cent of Indian youth suffer from some form of skill deprivation. Corporate India cannot find skilled employees and much of the labour force consists of the ‘working poor.’ Despite the large human resource available in the country, employability remains a key challenge. Pressures on employment arise from several factors including shift in the demographics of the population, the inability of an ailing agricultural sector to support labour and an educational system that is not in sync with the requirements of business and industry. The inadequate interaction between the academics on the one hand and business and industry on the other, results in a lack of focus on the skill development of individuals. The decision of most individuals to continue with education depends on their receiving adequate returns for the efforts made, and the current system does not enable them to do so, resulting in dropouts, under-trained and under-skilled labour. Globally, two approaches are followed to achieve better employability – educational reforms followed by a focus on lifelong learning opportunities.

Although the number of colleges and universities has mushroomed in the country, they lack the ability to impart career-oriented knowledge and training; curricula are out-dated; there is little interaction between industry and educational institutes, and only about 10 per cent of the colleges show good academic achievement. The poor quality of colleges means that students passing out of them would earn low incomes or would be unable to find jobs relevant to the courses pursued by them. This is also one of the causes for the high levels of dropouts in higher education. When future prospects are not attractive, the better option appears to be to drop out, particularly for the deprived sections of society.

Further, there is a wide range of income divergence within the same stream depending on the quality of skills. Though higher education levels can help an individual reach the desired employment, sustainability depends on how well the skills are adapted and improved over time. It is thus the quality of the institute that imparts the education or training which is the most important determinant of the income earning potential. For
instance, only 30 per cent of Information Technology (IT) graduates are actually employable in the IT sector.

A GHRDC-Competition Success Review Survey 2006 reported that out of approximately 1100 Business-Schools in India only 400 met the minimum eligibility criteria. And while the top institutes usually registered 100 per cent placements, the bottom ones barely managed 25 per cent. This was true for all streams of education in the country, emphasizing the fact that good infrastructure, instruction and other inputs were essential to ensure high standards of education, liberal or vocational, and this was lacking in the majority of educational institutes.

An analysis of data available from the NSSO 61st Round shows a surprisingly paradoxical finding. According to it, greater education levels can lead to greater income but they also bring with them a lower probability of being employed. The situation was aggravated because formal vocational training had no impact on incomes or the likelihood of being employed, because of its poor quality. On the other hand, informal vocational training not associated with formal certification, such as training in household occupation settings, had a positive impact on the likelihood of being employed, but did not affect income levels significantly. This highlighted the importance of having a formal, well-designed vocational training system and the poor quality available in the country.

The reason for the low participation of India’s Muslims in both higher education and in jobs can be traced back to weak school education. A recent study by the Sachar Committee points out that one cause of this could be that there were very few government primary schools in Muslim areas, and even fewer higher-level educational institutions. Even when present, most of them were of a very low quality, with high teacher-pupil ratios. This was because Muslims found it difficult to get jobs as teachers in schools, and those who did, it is alleged, were badly treated. The main cause for their educational backwardness could be poverty. Children are required to earn for the family and even those who do go to school, cannot cope without tuitions or parental support, resulting in drop-outs after a few years of schooling. Further, in view of their perception of being discriminated against in getting jobs, Muslim families do not perceive any major
gains from education. Difficulties in getting jobs in government organizations, even with certificates and degrees, were brought up repeatedly, says the Report, while the situation in the private sector was worse.

NEPAL

Nepal is characterized by considerable differences in educational attainment between girls and boys. This is particularly because of unequal allocation of household resources among children by gender continues to exert pressure on parents to invest in the long-term economic viability represented by sons over that of daughters. Thus, when resources are limited, families try to have at least one child educated, while delaying or denying formal education to the other children in the family. In such a situation, girls are unlikely to be the recipients of such investments.

There are other problems like lack of female teachers. It has been recognized that more women teachers lead to gender equality and social justice. It directly impacts the enrollment and retention of girls. Overcrowding in classrooms and lack of trained teachers aggravate the problem of access not only for girls but for all school age children. What is needed is affirmative action to ensure that girls, children with disabilities and others who are disproportionately disadvantaged should get extra support for their basic education.

The poor quality of school education serves as a significant deterrent to accessing higher education. Unless there is a strong school system, there will always be inequitable access to higher education. Hence for access and equity in education, the school sector has to be strengthened and made more inclusive together with higher education. It requires dealing with marginalized groups, gender issues, rural urban divide and poverty among others.

While the situation has improved, the higher education system still serves the elite and those who can afford the cost. Even amongst them, those who find the standards in Nepal inadequate and have the means, send their children abroad for higher education. Then, there are other biases as in favour of urban areas. Further, the gender issues and caste inequalities of the school primary and secondary systems are also reflected in
Nepal’s higher education. Many minority groups and ethnic communities have not benefited from education and find themselves marginalized.

**PAKISTAN**

It is seen that the growth of professional colleges in Pakistan is largely male-oriented. This may be because of socio-cultural and economic factors. Marriage often prevents women from pursuing higher education. Also the demand for women professionals gets weakened as culturally women are seen as homemakers first and professionals later. In any case, women’s economic independence is not usually culturally accepted.

The gender disparity is also affected by the Taliban enforcement of a complete ban on female education in the Swat district, as reported in a January 21, 2009 issue of the Pakistan daily newspaper *The News*. Some 400 private schools enrolling 40,000 girls have been shut down. At least 10 girls’ schools that tried to open after the January 15, 2009 deadline by the Taliban were blown up by the militants in the town of Mingora, the headquarters of the Swat district. "More than 170 schools have been bombed or torched, along with other government-owned buildings."

**MALDIVES**

While the government has long been committed to providing equal opportunities for women in the political, social and economic areas, official deference to Muslim customs fosters an environment of strict gender roles and often encourages more rigid adherence to cultural norms than to national laws. This can also lead to gender disparity in the post secondary institutions as girls not only marry at a younger age but also become mothers early, often in their teens. For some of these reasons, they are unable to spend adequate time in school and also fail to meet the entrance requirements for tertiary education whether in Maldives or abroad.

A country briefing paper of 2001 on the women of Maldives emphasized the impact of the lack of facilities on the islands. It affects everyone but the fall out is more on girls as can be seen from a sharp drop in enrolment after Grades VII and X. This implies that very few Maldivians living in atolls can go in for education essentially
beyond primary levels. The Government has been offering a few scholarships to enable the island children to pursue secondary education at the Southern Secondary School (SSS) since 1998. These are open to students of the islands that do not have facilities for secondary education with equal opportunities for both boys and girls.

The accessibility to schools appears to be the greatest impediment for island children pursuing secondary and/or higher education (beyond Grade VII). Some of the remote islands in the atolls still do not have secondary education facilities. No matter how bright the students may be, if they do not have secondary schools in their home islands, they cannot get secondary education unless they go to another island or atoll where it is available. Traveling to other islands in the same atoll or to another atoll coupled with boarding and lodging involves high costs and the aspiring students often find it difficult to get accommodation. Even if a student were to travel to another island to enroll, accommodation has to be arranged on a “home-stay” basis. Therefore, parents tend to hesitate to send girl-children outside their home islands. More than 80 per cent of the students in the three largest co-educational schools in Malé are from the other islands.

**BANGLADESH**

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees that all citizens are equal before law, enjoy the equal protection of law, and that “women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and public life.” However, the most important events in a woman’s life, such as marriage, divorce, custody of children, inheritance, and others are governed by the Islamic “Shari’ah Laws” which influences the enforcement of civil laws that do not conform to the Shari’ah law.

The ground reality is that despite constitutional guarantees, women have not attained legal equality and face unequal access to property, protection from harm, decision-making powers surrounding their family life and outside activities, and to the justice system itself. Cultural traditions (e.g., arranged marriages as minors, violence against women, etc.), ignorance of religious and State laws, and lack of will among enforcement agents and the judiciary, obstruct the enforcement of many protective and promotional laws.
The cost of education prevents children from the poorer sections of society from entering secondary education. From this level, the division between different social classes gets sharply accentuated. An elite, mostly English medium school system together with some private and public schools, including a few residential Cadet Colleges, functions with a degree of efficiency and offer a superior quality of education to their students. However the mass system, bifurcated into secular and religious streams, is considered to be largely dysfunctional. It serves the majority of the population and thus gives rise to divisions in the society. Thus there is an elite group based on its social and economic status while the majority survive as an underclass society. This means that the quality of mass education whether public or private has to be substantially upgraded.

The challenges to education in Bangladesh at all levels stem from poverty, gender bias, social stratification and inadequate educational infrastructure. These begin at the school level and are perpetuated with multiplier effect of higher levels of education. The caste system and the prejudice against the so-called ‘untouchables’ have been traditionally regarded as part of Hindu culture originating in Hindu scriptures but in Bangladesh these traditions and practices have also been adopted by sections of the Muslim majority. Hindus are about 10 per cent of the population in Bangladesh and a large portion of them are Dalits. Members of ‘low castes’ increasingly refer to themselves as Dalits or the ‘downtrodden’ people to emphasize that they have been exploited, oppressed and excluded through generations. Most Dalits are the descendants of those brought to the region from India as menial servants to the British colonial regime. There are local and regional variations on who are regarded as Dalits but they are mostly distinguishable by their professions, for example, robidas or cobblers; rishies or leather workers, and shobdikars or drum beaters and others like sweepers, sewerage cleaners and scavengers; woodcutters, honey collectors, fishermen and many other professions.

There are a number of challenges and constraints which affect the rights of the Dalit communities. Most of these concern the lack of access to education; poverty; problems of health, and housing; unequal access to work; discrimination; bonded labour and child labour. The lack is so great that they are often referred to as ‘missing communities’, that is they are missing from the developmental agenda of both the governmental and the non governmental agencies. Most Dalits have no formal education.
According to a study, 64 per cent of Hindu Dalits and 61 per cent of Muslim Dalits have no education at all. More than 80 per cent of Dalits experience discrimination in admission to school. Some teachers actively discourage Dalit parents from enrolling their children. They are often not motivated to seek higher education as biases prevent them from getting employment even at low levels in the public and private sector in spite of graduating from high schools and colleges. Their low literacy rates have hindered their development and also inhibited them from looking for alternatives or changes to their traditional occupations.

SRI LANKA

The undergraduate education in the State Universities is also free like schooling but is extremely limited. Less than 12 per cent or only about 16,000 students of all those who qualify get admission to the State Universities. Only half of those who enter actually graduate. However, these figures mask the reality as Sri Lanka has followed a changing policy towards university admissions, since the early seventies. Hence it is impossible to predict with any degree of certainty, the aggregate number of qualifying high school candidates that manage to get admission into tertiary education. This is mainly due to the distribution of seats in colleges and universities between merit-based, district-based and rural or backward-district based candidates as a result of constant political interference and societal pressures.

Theoretically, admission to the university system is based on the highly competitive GCE Advanced Level examination. So, only the top students from urban districts get the chance of availing of tertiary education. But affirmative action policies enable children from remote districts to get in with lower marks.

Those who cannot get into the system find other means of higher education. Some go abroad to foreign universities, while others enroll themselves at the Open University of Sri Lanka or at the few state-owned autonomous degree awarding institutes such as the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) or study as external students of traditional universities or at private institutes (such as the IIT) that conduct classes and exams on behalf of foreign universities. Some study for entrance/membership for professional bodies both foreign such as Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
(CIMA), BCS, Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA) and others and for local bodies such as Institute of Chartered Accounts of Sri Lanka (ICASL) or do vocational studies at the vocational technical colleges which specialize in mechanical and electronic subjects.

There are a significant number of unemployed graduates in Sri Lanka at present, except in the fields of medicine, engineering, information technology, commerce, agriculture and law. Many state university graduates are unemployed because there is no demand from both within and outside the country for the degrees they have done. Many students prefer to study at institutes and professional bodies instead of entering state universities even though they are accepted by them. The inadequate access has also prompted students to go abroad for their studies. Due to this, many intellectuals have often expressed the need for Private Universities, where students could study in their home country at a lower cost. The North Colombo Medical College (NCMC) was one such institute. Before its nationalization, it produced some of the best doctors in Sri Lanka. However efforts to establish Private Universities have been blocked due to protests from the students of the state universities and from some political groups.

Economic constraints and inequalities in school education have perpetuated disparities between socio-economic groups and districts in providing education. About 30.3 per cent schools in 2006 had less than 100 students and were neglected in the provision of facilities. Many ‘small’ schools have been closed. This has made the education of girls especially in the economically disadvantaged communities difficult as they cannot access schools in remote areas. Around 830 schools or 8.3 per cent of all schools are in plantation areas. Their quality has improved with specific donor support but they still suffer from isolation and neglect. The overall quality of schools has tended to deteriorate because of budgetary constraints. However, a clear relation exists between the socio-economic background of students, school facilities and educational performance of students which hinders both boys and girls from low-income families.

Children who do not regularly attend school live in low income urban neighbourhoods or in remote and deprived villages. They could also be in plantation labour communities and in conflict affected or tsunami affected areas. The majority of children in vulnerable groups like children with disabilities, domestic workers, labourers,
street children’, beggars and child sex workers have either never been to school or have dropped out. While only a small percentage of children in the compulsory age group are out of school, 15 out of the 100 poorest divisions have 10 per cent of the children out of school. Conflict-affected districts have 16 per cent children out of school. Plantation children also lack equal access to education and are likely to drop out or not attend school.

While all socio-economic groups have access to primary education, poverty causes disparities at higher educational levels. At the secondary and tertiary stages 61 per cent of the lowest income quintile and 76 per cent of the highest quintile were enrolled in Grades 6-9. There were respectively 31 and 60 per cent in Senior Secondary Education from Grades 10-13 and 2 and 13 per cent in tertiary education (World Bank 2007). Therefore, economic constraints more than gender seem to limit the access to education.

**Equity Promotion Policies**

What, then, can tertiary education institutions and systems concretely do to improve access and success of disadvantaged groups? Policies and procedures seeking to eliminate non-monetary barriers include a whole range of interventions at the national and institutional levels, such as building partnerships with K-12 institutions and reaching out to students at a very young age to plant the seed of attending university into their minds early, and instituting affirmative action procedures—to include issues such as socio-economic status and race, among others—in admission and hiring processes. In Southeast Asia, financial barriers to tertiary education are often addressed with no tuition fees or low fees.

**BHUTAN**

The effort at achieving gender parity in education in Bhutan is palpable. In reality, women face no discrimination but a gap had existed between the educational attainment of girls and boys mainly due to certain social and physical factors. A family’s economic situation, the level of education of parents and location of school from home affect a girl’s education.
Special efforts will be made to improve the participation rate of girls. During the 9th Plan, all the Dzongkhags are required to make extra efforts to enroll girls into their schools by building more community based schools and creating additional hostel facilities for girls where necessary. Increased awareness will be created on the value of education for girls through the local bodies and through guidance and counselling in the schools. More female teachers will be encouraged to teach in rural areas so that parents are motivated to send their daughters to schools.

Both girls and boys have equal rights to education right from pre-primary to the tertiary level. There are no separate standards set for boys and girls in employment or education at all levels, whether it is in curriculum, examinations, equipment, and other aids to pedagogy.

The enrolment of girls in the years (2002-2008) has shown a slow but steady increase. With the exception of the higher secondary level, the enrolment of girls as a percentage of the total school enrolment is about 50 per cent, at every level of general education. However, 2008 figures show that even at the higher secondary level, the enrolment of girls has been increasing steadily over the years. In terms of gender parity, the gap is not particularly large. On an average, girls account for 49 per cent of the enrolment in Bhutanese schools and in several dzongkhags it is above 50 per cent.

In recent years parents have realized the value of education and so more and more children are being sent to schools. Still in some parts of the country, the enrolment is low especially of girls because the physical terrain of the country restricts children from going to school. This needs to be remedied and some steps have been taken particularly through non formal education. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1981-87) of the Royal Government of Bhutan incorporated a separate chapter on women which stressed the social, economic and health status of women especially in the rural areas of the country. This broader awareness of problems faced by women was succeeded by the Sixth Five Year Plan (1988-1992) which emphasized the need to increase adult literacy especially for out of school girls and women.

Due to the increasing number of students going for higher education and also because of the growth of public as well as private colleges, the Ministry of
Education through the Department of Adult and Higher Education has come up with a draft Tertiary Education Policy which will help in instituting a system to coordinate, align and expedite the development of the tertiary education system in the country. One aim is to prepare individuals and institutions with specific skills and knowledge to contribute to the economy of the country and also fill high-level scientific, technical, professional and managerial positions both in the public and the private sectors. The country’s information infrastructure has to be strengthened through libraries, computer network hosts, and internet service providers.

However, the rapid growth in education in recent years has come at a cost. The quality of education at all levels including higher education has been challenged. One reason is that the lack of critical number of tertiary institutions in the country has resulted in a shortage of the numbers of qualified individuals to staff a multi-campus university providing a diverse array of programmes. The situation is not likely to improve in the near future. The lead-in time for such provision is significant and will take several years for a critical mass of qualified professionals to become available. The effectiveness with which the teachers, the students and the administrative staff function and the quality of their endeavours would depend upon the facilities that are available to them. These facilities may be broadly categorized as academic, physical infrastructure, resources and extra-curricular facilities. Provision of facilities involves huge capital investment. The maintenance and upkeep of these facilities also implies recurring maintenance costs. Besides, payment of salaries to teachers and administrative staff, other expenses relating to the management of tertiary education also involve heavy expenditure. It is in this context that the funding of tertiary education has become a crucial policy issue. While funding by itself does not assure quality, but at the same time, without adequate funding, the quality of tertiary education will be seriously impaired.

Bhutan is currently developing its first National Human Resource and Development Policy (http://www.bhutan.gov.bt/government/newsDetail.php?id=1262 & cat=4). It aims to create qualified people required for Bhutan’s development and in line with labour demands. The idea is to study the labour markets and do projections so as to strengthen the existing institutions of human resource development and plan for new ones
together to create professionals in the field of human resource development. The policy has the vision to shift from an agrarian to a knowledge-based society, going from low to high skill and knowledge, focus on technical, professional and vocational skills with emphasis on employability and the aim to be proactive, dynamic and inclusive. It seeks to resolve the main reason for unemployment in Bhutan; a mismatch between the skills acquired through education and the jobs available.

To address this state of affairs, the Ministry of Education through the Department of Adult and Higher Education, has proposed the establishment of a Tertiary Education Board (TEB). This is envisaged as the highest executive body responsible for setting the Goals and Objectives for tertiary education, developing a strategy to meet them, finding out the gaps and determining the capacity of the system to implement and deliver on especially those parts of tertiary education funded by the Board.

The Royal Government of Bhutan also aims to provide an enabling environment for private sector investment including Foreign Direct Investment in tertiary education through clearer procedures, provision of financial incentives, favourable environment for the employment of foreign faculty and the entry of foreign students into Bhutan. Bhutan is thus exploring the potential of using its unique position to develop within the country tertiary education that can cater to the international education market, attract foreign students, and thereby allow the enrichment of student life while also contributing to the economy of the country.

**INDIA**

India currently and historically has employed “reservations” as its affirmative action policy in higher education. Reservations work by effectively lowering the admissions criteria for certain identifiable groups that are severely under-represented relative to their proportion of the general population. The intended effect is to increase the social diversity on campuses and in workplaces.

After obtaining independence, India’s Constitution listed some affinity groups as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). The authors believed that, due to the caste system, SCs and the STs were historically oppressed and denied respect and equal
opportunity in Indian society. One’s social caste, as determined by India’s legacy caste system, is the most common criteria to identify under-represented groups. This caste is decided based on birth, and can never be changed. While a person can change his or her religion, and one’s economic status can fluctuate, the caste is permanent. The Constitution reserved 15% and 7.5% of vacancies to government aided educational institutes and for jobs in the government/public sector, as reserved quota for the SC and ST candidates respectively for a period of five years, after which the situation was to be reviewed. Subsequent governments and the Indian Parliament routinely extended the provision, and no revisions were undertaken.

Recently, reservations were introduced for other sections as well (religion, state of domiciles, physically handicapped, etc.). The Supreme Court also ruled that reservations cannot exceed 50% (which it judged would violate equal access guaranteed by the Constitution) has put a cap on reservations. Select state laws have exceeded this cap, and those are under litigation in the Supreme Court.

India’s reservation policy continues is the subject of much debate. As noted in the previous section, one must look at the outcomes of such a policy. Further study and research should be directed towards the effectiveness of the policy and its alternatives.

India’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan, which has come to be known as the Education Plan because of its emphasis on education, also accepts that there are several systemic challenges posed by tertiary education in India. It recognizes that there is an abundance of talent in the country, which is mostly un-nurtured. There is lack of flexibility in the system leading to a mismatch between school and employment hours. Knowledge resources are not easily available and there are inadequate opportunities to use even what is there. The quality of teaching is questionable and there is a gap between the demand and supply of knowledge and skills together with lack of collaborative learning. There is little or no personalized monitoring and long-term tracking of learning, skill upgradation and performance. And finally the situation is being aggravated by a growing digital divide. Most of these issues pertaining are not new.

Changes were introduced in the Indian system that led to the creation of new types of institutions but the implementation has left a lot to be desired. For example,
when vocational/technical education was to be introduced, the 10+2+3 system was formulated, with the intention of bifurcating students to academic or vocational/technical education at the +2 stage. As a consequence, Industrial Technical Institutes and polytechnics were created, but very little attention has been paid to the way these operate. Hence, they are of poor quality. Also, the UGC formulated a scheme in the 1990s to introduce B.A (vocational) in which one vocational subject is taught together with other academic subjects. However, lack of faculty and proper academic and physical infrastructure did not allow it take off with any degree of success. The result is that there has been no appreciable shift of students to vocational streams in the existing institutes nor has the education impacted the students or the economy. An attempt has been made to rectify both access to education and to strengthen vocational education in the Eleventh Five Year Plan.

The Eleventh Five Year plan envisages increasing the enrolment from the current 11 per cent to 20 per cent in the coming five years that is by 2012 the last year of the Plan. One of the strategies is to strengthen the open and distance learning system that provides higher education to about 25 per cent of learners. The Eleventh Plan expects this figure to increase to 40 per cent. It has an impressive track record of providing quality education and training to a large learner population, by using ICT to create access and opportunities through the length and breadth of the country. The learner profile includes the employed and the unemployed, those seeking to upgrade skills and knowledge while working, and the disadvantaged and the marginalized rural youth. The system has developed a wide delivery network.

The National Open University which is also the nodal institution for distance learning programming in the country is the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which was established in 1985 to promote distance learning. It has widened access to higher education by adopting integrated multimedia instructions. It has a delivery network of 53 regional centres, 1,400 study centres and about 25,000 counselors providing learner support. It has 28 FM radio stations and 6 TV channels, including three interactive channels. It has been given the responsibility to develop an additional 15 FM radio stations.
The focus of Open Distance Learning during the Eleventh Plan period would be on professional, vocational and career oriented programmes at certificate, diploma and degree levels, concentrating on skill development, vocational training and community development programmes. Skill development has so far been underdeveloped, but two-way interactive platforms like EDUSAT have created a vast potential for short-term training and there has been a shift from enrichment programmes towards curriculum-based learning programmes. The system however, needs inputs in terms of research, innovations, development of resource material and dedicated networks for efficient delivery and system upgradation.

Apart from enhancing the distance learning system of education, the Eleventh Five Year Plan’s Working Group on Higher Education has recommended the setting up of community colleges. It has recognized that there are significant disparities in the GER for rural and urban areas, being 5.58 per cent and 21.74 per cent respectively in 2000, as per Census figures. Growth of higher education can be viewed from both the supply and the demand side. From the supply side it needs to be ascertained that those who have passed the senior secondary level and are eligible to join higher education must have access to it. At the same time higher education must not only grow but also diversify to meet the growing needs of the economy and society. This means that higher education should have backward linkages with school education and forward linkages with the economy to supply the relevant human resource along with well qualified teachers for the education sector itself. For this to happen, the contents of higher education must have continuity with the earlier levels of education. Care has also to be taken to ensure that students do not take particular courses and subjects, in an ad hoc manner as that may lead to wastage, while at the same time the system has to be made flexible enough to enable them to choose their courses according to their own talents and inclinations.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan accepts Community Colleges as an alternative system of education to help the poor, the tribal population and women to find gainful employment in collaboration with local industry, business and the community. It states the importance of Community Colleges as they provide education for a livelihood; and eliminate exclusion from the formal system. They also reduce the mismatch between education and employment and can thus be an important means of reducing poverty,
unemployment, under-employment, un-employability and dropouts. It states further, that Community Colleges have the unique record of empowering the socially, economically and educationally backward sections of society during the past ten years wherever these have been started.

The Working Group on the Eleventh Plan recommends the national recognition of the Community College system; and the vertical mobility of the Community College student through open and conventional universities with a three-tier system of diploma, associate degree and degree. Community Colleges need to be set up in educationally backward regions to correct regional imbalances in higher education with emphasis on the development of soft skills. Also, central placement cells can be set up in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industries and Chambers of Commerce. The reach of Community Colleges can be further strengthened through distance learning for those students who cannot commute to college or stay in hostels.

Many of the existing institutions can be transformed to suit the educational requirements of the communities they serve. If the Community College programme of two year duration provides a comprehensive education to students it opens opportunities for those aspiring to higher degrees and graduation, to step into the traditional formal universities and colleges. At present, those students who opt for vocational/technical training at the +2 stage have no opportunity to move to universities at any stage in their lives. Therefore, the Indian educational institutions at the lower levels of higher education need to be transformed to be more receptive to local community needs, while providing adequate comprehensive education and maintaining links with formal higher education institutions and bodies. The latter have to also develop flexible structures to accommodate those coming from the vocational stream.

Community Colleges are needed where there are an adequate number of school pass-outs to make use of them and no such facilities are available. These can be both urban and rural areas. In rural areas which are remote and backward, community colleges could immediately provide the much needed access. Urban areas have a perennial shortage of educational institutions and community colleges could share some of that pressure. Of course, it would help if within a reasonable distance there were large scale industries and businesses which would enable an adequate number of learners to get
absorbed within the area. Where facilities such as polytechnics, arts and science colleges are available but are not being properly utilized, these can be converted, partially or wholly to community colleges. Of course, communities have to be aware of and amenable to supporting such ventures.

**NEPAL**

The reform of the school system has been in the air in Nepal for almost two decades. The reform programme aims to consolidate the gains made under Education for All and meet access, equity and quality goals for primary schooling while simultaneously focusing on expanding the coverage of the school sector. The overarching goal is to ensure learners’ equitable access to quality education, change the school structure, moving from grade 1-5 to a grade 1-8 system, and to enhance institutional, organizational and human capacity. Nepal’s Education for All programme is drawing upon the support of pooling partners, non-pooling partners, national and international NGOs as well as local communities. It is to be followed by the School Sector Reform programme.

The School Sector Reform Plan 2009 -2015 (February 2009) presents policies, strategic options and implementation strategies to meet issues and challenges such as rising expectations, integration of basic and secondary levels, improvement of quality and relevance, ensuring inclusive participation, and decentralization of education management and financing. The process of developing and implementing it has led to the School Sector Reform Core Document (2008) which is the result of a national initiative and a product of local efforts. These efforts have resulted in fairly satisfactory outcomes, as seen from the indicators given below covering the years 2004-2009.

Nepal’s University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1994 by an Act of the Parliament. The main objectives of the UGC are to allocate government grants properly to the universities and institutions of higher education; and to work towards formulating the policy on the financing of higher education in Nepal.

Apart from the UGC, six professional councils and several professional societies are responsible for maintaining standards of higher professional education in Nepal. Recently, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) has been established within the aegis of UGC. Several reform initiatives have also been taken like formula-
based funding for universities; phasing out of PCL (Class, 11 and 12) from universities; and the introduction of the means tested student financial assistance programme that enable poor meritorious students to go for higher education.

Due to financial limitations the Nepalese government has in principle decided to generally adopt cost-recovery policies in higher education. There is a trend towards the regional development of higher education by conversion and up-gradation of affiliated colleges to full-fledged regional universities. According to Sijapati, subsidies for higher education in Nepal have exacerbated inequalities in Nepalese society.

The Ministry of Education and Sports has introduced scholarships and fee waivers, but these are not enough. Efforts are also being made to introduce systematic changes to increase finances and improve standards in the universities. However, the government of Nepal has addressed equality of educational opportunity in higher education largely by attempting to deal with the supply side of the problem. Expansion of “the higher education pie” has simply been assumed to automatically improve access to higher education for a larger segment of the disadvantaged groups. However, too many people—especially women, ethnic groups and lower castes—continue to be excluded.

The UGC has taken initiatives towards formulating policies on the funding of higher education, establishment of new universities and setting the norms and standards of teaching, learning and research. The government has plans to set up the Mid-western University in Mahendranagar, the Far-Western University in Birendranagar and the Agriculture and Forestry University in Rampur, Chitawan. The proposed regional universities are aimed at making higher education more accessible to people from all regions, while the Agriculture and Forestry University is expected to cater to the needs of the country in these sectors.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan has placed human development at the centre of its economic planning as there is a realization that without significant and sustained investment in higher education society cannot prosper. It has been felt that higher education in Pakistan is inadequate in preparing the young people for the current challenges. This prompted the government to set up a Task Force for Education Sector Reform in 2001. While the emphasis has been
on literacy and primary education, the capacity to benefit from the new knowledge available has made the development of higher education crucial. The country has not been able to nurture talent or vocations and so has begun to experience key shortages in skills that are needed to support an expanding economy. The system does not measure up to international standards, is under funded and is subject to frequent student unrest which disturb the teaching learning processes.

However, it is not possible to strengthen the higher education sector without correspondingly strengthening the school sector. Hence greater allocations have to be made for both. It is seen that Pakistan has greatly enhanced its budget for education. In 2004-05 after the Task Force recommendations, the Education sector saw an allocation of about Rs.13 billion against the previous year allocation of Rs. 6 billion amounting to an increase of 134 per cent, unprecedented in the history of the country. It was pointed out that the provinces were primarily responsible for Human Development including Education and so the federal expenditures were in addition to the much larger expenditure being done by the provinces.

Apart from gender disparities, there are immense regional disparities. In Pakistan, policies of positive discrimination in favour of designated communities or regions have been in practice throughout its post-independence period. Successive governments have been pursuing the goal of closing the gap between various communities in terms of their access to educational institutions and representation in services both at the federal and the provincial levels. While reserved quotas were maintained for certain groups or regions, there have been protests against it.

The quota system, which has been enshrined in the 1973 Constitution, had ended after 20 years in 1993. Article 27(1) of the Constitution declared that “no citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the grounds only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth.” All this meant that the mainstream legal and judicial opinion in Pakistan in the late 1990s moved fast in favour of the elimination of the quota system. It is unlikely that the debate about affirmative policies will disappear from the public fore in the near future.
In January 2005, the Ministry of Education launched a visioning exercise designed to delineate a widely shared national understanding of what the education system will look like, and how it will function, in the year 2025. This visioning exercise was designed for completion in three major stages, each stage developing the vision document and culminating in the third stage with an elaborated vision for education.

According to the Ministry of Education, this visioning framework contains a number of exceptional goals and objectives, including an improved quality of elementary education and competence of teachers, the elimination of all types of disparities and imbalances in schooling and, significantly, an improved enrolment rates. As such, they all contain the elements of a vision. The visioning exercise is designed to flesh out those elements/aspects of the system required to actually make it work.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC), till 2002 the University Grant Commission, is the primary regulator of Higher Education in Pakistan. It also facilitates the development of the Higher Education. Its main purpose is to upgrade the Universities of Pakistan to become world-class centres of education, research and development. The HEC is also playing a leading role towards building a knowledge-based economy by giving out hundreds of doctoral scholarships for education abroad every year.

The HEC projects have been criticized, although the government of Pakistan has allocated significant amount of funds to them HEC and has increased its budget since its 2002 change of name. The HEC website points to a 40 per cent increase in enrolment in universities in Pakistan over the last two years, which it attributes to the efforts made on its part to encourage higher education in the country. However, quality is a matter of concern which also seems to be getting somewhat addressed. During 1947-2003, not a single university in Pakistan could be ranked among the top 600 of the world, but today three Pakistani universities belong to this prestigious group, which includes the National University of Science and Technology.

The Boston Group is an informal think tank, comprising mainly of Pakistanis abroad — scholars, educationists, researchers, professionals and activists with an interest in contributing to the policy discussions related to Pakistan’s development particularly in the area of higher education. While it has focused mainly on the issue of higher education reform in Pakistan since early 2000, but in so doing it has had to focus on the
specific problem in the school education system also because without higher education cannot succeed without a sound base of schooling.

The Boston Group has rightly pointed out that the major responsibility of Higher Education in Pakistan would have to be accepted by the government. Although there are private institutions in higher education, they cover less than 10 per cent of the relevant age cohort, and future projections do not create a basis for much optimism. The public sector institutions serve the vast majority of the population in Pakistan. They are affordable and attempt to be equitable along regional, income and gender dimensions.

The chief goals, as the Boston Group has also pointed out, in allocating resources and creating processes to manage the socio-political side of higher education reform are to mobilize the opinions and involvement of the stakeholders; reduce resistance to change and skepticism in the elements within the universities; organize and empower the reform-minded community within and outside the universities so that the resulting reform is sustainable; provide visibility into the progress of the reform process with the belief that it will increase the momentum of reform throughout the educational system and also the credibility of the institutions. Further, it will provide an added mechanism of accountability in the process, through public disclosures of its progress, and reduce the powers of the vested interests in hijacking the process because of the power of public and political opinion.

Pakistan remains publicly committed to increasing pro-poor spending, including in education and health for attaining the Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015. Widening disparities in social indicators, spiked inflation and increased public accountabilities suggest, however, that Pakistan is not likely to achieve its poverty-reduction goals within this time-frame. The government has announced a $1 billion spending plan over the next decade to build 6 state-of-the-art science and engineering universities. The scheme would be overseen by the Higher Education Commission. During this time, there would also be a strong focus on teacher education, on the quality of secondary and higher secondary; graduates coming to the universities, including a focus on marketable skills; subject revisions at secondary and higher secondary levels; a clearer partnership with the private sector, and the establishment of more universities in the provinces.
MALDIVES

The introduction of secondary education in the atolls has been a great advantage for girls because in the atolls girls had less access to secondary education. Two full-fledged secondary schools have been open in the atolls, in 1992 and 1998.

The government has introduced two scholarship programmes for atoll girls to enable them access to secondary and higher secondary education. The scheme was introduced because atoll girls were more at a disadvantage than atoll boys. There is greater emphasis on selecting equal numbers of male and female candidates for higher education opportunities. However, as candidates are selected on the basis of merit, their numbers are not equal due to unequal opportunities at higher secondary level.

To reach the national target of universal primary education, new schools have been built and older ones upgraded. There is no gender discrimination in the access to or provision of primary education.

A Career Education and Guidance Booklet has been produced by the Ministry of Education which helps guide secondary students in choosing a career. The booklet doesn't assume that some careers are more suitable for girls or for boys. Similarly, "Youth Challenge", an annual career and higher education fair provides high school students with valuable career information.

The National Primary Curriculum has been revised a few years ago. One of the reasons for the revision was to ensure that there is no gender stereotyping and to eliminate gender bias. For example, in Practical Arts, modules such as needlework, cooking, fishing and carpentry are now available to both boys and girls.

A Distance Education Programme is being conducted by the Non-Formal Education Centre to provide educational opportunities for people working in the atolls. 50% of the participants of this course are women.

The Gender and Development (GAD) Policy in the Maldives has broadly focused on gender mainstreaming through a structured Gender Management System for effective inclusion of gender concerns in all policies, programmes and projects. The aim is to
ensure gender equity in political and socio-economic development. Gender disparities are attempted to be eliminated through effective gender mainstreaming, active promotion of gender equity and equality, and where necessary, affirmative action.

To achieve this aim, certain priorities have been worked out to ensure gender equity. These include adopting a comprehensive National Gender Policy; gender sensitization; strengthening the Gender Management System through capacity building, advocacy and marketing; emphasizing male participation in issues pertaining to women; identifying the current and emerging gender issues to eliminate discrepancies, and addressing gender based violence both in the domestic and in public spheres.

The Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security (MGFDSS) has tried to improve and advocate some of the issues that were highlighted in the BFMS, 2003. The approach has shifted from emphasis on empowerment and integration to gender equality and mainstreaming. Gender issues are not seen as the responsibility of MGFDSS alone but of all the Ministries, government departments, NGOs and the private sector. The Government in its Country Report has outlined six critical areas in which progress has been made. Among others is the health and education of women. A National Gender Policy has been formulated and endorsed by the Cabinet.

The Gender and Development Section of the Ministry of Gender, Family Development and Social Security acts as the lead agency in the advocacy and mainstreaming of gender issues and promoting the participation of women in all spheres of the society. At the Education Development Centre, staff are trained to design and analyze data from a gender perspective. There is also an effort to use gender sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects. A Gender Management System (GMS) was put in place in 2001, to effectively address gender issues. The Sixth National Development Plan reaffirms gender mainstreaming as a priority policy and incorporates gender as a cross-cutting issue. It requires that gender sensitization/orientation activities should continue at all levels.

The country is making good progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal of promoting gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in education by 2015.
BANGLADESH

Statistics show that Bangladesh has made significant progress, in increasing access and gender equity, both at primary and secondary levels. Gross primary enrolment rates increased from 90 per cent in the late 1990s to 98 per cent in 2003, while a corresponding increase in enrolment rates at the secondary level rose to 44 per cent. Gender parity in access to primary and secondary education has also been achieved. These achievements are particularly spectacular when compared to countries in the South Asia region and other countries at similar levels of per-capita income.

The decade of the 1990s was significant in the history of educational development in Bangladesh, with respect to primary and mass education, particularly for girls and women. One of the goals was to increase access to schooling for girls and programmes were initiated since 1992 towards this end. The progress made was also assessed in preparation for the Dakar World Education Forum held in 2000. The National goals for 2015, are being articulated according to what was agreed upon in Dakar.

The issues pertaining to resources, remain the effects of financial hardship have implications for both sexes, but almost invariably have greater impact on girls, since families are reluctant to invest scarce resources in girls. Girls are also a major source of household assistance, and hence needed for “domestic services” outside the household, some legitimate and others not. The introduction of free and compulsory primary education for all children, but for girls up to grade 8, free textbooks for all primary school children, stipends for girls enrolled in rural secondary schools and the Food for Education Programme (FFEP) are some of the measures that have been initiated to ameliorate financial hardships.

Free and compulsory education officially opened the door for girls to gain access to education. But initial findings of the CAMPE, a coalition of the more than 400 NGOs show that in spite of “free” education there are still costs. Parents pay almost as much as the annual public expenditure for primary schooling: 776 taka per student for stationary, textbooks and supplementary materials, private tutors, examinations, admission/readmission, and other fees. Usually they pay less for girls than boys.
Support to girls has been extended for secondary school education also. The current (2006) secondary school stipend programme provides small cash amounts to girls in the poorer rural areas and, to further encourage schools to enroll girls, a tuition assistance payment is also given to the participating schools. To qualify for the stipend, girls have to remain unmarried up to the Senior School Certificate Levels, maintain 75 per cent attendance rate and obtain at least 45 per cent score on the final exam. The results have been encouraging. In project areas of the programme, enrolment more than doubled from 462,000 in 1994 to slightly above one million in 2001. The overall proportion of females who married in the project areas declined between 1992 and 1995, from 29 to 14 per cent for ages 13-15, and from 72 to 64 per cent for ages 16-19.

Mistakenly there are commonly held beliefs that boys and girls differ significantly in mental abilities and aptitudes, that girls are inherently of less value, and that boys are a better educational investment. Community mobilization and mass communication initiatives at national and school level; screening for gender bias and stereotypes in the new text books; and teacher training in gender sensitive classroom processes are programmes designed to change these beliefs about abilities and aptitudes. Within the Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL), the Meena Communication Initiative promoted the use of the Meena character and materials by teachers in order to help teachers become aware of gender among children; increase the completion rate for girls; and enhance the self-esteem, self confidence and academic achievement of girls. Meena is the most popular character representing the rights of the girl child in Bangladesh. Every year Meena Day is observed on September 24th when different cultural and educational events take place at central and local levels of the country. A series of supplementary Meena print materials including story and interactive books have been produced and distributed in schools in IDEAL districts. Meena films have been shown through the district mobile film unit.

The perception in Bangladesh is that the key to achieving high rates of economic growth and ensuring that its fruits are equitably shared by the population lies in the development of its human resource of which it has plenty. The Task Force on Education Policy of the Centre for Policy Dialogue identified some key issues that had to be addressed for the required human resource development. These pertained to access,
equity and quality of education. As these were interlinked, they had to be seen in an integrated policy framework. The major issues are poverty, gender disparities and deprivation because of social stratification.

To make higher education accessible to all, an Open University has been set up in the country. A National University has also been set up to serve as an affiliating university college across the country. Education sector allocations are currently about 2.3 per cent of GDP and 14 per cent of total government expenditure.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh was established under the President’s Order (P.O.) No. 10 of 1973 which was deemed to have come into force with effect from 16 December 1972. It assesses the needs of the public universities in terms of funding and advises the Government on various issues related to higher education.

The NGO sector in Bangladesh has played a significant role in efforts to reduce gender disparity. In the last twenty years, the NGO community has revolutionized the self awareness and expectations of women by offering access to non-formal basic education and income-earning opportunities through crafts, chicken rearing, and fish pond cultivation, among others. The Grameen Bank spurred the microfinance movement and provided loans to women to support these activities, while the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) pioneered non-formal education. BRAC and Proshika are the largest NGOs which provide education. All have played a fundamental role in helping women to achieve empowerment through education and entrepreneurial activities that initiated their groundbreaking entrance into the market place. NGOs have also made family planning more acceptable which adds to the empowerment of women. In addition, they have encouraged the political empowerment of women.

Affirmative action is a first step toward gender equity but does not necessarily lead to it. ‘Gender equity’ is also not just a matter of counting the number of girls and boys until they reach parity. “The education system is obsessed with numbers,” said one person, “but there is a great need for attention to the kinds and skills and competencies that are needed in order to achieve gender equity.” Girls risk teasing and attacks on the way to and from school. Once in school, girls and boys witness and are subject to
physical and verbal abuse, one of the major issues identified by children as discouraging learning and school participation. Community participation can be effective in achieving safe walks to and from school in the rural areas, but this is not possible in the fractured communities of urban areas. Communities can also be mobilized to stop the use of corporal punishment in schools. Teachers need to be trained in interactive methods with respect to the rights of the child to a learner friendly classroom environment.

Affirmative action initiatives such as the girls’ secondary school stipend project and food for education are costly, subject to misallocation, and are not sustainable. One of the reasons given for the stipends was to motivate primary school girls to continue on to secondary school. But there is no evidence that enrolment numbers increased beyond the enrolment in areas without the stipend.

SRI LANKA

The provision of free education has contributed to the promotion of gender equality as parents find no reason to transfer their scarce resources to their sons. Access to education has enabled women to make better use of the available health care facilities and other basic services. Some of it has led to well-paying jobs and improvement in the quality of their lives.

In addition there is the National Institute of Education (NIE) an Open Learning University established in 1980 to make education more inclusive. The object is to link up and expand opportunities for vocational education and build a bridge between general education and the world of work. Those with certificates from the Open School of Level 1, 2 or 3 can join or qualify for different levels of vocational courses. The idea is to provide continuing education to the farming and other working communities to enable them to upgrade their education so as to become eligible for specific courses and programmes and then enter into the world of work. It would also enable them to improve their productivity by upgrading and updating their skills and competencies.

Facilities for continuing education were also expected to enhance the quality of life of people whether in their work place, in academic, professional or other life enrichment areas. It enabled people whose education has been disrupted through natural disasters or other causes to do short-term bridge courses which would bring them back to
the mainstream education system. It could provide learning opportunities for the differently-abled, to those who want to complete their education at the secondary and senior secondary levels; and to provide opportunities to those citizens who had been unable to pursue formal schooling. It was thought that access, equity and quality education for all would promote a Learning Society and foster social harmony.

The Target Groups were the drop-outs and pushed outs of the formal school; the differently-abled who had not been able to attend formal school and people like the nomads, who did not enter the formal system. It enabled the already employed to go in for higher levels of training. The unemployed, who did not qualify for training also gained access to it and move their employment opportunities. It provided an opportunity for girls and women who would not easily access education due to various socio-economic and cultural factors. Children whose education has been affected, due to war or natural disasters could benefit by it as could victims of prolonged illness and any other category of people with special needs.

The entrance to the universities had up to then been on the basis of academic achievement tested through rigorous competitive examinations. When the government committed itself, to a system of standardization by language media at the university entrance examination, all marks were reduced to a uniform scale so that the number of students qualifying in each language became proportionate to the numbers sitting for the examination in the respective language groups.

A new institutional framework for higher education was adopted in 1979-80 which helped to stabilize the formula introduced in 1978. It was a combination of a new national "merit quota," regional "merit quotas," together with a special allocation for educationally backward districts. The concept of educationally backward districts had been introduced in 1976 and ten such districts had been identified. These quotas were all based on the aggregates of marks, referred to as "raw marks." Thus, a three-tier admission policy was adopted.

The establishment of the University Grants Commission and the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education, placed directly under the President of the republic, protected the admission policy from some of the worst political pressures. From 1979
changes in it were much less frequent than in the early 1970s. There was also relative stability of ethnic proportions in university admissions, with the Tamils' share remaining consistently higher than the proportion of Sri Lankan Tamils in the population, and much higher than that in regard to the scientific disciplines, especially Medicine and Engineering.

The compromise of 1978 was kept under constant review and once more a committee was appointed for this purpose. The issue was the special allocation of 15 per cent of places to the eleven “educationally disadvantaged districts.” Under pressure from the parliamentarians, the number of such districts was increased to twelve in 1979 and in late 1981 a new formula was announced for 1982-83. The principle recommendation was a two-tier system in which the 15 per cent allocation to educationally backward districts was abolished. The first tier consisted of 40 per cent of all students chosen on the basis of the highest aggregates attained at the examination on a country-wide basis. The second comprising of 60 per cent admissions was to be of these chosen on the basis of the highest aggregates achieved at a district level. The latter would come in at a lower level than the 40 per cent who were on the wider "merit list" and their aggregates naturally varied from district to district. The abolition of 15 per cent special allocation for educationally backward areas was received with relief by the critics of the system who had argued that the pendulum had swung too far towards the "underprivileged" districts but Ministers and MPs representing the latter districts successfully succeeded in preventing the introduction of the new scheme.

The next attempt to deal with university admissions was made in 1984 through a committee of university academics, educationists and public figures chaired by the chairman of the UGC. The committee succeeded in bringing down the number of educationally backward districts from 13 to five, and reduced the number of places available to them from 15 to 5 per cent. However, the system of district preferences or quotas was not only left untouched but was raised to 65 per cent, reducing the merit quota to 30 per cent. While there was still some resistance to this attempted modification of the formula devised in the late 1970s, the new formula became effective from the academic session of 1986-87. Although this was a minor victory for academic opinion over political pressures, it did not last.
Sri Lanka’s university admissions policy consists of a three-tier system of a national merit quota, a district quota, and a quota for the educationally backward districts. The affirmative action policies in Sri Lanka are confined to university admissions alone at the undergraduate level. They do not operate in post-graduate education or for appointments to the staff of the universities, or to promotions of staff from grade to grade.
Appendix: Outcomes Study of India’s Scheduled Castes and Tribes

Being a faculty member at my own institution, I tried to analyze the outcomes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe students beginning 1998 and attempted to compare them with those for the general category. The findings are only indicative and imperfect because there is no systematic record keeping. Also the system is complex and in the absence of proper tracking processes, it becomes difficult. For example, a student may be admitted to the more prestigious honours course in one of the social sciences, literatures or even the basic sciences, but if he/she gets 25 per cent or more up to 44 per cent in the first year, he/she is sent to the second year of the B.A. Programme. This means that the second year class gets students from all other classes and subjects together with those who have been promoted from the first year of the B.A. Programme itself. The lateral entry students have to manage the first year course themselves without any help from the institution. But if they were academically so sound, they would not have fared so badly in their original course to begin with. Consequently the second year sees a high drop out rate, failure or poor academic performance. This also affects those who originally belonged to the B.A. Programme making the entire class a disparate low performing group extremely difficult to motivate or teach.

A sampling was done for a period from 1998 admission year to 2005 as the results of the 2005 batch were declared in 2008. While all the reserved category candidates were looked at, a sampling was done for the general category students. In spite of imperfect tracking, there were certain basic statistics that emerged. The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students were divided into three streams – Science, Arts and Commerce. This is usual with all students. Then the numbers that graduated were compared to the number admitted and these were tabulated. (Tables 1,2,3).

Table 1
Detail of SC/ST students admitted in Science stream in the College from 1998 to 2005 and passing performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Students admitted</th>
<th>DNFF / Absent</th>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Graduated</th>
<th>Passing %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detail of SC/ST students admitted in Arts stream in the College from 1998 to 2005 and their passing performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Students admitted</th>
<th>DNFF / Absent</th>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Graduated</th>
<th>Passing %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>68.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Detail of SC/ST students admitted in Commerce stream in the College from 1998 to 2005 and their passing performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Students admitted</th>
<th>DNFF / Absent</th>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Graduated</th>
<th>Passing %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admission & Result (SC/ST) Arts Stream

![Graph showing pass percentage for years 1998-2005]
A number of students dropped out from the Science stream. This is not necessarily because of an inability to cope especially in the science stream. It is a common phenomenon for students to drop out in the first year in the sciences as the preferred courses are medicine and engineering rather than graduation in basic sciences. The results of the entrance for these courses often come out very close to the time or after the admissions to the university have been completed. Therefore students take admission in the university but if they get a place in medicine or engineering, they leave. It may be noted that there is reservation in medicine and engineering also. It is more difficult to explain why students have dropped out in the Arts or Commerce stream.

Next, the percentage of reserved category students that passed was calculated after subtracting the drop out students from the total admitted. It was found to be generally in the range of 35 - 50 per cent in the Sciences and Commerce but much higher in the Arts stream. But if the overall pass percentage of the reserved candidates is compared to the overall pass percentage in college, it is found to be low. (Table 4). One reason for this could be that there is usually a wide discrepancy in the school academic achievements of the students being admitted to the same class between the general
category students and the reserved category students, the latter having much lower marks than the former. Admission to the college was done according to the marks obtained in the Class XII, the last year in school. This would make it difficult for the reserved category students to cope. Also there is no conscious classroom pedagogy being used that factors in this gulf.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pass percentage</th>
<th>Overall Result of the College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC/ST</td>
<td>College Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>41.50</td>
<td>92.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>44.53</td>
<td>89.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>43.41</td>
<td>93.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>39.53</td>
<td>93.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>42.99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>45.97</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>44.44</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>50.38</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further analysis was done using the mean scores and correlative coefficients according to the Statistical Package for Social Science. (Table 5 & 6) A correlation was found between the mean marks in Class XII and the mean final score in graduation both for the reserved category students and the general category students. Each of the three
streams have been analyzed separately. While investigating the students of SC/ST in Science Stream, it was found that average score dropped down from 66.73 in class 12 to 59.99 in under-graduation and the correlation between the marks in class 12 and under-graduation was 0.53. Comparing it with the General Category Students, it was found that the mean score dropped from 83.44 in Class 12 to 69.74 in under-graduation and the correlation between Class 12 marks and under-graduation is 0.273. The correlation figure of General category is less than that of students in SC/ST category indicating a greater drop in performance of the general category of students than that of the reserved category of students. The main reason could be that the dropout/ failure rate was high in SC/ST students and the pass percentage was more in General Category Students, but those SC/ST students who managed to pass, did quite well. In the general category students, although the pass percentage was very high, the academic achievement dropped compared to performance in school.

In the Arts Stream, for SC/ST Students, the mean score in Class 12 was 70.67 and it dropped to 49.82 in under-graduation, which was very steep. The correlation between the marks in Class 12 and under-graduation was -0.199. For the general category students, the Average score in Class 12 was 79.21 and it dropped to 55.93. Also the correlation between the marks in Class 12 and under-graduation was 0.436. It is seen that in the Arts stream, while the failure rate of the reserved category students is not as high as in the Science and Commerce streams, but the average academic performance deteriorates. This is also by and large true of the general category students although their performance is better than that of the reserved category students. One reason for this could be that most of SC/ST students come from Hindi medium and find it difficult to adjust among the majority of students who have studied in English medium from school.

| Table 5 |
| SC/ST Category | Mean Scores in Class XII and Mean Scores in Graduation for Reserved Category Scheduled |
### Science Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Period</th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>70.28</td>
<td>61.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>51.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>57.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>65.07</td>
<td>64.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>69.67</td>
<td>62.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>69.24</td>
<td>59.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>66.09</td>
<td>62.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>70.92</td>
<td>61.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Arts Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Period</th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>68.12</td>
<td>50.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>72.56</td>
<td>51.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>68.65</td>
<td>47.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>75.02</td>
<td>44.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>71.02</td>
<td>49.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>70.40</td>
<td>51.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>73.29</td>
<td>53.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>66.28</td>
<td>50.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Commerce Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Period</th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>73.35</td>
<td>53.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>73.18</td>
<td>49.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>74.67</td>
<td>46.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>52.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>74.75</td>
<td>49.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>69.18</td>
<td>53.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>63.33</td>
<td>46.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G – Graduation

General Category

**Table 6**
Mean Scores in Class XII and Mean Scores in Graduation for Reserved Category Scheduled

Science Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-2001</td>
<td>85.46</td>
<td>67.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>83.35</td>
<td>67.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>82.41</td>
<td>64.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2004</td>
<td>84.23</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2005</td>
<td>81.20</td>
<td>69.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2006</td>
<td>80.11</td>
<td>71.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>86.66</td>
<td>75.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>72.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arts Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-2001</td>
<td>78.36</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2002</td>
<td>77.85</td>
<td>55.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>81.87</td>
<td>53.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2004</td>
<td>77.18</td>
<td>53.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2005</td>
<td>78.05</td>
<td>53.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2006</td>
<td>77.91</td>
<td>55.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2007</td>
<td>80.43</td>
<td>60.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>82.08</td>
<td>58.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commerce Stream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (12)</th>
<th>Mean (G)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>73.35</td>
<td>53.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>73.18</td>
<td>49.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>74.67</td>
<td>46.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>52.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>74.75</td>
<td>49.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>69.18</td>
<td>53.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>63.33</td>
<td>46.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G- Graduation

Finally, coming to the Commerce stream, for the SC/ST students, the mean score in Class 12 was 70.66 and it dropped down to 49.82 in under-graduation, which was quite
a steep fall. Also the correlation between marks in Class 12 and under-graduation was 0.169. For the general category students, the mean score for Class 12 was 86.945 and average score for under-graduation was 64.7138. Also the correlation between marks in Class 12 and under-graduation was -0.348. Here again the drop out / failure rate was high among SC/ST Category Students but for those who did pass, the outcomes were better than for those in the general category. One reason for the poor performance of the general category students could be that most of them were looking at graduation as just an eligibility requirement to get into a professional course like that for Chartered Accountants and others.
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