

**GIRLS' EDUCATION AS A MEANS OR END OF DEVELOPMENT?
A CASE STUDY OF GENDER AND EDUCATION POLICY KNOWLEDGE AND
ACTION IN THE GAMBIA**

by

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto**

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Abstract

Girls' education has been promoted by the international development community for over two decades; however, it has proven harder to promote gender equality *through* education than it has been to promote gender parity *in* education. Of significance is the global circulation and co-existence of two competing rationales for the importance of girls' education: economic efficiency and social justice. The cost of ignoring how and why Southern governments and their development partners choose to promote girls' education is high: an over-emphasis on economic efficiency can mean that the root causes of gendered inequalities in society remain unchallenged, and more social justice-oriented reforms become marginalized.

This thesis uses a critical feminist lens to qualitatively investigate the role and significance of human capital, human rights, and human capabilities policy models in the context of the production and enactment of gender equality in education policy knowledge in The Gambia, a small, aid-dependent Muslim nation in West Africa. The purpose of the study was to assess the scope education policies provide for positive change in the lives of Gambian women and girls. Towards illuminating relations of power in and the politics of gender equality in education policy processes, the study compares and contrasts written texts with the perspectives

of state and non-state policy actors. The study is based on data drawn from interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis.

The findings suggest that different gender equality in education ideas and practices have been selectively mobilized and incorporated into education policy processes in The Gambia. At the level of policy talk, girls' education is framed as important for both national economic growth, and "women's empowerment". However, the policy solutions designed and implemented, with the support of donors, have tended to work *with* rather than *against* the status quo. Power and politics was evident in divergent interpretations and struggles to fix the meaning of key concepts such as gender, gender equality, gender equity, and empowerment. Religious beliefs, anti-feminist politics, and the national feminist movement were identified as important forces shaping gender equality in education knowledge and action in the country.

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List of Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
AGEI	Africa Girls' Education Initiative
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy (WB)
FAWE	Forum of African Women Educationists
FAWEGAM	Forum of African Women Educationists – Gambia Chapter
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoBSE	Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education
DoSFEA	Department of State for Economic Affairs
DP	Development Partner
EEC	European Economic Community
EFA	Education for All
EFA/FTI	Education for All Fast Track Initiative
ESSP	Education Sector Strategy Paper
GAD	Gender and Development
GAMOCTRAP	Gambia Committee Against Harmful Traditional Practices
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Index
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GESP	Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011
GEU	Gender Education Unit [formerly Girls' Education Unit]
GSAIE	Gambia Secretariat for Arabic and Islamic Education
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative
HTC	Higher Teacher Certificate
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
INGO	International NGO
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JAS	Joint Assistance Strategy
MC	Mothers' Club
MDRI	Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative
NEP	National Education Policy 2004-2015
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGP	National Gender Policy 2010-2020
NPAGW	National Policy on the Advancement of Gambian Women
PCU	Projects Coordinating Office
PER	Public Expenditure Review
Pro-PAG	Pro-Poor Advocacy Group
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTC	Primary Teaching Certificate
RED	Regional Education Directorate
RNEP	Revised National Education Policy

RTG	Republic of The Gambia
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SoS	Secretary of State
SPA	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation
SPACO	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Coordinating Office
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank
WID	Women in Development

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Chapter One

Towards the Study of Gender and Education Policy Transfer: Global Frameworks and National Processes

With antecedents in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, gender parity and gender equality in education goals and targets have been incorporated into global development frameworks since the launch of the Education for All movement in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Currently, both the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA and the Millennium Development Goals include specific and time-bound targets for the achievement of gender parity and gender equality in education (UNESCO, 2000; United Nations, 2001; 2000). Two competing perspectives concerning the relationship between girls' education and development are represented in these frameworks. Human capital perspectives, concerned primarily with efficiency considerations, dominantly frame girls' education as essential for national economic growth and poverty reduction. In contrast, linking girls' education with social justice, as it is in human rights and human capability approaches, entails conceiving education as an instrument of social change and for the achievement of human freedom (Sen, 1999).

Given the privileged position of girls' education in global development policy, and the circulation of competing utilitarian and social justice perspectives, it is somewhat surprising that so little scholarly attention has been paid to national *processes* of girls' education policymaking, and particularly the dynamics through which global policy frameworks regarding gender and education are adopted and enacted by state and non-state policy actors operating at the national level, who are responsible for translating normative principles such as gender equality in education into practical policy solutions. This study sets out to fill this gap through an ethnographic exploration of how and why girls' education has come to be a policy priority in The

Gambia, a small, aid-dependent Muslim-majority country in West Africa. More specifically, using a critical feminist lens the thesis qualitatively investigates the role and significance of human capital, human rights, and human capabilities policy models with respect to the power and politics of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action in The Gambia.

Anchoring the study is an exploration of how the meaning of “key words” (Apple, 2006), such as “women’s empowerment”, “gender equality”, and “gender equity” are constructed and used by different policy actors and how these meanings inform and shape policy at the level of talk and action (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The story told in the thesis is one of change and continuity in terms of how girls’ education, as a policy priority linked to national development, has been interpreted and enacted in The Gambia over the past two decades. The nature and influence of national and international frameworks and practices are discussed in the analysis of the study’s findings. Using data obtained through document analysis, interviews with thirty-five government, civil society, and development partner representatives, as well as participant observation activities, the findings suggest that gender equality in education principles, discourses and goals have been selectively mobilized and incorporated into education policy processes in the country. Moreover, even as girls’ education has remained a formal policy priority in The Gambia since the 1990’s, and even though poverty has long been identified as the major barrier to girls’ education in the country, there has been a surprising reduction in public expenditure on formal education, concomitant with a dramatic expansion of private forms of schooling, particularly at post-primary levels. Furthermore, the research found that while at the level of policy talk, girls’ education is frequently linked to empowerment *and* human capital objectives, the policy solutions

implemented in The Gambia have tended to work *with* rather than *against* the status quo. The findings suggest a shift in preference away from girl-focused education policy solutions to those that are more distributive in nature, and specifically those that target both needy boys and girls. Moreover, my analysis suggests that as appropriated in education policy documents and as used in the discourses of policy actors, “gender” refers to biologically-rooted sex differences, thereby suggesting an occlusion and/or marginalization of the more transformative potential of “gender” understood as referring to the socially-constructed, and therefore changeable, nature of identities and subsequently, the social relations of power between men and women. In exploring the knowledge(s) underpinning gender education policy in The Gambia, the findings highlight the agency of different policy actors in shaping the gender equity in the education agenda in the country.¹

In discussing policy actor agency in the construction and enactment of gender equity in education policy, I draw primarily on the concepts of selective adoption and hybridization to explain the processes and outcomes of global-national gender policy transfer. While the language and priorities of national education and development policy documents in The Gambia are aligned with donor priorities and are explicitly connected with national commitments to EFA and the MDG frameworks, the ethnographic findings from the study suggest that beneath the veneer of consensus concerning girls’ education in The Gambia lie important tensions regarding how girls’ education policy fits within an overarching gender agenda for the country. The study suggests that secular, socio-cultural, and religious-based knowledge and values can both compete

¹ Throughout the thesis I generally use the concept of *gender equity* when referring to details concerning the national gender agenda in The Gambia. I do this because it was the most frequently preferred term in The Gambia. This pattern, as the study highlights, is different from the language of global gender and education frameworks which tend to dominantly use the language of *gender equality*.

with and be complementary to each other in processes of translating global commitments concerning gender equity in education into national policy action.

The overarching objective of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for understanding the study that this thesis presents. After identifying the main research question and its sub-questions below, in the subsequent section I discuss competing perspectives concerning the nature and purpose of formal education, situating utilitarian and social justice approaches in relation to the transnational promotion of girls' education.

Research Questions

My choice of research questions was guided by a critical feminist interest in relations of power in the development, diffusion, and *domestication* of global gender and education policy frameworks. The study problematized the circulation of competing rationales for and approaches to the promotion of girls' education as represented in human capital, human rights, and human capabilities schools of thought. Given the circulation of both utilitarian and transformative arguments concerning the promotion of girls' education, I wanted to assess their role and significance in the production and construction of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action. Drawing inspiration from Nelly Stromquist, who suggests that an important line of questioning concerns the ways in which education policies seek (or otherwise) "marginal improvements for girls and women or deeper institutional and social transformation in gender meanings and practices" (2008, p. 25), the research question guiding the study was

- To what extent do gender and education policy orientations and solutions in The Gambia seek and support the empowerment of girls and women?

Several sub-questions were designed to support the answering of this main question. The first two sub-questions focus on the framing and content of gender equality in education knowledge and action as produced and represented in formal policy texts:

- How are gender problems in education defined and represented in government and donor policy documents?
- What is the nature and form of the policy solutions devised to promote and support gender equality in education?

The third sub-question focused on understanding how gender equality and education policy objectives and solutions are perceived and understood by relevant policy actors, including government officials, non-governmental representatives, and donors:

- How do different policy actors interpret the purpose of and strategies toward the achievement of gender equality in education?

Towards illuminating relations of power in and the politics of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action, I was interested in exploring the differences and similarities between the treatment of girls' education and gender equality in formal policy documents and the perceptions and perspectives of the full range of policy actors engaged in girls' education in The Gambia. Therefore, the fourth sub-question asked,

- What is the relationship between the produced knowledge of policy texts, and the constructed knowledge of policy actors in terms of the purposes and practices of girls' education?

Instrumentalism and Social Justice: The Dual Mandate for Education

A perennial question in the sociology of education literature concerns the extent to which formal education serves a reproductive or transformative role in society; however, obscured in the international promotion of formal education generally, and girls' education specifically, have been the "strikingly different views concerning the nature and purposes of education and its relationship to national and international strategies of development" (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan,

2009, p. 367). Education policy discourse around the world has long incorporated and used ideas and practices associated with two fundamentally different perspectives on the nature and role of formal education. Structural-functionalists have generally portrayed education from a utilitarian perspective as a means of ensuring that successive generations of citizens assume their place “as productive citizens within an established socio-economic order” (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009, p. 367). From a utilitarian perspective, girls’ education is one of the most efficient means of achieving increased productivity, economic growth/competitiveness, improved maternal and child health and reduced fertility. Critical and conflict perspectives also emphasize an equilibrium or social reproduction role that schools play in maintaining and re-constructing, in each successive generation, the status quo in the economic, public and family spheres (Bourdieu, 1976, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Formal education has also been understood as an instrument for transforming the status quo through equipping citizens with critical thinking skills and empowering people to act to challenge systemic inequalities and injustices in wider society (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009). Liberation and critical theorists alike have, in contrast to social equilibrium theories, emphasized the role schools have to play in the transformation of society towards enhanced social justice and equity for all citizens (Apple, 2000; Ball, 1998, 1997, 1994, 1990; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003, 1983, 1980; hooks, 1994). Towards this end, transnational and national non-governmental organizations and international organizations such as the United Nations have used the human rights paradigm to frame education as an end in itself as well as an important catalyst in the realization and protection of other human rights (Thomasevski, 2003).

Although not as widely operationalized in policy spaces, the human capability approach, with its core concepts of freedom, capabilities, functionings, and obligations, provides an

alternative platform for feminist advocacy and the evaluation of social policies (Unterhalter, 2007a, b). While human capability theory has taken somewhat different trajectories in the work of its two main pioneers, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, they share in the understanding that the role of public policy is the promotion of citizens' combined capabilities to achieve the functioning necessary to lead a life of one's choosing (Nussbaum, 2003; 2000; Robeyns, 2006; Sen, 2005, 1999, 1997, 1993, 1980). In terms of girls' education policy, the human capability theory "require[s] that policy focus attention both on building individual's internal capability through say, education and training, as well as ensuring availability of requisite institutional and material conditions for a particular functioning to be a viable option" (Garrett, 2008). Thus, girls' education policies based on human rights and human capabilities perspectives are expected to bridge more transformative understandings of the role and purpose of formal education by clearly linking them to social change, in addition to economic growth and productivity.

Global scripts invoking the goal of "women's empowerment" frequently emphasize the critical role to be played by girls' formal education; however, what remains unclear is the extent to which "women's empowerment" is dominantly defined in economic, socio-cultural, and political terms and how the concept fits into utilitarian and transformative perspectives circulating in national education policy spaces (Maclure, Sabbah and Lavan, 2009). The cost of ignoring how central concepts in the promotion of girls' education are understood and engaged with is high: an over-emphasis on utilitarian rationales can mean that the structures and processes that reproduce inequalities in society remain unchallenged and more radical or transformative reforms aimed at promoting social change are left un-explored and/or unimplemented. The utilitarian argument that girls' education is important because of what it contributes to national

socio-economic development, while not inherently problematic, does tend to privilege a more reproductive role for education over a transformative one.

While utilitarian and transformative perspectives and practices are viewed as constituting the dominant approaches to the transnational promotion and enhancement of girls' education within the field of international development, they are not the only transnational movements affecting national girls' education policy and practice. The African Union also represents a center from which transnational influences emanate, constructed by delegates from member states. African feminist movements, driven by de-colonization and re-visioning objectives and emphasizing contextual and cultural complexity and the need for self-determination, are viewed as a "necessary corrective" to mainstream development thinking (Sethi, 2005, p. 6).

Moreover, in addition to the West-centric world cultural model posited by neo-institutionalists, alternative cultural models are forming in the Muslim world as evidenced in the rising power and reach of organizations such as the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the concomitant expansion of Islamic development organizations actively engaging with Muslim communities in the Global South (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Meyer, Boli & Ramirez, 1997).

Study Background & Statement of Purpose

Since the early 1990's, women's formal education has been a cause célèbre in the field of international development, particularly in relation to economic and rights-based approaches to poverty reduction and "women's empowerment". However, despite considerable achievements in terms of increasing girls' access to formal education around the world, evidence of sustained social transformation in gender relations and the status of women has not been as robust (Colclough, 2004; Stromquist, 1999, 2006; Walby, 2005). For example, while The Gambia has

achieved gender parity at the level of basic education (grades 1-9), rural women do not fare as well educationally, compared with their urban counterparts; moreover, women throughout the country continue to face significant challenges in terms of their labour force participation, access to land and credit, decision-making capacity, and political participation. In other words, in The Gambia as elsewhere, it has proven harder to promote gender equality *through* education than it has been to promote gender equality *in* education (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005; Wilson, 2004). In order to strengthen the connection between education and social change, feminist scholarship has emphasized the need for girls' education policies to move beyond the singular promotion of equal access and towards supporting approaches that challenge the gendered power relations that give rise to gendered inequalities in educational opportunities, experiences, and outcomes. (Aikman & Unterhalter, 2005).

My interest in the politics of girls' education policy began in 2002 when I first traveled to The Gambia for master's field research on young women's university-level academic decision-making. During interviews with male and female students, educators and administrators, I noticed frequent expressions of hostility to the ideas and discourses mobilized in the promotion of girls' education and specifically to "affirmative action" policies at the university, as well as within the broader school system in the country. Framing the hostility that I witnessed was the dominant idea that "gender equality" represented a "Western" or "foreign" normative agenda without congruence or relevance to the Gambian context.

Prior to beginning field research in 2002, and given my analysis of the education and broader social policy context, I had assumed that The Gambia had achieved considerable success in the promotion of girls' education and women's advancement throughout the country; however, the resistance expressed by participants during my 2002 fieldwork suggested that

outside of formal policy spaces there were contentious public debates concerning affirmative action for women and “women’s rights” more generally in the country. I wanted to better understand the nature of this position and particularly how it was represented, interpreted and responded to within formal policy circles. Moreover, I was interested in better understanding the scope, and features of anti-feminist politics, and if/how an anti-feminist backlash was manifested in and influenced formal policy processes, as enunciated by civil society, government, and donor actors.

The Gambia represents an excellent setting for an exploration of the global/local interface with regard to gender and education policy because of its relatively long history of state-led promotion of women’s advancement, its extensive connections with global development partners, the vibrancy of its civil society sector, and the existence of formal government-civil society partnerships in the governance of education. The Gambia’s small geographic size and its proportionately small education policy community was also a factor in the country’s selection for the study, because these conditions permitted an ethnographic study of policy processes to be accomplished in a relatively short period of time.

Contemporary gender education policy (GEP) in The Gambia has its historical antecedent in the donor-funded Girls’ Education Initiative (GEI) that was implemented in the country from 1998 to 2005 as part of the country’s Revised Education Strategy 1988-2003 and supported ultimately by the World Bank-led Third Education Sector Project (DOSE, 1998).² While girls’ access to education was one of the policy priorities of the government beginning in the late 1980s, and had been included in the programming of the World Bank’s Second Education Sector

² The Revised Education Strategy 1988-2033 was launched in 1998 following the military coup d’etat 1994 and the subsequent transition to civilian rule in 1996/7; however, in its title it maintains the timeframe “1988-2003” (RTG, 1998).

Project that ran in the country from 1990-1998, delays in formulating specific objectives and measures to promote girls' education and the political disruption caused by a 1994 coup d'état, meant that the GEI was the first policy package designed specifically to target girls' education. The GEI sought to promote girls' and women's access to formal education opportunities, particularly at the basic education level through a combination of policy instruments focused on reducing the costs of schooling, improving school infrastructure and teacher practice, and raising public awareness of the importance of girls' education (DOSE, 1998, p. 22).

The GEI formally ended in 2005 with the launch of the National Education Policy 2004-2015, a document that laid out the country's intention to mainstream gender in all education sector programs (DOSE, 2004). However, while the GEI officially ended with the emergence of gender mainstreaming as the formal policy approach, initiatives such as free basic education for girls, the Girls' Education Scholarship Trust Fund, national "all-girl" education conferences, the establishment and support of Mothers' Clubs throughout the country, community sensitization campaigns, and guidance and counselling services have continued to be used to promote gender equity in education, and are considered in this study to be part of the contemporary gender education program in The Gambia. Also included as part of the gender education program are scholarship opportunities that have been created through the following: the Angels Trust Fund, a foreign philanthropist-financed scholarship scheme intended to provide financial assistance to girls *and* boys; the President's Empowerment for Girls' Education Project (PEGEP), a government-led, but primarily donor-funded scholarship scheme that despite its name, provides financial support for both girls and boys in urban and suburban regions; and the Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program (AGSP) – a U.S.-funded program that provides a range of learning materials to girls and boys in one of the rural regions of the country.

I use a critical feminist lens to examine the role of core education orientations, namely human capital, human rights, and human capabilities, in the historical evolution of gender and education policy knowledge and action in The Gambia. Critical feminists tend to focus on “power and patriarchy to ‘out’ hegemony, showing power sources that maintain control over the generation, legitimation, and interpretation [of knowledge]...in ways that advance the interests of dominant groups” (Marshall & Young, 2006, p. 67).

The study’s overarching objectives are two-fold: first, to assess the scope of gender education policy to support and provide for positive change in the lives of Gambian women, and human capabilities more broadly; and second, to identify and understand the choices and understandings underpinning the evolution of girls’ and gender education policy processes.

The Gambia: A Brief Introduction

The Gambia is the smallest mainland country on the continent of Africa, and has an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse population of around 1.7 million (2007) (UNESCO/GMR, 2010, p. 306).³ The country has the dubious distinction of being the first (in 1783) and last (in 1965) British colony in West Africa. Considered somewhat of a “geographic anomaly”, it is surrounded on three sides by Senegal. Figure 1 shows where The Gambia is located in West Africa, and Figure 2 provides a map of the country, including major towns.

³ The major ethnic groups are, in rank order from largest to smallest proportion of the population: Mandinka, Fula/Tukulor, Wolof, Jola, Serahuli and Serere. While the official language for Government is English, over ten other languages are spoken in the country. The religious composition of The Gambia is approximately 90% Muslim, with the remaining 10% either Christian or Traditional African religion.

Figure 1 Map of West Africa



Source: http://www.solarnavigator.net/geography/west_africa.htm (access July 24, 2010)

Figure 2 Map of The Gambia



Source: Free World Maps (2010). Retrieved on July 22, 2010 from <http://www.freeworldmaps.org/maps-of-africa/maps-of-the-gambia/small-map-of-the-gambia>

The majority of the population has historically lived in rural areas; however this has changed in recent times, with just over 50% of the population living in urban or peri-urban areas (Central Statistics Department, 2003). In the period 2005-2010 The Gambia had an average annual population growth rate of 2.6%, which is slightly higher than the weighted sub-Saharan average of 2.4% during this time period (UNESCO/GMR, 2010, p. 306). In the period 2005-2010, the total fertility rate (children per woman) was 4.7, slightly below the weighted sub-Saharan Africa average of 5.2 (UNESCO/GMR, 2010, p. 306). The high population growth rate in The Gambia has been identified as a constraint on the Government's ability to serve the educational needs of its growing population.

Ranked 168th out of 182 countries in the Human Development Index of the most recent Human Development Report, The Gambia is among the poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2009). Similar to other developing nations, after half a century of "development" interventions and aid, the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita (in current USD) only rose from US\$300 in 1998 to US\$320 in 2007, close to ten years later (UNESCO/GMR, 2010, p. 306). Current World Bank statistics (from World Development Indicators) indicate that the Gross National Income (GNI) (Atlas Method, current US\$) per capita rose to US\$400 in 2009 (World Bank, 2010).⁴ The Gambia has historically suffered from high poverty rates, and despite the upward trend in GNI per capita (PPP), the average income of individuals has fallen far below the weighted sub-Saharan average GNI per capita in 2007 (US\$951) (UNESCO/GMR, 2010, 307).

The Gambian economy has been described as weak and undiversified (Chant, 2007, p. 129). Historically, men's groundnut cash-cropping has been the backbone of the formal

⁴ World Bank (2010) The Gambia: Quick facts Retrieved on July 20, 2010 from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/GAMBIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:351664~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:351626,00.html>

economy; however, problems with national transportation and processing infrastructure compounded with drought and falling world prices for groundnuts during the 1980s decimated the industry. In response, development planning has focused on diversifying the Gambian economy through the introduction of market gardens and the production of traditional and non-traditional produce such as cotton, sesame, fresh fruit and vegetables, expansion of the tourism sector, and the promotion of private sector development and entrepreneurship (Ajayi, 2003; Chant, 2007; Schroeder, 1999).⁵ The re-export trade is among the most profitable in The Gambia, with large markets in neighbouring landlocked countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso (Chant, 2007). In 2003 the value of the re-export trade was seven times greater than that of groundnut production (EIU, 2005a, p. 25, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 130).

Like other sub-Saharan African countries The Gambia has an economic history marked by the impact of structural adjustment programs, beginning with the 1985 World Bank and International Monetary Fund-supported Economic Recovery Program. The fiscal austerity measures characterizing structural adjustment reforms, and a heavy debt burden coupled with declining national revenues from the 1980's through to the present day, have made it more difficult for the Government to increase its spending in the social sectors, specifically education and health. For example, between 2002 and 2004 public expenditure as a percentage of per capita GDP dropped from US\$11.6 to US\$6.3 (World Bank, 2010). A similar pattern of declining public expenditure occurred during this same time period at the secondary level (World Bank, 2010).

The Gambia has been hailed as one of the most politically stable countries on the African continent. The country has only had two presidents since independence: President Juwara led the

⁵ The vulnerable nature of The Gambia's tourism industry to national and international political and economic events needs to be emphasized (Chant, 2007).

country from 1965 until 1994, when a bloodless military coup d'état brought the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) to power, led by a junior officer, Yahya Jammeh. Following a two-year transition from military to civilian rule, Yahya Jammeh became President of The Gambia, when the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) won the 1996 elections (Saine, 2009). Jammeh and his government have maintained the Juwara-era focus on macroeconomic reform and private sector-led economic growth and development. In laying out the Government's development vision, the Vision 2020 statement indicates that the overarching goal of public policy is,

To transform The Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading, export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population and guaranteeing a well-balanced eco- system and a decent standard of living for one and all under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry. (RTG/State House, 2006, p. 1)

While governed by an officially secular state, the vast majority of the Gambian population is Muslim, and Islamic symbolism, ideologies and practices have historically been used strategically by Heads of State in addition to proliferating in public spaces more generally (Darboe, 2004; Hughes & Perfect, 2006; Miles, 2004). The Gambia's small size, history of colonialism, lack of natural resources and marginalized political-economic position on the world stage have confined the country to a post-independence history of poverty, vulnerability to external and internal economic and environmental shocks, and aid-dependence (Thompson, 2006, p. 137).

While the receipt of debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) has improved The Gambia's external debt position, it remains a country heavily dependent on external development assistance (World

Bank/African Development Bank, 2008, p. 31).⁶ The current World Bank/African Development Fund Joint Assistance Strategy for The Gambia 2008-2011 identifies gender as a “development challenge” for the country, along with seven others: macroeconomic stability; governance; public spending and efficiency; delivery of social services; infrastructure bottlenecks and regional integration; the investment climate; and financial services.

The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia makes education a fundamental human right indicating that “All persons have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities [...]”, and that “basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all” (Republic of The Gambia, 1997, n.p.). The current National Education Policy 2004-2015 (Department of State for Education (DOSE), 2004) in The Gambia explicitly aligns with the goals of the Education for All Movement (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) frameworks. The mainstreaming of women’s issues into development processes is conceived by the government as a pre-condition for enhancing the human resource base in The Gambia, which is viewed as necessary for the achievement of national development goals (The Republic of The Gambia, 1997). The human capital approach to development planning is reflected in The Gambia’s Vision 2020 statement, as well as other national development documents (i.e. PRSPs) which establishes the nation’s development goals of becoming a self-reliant and developed country by the year 2020 (RTG, 1996). A key strategy identified towards the achievement of these goals involves the expansion of quality educational opportunities to all citizens; however, for the past two decades increasing girls’ access to and performance in formal education has been specifically prioritized in national education policy documents, in successive Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), in the project documents for the World Bank-supported

⁶ The expansion of girls’ education scholarships to the poorest regions of the country was one of the education-related triggers for HIPC eligibility (World Bank, 2006, p. 3).

Third Education Sector Project, as well as in national grant proposals under the Education for All/Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund.

Donor-supported national efforts to promote and enhance girls' educational opportunities and experiences appear to have had a significant impact with respect to girls' enrolment, particularly at the basic education level. For example, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for girls at the primary-level increased from 50% in 1990 to 89% in 2008 (World Bank, 2010). At the secondary-level, the GER for girls increased from 12% in 1990 to 49% in 2008 (World Bank, 2010). Primary completion rates for girls have increased from 36% in 1995 to 83% in 2008 (World Bank, 2010). Despite these gains in girls' participation in formal education, as of 2008 only 34% of Gambian women aged 15 and over were considered literate compared with 57% of the adult male population (World Bank, 2010).

The same constraints and challenges that were identified in the first World Bank study into why families under-invest in girls' education persist today (World Bank, 1995). Factors such as the heavy domestic burden of girls, the practice of early marriage, parental fears of pregnancy or generally "immoral" behaviour amongst school girls, as well as parental preferences to educate sons because they presumably will "lead" the household in the future, whereas women are "married off" and any education received will benefit their husbands and in-laws, all pose constraints to enhancing girls' education and achieving gender equity in and through education.

Study Overview

With some notable exceptions, including the work of Gail P. Kelly (1987, 1978), Nelly Stromquist (2008; 1999; 1998a, b; 1989), and Elaine Unterhalter (2008; 2007a, b; 2005a, b; 2003), critical feminist research into the gender politics of educational equity policies in the Global South is rare in mainstream development and education literatures. As introduced above,

this study addresses this research gap through a case study of gender equity in education policy knowledge and action in The Gambia. Based on data drawn from document analysis, interviews with government, non-governmental and donor policy actors, and participant observation activities, the case involves the “unpacking” of policy processes through a comparative analysis of official and constructed gender equity discourses in education policy knowledge and the forms of policy action or solutions justified and supported by such knowledge(s). At the center of the study is the overarching question concerning the opportunities and scope for national gender and education policy processes to support the enhancement of human capabilities toward the goal of social justice.

The research was conducted in three main phases: desk-based document analysis, field research in The Gambia, and the comparison of official and constructed gender equality policy knowledge underpinning policy action. In the first phase I completed a content analysis of past and present policy texts in The Gambia relating to women, gender, education, and development. Relevant to understanding the position and framing of gender education in national development planning, I analyzed the country’s development manifesto, “Vision 2020: The Gambia Inc.,” as well as the two most recent (post-2000) poverty reduction strategy papers produced by The Gambia as part of World Bank aid conditionality. Also analyzed was the 1999 National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women, developed as part of a World Bank-sponsored, Women in Development Project in the country (1990-1999). Core contemporary education policy texts analyzed included the National Education Policy 2004-2005 (NEP) and the Education Sector Strategy Paper 2006-2015 (ESSP). To historicize the analysis of current policy texts, I also reviewed education policies dating back to the transition period from colonial rule to independence. The goals of the analyses are threefold: i) to identify key policy priorities with

respect to girls' education specifically and women's advancement more generally, ii) to examine how gender inequalities in education and society are framed as a public policy problem, and iii) to map the division of labour established in official texts for the implementation of gender and education policy programs.

In the second phase, I explored and compared the perspectives, strategies, and experiences of different policy actors (central and regional government officials, representatives from key nongovernmental organizations, and donor officials) concerning the role and nature of gender policy objectives and instruments, as well as their views on the key challenges and opportunities in the promotion of gender equality in education and social justice through education. A key part of this second phase was the examination of how gender inequalities in education are framed and understood, as well as the goals, strategies and impact of girl- and women- focused advocacy and programming. Of particular salience to the analysis of how gender problems in education were defined and understood was the question of how the concept of "gender" was understood and used across formal policy texts and by different policy actors. There were few in-country development partners to speak with, therefore documentary evidence was relied upon for the analysis of the framing of and approach advocated for girls' education policy by key education bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the African Development Bank.

In the third phase I comparatively analyzed the findings from the textual and ethnographic field work phases, looking at how gender equity policy is represented in official education and other related policy texts versus how these texts and the policy directions they prescribe are read, interpreted and enacted by different policy actors. Given the complexity and scope of policy broadly defined and the breadth of the questions I was asking in terms of not

only government actors, but also NGO representatives, and bi- and multilateral donors, I needed more than one single theory for the analysis (Ball, 1994). Specifically, I draw on critical feminist policy analysis approaches to theoretically frame the study (Marshall, 1999, 1997; Shaw, 2004). Such approaches represent a melding of feminist and critical theory towards the study of power relations in the construction, interpretation, and enactment of policy objectives, programs, and implementation, and are thus best suited to studying the gender politics of educational equity policy processes (Shaw, 2004, p. 58). While critical feminist theory provides the overarching frame for the study, I also use human capital, human rights, and human capabilities frameworks to analyze dominant knowledge(s) and official forms of policy intervention within the Gender Education program in The Gambia.

Defining Key Concepts

Gender and gender equality. Clarifying how the concept of gender is understood in the thesis is a critical matter as there has been much slippage noted in terms of how it has been used uncritically by researchers as synonymous with biological sex (Glasser & Smith, 2008; Paechter, 2006). Analyzing the shift from a focus on “women” to that of “gender” in international development policy, Bessis (2003) argues that the concept of gender often masks a “conceptual vacuum” (p. 635). Compounding the problem is the persistent practice in mainstream development literature of uncritically using the language of “gender” when discussing female disadvantage in education, health and economic spheres (for examples see, Kane, 2004; UNFPA, 2005; World Bank, 2008, 2005a, 2005b), without sufficient analytical attention to the patriarchal modes of domination that underpin gender-based inequalities or the ways in which corporate globalization and structural racism are combining to reinforce gender-based hierarchies and inequalities (Steady, 2004, p. 42-43). As Walby (2005) notes, “‘gender equality’ is a ‘signifier’

that actors attempt to fill with their own preferences” (p. 371). Just as gender equality is a socially constructed concept, so too is its inverse – gender inequality, and thus can similarly be open to interpretation and contestation (Yates, 1986).

As both an ideology and performance (Butler, 2008, 1990), the concept of gender has developed out of liberal feminist theories emphasizing the social constructedness of masculine and feminine identities and the relations of power between men and women that such constructions generate and reflect. The key theoretical claim in this regard is that because hegemonic masculine and feminine ideals are socially constructed and reproduced, identities are also fluid and open to contestation and compromise in the context of shifting power relations between men and women (Arnfred, 2004).

There are important distinctions between formal and substantive constructions of equality in education. Substantive definitions of equality emphasize the qualitative dimensions of the educational experience in terms of access and outcome. The concept of “equity” is used by scholars focusing on the “subjective moral or ethical judgement” of social justice or fairness (Farrell, 2003, p. 154): “equity involves value judgements and differing understandings of what is normal or inevitable” (Farrell, 2003, p. 154). This is a critical theoretical point in the context of the current study because it directs attention to the importance of context-specific interpretations of the nature of educational inequalities, their relative importance and the response required. As Farrell (2003) states:

Many of the most complex public political debates about educational equality, and what might be done for it in terms of public policy, revolve around differing equity-based interpretations of differing equality-driven statistical indices. (p. 155)

In contrast with substantive equity, formal equality generally refers to the quantitative dimensions of educational opportunity – that is, equal numbers of boys and girls in school satisfies the formal definition of equality, or “gender parity” (Subrahmanian, 2003). Equality, as Farrell notes, “deals with actual patterns in which something is (e.g. income or years of schooling) is distributed among members of a particular group” (2003, p. 154). Gender parity in education, as it is conceptualized in the Millennium Development Goal framework, is defined as “achieving equal participation of girls and boys in all forms of education based on their proportion in the relevant age-groups in the population” (Subrahmanian, 2003, p. 2). When viewed in relation to the imperatives of gender equity in education, the gender parity goals of Education for All, and MDG education targets, notwithstanding the existence of MDG 3 targeting “women’s empowerment”, represent mere stepping stones on the road to achieving equality in education process and outcome (Farrell, 2003).

This study draws on Subramanian’s conceptualization of gender equality in education as comprising three interrelated processes and outcomes necessary for the achievement of gender equity:

A consideration of gender equality in education therefore needs to be understood as the right to education [access and participation], as well as rights within education [gender-aware educational environments, processes, and outcomes], and rights *through* education [meaningful education outcomes that link education equality with wider processes of gender justice]. (2003, p. 2)

Thus, I connect gender equality in education policy processes to the broader goals of social change and gender justice (Barton, 2005; Cornwall & Molyneux, 2006; Fraser, 1995; Raju, 2006; Schech & Vas Dev, 2008). I see the goals of gender equality in education as part of a broader agenda of social transformation. Formal education can represent a critical entry-point for

the achievement of more broad-based gender justice goals (UNFPA, 2005). Getting girls into school in order to increase the available pool of labour for “national development” is only one prong in a multilayered and multiply constituted agenda of structural and institutional change. Achieving gender equality through education then requires socio-cultural, political, economic and legal transformation, not only at national and sub-national levels, but also within transnational policy spaces. This is largely because the same structures that constrain girls’ access, retention and performance in formal education also shape girls’ and women’s opportunities and experiences beyond the school system.

Empowerment. The use of the concept of empowerment in development policy lexicon has occurred as Women in Development (WID) approaches have given way in some respects to Gender and Development (GAD) approaches. The key difference between the two is the emphasis on power in GAD, which has led GAD proponents to advocate for not just more resources for women, but also for more attention to issues of agency and outcome in the distribution of development benefits. Within the GAD perspective, the term ‘empowerment’ represents an alternative, grassroots approach to development, which does not simply mean a top-down redirection of resources to the poorest, but also a bottom-up strengthening of poor women’s participation in policy-making and implementation processes in development (Sen & Grown, 1987)

Naila Kabeer offers a compelling conceptualization of women’s empowerment, seeing it as comprising three interrelated and inseparable components: resources, agency, and achievements (1999, p. 435). Kabeer frames empowerment as being “about the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability” (1999, p. 435). Moreover, Kabeer states that “agency in relation to empowerment implies not

only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations” (2003, p. 171, cited in Schech & Vas Dev, 2008, p. 18).

Organization of Thesis

Chapter Two provides a synthesis of three broad literatures towards conceptualizing the study’s analytic framework: globalization studies, gender and development, and education policy. Questions of power in international policy borrowing are identified against the backdrop of economic and cultural globalization. In reviewing the development literature concerning gender and education, the shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) is emphasized, as the latter much more explicitly calls for transformation in gender relations and the elimination of the structural factors of women’s subordination towards the goal of women’s empowerment. The chapter finishes with the identification and description of the three policy models that were used to analyze gender and education policy knowledge in The Gambia: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities.

In Chapter Three, key features of the socio-cultural, economic, and political context of The Gambian are identified and described. The chapter serves to contextualize the study in two main ways. First, it provides important background information concerning gender relations and women’s status in The Gambia. Second, the chapter provides a general overview of the historical evolution of formal education in The Gambia from the colonial period through to the present day.

Chapter Four details the study methodology and research design. Following the presentation of my conceptual framework and the re-statement of the research questions, I provide a detailed description of the research design, including textual analysis, interviews, and observation. I describe the procedures that I used to identify and recruit participants in the

sample, provide information concerning the urban and rural research sites, as well as describe the specific instruments and methods used for data collection. The subsequent sections discuss the data analysis strategies used in the study, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

The focus in Chapter Five is on the presentation of the findings from the textual analysis phase of the study, placed in the context of national development planning and donor influence. Where appropriate policy actor perceptions are included in the analysis. The chapter highlights the changing context of gender equality in education policy knowledge production and action in The Gambia. I first situate gender and education issues and objectives within the overarching national development policy landscape, paying particular attention to the shifting role of the state in education governance implied by decentralization, privatization, and partnership reforms. Along with structural reforms in the education sector, the chapter also discusses the emergence of educational quality, relevance, and efficiency as central policy priorities, as well as the concomitant rise of boys' education as a new priority within the gender education program. In the last section of the chapter, I look at issues of gender equity in relation to the recent national integration of the *madrassa* (Islamic) system of education in the country – a reform deemed necessary by the government and supported by the donor community for the achievement of Education for All.

Chapter Six presents the findings concerning the production, construction, interpretation and enactment of gender equity in education policy knowledge. A central part of the discussion concerns the nature and significance of how different policy actors define and understand the meaning of “gender”, and how the dominant understanding of gender as synonymous with biological sex poses an important challenge for feminist advocacy in The Gambia. I also discuss the role of human capital, human rights, and human capabilities policy orientations as reflected

in policy texts, policy solutions, and the perspectives, interpretations, and experiences of different policy actors. Forms of policy action taken to address gender inequalities in the education sector are analyzed and discussed.

Chapter Seven examines power and politics at the launch of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) in The Gambia, a two-day event that I had the opportunity to attend. I identify and discuss key tensions arising at the event, including those concerning the exclusive focus on girls' education characterizing UNGEI, as well as tensions and questions arising with respect to the overall national gender agenda. In presenting the findings from this event I highlight the power of national policy actors in the context of global-local policy transfer. Findings from the UNGEI workshop are used to further highlight the limitations posed by the dominant understanding of gender as referring to "men and women", rather than the "social relations between men and women".

Chapter Eight presents an analysis of two recent national gender policy documents, published after 2007, in the time since the field research was done. These two documents were the Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011, and the subsequent National Gender Policy 2010-2020. In analyzing these documents, I highlight the ways in which they align with and illustrate some of the study findings, particularly with respect to struggles to define the language and meaning of key terms used of gender and education discourse in the country. Comparing the different documents demonstrates the uneasy incorporation of the language of "gender" with the goal of "women's empowerment". The chapter also highlights the recent passing of the Women's Bill in The Gambia, which introduces for the first time in the country legislation geared towards securing and protecting women's rights in line with national

commitments under CEDAW and the African Protocol, among other international rights-based conventions.

In the final chapter, I overview the main findings and link them with several emergent themes from the study. Relating the findings and themes back to the central literatures informing the research, I discuss the significance of the study and the contributions it makes to our understanding of power in, and the politics of girls' education policy processes. The chapter also elaborates on the study's limitations and identifies areas for future research.

Chapter Two

Conceptualizing Inter/National Knowledge and Action in Gender and Education Policy Processes

The development of a conceptual framework for the study involved surveying three main literatures: a) globalization and international policy transfer; b) gender, education, and development; and c) feminism in Africa. I begin by introducing globalization as a concept used to examine processes of global educational policy transfer, with an emphasis placed in the discussion on feminist and political economy critiques of processes and consequences attributed to different, yet overlapping dimensions of “globalization”, particularly those associated with the proliferation of economic liberalization reforms and the disproportionately negative impact these reforms have had on vulnerable groups around the world, particularly poor women. Following the discussion of globalization and gender, I identify three major theoretical approaches to globalization and national education policy processes: the Common World Educational Culture (CWEC), the Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE), and hybridization/localization theories. Given that the study draws on the latter scholarship, I next outline the key features of the critical policy sociology approach – an approach that bridges post-structuralist and political economy perspectives and is amenable to my own feminist research interests (Ball, 1997; Jonasdottir & Jones, 2009). Here, I contrast global political economy and Foucauldian approaches to power, process/mechanism, and effect dimensions of transnational education policy transfer in the fields of international development and education multilateralism.

Following the discussion of globalization, gender and policy transfer, I next provide a simple typology developed by Dreze and Sen (2002) for organizing perspectives concerning the role and purpose of formal education; contrasting intrinsic/extrinsic, economic/non-economic,

and individual/collective understandings (cited in Robeyns, 2006). This typology is used in the subsequent section which reviews three dominant education models: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities, and their relationships with utilitarian and transformative education ideals and principles. Using feminist theory and CWEC, GSAE, and localization approaches, I connect globalization pressures to the dominant discourses and practices of educational multilateralism in terms of the emphasis placed on human capital development within and across nations towards the twin goals of economic growth/competitiveness and efficiency.

The promotion of girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa has largely been facilitated through the machinery, institutions and actors associated with the international development community; therefore, this literature provides important information concerning dominant international discourse and practice in relations to girls' education. The Western liberal feminist-bias characterizing feminist activism within the development industry is compared and contrasted with the literature concerning feminism and gender scholarship in Africa in order to highlight key conceptual and theoretical tensions and synergies between the different gender agendas each school of thought represents.

Globalization, Gender, and Education Policy

In the post-WWII period, world order has shifted from an "international political economy (1975-1990) to a global political economy (1990-onward) powered by neo-liberalism as an ascendant ideology" (Robertson & Dale, 2006, p. 2). The increasing scope and volume of socio-cultural, economic and political transactions commonly associated with "globalization" and the effects of globalized capital, national competitiveness and consumer culture, appear to "know no boundaries" and as such are perceived to radically transform national policy processes

(Dale, 1999). The concept of globalization is highly contested, yet widely used to refer to a range of “post-cold war processes of accelerating economic, cultural, and political interconnections” around the world (Assie-Lumumba & Sutton, 2004, p. 345). Citing David Held, Arnove defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Held, 1991, p. 9, cited in Arnove, 2003, p. 2).

The main defining features of economic globalization coalesce on the themes of deregulation, decentralization, privatization, political and economic liberalization, and the implementation of market-oriented reforms. A defining feature of cultural globalization is the spread of consumer culture; however, top-down international human and women’s rights declarations, conventions, and discourses may also be understood as mechanisms and effects of cultural globalization processes (Bergeron, 2001). Globalizing trends have made “hegemonic global discourses” (Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 71), underpinned by neoliberal ideology, more influential in public policy spaces, with the result that it has become increasingly difficult to understand national education policy and practice without reference to globalization processes (Crossley, 2000, cited in Vidovich, 2004, p. 341).

In much of the mainstream globalization studies literature an implicit (and sometimes explicit) assumption is made that globalization forces and their subsequent impacts are gender-neutral (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002; Luke, 2001). It has also been suggested that processes of cultural globalization, facilitated in part through the construction of international normative frameworks and conventions, have contributed to a “rising tide” of support for gender equality principles, particularly in industrialized, and post-industrial countries (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). In contrast, feminist and other critical scholars have suggested that the processes and ideologies

associated with neo-liberal economic globalization are not benign in terms of their implications and effects in relation to gender justice. Specifically, feminist research has documented and sought to highlight the gendered impact of global economic liberalization and macroeconomic reform agendas⁷ on the lives of women and men around the world (Abdi, 2006; Bahramitash, 2005; Barton, 2005; Bergeron, 2003; Ghosh, 1996; Parpart, 1995; Vavrus, 2002).

In the literature there are three main theoretical approaches to understanding the relationship between “globalization” and national education policy and processes: Common World Educational Culture (CWEC); Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE), and hybridization theories. According to world culture theorists working within what Dale (2000) calls the Common World Educational Culture (CWEC) model, globalization is leading to greater institutional and policy isomorphism and convergence according to the script of a single global model of progress and justice (Boli & Thomas, 1999; Meyer, Boli & Ramirez, 1997). Within the CWEC model, the autonomy of the state in directing education policy change is viewed as diminishing, with the imperatives of a universal model of education, state and society taking precedence over nationally defined education priorities and strategies. In contrast to this “globalist” perspective (Held & McGrew, 2000), “internationalists” working within the Globally Structured Agenda for Education (GSAE) model (Dale, 2000) use an international political economy approach to analyze locally-mediated responses to globalization and global economic

⁷Beginning in the 1980’s, international agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF diagnosed the problem of “underdevelopment” amidst increasing external debt and poverty in Africa as being one of inefficient governments (Martinussen, 1995). The prescription then targeted macro-economic reform geared towards “getting the prices right”, a retrenchment in the role of the state in the market and indeed in the provision of social services (including health and education) as well as increasing privatization of public services (Dei, 1999; Martinussen, 1995). The proliferation, adoption and impact of SAPs throughout Africa, and much of the so-called developing world, has been criticized on a number of fronts, not least of which is that those most vulnerable, especially women and ethnic minority groups, have borne the overwhelming brunt of macro-economic adjustment (Cobbe, 1991; Dei, 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Martinussen, 1995).

pressures. Others, however, view globalization not as a singular process, but as multi-dimensional “globalizations”, the impacts of which are equally diverse and multiple (Pieterse, 1995, p.45; Appadurai, 1990). In contrast to ideas that the world is becoming more “uniform and standardized” as a consequence of “a technological, commercial and cultural synchronization emanating from the West”, it is argued that globalization is a process of “hybridization” which gives rise to a “global melange” (Pieterse, 1995, p. 45; see also Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Appadurai, 1990; Pieterse, 1995; Steiner-Khamsi, 2008, 2006). As Steiner-Khamsi (2008) suggests, borrowed policies do not always replace existing ones; rather, selected elements are incorporated within existing practices and norms, based on the specificities and imperatives of particular socio-political contexts.

Comparing Rational and Sociological Approaches to Policy Analysis

Different approaches to policy analysis have developed in conjunction with the continuation of more traditional forms. For example the rational theory model conceives policy as a largely mechanical and linear process in which “experts” and political elites formulate policy solutions which are then implemented and monitored by policy managers (Newman, 2002). In viewing policy as a top-down process, policy analysts using the rational model analytically separate policy formulation and implementation processes, with the latter viewed as the “least significant stage” (Newman, 2002, p. 348). Rational theorists view the state as being the legitimate locus of power in policy decision-making and formulation and emphasize the importance of policy content over process in explaining policy outcomes (Newman, 2002). The focus in the rational theory model is on explaining discrepancies between policy objectives and policy outcomes.

Prunty (1985) argues that policy is never value-neutral and that to view the purpose of policy as the “smooth functioning of the state and its institutions” is to miss another important effect/function of policy, that is to serve the interests of “specific people, usually the most powerful” (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 9). Scholarship in the critical policy sociology literature tends to conceptualize policy as text, discourse and practice, emphasizing the structures and agency of policy actors and institutions in the production of meaning and practice in relation to specific policy processes. As text, “policy exists as a concrete, analyzable document that can be read”. Policy as discourse perspectives view policy as a hegemonic process and focus on how policies ‘exercise power through a production of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’...and “bid to control the ‘thinkable’, from the ‘facts’, and who counts as expert” (Ball, 1994, p. 21, cited in Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 10). Policy as practice sees the interactions within and across policy spaces as well as specific policy interventions as part of “an ongoing process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts” (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 1). Here, policy is understood as a somewhat messy process, offering openings or opportunities for the promotion of particular views and interests. While I remained alert to policy as discourse perspectives in the context of the current study, I draw primarily on Levinson and Sutton’s conception of policy as practice within which knowledge is produced and constructed by certain actors for certain purposes (2001).

Public Policy Forms

Public policies have been approached and categorized in a range of ways. Stromquist identifies several typologies of public policy (2008). In terms of policy design, Lowi (1964) presents a typology of distributive, regulatory, and redistributive public policy forms (cited in

Stromquist, 2008, p. 5). Noting that many feminist advocates call for redistributive policies, the following table provides Stromquist's summary of Lowi's work (pp. 4-5).

Table 1.0 Forms of Public Policy

Public Policy Form	Description
Distributive	Those benefitting certain groups through service, contracts, and subsidies. Extending this category to women, such policies could target them as a visible group, deserving to receive certain benefits such as electoral quotas or affirmative action to certain jobs. In the field of girls' education distributive policies are those that seek the expansion of schooling, or the enhancement of quality that, while not focused on them, benefit girls (i.e. building more schools, teacher training, curriculum reform).
Regulatory	Those that seek to have an impact on the general population and function in the sense of dictating norms that either limit or expand the choice of individuals and groups. Applying this to gender issues, such policies might set norms regarding non-discrimination, abortion, rape, domestic violence, and rights, among others. In the field of girls' education, such policies would be anti-discriminatory, for example, the introduction of sexual harassment policies and re-entry policies for young mothers.
Redistributive	Those that affect the material differences between the rich and the poor and that imply a substantial reallocation of resources. Extending these policies to gender issues, they would seek to provide women with greater material resources than they had previously such as higher wages, rights to property, and rights to inheritance.

Source: Lowi (1964, cited in Stromquist, 2008, p. 5).

A second public policy typology that Stromquist identifies is one in which the focus is “on the *leverage* used to assure implementation and thus to attain an intended solution” (Stromquist, 2008, p. 5, emphasis in original). Of interest in such analyses are the mechanisms in place for ensuring compliance with policy objectives and prescribed practice. Policy mechanisms of persuasion can function through negative (threats if practices do not change) or positive strategies (incentives to change practices), or a combination thereof (Stromquist, 2008, p. 5).

A third typology of public policy identified by Stromquist concerns the quantity and quality of the human and financial resources allocated to a particular policy problem. Based on such analyses, public policies are classified as rhetorical/symbolic or substantive (Stromquist, 2008, p. 5). While a policy problem may be recognized, the policy is said to be rhetorical if adequate and quality resources are not allocated towards its resolution (i.e. the policy objective).

In contrast, public policies are said to be substantive in nature if they,

assign human and financial resources in proportion to the objectives, present detailed and clear action plans, indicate timelines for the attainment of objectives, and are accompanied by evaluation measures to assess impact. (Stromquist, 2008, pp. 5-6)

The coverage of policies forms the basis of the fourth public policy typology that Stromquist identifies (2008, p. 6). Policies can be system-wide, or they can target a particular group or population. Compensatory policies are those that target poor and vulnerable groups, whereas focal policies are those policies aimed only at a small group of people (Stromquist, 2008, p. 6). Based on her analysis of the literature, Stromquist asserts that girls' education policies have dominantly been distributive, regulatory and/or symbolic in form (Stromquist, 2008, p. 15).

Women, Development and Education: Evolving Perspectives

Women's rights and women's roles have gained increasing attention in international development theory and practice since the early 1970's.⁸ During these early years, the Women in Development (WID) movement focused on the economic integration of women into development processes, and therefore education and training for women was viewed as a means of providing women with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete equally with men

⁸ This shift can be traced back to Ester Boserup's influential book, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970).

(Vavrus, 2002). Because they are largely founded on liberal functionalist principles concerning the role of formal education as a means of creating effective and efficient skilled workers for a market economy, WID theories do not generally offer a critique of capitalism (Bloch & Vavrus, 1998). However, in the decades following the “discovery” of women as productive and not just reproductive agents, the value accorded to women’s education has expanded from an emphasis on its instrumental role in increasing women’s productivity to include a focus on the relationship between education and “women’s empowerment” (Unterhalter, 2007a).

The shift from WID to GAD in the 1980’s is largely attributable to insight offered by various feminist critiques of the lack of attention paid in WID to the need to challenge the very structures and asymmetrical power relations that give rise to gender-based inequality (Lourdes & Sen, 1997; Rathgeber, 1990; Reeves & Baden, 2000). In the current Gender and Development literature (GAD), a more holistic perspective is deployed that seeks to include consideration of all aspects of women’s lives (Razavi & Miller, 1995a, b). As part of this broader emphasis, GAD focuses not just on women (as WID tended to), but on the social relations between men and women and seeks a redistribution of power within as well as between societies (Kabeer, 2005; Parpart, Rei & Staudt, 2005; Razavi & Miller, 1995a, b). More specifically, the GAD analytical framework, pioneered originally by a feminist collective in India (DAWN), emphasizes gender relations in both the labour force and the reproductive spheres.

The empowerment approach is frequently identified with the gender planning strategies associated with the GAD framework (Moser, 1989). Although this approach was most popular during the 70’s and onwards into the 80’s and largely confined to the work of non-governmental organizations, it has continued to be emphasized within much of the development discourse, specifically with reference to women’s education in the South. The purpose of this approach has

been to increase the self-reliance of women in order to confront forces of oppression as a function of patriarchy as well as colonialism and neo-colonialism (Moser, 1989).

The empowerment of women seeks a redistribution of power within as well as between societies. Indeed, Moser maintains that the empowerment approach seeks to address women's strategic needs indirectly through the meeting of practical gender needs (Moser, 1989). In relation to education, advocates of the empowerment approach argue that education is a liberating experience, providing 'third world women' with the practical and strategic tools necessary to confront multiple layers of oppression and subordination.⁹

The GAD approach also expects more State involvement in the addressing of issues of women's oppression as well as the provision of programmes to support the work of social reproduction (Visvanathan, 1997). This can be seen as a reflection of GAD's common base with Marxist, neo-Marxist dependency, and global political economy theories that call for radical structural reforms towards social, economic and gender justice (Bergeron, 2001). With respect to women's education, the GAD framework suggests that the structural oppression that constrains women's equal participation in education does require State intervention in order to alleviate such conditions. With respect to State planning and reform, the GAD paradigm promotes "gender mainstreaming" as the technical fix for gender inequality.

Nalini Visvanathan identifies Caroline Moser as a key writer within the WID approach; however, upon closer inspection, Moser's scholarly work fits more closely with the GAD approach (for example of Moser's work, see, 1993; 1989; 1987; 1986; 1984; 1981; 1978) (cited in Visvanathan, 1997). Moser (1989) has contributed significantly to the way women's issues are treated within development discourse and practice, particularly at the level of development

⁹ For a more in-depth discussion of the empowerment approach see, Vavrus, 1997; Lazo, 1995; Njeuma, 1993; Parpart, 2000; and Stromquist, 1995.

planning. Moser emphasizes the importance of understanding the reasons why recognition of the important role played by women in national development has not necessarily been translated into planning practice. Moser's approach to addressing this question has produced a coherent framework for facilitating women's inclusion in development planning. Indeed, this framework has subsequently been incorporated into the gender planning procedures of several government and non-governmental organizations (Unterhalter, 2007a).

A feminist writer in the field of international development, Moser has distinguished two streams of approaches useful for meeting the planning needs of women in the developing world. The concept of "practical needs" refers to those requirements that are formulated from the concrete conditions women experience through their engendered position within the sexual division of labour (Moser, 1989). Often, practical gender needs reflect an immediate perceived requirement that has been identified by women within a specific context. With reference to issues of education, an example of a practical gender need would entail the expansion of educational opportunity for rural women through the construction of more schools in rural areas.

On the other hand, strategic gender needs are those needs "which are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men", and therefore reflect the identification of strategies to bring about systemic change in terms of both the structure and nature of gender relations (Moser, 1989). Examples of strategic gender needs as identified by Molyneux (1985) include the elimination of the sexual division of labour, the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination, the establishment of political equality and freedom of choice over childbearing. Indeed, Moser concludes that although many important initiatives have been undertaken to satisfy many of the practical gender needs of women, particularly through educational expansion,

that state intervention has nonetheless been slow with respect to addressing the strategic needs of women (Moser, 1989).

Shifting Gender, Education, and Development Discourse and Objectives: Global-Level

The ways in which gender-related issues in education have been incorporated in international development policy and practice have been informed and shaped by both larger shifts in the global economy and economic ideologies (i.e. the ascendancy of neoliberalism and the retreat of the Keynesian welfare state), as well the appropriation of shifting feminist insights.

Table 2.0 below lays out the dominant themes in the shifting education and gender discourses from 1950 to the present day.

Table 2.0 Themes in national development, educational development discourse, and gender-related policy discourse, 1950-present

Decade	Development Discourse	Educational Development Discourse	Gender-Related Policy Discourse
1950s	Comprehensive economic planning Industrialization and community development	Human resource planning Fundamental education	Largely absent
1960s	Economic growth/modernization Dependency	Human capital theory Functional literacy, vocational education	Largely absent
1970s	Basic human needs/poverty alleviation New International Economic Order	Basic education Life-long learning	Women in Development (WID)
1980s	Structural adjustment	Educational effectiveness and efficiency	Women in Development (WID) Women and Development (WAD)
1990s	Poverty reduction Sustainable human development	Human resources development Education for All	Gender and Development (GAD)
2000s	Poverty reduction Sustainable human development Global economic competitiveness	Human resources development Education for All	Gender and Development (GAD)

Source: Adapted with permission from Chabbott (1998, p. 209)

Gender-related education and development goals are included in the Education for All movement, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). MDG 2 calls for the achievement of universal primary education, with the target of ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling. The goal of MDG 3 is the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, with the target of eliminating gender disparities at primary and secondary-levels of education by 2015. Indicators for MDG 3 include enrolment ratios between boys and girls, literacy ratios between men and women, share of women's wage employment in sectors other than agriculture, and the political participation and representation of women in national parliaments. The inclusion of *gender equality* in the language at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar marked a departure from the historical target of gender parity, although the significance of this in terms of promoting a more multi-dimensional understanding of gender and education goals is debated (Colclough, 2008; Unterhalter, 2007a). Table 3.0 below summarizes the evolution of gender and education-related goals as articulated in the produced knowledge of global policy frameworks.

Table 3.0 The Evolution of Development Goals in Education – From Jomtien to the MDGs

Date	Event	Goal	Target Date
1990	WCEFA	UPE	2000
1994	ICPD	UPE Primary Gender Parity	Before 2015 Before 2015
1995	FWCW	UPE Primary Gender Parity	2015 2005
1995	WSSD	Primary/Secondary Parity	2005
2000	WEF	UPE Primary/Secondary Gender Parity Gender Equality	2015 2005 2015
2000	UN Summit	UPE Primary/Secondary Gender Parity All Levels Gender Parity	2015 2005 2015

Notes:

Acronyms Represent the Following Events:

WCEFA – World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand

ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt

FWCW – Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China

WSSD – World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark

WEF – World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal

UN Summit – United Nations Millennium Summit, New York, USA

Source: Colclough (2008, p. 52)

Gender Equality in and Through Formal Education: Theoretical Orientations Informing Policy

Paying particular attention to gender, in this section I identify and describe three normative accounts that can underlie education policies: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities (Robeyns, 2006, p. 69). To different degrees, each of these education models has influenced thinking on gender and education policy as well as mass schooling more generally. The models differ from each other in important ways: their conceptions of the role of education; the nature of their approach; and their degree of operationalization (transnationally and nationally) (Robeyns, 2006). Feminists have highlighted that the nature and form gender equity policies take in education, and other sectors, depends to a large extent on how gender

injustices and gender relations are understood by policymakers (Robeyns, 2006; Unterhalter, 2007a, b).

With particular reference to historical shifts in the international Education for All movement, Unterhalter (2005, 2007a, b) points to three different ways that gender has historically been understood and used to inform the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of gender equity policy: gender as a noun, adjective, and verb. First, gender has been understood and applied as a noun. Here, “gender” replaces “sex” and is used to refer to groups that are understood to be biologically distinct. In contrast, the socially constructed and performed nature of gender is embedded within understandings of gender as an adjective and verb. Concern with changing social processes is associated with the understanding and application of gender as an adjective (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 3).

Here gender is an adjective which describes a range of social relations and institutional forms which structure social relations leading to particular forms of action in school and as a consequence of school. This is sometimes termed the gender regime. (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 3)

Understanding gender as a verb or as something we do focuses attention on issues of identity formation and performance within a given social system. According to Unterhalter, understanding gender as a verb, “signals a process of being or becoming ‘girl’ or actions in accordance with particular forms of masculinity” (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 3).

Human capital. Perhaps nothing reflects more the pre-eminence of economics in past and contemporary development theory than the enduring impact of human capital theory on education policy discourse and practice. Pioneered in the 1960’s by economists at Chicago University, notably Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, the human capital approach conceives education as a form of productive investment (see Becker, 1975; 1962; Schultz, 1971; 1961). As

such, human capital theory is characterized by the emphasis it places on providing citizens with the skills and attitudes deemed necessary for meaningful participation in national development processes (Samoff, 1996). Viewing skills and knowledge as investments in labour productivity has enabled economists to apply cost-benefit analyses in the measurement of economic returns to education for different schooling levels and types (Robeyns, 2006). Thus, within human capital theory the value of education is measured in economic terms related first to ensuring all citizens have access to education, and second, that the learning that occurs is relevant to the needs of the labour market (Boli, Ramirez & Meyer, 1985; Dei, 2004; McMichael, 2000; Fuller, 1991; Martinussen, 1995).

Proponents of human capital theory argue that a skilled population that is able to meet the labour demands of industrial development is the most efficient and effective means of promoting national growth and competitiveness in the global market. Hence, with the marriage of human capital and mainstream development theory and practice in the 1960s onward, education has been promoted as a means of increasing the productive capacity of labour in the service of national development objectives and strategies (read: economic growth and modernization). Indeed, the hallmark of the human capital approach has been the promotion of Western-modelled education systems in conjunction with improved health and nutrition to promote increased effective and productive participation in modernization processes leading to development (Fuller, 1991).

While human capital theory has had an enduring impact in the fields of international development and national policy planning, the role of and capacity of the state with respect to the public provision of education has undergone changes over the decades. The rapid expansion of mass systems of schooling in newly independent countries of the South was made possible by

increases in government public expenditure in education, as well as development aid dollars from donors.

Numerous critiques of human capital theory have highlighted a range of problems with its application and dominance within mainstream international development policy. The focus on economic considerations is clearly evident in human capital theory, as is the almost complete eclipsing by economic imperatives of the social, political and cultural dimensions of development. As Robeyns (2006) suggests,

Human capital theory conceptualizes the world through the eyes and disciplinary lenses of contemporary mainstream economics, a discipline that has increasingly blocked out the cultural, social and non-material dimensions of life, except in some highly reductionist formal models. (p. 72)

The paucity of attention given to non-economic dimensions of development has important implications for educational outcomes in that by placing explicit priority on producing “skilled” citizens as opposed to producing “thinking” citizens, this implies the limits to education, as understood within human capital theory, to function as an instrument of equality and social justice. Robeyns (2006) ultimately suggests that,

understanding education exclusively as human capital is severely limiting and damaging, as it does not recognize the intrinsic importance of education, nor the personal and collective instrumental social roles of education. (p. 75)

Despite the foregoing criticisms of the human capital model, it has dominated mainstream policy approaches to women, education and development in the Global South since the first Education for All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (Bloch, Bekou-Betts & Tabachnick, 1998; Rathgeber, 1991; Moser, 1993; Unterhalter, 2007a). Aligning with the WID paradigm, the human capital approach assumes that the inclusion of women in the development

process is necessary in order to attain economic growth and improve national economic competitiveness (Unterhalter, 2005). Human capital theory views human beings as important inputs for increased productivity and therefore the goal of increasing girls' educational access is to expand the pool of available resources for labour. From a human capital perspective, the primary goal of gender equity in education policy is the identification of the most cost-effective strategies to expand the access of women to education in order to maximize their economic contribution to development as skilled workers (Beneria & Sen, 1997). Unterhalter, citing King and Hill (1993), explains the appeal and implications of the instrumental argument for gender equality in education thus,

[it] was a powerful combination of ideas founded in the economics of 'good sense' and cost benefit associated with human capital theory, a depoliticized notion of need extracted from the basic needs approach suggesting that need can be satisfied by a single commodity, and an approach to the advancement of women associated with WID suggesting counting their presence in education institutions, occupations and on decision-making bodies. (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 40)

A key limitation then of human capital specifically, and instrumentalist arguments more generally, is that "Instrumentalist ideas are not concerned with problems of difference, value pluralism or difficult problems of distribution" (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 55).

The World Bank is widely posited as the key institution in the international promotion of girls' education as a human capital investment and panacea for a wide range of development issues, most notably poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment, and/or what Leila Villaverde (2008) refers to as "capitalist empowerment" (Arnot & Fennell, 2008; Colclough, 1996; Ebyen & Napier-Moore, 2009; Unterhalter, 2008; Vavrus, 2002). As such, Bank policies

concerning girls' education deserve attention in analyses of girls' education policy programming in aid-dependent countries like The Gambia.

Examining the ideological foundations of the World Bank's gender and education policy, it appears as though the Bank advocates for gender equity in education so long as it is embedded in a neoliberal framework in which "efficiency" is privileged over "equity" or social justice imperatives, leading to what some argue is the increasing commodification of women and their contributions to economic growth and development (Bergeron, 2003; Lincove, 2006). The policy remedies proposed within the human capital approach promoted by the Bank tend to be affirmative rather than transformative in nature and are underpinned by a distributive rather than redistributive logic of action (Stromquist, 2008). Consequently, critics have charged that girls' education, as a policy goal framed and promoted by the World Bank, is primarily about integrating women into the global capitalist economy and not as a means for effecting egalitarian social transformation either domestically or globally (Barton, 2005; Klees, 2002).

In focusing on the World Bank as a dominant purveyor of human capital theory through its education research and assistance work, I am not suggesting that it is the only actor on the international scene that privileges economic-instrumentalist rationales in the promotion of girls' education. Economic-utilitarian rationales, because of their political expediency in terms of bypassing what are thought to be culturally-based obstacles to "equity", have gained prominence in national as well as global education policy fields. Furthermore, other development and financial institutions also represent economic-instrumentalist strongholds, including the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, and various other bilateral and multilateral donors and private actors. Moreover, in the contemporary moment, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), once framed as the "vanguard for social justice" are now increasingly

being accused of converging their agendas with those of the “official” development community in terms of the discourses and practices that frame girls’ education as a magic bullet for poverty reduction and economic empowerment (Ebyen & Napier-Moore, 2009, p. 286; see also Najam, 2000; Perry 2004).

Human rights. The human rights education model can be viewed as the conceptual antipole to the human capital paradigm, with the latter emphasizing efficiency considerations and the former emphasizing justice-as-rights considerations (Robeyns, 2006, p. 75). The human rights paradigm is most closely associated with the work of various United Nations agencies (i.e. UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO) as well as transnational non-governmental organizations involved with issues of global social justice. As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the right to education is a basic human right. Within the human rights perspective, education is framed as an end in itself as well as a vehicle for further rights-based change (Greany, 2008). Similarly, within a rights-based approach, women’s education is viewed as a fundamental right. Subrahmanian argues that the human rights approach provides a “powerful overarching framework for discussing gender equality” (2005, p. 396). Rights are conceived as multi-dimensional and inclusive of civic, political, economic and social rights “and the conditions in which all those who suffer forms of discrimination and injustice can secure rights (Vizard, 2006; Molyneux & Razavi, 2002, 2003, cited in Unterhalter, 2007b, pp. 29-30).

International and domestic advocacy networks have rallied around the idea of women’s rights as human rights, and have used the language of rights to gain access to global decision-making bodies in the 1990’s (Unterhalter, 2007a). The institutionalization of the idea and language of human rights at the global level, “has come to offer a rich notion through which civil society organisations engaged in local campaigns have sought to hold states accountable, for

example for delivery on promises of rights to education or health (Unterhalter, 2007a; Mundy & Murphy, 2001, cited in Unterhalter, 2007b, p. 30).

However, the human rights perspective has not gone without criticism. First, Martha Nussbaum suggests that there is a lack of clarity in terms of human rights language,

Rights have been understood in many different ways, and difficult theoretical questions are frequently obscured by the use of rights language, which can give the illusion of agreement where there is deep philosophical disagreement. (2003, p. 37)

Raising a similar point, Unterhalter suggests that the use of rights language in policy documents,

may sometimes sound rhetorical and often emphasises the existence of international agreements as the reasons individuals have rights rather than substantive notions concerned with human dignity and equality. (2007b, p. 30).

Another important concern raised in the literature is that human rights activism is based on a “juridical model of individual complaints against state agents”: yet states are not the only actors involved in violating human rights (Stromquist, 2008, p. 22). Oppressive conditions are structured by the interests and actions of multiple actors – state and non-state – across multiple and overlapping spheres (sub-national, national, in/ternational). Recognizing that the nature of gender-based inequalities “permeates the entire society”, it becomes problematic to position the state as “neutral adjudicator” of human rights (Stromquist, 2008).

Notwithstanding the limitations noted above, human rights principles continue to be framed as a “key to the women’s movement and a major source of global support” (Stromquist, 2008, p. 22). This is primarily because, as succinctly put by Stromquist:

The human rights framework is predicated on the principle that transnational linkages and global norms are essential for the protection of all human rights and could readily serve as an organizing principle upon which women's political claims could be advanced globally. (Dorsey, 1997, p. 357, cited in Stromquist, 2008, p. 22).

Human capabilities. A third normative account of distributive justice that can underpin public education policies, and which has particular relevance to questions concerning the link between education and social justice, is represented in the human capability approach (CA) (Arneson, 2005; Robeyns, 2006, Unterhalter, 2007a, b). While CA does not offer a comprehensive and universal theory of social justice per se, it does provide an alternative starting point and horizon for thinking about issues of bottom-up equality, distributive justice, and the intersection of public policy and human well being/freedom (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2004; Unterhalter, 2009; Walker, 2004). While CA is relatively newer and not as widely operationalized as human capital and human rights approaches, there is growing interest within the international development community in using CA to theorize, implement and evaluate education policy as a matter of social justice (Walker, 2006, p. 163).¹⁰ At its core, CA provides “a normative framework for the evaluation of individual well being and social arrangements” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 93, cited in Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 74). Given that at least at the level of policy talk (Tyack & Cuban, 1995), the promotion of girls' education is predicated on the assumption that the well-being of girls and women is enhanced through formal schooling, and that gendered inequalities in education have been empirically linked in the literature to

¹⁰ The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), launched in 1990, has been cited as an example of CA operationalization in the field of international development. The HDI was developed in consultation with Sen, and uses a composite of educational attainment, life expectancy and real gross domestic product per capita indicators to comparatively measure relative, not absolute, levels of human development throughout the world (Saito, 2003: 22). In contrast to measuring development on the basis of per capita GDP, an indicator that focuses on the means of the development, the HDI focuses on the ends of development (Saito, 2003).

inequitable social arrangements that act as barriers to girls' educational access, retention, and performance, CA has clear relevance for gender and education policy formulation, implementation, and assessment.

The key pioneers of CA are Amartya Sen (1980, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999), a South-Asian Nobel prize-winning development economist, and Martha Nussbaum (1988, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003), an American feminist philosopher; however, it is important to recognize that there are differences between the perspectives of these scholars. The genesis of CA is located in Sen's work in the 1970s that took to task various aspects of mainstream welfare economics and utilitarianism, arguing against the notion that "the evaluation of equality should merely be based on information about people's sense of happiness or desire fulfillment, or on their command of primary goods" (Saito, 2003, p. 18; see also Sen, 1979). Sen's starting point for critique was the historical use of gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator of human well being and national development, as per the early modernization theories that underpinned development aid and technical assistance during the 1950's and 1960's.

Emerging as it did out of Sen's critique of the dominant emphasis placed on economic growth as an indicator of a country's quality of life, or people's command of primary goods (Rawls, 1971) as an indicator of human well-being, CA makes the case that individual capabilities – what people are actually able to do and be – ought to be central in evaluations of human well-being and development. A capability is a potential functioning, with the list of possible functionings endless (Walker, 2004, p. 2). Sen defines *functionings* as constitutive of the "beings and doings" of a person's living (Sen, 1992, p. 39). As Robeyns explains,

Capabilities are the various functionings that a person can attain – where functionings are the constitutive elements of living, that is, doing and being. Examples of functionings are being healthy, being educated, holding a job, being part of a nurturing family, having deep friendships, etc. Functionings are thus outcomes or achievements, whereas capabilities are the real opportunities to achieve valuable states of being and doing. (2006, p. 78)

In distinguishing between capabilities and functionings, Walker states that “The difference [between a capability and functioning] is like one between opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome. (2004, p. 2)

In *Women and Human Development: A capabilities approach*, Martha Nussbaum distinguishes between basic, innate/internal, and combined capabilities (2000). For Nussbaum, these three types of capabilities must be guaranteed in order to secure human freedom and well-being (2000, see also Blackmore, 2009). Basic capabilities are those that every person is born with and represent the “innate equipment of individuals that is the necessary basis for developing the more advanced capabilities, and a ground for moral concern” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 84). Examples of innate capabilities include seeing and hearing, and are viewed as being “more or less ready to function” at birth; however, also noted is that innate capabilities are “very rudimentary, and cannot be directly converted into functioning” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 84). Internal capabilities refer to “developed states of the person herself that are, so far as the person herself is concerned, sufficient conditions for the exercise of the requisite functions” (2000, p. 84). Thus, in contrast to basic capabilities, internal capabilities refer to “mature conditions of readiness [to function]” (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 84). However, a person’s ability to use their internal capabilities to achieve desired functionings remains dependent on the external conditions within which they think and act. This is where the concept of combined capabilities emerges in

CA for Nussbaum, defined as “internal capabilities combined with suitable external conditions for the exercise of the function” (Nussbaum, 2000, pp. 84-5).

Proponents of CA view the primary goal of public policies, including those in education, as being the promotion of combined capabilities (Dutt, 2010; Nussbaum, 2000; see also Sen, 1999). Nussbaum suggests that basic and internal capabilities are dependent in different ways on external conditions and it is precisely “external conditions” that Nussbaum (1999) argues are amenable to political and public action (cited in Garrett, 2008). Thus governments and their public policies, according to CA, ought to seek to develop and implement policies that target capability-deprived and disadvantaged groups and individuals (Nussbaum, 2000, 2003; Sen, 1992, 1999).

Whereas human capital theory focuses exclusively on the instrumentalist role education can play, and whereas human rights theory focuses on the intrinsic importance of education as a basic right of all, CA, as a “multi-dimensional and comprehensive” model, accounts for both intrinsic and economic and non-economic instrumentalist roles that education can and does play (Dutt, 2010; Robeyns, 2006, p. 69; see also Unterhalter, 2003, 2007a, b; Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker, 2007; Walker, 2004). At its core, CA emphasizes that knowledge concerning education inputs (resources) and outcomes (utility – preference satisfaction), while necessary, remain an inadequate basis for interpersonal comparisons of well-being.

Sen and Nussbaum each view education as a critical catalyst for improving human well-being; however, Nussbaum has gone so far as to include it on her list of core capabilities fundamental to every society and to every human, whereas Sen has so far not specified any such list of “core” capabilities. The concept of capability equality refers to “a state of affairs in which each person equally has the capability to attain all of the designated important basic types of

functionings, and so is able if she chooses to function at a good enough threshold level with respect to each and every one of the types of functionings deemed basic or essential” (Arneson, 2005, p. 3). Within CA then, basic capability equality is taken to be a core social justice indicator (Arneson, 2005, p. 3).

There is a growing body of education scholarship that explores the contribution CA can make to public policy and particularly with respect to questions of equity and social justice (Lanzi, 2007; Nussbaum, 2000, 2003; Robeyns, 2004, 2006; Saito, 2003; Terzi, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007a, b; Unterhalter, Vaughan & Walker, 2007; Walker, 2004, 2006, 2007; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Furthermore, over the past decade feminist scholarship in the field of comparative education has begun exploring the potential for Nussbaum’s and Sen’s respective work on human capabilities to inform and move forward, gender equity in education policy development (Blackmore, 2009; Dutt, 2010; Nussbaum, 2000; Robeyns, 2003; Unterhalter 2003, 2005, 2007a, b, 2008, 2009). For example, in conceptualizing the relationship between CA and gender equality in education Elaine Unterhalter argues that it,

entails considering the interplay of obligations between individuals, states and civil society in order to secure freedoms to expand a capability set and give all women and men equal conditions to reflect on and achieve dimensions of learning, education and schooling they have reason to value. (Unterhalter, 2007a; Walker, 2007, cited in Unterhalter, 2007b, p. 30)

In an example of how CA has been used in girls’ education research, Dutt (2010) uses CA to assess the impact of the Alternate Learning Systems program in India, specifically with respect to increasing girls’ individual capability. Applying CA to her analysis, Dutt identifies three key components that must be in place for schooling to actually improve girls’ capability sets for a fulfilling life of their choosing: an inclusive economic environment, enabling social

attitudes, and effective governance structures (2010, p. 25). The conclusion reached is that both the state and society must work “proactively” together to put the above supports in place to enable girls’ to use their knowledge and skills to improve their well-being, now and in the future (Dutt, 2010, p. 25).

To conclude this section concerning the potential theoretical underpinnings of education policies I want to briefly summarize the relationship between human capital, human rights, and human capabilities perspectives, as these relate to discourses and practices of girls’ education and gender parity in and gender equity through education. First, as Sen argues, human capital theory and the human capabilities approach “emphasize different elements of what is valued” (1997, 1999, cited in Unterhalter, 2003, p. 8). As the above discussions have elaborated, human capital theory posits a limited range of economic benefits that are expected to accrue to individuals, families, communities, and countries. In contrast, the human capabilities approach “...implies a larger scope of benefits from education, which include enhancing well-being and freedom of individuals and peoples, improving economic production and influencing social change” (Sen, 1999, pp. 293-296, cited in Unterhalter, 2003, p. 8). In short then, the human capability approach bridges the exclusive economic focus of human capital theory with the core principles of human agency and freedom which, according to CA theorists, are viewed as essential components of human development and well-being. In turn then, applied to gender equality in education, CA moves discussions concerning the importance of gender equality in education “considerably beyond its instrumental importance” (Unterhalter 2007a, p. 81).

The relationship between human rights and human capabilities is not as easily delineated as that between the latter and human capital theory. However, while both Nussbaum and Sen have developed somewhat distinct perspectives on CA, both agree that rights and capabilities are

complementary concepts (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 86). However, they are not synonymous concepts, with human capabilities being more helpfully and accurately understood as an “expanded notion of rights” (Unterhalter, 2005, p. 115). Advocates of the human capability approach have argued that rights have often been “utilized rhetorically and rather loosely”, and that formal commitments to rights made by governments and the donor community have not gone far enough in terms of spelling out the specific content of rights or the subsequent obligations of different actors (i.e. governments, donors, civil society, communities, individuals etc.) (Robeyns, 2006, cited in Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 87). The appropriation of human rights principles and discourses in international declarations and policy frameworks has also frequently failed to adequately consider questions of resource (re)distribution (Blackmore, 2009, see also Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2002; Unterhalter & Walker, 2007). The human capability approach represents an opportunity and means for addressing weaknesses in the operationalization of the concept of human rights. That is, the principle of capability equality, central as it is in both Sen’s and Nussbaum’s CA theorizing provides the basis for rights-based claim-making.

Moreover, the human capability approach’s recognition of the importance of cultural difference and contextual specificity in efforts to promote social justice and human well-being and freedom further distinguishes it from the universalism of human rights theory and discourse (Blackmore, 2009; Unterhalter, 2007a). The more culturally relativistic stance of CA theory is an important point to highlight, as the universalism of human rights theory has been a primary target of critics who see human rights as just another “Western” and/or (neo) colonial invention forced on “non-Western” others. Here it is important to acknowledge that in identifying and listing ten core capabilities that are posited as essential to full human development and freedom, that Nussbaum’s CA work retains some of the universalism inherent in human rights theory

(Unterhalter, 2007a). In contrast, Sen emphasizes “the importance of establishing the conditions for capabilities as reasoned actions”, suggesting that,

Gender equality in education is not dictated morally or legally, but is a necessary condition to allow reflection on capabilities, the conversion of resources into capabilities for differently-situated people and to enable the development of further capabilities. (Unterhalter, 2007a, p. 81).

Thus gender equality, both within and beyond formal schooling is important on the basis that it is “part of the processes, the dialogues and the deliberation that underpin rights”. Unterhalter concludes that “What the rights-based approach dictates from assumptions about what is good or laid down in law like texts, the capability approach opens up to reasoned actions that take account of diversity” (2007a, p. 81).

African Feminism: Secular, Faith-Based and Indigenous Perspectives

Postcolonial theory and in particular postcolonial feminist scholarship offers compelling critiques of the “development enterprise” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 295) particularly as it relates to systems of Western neo-imperialism or neo-colonialism in formerly colonized parts of the world. Such theories proliferate in materialist or political economy orientations and “deconstruct development either as a cultural, neocolonial construction or as a capitalist, impoverishing system” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 295). In this section I overview some of the main arguments from this literature relevant to the current discussion.

Postcolonial theories are related to other “post” orientations such as postmodernism and poststructuralism, in that they share in a commitment to challenging “foundational” notions concerning “the Enlightenment ideas that human rationality provides the ultimate source or foundation of knowledge” (Ninnes & Mehta, 2004, p. 2). Thus postfoundational approaches, of which postcolonial theory is a part, “...refers to the set of ideas which challenge these humanistic

enlightenment notions of humanity and the self, and interrogates these terms of authority, inclusions, and exclusions, and in regard to whose interests these notions serve” (Ninnes & Mehta, p. 2). From this angle, Islamist struggles to establish Islamic states based on Islamic principles and law seem to have a natural affinity to postfoundational discourse.

Arturo Escobar (1995) is among those most critical of development as cultural production. The argument departs from the thesis that the “texts and projects” that emerge within and through the development enterprise are in fact based upon and attempt to impose “a particular way of seeing and acting in the world”, and that such a worldview, perceived as guiding “development prescriptions”, is West-centric and is geared to protecting and furthering Western “tradition” against incursions by the “Other” as well as maintaining hegemony in the world capitalist system (Spoelders, 1998, pp. 296-297). Those critical of development discourse as cultural production suggest that Western intervention via material and technical assistance (i.e., the activities of the international development regime) to non-Western “poor” countries is justified through discursive practices in which the “Third World” peoples are represented as “powerless, poor, passive, ignorant, dark, lacking in historical agency and waiting for help” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 296).

Yet, as Spoelders (1998) notes, postcolonial and critical political economy approaches suffer two main weaknesses. One is the essentialized and idealized representation of “local people” and “indigenous alternatives” as “opposed to everything Western or rich” (Spoelder, 1998, p. 297). Critiquing unequal power relations is insufficient in itself because “power relations” are inescapable in human interaction (Foucault, 1990, 1980). Another weakness is that by positing development as exclusively Western, critics fail to “acknowledge the complexity of responses in the developing countries” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 297). In this regard, it is important to

highlight, as Hobson (1965) argued, that “imperialism never benefits a whole nation” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 297), but rather certain classes and groups of people (in particular men as well as elite, upper and business classes) in “Western” and “Third World” countries, disproportionately benefit from imperialist processes and outcomes. For this reason, it can be argued that “certain classes [in the developing world] benefit and propagate the ‘imposed’ world view” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 297).

The critique of development as a Western cultural and neo-colonialist construction is also a focal point in the postcolonial feminist literature. According to postcolonial feminists such as Goetz (1991, see also edited collection by Goetz and Hassim, 2003), and Spoelders (1998), the evolution of theoretical and practical approaches manifest in the shifts in “women in development”, “women and development” and “gender and development” models have done little more than impose “a different, [but] equally Western-centered social model” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 298). Despite the privileging of “women’s empowerment” and “participation” in such models, the main weakness comes from the extrapolation of “Western feminist struggles and views to gender roles in all countries” (Spoelders, 1998, p. 298). It is asserted that it is only by essentializing and pre-fixing a unified category of “oppressed Third World women” that the development enterprise can justify intervention (Mohanty, 1991).

A major critique of the development enterprise and also a very revealing aspect of its secular Western basis is the lack of attention paid to religion or spirituality in the lives of the “beneficiaries” of development projects and programming (Ver Beek, 2000). Instead of acknowledging, including and learning from religious discourse, “religion” is completely ignored, or viewed as a “private” matter, and one that should not concern the development community out of “respect” for religious pluralism. The main exception to this tendency comes

when religion is perceived by “outsiders” (i.e., development actors) as thwarting the broader goals of socioeconomic transformation as per the mainstream (i.e. “Western”) development model. Nowhere is this more evident than in development and international relations discourses concerning gender and Islam.

Thus women in many Muslim postcolonial societies find “representations” of themselves in development discourse, as well as in discourses of “subjugation and cultural authenticity” vis-à-vis Islam (Spoelders, 1998, p. 299). On one hand, the Beijing Platform for Action (a product of “international consensus”) calls for women to “question the so-called self-evident truths couched in various traditional interpretations of religious and legal texts”, implying recognition of and call for women’s “agency” and power to facilitate change. On the other hand Muslim women in postcolonial societies continue to be largely represented as hapless victims of gender oppression and in need of “saving”.

In this study, I assume neither of these positions. First, I do not assume that all Muslim women face any more or any less oppression than non-Muslim women, nor do I believe it is appropriate or possible to lump “Muslim women” into an essentialized category, thus denying the myriad differences in relations and responses to Western cultural influences. Second, based on first-hand experience in two sub-Saharan African countries and knowledge of various examples of gender activism across the continent, it would be impossible for me to approach Gambian women as “victims” and in need of saving (Alidou, 2005; Callaway & Creevey, 1993; Tripp, 2003)! What I do believe is that it is essential to include religion as a “marker of difference”, but also as a source of knowledge, innovation and inspiration for people to co-exist peacefully as equals (Dei, 2006).

The Purpose of Formal Education: A simple typology

As introduced in Chapter One, what education is and what its purposes are has long been the subject of philosophical and theoretical debates in the field of education research. As Unterhalter reminds us, “Education is difficult to theorize, because the word connotes both ideas and aspirations, social relations, institutions and specific forms of understanding and skill” (2003, p. 19). There are significant social, political, and economic questions raised with respect to the achievement of gender equity in and through education within discussions concerning the public versus the private benefits of formal education as well as the role of the state in the provision and governance of education services. In this section I take the lead from Robeyns in using Dreze and Sen’s (2002) simple typology concerning the range of purposes attributed to education, broadly defined (2006). The typology distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental purposes of education, as well as between individual versus collective and economic versus non-economic dimensions of instrumentalist understandings of education’s purpose (Robeyns, 2006). As such, the typology speaks to broader debates between utilitarian and transformative conceptions of the role of education. Moreover, in distinguishing between intrinsic/extrinsic, economic/non-economic, and individual/collective roles of education, the typology enables a more nuanced approach to analyzing the purposes for which education is understood and to which it is directed within formal policy documents as well as in the perceptions of policy actors.

The first category in Dreze and Sen’s (2002) typology concerns the *intrinsic* value, or purpose of education, which broadly refers to learning for the sake of learning: “A person may value knowing something simply for the sake of this knowledge” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 70). Here, education’s value is judged by the learner based on his or her particular interests and not necessarily on their basic needs per se. In contrast to the human capital approach under which

education is valued for its role in enhancing productivity and supporting social reproduction, the intrinsic role of education considers that knowledge does not have to be applied directly to productive or reproductive purposes to be valued. Robeyns provides the example of people who study foreign languages, even though they are unlikely to use them, because they find it intrinsically satisfying (2006, p. 70). The intrinsic value of education also aligns with the notion of education as a fundamental human right in itself, outside of the instrumental purposes of which it may serve. Additionally, in recognizing the intrinsic importance of education in promoting quality of life and emotional wellbeing this conceptualization of the role of education aligns with the principles of agency and freedom in the human capabilities approach. However, the intrinsic purpose of education has been marginalized or left implicit in much of the education for development literature since the 1950's, and particularly with respect to human capital-based arguments for the promotion of girls' and women's education. The second category in Dreze and Sen's (2002) typology concerns the instrumental purposes to which education has been associated with, to varying degrees, under human capital, human rights, and human capabilities policy models. Here, education is viewed as a means to an end(s); however, the authors are careful to highlight that education's instrumental purposes include personal, collective, economic and non-economic dimensions (Robeyns, 2006). The *instrumental personal economic* purpose of education refers to the role of education in helping individuals become more competitive and less vulnerable in the labour market, as well as helping people become smarter consumers. From this perspective, education helps people achieve higher standards of living, and helps people protect themselves and their families from poverty and destitution, thus aligning with human capital understandings of the role of education (Robeyns, 2006, p. 71). The instrumental personal economic purpose of education thus emphasizes liberal notions concerning the role of education

in helping individuals cope with and better succeed in *existing* socio-economic systems, but falls short of linking education to more critical perspectives concerning the goal of social transformation aimed at removing systemic inequalities and the structural factors impeding human freedom and agency.

Also mapping onto human capital understandings of the value of education is the *instrumental collective economic* purpose of education, concerned as it is with education's role in expanding domestic markets and economic restructuring more broadly (i.e. shift from agrarian- to industry- to service-based economies) (Robeyns, 2006). This understanding of education's value has been a cornerstone of the modernization paradigm underpinning international development thinking since the 1950s. In the current context of economic globalization, educated citizens are thought to help make a country more competitive in the global market. The instrumental collective economic purpose of education is premised on the utilitarian objectives of increased productivity and social reproduction to charge the engine of national economic development, and not on critical perspectives concerning education's role as an instrument of egalitarian social change.

Moving to the *non-economic instrumental* purposes with which education has been associated, at the *personal level* education is valued for the role it plays in supporting the expansion of opportunities and personal growth:

...one could think of having access to information by being able to read the newspaper or a medical instruction leaflet, being knowledgeable about issues of health, reproduction and contraception, being able to speak with strangers in their languages, being able to work with a computer and communicate with people worldwide through the internet, and so on. Education can open the minds of people: they can recognize that they do not necessarily need to live similar lives to their parents, but may possibly have other options too. (Robeyns, 2006, p. 71).

This understanding of education's role aligns closely with both Sen's and Nussbaum's framing of education's purpose within the human capabilities approach, and specifically with respect to the principles of freedom and agency/choice. Conceptualizing education's value in non-economic instrumentalist terms aligns also with the notion of the right to education as a gateway right towards the realization of and protection of other fundamental rights and freedoms. I suggest that this dimension of education's purpose is an important component towards initiating, steering, and sustaining processes of egalitarian social change and transformation towards gender justice.

At the *collective level*, non-economic instrumental purposes of education generally align with the goals of what has been referred to in the aid literature as social development. Education from this perspective has been understood to play a major role in the inculcation of the civic values of mutual respect and acceptance of diversity towards the goal of achieving and/or maintaining social cohesion and political stability. Moreover, recent scholarship suggests a resurgence of interest in the potentially socially transformative role to be played by education (Maclure, Sabbah, and Lavan, 2009). These scholars argue that,

In contrast to the utilitarian notion of enabling learners to find a fit within the status quo, the transformative perspective conceives the main purpose of education as addressing the inequalities and injustices embedded in the larger society. (2009, p. 368)

While the non-economic instrumentalist purpose of education at the collective level can be mapped onto human rights and human capabilities models under which social change is part and parcel, it must also be recognized that "transformation" can have different connotations and meanings in different contexts. For example, economic, political and psychosocial explanations for the "Islamic resurgence", found in both Islamic and Western scholarship, generally share the

view that the rise of Islamic revivalist and reformist movements is at least partly in response to the perceived Western imperialist agenda served by secularization processes frequently associated with economic and cultural globalization (Berger, 1969, 1999, 2005; Cruise-O'Brien, 2003; Huntington, 1993; Juergensmeyer, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Sutton and Vertigan, 2005). Some view a rejection of secularism and secularization in the Muslim world as coming from the idea that separating the religious and political realms leaves a moral vacuum in the public sphere that is anathema to Islamic doctrinal dictates that prescribe Islam as a comprehensive way of life and reject any distinction between so-called "private and public" realms. Within such contexts, formal education – both public and private – can be the focus of efforts to "transform" society in accordance with particular religious worldviews. While such transformative goals do not necessarily preclude concern for equality and gender justice, such questions are at the heart of debates between faith-based feminists, and in the context of the current study, Islamic or Muslim feminists, who perceive the possibilities for gender change as existing *within* Islam (Najmabadi, 1998; Tohidi, 1998) and secular feminists who tend to reject the idea that gender equality can be brought about through recourse to Islamic texts and principles (Afkhani, 1995; Moghadam, 1998). Secular feminists generally argue that the only effective path towards gender equality and social change is through secular social institutions and forces, including the secular nation-state (Afkhani, 1995; Moghadam, 1998).

Chapter Summary

Towards building a conceptual and theoretical framework for the study, this chapter has presented a synthesis of three key bodies of literature as these relate to questions of power and politics in the field of gender and education policy: globalization and educational change; gender, education, and development; and education policy. Through this synthesis of the

literature, I have sought to highlight the importance of different forms of knowledge and action underpinning efforts to promote and enhance girls' education. First, I highlighted key questions concerning international policy transfer and the power of national policy actors to define policy objectives and develop policy solutions in accordance with domestic priorities and needs in the context of aid dependence. Second, I drew attention to the shift in mainstream development policy from the Women in Development (WID) approach to Gender and Development (GAD). Using a critical feminist lens, I discussed the implications of this shift for conceptualizing the role and purpose of girls' education as well as the development of policy solutions towards the objective of gender equality in and through education. I identified three main policy models that can underpin calls for and efforts in support of girls' education: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities.

Again, from a critical feminist standpoint in which issues of power are central, I proposed that the human capabilities and human rights approaches offered the most in terms of understanding girls' education as more than just about human capital development. I suggested that human rights and human capabilities approaches view girls' education as an essential part of processes of individual empowerment, including attention to all three components of Kabeer's conceptualization (resources, agency, and outcomes). I also proposed that, in contrast to the universalizing discourse of human rights, the capabilities approach, in recognizing and accounting for cultural differences, may be a more appropriate policy model for organizing national gender and education planning in specific socio-cultural contexts.

As part of detailing the particulars of the research design, in Chapter Four, I describe how I use the concepts of knowledge, actors and policy space in the research analysis. However, before moving to these discussions, in the following chapter I present an overview of the key

features of the Gambian socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic context, paying particular attention to the history and nature of gender relations in the country. In addition, I identify the main features of the national education system and draw attention to key reforms that have been introduced in recent years.

Chapter Three

Gender and National Development in The Gambia: An Historical Overview

In this chapter I provide an overview of the Gambian context, mapping the fields of gender relations, politicized religion and formal education, in order to provide a basis for understanding the study findings and analysis.

Colonial History

Gambian heritage, like that of other African countries, has been shaped by a “triple culture heritage” (Quist, 2001) that has impacted the political, socio-cultural and economic development of the country. The concept of a “triple heritage” refers to the historical impact on African countries and peoples of three main cultural forces: indigenous African, Islamic and what has variously been referred to as the “Euro-Christian” impact and/or the “Western” impact (Mazrui, 1988, p. 503; see also Quist, 2001). The “Western” impact in religious terms has taken the form of the introduction and spread of Christianity in African countries. There has been a range of secular Western impacts in Africa, most notably the introduction and spread of capitalism and the English language (Ferguson, 2006, cited in Mazrui, 1988, p. 504). The relationships among Indigenous African traditions, Islamic and Western forces have been conceived as “sometimes mutually supportive, sometimes mutually antagonistic and sometimes independent parallel lines in a nation’s history” (Mazrui, 1988, p. 504).

The Gambia was the first (1889) and last (1965) British colony in West Africa. The “British Province of the Senegambia” existed from 1763-1783 (Ajayi, 2003). Following the abolition of the nefarious Atlantic slave trade in 1807 – in which it once played a role in and benefited from – Britain built a fort at the mouth of the Gambia River in 1817 (Ajayi, 2003; Gailey, 1964; Southorn, 1952). This fort eventually grew into the former colonial capital,

Bathurst, and in the post-independence period, Banjul. Between 1821 and 1843, The Gambia was under the jurisdiction of Sierra Leone (Ajayi, 2003). In 1889, France and Britain reached agreement concerning the boundaries of their respective colonies (Senegal and The Gambia) in the “scramble for Africa” and thus began a “new” chapter in Gambian history.

Establishing colonial rule in The Gambia was not an easy task and the process was marked by war and socio-political upheaval with a religious dimension. Prior to British colonial contact, The Gambia was a trading and Islamic education center led by Muslim merchants and clerics. Similar to the experiences of other West African colonies, Britain pursued a strategy of indirect rule through which important alliances were made with powerful Muslim elites in order to ensure socio-political stability in the colony (Skinner, 2009, p. 91).

Relations between Britain and the Gambia during the colonial period were heavily inflected with and shaped by forms of politicized religion, with reference to both Christian missionary and Muslim scholars and merchant-traders. A series of conflicts, called *jihads* by the British and later referred to as the “Marabout-Soninki wars”, punctuated the development of colonial relations with Muslim elites and Islamic communities from the 1840s until early in the twentieth century (Skinner, 2009). The Marabout-Soninki wars were essentially about power and religious control: Islamic elites (Marabouts) challenged secular (Soninki) claims to power. In the end, the British claimed to have defeated the “last Muslim fanatic”; however, Soninki power was dealt a fatal blow and in the aftermath of the wars, there was a surge in the prestige accorded to Islam (Skinner, 2009). Islamic settlements continued to flourish and expand in conjunction with the rising power and socio-political influence of Muslim elites under British rule. Thus, as Skinner (2009) notes, throughout colonial history in The Gambia the British had to continually

“address a religious and cultural system that was dominated by Muslim merchants, teachers and scholars” (Skinner, 2009, p. 93).

Post-Colonial Context: Politics and Religion in a Secular State

Historically, The Gambia has been hailed as one of the most stable post-colonial democracies in sub-Saharan Africa (Edie, 2000). Although The Gambia has had an officially secular state since independence, the country context is one in which religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are very important individually and collectively in both the so-called “private” and “public” spheres.

Islam was introduced in The Gambia by Berber Arab traders in the 11th century. Prior to exposure to Islam, people living in the area now known as The Gambia practiced traditional religions - often a blend of animism, ancestor worship and belief in an assortment of gods related to the environment (i.e. god of earth, god of water etc.)¹¹ The conversion to Islam was a gradual process in The Gambia and temporally different across various ethnic groups. Islam is thought to have succeeded in countries south of the Sahara because of the way it was introduced by some of the first Muslim clerics in the region (Mazrui, 1988). Even though traditional African religions may have worshipped a number of gods, all are thought to believe that there was one Supreme God. Early Muslim clerics did not try to displace the gods of traditional African religions; rather, the strategy was to show that Islam and the worship of Allah, was amenable with existing religious practices. Mazrui (1988) emphasizes that more important in explaining the success of Islam in sub-Saharan African countries like The Gambia, is the highly tolerant nature of traditional African religions to religious pluralism in general. Other qualities of traditional

¹¹ <http://www.accessgambia.com/information/history-islam-gambia.html>

African religions that contributed to the adoption and integration of Islam into daily life are that they do not “aspire to universalism and are not inherently competitive” (Mazrui, 1988, p. 502).

While partisan politics in post-independence Gambia have historically been influenced by religious and urban/rural cleavages, the principles of religious tolerance and coexistence have been successfully mobilized to maintain socio-political stability; however, a growing literature on the rise of Islamism in West African countries such as Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, as well as The Gambia suggests that “famously syncretistic, tolerant and assimilationist” varieties of Islam are on the defensive in the region as reformist, or orthodox interpretations expand in influence (Miles, 2004, p. 111). In West Africa, an “anti-Sufi” stance is the “outstanding characteristic of Islamist groups” (Westerlund, 1997, p. 310) in the region including, for example, among followers of the Tabligh Jamaat and Wahabbist groups (Janson, 2005). The government too has found it expedient to align at times with Islamic reformist interests. In the immediate after-math of the 1994 coup d'état, Sufis and other “traditional” religious leaders in The Gambia found themselves under attack and the victims of a very public attempt to intimidate them and reduce their authority in the country (Darboe, 2005). The charge was that religious authorities, including Islamic and Christian religious leaders, had condoned and even sponsored the rampant corruption that was said to have characterized the First Republic, as well as being supporters of former President Juwara's secular approach to governance (Darboe, 2005). The public humiliation and discrediting of religious authorities by President Jammeh was broadcast over national television “at prime time” (Darboe, 2005, p. 77). After alienating key religious leaders in the country in such a high-profile way, Jammeh quickly looked for and found new alliances with Muslim elites in newly returning and former graduates of sponsored Islamic Studies programs in Saudi Arabia (Darboe, 2005).

In present-day Gambia, Islam can be said to be a “public religion” on the basis of the creation of a State House Mosque by an Act of Parliament in 2002, at the behest of President Jammeh (Casanova, 2009). The President also pushed for the creation of the Gambian Supreme Islamic Council in order to help attract aid and other forms of support from Islamic donors (Saine, 2003). However, the “state of the state” is “highly unstable”, with mosque-state relations characterized as mutually exploitative (Miles, 2004, p. 112). The major trend identified in the literature concerns the ad hoc manipulation of Islam in The Gambia by both the state and a relatively small group of Muslim elites as a means of maintaining and expanding socio-political power in Gambian society (Darboe, 2005; Miles, 2004).

President Jammeh appears to understand well the power of Islamic symbolism as political strategy. Upon transitioning from military to civilian government in 1997, Jammeh stopped wearing his military uniform and began wearing long robes customary for Muslim men, along with always being photographed or seen in public with a set prayer beads (*Misbaha* or *Tasbih*) in one hand and an Islamic staff in the other. President Jammeh even went so far as to divorce his first wife who was Gambian in order to marry a Moroccan Muslim woman.

The institutionalization of Islam as a public religion, and the conservative and orthodox tendencies of the public religious discourses and ideas coming from the State House Imam Fatty (a member of the Wahhabi sect and the President’s official “spiritual advisor” (Darboe, 2005, p. 77) during the Friday sermons that are broadcast throughout the country via radio, have shaped and been shaped by the prevailing socio-political landscape in the country. According to Darboe State House Imam Fatty’s significant influence due to his regular TV and radio Friday sermon broadcasts as well as the authority vested in him by the President, has been linked to a change in

school dress codes (2005, p. 77).¹² Mission schools have long enforced a strict uniform policy and when in 2003 girls started appearing wearing veils, school officials responded by sending them home. With the tacit approval of President Jammeh, The Department of State for Education (DOSE), responded by threatening to shut the mission schools down if they would not allow veiled girls in. Surprising his religious-orthodox supporters, in his July 22, 2003 public speech¹³ President Jawara “attacked the Wahhabis and their public behaviour” and reversed the original threat to shut down the schools and instead threatened to “prosecute and imprison” any school-girl wearing a veil to school (Darboe, 2005, p. 77). In response, Imam Fatty charged the President with “blasphemy” and threatened that Jammeh would be declared a “kaffir”, or “non-believer” and “enemy of Islam” if he missed one more Friday prayers”. The impact of Imam Fatty’s response was contained by Jammeh’s order that the Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) not televise the sermon as well as the confiscation of all video and audio tapes of the sermon (Darboe, 2005).

Imam Fatty continues to serve as State House Imam currently and the conservative bent of his sermons both reflects and seeks to further shape the thought and behaviour of his Gambian audiences. However, when judged politically expedient - for instance to curry favour with the US in order to obtain aid during the early years of the “war on terror”, the target of which was “Islamic extremism” - President Jammeh has challenged his Wahhabi supporters as noted above.

¹² Anecdotally, I definitely noticed a huge surge in the number of veiled girls and women I saw in The Gambia in 2007, compared with my experiences in the same areas in 2002. Asked about this, one NGO representative suggested that girls (or rather their parents) were “paid” to wear a veil in school. This same participant criticized the practice of veiling with the statement “you cover your head, you cover your mind, you don’t think for yourself”.

¹³ July 22 is a national holiday in The Gambia, commemorating the 1994 coup that brought the APRC under the leadership of President Jammeh to power.

The Economic Context

The problems of the current “weak and undiversified” national economy have their genesis in the colonial practice of promoting monoculture cash-cropping in groundnuts as well as the larger processes of uneven development which produced major differences in the developmental trajectories of urban and rural areas (Chant, 2007, p. 129). Over the past two decades though, development interventions have specifically looked to diversify the economy through the introduction of market gardens and the production of traditional and non-traditional produce such as cotton, sesame, fresh fruit and vegetables, expansion of the tourism sector and the promotion of private sector development and entrepreneurship (Ajayi, 2003; Chant, 2007; Schroeder, 1999).¹⁴ The re-export trade is among the most profitable in The Gambia, with large markets in neighbouring landlocked countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso (Chant, 2007). In 2003 the value of the re-export trade was seven times greater than that of groundnut production (EIU, 2005a, p. 25, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 130).

The service sector accounts for the largest share of GDP at 54.2 per cent in 2005, representing an increase of around 3 per cent from 2000 (World Development Indicators, 2007). In 2000, the agricultural sector accounted for almost 36 per cent of GDP, but declined to 32.6 per cent by 2005 (World Development Indicators, 2007). The industrial sector represents the smallest share of GDP at 13.1 per cent in 2000 and again in 2005 (World Development Indicators, 2007). Between 2000 and 2005 The Gambia’s exports of goods and services declined as a proportion of GDP from 48.0 per cent to 44.8 per cent; during the same period, imports of goods and services climbed from 56.8 per cent to 65.4 per cent of GDP (World Development Indicators).

¹⁴ The vulnerability of the tourism industry to national and international political and economic events needs to be emphasized (Chant, 2007).

According to the World Development Indicators database The Gambia's Gross National Income (GNI) rose from \$424 million in 2000 to \$487 million in 2006 (World Bank, 2010). Similarly, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from \$420.9 to \$510.7 million in the same six-year period (World Bank, 2010). However, correlating with increases in poverty rates – 40 per cent in urban and 60 per cent in rural areas – GNI per capita was US\$320 in 2000; US\$290 in 2005 and; US\$310 in 2006. Similar to other developing nations after half a century of “development” interventions and aid, the GNI per capita in 1980 (US\$370) was higher than the GNI per capita twenty years later (DOSFEA, 2006).

Table 4.0 provides details on aid flows and external debt indicators:

Table 4.0 Aid Flows and External Debt Indicators

Indicator	2000	2005	2008
Net ODA received per capita (current US\$)	38	40	57
Net ODA and official aid received (constant 2007 US\$)	71,150,000	66,210,000	89,570,000
Net bilateral aid flows from DAC donors, Total (current US\$)	22,150,000	16,670,000	37,710,000
External debt stocks, total (DOD, current US\$) (millions)	483	670	453
Concessional debt (% of total external debt)	87	92	90
Debt forgiveness grants (current US\$)	90,000	830,000	215,330,000
Debt stock rescheduled (current US\$)	0	0	3,410,000
Multilateral debt (% of total external debt)	71	76	63
Total debt service (% of GNI)	5	7	3
Workers' remittances and compensation of employees, paid (current US\$)	...	719,134	3,344,122

Source: World Bank (2010).¹⁵

In terms of overall development, The Gambia was ranked 168th out of 182 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2009). While The Gambia has struggled under the

¹⁵ World Development Indicators. Retrieved on July 22, 2010, from <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=2&id=4>.

weight of debt, in 2000 it qualified for US\$91 million in debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative in 2000, and subsequently reached the completion point for further debt relief in late 2007 (IMF, 2007). In 2007, Norway cancelled The Gambia's debt in its entirety (around US\$9.5 million) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). The major donors or "development partners" in The Gambia are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union, the African Development Bank, and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) as well as United Nations agencies including UNICEF, the UNDP and UNESCO (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). It should be noted that in early 2007, the United States Congress removed The Gambia's eligibility for aid through the Millennium Challenge Account because of "severe setbacks for democracy and human rights" (AFROL News, 2007).¹⁶

Table 5.0 provides basic statistics on population, income and health statistics in The Gambia.

Table 5.0 The Gambia Population and Health Statistics

Indicator	2000	2005	2008
GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$)	330	270	400
Population between 0-14 years of age (%) (2008)			40.3
Sex ratio (men per 100 women) (2008)			100.3
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	54	55	56
Life expectancy at birth, female (years)	55	57	58
Total fertility rate (births per woman) (2004)			4.5
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	118	98	88
Total adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women age 15-19) (2004)			119
Prevalence of HIV, total (% of population ages 15-49)	0.8	0.9	...
Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000)	131	115	106

Source: World Bank (2010). World Development Indicators. Retrieved on July 22, 2010 from <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=2&id=4>.

¹⁶ Both the World Bank and the European Union have expressed concern over the rising allegations (often well-substantiated) of human rights abuses, yet neither has withdrawn support.

In terms of health issues, neonatal complications, tuberculosis, malaria, parasitic infections and HIV/AIDs are the major causes of ill-health and sometimes death amongst the population. Additionally, asthma and diabetes are also relatively common conditions that impact negatively on the health and well-being of people in The Gambia.

Human Rights Abuses and Political Interference and Repression

It is widely agreed that the independence and freedom of print and broadcast media is a critical foundation of any stable democracy and is an essential condition for a vibrant and activist civil society. The media can and should play a key role in the dissemination of national, regional and international news, public education information concerning healthcare (i.e., HIV/AIDs), as well as civil rights and responsibilities, among any number of possible issues (Coulter, 2005). Additionally, a free and independent media can and should be effective in “holding government and other powerful institutions to account” in terms of their responsibilities to citizens (Coulter, 2005, p. 1). Understanding government-media relations in The Gambia is important for what is revealed about the country’s political leadership specifically and more generally, what is revealed about the constrained context for social justice activism.

The Government of the Second Republic (1994-present), under the leadership of President Jammeh, has come under fire from the international community, regional and local activists, for human rights violations against members of the press and ordinary citizens under the alleged pretext of sedition and intent to cause socio-political unrest. A major outcry against “draconian” legislation introduced by the government led to a series of conflicts - legal and more sinister - involving at times allegations of arson, arbitrary arrest and intimidation and even murder (quoted in Boye, 2005, p. 2; also see BBC News [online], May 2, 2002, accessed February 3, 2008). During the summer of 2009, six journalists, including one who worked for

Reuters, were charged and found guilty of various counts of sedition and defamation (The Guardian, Friday August 7, 2009).¹⁷ Each sentenced journalist received two years in prison with hard labour. Ultimately, under constant threat of harassment, imprisonment or worse, the Gambian media can hardly be said to be free, although formally institutionalized as part of the private sector.

The Government of The Gambia during the Second Republic (1997 – present) has consistently portrayed itself as a guardian of Gambian culture, frequently deferring to “tradition” and “cultural practices” even where these come up against national and international women’s advocacy campaigns. In its efforts to “defend culture”, the government has attempted to control media messages concerning the practice of female genital cutting. In 1997, the same year that the country transitioned to a civilian government following the 1994 coup, the Gambia Telecommunications Director of Broadcasting Services announced a new policy on media treatment and coverage of female genital cutting issues:

The broadcast by Radio Gambia (RG) or Gambia Television (GTV) of any programmes which either seemingly oppose female genital mutilation or tend to portray medical hazard about the practice is forbidden, with immediate effect. So also are news items written from the point of view of combating the practice. GTV and RG broadcasts should always be in support of FGM and no other programmes against the practice should be broadcast. All programmes must therefore be previewed to ensure compliance with this directive. (Equality Now, 1997)¹⁸

The independence of the media is a further problem in connection to what Bojang-Sissoho (2004) sees as increasing Islamic fundamentalism in the country. The state-owned Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) broadcasts the Friday sermons of the State House Imam (Imam Fatty) free of charge. The misogynistic bent of many of Imam Fatty’s

¹⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/aug/07/gambia-journalists-jailed>

¹⁸ http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_1301_en.html

sermons has not gone unnoticed, nor has the fact his views on women's rights and roles in society frequently contradict formal government policy (Bojang-Sissoho, 2004, p. 2). The Imam for Kanifing district (peri-urban) has been among the most vocal Islamic scholars in the country to oppose Imam Fatty, and has used some of the independent newspapers as forums to express his opposition to the State House Imam and to offer an alternative interpretation of Islamic teachings, particularly as these relate to women and gender. However, in return for his support of formal government policies concerning the rights of women and their advancement in Gambian society, the Kanifing Imam has been "rewarded" with detention in the custody of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) on several occasions (Bojang-Sissoho, 2004).

I conclude this section with an excerpt from the Reporters Without Borders Annual Report 2007 that succinctly and powerfully critiques the Gambian government's human rights abuses and the production of a "climate of fear" that shapes public life in the country:

Ten journalists arrested, one missing, many others in exile, countless unsolved murders for which supporters of the President are suspected of responsibility or complicity, the memory of a murdered journalist besmirched by the government and a permanent climate of fear: this is the terrible track record of President Yahya Jammeh's as far as press freedom is concerned. (Reporters Without Borders, 2007, accessed February 3, 2008)

Status of Women and Gender Relations

In The Gambia the reproduction of gender norms rooted in socio-cultural, economic and religious processes that generally relegate women to second-class status, appear to co-exist in tension with the official state discourse concerning the critical importance of promoting women's advancement through education. High fertility rates, high levels of female illiteracy relative to men, the common practice of early marriage and women's general lack of decision-making power in private and public spheres serve to maintain women's subordinate position in Gambian

society (Pro-PAG, 2004; TANGO, 2001). In 2005, The Gambia ranked 132 out of 177 countries on the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), with a value of .496 (UNDP/HDI, 2007). The GDI is calculated using four gender-differentiated indicators: life expectancy at birth; adult literacy; combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, and estimated earned income (Chant, 2007, p. 148).

However, it is important to recognize that women in The Gambia, like women everywhere, do not constitute a homogenous group: class, ethnic, religious and geographic differences, among others, shape women's lived experiences and opportunities. In this section I present a composite profile of gender in The Gambia in terms of political representation, law, employment and gender-based violence, drawing particular attention where possible and appropriate, to class, race, religious, and regional differences. Education-specific gender statistics are presented in the following section that deals specifically with the education sector.

Women and the "dual" legal system. Women in The Gambia are subjects of two legal systems. Section 28, articles 1 and 2 of the 1997 Constitution specifically concern women, stating that:

- (1) Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.
- (2) Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. (RTG, 1997, n.p.)

However, the Constitution does not mention women's equality in law (Bessis, 2005). Rather, Section 120 of the Constitution establishes the legislative authority, where applicable, of two parallel legal codes: a) the Civil Code, with its roots in British law and b) the Personal Code or "Family Law", rooted in Islamic Shari'a (Islamic Law) but heavily informed by customary law. Sharia is the most widespread legal code in The Gambia and applies to Muslim Gambians in the areas of marriage, divorce and inheritance, but has been understood more broadly to govern

“gendered power relations and education in the family” as well as the “sharing of assets and division of labour at household level” (Bessis, 2005; RTG, 2008, p. 2). In terms of marriage, four types are formally recognized: Christian, customary, civil and Mohammadian (governed by Sharia). While divorce for Muslims in The Gambia may be as “easy as changing a garment”: the “laws protecting the rights of women in divorce are rarely enforced” (Touray, 2006, p. 79).

Under Sharia law women are treated differently than men: polygamy is allowed, men are favoured in terms of inheritance rights, men can more easily obtain divorce and, as legal witnesses, the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man (Bessis, 2005, p. 8). Under customary law widows become, at the time of their husband’s death, part of his estate (Bessis, 2005). It is then customary in such circumstances for the eldest brother of the deceased to marry his widow. Legal dualism in The Gambia, and specifically the “inequitable **interpretation** of Sharia laws” has “created a bifurcation of citizenship mediated rights and responsibilities” as there is no guarantee that the Constitutional provisions regarding the principle of equality between men and women will or can be upheld in such a system (RTG, 2008, p. 2, bold in original). While a Sharia Appeal Court exists, it is argued that few women know that recourse is available through it (GAMCOTRAP, 2008). Moreover, despite the government’s formal acknowledgement of the problem of bifurcated citizenship as produced through the dual-legal system, the government continues to demonstrate ambivalence toward achieving gender equality and women’s rights in its general refusal to challenge the legitimacy and provisions of Sharia and customary law (Wright, 2004, p. 268; see also Bessis, 2005; Touray, 2006; UNDP, 2008).

Women’s political representation and participation. Since the 1994 coup and the transition to civilian government in 1997, President Jammeh has installed several women in

high-ranking government positions. For example, the Vice President of The Gambia¹⁹, several Secretaries of State and the Speaker of the National Assembly are women. In 2008, women represented 9.4% of National Assembly Members (NAMs) and 27.8% of ministerial positions (UNDP, 2008a, b). However, disparities between women's and men's political representation and leadership remain in the public sector at central, regional and local levels.

Table 6.0 provides details concerning the gender composition of public sector personnel in key positions. It demonstrates that while five women held positions of Secretary of State, only one woman had a position of Permanent Secretary (PS). This is an important point to highlight because, at least in the education sector, the PS wields more practical power than the more symbolically important Secretary of State, especially concerning the day-to-day functioning of the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE).

Table 6.0 Gender Composition of Public Sector (2008)

Positions	Number of Women	Number of Men	Total
Secretaries of State	5	10	15
Secretary General	1	-	1
Permanent Secretaries (PS)	1	16	17
Deputy PS	5	12	17
Ambassadors	5	14	19
Deputy High Commissioners	2	17	19
Public Service Commission Members	1	4	5

Source: UNDP (2008b).

The National Assembly is the legislative branch of the Government of The Gambia (GoTG). There are fifty-three National Assembly Members (NAMs), forty-eight of which are directly elected by their constituencies and five of which are appointed by the President.²⁰

¹⁹ The Gambia was the first country in the West African region to have a woman Vice President.

²⁰ Nominated NAMs do not get to vote.

NAMs serve a five-year term. As Table 7.0 details, men are the overwhelming majority of elected NAMs.

Table 7.0 Gender Composition of the National Assembly (2008)

Positions	Number of Women	Number of Men	Total
Members of the National Assembly (elected)	2	46	48
Members of the National Assembly (nominated)	3	2	5
Speaker of the National Assembly	1	-	1
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly	-	1	1

Source: UNDP (2008b).

Similar to women's representation and participation in central government and the National Assembly, Table 8.0 demonstrates that at the regional and local levels women are again under-represented in leadership positions.

Table 8.0 Gender Composition of Local Government (2008)

Positions	Number of Women	Number of Men	Total
Governors	0	5	5
Deputy Governors	1	4	5
Chairpersons of Councils	0	5	5
Mayors	0	2	2
Chiefs	0	48	48
Ward Councillors (elected)	15	99	114
Alkalolu	4	1869	1873
Total	20	3032	3052

Source: UNDP (2008b)

Women, labour, and employment. Wright (2004) traces the establishment of the gendered division of labour to the colonial period, during which almost all policies aimed at promoting agricultural development focused on groundnut cultivation as a cash-crop. Informed by patriarchal ideologies, British colonial authorities viewed men as the exclusive heads of households and the primary breadwinners, and thus promoted men's engagement in groundnut

cash-cropping for export. Prior to the opening of an export market for peanuts in the nineteenth century, “there were no generalized, absolute gender divisions of labor [in Niimi²¹]... men and women worked in the household unit growing the same crops: millet, sorghum, rice and around the compound in kitchen gardens an assortment of vegetables” (Wright, 2004). Peanut farming became an activity exclusive to men in Gambian society, with women assuming the heavier burden of rice growing – a gendered division of labour that continues to present day. The increased earnings of men from the peanut industry enabled men to gain power within the household at the expense of women by exerting a greater proportion of power over household spending (Wright, 2004).

Currently, the majority of women in The Gambia experience a triple burden of income-generating and unpaid work tasks, a concept that refers to women’s productive, reproductive and community labour responsibilities (Boadu, 2000; Chant, 2007, Dunne & King, 2003). Women, particularly those in rural and remote regions, have borne the brunt of the macroeconomic adjustment reforms that began in the early 1980s and precipitated a decline in social spending. The negative effect of neoliberal economic globalization processes on male employment has increased the pressure on and the opportunities for women’s participation in the formal sector (Chant, 2007). In urban areas, a 2000 study by the Management Development Institute (MDI) revealed that women are a growing presence in the formal sector, although, there were four times as many men as women in top management positions, “even where the former did not possess the appropriate qualifications” (MDI, 2000, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 157). In rural areas many women engage in commercial farming and horticulture alongside subsistence agricultural work (UNDP, 2008a). Overall however, and despite their major contribution to food production,

²¹ Niimi is the historical name of the region now known as the North Bank in The Gambia.

women constitute 70% of the “unskilled” agricultural workforce (GOTG, 2000, p. 138, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 157; see also, UNDP, 2008, p. 17).

Unemployment in The Gambia is equivalent to almost 30 per cent of the one million-strong potential labour force, and the problem of unemployed or under-employed youth graduates is particularly acute (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 118). The unemployment rate for women in the formal sector is higher than that of men. In 2000, women accounted for 4.9 per cent of the “skilled” workforce (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 118). Employment prospects are relatively limited, and tend to be concentrated in the agricultural and service sectors. Supplementary income-generating activities include tailoring, carpentry (men), soap-making and tie and dye (women). Many women, and often teenage girls who have migrated from rural areas are employed as domestic labourers (or “maids” as they are commonly referred to in the country) in the urban and peri-urban areas.²²

The non-formal sector accounts for upwards of 90 per cent of the workforce, with the remaining 10 per cent employed in the small formal sector (RTG, 2000, p. 13, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 132). Between 1998 and 2001, official government statements indicated that women consistently earned less than men “regardless of poverty status and type of occupation” (CSD, 1998; RTG, 2001, cited in Chant, 2007, p. 156). However, according the Department of State for Financial and Economic Affairs (DOSFEA):

There is no empirical evidence in the Gambia to show that a man earns more than a woman in the same position. However, some jobs are gender-specific, and depending on the nature of

²² I frequently heard mention of and complaints concerning the “scarcity of maids” during my research, and these were always made by women whom I would consider among the more affluent and educated members of the urban population. Indeed, during break-out sessions for the workshop on the Women’s Bill which would put into effect formal legislation in accordance with the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the “maid scarcity” problem was brought up by a male government official who asked the women in the group if they would want to enforce the legislation concerning maternity benefits when it came to their treatment of their domestic help.

the job may determine the earning scale. (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 30)

In the end, the “who you know” system prevails, therefore implying that many qualified individuals are passed over for employment or promotion (see Chant & Jones, 2005). I would add that in addition to “who you know”, getting a job also depends on “what they know”, or think they know, in terms of evaluating and recognizing qualifications. I say this because I frequently heard government officials indicating that there were not enough “qualified” women to assume the 30 per cent quota for civil service and other positions, yet just as frequently heard women lament that there was no “central database” that could serve as a repository for information on trained/qualified individuals. Needless to say, the women who suggested such a database or tracking system argued that there were in fact plenty of qualified women (or at least as qualified as the men currently in similar positions) to fill a 30 per cent quota!

Table 9.0 provides details concerning gender inequalities in economic activity in The Gambia.

Table 9.0 Gender Inequalities in Economic and Political Activity

Women Headed Households (%) (2008)	20
Female economic activity rate (age 15 and above) (2005)	59.1
Female economic activity rate as % of male rate (15 years and above)	69.0
Estimated earned income (men) (PPP US\$) (2001)	2581
Estimated earned income (men) (PPP US\$) (2005)	2525
Estimated earned income (women) (PPP US\$) (2001)	1530
Estimated earned income (women) (PPP US\$) (2005)	1327
Ratio of estimated female to male earned income (n.y)	.53

Sources: Jones & Chant, 2009; UNDP, 2008b

Table 10.0 provides further details concerning the gender distribution of employment in The Gambia.

Table 10 Gender Distribution of Employment (2003)

Branch of Employment	% of Male Workforce	% of Female Workforce
Agriculture	56.7	78.3
Fishing	1.4	0.5
Mining	0.4	0.3
Manufacturing	6.3	2.2
Utilities	0.9	0.0
Construction	2.8	0.2
Transport, storage and communications	3.9	0.8
Wholesale and retail commerce	9.6	10.0
Hotels and restaurants	2.1	0.3
Finance and real estate	0.5	0.6
Public administration	2.4	0.6
Social and recreational services	7.9	2.5
Personal services	4.4	3.2
International	0.7	0.4
All	100.0	100.0

Source: Adapted from Chant, 2007, p. 157, data from SPACO (2003: table 14)

Patriarchal control and violence against women. Violence against women in The Gambia is heavily influenced by patriarchal ideology, infused with religious and “customary” beliefs and attitudes towards women’s status relative to men. The dominant masculine form positions men as the protectors and controllers of women and their bodies. The use of physical force to control and “discipline” women is viewed as acceptable in many situations, similar to the widespread acceptance of the corporeal punishment of children in Gambian classrooms, despite such practices being formally outlawed. With the backing of religion and custom, dominant masculine forms uphold the rights of men to control women’s lives from birth to death, from the timing of marriage to choice of partner to how many children to have, and the spacing of births (Touray, 2006). Patriarchal control over women also extends to women’s formal employment where many men attempt to (and often succeed) in determining if and where women work. This has become an issue as the government attempts to ensure more female

teachers in rural regions, as urban-based female teachers need permission from their husbands to take a position and few men would want their wives so far away.

Under customary law there is no legal minimum age for marriage (Touray, 2006). Girls as young as thirteen are forced into early marriage: a trend that has allegedly increased over the past few years although no formal data is available or kept on the issue. In many regions, particularly in remote rural areas up-river, parents are convinced by local authorities (religious and customary) that withdrawing girls from school (or not sending them in the first place) is the “most honourable and dignifying decision” to make (Touray, 2006, p. 79). Identified in policy documents, donor reports, and NGO research, early marriage, because it almost exclusively means the termination of a girls’ formal education, is viewed in The Gambia as a major barrier to women’s empowerment.

While formally considered a privilege with strict conditions and restrictions placed on its practice, polygamy is framed in religious discourses in The Gambia as a “divine right for men with short shrift to the preconditions which are supposed to govern it” (Touray, 2006, p. 80). Specifically, the claiming of the privilege of polygamy is conditional on the ability of a man to “treat co-wives justly”, materially, physically and emotionally (Touray, 2006, p. 80). If a man can meet the strict conditions laid out in the Quran, than he may marry up to four wives. While some women may find polygamous marriages useful for some reasons (i.e. to avoid the stigma of being unmarried and/or the ability to shift domestic work tasks to younger co-wives), for many women such marriages often mean sexual, emotional and economic neglect, particularly in the case of older co-wives and those nearing or who have reached menopause (Touray, 2006). The fear and loathing of some women towards the possibility that their husbands might marry a second wife (or third, or fourth) was palpable during several conversations I had with women

(the majority of whom were “elite women”). Moreover, women’s resistance to and rejection of polygamous unions are often implicated in incidences of violence against women by women and violence against men by women as covered in national newspapers. In 2007, an upper-middle class woman was charged with murder after her husband died from burns sustained by the hot oil that she had poured on him while he slept. The alleged motivation for the crime was that the woman had learned that her husband was planning to take a second wife.

Sexual abuse of girls and women and marital rape are also potent forms of violence against women in Gambian society. Girls and women face the threat of sexual abuse and exploitation at home, work, school and other public places. The “Sugar Daddy Syndrome” refers to the practice of wealthy older men exchanging material benefits for sexual ones with younger girls and women. This is viewed as a rampant problem in urban and rural areas and girls’ perceived vulnerability to such forms of abuse and exploitation was identified as a major reason why parents fear sending their daughters to school. The “ideal woman” is dominantly constructed in The Gambia, as in other places, as one that serves male interests (Touray, 2006, p. 80) – “the wife is considered the property of the husband and is expected to fulfill conjugal rights” (Touray, 2006, p. 81). A 2003 GAMCOTRAP study suggested that Muslim men in The Gambia did not believe that a husband could be guilty of raping his own wife, with religion used to “justify a man’s absolute right to sex with his wife whenever he pleases” (Touray, 2006, p. 81; see also GAMCOTRAP, 2003).

Patriarchal control over women’s bodies manifests in a deeply entrenched rejection of lesbianism, which is a taboo subject, unrecognized by society and socially unacceptable (Touray, 2006). Homosexual relations between men are also unacceptable and the President made international news in 2008 for threatening to behead any homosexuals found in The Gambia

(BBC News, 2008). Touray (2006), states that lesbianism in The Gambia has a historical association with families with powerful women (p. 82); however, more research is needed concerning the extent to which such relationships represent expressions of resistance to patriarchal control.

Depending on one's perspective, the practice of "female circumcision" or "female genital mutilation" may be interpreted as a form of violence against women. An estimated 80% of women in The Gambia have undergone some form of genital cutting at a young age. The national campaign to end the practice of genital cutting is led by the Gambia Association Against Harmful Traditional Practices (GAMCOTRAP), which has marked several achievements in terms of changing the attitudes and behaviours of "circumcisers" in the country. Genital cutting is a practice deeply entrenched with socio-cultural and religious authority amongst various ethnic groups in the country. Indeed, unlike neighbouring Senegal, The Gambia government refuses to pass a law against genital cutting on the grounds that it is "an important symbol of 'culture'" (Touray, 2006, p. 79). To change behaviours and attitudes, GAMCOTRAP and other partners, work with local women, finding the most success in twinning health and reproductive rights arguments with religious backing by Imams working with the movement. I was told by some participants that without the approval of religious authorities, other angles such as the health argument for women's reproductive rights, may not have yielded the same success in altering women's practices.

In recent years, patriarchal-religious attempts to control women and their bodies have made the national news in The Gambia. While in The Gambia in early August of 2002, four men (out of an alleged group of ten) were charged with assaulting four young women as they disembarked from a lorry in town car park in a rural region (Brikama). The so-called "jihadists"

were said to have assaulted the young women because of what the men perceived to be the women's "immoral dress". Depending on which national newspaper one read, the story was that either three women were assaulted causing "actual bodily harm" (according to the Daily Observer) or that four women were assaulted, with one dying from the beatings and three others receiving non-life threatening injuries (according to The Point and The Independent). This incident was publicly denounced through the media by high-level state, civil society and religious authorities.

However, while the powers that be did not condone the use of violence to ensure the compliance of women in dressing "morally", newspaper articles in 2002 and 2007 suggest that the issue of women's dress was indeed a significant one in the context of the dominant religious and moral discourses in public spaces. For example, in September 2002, just one month following the Brikama "jihadist" assault, the Sanyang Youth Islamic Club held an annual conference for which the theme was "Women's Code of Dress and the Responsibilities of Youth in Islam" (The Daily Observer, Thursday September 19, 2002). As reported in the article, at this conference the guest speaker asked "why are our mothers and sisters thinking that it is a pride to walk half-naked", before continuing, "The best way to ward off evil for young women is to be in veils. With this you can be under the guidance of Allah (The Daily Observer, Thursday September 19, 2002). When I returned to The Gambia 2007, I noted a highly visible increase in the number of women wearing Muslim headscarves in the urban areas.

In another example of violence against women linked to particular ideologies, during my stay in The Gambia in 2002 the annual rainy season was slow to start. Whereas the rains normally began in June, they did not come until late August that year. Public tension mounted and newspapers began to run articles concerning the drought conditions and the social

implications of the lack of rainfall. One Letter to the Editor on August 13, 2002 argued that the drought was precipitated by the immoral and “ungodly” acts of “humankind” and identified, in particular, several social problems: the spread of HIV/AIDs; “disloyalty to Allah”; infidelity within marriage; loss of male control over women; “greedy Imams”; and family breakdown. The letter goes on to state “Naked appearances of our sisters in the streets is a common sight” and suggested that boys were adopting “feminine” jewellery and hair-plaiting techniques from girls and suggested that the latter were “putting on skin-tight dresses” and complained that married couples were no longer being faithful to one another. In the final wind-down, the author, one Sheikh Omar, declares “Anger away from us! Amen” (The Daily Observer, Tuesday August 13, 2002). It was because of these things, and notably women’s dress and comportment, that Allah was withholding the rains. This is a critically important point as in looking for human causes for natural patterns; it is women – their bodies and behaviours – that bear the brunt of blame for the punishments meted out by Allah.

Development Interventions Targeting Women: A Brief History

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s a number of donor projects in the Gambian agricultural sector were implemented, that in part intended to assist women in their productive roles, as per the dominant WID approach of the time. Projects focused on irrigated rice development and the development of women’s market gardens are the two main programs implemented in the agricultural sector that are addressed in the research literature (Carney, 2008; Carney & Watts, 1991; Schroeder, 1999). It will be recalled that above I described how the introduction of groundnut cash-cropping in The Gambia during the colonial period had significant impacts in terms of gender relations and the lives of women. Under the new division of labour introduced with the advent of groundnut cash-cropping, women became solely responsible for subsistence

farming, and particularly the cultivation of the primary food staple rice, while men engaged in activities that generated cash income and integrated them more into the formal economy.

The introduction of irrigated rice cultivation, ostensibly for the benefit of women directly and food security indirectly, is argued to have done little to improve the lives the project's intended beneficiaries (Carney, 2008). Carney argues that, "Gambian irrigation projects sowed seeds of discord, leaving a peasantry disillusioned with its hollow promises, rural men and women in conflict, and wetlands environmentally degraded" (2008, p. 129).

Carney and Watts (1991) discuss how projects focused on the mechanization and irrigation of rice cultivation were inextricably bound up with issues of power and authority at the household level, particularly in terms of tensions concerning access to and control over land and other productive resources.

Similarly, in Schroeder's study of women's market garden projects further revealed how state and donor interventions focused on improving the lives of women were usurped in ways by husbands and other male authorities in communities, including political leaders (1999).

Schroeder's study details how women's engagement in market gardening animated intrahousehold struggles over control of productive resources (i.e. land and labour). In both rice and market garden projects, men were shown to find ways of benefiting from the resources directed to women (i.e. using store-houses for their own crops) (Carney, 2008, Carney & Watts, 1991; Schroeder, 1999). Research showed that men felt threatened by the economic activities of women and that many were resentful of the time and energy women spent tending their gardens (Schroeder, 1999). In this respect, Schroeder highlighted how men would talk about women "going to their second husbands" – meaning their gardens. Thus, I conclude that early women-focused interventions seeded discontent amongst the male population and had largely ambiguous

impacts in terms of improving the lives of women. With the advent of the World Bank-led Women in Development (WID) project in 1990, a more multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral approach to improving women's lives through increasing their productive capacities was launched. I discuss this project below, drawing attention particularly to how the Bank promoted the adoption of the "partnership" approach to national policy programming.

Seeding civil society-government partnerships: The dual purpose WID project. The history of civil society involvement in the provision of education in The Gambia is a long one, but in the current period of economic and social policy restructuring, civil society's role is expected to expand from a service-delivery function into a range of other education governance activities. For example, NGOs can and do engage in education governance by participating in policy development and formulation, research and analysis, lobbying and advocacy and monitoring and evaluation. Civil society-government relations have been "cordial" according to some accounts and "hostile", "repressive" and "manipulative" according to others (Miles, 2004; Wiseman, 1999; Yabo, 2003). Because NGOs have historically been co-opted by the state as "development partners" – there has been a lot of pressure on NGOs to be "on side" with the development plans of the government and so it seems that NGOs respond differently, depending on how close or far their perspectives are from those of the government and how much compromise and negotiation will be necessary in order to forge a partnership. In this section I elaborate on the institutionalization of the partnership norm in The Gambia because this history directly relates to national efforts to promote the advancement of Gambian women as well as speaking to the tensions and synergies that have arisen in the process of forging viable government-civil society partnerships in education and other sectors.

Civil society groups in The Gambia include secular and faith-based transnational and national non-governmental organizations (INGOs and NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), civic associations; teachers' unions; and research institutions such as the University of The Gambia. Yet, what is now referred to as "civil society" in The Gambia is not really a new phenomena in the country. Similar to many African countries, indigenous forms of social organization based on strong communitarian principles form the bedrock of citizen participation in the contemporary context. For example, women's "kafos" (age-based cohorts) are an indigenous form of community-based social organization within which women (mainly rural-based) collectively labour, organize special events (i.e. naming ceremonies, circumcision rites etc.) and generally provide a degree of social security to members.

The construction of government-civil society partnerships began with the selection of The Gambia by the World Bank in 1987 as the site of a pilot "Women in Development" project (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007). Through this project, the Bank hoped to promote and support the construction of partnerships and the institutionalization of the partnership norm in The Gambia as well as to promote "women's empowerment" (World Bank, 1990, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 157-158; see also RTG, 1999). As such, the WID project represented one of the first initiatives by the Bank to diffuse its partnership norm that had begun gaining traction within the institution since the early 1980s as part of the "good governance" policy agenda. The Bank believed that not only were NGOs well-positioned to contribute to "good governance" reforms and practice, particularly in terms of holding Government to account for its responsibilities to Gambian citizens, but also the NGO sector was viewed as a key resource for policy reform and innovations based on its extensive experience with development activities at the grassroots.

Ultimately, partnerships were pushed by the Bank as the key to future success in national and global development efforts (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007).

Persuading the Gambian government, led by then President Juwara to accept NGOs as partners in the WID project initially proved rather difficult. A major sticking point centered on the issue of who was to control the resources made available through a WID project fund for NGO activities (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007). The Bank had originally envisioned the fund to be managed by the umbrella association, The Association of NGOs (TANGO), with resources being used by member NGOs to design and implement projects that would help ameliorate the negative impacts of the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) (1984-1994), representing The Gambia's first structural adjustment package.

Yet it was the very conditions produced by externally-imposed fiscal austerity measures and the subsequent legitimacy crisis threatening the Gambian state that led Juwara, acting in his dual capacities as President and Secretary of State for the Department of Women's Affairs to fight to retain control over the WID fund for NGO activities (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007). Politically, it was important for Juwara to retain control of this fund because the largest group of intended WID project beneficiaries was to be rural women engaged in agricultural activities, and it was widely believed that women voters had played a decisive role in the President's recent re-election (Vitagliano, 1987, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 158). Thus, in addition to retaining control over the NGO fund, President Juwara "insisted" that the WID project be based out of the Women's Bureau – the under-funded, "weak and disorganized" secretariat of the National Women's Council – housed next door to the President's office (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 158-59). The Bank ceded to the government's demands despite fears that the project

“might be overwhelmed and swallowed by political considerations” (Place, 1988, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 159).

In contrast to government resistance to certain aspects and implications of the proposed WID partnership, NGOs contacted early on by Bank staff expressed “considerable interest” in collaborating in a three-way partnership with the Bank and the Government (Vitagliano, 1987, p. 3, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 158). NGO interest in working with the Bank and the government on the WID project was high because it represented an institutional opening through which to advance their advocacy and project work in support of women’s advancement. Not only would such a partnership increase the visibility and legitimacy of NGOs at sub-national and national levels, it could also enhance their reputation internationally with important implications for further technical and financial support for NGO-led activities. Perhaps even more important in a context of limited resources – human and financial – NGOs expected to benefit from collaboration with other NGOs and the government as well as gaining access to the WID fund for NGO activities (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007).

Ultimately, the World Bank can be said to have played a decisive role in bringing together NGOs and government through the WID project (van der Heijden, 1988, p. 3, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 158). In the first phase of the project – the design phase – the partnership was very one-sided, with the government refusing to relinquish control over the NGO fund, and NGOs fleeing the project “out of frustration” and those remaining “left with a limited role” (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 158). Yet despite the rocky start of government-civil society partnerships under the WID project, a major institutional change was realized in support of future partnerships in The Gambia. In addition to mandating the formulation of a policy detailing government commitment and planning toward the promotion of the socio-

economic advancement of women (eventually culminating in the National Policy For the Advancement of Gambian Women (RTG, 1999) the Bank also required, as part of its WID project funding, that the government enact a “statement of government policy regarding NGO participation, satisfactory to [the World Bank]” (World Bank, 1990, cited in Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 159). Highlighting the critical role played by the World Bank in using its power to stimulate the adoption of the Gambian government of the principle of “partnership”, Brautigam & Segarra conclude:

The working out of this statement [government policy on NGO participation] required the government to formally accept the principle of NGO partnerships, to adopt formal language to structure participation, and to be accountable to the World Bank for doing so. (2007, p. 159).

Beyond institutionalizing the principle of partnerships in The Gambia, WID project processes “built bridges that were regularly traversed by the government and the NGOs” (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 159). While TANGO did not ever gain control over the NGO fund, the Bank convinced the government to allow TANGO’s executive secretary to formally participate in the Implementation Coordinating Committee. This meant that once a month for several years, the same man met with government and other NGO-based project coordinators. In this role, the executive secretary of TANGO: “became an effective bridge-builder between the government and the NGO community” (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 159; see also Schweisfurth, 2008).

While Bray states that “genuine partnerships involve much more than control of finance”, struggles for control over resources can represent a significant obstacle to the success and strengthening of government-civil society partnerships (2000, p. 51). Such struggles, by highlighting systemic power imbalances between government and non-governmental actors as

well as detracting from efforts to build trust within partnerships, function to undermine truly collaborative and productive policy processes. Thus, another important variable in explaining how, despite such an inauspicious beginning, that partnerships emerged in The Gambia through the WID project, is that of funding. While control over the NGO fund was at the center of government resistance as it was NGO frustration, in the second phase of the project (1990-1994) NGOs did apply for and receive money through the fund. The integration of NGOs as partners with government and the World Bank in the context of the WID project facilitated a form of social learning that helped challenge government ambivalence and mistrust towards the NGO community and facilitated the institutionalization of NGO participation in the WID project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Brautigam and Segarra note “an increase in mutual respect and trust between NGOs and midlevel government officials” (2007, p. 159). The Bank recognized the need to help ensure the sustainability of partnerships in the long term and so coordinated capacity-building training for TANGO and government staff (Fredrikson, 1988).

The WID project was abruptly suspended in the wake of the 1994 coup d'état that brought a military government to power under the leadership of current President Yahya Jammeh, and precipitated the flight of most donors out of the country.²³ While one might have expected government-NGO partnerships to disintegrate in the absence of the greatest proponent of partnerships – The World Bank – this did not happen. Rather, the Gambian government “politically isolated, weak in capacity, and concerned about its legitimacy” continued to forge links with national and sub-national NGOs to assist in the delivery of basic services throughout

²³ For example, USAID, a long-time development partner in The Gambia, closed up its country office following the coup and moved to Senegal. While The Gambia now receives some bilateral support from USAID, it is generally through the US Embassy (i.e., The Ambassador Scholarships for Girls' Education).

the country (Brautigam & Segarra, 2007, p. 159). That such a move was consonant with the material interests of government over normative ones is indubitable, as Brautigam & Segarra note: “This [maintain partnership] it [military government] clearly did out of self-interest rather than because it was the “appropriate” thing to do” (2007, p. 159).

The WID project was formally ended in 1998. Over the years of the project, including those years where it was suspended but government continued to interface with NGOs in the area of service delivery, the positive and productive experiences of government and civil society effectively produced institutional change in support of future partnerships.

Gender and Education in Colonial Gambia

During the long colonial period, education in The Gambia was delivered through a highly centralized and elitist formal education system, with extremely low presence in rural areas where the bulk of the population is concentrated. Christian missionaries played the pioneering role in the development of Western education in The Gambia, albeit a form of schooling heavily weighted in religious indoctrination (Ajayi, 2003). Portuguese missionaries had contact with The Gambia as early as 1456, however it was not until 1821 that the Quakers established a Mission Station and a School in Bakou (coastal community near the present-day capital, Banjul) (Ajayi, 2003). In the latter part of the 19th century, Methodist, Catholic and Anglican missionaries established a presence in The Gambia. Education and particularly literacy, was viewed as the key means through which to convert people to Christianity (Ajayi, 2003; CEF, 2005). The legacy of earlier resistance to such efforts manifests today in rural parents’ preference for sending their children, and especially girls, to local Madrassa (Islamic schools) (CEF, 2005).

Notwithstanding the proselytizing impetus of missionary education, Methodist and Catholic missionaries opened the first secondary schools in The Gambia, as well as some “trade

centers” for training in vocational skills (Ajayi, 2003, p. 61). However despite the existence of some centers for technical training, missionary education tended to focus on literacy and the “three R’s”, according to Ajayi , secondary and vocational training was not promoted by the missionaries who thought “from their evangelical point of view it was superfluous and was likely to make the ‘natives’ materialistic and intellectually arrogant” (2003, p. 62). In part because of the close connections of the Christian missionaries with the British colonial government, throughout the 19th and into the 20th century, before The Gambia gained political independence, the colonial government largely left the provision of education to the missionary groups.

Formal Education in Post-Independence Gambia

The development and expansion of a system of quality education in The Gambia has been a cornerstone of nation-building and national development since the country gained independence from Britain in 1965. Thus, the immediate post-independence period in The Gambia was characterized by the spread of mass education, assumed to be a cornerstone of social transformation, as well as a highly visible symbol of the legitimacy of the post-colonial leadership and its commitment to reducing poverty and improving the overall well-being of the people (Mundy, 1998; Samoff, 2003). Given the country’s small size and lack of natural resources it has long been recognized that The Gambia’s major and “most precious” resource is its people (RTG, 1998, p. 9).

While there was considerable expansion in basic schooling during the 1970’s and 1980’s, government expenditures in the education sector favoured post-primary institutions and students. However, in the wake of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, The Gambia, like many other Southern countries shifted its focus from post-primary to basic schooling as that was where the bulk of aid for education was directed by donors and IFIs, based

on econometric cost-benefit analysis that demonstrated higher rates of return on investment in basic education relative to higher levels. Ten years later, The Gambia government's commitment to achieving basic education for all was re-confirmed in response to the "Dakar Framework for Action" on EFA (UNESCO, 2000), where again the global consensus was that basic schooling was the most effective and efficient approach to poverty reduction and economic growth.

Girls' education has been mentioned as a policy priority since the early 1960's, prior to The Gambia achieving formal independence from Britain and before the large-scale, global push for girls' education as a development investment par excellence (Parpart & Rai, 1995; UNESCO, 1961). Out of eleven priority areas in the 1961-1965 Education Programme, "more attention should be paid to the education of girls" was ranked ninth (UNESCO, 1961, p. 1). However, beyond identifying the need for "more attention" to girls' education in connection to expanding the human resource base, the document does not specify the purpose, scope or form of possible or planned interventions in support of this policy aim.

In the First Ten-Year Education Policy 1976-1986, formal education is explicitly connected with social transformation for the first time, although "man-power" considerations remained the focus. The policy explicitly frames formal schooling as a means of "producing an egalitarian society" (RTG, 1976, p. 3, cited in Davies, 1986, p. 194). Yet, despite this rhetoric, primary to secondary transition targets were reduced during the policy period in order to minimize the risk of producing "unrealistic" expectations among school graduates as to their employment prospects. By reducing the number who transitioned to secondary school, the government attempted to maintain a balance between available human resources and job opportunities. Thus, the Gambia appeared then, as it does now, to follow a form of "selective

manpower elitism”, which persists in taking “precedence [for the moment] over egalitarian considers” (Davies, 1986, p. 195).

The 1976-1986 education policy continued the pre-independence practice of identifying “girls’ education” as a key policy area. According to the policy document, the reasons for this are two-fold. First, it was recognized that girls’ were a disadvantaged group, relative to boys, in terms of their access to educational opportunities. Second, the expansion of mass schooling was viewed as a pre-requisite for nation-building and national development and that The Gambia needed all citizens to contribute to such efforts. Despite this express concern for girls’ education however, the policy favoured secondary and tertiary education where the overwhelming majority of students were male. The dismal material, technical and administrative support given to primary education within this policy undermined its explicit objective of realizing an egalitarian society through formal education, both in terms of class and gender-based cleavages.

The structure and performance of the education system. Up until 2001²⁴, The Gambia operated under a 6-3-3-4 which included the following: six years of Basic education, three years of Junior Secondary, three years of Senior Secondary and four years of tertiary-level schooling. This changed with the restructuring of the education sector according to a 9-3-4 system as prescribed in the Revised Education Policy 1988-2003 (RTG/DOSE, 1998). The restructured system now includes nine years of Basic Education, three years of Secondary Education and four years of tertiary-level schooling. The Basic Education cycle is divided into six years of Lower Basic (LB) (grades 1-6) and three years of Upper Basic (UB) (grades 7-9) schooling. In addition to LB and UB schools, “basic cycle” schools also exist that cater to students in grades 1-9

²⁴ VSO (2007) indicates that the restructuring was officially implemented in 2001; whereas according to Education USA (n.d.), the restructured system was formally launched in 2002, retrieved on September 4, 2009 from, <http://educationusa.state.gov/uploads/1W/hG/1WhG0t5eV-KPVqde9Kp9vg/Gambia.pdf>.

inclusive. Under the new system, students no longer have to pass an exam in grade six to transition to the next cycle; however, in order to transition to the Secondary level, students in grade nine must pass the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). In order to graduate from grade twelve, students must pass the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) administered by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

There are three main types of schools in The Gambia: private, grant-aided and government. Fully private schools, like all other school types must accept central government regulations and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. After operating for a minimum of five years, private schools can apply for government subsidies and become what are known as “grant-aided” or “subsidized” schools; however, there is no automatic guarantee that private schools will receive government support. Most lower and upper basic as well as the newly introduced “basic cycle” schools throughout the country are government-operated. At the senior secondary level, public-private partnerships are well-established. As of 2007 88% of the senior secondary schools in The Gambia were privately operated, with 41% being subsidized and 46% non-subsidized (RTG, 2007).

At the primary and post-primary level there are four forms schools in the country take: Lower Basic, Upper Basic, Basic Cycle Schools and Senior Secondary/High School. There has been an explosion of private schools in urban and peri-urban areas with the majority serving pre-primary and senior secondary students. Table 11.0 provides basic education enrolment and efficiency statistics.

Table 11.0 The Gambia Basic Literacy and Education Statistics

Adult literacy rate (% age 15 and over) (female as % of male) (2006)	70.9
Youth literacy rate (% Age 15-24 years) (2001)	58.6
Youth female literacy rate as % of male rate (2001)	76.0
Primary Gross Enrolment Rate (boys) (2008)	83.9
Primary Gross Enrolment Rate (girls) (2008)	88.6
Secondary Gross Enrolment Rate (boys) (2008)	52.3
Secondary Gross Enrolment Rate (girls) (2008)	49.3
Combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment (gross) (female as & of male) (2006)	101.6
Primary Completion Rate (boys) (2008)	75.6
Primary Completion Rate (girls) (2008)	82.5
Net tertiary enrolment, ratio of females to males (2005)	.23
Children reaching grade five (%) (2000)	

Sources: World Bank (2010) World Development Indicators

It is worth noting that Table 11.0 indicates that girls outnumber boys in combined enrolment for primary, secondary and tertiary levels (101.6). As students move through basic to secondary levels, spaces in schools and opportunities to move on to this next level are fewer for several reasons: there are simply not enough senior secondary schools in the country to meet demand; poverty; parental choice/preferences and for a variety of other reasons, or combination thereof. Government attention to the education issues at the post-basic level (DOSE, 2006a, b; RTG, 2004, 2006). Getting more boys and girls into schools is needed in order for the country to meet its EFA and MDG commitments, particularly at the post-basic levels and for MDG 3 concerning women's empowerment and the achievement of "gender equality" (DOSE, 2006a, b; RTG, 2004, 2006).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to expand on the brief introduction to the Gambian context that was presented in Chapter One. I have discussed key features of the economic, social, political and religious context of the country, seeking to highlight the structural features of Gambian society as these relate to women and gender relations, as well as national development policy and

planning. The situational analysis of women in the Gambia highlighted key structural challenges related to women's empowerment and the achievement of gender equality and equity, particularly with respect to women's participation in the formal economy, their political representation and participation, treatment under the law, access to productive resources (i.e. land ownership), and decision-making power and voice at the level of the household as well as in the broader society. In describing these structural factors my aim has been to identify areas in need of transformation and change in order to support the achievement of human capabilities and women's empowerment.

I have also used this chapter as an opportunity to overview the Gambian education system, including a discussion of its evolution from the colonial period onward to the present day. Highlighted have been the expansion of the formal education system since independence, and the achievement of gender parity at the basic levels.

In the following chapter I identify and explain my conceptual framework for this study and elaborate the particulars of the research design.

Chapter Four

Conceptual Framework and Research Design

This chapter has two main objectives. First, the chapter presents the conceptual framework I developed and used to “unpack” gender and education policy processes in The Gambia. Second, the chapter articulates the research design, including details on the research sites and sample, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and procedures, ethical considerations, the study limitations, and questions of validity.

My Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework the study uses is adapted from the work of a team of researchers studying poverty reduction policy processes in Uganda and Nigeria (Brock, McGee, & Gaventa, 2004). In their study, the research team used the concepts of actors, knowledge, spaces, and context to explore how poverty reduction policy knowledge is produced and controlled, by whom, and with what implications for the lives of the poor in two sub-Saharan African countries. Given the alignment between Brock et al.’s work and what this study wanted to accomplish, I decided to use their conceptual framework, with some modifications. The following sections provide details concerning how this was done.

Actors. It is different actors, with their different interests and perspectives that underpin Levinson & Sutton’s conceptualization of policy as practice (2001). In my study I include as policy actors all individuals and organizations up and down what Brock et al. (2004) call the “vertical slice” (i.e. donors, government, civil society); however, whereas Brock et al.’s study included “the uppermost levels of governance to the lowest”, my study sample was limited to representatives from multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, central and regional government officials, and national non-governmental organizations. Thus, I am using a vertical slice approach, but not to the depth of including community-based actors although, as will be

discussed in greater detail later in the chapter, the work of actors included in this study does reach down to local-level agents and institutions.

In conceptualizing actors I take a relational perspective that draws on Bourdieu's theory of social practice (Bourdieu, 1977). The construct of actor implies action – people or organizations doing "something(s)". As Brock et al. suggest "Actors hold opinions and interests; they are embedded in institutional and political cultures; they exercise agency" (2004, p. 9). In exercising agency, actors can also choose not to do something(s) – what has been referred to as the "second face of power" (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Lukes, 1974, cited in Pinkus, 2009, p. 152). Researchers examining the gaps between policy objectives and policy outcomes have used the concepts of non-decision making and non-implementation to explore how power is wielded by policy actors in the service of maintaining the status quo (Pinkus, 2009). Actors are understood in this thesis to be power-holders, although it is important to recognize that not all actors have the same power: the capacity to influence policy processes is dependent on a number of actor-centered and context-related characteristics (Brock et al., 2004).

The concept of agency is comparable to Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* – "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which function at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 82-83; see also McNamara-Horvat, 2003, p. 6). The dynamic nature of policy processes "inheres in each person's effective actions" (Brock et al., 2004, p. 9). According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is expressed and informs what happens (or not) in what he calls the field, a concept comparable to the sociological notion of structure. I understand that actors both constitute and are constituted by the social fields that they participate in. In this way, my conceptualization of actors moves us away from deterministic sociological

understandings of structure and agency and toward accounting for the dialogical dynamics between social agents and the world around them.

There are three remaining assumptions to clarify in terms of how the agency and power of actors are conceptualized in this study before I move on to issues of knowledge and power in the policy processes. First, actors belong to one or more networks, “which cut across different spaces in the policy process” (Brock et al., 2004, p. 9). Labels such as “NGO”, “donor”, “civil society”, “government”, according to Brock et al., “are themselves shorthand, disguising diverse interests and complex power dynamics” (2004, pp. 9-10). While acknowledging the convenience of labelling groups of actors, such “collectivities cannot in fact exercise agency as one unit and should thus be recognized not as one collective actor, but as many and diverse actors” (Long, 1992, p. 23, cited in Brock et al., 2004, p. 10). This is not to say that the networks actors belong to and constitute are not important - they are - and this brings us to the second assumption I want to raise here: that actors’ agency and power are influenced by the networks to which they belong and move through, particularly with respect to the “constant and mutually-reinforcing dynamics between [these] networks and the narratives and discourses” of gender equality in education they promote and perpetuate (Brock et al., 2004, p. 10). The third assumption I make towards conceptualizing the power and agency of actors concerns the length of time and nature of actors’ engagement with formal policy processes (Brock et al., 2004). Here, the assumption is that the legitimacy of actors and hence their power is affected by “conventional perceptions of the validity and credibility of actors and their contributions (probably set and perpetuated by longer-standing actors)” (Brock et al., 2004, p. 10). For example, in the context of participatory policy processes, a relatively recent phenomenon, power differentials based on perceived legitimacy may exist between “traditional” policy actors (i.e. governments and donors) and “new” policy

actors (NGOs). The fourth assumption I make is that different expectations concerning the behaviour of actors and their contributions influence the agency and power of individuals and the networks to which they belong (Brock et al., 2004).

Knowledge. The literature on knowledge production emphasizes that it comes in many forms and through many sources (Apple, 2000; Bourdieu, 1973; Brock et al., 2004; Collins, 2000; Cornwall, Harrison, & Whitehead, 2007; Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000; Keeley & Scoones, 2000; Unterhalter, 2009). In short, there are many ways of “knowing”. Again, like Brock et al. (2004), this study takes a broad view in defining knowledge, spanning official knowledge constructed from survey-based statistics, through gender discourses and narratives produced and advocated by a range of actors, to popular knowledge based on actors’ own experiences (p. 11). For reasons similar to those of Brock et al. (2004), I prefer the concept of ‘knowledge in the gender equality in education policy process’ rather than the arguably simpler notion of “gender knowledge”, or more specifically “gender equality knowledge”. The argument I make is that “gender equality knowledge” implies knowledge and information about gender equality; however, the complexity and multidimensionality of gender inequality requires more than simply understanding gender equality in terms of access to educational opportunities, by which it has been predominantly judged, thereby suggesting that more than just “gender equality” knowledge is required to push the gender agenda beyond access.

For the purposes of the study I focus on two different forms knowledge can take – what Brock et al. refer to as produced and constructed knowledge (2004, p. 12). As implied by its name, produced knowledge refers to “industrially produced knowledge...by certain actors for certain kinds of users” (Brock et al., 2004, p. 12). As applied in this study, produced knowledge encompasses the statistical and situational data produced through quantitative and qualitative

inquiry into the lives of women and girls in The Gambia. The producers of this knowledge include donors, international financial institutions (especially the World Bank), government, and non-governmental actors and organizations. Like Brock et al., I understand that produced knowledge is not a politically-neutral driver of policy knowledge; rather, it carries “considerable quantities of ideological baggage” (McGee and Brock, 2001, cited in Brock et al., 2004, p. 12).

Firmly embedded within a post-positivist theoretical orientation, the notion of constructed knowledge is premised on the rejection of the possibility of definitively “knowing” reality. An important assumption underpinning the notion of constructed knowledge is that it is “not always evident, visible or explicit” (Brock et al., 2004, p. 12). Post-positivist constructivists emphasize that “reality” is constantly in flux as different actors construct different, yet sometimes overlapping “realities”. In the study, I expected there to be different “realities”, or knowledges in gender equality represented in education policy spaces. As Sylvia Walby (2005) notes, “‘gender equality’ is a ‘signifier’ that actors attempt to fill with their own preferences” thereby raising the issue of power struggles in the production of knowledge of what constitutes gender equality and why this policy goal is important and what precisely it hopes to achieve (Walby, 2005, p. 371). Moreover, for the purposes of this study, constructed knowledge is understood to involve all the same actors as produced knowledge, but results from “very different processes...and to different ends” (Brock et al., 2004, p. 12).

Whereas they are not a focus in Brock et al.’s (2004) study, which emphasizes the role and power of experiential knowledge, gender equality discourses and narratives circulating within the field of development education – that is education for the purposes of development – are a focal point for the study’s analysis. Discourses and narratives are visible forms of knowledge, although their constructed character often remains invisible (Brock et al., 2004, p.

13). In this study I draw on Foucault and others who locate power in the knowledge/power nexus and see discourse as an instrument of social construction (as opposed to brute force) that in turn operates through the paired instrumentalities of *ideological persuasion* and *sentiment evocation* (Lincoln, 1989, p. 9). I use these concepts to examine how the economic-instrumentalist arguments for gender equality in education, based almost exclusively on cost-benefit analyses, are mobilized by various actors in ways that serve to mystify or otherwise obscure and/or depoliticize the promotion of girls' education and undermine its social justice potential.

Ideologies, or ways of seeing and making sense of the world around us, serve as the foundation for the social production of meaning and are an alternative source of power for actors as they engage in knowledge production and other forms of social interaction across spaces. As McLaren makes clear, hegemonic discourses, such as the one in which the phrase "educate a woman, educate a nation" is a characteristic expression, would not be possible without the support of ideology (1989). In this case, the ideology is an instrumentalist one, one that focuses on the extrinsic rather than intrinsic value of girls' education. Without ideology we could not make sense of the social order and our place in it; but the function of ideology is to direct and structure our perceptions in particular ways, and as critical scholars have continually noted, these often reflect the interests of dominant groups (Ball, 1990; Foucault, 1977; Henry & Tator, 2006; McLaren, 1989). In the case of The Gambia, these groups included urban-dwelling men and women, belonging to the middle and upper classes and who occupy leadership positions within government agencies and non-governmental organizations, and who by virtue of these positions are responsible for various tasks within girls' education policy spaces. Ideological hegemony results from the intersection of power and meaning in social worlds – what Lincoln (1989) refers to as ideological persuasion. Within my conceptual framework, taking ideology seriously meant

that I needed to deconstruct the formal statements of policy texts and actors to identify the different ideological underpinnings of particular discourses and narratives (as applicable) and relate these to their broader implications for improving human capabilities and gender equality. A key part of this analytic process was trying to understand who participated in the construction of dominant knowledges and discourses, and in turn how these impacted the framing of policy solutions as well as the policy interpretations of various actors throughout the vertical slice.

I assess the scope for gender and education policies in The Gambia to support some of the key principles of human capability theory through an interactive approach to addressing gender and other forms of educational inequalities (Unterhalter, 2007a, b). Therefore, in asking the question of what knowledge is produced and constructed in and for girls' education, I pay particular attention to how inequalities are defined and what forms policy solutions take through a critical feminist lens and with an emphasis on social justice. Here, I am interested in trying to understand what ideological and context-specific (including actors) influences are at play and how these support, or not, human capabilities principles as discussed in Chapter Two. Specifically, in assessing gender equality in education policy knowledge and the dominant approaches characterizing the national promotion of girls' education, I draw on Unterhalter's typology of interventionist, instrumentalist, and interactive orientations (2007a). As reviewed, these approaches respectively range from fairly limited understandings of girls' education based on cost-benefit analysis and instrumentalist understandings of gender equality, to those that have focused on legislative reform, to finally a new approach that Unterhalter develops that blends the two former approaches to promoting gender equality in education and brings us closer to promoting social justice through the lens of human capabilities (2007a).

Spaces. As the review of the literature has shown, questions of power have taken on renewed saliency in the context of globalization, international policy transfer, and the reconstitution of education governance linked to the institutionalization of participatory policy processes and government-civil society partnerships in national policy spaces. Specifically, the literature reviewed highlighted how the concept of space has been used by a variety of feminist and other critical scholars towards analyzing relations of power within the policy process. Drawing on work concerning the spatial dynamics of policy processes, I use the concept of policy space in this study for both methodological and analytical purposes. Moreover, I conceptualize girls' education policy processes as represented at the levels of talk, action, and implementation and as embracing both physical and conceptual spaces (Foster, 1996; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). I use Tyack and Cuban's notion of policy levels because I believe it allows for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of where precisely in the policy process policy actors and different ideas and discourses have the most impact and why. For, as these authors argue, ideas and discourses at the level of policy talk tend to shift and change in content and emphasis more so than does actual educational practice change in fundamental ways. Political struggles over the meaning and intent of specific girl-focused policy solutions in education policy spaces in The Gambia are understood as representing both opportunity and constraint on actors pushing a social justice agenda within which girls' education is viewed as critical.

The study conceptualizes policy spaces as representing specific sites of social interaction in the production of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action. Drawing on Brock et al.'s claim that the concept of policy space "makes it possible to break down the policy process into observable, influenceable elements" (2004, p. 16), I use the concept to isolate and foreground specific girls' education policy ideas and events for analysis – hence the

methodological utility of “policy space”. In this usage, space becomes a concept similar in function to Bourdieu’s *fields* - sites of social interaction shot through with history, values, knowledge and power. Fields have physical and ideational/discursive dimensions within which relations of power constantly circulate and function to define and redefine the “rules of the game” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Foster, 1996). Each field is viewed as having its own logic, specific to its own system of valuation, thereby structuring the dominant and subordinate positions within it (McNamara Horvat, 2003; Naidoo, 2004).

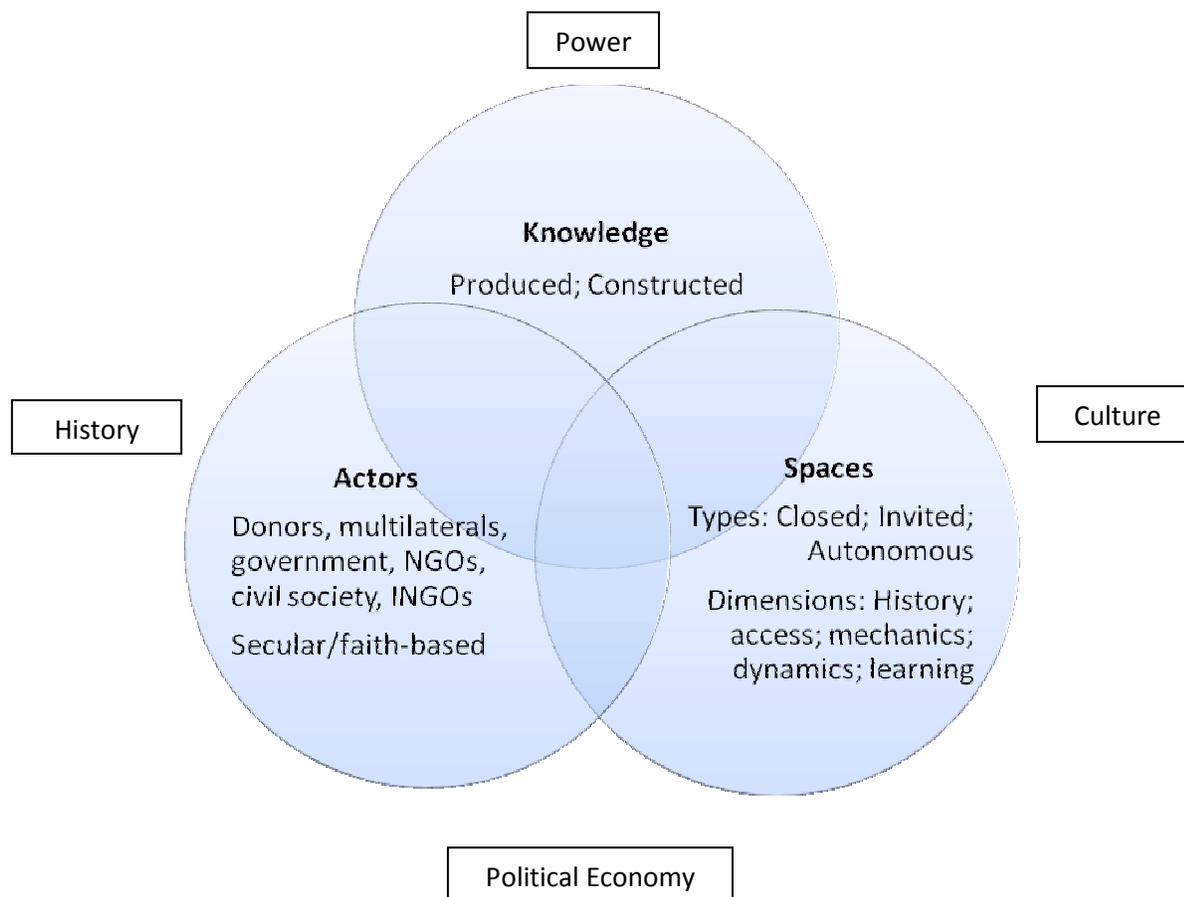
In conceptualizing policy space as opportunity I follow Thomas and Grindle who define policy spaces as “[...] moments in which interventions or events throw up new opportunities, reconfiguring relationships between actors or bringing in new ones, and opening up the possibilities of a shift in direction” (1991, see also 1990, cited in Brock et al., 2004, p. 18). The opening up of policy spaces to civil society participation represents an example of such a moment, as too does the introduction and integration of “gender” into the official development policy and discourse of supranational and national governance institutions. For reasons discussed in the previous chapter, in this study government-NGO partnerships and the shift from “women” to “gender” in mainstream development policy are taken to be representative of moments of possibility for feminist advocacy and change within the gender and education policy field. Used in this way, the concept of space foregrounds questions of power, access and recognition in relation to women’s advocacy within and across the fields of social interaction comprising the policy process (Brock et al., 2004; Foster, 1996; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). Thus, in relation to reconstituted education governance systems, the concept of space is used in the study to explore the scope and nature of the opportunities for women’s and other social justice advocates to influence education policy processes. A key part of this analysis involved

identifying and trying to understand the complex constraints imposed on women's advocates by politics, resources, society/culture, and history (Brock et al., 2004).

Distinguishing between different kinds of space is important, as "the assumptions and meanings that shape each space are clearly decisive" in determining the opportunities for gender equality knowledge, advocacy and action towards policy change (Brock et al., 2004, p. 18). The study analyzes gender equality in education policy knowledge and action in relation to three broad types of space identified in the literature: closed, invited, and autonomous (Brock et al., 2004, p. 18). While the type of space influences the degree of authority experienced by different actors and their ideas, so too, do the different dimensions of space reflect and shape the distribution of power and its effects within the policy process (Brock et al., 2004). Brock et al identify five broad dimensions that together constitute a policy space and define its potential: history, access, mechanics, dynamics, and learning dimensions (2004, p. 20). I use Brock et al.'s classificatory schema of types and dimensions of policy spaces to conceptualize and analyze relations of power in the production of gender equality in education policy knowledge and practice.

Bringing together actors, knowledge, and spaces in context. At the center of the study was the overarching question concerning the opportunities and scope for national gender and education policy processes to support the enhancement of human capabilities for social justice. The above discussion has established three core elements that form the basis of my conceptual framework for critically analyzing gender equality in education policy processes in The Gambia: actors, knowledge, and spaces. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of this conceptual framework.

Figure 3 Conceptual Framework



Source: Brock et al., 2004, p. 23

Given the dynamic and complex interplay between actors, knowledge and spaces in shaping discourse and action within the policy process, these three elements are shown as overlapping and interlocking circles, with the policy process at the intersection (Brock et al., 2004, p. 22). Outside the interlocking circles, and conceptualized as impacting actors, knowledge, and space and therefore the policy process itself are relations of power, culture, history, and politics (Brock et al., 2004).

Research Questions

As introduced in Chapter One, the overarching question this study asked concerned the extent to which gender and education policy orientations and solutions in The Gambia seek and support the empowerment of girls and women. In order to answer this question, I broke it down into four sub-questions:

- How are gender problems in education defined and represented in government and donor policy documents?
- What is the nature and form of the policy solutions devised to promote and support gender equality in education?
- How do different policy actors interpret the purpose of and strategies toward the achievement of gender equality in education?
- What is the relationship between the produced knowledge of policy texts, and the constructed knowledge of policy actors in terms of the purposes and practices of girls' education?

Research Design

This research examines the ideology and politics of transnational gender policy transfer through a case study of knowledge and action in relation to the gender education program in The Gambia. While case studies are generally used to conceptualize and/or encapsulate human social behaviour, Schram further distinguishes between intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies (2006, p. 107). While I agree that the case study of gender equality in education policy in The Gambia is important in its own right (i.e. intrinsic value), I also argue that studying the structure and agency of gender equality in education policy knowledge and practice in The Gambia helps illuminate relations of power and knowledge in global-national gender policy transfer, particularly with respect to translating into national policy spaces the gender-related education targets of the EFA and MDG international frameworks. Overall, the study frames gender equality in education policy as a deeply political process.

As Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry suggest, qualitative approaches best support policy research aimed at unravelling the complexities of the policy process (1997, p. 41). This study uses what I refer to as a multi-sited policy ethnography approach. It is multi-sited in the sense that it explored how gender equality in education policy knowledge is produced, constructed, interpreted, and enacted by governmental, nongovernmental, and donor actors operating at supranational, national and local levels in the policy process. The ethnographic component of the research refers to both a set of methods (in this case interviews, observation and document analysis) and an analytical purpose which is to:

describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do... presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process. (Wolcott, 1999, p. 68, cited in Schram, 2003, p. 95)

The research was conducted in three main phases: desk-based document analysis, field research in The Gambia, and the comparison of official and constructed gender equality policy knowledge. I provide a content analysis of key policy texts in The Gambia relating to women, gender, education, and development. Here, the goals are threefold: i) to identify key policy priorities with respect to girls' education specifically and women's advancement more generally, ii) to examine how gender inequalities in education and society are framed as a public policy problem, and iii) to map the division of labour established in official texts for the implementation of gender and education policy programs. In the second phase, I explore and compare the perspectives, strategies, and experiences of different policy actors (central and regional government officials, representatives from key nongovernmental organizations, and donor officials) concerning the role and nature of gender policy objectives and instruments, as well as their views on the key challenges and opportunities in the promotion of gender equality in

education and social justice through education. A key part of this second phase was the examination of feminist advocacy strategies in the education sector, including how gender inequalities in education are framed and understood, as well as the goals, strategies and impact of girl and women focused advocacy and programming. In the third phase I comparatively analyze the findings from the textual and ethnographic field work phases, looking at how gender equity policy is represented in official education and other related policy texts versus how these texts and the policy directions they prescribe are read, interpreted and enacted by different policy actors.

Phase 1 – Content and frame analysis of gender justice in education and related policy texts. Before field work began, preliminary textual policy reviews of the National Education Policy 2004-2011 (NEP) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2015 (ESSP) were completed (RTG/DOSE, 2004, 2006). These are the two core education policy documents guiding education service delivery in The Gambia. This preliminary review indicated that the NEP and ESSP formally detail the government's explicit mandate and share responsibility for the achievement of gender equity in educational access, retention and outcome (RTG/DOSE, 2004, 2006). A full analysis of these two documents was completed following my return from the field.

In order to gain a better understanding of the history of girls and women-focused policy in The Gambia, and to contextualize the discursive themes and patterns emergent from analyses of the NEP and the (ESSP), I comparatively analyzed the following official policy documents, presented in chronological order:

- 1961-1965 Education Programme (as detailed in UNESCO, 1961)
- First Ten-Year Education Policy 1976-1986 (RTG, 1975)
- National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (RTG, 1999)
- National Education Policy 1988-2003 (RTG/DOSE, 1988)
- Revised National Education Policy 1998-2003 (RTG/DOSE, 1998)
- Education Master Plan 1998-2005 (RTG/DOSE, 1998)
- The Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011 (RTG, 2007)

Unable to obtain official copies of the first two education policies, data from secondary sources was used in the analysis of these documents. However, official copies of the remaining five documents were obtained and analyzed.

As part of aid to education conditionalities, regular evaluations and reports are required by donors, particularly the World Bank as the lead donor to the education sector. Beyond reviewing African Development Bank and World Bank aid to education project documents, national proposals and reports concerning Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals were also analyzed. A full listing of the education sector evaluations and relevant government education policy and program documents reviewed for the study is provided in Appendix A. The documents listed in Appendix A were mined for data relevant to three core analytical categories: a) the treatment and the framing of girls' education and/or gender and education policy objectives; b) knowledge produced in the findings from policy and program evaluations (i.e. Girls' Education Trust Fund); and c) budget expenditures in support of girls' education and/or gender and education policy interventions, in addition to relevant spending in other important departments like Social Welfare and Community Development and agencies like the Women's Bureau.

Given ethnography's concern with holism in relation to experience as well as the idea that policy is a culturally, socially and therefore politically embedded practice (Ball, 1990, 1997, 1998; Sutton & Levinson, 2001), it was imperative that the study adequately account for the

historical and contemporary contexts that shape gender and education policy spaces in The Gambia. Furthermore, a guiding assumption in the study is that issues related to girls' education should not and cannot be separated from the conditions that people's day to day existence. Together, the notion that gender is a bivalent collectivity affected simultaneously by both political-economic structures as well as the cultural valuation structures and the claims regarding the impact on women in the wake of neoliberal structural adjustment programs and economic/political liberalization processes, suggests the need to look beyond education policies in order to better understand the broader socioeconomic and political context of gender equality and education processes in The Gambia. Given the above concerns, key policies and official reports and evaluations were reviewed. A detailed listing of the non-education government policy and program documents included for review is provided in Appendix B. Appendix C lists the donor and civil society documents that were reviewed as part of this research.

Phase 2 – Field research in The Gambia: Interviews, participant observation and document collection. Field work, involving interviews with key informants drawn from governmental, non-governmental and donor agencies and organizations, participant observation, and document collection, was completed in The Gambia from February 2007 to May 2007.

Key informants were defined as those individuals most likely to have in-depth technical and contextual knowledge and experience in relation to the field of girls' education and/or gender and education policy processes in The Gambia as well as potentially the power to enforce this knowledge and experience in relations with others. Three broad groups of actors formed the populations from which the sample was drawn: government officials, civil society (secular and faith-based), and donors. Reviews of policy documents, donor publications, and government and NGO websites helped me develop a short-list of potential participants for the study. Once in the

country, this preliminary short-list was modified and expanded as I met with my institutional host at the University of The Gambia (UTG), Vice Chancellor, Dr. Andreas Steigen who suggested key people I should speak with, and further, as I made initial contact with key players in government and the non-governmental sector. The assistance I received through my affiliation with the UTG played a critical role in my gaining access to some high-level participants because of local customs and the formal protocol to be observed around requesting an audience with government officials.

While most interviews with government officials were arranged through email and phone contact, I met and recruited most of the participants from non-governmental organizations by first simply showing up at their offices and introducing myself. I have some basic skills in Wolof and this is a language that is widely spoken in the urban and suburban areas of The Gambia. Upon entering an office I spoke the familiar “Salam malekum” greeting to the people I met, and in some cases I tried to speak a few more phrases. This seemed to be appreciated by the people I met, with one woman remarking that I spoke better Wolof than she did and she grew up in The Gambia. In most cases I was able to access offices publically, but in the case of the teachers’ union I had to first convince the compound guards to permit me access to the offices before I could introduce myself and the study and request their participation. Towards the end of several interviews with non-governmental organization representatives, participants suggested possible people I should speak with and in some cases provided me with mobile numbers.

At the start of each interview participants were briefed on the background and nature of the study, emphasizing that their involvement was completely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time. Next individuals were given a copy of the letter of invitation and consent form. Participants were then given sufficient time to read through all

documentation and raise any questions and/or concerns that they may have about the research process. There were generally few questions and no concerns raised by the participants in the study. Where concerns were raised, it was always a matter of how the study findings were going to be shared and how they might benefit the education community. In some cases participants politely refused or otherwise avoided signing the consent form; however, in most of these cases individuals were comfortable expressing their consent on the audio-recording. In two cases participants gave verbal consent for the interview and to my note-taking; however, they would not sign the consent form nor would they consent to a recorded consent (or interview). My field notes recorded that in both cases, participants seemed more concerned with saving time than in any way concerned with the interview or informed consent process. The majority of interviews were audio-taped.

Obtaining informed consent during the participant observation activities at workshops and public meetings was different than I had originally planned for. I had planned to follow a careful process characterized by adequate lead-time, opportunity for potential participants to discuss, ask questions and consider their participation in the study, full disclosure of research study purposes, objectives, methods and anticipated outcome as well as the right to withdraw at any time, and without any penalty from the study. In the end, my attendance and participation at events occurred as a result of my being specially invited by an organizer or other key player. While I was given the opportunity to introduce myself and my research at the SIDA-funded GAMCOTRAP workshop with government education officials, I was told that it was not necessary or appropriate to seek the signatures of each of the people in attendance. At the time I was invited by organizers and participants of the UNGEI launch workshop and the validation workshop for The Gambia's National Women's Bill, I was told that these were public meetings

which I was freely welcome to attend. I understood that it was not appropriate to try and seek permission for the other participants at these events; however, I did make a point of introducing myself to as many people as possible and to explain my research and why I was interested in observing in the event proceedings. Such introductions occurred before events formally started, as I always arrived early in order to mingle, during breaks, as well as the events wrapped up. I was able to directly gain informed consent during my participation in small-group/breakout sessions by taking a few minutes at the start to provide the details of the study and ask permission to use my observations (recorded in field journals) in the study's analysis. I was not made aware of any objections to my attendance or participation in events, and indeed it was quite the opposite. I was told that people appreciated my attendance and interest. I also experienced some people asking for my opinion or input on some issues. Overall, people seemed generally keen and open to my participation activities, and candidly shared their perspectives and experiences in helpful ways.

I formally interviewed thirty-five participants from civil society, faith-based non-governmental organizations, teachers' unions, donors and multilaterals and central and regional government offices. Table 12.0 shows the sample breakdown according to organizational affiliation and gender of participants.

Table 12.0 Gender Breakdown by Informant Category

Category	Women	Men	Total
Senior Central Government Representatives (Education & Other)	1	6	7
Senior and Mid-Level Gender Education Unit (DOSBSE) Representatives	2	2	4
Senior and Mid-Level Urban Region Education Authorities	2	1	3
Senior and Mid-Level Rural Region Education Authorities	2	2	4
Faith-Based Education Authorities	0	2	2
Non-governmental organizations (formally secular)	8	4	12
Teachers' Union	1	0	1
Donors/In-Country Multilaterals	0	2	2
Total	16	19	35

The bulk of interviews with central government officials featured participants in mid- to senior-level positions in the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE), including the Gender Education Unit, the Projects Coordination Unit and the Policy Planning and Budget Directorate. Interviews were also completed with officials from other governmental departments including the Women's Bureau, Department of State for Social Welfare, and the Department of State for Community Development. Although not specifically focused on girls' education or gender and education policy, each of these government departments was identified at least once by more than one participant as having some responsibility and/or relationship to education service delivery and hence education policy. The perspectives and insights of officials within these governmental offices were used to triangulate findings from core interviews with DOSBSE staff at central and regional levels.

A wide net was cast in terms of the civil society organizations included in the study. However, beyond interviewing representatives from civil society umbrella organizations and networks (i.e. the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations and the National Education

for All Secretariat), three civil society organizations were approached and consented to more in-depth participation in the study. These organizations were:

1. Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) – Gambia Chapter (FAWE-GAM)
2. Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children
3. Action Aid – The Gambia

Specifically, interviews with multiple representatives from these organizations were completed in addition to the completion of extensive and prolonged participant observation activities, as will be detailed below.

These groups were chosen for a variety of reasons. First, all are active in the formal education sector in The Gambia. As part of its membership in the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), The Gambia has a National Education for All Secretariat as mentioned above. Each of these organizations is a member of the EFA National Secretariat, a key goal of which is to develop and support education partnerships between NGOs and between NGOs and government. As such, these groups are directly engaged in civil society-government partnerships in education, and similarly all are active in formal education policy processes and girls' education initiatives. All of these organizations are active at national, regional and/or local levels in rural and urban areas in The Gambia. More specifically, each organization is active in the Central River Region (CRR) and Western Region (WR) where interviews were completed with regional education officials. While all NGOs in the study formally adopt a rights-based approach in their programming, their different areas of expertise and focus (i.e. girls' and women's empowerment, women's reproductive health and poverty reduction) was expected to influence the ideas, interests and discursive strategies of informants in structuring their accounts of girls' education policy decisions and practices.

I had originally planned to “track” how gender equity in education policy objectives were interpreted and engaged with by three national civil society organizations (NGOs) at the central, regional and local levels of education governance in The Gambia. This particular component of the study’s methodology was to be facilitated through a four-week stay in a rural area where each of the participating NGOs was active in formal education policy processes. My idea was to work with and through the field offices of each NGO. However, during my initial conversations with NGO representatives, I learned that none had field offices per se, and that their sub-national activities were facilitated through travel between their urban headquarters and the local communities they worked with. Thus, my rural-based research ended up involving interviews with education authorities and participant observation at regional education offices in the Central River Region and Western Region. This component was completed in ten days. Questions relating to the activities of NGOs in the rural areas were integrated into the formal interview questions that each non-governmental organization representative responded to.

As part of the government’s commitment to achieving EFA targets, the madrassa system has been incorporated into the formal education system in the country. Therefore, the perspectives and voices of representatives concerning girls’ and/or gender and education policy from the General Secretariat for Islamic and Arabic Education (GSIAE) were included in the study. Specifically, the civil society interview schedule was used and of particular interest was the way(s) in which national gender and education policy goals were interpreted and engaged with by the leadership and senior representatives within the institution.

Phase 3 – Comparative analysis of policy texts and the perceptions and actions of different policy actors. In the third phase of the research I comparatively analyzed the findings from the textual and ethnographic field work phases, looking at how gender equity policy is represented in official education and other related policy texts versus how these texts and the policy directions they prescribe are read, interpreted and enacted by different policy actors.

Research Sites

As detailed above, site visits and interviews with education actors were completed in three administrative divisions in The Gambia: Banjul/Kanifing; Western Division (WD); and Central River Division (CRD). Banjul/Kanifing municipalities constitute one administrative division, and are respectively considered urban and peri-urban areas. Some areas of WB can be considered peri-urban (i.e. Brikama), but most of the communities are rural. CRD is generally considered rural.

The decentralized structure of education governance in the country required a design that would include the perspectives and experiences of both central and regional education authorities in the study. The opening up of formal policy spaces to participatory processes and the development of formal government-civil society partnerships required that I include the perspectives of non-governmental actors and organizations. Given that the donor and multilateral community has historically and continues to play a significant role in the development, implementation and funding of policy programs aimed at promoting gender equality in education, research was also completed in donor offices, with officials most closely tied to relevant gender programs in the education sector.

I distinguished between sites on the basis of geographical and type of policy actor criteria. There are five administrative divisions in The Gambia, which are further sub-divided

into 37 districts. The research included the perspectives of government policy actors in one urban (Banjul/Kanifing), and two rural regions (WD and CRD), as well as the perspectives of representatives from national non-governmental organizations who operate in different districts and communities throughout the country, but who are based in or around Kanifing municipality.

Figure 4: Administrative Divisions of The Gambia



Source: World Atlas, 2010

In the following, I briefly identify the various research sites included in the study.

Department of State for Education. The bulk of interviews, observation and document collection took place in various sites in urban capital of Banjul and suburban Kanifing administrative districts. While Kanifing is not on the map in Figure 4, its major town Serekunda is. Banjul is located along the Atlantic coast at the mouth of The Gambia River in the north western part of the country as shown in Figure 4 as well. While Banjul has experienced a decline in population from 42,326 in 1993 to 34,828 in 2003, Kanifing has been experiencing a steady growth in population in this same time period, from 228,214 in 1993 to 322,410 in 2003 (CSD,

2003). The population of Serekunda dwarfs that of Banjul at over one hundred thousand (CSD, 2003).

All central government offices and most related agencies are located in Banjul, including the Women's Bureau; however, while the central offices of the Department of State for Education (DOSE) are in Banjul, the Basic and Secondary Education Directorate (BSED) as well as the Gender Education Unit (GEU) is located outside the capital, in Kanifing Municipality. The BSED and the GEU are located in the same complex of buildings that house the Region One Education Directorate. It is an approximately twenty minute journey by car between these two government office complexes.

Rural divisions. I had to assure regional education authorities participating in my research that I would not identify their respective divisions. I can say that poverty and lack of access to basic services characterize the key development challenges facing the communities and political leaders in the two rural divisions participating in this study. The vast majority of the populations in the two regions are Muslim. Agriculture and trading are the main economic activities and sources of income for people in these regions. I can also say that I was able to travel to and from one of the regional education directorates over the course of a day. In the case of the other rural division I visited, it took a whole day just to travel to my destination. It is one of the most remote regions of the country. While I had intended to spend a couple of weeks in this particular division, I fell ill after the first few days and needed to travel back to Banjul for medical care.

Non-governmental sites. The non-governmental organizations and actors included in the study all operate at the national level and all were located in the peri-urban areas outlying Banjul. I provide more specific details concerning non-governmental sites when I introduce the three key NGOs that participated in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews. In-depth, semi-structured “conversational” interviews with key informants were conducted with governmental and non-governmental actors participating in gender and education policy spaces in urban and rural sites (Yanow, 2000).

The common goal across all interviews was not to elicit “objective” data, rather it was to generate information useful for reconstructing the “implicit knowledge of action and interpretation” (Littig, 2007, n.p.). George Spindler sums up the challenge of such an endeavour with the statement “how to get people to tell you what they don’t know” (2002, p. 13). Given the research goals in relation to interview activities it was decided that an interview format that encouraged informants to define and structure their own accounts of girls’ education policy and their roles and experiences within the field was required. In using semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, the goal was to further encourage informants to express what they regarded as relevant, instead of relying upon my own sense of relevance (Dexter, 2006/1969, p. 18, cited in Littig, 2007, n.p.; see also Yanow, 2000).

Two similar interview schedules were used in the research – one for “government officials” and one for “non-governmental groups”. The minimal differences between the two interview schedules were not substantive in nature; rather, the differences were in terms of the language used in the development of interview questions (i.e. government officials were asked questions in relation to their positions in government and in policy spaces, whereas civil society actors were asked questions about their positions within their organization as well as in terms of policy spaces). The interview schedules are provided in Appendix D and Appendix E. Interview questions were designed to elicit details concerning how gender equality in education policy, as articulated in The Gambia’s National Education Policy 2004-2015, is understood and engaged

with by various education actors. In the majority of cases, interviews were digitally recorded; however, in a few cases, informants indicated that they did not want our conversation recorded. For all interviews detailed field notes were recorded immediately following each interview.

Participant observation. Participant observation (PO) was an ongoing research activity throughout the fieldwork phase of the study and therefore took place in a variety of settings including: in and around government (central and regional) and civil society offices; at workshops and public meetings. Opportunities to attend workshops and public meetings arose serendipitously as I did not have prior knowledge of any of the events I was invited to attend and ultimately participated in. Over 60 hours in total were spent participating in and observing workshops and public meetings with government representatives (from the education sector as well as other line ministries), NGOs and religious and community leaders.

During my first two weeks in The Gambia, I had the opportunity to attend a three-day workshop which was facilitated by GAMCOTRAP and brought together education sector officials to advocate for the incorporation of human rights education into the curriculum, focusing specifically on the rights of girls, women and children. This workshop contributed to the study by providing me with an opportunity to learn more about the Gambian context as it relates to the status and lived experiences of girls and women. I was also able to take careful field notes regarding how issues were engaged with by different actors (participants and facilitators), the nature of the debates and the proposed solutions. The workshop also represented my first opportunity to meet and connect with different education sector officials, with several individuals later consenting to be interviewed as part of the study.

The second workshop – spread out over two days – was facilitated by the Gender Education Unit (formerly the Girls' Education Unit) of the DOSBSE in collaboration with

FAWEGAM, and brought together education officials, one multilateral agency, one donor representative and a number of other NGO representatives. This workshop was intended to launch a national United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) network in the country, after years of delay. The focus of the workshop was establishing the "Terms of Reference" for the new network. I again took careful and detailed field notes concerning the actors involved, the nature of the debates, tensions/conflict that arose, and the solutions proposed.

The third participant observation activity that I engaged with occurred towards the end of my field work and was a one-day "validation workshop" for the government's proposed "Women's Bill". After years of "collecting dust"²⁵ the draft Bill, which would bring into force legislation in line with the government's commitments under three major international agreements (CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa), was debated, altered and eventually passed on to the next stage where it would be debated by the National Assembly. This workshop provided me with an excellent opportunity to not only develop field notes concerning debates, actors and solutions, but also to triangulate data from document analysis and interview phases, as well as to compare what I saw and heard at this workshop with what had happened at the two other workshops which mainly included education sector officials and actors.

Documentation. In addition to collecting data through interviews and participant observation activities, documents were solicited and analyzed from a variety of relevant civil society organizations and donor offices and representatives. Documents were obtained from staff offices in the field and from the Internet. Appendix C provides a detailed listing of the key civil society and donor documents reviewed. In addition to these core civil society and donor

²⁵ This statement was expressed by a Senior Regional Education Official participating in the study.

documents, literature and reports obtained from various organizations and individuals participating in the study were also included in the document analysis phase of the study.

Media analysis can provide important background information on a policy issue as well as helping to identify policy-relevant actors (Yanow, 2000, p. 37). Moreover, it is also assumed that national newspapers play an important, although sometimes contested function in relation to national identity (Brookes, 1999). Newspapers and other forms of national media, including radio, television and billboard advertising may function to reproduce and represent particular ideas about national identity. Two theoretical claims are important to highlight in connection to the relationship between national media and national identity. First, in political regimes with authoritarian tendencies like The Gambia it is not uncommon for government to attempt to control media houses in such a way as to limit or censor completely any form of political dissent in the form of opinions and behaviour that are deemed “subversive” to “official” representations of national identity. A more optimistic theoretical perspective is that national media can serve an important role in terms of promoting democratic ideals related to freedom of expression and participation in public life. In this latter perspective, the function of national media is the provision of participatory spaces for the inclusion of different voices and perspectives concerning national affairs and identity in such a way that it becomes generative of national identity discourses and representations.

In light of the above considerations, local newspaper articles and opinion pieces published in the three leading national newspapers - “The Daily Observer”, “The Point”, and “Foroyya” - were analyzed for information related to religion, national development, education, and gender issues. The Daily Observer and The Point are daily newspapers and have both print and online versions, whereas the Foroyya (or “Freedom”) newspaper is published weekly and is

available in print format only. Different newspapers are understood to reflect particular political biases. In this respect The Daily Observer is widely perceived as “pro-Government” and/or as the “voice of Government”, whereas The Point was perceived as having greater autonomy vis-à-vis the Government and in terms of representing a greater degree of plurality and diversity of opinion and perspectives on issues of national and local significance²⁶. Every available edition of each of these newspapers was purchased throughout the duration of the field work. Where appropriate, relevant archived articles as well as articles viewed online upon return to Canada were collected and analyzed.

Data Analysis

A common challenge in ethnographic research and one shared in this study concerns managing and making sense of the large amounts of data generated – both in terms of interviews, document analysis and observation, but also in terms of the extensive field notes and other process notes generated during field-work and analyses phases.

Upon returning from the field, digitally recorded interviews were transcribed in full – generating just over three hundred pages of interview data. Each transcript was read in full at this point, with preliminary notes made on hard copies as well being merged with electronically recorded field notes. Electronic transcript files were uploaded to the qualitative analysis software program N*6. Data reduction began as the initial coding of the interview transcripts via N*6 proceeded, with each interview again carefully read. Coded units of transcribed text were then printed off, read again, and organized into thematic groups. Further data reduction proceeded as preliminary thematic groups were re-organized, revised, conflated and synthesized.

²⁶ This claim is based on formal and informal conversations while in the field.

The process of identifying, compiling, organizing and then analyzing the knowledge (data) acquired were necessarily iterative in nature. As interview transcripts, documents, and written field observations were read multiple times, process notes were used to record and track my “provisional” insights and understandings of the themes and categories generated through the interpretive analysis process (Yanow, 2000, p. 86). Yanow indicates that “as with all science, interpretive analysis requires a sense of provisional certainty and an attitude of confirmed doubt” (2000, p. 86).

Drawing on Ball I approached the analysis understanding that data in the form of “voices” from the policy actors I spoke with needed to be understood as polyvocal (1994) (cited in Halpin & Troyna, 1994, p. 109). Interview data or policy actor voices can be analyzed and interpreted in several ways in order to get at three different policy dimensions: the “how” of policy; the “why” of policy; and the “because” of policy. The “how” of policy is revealed through actor voices which provide “real stories”, or accounts of what happened, who said what and whose voices were important. Emphasized from this angle are actor descriptions of what happened and their accounts of “moments and debates ‘inside’ policy” (Halpin & Troyna, 1994, p. 109). The “why” of policy is revealed through the discourses of policy actors – how they spoke about and conceptualized policy. Emphasized from this angle are the attitudes, evaluation, arguments and interpretation of policy actors as they discussed issues of girls’ or gender and education policy. Looking for discursive patterns across interviews helped me identify what forms of knowledge were in circulation concerning girls and/or gender and education issues. Specifically, I was interested in understanding what knowledges were used to explain and justify specific policy solutions, and which solutions these knowledges seemed to occlude. The “because” of policy is connected to the organization and ranking of interests, including those of

the State, civil society and private capital in policy spaces: “This is data as indicative of structural and relational constraints and influences which play in and upon policymaking” (Halpin & Troyna, 1994, p. 109).

The analytic process therefore was one involving constant comparison between the “authored” texts of government, civil society and donors and the texts “constructed” through the different “readings” or interpretations of different communities of meaning active in the gender and education policy spaces in The Gambia (Berg, 2001). The ultimate goal of the analytic process was to organize and reduce the data through the development of thematic categories that would in turn enable the uncovering of “patterns of human activity, action and meaning” (Berg, 2001, p. 239). This involved both manifest and latent content analysis processes. Manifest content refers to “those elements that are physically present and countable; whereas, latent content is understood as the “symbolism underlying the physical data” (Berg, 2001, p. 242).

Drawing on discursive institutionalist conceptualization of the central role of ideas in explaining policy processes and the interpretivist quest for understanding why and how some ideas and discourses come to be imbued with particular “meanings”, the “counting” dimension of the analysis centered primarily on themes and “conceptual clusters” or “ideas” either manifest or symbolically represented in the language of policies and policy-relevant documents as well as the language and actions of policy agents – governmental and non-governmental (Berg, 2001, p. 247). Of fundamental concern in this process was the use of conceptual categories that came from participants, rather than my own.

Credibility and Limitations of Study

Among the many challenges posed by qualitative research the time consuming nature of it, difficulties in reducing data, and reliability are among the most commonly confronted by

researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Qualitative research seeks to maintain scientific credibility through the application of “rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry that is data-based” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 38). Reliability has often been understood in non-qualitative research approaches to connote sameness and consistency in terms of research results over time (by the same or different researchers) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 35). However, qualitative researchers tend not to share this expectation (Agar, 1986, pp 13-16, cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 36); preferring to assess the credibility of their research findings on the basis of “accuracy and comprehensiveness” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 36; see also Berg, 2001). That is, qualitative researchers,

tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 36)

There are several ways that ethnographic interpretive researchers can enhance the credibility or trustworthiness of their findings: prolonged engagement, persistent observation and the keeping of detailed records of observations, and triangulation. Since 2002, I have spent over six months living in different parts of The Gambia. In 2007, I spent over three months in The Gambia, and during this time I attempted to build relationships of trust with the study participants. It was the rare day in the field that I did not spend at least one hour visiting and observing the offices of each of the three main civil society organizations of interest in the study. Government spaces were more difficult to access on a regular basis because without security clearance, one could not just “pop in” like I was able to with the participating NGOs. In order to mitigate this constraint, I used the often ample waiting time before scheduled interviews with

government officials to observe the physical settings, the people inhabiting them and their interactions.

Triangulation as applied in this study is short-hand for the ways in which I moved back and forth between and across the multiple sources and forms of data during the final analysis phase in order to assess the accuracy of the “interpretations of interpretations”.

A final limitation to be noted here concerns the lapse in time between field research and the completion of the study write-up. Given the dynamism of the policy process means that in the few years it has taken to complete this thesis, actors, knowledge, and policy spaces have changed; however, how significant these changes are in relation to the study’s findings remains an empirical question.

Ethical Considerations

Feminist methodologies and scholarship on ethnographic interpretive research highlight the importance of researcher reflectivity particularly with respect to researcher attitude (i.e. philosophical and epistemological standpoint) and researcher “voice” in ethnographic accounts (Berg, 2001). The attitude of the researcher, if “wrong” “might well destroy the possibility of ever learning about the observed participants and their perceptions” (Berg, 2001, p. 139). It is argued that ethnographic interpretive researchers must enter the field “appreciating the situations rather than intending to correct them” (Matza, 1969, cited in Berg, 2001, p. 139). The orientation I bring to the research emphasizes responsibility, and particularly with respect to making “silenced stories and silenced communities speak” (Yanow, 2000, p. 92), even when they appear to run counter to my own ideational background concerning gender issues in education and beyond.

Thus, it is important to clarify that the study is not about judging the interpretations of different policy actors or interpretive communities per se, or to use the interpretations to add legitimacy to “deficit” accounts of policy spaces in “Third World” countries - it is about learning “how things are” from multiple perspectives that infuse and overlap one another in a dynamic and relational process of meaning-making and action, coming from my active observation and engagement with the language and actions of study participants. In many cases participants’ responses veered from my own social and cultural understandings of the relationship between women’s education and social change, based on my experiences in the Canadian context. In particular, I needed to be very mindful of my responses and interpretations of participants’ discussions of gender roles under Islam. This challenge was mediated by the diversity of interpretations of Islamic dictates regarding gender roles in evidence across different communities of meaning identified in the study. Nonetheless, it was necessary that I remain flexible, open and intellectually interested in learning from participants, even when their words and actions seemed at times, so different from my own. It is important to clarify that by engagement I do not mean pursuing a conversation or dialogue outside the normal conversation that occurs during interviews. I mean engagement in the sense of cognitive flexibility and the ability to remain tuned into what a person is saying and how they are saying it, to make sense of alternative perspectives that this research attempts to give voice to.

In terms of researcher voice, there has been a longstanding tension within ethnography and between, for example, ethnography and feminist research in terms of the treatment of “voice” and the position of analyst in the research account. Scheurich takes exception to calls for “depoliticized” ethnography or ethnographic accounts in which the researcher attempts to become “invisible” (Scheurich, 2002, p. 49). Ethnographic methodologists such as Henry F.

Wolcott (2002) are taken to task by their critics for refusing to take seriously the “politics of epistemology and methodology” (Scheurich, 2002, p. 50). At the heart of such criticisms is a concern that the invisibility of hegemonic ideologies and their impact in terms of making some things visible and others not is not adequately accounted for in terms of how ethnographic data are interpreted by researchers who are “outsiders” to the cultural context under investigation.

As introduced at the beginning of the chapter, I believe that there is no one universal position from which to decide “truth” and “reality”. Meanings and actions are constructed within and from particular conjunctures and in ways that reflect the nature of the experiences and feelings of those moments. My own perceptions of gender equality discourse and practice in The Gambian context is influenced by my own experiences, feelings and “ways of knowing” as a middle-class, Canadian woman.

One of the most difficult questions that I been confronted with concerns my position on the normative and instrumental dimensions of gender equality/equity in education as a normative and instrumental policy goal. I first considered the statement that ‘there is an objective theory (universality) that states that gender equality looks like [or should] “this”, universally, across all settings, contexts and cultures’. But I could not accept that “gender equality” would, or even should look or be perceived the same everywhere. I do believe in and support gender equality and believe that structural inequality between men and women needs to cease. I also believe that all girls should be in school and have access to quality and relevant educational opportunities to the highest levels, as desired by individuals.

I also recognize the concomitant need to address the structural inequalities that exist both between and within nations in terms of class, gender, race etc. I draw inspiration from Nancy Fraser (1994, 1995, 1997; 2008; see also Fraser and Honneth, 2003) and the scholars who have

drawn on her work concerning the redistribution and recognition dimensions of social justice, in national and transnational contexts (David, 2005; Magno, 2008; Stromquist, 2008; Unterhalter, 2007a). Securing funding for interpretive policy research is challenging because its products are not as highly valued in a global policy context in which econometric cost-benefit analysis seems to reign supreme. It is perhaps even harder for a small, aid-dependent country like The Gambia to propose and implement such research, for financial reasons as well as and perhaps more importantly, the aid community, by and large, does not seem particularly interested in the nuances of policy interpretations as a means for explaining disconnects between policy and practice.

The Study Sample

Governmental participants. The overwhelming majority of participants were of similar middle-to-upper class background and lived in urban or peri-urban neighbourhoods. Interviews were generally held in the offices of participants, or in some cases, in communally-shared spaces (i.e. “board rooms”, libraries). There was a noticeable contrast in the outward appearance of participants and those they worked with and the majority of women and men I would see on a daily basis, in the markets, on the street, in local *gelee-gelees* (12 to 14- seats vans used for local transport) and other public places. Most of the individuals I formally spoke with had participated in post-secondary education either in The Gambia at one of the tertiary institutions (i.e. University of The Gambia, Gambia College, Gambia Technical Training Institute, or the Management Development Institute) or overseas in Europe or the United States, earning graduate, post-graduate and/or advanced diploma credentials. A few participants had completed their post-secondary education in North African and Middle Eastern countries, where various institutions offered scholarships and generous subsidies for Gambian students to pursue Islamic

and Arabic Studies. Upon returning to The Gambia with their newly earned advanced educational qualifications, many participants had taken up posts in government or non-governmental/civil society organizations. In other cases, those participants without overseas education credentials frequently had worked their way up through the education system to positions of relative authority in government or non-governmental postings. For instance, several participants began their careers as teachers but were promoted to administrative/management positions in regional and/or central education offices. Many of the participants I spoke with had government and non-governmental work experience.

Non-Governmental Participants

The Forum for African Women Educationists-The Gambia (FAWEGAM). The Gambia National Chapter of the Forum for African Women’s Educationists (FAWEGAM) has been active in the education sector in The Gambia since 1997 and is registered as a national NGO. The Gambia Chapter represents a country focal point for its larger international parent organization, which has its headquarters in Kenya. FAWE was established by five African women Ministers of Education in 1992 following a meeting of Ministers of Education in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 (FAWEGAM, 2002, p. 3). Country chapters of FAWE such as the one in The Gambia maintain this legacy through its broad-based membership and the participation of senior Gambian women policymakers, particularly with respect to the organization’s Board of Directors. For example, the last three FAWEGAM Board Chairpersons have been Secretaries of State for Education in The Gambia, “who by virtue of their leadership positions felt it was necessary to have this organization and influence policy” (Mariama, NGO Representative). The overarching goal of FAWEGAM and its parent organization “is to promote gender equity and equality in education

in Africa by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes towards girls' education (FAWE, 2008, p. 12).

FAWEGAM's second-floor office consists of five rooms, including the bathroom, and is located in Bakau, a semi-urban community sprawling inland from the Atlantic coast south of the capital Banjul. This is the organization's second home after moving from its original location in Banjul. Five paid staff worked regularly during the study, and three participated in formal interviews. I also had multiple opportunities to informally speak with the other two FAWEGAM staff as well as with volunteers. I frequently spent afternoons at the office reading through literature, reports and training manuals, among other documents, as well as observing and interacting with people as they came and went from the office. Keeping with a major theme in this study concerning "small state" factors, the education and NGO community, while quite vibrant, remains small in terms of both people and resources. For this reason and the fact that the organization was a key actor on the national scene in terms of girls' education, I met up with FAWEGAM staff and volunteers frequently at meetings and even in the offices of other participants. Attending the launch of the draft National Women's Bill (2007) offered me a further opportunity to connect with FAWEGAM staff and volunteers.

The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women & Children (GAMCOTRAP). The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children was established in 1984 and was originally called The Gambia Committee Against Harmful Traditional Practices. The name change came about subsequent to the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of The Gambia and reflects the organization's response to national and local-level resistance to the idea that traditional practices were "harmful". Notwithstanding the name change however, ending the

practice of Female Circumcision/Female Genital Mutilation and protecting the political, social, educational and sexual reproduction and health rights of women and girls remains the organization's core mandate. The key difference brought about by the name change is that the organization now makes explicit, their acknowledgement and recognition of the positive aspects of some traditional practices (i.e. breast-feeding). In effect, the removal of the word "harmful" has contributed to GAMCOTRAP's success in enhancing its legitimacy at the national and local-level and consequently the effectiveness of its activities.

The spacious offices of GAMCOTRAP are located on the second-floor of a building on the same road as FAWEGAM in the peri-urban coastal area of Bakau. Similar to FAWEGAM, a very large table, big enough for probably 25 people to sit at, took up most of the space in the first room. On the walls hung many photographs, news clippings, advocacy posters and other assorted items related the organization and its activities. There were three other offices and another larger room that housed the GAMCOTRAP library. There were fewer than ten paid staff working at GAMCOTRAP and many more unpaid volunteers, particularly at the local-level where community-based facilitators collaborated with and supported the organization's activities.

Once widely perceived to be a "radical" organization pushing a "foreign agenda" (Halimatou, NGO Representative), the organization has nonetheless succeeded in forging "strategic partnerships" with several multilateral agencies (i.e., UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNICEF), international non-governmental organizations (i.e., Action Aid, Save the Children) and government departments, specifically the Department of State for Health and Social Welfare, the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education and the Women's Bureau.

Participants highlighted the active role the organization played in the signing and ratification of major international conventions concerning the rights of women in girls, including

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the African Protocol on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol). The organization has also been at the forefront of advocacy work aimed at speeding up the passing, by the National Assembly, of the 2007 Women's Bill which would put into effect a legal framework for the enforcement of the binding commitments entailed in the above international conventions. Indeed, the National Assembly is one of GAMCOTRAP's "target groups" for their advocacy and sensitization work (Halimatou, NGO Representative) because of the power that "NAMs" (National Assembly Members) in terms of policy and legislation.

GAMCOTRAP's mission statement, objectives and activities are firmly embedded in a rights-based conception of social transformation towards the advancement of women. Regarding the organization's involvement in policy processes aimed at promoting and enhancing girls' education, GAMCOTRAP's objective is to integrate rights education into the formal curriculum of public schools. This objective is premised on the assumption that one cannot demand rights of which one is unaware. Based on the success of innovative pilot activities that saw rights education delivered in multiple remote rural communities to significant effect, the organization has been lobbying the government to support the scaling-up of the model and its integration into the formal public school system.

Action Aid The Gambia. Action Aid International - The Gambia (AATG) was established in 1979, the earliest of all the other civil society groups participating in this study. According to participants, formal education has been the focus of the organization's work since its inception. Although AATG has branched out its activities to other sectors in more recent times, the education sector remains a key focal point in the organization's mandate. Early

interventions into the education system were limited to “directly supporting schools” in the Lower and Central River regions (rural), including the provision of “the teachers, the books, everything!” (Sunkangba, NGO Representative). However, this changed beginning in the 1980s when Action Aid International formally adopted a rights-based approach to its activities and service delivery approaches were “downsized” (Sunkangba, NGO Representative). Action Aid in The Gambia tends to work through community-based partners to implement the organization’s programming. Action Aid has been involved in building budget-monitoring capacity at the community and school-level, as well as assisting in the development of teacher guides (in English) for the madrassa system.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has elaborated the conceptual framework that I used in this study, as well as the particulars of the research design. I began by identifying my key material concepts – knowledge, actors, and space – and then defined and described how I used them. In so doing I connected these concepts to my theorization of “policy” and policy processes, highlighting my conceptualization of policy as practice (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). I then proceeded to identify and describe the three phases composing this study: textual analysis of policy and donor program documents; ethnographic research in The Gambia involving interviews with state and non-state policy actors, including donors and multilateral representatives, and participant observation activities in the offices of participating organizations and agencies as well as at public events; and finally, a comparative analysis of the produced knowledge represented in various formal documentation and the constructed knowledge of policy actors with respect to the objectives, strategies, challenges, and prospects for the achievement of gender equality in and through

education. I then described the study sample as well as the various research sites. Issues related to the research ethics and the credibility of the analysis were also addressed.

In the following chapter, I present the findings from the textual analysis, focusing on the content and discourses related to girls' education and gender and education issues, of various national policy documents and donor research and program documents.

Chapter 5

Inter/National Gender and Education Policy Knowledge and Action

The primary objective of the current chapter is to present the findings from the textual analysis of major national development and education policies in The Gambia, as well as donor research and program documents. While maintaining the historical emphasis on the importance of formal education for national development, the Gambia's education system has undergone major changes in terms of structure, priorities, and mechanisms of service delivery over the past decade. This chapter discusses these important changes. I suggest that these shifts are important in their own right, with respect to their implications for the promotion and achievement of gender equality and the enhancement of human capabilities. I also argue that the shifts reflect the dominance and impact of macroeconomic reform imperatives and the concomitant fiscal austerity measures that have characterized the political economic movement in the country over the past decade.²⁷ Identifying changes in the structural features of the development and education policy context is a necessary first step in examining the perceptions of policy actors and their roles in producing, constructing, consuming, and enacting gender equality in education policy knowledge – the subject of the next chapter.

The chapter discussion begins by describing the main features of the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW), as a way of establishing the overarching gender agenda in the country intended to guide education and other sector policy and programming.

²⁷ While this study is concerned primarily with the period since the 1994 coup and the transition to civilian rule under the presidency of Yahya Jammeh, it should be remembered that macroeconomic reform, liberalization, and fiscal austerity measures began under former President Juwara. The reform package introduced was called "Economic Recovery Program" and it ran from 1984-1994. Its impact in terms of negative social repercussions began immediately, while its ultimate impact on overall economic growth and stability was disputed.

After discussing the NPAGW, I examine the place and framing of women and gender within national development goals and strategies, as articulated in The Gambia's development manifesto "The Gambia Inc.: Vision 2020", as well as successive generations of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Set against the backdrop of World Bank-led Education Sector Programs, I then link these broad planning documents with the two most recent national education policy frameworks, highlighting the consistent connections made between "national development" and girls' education. I suggest that the instrumentalist assumptions concerning the socio-economic benefits of girls' education that dominate national education policy documents are reflected in the framing of girls' education in World Bank policy documents. Moreover, I draw attention to the more recent downplaying of gender concerns in education as these relate to girls' education in the context of FTI grant proposals submitted by The Gambia since 2003.

After establishing the priority status of human resource development in formal national development and education planning documents, within which the discourse of girls' education has been central, I then juxtapose these goals with the reality of steadily declining government expenditure in public education and the growing privatization of education service delivery. I also discuss how quality and efficiency imperatives seem to be overtaking the previous policy discourse of access and equity, drawing particular attention to the recent proposal for additional lending for implementation of Phase II of the World Bank's Third Education Sector Project, in which equity concerns are explicitly abandoned as a focal point in the project, in favour of a concerted emphasis on addressing issues of quality in the education sector.

However, this is not to say that questions of access are not important in the Gambian context; in the next section of the chapter I examine the recent formalization of the madrasa system of schooling in the country, a reform billed as a strategy for achieving Education for All

as required under the commitments made by The Gambia at Jomtien, and again at Dakar in 2000.

In the final section I examine shifts in policy space brought about by decentralization reforms within the education sector as well as the adoption of participatory policy approaches.

The National Policy on the Advancement of Gambian Women

The formulation of a National Policy on the Advancement of Gambian Women (1999) was one of the activities of the World Bank's pilot "Women in Development" project in The Gambia, as introduced in Chapter Three. The Gambia did not propose this project; it was initiated by the World Bank and jointly funded by the African Development Bank and Norway. In the Forward to the policy, President Jammeh indicates that The Gambia was chosen as a site for this pilot project because of its participation in the formulation of international conventions (CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action etc.), its "high level of commitment to the women question" as a national issue, as well as representing a "joint commitment towards the global advancement of women" (RTG, 1999, p. 5). Jammeh's emphasis on the leadership role the Gambian state has played in terms of women's advancement is continued, with the entire Forward devoted to highlighting the achievements already made in promoting the status of women while simultaneously downplaying what still needs to be done.

Thus, while the familiar problems of women exist in terms of limited access to development resources, modern educational facilities and health care; a patriarchal legacy that restricts decision-making power at the various levels of the state, the community and family to men; a traditional agricultural system that relies on the labour of women while at the same time discriminating against them in land ownership and employment; **The Gambia has never lost sight of the importance of our womenfolk** (RTG, 1999, p. 3) (emphasis added)

The Forward begins with President Jammeh emphasizing the "acute sense of unity" characterizing the nation and indicating that this ethos of togetherness "enables us to manage

tensions related to the cleavages of class, caste, religion, ethnicity and gender relations” (RTG, 1999, p. 3). In effect, such statements can serve to depoliticize and occlude the inherent conflict in equity initiatives. I argue that while President Jammeh, among others, advocates the “harmonizing” of relations between men and women, the goal of “harmonizing” gender relations is different from “equalizing” gender relations. The emphasis on the language of “harmony” and “unity” could imply a limited appetite for debate and dialogue with respect to women’s rights on the basis that providing for women’s rights may be perceived to threaten and disrupt the central tenets of national identity. Moreover, Ebyen & Napier-Moore suggest, too, that in the contemporary moment, “diversity and debate” are increasingly viewed as “inefficient” in a context that rewards “harmonization of diagnosis and effort” as the most efficient and effective means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (2009, p. 286).

Jointly funded by the African Development Bank, Norway and the Government of The Gambia, the multi-sectoral Women in Development (WID) project (1987-1997) aimed to “bring about a change in society’s perception of the role of women” (World Bank, 1998b, p. i). However, the underlying assumption seems to be that in order for society’s views of women to change, women have to change first. Project activities focused on increasing rural women’s agricultural productivity, developing rural women’s literacy and numeracy skills and increasing women’s knowledge of “safe motherhood” practices (World Bank, 1998b) aimed at producing change in women themselves, as producers and mothers, rather than structural change and social transformation.

The lack of attention paid to the imperatives of structural and social change in the activities of the WID project is, however, in tension with some of the explicit goals of the

NPAGW. For example, at the launch of the national policy the Vice President of The Gambia, and Secretary of State for Women's Affairs is quoted:

The challenge for policy makers and interventionists alike is an **ideological change that would recognize that the lives of women cannot be changed without changes in gender relations** and in the sexual division of labour that tie most women and restrict their participation in the public sphere. For the [NPAGW], mainstreaming gender issues is crucial for women as it moves them into a more inclusive and **equal** society. (Njie Saidu, 1999, n.p.) (emphasis added)

The NPAGW criticizes past interventions as “piece-meal and ineffective, resulting in little gain in the security, equality and economic empowerment of women” (Njie Saidu, 1999, n.p). The NPAGW was intended to be the guiding document for multi-sector reform in support of women's advancement and is guided by two broad overarching objectives: a) To catalyze all possible courses of action necessary to eliminate forms of inequality between women and men and; b) To create an enabling environment for the promotion of women's participation in all spheres of life (RTG, 1999, p. 7). Reflecting a core principle of the human capabilities approach – agency – the NPAGW calls for broad-based “women's empowerment”, defined as “making women and girls visible and their voice heard, and to enable them to take full control of their lives” (RTG, 1999, p. 17).

In contextualizing the NPAGW, it must be recognized that this policy was formulated in the immediate years following 1995 United Nations Women's Conference in Beijing, frequently viewed as representing the “apex of 20 years of sustained effort to secure women's empowerment as a central tenet in development discourse” (Ebyen & Napier-Moore, 2009, p. 285). The policy was also externally-initiated and supported, and therefore it would be surprising if it did not use the dominant donor language of “empowerment”, “equality” and “equity” – in

framing its goals and strategies. This is not to say that donors “own” these words and concepts and that their incorporation by Gambian policymakers into the NPAGW was entirely disingenuous; rather, I bring this point up because I believe that we must consider the very real constraints imposed by the upward accountability of policymakers to the donors who are relied upon for policy program funding. In the case of the NPAGW, the retreat of NGOs and civil society more broadly from the WID project effectively removed an important means for promoting downward accountability.

From National Development to Poverty Reduction: Situating Gender and Education in a Shifting Policy Field

National development planning, within which the development of national human resources is prioritized, is internally and externally mediated in The Gambia. Internally, development planning and activities in The Gambia are guided by two major policy framework documents: the “Vision 2020: Gambia Inc.” and currently the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2007-2011 (PRSP II) (RTG, 2006; 1996). The latter explicitly connects national development planning to global policy frameworks, namely the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. In turn, nationally-driven policy documents like the PRSPs are externally mediated by World Bank’s Country Assistance Strategy Papers and the more recent Joint Assistance Strategy Paper between the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) that, while formally based on national priorities, are geared towards the identification of “the key areas where the Bank Group’s assistance can have the biggest impact on poverty reduction” (World Bank).²⁸ This implies that the Bank has the “final say” concerning what policy initiatives

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<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,contentMDK:20120746~menuPK:51551~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html>

receive financial and technical assistance. Moreover, as a condition for endorsement under the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), The Gambia has had to incorporate gender analysis and establish clear gender-related policy objectives into both its PRSP and national education planning documents. Given the large financing gap in the Gambian education sector, I argue that the Gambian government has much incentive to align and frame their policy frameworks with donor priorities and language (RTG, 2006 – ESSP).

In this section, I elaborate on the place and treatment of education and gender issues within national development and education policy documents. The twin overarching themes of “self-sufficiency” and “economic liberalization for development” are highlighted in the overview as these discourses reflect dominant neoliberal ideals promoted by the international community, notably the World Bank, IMF, African Development Bank and the Government of The Gambia in the service of economic growth and development.

“*The Gambia Inc.: Vision 2020*”. In 1996, the government launched a development manifesto entitled *Vision 2020 Statement*, in which the overarching goal is,

to transform The Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free-market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well educated, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, guaranteeing a well balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for all, under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry. (RTG, 2006, n.p.)

In an updated introduction (2006) to the Vision 2020 document, President Jammeh highlights the significance of the concept of “The Gambia Inc.”, stating that it reflects and re-confirms the government’s longstanding “pro-private sector stance”, viewing the private sector as a “serious partner in national development and the very engine of growth” (RTG, 2006, n.p).

President Jammeh explicitly states that “The Gambia’s choice of economic ideology is clear – it is based on free market principles” (RTG, 2006, n.p.). The development strategy adopted by the government is one which is “human-centered and export-oriented” and is marked by a “new partnership between the public and private sectors to spur faster growth *with equity*” (RTG, 2006, n.p.) (emphasis added). Corporate language infuses the entire introduction, with citizens discursively framed as “shareholders in a joint-stock company” whose success depends on the active participation of all shareholders operating in a “free and competitive” environment (RTG, 2006, n.p.). Reflecting dominant neoliberal principles, the President further claims that the role of the government is limited to “the correction of market failures and the provision of public goods which cannot be produced by the private sector” (RTG, 2006, n.p.).

Four major policy themes are highlighted in the Vision 2020 statement: *good governance, partnership, equity, and productivity* (RTG, 1996). Human resource development is among six priority areas identified in the Vision 2020 document, and education-specific issues are framed in the explicit language of human capital development. Women are included in the document under the category of “socially disadvantaged”, and are therefore targeted for “integration” by “enhancing their status and/or productive capacities” (RTG, 2006, n.p.). However, women are not mentioned specifically in the formal objectives of the Vision 2020, but are tacitly included in calls for educational expansion towards the achievement of education for all. Again, in the “situational analysis” and “conclusion” sections, women are not mentioned specifically. However, under “strategic issues”, women’s and girls’ education is given some consideration, although the focus is limited to increasing girls’ educational access.

Despite this narrow focus on equal access, the overarching gender agenda spelled out in the document echoes the language in CEDAW, and reflects far more ambitious and far-reaching

development objectives: “The thrust of the government’s policy in this area shall focus on the *eradication of all forms of discrimination* against women and children, the *girl-child* [emphasis added] in particular” (RTG, 2006, n.p.). Women and girls are the subject of a few more sentences in the Vision 2020 document:

Emphasis shall be placed [on the] full and *productive participation* [of women] in the economic, social and political development process as well as decision-making at all levels. Attention shall also focus on *equitable* [emphasis added] access to the necessary factors of production such as land, credit...health, education, skills training. (RTG, 2006, n.p.)

This quote is noteworthy for two reasons. First, a link is explicitly made between women’s “equitable access” to education and the goal of increasing women’s productivity towards national development. Second, while the idea of promoting “equitable access” to land is made, this not the same as challenging land ownership rights, something that Gambian women continue to be denied.

Both versions of the Vision 2020 statements call for *partnership* between men and women as well as mutual respect and understanding of issues pertaining to gender and development (RTG, 2006; 1996). The promotion and maintenance of social cohesion is a key objective in this regard and is understood to rest on “an equitable distribution of resources” and “by fostering good governance” (RTG, 2006, n.p.). However, tensions concerning intra-household financial contributions and dependencies are noted in the Vision 2020 statements of 1996 and 2006. For example, the extended family system is criticized for producing a situation of “financial dependence by the majority on a few” (RTG, 2006, n.p.). While this statement appears gender-neutral, the follow-up statement concerning the lack of recognition given to “the economic role of women” suggests that the Vision 2020 statements are critical of women’s

economic dependence on men. Failure to recognize women's economic roles as "indispensable to an enhanced revenue generating capacity of the household" is argued to have impeded reform efforts to expand women's access to productive resources (RTG, 1996, n.p.; see also RTG, 2006).

An entire section of the Vision 2020 document addresses "attitudes" and specifically, attitudinal and behavioural change as a means to facilitate "growth with equity" (RTG, 2006, n.p.). In connection with attitudinal and behavioural change, the document contains a disparaging critique of the "average Gambian":

The average Gambian is still largely inhibited by a number of negative attitudes towards production and social life. Attitudes such as "maslaha" (i.e. compromising to the point of condoning wrong-doing), greed, corruption, nepotism, patronage, extravagance, inconsiderate consumption to the detriment of personal savings, fatalism and a want for entrepreneurial drive are rife in our day to day personal exchange. (RTG, 2006, n.p.)

A key area of attitudinal change concerns popular perceptions of the government "as an alien and remote machinery (*mansa kunda*) to one that is at the service of all and owned by all" (RTG, 2006; 1996, n.p.). A key strategy towards this end is the integration of civics education into the formal curriculum to raise people's awareness of their "ownership of, and entitlement to the nation's wealth" (RTG, 2006, n.p.). However, the Vision 2020 is quick to warn that "people's perception of the State as the all-provider and all-doer is seriously counterproductive" (RTG, 2006, n.p.).

Overall, the Vision 2020 document establishes the government's intent to pursue ambitious goals towards improving women's wellbeing; however, these goals are largely justified on the basis that they will enable women to contribute more towards national

development efforts. Moreover, it is surprising that the 2006 updated version of the Vision 2020 does not include even one mention of gender mainstreaming or gender as a cross-cutting issue, despite the fact that these concepts and objectives had been incorporated into every other major policy document at the time of its release.

Gender and education in The Gambia's poverty reduction strategy papers. International efforts to ensure that development aid interventions succeed in realizing benefits for the poor and other vulnerable groups have most recently manifested in requirements that aid-recipient governments develop national action plans for poverty reduction. In these IMF- and World Bank-supported Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), governments identify national development priorities and detail specific strategic interventions for the realizing of broad-based poverty reduction objectives. The PRSP process represents a relatively new form of aid conditionality as the World Bank and IMF leverage debt relief and concessional lending opportunities to governments willing to adopt a nation-wide participatory strategy in the development of national poverty reduction priorities and strategies (Jones & Chant, 2009; Lancaster, 2007). However, what is referred to as a “globalisation of solutions” refers to the pattern whereby policy priorities and strategies converge across individual country PRSPs despite the fact that these documents are ostensibly drawn up through a process of “local participation” (Jones & Chant, 2009). Implied is that PRSPs cannot only be seen as a form of aid conditionality or coercive power, but also that these documents often reflect the requirements of donors and financiers rather than the poverty relief needs of local constituencies. In understanding the power inherent in the PRSP process, the old adage “he who pays the piper calls the tune” comes to mind (Sifuna, 2000; Touorouzou, 2006).

Strategy for Poverty Alleviation II/PRSP I (2003-2005). The 2002 SPA II (2003-2005) represents the Gambia's first "official" PRSP and is referred to as PRSP I in the PRSP II 2007-2011 (Department of State for Economic Affairs (DOSFEA), 2006). Highlighted in the document's introduction is the shift in development cooperation from "the prescriptive, mainly donor-driven structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the seventies and eighties" towards an approach that emphasizes "partnership, ownership, country leadership, broad-based participation, development effectiveness and accountability" (DOSFEA, 2002, p. 6). Formulation of the SPA II began in 2000 and the process followed a decentralized, participatory approach including contributions and dialogue between government line ministries, parliament, civil society, communities, and development partners, with consultations lead by the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Coordinating Office (SPACO) (DOSFEA, 2002). Under the SPA II, SPACO's responsibilities have been expanded to include public expenditure monitoring, a "non-traditional" area for SPACO involvement (DOSFEA, 2002, p. 8).

For the first time in Gambian history, the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs (DOSFEA) held pre-budget consultations with a "cross-section of civil society", with the results used to establish spending ceilings for the sector envelopes (DOSFEA, 2002, p. 9). Following from these consultations was the formation of the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG), under the leadership of the now Permanent Secretary (PS) for the Department of State for Education (DOSE). Generally speaking, the participatory nature of planning processes underpinning the development of the SPA documents as well as the current National Education Policy 2004-2015 was repeatedly emphasized and celebrated by the study participants, particularly by regional and central government officials.

Poverty is defined comprehensively in the SPA II, and includes “food poverty, income poverty; human poverty (access to social security); powerlessness and voicelessness; and insecurity” (DOSFEA, 2002, p. 7). Beyond promoting economic growth and “redistribution”, the SPA II aimed to reduce poverty through a “social development program aimed at removing inequities in access to sources of economic empowerment and enhancing participation in the development process” (DOSFEA, 2002, p. 9). The poverty reduction goals of the SPA II rest on the following five pillars:

- Create an enabling policy environment to promote economic growth and poverty reduction
- Enhance the productive capacity and social protection of the poor and vulnerable
- Improve the coverage of the basic social service needs of the poor and vulnerable.
- Build the capacity of local communities and civil society organizations to play an active role in the development process.
- **Mainstream gender equity**, environmental issues, nutrition, governance and HIV/AIDS awareness into all development programs (emphasis added)

Interestingly, in both the interim-PRSP (2000-2002) and the executive summary of the SPA II , “gender” is not mentioned as a cross-cutting issue, although “governance”, “the environment”, “population” and “HIV/AIDs” are.

International influence in the SPA II process is evidenced in the multiple references to international development frameworks and agencies, especially the United Nations, World Bank, and the Millennium Development Goals, alongside the use of “IFI discourse” concerning “macroeconomic goals and growth”, “private sector growth”, and “public sector management and administration”, and “efficiency” principles such as “cost-effectiveness”. The concept and goal of “self-sufficiency” underpins poverty reduction efforts in The Gambia, legitimated as it is by a neoliberal ideology that frames individuals as responsible for their own well being and states as responsible for protecting individual freedom to be “self-sufficient”.

According to the World Bank/IDA PRSP Annual Progress Report – Joint Staff Advisory Note (2005), implementation of SPA II was uneven. The most progress was made in increasing access to basic social services. However, most macroeconomic targets were not reached, and the share of poverty-reduction expenditures decreased in the national budgets of 2002 and 2003 (World Bank/IDA, 2005). Private sector development and employment expansion “did not increase significantly” (World Bank/IDA, 2005, p. 2). The poverty rate increased, especially amongst the rural population reliant on income earned through groundnut production as these experienced severe crop failures (World Bank/IDA, 2005). The Joint Staff Advisory Note also indicates that unauthorized off-budget spending (meaning money was spent outside and/or above that formerly allocated in the national budget) continued to plague Gambian political processes and the implementation of poverty alleviation strategies. For instance, in 2001, off-budget expenditures amounted to 7 percent of GDP (World Bank/IDA, 2005, p. 3). This problem was not new, however, as it also plagued the government of Sir Dawda Jawara during the First Republic (Ajayi, 2003).

Recommendations were made in the PRSP evaluations across the five pillars of the SPA II. Regarding macroeconomic reforms, it was recommended that the government must maintain fiscal and monetary discipline (World Bank/IDA, 2005); strengthen governance and particularly those “governance problems that gave rise to the misreporting of fiscal data” (World Bank/IDA, 2005, p. 3); and allocate sufficient funding for poverty-reduction expenditures. In terms of pro-poor growth and employment, a comprehensive rural development strategy was recommended, emphasizing the core objective of diversifying “the sector away from subsistence-based activities and to make it market-oriented (World Bank/IDA, 2005, p. 4). No mention was made however of

the gendered implications of a shift from subsistence to market-driven agricultural activities in a context where women are primarily responsible for the former, and lack land ownership rights.

While the most progress was made in terms of the expanding access to healthcare and education opportunities, the quality of both sets of services remained a major challenge (World Bank/IDA, 2005). While the participatory processes that gave rise to the SPA II were lauded, expansion of communication and transportation infrastructure and capacity-building efforts were called upon in formal evaluations by the Bank (World Bank/IDA, 2005). In terms of impact on women, the World Bank/IDA evaluation stated that “an education outreach program was required for changing “traditional” views that limit opportunities for women and their access to resources (2005, p. 6).

Overall, the analysis of the SPAII suggests that despite the formal position of “gender” as a cross-cutting issue, on more than one occasion in the document it is missing while other cross-cutting issues are included. While typos and omissions of various kinds are bound to occur in any document, the absence of “gender” in the text suggested that there may be a deeper problem related to a lack of political commitment or understanding of what it means to integrate “gender” as a cross-cutting issue. Moreover, rather than strengthening the position of gender concerns through making them cross-cutting issues, it seems that their placement – as the last “pillar”, the last section in the document text, the last section in the formal evaluation reports – perhaps reflects tacit assumptions by officials concerning their value and significance.

PRSP II 2007-2011. The PRSP II began development in 2005 using a participatory approach, similar to its predecessor. Formal program evaluations indicated that progress in implementing the SPA II/PRSP I had been unsatisfactory, with this largely attributed to the suspension by the IMF of its lending programme, the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility

(PRGF), in 2003 (DOSFEA, 2006). The problems giving rise to the IMF suspension of funding have been addressed through the re-engagement with the IMF in a six-month Staff Monitored Program (SMP), and The Gambia is once again considered “back on track” (International Monetary Fund, 2006). Overall, the PRSP II reflects government efforts to align national development strategies with global poverty reduction policies as well as major global development frameworks, particularly the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All movement (DOSFEA, 2006).

In terms of education, the PRSP II recommits the government to increasing public expenditure to the sector and particularly in the support of the following priority areas: access to basic education; quality of teaching and learning; teaching and learning materials; non-formal education; and skills training/appropriate technology (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 16). The PRSP II notes that girls’ enrolment in basic education has risen “considerably” since 1998 and especially for girls living in regions four, five, and six (the easternmost regions, furthest from the capital city) (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 16). Achievements regarding girls’ education are attributed to the introduction of initiatives such as Mothers’ Clubs and the Girl-Friendly School program (subsequently re-named as the “child-friendly school initiative”) (DOSFEA, 2006).

The PRSP II includes an entire chapter on the “cross-cutting issues” of gender, HIV/AIDs, and the environment. The document states, “the realization of **gender equality** requires empowerment of the most affected (women and girls) and mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all sectors by all actors in the development process (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 103).

The PRSP II explicitly states that inequalities between men and women remain high and that state interventions have met with limited success because of low capacity amongst government, civil society, and “women leaders” to perform gender analysis and to successfully

coordinate sensitization and monitoring processes (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 103). Moreover, “socio-cultural and discriminatory practices against women and girls” are said to require the “commitment of all” improve this group’s wellbeing (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 103).

Regarding strategies and planned interventions concerning women and gender the PRSP II emphasizes the intention to “mainstream gender in all policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels to ensure [sic] empowerment of women” (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 106). Towards this end, capacity-building is planned, including that for gender analysis, and budget-tracking in policy processes. It also uses the language of “equality” and identifies the need to raise awareness of the challenges to gender equality and “its impact on both men and women” (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 107).

In addition to “gender equality”, the PRSP II document uses the language of “empowerment” explicitly to describe its objectives in relation to women and gender issues. Towards supporting this goal, the document identifies the following interventions as being necessary:

- Expand the access of girls and women to quality formal education and training opportunities
- “Reduce women’s drudgery” to improve performance in education and training activities
- Increase women’s entrepreneurial skills and overall productivity
- Improve women’s access to credit and other productive resources
- Pursue legal reforms to ensure the protection of women’s rights. (DOSFEA, 2006, p. 107).

Ultimately, and similar to dominant global gender policy frameworks, the conflation of poverty reduction and women’s rights agendas in the PRSP documents suggests an economic bias underpinning understandings of the concept and goal of “women’s empowerment”.

The World Bank “Discovers” Girls’ Education Problem

Throughout the country’s early post-independence history, national education policies in The Gambia made at least some mention of the need to focus attention on girls’ education; however, such efforts were largely framed in the overall context of educational expansion. Thus, the assumption was that as the national education system expanded girls’ access would improve. This changed with the World Bank’s 1995 study, *Why Gambian Households Underinvest in Girls’ Education*, which marked the “discovery” of girls’ education as a problem in need of specific and targeted policy interventions, supported by the Bank.²⁹ Moreover, the study affirmed the notion that girls’ education was a locally-rooted problem and therefore needed locally-developed and implemented solutions (World Bank, 1995). The Bank framed the context and rationale for the study in terms of the overarching problem of widespread poverty and low country performance in terms of social development indicators (e.g. life expectancy, infant mortality) and connected these problems with women’s strikingly low levels of literacy and girls’ disproportionately low enrolment at primary and secondary levels of education in the country. Disparities between urban and rural regions in terms of girls’ education enrolment rates were also noted.

The study was guided by three key questions: *Why do so many fewer girls attend school than boys? Why are they less successful in school? And what can be done about it?* (World Bank, 1995, p. 2). The study adopted a rural appraisal methodology, with data concerning parental and student perceptions of the obstacles to girls’ education based on a sample that included participants from seven rural communities, and five hundred and forty-two (542) grade six students from seven urban schools as well as out-of-school girls living around Banjul and

²⁹ This study was published during the World Bank-funded Women in Development Project in The Gambia (1990-1999).

Serrekunda markets. During the first phase of the study, a team of Bank-trained Gambians worked with each community in the sample and developed community maps, calendars of income and expenditure, and matrices of community and education problems (World Bank, 1995, p. 2). In the second phase of the study, two communities that had participated in the first phase worked with the researchers to select six problems from a longer list of problems that they had previously identified, “which they, as a group, could begin to address in a practical way utilizing mainly their own resources” (World Bank, 1995, p. 2). Community Action Plans were then developed, incorporating problem-solving strategies that were deemed more likely to be successful based on the following criteria that the Bank established: time before the community benefits from the option; cost; feasibility; fairness; sustainability; and resources available to implement the option (World Bank, 1995, p. 2). In the end, village development associations were tasked with the responsibility for the implementation of the specific solutions/strategies they identified.

The results of the study highlighted some differences between men and women’s ranking of the problems facing their communities: men ranked education as the number one problem, whereas, women indicated that access to health care and water were the top ranked problems facing their communities, followed by education in third place (World Bank, 1995, p. 3). However, when asked what they most desired for their daughters, mothers ranked education first, followed by employment, marriage, and the learning of a skill, in that order (World Bank, 1995, p. 3).

The study revealed that not everyone believed in the importance of girls’ education, with men far more likely to express scepticism and/or outright rejection of girls’ education as a development challenge. Moreover, a full third of the children and youth participating in the study

did not think that it was important for girls to be educated. Men in the sample were found to frequently take a “dim view of girls’ intellectual abilities”, with the report suggesting that, “to a large extent, girls fulfill this prophecy”, noting the poor educational performance of girls relative to boys (World Bank, 1995, p. 7). Men were also more likely to reject the notion that girls would help them in their old age, based primarily on the notion that once a woman is married any benefits from her education would be shared exclusively with her husband’s family. Men also expressed concern that educated girls become disrespectful, disobedient, and less humble towards their husbands (World Bank, 1995, p. 7). The primacy placed on women’s roles as wives and mothers, and framed in terms of religious norms, is succinctly captured in the following quote: “If you have to make a choice, boys should go to school: girls can always learn Arabic, which would teach them about Islam and their married life, because marriage is their lifetime career (World Bank, 1995, p. 7).

Many of the study participants expressed that religious leaders (always male), who have considerable impact on community behaviour, promoted early marriage as a fundamental tenet of Islamic practice: “A woman has to be married early and start having children. In this way, Muslims will be numerous, and that is the way Allah the Almighty wants it” (World Bank, 1995, p. 7). One young woman who had been removed from primary school recounted her situation as follows:

I was married to someone from Conakry whom I never saw before but I can't reject my parents' words and act on my own feelings. I left school in 1989 because my father and mother were asking me where had I ever seen a prosperous lady in this country who has succeeded in life and was still willing to obey and take instructions from her husband—even when such a case exists, it is very rare. (World Bank, 1995, p. 7).

Overall, and in terms of participants' analysis of the problem of girls' education, the main disincentives were identified as the following:

- Inadequate supply of schools, particularly middle schools
- High costs of schooling (direct, indirect, and opportunity costs)
- Higher risk of early pregnancy
- Loss of respect for traditional values, particularly obedience and humility towards husbands
- Perceptions, particularly among men, that girls will be less successful in life generally. (World Bank, 1995, p. 3)

In identifying solutions to problems of girls' educational access the Bank identified those that were most amenable to community-based efforts, and those most suitable for the government to lead on. While the study acknowledges that the practice of early marriage is a barrier to girls' educational participation, the Bank explicitly states that it is only communities and not the government that can change such practices (World Bank, 1995). In one of the communities that participated in the second phase of the research, the problem of teen pregnancy was identified as a key concern. Elder women in the community claimed that teen pregnancy was influenced by two main factors: lack of "proper" upbringing and the fact that girls "are not supplied with their needs" for schooling (i.e. books, uniforms, shoes, lunch money) (World Bank, 1995, p. 6). It was felt that if girls had what they needed in terms of their schooling, they would not be tempted to take money from men, and would therefore avoid the risk of finding themselves in a situation where they were expected to "pay back" in the form of sexual services. The solution devised in one community was a gendered one that involved women agreeing to "engage in thrift-savings to satisfy girls' needs...so that they would not be tempted to take money from men" (World Bank, 1995, p. 13). Men agreed to take turns supervising evening classes in schools to protect girls both inside the classroom, as well as travel to and from the school.

Ultimately, the study goes to great length to detail key economic and socio-cultural constraints on girls' educational participation, as identified by parents and children in rural and urban communities. However, in the produced knowledge of the Bank research, the economic barriers to girls' education were ultimately identified as the most urgent to address: "From every research approach used, and from almost every group involved, the direct cost of schooling emerged as the single biggest problem associated with education in general" (World Bank, 1995, p. i).

Towards improving girls' access to education and lowering girls' drop-out rates, the Bank identified that a policy strategy would need to emphasize the following objectives:

1. Improve physical access
2. Significantly lower the cost of education
3. Improve safety in school and in the community
4. Improve girls' performance in school
5. Get communities more involved in education (World Bank, 1995, pp. 13-14).

In wrapping up the report, the statement is made that,

This is an opportune time for the Bank to assist The Gambia to develop and implement a program to address these issues. Not only would the momentum generated by this research initiative be exploited at the community level, but the Government's heightened sensitivity to the problems of girls' education would make policy changes possible. (World Bank, 1995, p. 14)

Following this statement, the Bank identifies that it could assist government and community efforts to promote girls' education at the primary and lower-secondary. Such assistance could take the form of a "policy-based investment operation" (World Bank, 1995, p. 14). Pre-empting the future Bank-supported Third Education Sector Program to be discussed shortly, the study identifies three main possible components for supporting the enhancement of girls' education: (i) a package of policy measures that the Government would adopt and

implement, particularly those that lower the cost of education, raise the ethical behaviour of teachers and put more female teachers into the system; (ii) financial support for community initiatives that make it easier for girls to enter and stay in school; and (iii) an investment program providing for primary and lower-secondary classroom construction to accommodate all school-age children, improving textbooks and learning materials, and introducing experimental programs designed to improve girls' performance and retention (World Bank, 1995, p. 14).

In addition to surveying community attitudes towards girls' education, and perceptions of the main barriers to girls' education, the study also includes a section that lists the feedback received from Government concerning the study. Noted was that none of the respondents had anything to say about the findings per se; rather, all comments received focused on the proposed policy interventions (World Bank, 1995, p. 14). A few of these comments are important to highlight as they help illuminate government thinking at that time concerning girls' education. Unfortunately, while in the presentation of the study results it was made clear who was speaking (e.g. man, woman, girl, or boy), it must be assumed that all government respondents were men as there was no suggestion otherwise.

One government official's comment suggested some hesitancy with respect to making girls' education a policy priority, stating that, "A program to improve girls' education should be considered as only a segment of the broader education policy and development framework" (World Bank, 1995, p. 14). Several officials expressed doubt concerning the feasibility of lowering the direct costs of schooling, with some emphasizing the need for "cost-sharing" (World Bank, 1995, p. 14). Other comments suggested that the Government was keen to engage with Islamic madrassas in order to expand their reach and improve the quality of the education they offered. Others emphasized the need for creating more opportunities for girls to acquire

skills in order to be “self-reliant”. It was suggested that if girls could be shown to be learning practical skills this would help address parental concerns about the relevance of girls’ education. Reflecting stereotypical assumptions about what subjects were appropriate for girls to learn, it was suggested that, “Another alternative could be to introduce life skill subjects for girls in the Gambia Technical Training Institute syllabus where girls could be trained up to certificate level” (World Bank, 1995, p. 16).

A Feminist Analysis of Gender Equality in Education Policy Knowledge and Action in National Education Policies and Donor Programs

In its position as lead donor to the Gambian education sector the World Bank has supported three major sector projects since 1978. Each of these sector projects supported the implementation of the national education policies of their time. The First Education Sector project (1978-1983) did not specifically address the needs of women but anticipated that girls and women would nonetheless benefit indirectly through its efforts to expand access to primary education in rural areas, improve the quality of secondary education, “and post-secondary instruction in practical subjects, including home economics”; and improving health services, including maternal care (World Bank, 1978, p. 17). The Bank’s stereotypical framing of home economics as a practical subject relevant to the needs of women is important to highlight as it reproduces the perspective that women’s roles are generally confined to the domestic/private sphere and that the only education of practical use to women is that which can help them perform their reproductive roles better.

In the Bank’s Second Education Sector Project (1990-1998), the focus was on improving access to and the quality of primary education; restructuring the secondary education system; expanding access to and relevance of technical and vocational education; and strengthening

sector planning processes and mechanisms to improve cost-effectiveness (World Bank, 1990).

With respect to the latter point, the project promoted increased private financing and provision of formal education, in addition to the introduction of double-shift teaching and multi-grade classrooms. The restructuring of the secondary system to include three years of lower secondary and three years of upper secondary education was framed as a “more cost effective system” (World Bank, 1990, p. 13).

It was this project that also saw the inclusion, for the first time, of measures to improve girls’ educational opportunities. Girls’ education was framed in the project’s staff appraisal document as a predominantly rural problem, with key barriers being the lack of adequate facilities as well as religious and cultural factors (World Bank, 1990). With respect to this latter point the Bank suggested that “parents look to religion to provide moral development and protection from the outside world” (World Bank, 1990, p. 4). Further constraints noted, with respect to girls’ educational access and completion rates, included negative teacher attitudes towards girls’ schooling, a lack of female role models, girls’ domestic work burden, and early marriage and pregnancy (World Bank, 1990, p. 12).

Towards increasing girls’ enrolment, the project identified four specific measures:

- Increase the proportion of women in the teaching force as a means to provide more role models for school-age girls
- Support the development of unbiased educational material
- Actively encourage girls to enrol in more traditionally male-dominated classes such as science, mathematics, and technical courses.
- Incorporate family life education programs into school curricula (World Bank, 1990, p. 12-13).

However, as noted in Chapter One, the full implementation of the Second Education Sector project, where girls’ education was a formal program priority, was disrupted by the 1994 coup d’état. As will be detailed later in the chapter, the Third Education Sector Project takes up where

the Second Education Sector Project left off, with a program for girls' education implemented through it. Before moving to that discussion I want to first present my analysis of the current national education policy's predecessor, the Revised National Education Policy 1988-2004.

Revised National Education Policy 1988 – 2004

Implementation of the National Education Policy 1988-2003 was interrupted by the 1994 coup and during the three year transition to civilian rule, a Revised National Education Policy (RNEP) was formulated, accompanied by an Education Master Plan 1998-2005. Developed in the wake of the 1995 Bank study on challenges to girls' education discussed above, the RNEP identified girls' access to formal schooling as a policy goal: "A further fundamental issue is that of equity and the reduction of gender disparities by ensuring that girls and women gain access to education and achieve a high retention rate in each of the programme areas" (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 10).

"Girls, illiterate women and the disabled", are included as the top-ranked "priority target groups" in the RNEP (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 11). Articulating government commitment to liberal notions of formal equality, the Education Master Plan (which establishes specific strategies and lines of responsibility for different actors) states that: "Equal opportunities and access will be created for girls and women from an early stage...all interventions will be geared towards creating an enabling environment for girls and women to compete equally with boys and men" (DOSE, 1999, p. 22). In order to meet national commitments regarding universal primary education as called for in the global Education for All movement, the RNEP states that: "Further enrolment increases will depend on attracting more girls to school and integrating the formal school curriculum in the Madrassas" (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 8).

In delineating its “ten basic aims”, the RNEP clearly establishes a nation-building and socio-economic development role for education. Over half of these policy goals explicitly link education to nation-building and “development”. The cultivation of a particular set of values and qualities is emphasized in this regard: a) sound moral, religious and ethical values; b) an appreciation of and respect for the cultural heritage of The Gambia; and c) a sense of service, loyalty, integrity and dedication to the nation (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9).

In line with a human capabilities perspective a key assumption is made in the RNEP that through formal schooling individuals can “develop to their full potential”; however, this is framed in human capital terms as enabling individuals to “contribute to life in their community and the nation at large” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9). A key concept in this discourse is that of “self-reliance” and education is expected to facilitate this outcome. In this respect, “literacy, vocational and life skills” are highlighted as particularly critical for self-reliance (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9) and it is towards this end that the policy focuses on providing “opportunities for all” to acquire such skills. A liberal emphasis on the individual appears in the RNEP aims in terms of individual development and the role of individuals in improving the well-being of the collective (i.e. the “nation”). The second last policy goal is “to create an awareness of the importance of peace, democracy and human rights and the responsibility of the individual in fostering these qualities” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9). In return for these responsibilities, the individual should expect support and opportunities made available through state provision of education services.

That the RNEP and Master Plan are strongly influenced by economic efficiency objectives is indubitable. Originally formulated in the context of The Gambia’s Economic Recovery Program (1984-1994) - “one of the most sweeping reform programs ever attempted in sub-Saharan Africa” (McPherson & Radelet, 1996, p. 14) - both the National Education Policy

1988-2003 and its revised version can be seen as products of neoliberal structural adjustment, emphasizing cost-recovery (particularly at the tertiary level), “tapping new sources of finance” through privatization and civil society-government partnerships, and devolving responsibility from central to regional to local levels via decentralization reforms (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 11). One means of cost-saving called for in the RNEP and Education Master Plan 1998-2005 was the introduction of double-shift schools in urban areas and multi-grade classrooms in rural areas. The RNEP also stipulates that efforts must be made to ensure that “external assistance matches policy priorities” (RTG/DOSE, 1998).

Based on Public Expenditure Review findings, the RNEP seeks to improve efficiency by redistributing government subsidies to education away from higher income groups, in favour of the poorest groups:

The burden of cost is highest on the poorest households who spend a higher proportion of their per capita income on education, even though they spend much less than the rich and have a smaller share of enrolment at all levels. (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 8).

As framed in the RNEP, the role of education is the facilitation of national development by raising the human capital necessary to increase productivity and competitiveness to achieve economic growth:

By increasing the productivity of the people, education contributes to better income distribution and the reduction of poverty. An educated and skilled population capable of adapting to change is essential for social and economic development in an environment of growing international competition and in a rapidly changing workplace. (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9)

While schooling is explicitly linked to “social” as well as “economic” development, most policy goals and strategies emphasize economic efficiency and development understood as

economic growth: “Investment in education is key to economic growth” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 8), and similarly: “The Gambia’s most precious resource is its people. This wealth must be developed for the good of the individual and the nation alike” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9).

According to the RNEP education is “essential to improve people’s well-being and their capacity to better themselves and their environment” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9).

In keeping with the emphasis on efficiency, basic education is framed in the RNEP as a priority education sub-sector where “the social rate or return for investment” is highest (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 9). The policy states that,

Private returns to education exceed social returns at all levels, especially technical and vocational education. Given this fact and the externalities associated with basic education, public resources need to be redirected and invested at this level. At a time when **efficiency has become a household word** and government’s commitment to poverty alleviation in **the eyes of its partners in development** is irretractable [sic], a reallocation of resources targeted towards the poor cannot be more appropriate. (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 8) (emphasis added)

In the RNEP women and girls are the target beneficiaries of non-formal education, including literacy and numeracy programmes that focus on “illiterate adults, out-of-school children and youth, the majority of whom are female” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 19). Reifying the reproductive roles of mothers these training programs intended to “ensure that mothers are placed at the centre of the education of their young...” (RTG/DOSE, 1998, p. 19).

In order to achieve the policy objectives for girls’ formal education, the Master Plan established a “Girls’ Education Programme” costed at US\$530,000 (RTG/DOSE, 1998). While the document notes that girls’ educational enrolment had increased, persistent problems in terms of poverty, the national socio-cultural context, and the school environment itself, continue to impede the achievement of “gender parity” (DOSE, 1998, p. 20-21). Here it was noted that

“cultural taboos and religious persuasions also work against girls’ enrolment” (DOSE, 1998, pp. 20-21). Moreover, the above problems and challenges were framed as largely “rural” in nature, and were therefore not as applicable to “urban” areas where citizens were said in the policy document to be “more enlightened” (DOSE, 1998, p. 21).

The Girls’ Education Programme called for making girls’ and women’s education “transversal to every sector programme”, but with “greater prominence” given to the Basic Education Programme (DOSE, 1998, p. 22). The overarching objective of the program was indicated as the following: “All interventions will be geared towards creating an enabling environment for girls and women to compete equally with boys and men” (DOSE, 1998, p. 22).

Key policy solutions towards enhancing girls’ education identified in the Master Plan are as follows:

- Lowering the cost of education for girls through a female scholarship scheme at the upper Basic and Secondary levels;
- Encouraging a flexible payment schedule of fees for non-sponsored students in addition to lowering tuition and book fees through policy reform;
- Providing a clean, safe and supportive environment for girls in school;
- Mobilising and sensitising communities to develop local solutions to the problem girls face in their communities by expanding Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) activities (DOSE, 1998, p. 22).

In terms of implementation responsibilities, the Master Plan identifies central and regional government officials as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as key actors, the latter specifically in terms of “community mobilization” (DOSE, 1998, pp. 25-26).

In 2001, a “Free Education for Girls” policy was announced by President Jammeh at a pre-election rally, and subsequently came into effect shortly after his re-election. This policy effectively removed tuition fees at the lower basic level (grades 1-6).³⁰ Anecdotally, while doing

³⁰ Note that currently school fees have been formally removed at the basic level for all students; however, there are still costs associated with uniforms, books, shoes, lunches, and transport.

field research in The Gambia in 2002 I was privy to several complaints and discussions from teachers, administrators and parents that the new Free Education for Girls policy had not been matched with any increase in funding for the new entrants to schools. Thus, while more girls were in school, the quality of education overall was said to have declined.

In 1999 the Girls' Education Scholarship Trust Fund was launched. The Trust Fund, which it is locally called, provides scholarships for girls at the upper basic and senior secondary levels (grades seven through to twelve). The objectives are to increase access to formal schooling, to retain girls in school until at least the twelfth grade, and to improve the performance of girls in school (Goree Associates, 2004; DOSE, n.d.).³¹ While originally targeting girls in the most remote regions (Region 5 and 6), beginning in 2003, eligibility for assistance through the Trust Fund was extended to "needy" and "meritorious" girls in all regions (Goree Associates, 2004). The Trust Fund remains reliant on donor funding and specifically on financial contributions from UNICEF and the World Bank. While local funds were originally intended to help support the Trust Fund, a 2004 evaluation of the program found that this has not happened at all (Goree Associates, 2004).

A recent formal evaluation suggests that in terms of the Trust Fund's overall impact, more girls are in school and there has been some change in socio-cultural attitudes towards the benefits of investing in girls' education (Goree Associates, 2004). In terms of recommendations, the evaluation noted that scholarship funding does not cover the entire cost of schooling – for example, it does not cover the cost of uniforms, stationary, shoes etc., and therefore should be increased to make the program more effective. It also noted that Trust Fund administrative centers had not been established in each of the regional education directorates as planned.

³¹ Department of State for Education, retrieved on November 4, 2007 from www.statehouse.gm/kids/girlchild/opmanual.htm

Additionally, the disbursement of funds was unpredictable and/or predictably late (Goree Associates, 2004).

While the scholarship program has successfully maintained more girls in school, a major theme emerging from focus group discussions with teachers and headmasters was that “most” girls “are not serious with their studies” (Goree Associates, 2004, p. 17). Based on this analysis, participants urged the Department of State for Education (DOSE) to base scholarship eligibility on merit, and thus target “deserving students”, rather than exclusively girls (Goree Associates, 2004, p. 17). The idea that not all girls were deserving of scholarship support and that if girls were not prepared to work hard and persist in their schooling that they should forfeit their scholarships to boys, was something that came up during country field work in 2002 and in 2007 in informal conversations and interviews with teachers and school administrators. Letters to the Editor and other opinion pieces in national newspapers often noted the “lazy” attitudes of “school-girls”. On several occasions President Jammeh has publicly warned that girls who do not take their studies seriously will forfeit their scholarship to a boy (Fanta, Mid-Level Education Official, Rural Region).³² Overall, the Trust Fund has been widely lauded internationally, and was one of the initiatives short-listed for the Commonwealth Good Practice award in 2006.

The Scholarship Trust Fund is not the only scholarship program running in The Gambia. In 2002, the President’s Empowerment for Girls’ Education Project (PEGEP) was established to provide scholarships for girls in regions 1 and 2 - regions where gender disparities in educational participation are least pronounced relative to the other four regions. I was unable to obtain sufficient information concerning the PEGEP for a number of reasons. When I was in the country and scheduling appointments with potential participants it was difficult to establish

³² All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

contact with PEGEP. When I did eventually establish contact by mobile, I was asked to come to the office. Upon arriving at the office I was told that the person I was looking for was away from his office and to call him if I wanted to speak to him. We made an appointment and when I finally arrived at his office, he welcomed me and then announced that he was not able to participate in an interview or distribute documents or other data without my first obtaining formal authorization, in letter form, from the State House. This was the only instance in which my request for information or to interview someone was denied.

Regarding the pride of place that scholarships held, especially for the government officials participating in the study, I suggest that while such interventions have played an important role in getting girls into schools, and in some cases keeping them there, scholarships alone do little to change the socio-cultural constraints to girls' education specifically and women's advancement more generally. While the need for "sensitization" was repeatedly highlighted in public meetings and by study participants, as will be discussed in the following chapter, there was little evidence beyond the Big Bang sensitization campaign in 2001 of official interventions targeting socio-cultural beliefs and practices. The weak capacity for administering the Trust Fund, as well as the lack of linkages forged between different scholarship programs in The Gambia suggest that the scholarships do not reflect and do little to contribute to building political and civic commitment to the substantive demands of "gender equity" as a policy goal requiring and catalyzing social transformation and women's advancement through education.

In terms of funding, Table 13.0 provides details concerning the financial resources directed to each of the programmes called for in the RNEP.

Table 13.0 Costs by Programme Area

Programme	Cost (US\$)
Basic Education Expansion Programme	30,143,800
Secondary School Expansion Programme	5,681,900
Improvement of Sector Management Programme	5,528,000
Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of the Basic Education Programme	4,086,400
University Education	1,735,500
Increasing Access to Vocational and Technical Education Programme	1,649,300
Adult and Non-Formal Education	730,600
Girls' Education Programme	530,000
Early Childhood Development and Care Programme	200,600

Source: DOSE, 1998

Formalization of madrassa. The goal of integrating madrassa schools into the formal education system emerged in the 1990s in the context of World Bank-led Education Sector Projects 1 and 2. Donor and government documents reveal that the formalization of the madrassa system was viewed as an important means of achieving Education for All and Millennium Development Goal targets as well as reducing the cost to government of public education (World Bank, 2006, 1998, 1990). Towards the end of the RNEP period, in 2002, the madrassa system was formally integrated into the national education system. Over 15% of Gambian families enrol their children in madrassa and there are indications this number is growing as more madrassa are established and parental preferences favour this form of schooling for their children on moral and religious grounds, as well as the perception that the quality of education in madrassas is superior to that of “secular” and/or government schools. Similar to private and government schools there are more madrassa in urban areas than rural ones.

The General Secretariat for Islamic and Arabic Education (GSIAE) represents the governing body for madrassa in The Gambia. It was established in 2001 and in addition to

administering the madrassa system in the country the GSIAE decides what madrassa can formally be considered as such within the new formalized system. There are other forms of Islamic schooling operating in The Gambia, specifically daras and Koranic memorization centers. There are a number of very large daras operating in Central River Region. At these daras, children take Islamic studies during the morning and then go to the fields and farm in the afternoon. The labour of the children represents a form of “in-kind” payment for the religious education they receive. Some parents in nearby countries prefer to send their children, particularly their sons, to daras in The Gambia. Similarly, Koranic memorization centers are not considered part of the formal education system because they do not provide instruction in any other subject than Islamic studies. There are a number of Koranic memorization centers throughout the country.

The integration of the madrassa system required the synchronization of the curriculum with that of other formal schools in The Gambia. Prior to the reform, the curriculum taught to students in madrassa heavily depended on the nationality and/or formal training/experiences of proprietors and teachers; for example, students learned about Saudi Arabian history, the geography of Egypt and the economies of various Arabic and North African nations. The desire to have Gambian students learn about The Gambia provided a key impetus for developing and implementing a common national curriculum in the core subjects of Math, Science, English, History, and Geography. As part of the movement to formalize madrassa education in the country, Action Aid The Gambia collaborated with the GSIAE and the DOSBSE in the production of curriculum resources (i.e. teacher guides) based on the national curriculum and the translation of these into Arabic.

The formalization of the madrassa system was supported by the Government and donors. The Government pays the salary of English teachers in madrassas; however, no other direct financial support is provided by the state for these schools. In this regard, I was told that there had been some problems caused by English teachers not wanting to remain in their madrassa postings, and as of 2007 it was unclear what would happen in the future. Unfortunately, the details of the problems with English teachers in madrassa were not shared with me, despite my requests for more information from GSIAE officials.

GSIAE representatives indicated that parents pay fees for their children to attend madrassa and while no specific figures were made available to me, I was told that fees were generally slightly higher in madrassa than in the public education system. In partnership with the GSIAE and supported with funding from the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), Action Aid The Gambia led the process of synchronizing the national curriculum and developing teacher guides for use in madrassa. I was able to obtain copies of several of these teacher guides and I noted that girls (wearing *hijab*)³³ were featured in the cover images of madrassa classrooms.

Government support to madrassa, as detailed in the Master Plan 1998-2005, is dependent upon several criteria that must be met on the part of the madrassa operators/owners. Among these are: compliance with DOSE policy for school opening and operating; Acceptance of the same internal efficiency indicators and standards of quality assurance set by the DOSE (i.e. teacher-pupil ratio, English as compulsory subject, instructional hours); and the harmonization of core curriculum with conventional schools (DOSE, 1998, p. 5). Absent are any criteria related to the equity dimension of the RNEP policy objectives, including any mention of girls' education. Indeed, during my field research I was told by a member of the Education Sector Senior

³³ *Hijab* is the Arabic word for the Islamic head covering worn by some Muslim women.

Management Team (SMT) that gender had been left off the table in negotiations with the GSIAE because “we didn’t want trouble” (GM22). Nonetheless, madrassas are inspected and monitored under the processes as public, state-subsidized, and private schools.

Third Education Sector Project 1998-present day

The World Bank-led Third Education Sector Project was divided into two phases. Phase I ran from 1998 to 2005 and Phase II is currently being implemented. An Adaptable Program Lending (APL) instrument was used for the Third Education Sector Project, for the first time in the Africa region (World Bank, 1999). A credit of US\$20 million (total for both phases) from the World Bank has supported a wide range of national education reforms in The Gambia focused on improving access to and the quality of formal education, as well as the efficiency of the sector more generally (World Bank, 1998a). Specifically, the Third Education Sector Project intended to support nine objectives that were identified in the identified in the Government’s Education Sector Strategy Framework 1988-2005, revised after the 1994 coup: access to education; girls’ education; basic education quality; early childhood development and care; secondary education; technical and vocational education; university education; adult education/functional literacy program; and capacity-building for sector management (World Bank, 1998a, p. 3).

Key systemic challenges in the education sector are identified in the project appraisal document as follows:

- Increasingly stronger leadership at policy and strategy level, but weak management at all operational levels;
- Weak organization, including an inadequate division of labor and responsibilities, and a lack of authority and accountability;
- Poor management of human resources, where the recruitment, selection, training and promotion of staff are not guided by a well-conceived institutional development strategy;
- Shortage of highly-skilled, experienced professionals in all specialized areas; and
- Inefficient work practices and procedures, including weak information systems, reporting systems and coordination (World Bank, 1998a, p. 7).

Beyond the identification of the gender disparities in educational enrolment, performance, and retention, project documents by the World Bank do not specify further details concerning the rationale for girl-focused program interventions. I understood this to be a data point in itself, as it suggested to me that the Bank assumes widespread agreement that gender disparities in education are self-evidently problematic, tacitly on the basis that these constrain the full participation of all citizens in national development processes as per dominant human capital and instrumentalist framings. I also suggest that in leaving the arguments for girls' education off the table, the Bank opened up opportunities for national and sub-national policy actors to construct their own understandings and justifications for policy attention to issues of girls' education and gender equality in education policy programming.

The overarching goal for girls' education during Phase I, as defined in the Project Appraisal Document, was to increase girls' enrolment and retention in grades 1- 12 (World Bank, 1998a, p. 3). This was to be achieved through four key interventions, including those focused on demand-side factors as well as those focused on institutional reforms:

1. A scholarship scheme and flexible fee payment schedules;
2. The development of a supportive learning environment;
3. A community and teacher mobilization program; and
4. An increase in the proportion of female teachers (World Bank, 1998a, p. 3).

In Phase II of the Third Education Sector Project (2005-present), the Bank sought approval for further lending from the IDA Board of Directors because one of the triggers related to government commitments to education expenditure had not been met in Phase I. The problem was that between 2000 and 2004, government expenditure in education experienced a precipitous decline, contradicting formal government commitments made under Phase I of the APL (World Bank, 2006, p. 4).

My analysis of Phase II program documents suggested that the sense of urgency concerning girls' education, which characterized the discourse of earlier Bank education projects in the country, as discussed above, has been down-graded in more recent times. While challenges in terms of girls performance in school were identified, project documents highlight that near gender parity has been achieved at the basic education level (grades 1-9) (World Bank, 2006). Moreover, in both the Phase I evaluation reports and in Phase II program documents, boys' education emerges as a key theme (World Bank, 2005, 2006). For example, in a discussion of the achievements realized through the establishment of the Girls' Education Scholarship Trust Fund, the Bank stated that, "Gender equity also applies to boys' enrolment. Insufficient attention to boys may lead to a decline in their attendance" (World Bank, 2005, p. 23).

A key difference between Phase I and Phase II of the Third Education Sector Project concerns the relative emphasis on improving access, and therefore equity in educational enrolment. Whereas expanding access through building schools and providing financial incentives to parents to send their daughters to school was a component of Phase I; in Phase II the emphasis has shifted to improving the quality of education. This is most evident in the recent proposal for additional funding for the implementation of Phase II, where the document is oriented towards justifying the abandonment of equity and access issues in favour of quality (World Bank, 2010).

As of 2006, Phase II project components were identified as follows:

- Improved conditions for teaching and learning;
- Strengthened capacity-building, performance management, and monitoring and evaluation;
- Expansion of effective access (World Bank, 2006).

However, a declining focus on access and equity issues is suggested in the 2006 Project Appraisal Document for Phase II, where under “Alternatives Considered and Reasons for Rejection” it states,

The project will focus primarily on improvements in quality while continuing to support **limited expansion [emphasis added]** of school places. Although the EFA goals are very much a focus of the grant, the quality aspect of those goals was left unaddressed during the first phase; therefore, this project will make a strategic choice to ensure a minimum level of quality of teaching and learning as its priority. (World Bank, 2006, p. 9)

Nonetheless, support for the Girls’ Education Scholarship Trust Fund, as well as literacy training for rural women is continued under Phase II of the Third Education Sector Project; however, no new interventions or institutional reforms are mentioned.

Overall, the produced knowledge represented in the Third Education Sector Project documents frames girls’ education as being enhanced through distributive reforms aimed at expanding the physical infrastructure of the school system, the provision of girls’ education scholarships, as well as through some institutional reforms aimed at increasing the number of female teachers and introducing gender sensitivity training in Gambia College teacher education programs (World Bank, 2006). Moreover, the produced knowledge of World Bank sector-project documents emphasizes the urgency of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending in the sector, linked to larger macroeconomic reform objectives as spelled out in the PRSPs. In this regard, the Bank has pushed “unpopular” reforms such as double-shift teaching and multi-grade classrooms, which have dubious implications for the quality of education. Thus, beyond tensions between the relative importance of equity versus quality reforms in the sector, the policy solutions promoted by the Bank seem to contradict the professed urgency of improving educational quality and student performance as a means of enhancing girls’ education.

National Education Policy 2004-2015

Two main documents constitute the current national education policy context in The Gambia: the National Education Policy 2004-2005 (NEP) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2015 (ESSP).

The NEP dominantly frames the importance of education in terms of its contribution to human capital development and economic growth (RTG/DOSE, 2004). The role of education in poverty reduction efforts is emphasized more explicitly and frequently than in any other education policy to date, perhaps as a reflection of attempts to link sector development with the goals of the national PRSP II. The Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education's (DOSBE) guiding motto is now: "Provision of Responsive, Relevant and Quality Education for All Gambians for Poverty Reduction" (RTG/DOSE, p. 13).³⁴ The NEP notes a "positive trend" in girls' enrolment: "especially for the period 1996-2003" (2004, p. 26). However, gender disparities persist in terms of enrolment, retention and performance, particularly at the secondary and higher levels (DOSE/RTG, 2004, p. 26). Gender disparities are dominantly attributed in the policy document to "traditional beliefs and practices coupled with other factors" (DOSE/RTG, 2004, p. 26). Further gender analysis is not provided.

The ESSP targets six programmatic areas: basic education; secondary education; tertiary education; technical and vocational education and training; quality assurance; and sector management (RTG/DOSE, 2006). Table 14.0 shows the cost of each of these programs as laid out in the ESSP.

³⁴ The Department of State for Basic Education (DOSE) was changed to the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE) in 2007, while I was in the field. This change followed the creation at the same time of the Department of State for Higher Education (DOSHE).

Table 14.0 Total Costs By Programme (US\$ 000)

Programme	Cost	% of Total
Basic Education	140,365.31	72.1
Secondary Education	28,161.62	14.5
Tertiary Education	3,982.56	2.0
Technical and Vocational Education and Training	7,841.22	4.0
Quality Assurance	3,392.58	1.7
Sector Management	10,869.90	5.6
Total	194,613.18	100.0

Source: RTG/DOSE (2006, p. 37)

According to the NEP, it is towards the Education for All goals of “gender parity” and “equity” that the policy seeks to eliminate educational inequalities. A key basic aim of the NEP is to, “Mainstream gender in the creation of opportunities for all to acquire literacy, livelihood skills and the utilization of these skills in order to earn a living and become economically self-reliant members of the community” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 13). Policy goals concerning girls’ education are explicitly linked with the government’s “global commitments” and specifically to EFA and MDG agendas and targets. International human rights discourses are also used in the NEP and applied to the rights of individuals and groups to quality, relevant education: “The Gambia Government is committed to upholding the right of every person to basic education, regardless of gender, age, religion or disability. Accordingly, basic education will be open to all” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 19). However, despite using the language of rights in several instances, and even as a main policy aim - namely the creation of “an awareness of the importance of peace, democracy and human rights, duties and responsibilities of the individual in fostering these qualities” - the NEP does not seem to otherwise represent a rights-based approach to education expansion or reform (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 14).

The most noticeable difference between the NEP and other previous education policies is its dedication of a separate section to “Gender Mainstreaming” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, pp. 26-27).

However, given the historical absence of gender mainstreaming practice in the country, the NEP somewhat confusingly calls for a “revitalization” of gender mainstreaming. The document states,

In order to revitalise gender mainstreaming, three key interventions will be adopted: Minimising costs of education, especially for girls; Ensuring that all co-educational schools have ‘girl-friendly’ environments; Equal participation by women and men at the PTAs, governing bodies and the management levels of schools. (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 54)

Beyond the two-page overview of “gender mainstreaming” in the NEP, there is little evidence that considerations of gender and the unique educational needs of girls and boys have been incorporated across all sectors. Noticeably absent for instance in the NEP is attention to girls, boys and/or “gender” in the sections on Early Childhood Education, Madrassa, Facilities, Special Needs Education, Non-Formal Education, Curriculum, Staffing, Educational Broadcasting, Tertiary Education, as well as most other sections.³⁵ Where gender or sex categories are included, it is most often one sentence indicating intent to “include all girls” or “especially girls”.

The NEP identifies several types of barriers or constraints on girls’ education – economic, socio-cultural and individual - but provides little if any analyses in terms of the origin and nature of the main barriers to girls’ educational equality. It is as though the NEP takes it as a given that barriers and constraints exist in terms of girls’ education, that they are widely understood, and that it is sufficient to broadly label constraints (i.e. “economic”, “socio-cultural” etc.) rather offer an analysis of their dynamics and effects as a means of advocating and framing remedial policy initiatives in the area of girls’ education.

³⁵ Whereas gender considerations have not been mainstreamed throughout the policy document, the list of goals in the “gender mainstreaming” section cover teacher issues, access, retention, performance, non-formal education, and science, math and technology education.

Referencing the World Bank (1995) study, *Why Gambian Households Underinvest in Girls' Education*, economic constraints on girls' access, retention and performance in formal schooling are considered the most significant barriers to girls' educational equality with boys in the NEP. The policy also mentions socio-cultural constraints "engendered by traditional beliefs and practices", but fails at times to elaborate fully what, more precisely, it is about certain "traditional" norms and practices that constrain girls' education, nor where such constraints have the most impact, for example, in terms of girls' access, retention or performance in schools (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 26).

The cursory attention paid to constraints on girls' education (or boys' education for that matter), extends to the policy position that girls themselves are the problem inasmuch as they lack the confidence and assertiveness it takes to succeed in formal education: "The need to intensify efforts in order to neutralise the factors that militate against girls' education is crucial, and so is the need to raise the confidence and performance levels of girls (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 26).

At other points in the policy document, a fuller gender analysis is provided. For example, claims are made that girls' and women's lack of decision-making power leads to a "socialisation process that produces girls who adequately lack [sic] assertiveness, self-confidence or self-esteem" (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 29). Another problem the NEP highlights in connection to the social context of schooling is the "sexual objectification" of girls and women in society which is said to contribute to the widespread practices of early and forced marriage, sexual harassment and sexual abuse (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 29). Remedial policy action to protect girls in schools calls for the institutionalization and implementation of the Sexual Harassment Policy.

Sexual harassment policy. Launched in 2004, the *Policy Guidelines and Regulations on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment in Gambian Educational Institutions* document covers a range of topics and issues concerning the justification of the policy; its legal basis; the policy context; defining sexual harassment and sexual misconduct; identification of the policy regulations; implementation responsibilities; reporting procedures; and what form sanctions will take against offenders (RTG/DOSE, 2004). The policy begins by highlighting that “sexual harassment is a serious societal problem” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 2), and further that:

The Gambia is obliged by its ratification of international treaties and enactment of domestic laws to ensure respect for women’s and girls’ and all children’s human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to education. It must be recognised that the failure to address the problems of rape, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment at school has a discriminatory impact and effectively denies girls and boys their right to education. (p. 6)

The policy covers all forms (Madrassa, Government and private) and levels (pre-primary to tertiary) of schools in The Gambia. The definitions of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment included are clearly established and appear comprehensive in scope. Moreover, the policy explicitly frames sexual harassment and misconduct as an abuse of power and highlights that under international human rights law and national law, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are illegal ((RTG/DOSE, 2004). A key message of the policy is that sexual misconduct and harassment can affect boys and girls and women and men alike; however, the problem of teenage pregnancy was central to the justification of the need for such a policy. Based on the findings from several studies the policy claims that the risk of girls becoming pregnant is the major reason why parents are reluctant to send their daughters to school (RTG/DOSE, 2004; see also, GEU, 2003, unpublished research; UNICEF, 2003; World Bank, 1993, 1995). In further justification of the policy, the document states that sexual harassment and

misconduct in schools negatively affects the learning and performance of students, as well as student retention: “There have been many reports of schoolgirls leaving the system because of impregnation by teachers, fellow pupils or others” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 2)

The policy identifies the bodies and mechanisms through which sexual harassment and misconduct cases are to be reported and adjudicated. Each school and region is to have a committee responsible for dealing with cases of sexual harassment and misconduct. School-based committees must involve teachers, administrators, representatives of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Mothers’ Clubs (MCs), as well as a representative from the health sector (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 12). The policy stipulates that committee membership “must include women” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 12). School-based committees are to report all cases to the School Principal, the Regional Education Office and the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE). Committees responsible for dealing with cases of sexual harassment and misconduct are to be established within each of the six Regional Education Directorates (REDs) in the country. The policy calls for “one third” of regional committee membership to be women and expands the committee membership requirements to include representatives from the police force, commissioner’s office and youth groups. For whatever reason, if it is not possible for school and/or regional committees to arbitrate in sexual misconduct and harassment cases, a National Sexual Harassment Committee is to be made available, coordinated by the Girls’ Education Unit (GEU) (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 12). The policy does not attach specific sanctions to different offenses; rather, school, regional, and national committees are responsible for coming up with the appropriate sanctions depending on the “severity” of the offense. Some possible sanctions that the policy identifies include: letters of reprimand, reassignment, temporary suspension with pay, financial penalties, referral to

counselling, dismissal, imprisonment (in cases of rape), and “deportation of non-Gambians” (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 15).

The policy highlights two major challenges to its implementation: girls’ and women’s lack of awareness of their legal and human rights, and victims’ fear of retaliatory action by accused. To address the first challenge, the policy identifies a comprehensive list of “stakeholders” that are responsible for implementation, including National Assembly Members (NAMs), Secretaries of State, DOSE (now DOSBSE), the Women’s Bureau, “gender-concerned institutions”, Gambia Teachers’ Union, REDs, school heads, teachers, parents, students, and the public (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 16). The policy is to be disseminated to all schools and a summary is to be displayed outside the Principal’s office at each school. Each RED is to incorporate the policy into school “rules and regulations handbooks”, as well providing training sessions on the policy for teachers, staff, parents and students (RTG/DOSE, 2004, p. 16). Teacher training programs at the Gambia College are also required to incorporate the Sexual Harassment Policy into the curriculum. To address the problem of lack of awareness and fear of reprisal for reporting abuse, the policy emphasizes the need for sensitivity and confidentiality in dealing with reported cases of abuse/misconduct. Overall, the Sexual Harassment Policy provides clear guidelines and processes that are to be followed in cases of sexual harassment and misconduct. The document makes it clear that these forms of offense are not to be tolerated or covered-up or in any other way dismissed.

The “silent” re-entry policy for young mothers. The most controversial recent policy reform has been the re-entry policy for girls who have left school due to pregnancy. In the past, girls who found themselves in this situation were not allowed to return to school. While not an official policy, the practice of barring school-age mothers from returning to school after giving

birth to their children has been in the past, the politically and socially sanctioned norm: “Even though head-teachers don’t have the right to expel them, even though nothing is stated in the policy, they use to take it upon themselves to send them away from school” (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region).

Although not mentioned in the NEP, I was told by several government officials and non-governmental representatives that young mothers returning to school are supported in finding a new school to enrol in, as well as receiving financial assistance. However, according to a senior regional education authority one problem was that no budgetary funds had been allocated for the re-entry policy to help support young mothers returning to school. In 2006, “one-off payments” were made to several women using money from the FTI Catalytic Fund, yet future funding was not secured (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region).

Moreover, due to fears that parents would be upset with it, the new re-entry policy is a “silent policy”. As one participant from the GEU stated, “The Government is very silent on it”, continuing, “You know, our culture in The Gambia, we cannot go and announce it on TV that we have a re-entry policy” (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative). In another instance, a senior DOSBSE official said:

We have also tried not to go public for fear of getting a backlash effect, because some of the parents that were reluctant to send their girls to school, if we had to come up with [re-entry policy] it may have this backlash effect of them saying [participant claps hands] ‘since you convinced us to bring our girls to school, you are now coming out with a policy that would encourage girls’ pregnancy’! (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

However, Lamin seemed to share some of the same concerns that were attributed to parents, and implied the same for other policy actors through the use of the pronoun “we”, in the

following statement: “We don’t want the other girls to see that this has happened to this girl and that she’s back... We don’t want to create a license for some of the other girls to get pregnant” (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government). Thus, under the policy school-age mothers, who have dropped out due to pregnancy, can return to school; however, it has to be different from the one they left.

Awa, as someone who had completed research on out-of-school mothers in The Gambia was very upset that it was silent. She critically noted that, “It is not like it’s being advocated and publicized”, and stated that “this is the way...the wish of the parents who participated” (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region). Moreover, as Awa argued, girls and women can only benefit from the policy if they are aware of it. Several non-governmental and governmental participants expressed concern over the low level of public awareness of policy and programs. Combining more economic and social justice perspectives, Awa stated,

And remember that these are children whose parents have invested in them. They are also children who the nation has invested in and you don’t want to see them waste because once they are sent out of school, they don’t have a dream, they have nothing to do – you have a vicious cycle of poverty just going around. And in the process they become more vulnerable, they become more vulnerable and we are talking about the human resource base for the country. Remember that we are not wealthy in terms of natural resources, so we cannot afford to waste our human resources. (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region)

Flexible school calendars. An important outcome of the country-wide public consultations, constituting the participatory policy formulation process, was the institutionalization of the “flexible school calendar” as part of the decentralization reforms in the sector. Public consultations with rural communities in particular revealed a common concern amongst parents that school schedules frequently conflicted with the labour needs of the

household. The conflict was particularly acute during the cultivation and harvesting of subsistence and cash crops – the timing of which is critically important.

In an attempt to facilitate more “policy ownership” and promote “community empowerment”, decisions concerning when schools open and close, as well as the timing and duration of holidays and breaks are taken at the community-level in consultation with regional education authorities. Government officials recognized that if greater flexibility and control was not accorded to communities over school scheduling that this would continue to impede progress towards the attainment of EFA. It was interesting to note that participants tended to refer to either EFA or MDGs or both, rather than the NEP, when linking action to goals.

The implementation of the flexible school calendars can also be understood as part of the government’s efforts to “sensitize” communities concerning the importance of education for national development, and as such involved an element of compromise between the state and its citizens. A senior official in the GEU recounted a story in which she travelled to the “most difficult area in this country”, located in the northern area of the Central River Region (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative). This area is known for its “big daras...as big as putting Banjul and Serrekunda together”, where Muslim children (including those from The Gambia, Guinea Bassau, Senegal, and other neighbouring countries) split their time between memorizing the Quran and farming activities. When Fatou and her entourage, including the then Secretary of State for Education Mrs. Ann Theres Ndong Jatta, they were told by community members “we don’t need a school...we have one but the children don’t go to it, we don’t need it, we need a madrassa” (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative). While it is not clear whether the community in question had a madrassa built, for Fatou what was more important was that education officials talked with the community members, listened to them and their concerns, and

proposed a flexible school calendar as a means of better balancing the farm-work/schoolwork responsibilities of children. This was a strategy advocated by the main children's advocacy umbrella organization - "The Child Protection Alliance". However, the flexible school calendar approach, like The Gambia and other countries are experimenting with, is an example of a "distributive" policy solution because it is a reform framed as "helping all children" (Stromquist, 2008). It seemed that amongst the policy actors that I spoke with, and in terms of the main policy initiatives chosen to be scaled up, that there was a policy preference for distributive policy interventions over redistributive or transformative reforms.

Sensitization: Changing attitudes toward girls' education. Since the early 1990's the government has emphasized the importance of "sensitizing" communities concerning the importance of girls' education. Through the course of the field research the value of "sensitization" campaigns was highlighted by the majority of government and non-governmental participants, with all mentioning the "Big Bang" campaign and noting its success in terms of realizing an increase in boys' and girls' enrolment. In this sense, "sensitization" efforts had, in many instances, a "gender-neutral" framing. Participants frequently mentioned "sensitization" as the default "solution" to socio-cultural constraints on children's educational opportunities, even as these constraints were frequently down-played during interviews, especially amongst government actors who emphasized that socio-cultural attitudes had largely changed towards supporting girls' education and accepting "Western" forms of schooling.

However, "raising awareness" concerning the importance of education for national development was a key theme in participant's narratives during interviews and public meetings as well as in national media. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, participants emphasized the successes of girls' education and gender education policy solutions in the

education sector; however, this emphasis on success did not occlude the recognition that problems remained in “some communities”. The title of an undated DOSE document, *The Gambia Girls’ Education Program: Mopping up Pockets of Low Enrolment*, attests to the perception that girls’ education was only an issue in a few isolated areas. I suggest that girls’ education would only be considered an “isolated problem” if one were to look at the issues only in terms of access; if one considers the problems of retention, completion, and women’s participation in the formal labour market across the country, the statement that girls’ education faces “isolated” challenges is not wholly accurate.

Sensitization activities were also targeted toward teachers. Specific concern for women “role models” in the education system was emphasized by a number of participants, all of whom identified and talked about the Remedial Instruction for Female Teachers (RIFT) program that had been implemented from 1995 to 2005, funded largely by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and implemented in partnership with UNICEF, DOSE, and Gambia College. The program aimed to attract more women into the teaching profession and offered candidates opportunities to improve and acquire the skills and qualifications they needed to graduate from teacher’s college. The RIFT program was identified by participants with pride, with individuals frequently lamenting the termination of the program after donor funding ran out. However, a senior official at the GEU indicated that a “counter-program” called the “Recruitment Drive” had been initiated by the DOSBSE that targeted rural-based girls in senior secondary schools in order to “sensitize them and get them to come [into the teaching profession]” (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative).

Few central education officials mentioned them, but most of the regional education officials identified Mothers’ Clubs (MCs) as playing an important role in terms of “sensitization”

and “raising awareness” concerning the importance of girls’ education. One regional government official remarked that MCs were part of government efforts to “enlighten” society (Saul, Senior Education Officer, Urban Region), and another said that MCs were part of the “affirmative action” dimensions of the NEP (2004-2015) that were advocated by the National Women’s Bureau (Abdoulie, Senior Official, Women’s Bureau). In their descriptions of the Mothers’ Club initiative, government officials emphasized both the intended impact in terms of promoting girls’ access and performance in school, as well as the actual impact in terms of Mothers’ Club members using the profits from their income-generating activities, which are part of the program, to support school improvement and maintenance. Here again was the theme that policy solutions are supported if they can be demonstrated or at least perceived to benefit “everyone”, school-boys and school-girls alike. In the following section I look more closely at the Mothers’ Club initiative, a policy solution that was widely identified as central to government and civil society efforts to promote and enhance girls’ education.

Promoting girls’ education through mother’s clubs: Change with continuity. A flagship activity included in the NEP and ESSP, but initiated originally by UNICEF and implemented by FAWEGAM, has been the establishment of Mothers’ Clubs. According to the UNICEF website, the overall aim of setting up the clubs is to “promote family and community participation and create special opportunities for women/mothers in particular in the promotion of access, retention and performance of their girls/daughters in schools” (UNICEF, n.d.). The Gambia has well-over ninety “functioning” MCs, and likely twice as many non-functioning MCs throughout the country. The critical distinction between the two is that “functioning” MCs have received “seed money” to initiate income-generating activities and the adoption of labour-saving technologies, and “non-functioning” MCs are those still waiting for this initial financial support.

Locally-based women's groups have a long history throughout sub-Saharan Africa and generally have played important social and economic roles (Nordtveit, 2008, p. 185). The formation of MCs in The Gambia began under the Africa Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI) – a Norwegian-sponsored, and UNICEF-implemented program aimed at enhancing girls' education in thirty-four countries on the continent from 1996-2003 (Chapman & Miske, 2008). As part of the program in The Gambia and in addition to the establishment of MCs, the AGEI supplied: textbooks at the basic education level; facilitated curriculum review and the development of a guidance and counselling manual; ran school-feeding programmes; built separate toilet facilities for girls; developed "Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) instruments; ran adult literacy training for women; and supported community sensitization efforts in rural areas (Chapman & Miske, 2008, pp. 92-97).

MCs were introduced in The Gambia at a time when public expenditure in education was dropping and decentralization reforms were being implemented. Thus, as state spending was reduced as part of overall fiscal austerity measures and macroeconomic adjustment MCs emerged at the community-level to assume a considerable degree of financial and labour responsibilities in terms of the school(s) in their community. Second, MCs aim at relieving girls from the domestic chores that were constraining their access and performance in formal education. However, the approach to relieving girls' domestic burden relies on shifting and even extending the reproductive and productive burdens of mothers. Third, I want to raise concern regarding the messages girls receive in school, or the "hidden curriculum" of girls' educational experiences (Masemann, 1974). All those who inhabit the walls of the school, witness each day, members of the MC working or otherwise engaged in school-support/reproductive activities. Messages concerning the role of women, the basis of privilege and ultimately "gender justice"

circulate that affirm the status quo rather than challenge existing gender relations and the division of labour and familial responsibility.³⁶

The process of establishing an MC seems very straightforward, according to many of the participants, as well as the secondary literature (see Chapman & Miske, 2008). Wherever an MC is established, I was told by several participants representing all three categories of actors this study focuses on, that all mothers in the community become members by virtue of their motherhood. A relatively small amount of “seed money” is given to each MC for the purpose of purchasing labour-saving devices or other productive resources that can be used to generate income.³⁷ I was told that some MCs are funded through the AGEI as administered by the Forum for African Women Educationalists – The Gambia (FAWEGAM), and that others (Region 2) receive funding through the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) via the DOSBSE. However, up-river in the second-most remote region, one participant lamented that:

Because what happened was when Mother’s Clubs came up, then FAWEGAM gave what they called seed money to certain Mothers’ Clubs. So when other communities heard about it, almost every school had a Mothers’ Club. But unfortunately they did not have any money from FAWEGAM. The clubs still exist, but they can’t do much without that money. It’s always difficult, especially in a poor community. (Ousman, Senior Education Official, Rural Region)

Within some groups, the seed money is divided amongst a few income-generating ideas that members may have. All of the participants that spoke about MCs emphasized that the profits from women’s income-generation activities were ploughed back into the schools, where it benefitted “everyone”. In addition to helping to financially support students and the schools in general, MC members also perform reproductive work for the school community. Tasks in this

³⁶ In The Gambia, the extended family system is the predominant model.

³⁷ In early 2007 the usual amount of “seed money” provided was D3500, equal to US\$155 at the time.

respect include sweeping, cooking (as part of a feeding program if a school has one), and fetching water as necessary. Members also play a role in the teaching of girls on matters of reproductive health and sexuality (boys are not generally included in these lessons).

The MC program was viewed as a win-win situation by all, and not one participant raised even the faintest critique of potentially problematic aspects. From the perspective of Fatou Bah, president of an MC in Region 5, formal education is important because, “The world is changing, and even in a small country like ours, things are changing. If we don’t educate our children, we will be left out. It’s becoming clear that in today’s world, without education, we lose” (AGEI, n.d.).³⁸

I argue that MCs can be seen as handmaidens of neoliberal and market-oriented reforms that emphasize economic solutions to perceived economic problems and devolve responsibility for social services “down” to the region and community levels. Yet the burden is carried disproportionately by women at the sub-national levels as they work harder, longer, and differently in order to fill the gap left by the retreating state, particularly in the areas of health and education. As women’s reproductive burden is extended and deepened, girls’ socialization is one characterized by the witnessing of and participation in, their mothers’ long and arduous days spent doing highly-gendered work tasks. I suggest that the privileging of MCs within gender and education policy spaces reflects the dominant economic-utilitarian logic of action underpinning the promotion of girls’ education, even as market ideology appears to be in tension with the formal rights-based agenda of FAWEGAM.

Moreover, I argue that MCs function according to somewhat depoliticized notions of gender equality and gender equity, thereby, reflecting a bias against efforts to disrupt the unequal

³⁸ AGEI, accessed February 17 from http://www.ungei.org/gaproject/gambia_318.html

socio-economic status quo. Schech and Vas Dev's critique of World Bank gender analysis and policy points to a similar pattern, whereby, "The [World] Bank's understanding of gender relations whereby the empowerment of women does not appear to be associated with conflict, and increasing women's choices is not related to restricting men's power to restrict them" (2008, p. 19).

Before concluding this section I would like to say a few words concerning the advantages and strengths of the MCs as I see them and as many of the participants saw them. Mothers' Clubs are based on a democratic organizational model in which there is a President, Executive, Treasurer, etc. Women are taught leadership and communication skills and are exposed to situations in which these skills are applied and developed further. Women's status within a community may change as a result of their involvement with the MCs (see Chapman & Miske, 2008). In some cases this was for the better; however, in at least one case, conflict between men and women concerning girls' education implied that the sensitization and public education work that members of MCs engaged in would have a negative impact on their status in the sense that men resented and put-down those who engaged in gender advocacy activities. These sorts of tensions and dynamics must be considered when supporting or implementing equity policies. The value of having MC members assist in the development of girls' understandings of sexual and reproductive health issues must also be recognized. I would however, suggest that the benefit to girls and boys of such classes would increase if there was way to engage with the latter around these same issues.

*Reconfiguring the Role of the State in Education and the Promotion of Gender Equality
Privatization*

Decreased government spending. Government expenditure on public education as both a percentage of GDP and percentage of the government spending overall has been declining since 1999 as detailed in Table 15.0. Expansion of the education sector is primarily attributable to the growth in the number private schools, particularly those offering senior secondary and pre-school education services. The Gambian education system is heavily aid-dependent, despite the priority status of the sector in official national development policy documents such as the PRSP II and the Vision 2020. For example, in 2005, the share of total capital education expenditure coming from international sources was 94.5% (World Bank, Public Expenditure Database).³⁹ Similarly, government interventions in support of enhancing girls' education are predominantly funded by external sources, for example, through the Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and through direct bilateral support.

Table 15.0: Education Expenditure as % of GDP and Total Expenditure by Level

Indicator	1990	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Education Expenditure as % of GDP	...	4.2	6.3	6.8	4.7	4.4	3.8	....
Total Public Education Expenditure as % of GDP	...	3.8	4.1	4.3	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.0
Total Public Education Expenditure as a % of Total Government Spending	14.6	17.1	14.4	15.8	12.0	12.2	9.7	8.9
Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (1998-2000)	14.2	...	...	...	...	...
Public expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (2002-2005)	8.9
Share of Education Budget (%) Primary	43.2

³⁹ <http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/EdStats/ExpReport>

Share of Education Budget (%) Secondary	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	25.8
Share of Education Budget (%) Tertiary	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	12.2
Share of Education Budget (%) "Other"	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18.8

Sources: World Bank Education Statistics [<http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/EdStats/ExpReport>]; World Bank Education at a Glance, The Gambia [<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTEDSTATS/Resources/3232763-1171296190619/3445877-1172014191219/GMB.pdf>]

Promotion of private sector expansion in education service delivery. The private sector enrolment share at the primary level grew from 13.6% to 20.2% between 2000 and 2007. More modest growth in private school enrolment was experienced at the secondary-level, which increased from 27.2% in 2000 to 27.8% in 2007 (World Bank).⁴⁰ The University of The Gambia was established with the support of Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1999. Previously, those wishing to pursue university-level studies had to travel outside The Gambia to do so. In this respect European, U.S., Middle Eastern, and North African institutions have been popular amongst those Gambians pursuing university degrees, as well as some institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) and the Management Development Institute (MDI) are both government supported and operated institutions. The Gambia College located in Western Region is a government run educational facility that is responsible for the primary and secondary teacher training needs of the country. Teachers receive either the Primary Teaching Certificate (PTC), or Higher Teaching Certificate (HTC). Types of teachers working in The Gambia are classified as follows: Qualified, Unqualified, Qualified Koranic, Unqualified Koranic. Despite the formalization of the madrassa system teachers in madrassa, other than those who are government appointed and paid, do not belong to the Gambia

⁴⁰ http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/ext/ddpreports/ViewSharedReport?&CF=&REPORT_ID=10804&REQUEST_TYPE=VIEWADVANCED&DIMENSIONS=69&HF=N

Teachers' Union (Ibrima, Faith-Based CSO). All primary and secondary schools, whether public or private, "secular" or "religious", include Islamic studies as part of the formal curriculum.

Table 16.0 provides details concerning the distribution of schools by type and region in the country.

Table 16.0 Number, Type and Level of Schools in The Gambia 2006/2007

	Region 1 (Banjul)	Region 2 (Western)	Region 3 (North Bank)	Region 4 (Lower River)	Region 5 (Central River)	Region 6 (Upper River)	Total
Lower Basic							434
Government	20	66	71	48	84	73	362
Grant-Aided	8	15	1	0	2	2	28
Private	29	13	2	0	0	0	44
Upper Basic							56
Government	9	28	20	9	23	14	103
Grant-Aided	6	9	2	0	0	1	18
Private	20	4	1	0	0	0	25
Senior Secondary							61
Government	1	1	7	7	4	2	22
Grant-Aided	6	3	0	0	0	1	10
Private	19	10	0	0	0	0	29

Source: DOSBSE (2007)

The Framing of Gender Equality in Education and Government Commitments Under The Gambia-EFA/FTI Partnership Arrangement (2004-Present)

Towards achieving the education and gender-related MDGs, the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative has been one of the most important partnership arrangements for the Gambian Government since 2005 (World Bank, 2006, p. 9). An original proposal was submitted by The Gambia in 2003 for funding under the EFA-FTI initiative (RTG/DOSE, 2003). In total, US\$ 4 million was granted through the EFA-FTI Catalytic Fund to The Gambia in 2006 (World Bank, 2006, p. 9). For the period 2009-2011, a further US\$28 million has been approved (EFA-FTI,

2009). As part of the EFA-FTI endorsement process, partner countries must include a commitment to girls' education as part of their national education plan and grant proposals.

The original proposal for EFA-FTI financing, identifies the attainment of gender equity in primary and secondary enrolment by 2005 as one of the five objectives of the National EFA Plan towards the achievement of the MDGs (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 2). Particular emphasis is placed on girls' access to and retention in schooling. It is also important to note that while the concept of "equity" is used in some parts, "gender parity" is the dominant phrase used in connection to girls' education goals. One theme in the proposal concerns the positive impacts of girls' education programming, particularly the achievements made through the Girls' Education Scholarship Trust Fund, as well as the reduction in costs at the upper basic and senior secondary levels (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 7). However, the proposal identifies girls' participation at the senior secondary level as a remaining challenge. The key barriers to girls' post-basic educational participation are framed as related to socio-cultural beliefs and practices as well as the school environment itself. Here, early marriage and teen pregnancy, as well as gender bias in the curriculum, and the lack of separate toilet facilities for girls, are singled out as being the key barriers to the achievement of "gender parity" (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 7).

Specific Government commitments under the girls' education component of the proposal include cost reduction/financial assistance, the provision of separate toilet facilities, removal of gender bias in the school curriculum, as well as the development and implementation of the Sexual Harassment Policy for the education sector. The continuation of sensitization campaigns aimed at raising awareness concerning the importance of girls' education was also included as a formal Government commitment (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 12).

Government commitments to girls' education, as spelled out in the 2003 EFA-FTI grant proposal, are premised on human capital and instrumentalist assumptions concerning the role of girls' education in facilitating national economic growth and development:

Increasing the participation and retention rates of girls will be a critical part of this EFA/FTI proposal, considering the returns associated with girls' education and the potential it has in overall poverty reduction. (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 12)

In terms of financing the National EFA Plan, the 2003 proposal to the EFA-FTI commits the Government to contributing 36% of the total program cost, comprising 50% of the recurrent costs and 6% of the capital costs (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 18). The proposal identified the Government's willingness to continue increasing expenditure in the social sectors, and to this end commits the Government to financing double-shift and multi-grade allowances, as well as teachers' salaries – for the first three years (i.e. 2006-2009) (RTG/DOSE, 2003, p. 20).

In the 2006 report on EFA-FTI implementation in The Gambia, the Government notes with pride the gains made in terms of girls' education: "As indicated in previous reports, gender issues have been given enormous attention during the implementation of both the 2005 and 2006 grants, and the returns are evident (RTG/DOSE, 2006, p. 4).

The report goes on to highlight that gains made in terms of girls' access to basic education in recent years have been maintained, "while the decline in the enrolment of boys in lower basic has been addressed" (RTG/DOSE, 2006, p. 4). However, the document does not provide further details concerning how the problems in boys' education nor how they were solved. Catalytic funding supported a GEU-led teacher recruitment drive in 2006/2007 that targeted over one hundred and fifty female students in support of the program goal of increasing the number of women teachers in the system (RTG/DOSE, 2006). The report further notes the

gains made through the UNICEF-supported "Child/Girl-Friendly School Initiative" in terms of increasing girls' access to and retention in basic education (RTG/DOSE, 2006, p. 4).

Additionally, EFA-FTI funding enabled the support of The Gambia teachers' union, and especially the Women's Wing of the organization, in the development and implementation of Information, Education, Communication (IEC) and Behavioural Change Communication (BCC) messages for communities and schools in the most remote and deprived regions of the country (RTG/DOSE, 2006, p. 4).

Mothers' Clubs were a further policy solution identified as contributing to the gains made in girls' education. Here again is what I see as an emphasis on and preference for distributive reforms (i.e. those benefiting all children) that are enabled by the contribution of women's unpaid labour to the maintenance and operation of community schools and their related programs and activities. In describing the impact of MCs in terms of gains in enrolment and retention the report states that both boys and girls have benefited from the income of Mothers' Clubs (RTG/DOSE, 2006).

In the 2007 Technical Proposal for support under the EFA-FTI Catalytic Fund increasing girls' access to and retention in basic education is again identified as a priority; however, in describing the challenges to "increasing access and equity to basic education" the document states that: "there has been considerable access in basic education, it should be noted that such expansion has been in favour of girls due to the worrisome drops in enrolment for boys in lower basic education" (RTG/DOSE, 2007, p. 4). The total amount requested was US\$ 5.4 million, with US\$ 294,546 allocated to increasing the participation and retention rates of girls (RTG/DOSE, 2007, p. 13).

Compared with other proposals and policy documents there is less space devoted to identifying the challenges and strategies for the achievement of gender equality in education. Indeed, more emphasis is placed in the analysis on the pattern of boys' declining enrolment in some regions, suggesting that earlier claims to have addressed the problem may have been premature. In terms of strategies, the proposal commits the Government to continue financing what is now called the "Child-Friendly Schools Initiative" (rather than "girl-friendly" or "child/girl-friendly"), under which support to MCs and the building of separate latrines are interpreted in the document as key solutions, assumed to contribute to the creation of a "safe and supportive learning environment...for eventual improved learning outcomes" (RTG/DOSE, 2007, pp. 5-6).

Overall, the produced knowledge in EFA-FTI proposals and implementation reports is similar to that of World Bank sector project documents, as well as national policy documents. It is clear that education is a priority sector for the Government, particularly because of its role in promoting human capital development and framed as a means of achieving the MDG goal for poverty reduction. Yet, the EFA-FTI regulatory mechanism does appear to be helping maintain formal government attention to issues of gender in education, albeit framed as it is in terms of the goal of "gender parity". The analysis revealed a decline in the attention paid to issues of girls' education in the years since the original proposal in 2003. Instead, declining boys' enrolment in basic schools appears as an emergent policy priority for Government. This helps explain the identification of and support for interventions that focus on both boys' and girls' access to and retention in formal education. Distributive reforms targeting the quality of education are also emphasized as promoting educational equity in each of the national EFA-FTI documents reviewed.

Gender and Education in the World Bank-African Development Bank Joint Assistance Strategy 2008-2011

Based on Rome and Paris declarations principles, Joint Assistance Strategies (JAS) aim to promote better coordination and harmonization between donors as a means of building better relationships with recipient governments and improving aid effectiveness. Together, the World Bank (WB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) prepared the Joint Assistance Strategy for The Gambia (JAS 2008-2011) to replace their respective country assistance strategies that had most recently guided aid programs in the country from 2003 (WB) and 2006 (AfDB). As mentioned in Chapter One gender is identified along with seven other areas as being a priority development challenge that the JAS aims to support the government in addressing within the context of implementing the PRSP II. In accordance with the principle of country ownership, JAS priorities are explicitly aligned with the poverty reduction goals articulated by the government in the MDG-based PRSP II and the Vision 2020 framework (WB/AfDB, 2008).

The JAS frames gender equality as requiring the “empowerment of the most affected”, which the document identifies as being women and girls (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). The Government of The Gambia (GOTG) is said to recognize the necessity of empowerment and the “mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all sector by all actors in the development process” for the achievement of gender equality (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). However, gender as a concept is left undefined in the JAS. In largely using it interchangeably with girls and women, boys and men, the concept seems to be understood more as a noun in much of the document. For example, women are the exclusive focus in the JAS’s discussion of gender as a development challenge, with the problem of high fertility rates emphasized. Aligning with the human capital approach,

the JAS notes with concern that the high population growth rate in The Gambia will make it increasingly more difficult to “finance human capital investments” (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10).

Gender equality is linked in the document most explicitly to the principle of *equal opportunity*, and is framed in largely human capital terms. For example, under the heading of “gender”, the JAS highlights that The Gambia “has been promoting equal access for men and women to human capital development opportunities” (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). The JAS notes that the education sector benefits from having one of the largest government budgets among most ministries; donor support, including the IDA-financed second phase of the Third Education Sector Project and the Policy and Human Resources Development (PHRD) project financed by Japan and administered through the Bank; and grant financing through the EFA-FTI Catalytic Fund (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 9).

In discussing the positive impact of government efforts to promote access to education, the JAS highlights that scholarships for girls at the senior secondary level and girl-focused initiatives for basic schools have yielded “significant” increases in girls’ enrolment in formal education (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). However, while the achievement of “gender parity” at the basic cycle is acknowledged, the JAS indicates that the gender gap at the senior secondary level remains significant (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 9). Reflective of the human capital approach, the JAS frames education as a productive resource and opportunity when discussing how “traditional views” continue to constrain women’s access to education, particularly in rural areas (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). However, while the JAS considers access to educational opportunities to be important, it makes clear that “education remains the biggest challenge” (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 9). In this regard, teacher recruitment and training is identified in the JAS as being a priority area for supporting government efforts, which have recently begun to include hardship

allowances and activities geared toward improving teachers working and living conditions, particularly in remote rural areas. The JAS frames the problem of poor educational quality in human capital terms and as an “impediment for growth” on the basis that it means individuals are not acquiring the skills and abilities deemed necessary to fulfill the human resource needs in the country (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 9).

The JAS proposes to support the achievement of “gender equality” and “women’s empowerment” in The Gambia by strategically targeting the education sector, health services, and rural development. As part of its overall gender strategy the JAS supports family-planning activities; the “targeting of girls’ education more consistently, especially in completion rates for post-basic cycles”; and the provision of “more autonomy and economic opportunities for women”; and the provision of infrastructure, particularly in rural areas (WB/AfDB, 2008, p. 10). To help policy decision-making under the JAS, a national Gender Profile for The Gambia was to be done by the AfDB in 2009; however, although such profiles exist for fifteen African countries, to date the Gambia file is not available.⁴¹

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an extended examination of the produced knowledge of national education and gender-related policies and aid proposals, as well as donor project documents. In the first section I examined the overarching national gender and development agendas in The Gambia, including a specific focus on the provisions for and framing of “women’s issues” in the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW), formulated as part of the World Bank-supported Women in Development Project in the country, as well as the Vision 2020 statement and the national PRSPs.

⁴¹ To access these national Gender Profiles visit <http://www.afdb.org/en/documents/project-operations/country-gender-profiles/>.

In the subsequent sections I looked at the specific framing of and policy actions identified towards the achievement of gender equality in education, as specified in World Bank education sector program documents, the JAS, national education policy and strategy papers, as well as grant proposals and implementation reports related to The Gambia's partnership with EFA-FTI. A key theme in the discussion concerned the power dynamics at play in the production of knowledge concerning girls' education and gender equality in the context of aid dependence and aid conditionality. Here, I suggested that aid conditionality can help regulate the behaviour of Governments, but I also pointed out that the formal commitments made by governments (including that of The Gambia) in grant proposals and credit agreements are difficult to enforce when not kept. This was a key issue for The Gambia-EFA/FTI partnership when, in the early 2000s, the Government did not meet its obligations for increased public expenditure in education.

A further key theme emergent from the above analysis concerns the use of the term "gender" in the produced knowledge of the documents reviewed. There has been a clear shift from the language of "girls" to that of "gender" in the educational equality/equity discourse in the sector, further reflected and shaped by The Gambia's formal adoption of the gender mainstreaming approach in national development policy and planning. While the transformative potential of the concept is largely rooted in its attention to the socially constructed and performed nature of gendered identities, and thus, the recognition that gender relations are fluid, dynamic, and open to challenge and change – as it is dominantly used in both government and donor documents, "gender" is used as a synonym for girls and/or women.

Moreover, I argued that the analysis suggested a clear dominance of human capital ideas in terms of the framing of the importance of girls' education and/or gender equality in education,

on the basis of the frequency and nature of the linkages made between equity issues in education and poverty reduction/national development and women's economic empowerment (linked to increases in women's productivity). However, ideas concerning the linkages between education and social development are not entirely absent in the produced knowledge of policy and donor documents. I argued that the NPAGW, as a policy statement aimed at guiding sector policies in the service of women's advancement, offers a compelling vision of multi-dimensional change in terms of women's lives in the reproductive and productive spheres.

The findings from the analysis demonstrated that girls' education policies employ both distributive and regulatory approaches to addressing gendered inequalities in terms of educational access, performance and achievement/outcomes (Stromquist, 2008). The findings revealed an emergent policy concern for boys' enrolment at the basic education level as well as a concomitant shift away from an exclusive focus on girl-focused policy solutions, towards those that would benefit boys and girls (i.e. distributive policies). I further argued that the institutional shift from WID to GAD and the subsequent adoption of the gender mainstreaming approach in national policy programming in The Gambia was, at the time of the research in 2007, more symbolic than actual, particularly as the shift was supposed to signal the challenging of gendered power relations and not simply the inclusion of boys under equity initiatives (Stromquist, 2008).

In the following chapter, I examine the constructed knowledge of policy actors, based on their perspectives and perceptions of gender and education policy objectives and strategies in The Gambia.

Chapter Six

Gender and Education Policy: The Perceptions of Policy Actors

In this chapter I present the research findings concerning the constructed knowledge of state and non-state policy actors in relation to girls' education and gender equality in and through formal schooling. I first explore policy actor perspectives and understandings concerning the role of formal education in The Gambia broadly, and in the lives of girls and women in particular. Here, I suggest that the findings revealed the dominance of human capital assumptions and orientations in the discourse of participants, alongside more fragile and muted concerns for education as a human right and education as a means of challenging the unequal status quo. I argue that policy actor perspectives on the challenges to girls' education and gender equality differed somewhat, in terms of content and sense of urgency, from the produced knowledge of policy and donor program documents as discussed in the previous chapter. Boys' education as an emergent policy concern is discussed in connection with what some participants saw as an actual or potential "boys' backlash" against their exclusion from government and donor educational support. I ultimately suggest that the constructed knowledge of policy actors tended to emphasize the achievements made in the area of girls' education. While some actors, including government and NGO representatives, spoke of the need to better connect girls' education with wider feminist aspirations as articulated in the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women, the majority of participants emphasized the need to focus more policy attention on boys' education as well as maintaining some girl-focused interventions. The importance of distributive policies aimed at benefitting girls and boys, noted as a feature of the produced knowledge of policy and program texts, was reflected also in the majority of interviews with state and non-state actors, as well as donors.

Policy Agents Perceptions of the Education Mission

During interviews with donors, government, and civil society I spent a great deal of time asking about their views concerning the role of formal education in The Gambia, and in particular their understandings of why girls' education was a policy priority in the country. The following key discourses and themes emerged from an analysis of interview and participant observation data:

- Education for national development and economic growth
- Education for “self-sufficiency”, “economic empowerment” and “economic independence”
- Education for “equal opportunity” – social role of education in levelling the playing field – gender neutral
- Education as a human right and for the realization and claiming of other human rights
- Education for a moral, faith-based and pious Muslim society

Education for development emerged as a dominant discourse shaping how the education mission was understood by policy actors in The Gambia; however, the relative emphasis on and use of the above themes and discourses concerning the education mission were different across government, secular non-governmental organization representatives and madrassa authorities. Government actors dominantly emphasized the role of education in national economic development and framed the promotion of girls' education as a means of enhancing women's contribution to development processes. Ideas and discourses associated with the transformative purpose of education, including the idea that education is a human right and end in itself, were largely absent amongst government participants. The weak inclusion of ideas concerning education and other rights and the emphasis on “education for national development”, noted amongst the government officials I spoke with, contrasted with what I found in terms of a more multi-dimensional framing of girls' schooling by secular non-governmental policy agents as an

instrument or an entry-point for realizing more broad-based social change in terms of gender relations and gendered social structures; although the discourse of girls' education for national development was still present in many of my discussions with NGO representatives. Similarly, policy actors working in the madrassa system also spoke of the relationship between education and national economic development, but emphasized the importance of Islamic education for a moral, faith-based and pious Muslim society.

The following sections map the construction of these discursive themes within policy spaces in further detail.

“Education for national development”. The findings revealed that government policy actors dominantly emphasized the “national development” function of formal education in The Gambia. Government and donor representatives most frequently invoked the concept and principle of “equal opportunities” to describe the overarching approach to gender and education policy in the country. There is institutional continuity here in the sense that the first multi-sectoral Women in Development (WID) pilot project appears to have had a lasting impact in terms of how gender issues are understood within national education policymaking processes. Within the WID perspective the liberal emphasis is on providing “equal opportunities” for women to gain the skills and qualifications to compete equally with men in the so-called “public” domain. In turn, the perceptions and attitudes of Gambian policy actors – mainly government officials, but also some NGO representatives - reflects the broader educational mandates of international and intergovernmental organizations that emphasize “equality of opportunity” and non-discrimination in the distribution of public services, and particularly education (Mundy & Ghali, 2009). As it was used in the Gambian context by the majority of governmental and donor partner representatives, the concept of “equity” was dominantly framed

as being culturally and socially appropriate and comprehensible within Gambian society as a means for promoting justice within the education system. However, the idea that “equal opportunities”, as connected to the concept and principle of “equity” is acceptable, but “gender equality” is not acceptable on religious grounds, exposes a sharp and uncomfortable tension between different interpretations of “acceptability” in relation to distributive educational reforms.

Government and bi-lateral donor representatives dominantly framed the role of education in terms of its contribution to national development and poverty reduction through the promotion of individual and community “self-sufficiency”. Modernist trickle-down and meritocratic assumptions were evidenced in statements concerning the role of education in poverty reduction strategies particularly and national development more broadly, echoing dominant global development policy discourses.

So really, the issue of formal education towards development and addressing issues of poverty I think is now generally accepted. It's the surest way of getting a particular family or community to move from one level in the social ladder to another level. For those that have ventured, they have seen how education can in fact help families to move out of you know the poverty trap. (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

Aligning with the language of the National Education Policy 2004-2015 (NEP), the concept of “self-sufficiency” was seen by some government representatives as a key goal of education, particularly as discursively linked to “girls’ education”, similar to “economic empowerment” discourses: “It’s [education] making the Gambian women self-sufficient. Finally, a great percentage of Gambian women are now able to take care of themselves” (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative).

Media coverage of school-based functions, including school-openings, graduation ceremonies, philanthropic donations and other education news, helped triangulate my claim that the “education for national development” discourse was a dominant one in public and education policy spaces. In one example, a senior government official told graduates from MDI that they should be prepared to face the challenges that were ahead of them so as to be able to “contribute to national development” (Secretary of State for Youth, Sports and Religious Affairs, Sheikh Omar Faye, cited in Bah, 2007). In another example, the important role of education in increasing the productivity of citizens is highlighted: “Being a Gambian is one thing, but being a productive Gambian is another. It is being the latter that all good citizens must aspire for” (Editorial, Daily Observer, Monday March 5, 2007, pg. 4).

One rural regional education officer in the Central River Division expressed the view that the imperatives of national development trumped the arguments of those seeking to promote and privilege the sacredness of following the “original roles” of men and women as husbands and wives prescribed in certain interpretations of Islamic law (Jah, 2007). For example,

We believe in girls’ education. We believe that the girl-child should have all the chances that she should have in order to decide for herself. But becoming a husband or wife is a secondary issue. **The primary one is her contribution to national development.** (Abuubakar, Senior Education Official, Rural Region)

In this quote, while the speaker ultimately invokes the discourse of girls’ education for national development, this man also demonstrated a multi-dimensional understanding of the role of schooling, including as the above quote shows, in terms of helping girls’ gain decision-making power and opportunities to pursue their individual goals and needs.

In reflecting the utilitarian themes in global and national girls' education policy, participant responses to the question of the role of formal education in Gambian society tended to emphasize what "more" an educated woman can do for her family, community and nation; rather than what an educated woman "is" or "can be". That is, government officials, including central and regional Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education personnel as well as government representatives from the Women's Bureau, the Department of State for Community Development and the Department of State for Social Welfare, overwhelmingly highlighted the extrinsic (public) and economic benefits of education over the intrinsic (private) benefits, particularly with respect to girls' education – echoing the findings from cost-benefit analysis of returns to investment in girls' education, particularly as these relate to women's increased productivity and improvement in health indicators. For example,

We realized that the benefits can be overwhelming if the girls are educated. Because once you educate the girl the health indicators will greatly improve. And an educated mother of course will ensure that her children are also educated. An educated mother will also ensure that her child is given nutritious food. (Omar, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

However, it is important to recognize that not all government officials expressed exclusively utilitarian perspectives on girls' education policy: several connected the role of education in catalyzing more broad-based structural change. For example, Abdoulie, the representative of the Women's Bureau, connected women's education to "women's empowerment", in terms of the economy, decision-making and political representation, stating,

[...] if we are able to succeed by getting women as educated as men, women given the right jobs and they can compete with men for higher positions...and we get women in decision-making and in governance and politics, and we get women to own land, to be able to become agricultural workers and to be

able to share equally amongst men the resource allocation and all that. (Abdoulie, Senior Official, Women's Bureau)

This quote appears to reflect the recognition that Government has the responsibility for providing not just access to education, but also the provision of an enabling environment for the achievement of valued human functionings as framed in the human capability approach. In this regard then, Abdoulie highlights women's lack of control and ownership over productive resources as dimension for state action connected with promoting equal outcomes of education specifically, and development more generally.

In discussing the relationship between schooling and society, two other government officials conceptualized schools, and indeed the "education sector" as microcosms of the larger society (Kaddijatou, Gender Education Unit Representative). It was argued that in order to change society from the "grassroots", that: "There's a need for us to change things at the level of or within the sector; and that's where the workers in the education sector come in with the responsibilities for implementing policy" (Kaddijatou, Gender Education Unit Representative).

Abdoulie and Kaddijatou identified socio-economic inequalities as the main barriers to "social progress", with the latter suggesting that if education is not conceived as a force for progressive change, than "it would make it redundant". Importantly, this government official is saying that change is necessary not just "outside" the education sector, but that change is necessary within the sector and across education institutions and the actors responsible for policy implementation.

Like government officials, NGO and multilateral agency representatives framed the expansion and improvement of formal education in The Gambia as a cornerstone of poverty reduction strategies, for example, "In order to get these women out of poverty, I think education

is the way to do it and is probably the best way of getting people out of poverty” (Kuta, NGO Representative). Also similar to government and donor responses, NGOs frequently noted that a key role for formal education was national development. However, as will be detailed below, NGO representatives tended to place greater emphasis on the role of education in processes of egalitarian social change through the production of critically-minded and active citizens.

Education as a Human Right & Education for Self-Actualization. Officially, all NGOs participating in the study explicitly used a rights-based approach in their education policy work, and rights language and discourse peppered NGO participant’s perspectives on the role of education in Gambian society. Specifically, the majority of civil society participants discussed the right to education as an entry-point for broad-based social transformation in support of women’s advancement, thereby aligning with human capability theory. A key assumption made in the constructed knowledge of NGOs was that education fosters confidence-building, and therefore is a crucial entry-point for women’s rights advocates promoting women’s participation in leadership roles, and formal governance activities:

The culture of patriarchy makes them [women] not to participate in public offices and so under our women’s rights as a cross-cutting theme in our governance program we advance the leadership of women. You cannot do that without education, without assertiveness, without confidence-building, without mentoring and support. (Codeyel, NGO Representative)

In tandem with invoking the language of women’s empowerment as a goal of girls’ education (note: education is viewed as a means to an end, and not just an end in itself), non-governmental participants, more frequently than government officials, framed girls’ education as a human rights issue, invoking international human rights discourses and women’s rights principles in support of their arguments. Across the interviews with civil society representatives,

fourteen out of seventeen participants mentioned “rights”, and particularly as these relate to gender or women’s rights.

Connected with the idea that education is a necessary pre-condition for moving more women into leadership positions, a major theme that emerged from interviews with NGOs was the role of education in “self-actualization”. Much of the discourse of the NGO representatives that I spoke with reflected key ideas and principles expressed in the human capability approach. For example,

Giving people basic education is absolutely important to enhance their capacity in the first place to be able to self-actualize, aside from the certificates or whatever that goes on. Education **empowers** the person to be that self that that person wants to be in the future. (Yunkuba, NGO Representative)

In framing the role of formal education as one of enabling “self-actualization” or “enlightenment”, the role of education in enabling the accumulation of wealth and/or status was frequently downplayed by civil society representatives. This latter understanding and rationale for investing in formal education (by either the state or individual) is problematized in the participants’ discussion of the self-actualization role of education that they embrace:

For the models that have already come out of the community, very few of them have white-collared jobs and they don’t seem to see the gains of education. They see it from the point of view of cash and finances, rather than as **self-actualization**, building yourself and building your capacities in yourself as an individual. (Satang, NGO Representative)

I argue that there are important differences between the concepts of “self-actualization” and “self-sufficiency”, particularly in terms of who uses them, in what context and for which purpose. Ultimately, in contrast to economic-instrumentalist ideology, in which the concept of “self-sufficiency” is embedded, the rights-based approach of the NGOs in the study, emphasizing

women's empowerment, self-actualization and social inclusion represented a more transformative rationale or logic of action for girls' education and understanding of gender equality/equity as an education policy goal. Indeed, one anti-poverty national coalition representative suggested that increasing numbers of educated and formally employed women have realized some degree of social change in the sense that "people" are seeing that "most of the time they far outperform men" (Isatou, NGO Representative). Such recognition was viewed by some as crucial for the advancement of women by breaking down discriminatory beliefs regarding the capacity of women to assume positions historically the exclusive domain of men.

Policy Actors' Perceptions of the Nature, Cause, and Scope of Gender Inequalities in Education

Defining the problem(s) to be addressed through policy reform is an act that is inextricably connected to power/knowledge relations. The advent of participatory policy formulation in the education sector in The Gambia has important implications for how power is conceived within the national education policy space. Government participants were keen to elaborate on the participatory processes behind the formulation of the National Education Policy 2004-2015 and its predecessor. Almost all of the government participants highlighted that education policy processes have adopted a participatory approach involving consultations at regional and community levels followed by national-level consultation. Institutionalizing participatory processes was perceived by government participants as an important act that symbolized "good governance" and facilitated "ownership" by the Gambian populace of national education policies. While participants expressed much pride in the use of participatory policy processes, and emphasized the strength of such approaches in terms of "empowering" communities, in accommodating grassroots concerns and needs into the National Education Policy, power accrued as well to central and regional governmental discourses that were framed

as aligning with “grassroots” concerns. In particular, as will be discussed below, most participants justified a shift from a policy focus on “girls’ education” to that of “gender education” by drawing on enrolment statistics that suggest a declining enrolment pattern for boys in some regions as well as by framing the shift as something that was “locally-supported”, based on the findings from participatory policy processes.

All participants were asked to identify and describe what they understood to be the key challenges to the achievement of educational equity. The produced knowledge expressed in the National Education Policy frames the problem of educational inequality as one dominantly characterized by gender disparities in terms of girls’ access, performance and retention in formal education, particularly at the secondary and higher levels. However, the constructed knowledge of the policy actors under consideration in the study represents a somewhat different analysis of the nature and causes of the problem of educational inequality, with most participants moving quickly from an overview of “old” problems rooted in socio-cultural norms and practices to the conclusion that these have been addressed and do not function as significant constraints anymore.

Thus, the downplaying of the historical barriers to girls’ education in The Gambia, found across interviews and observation activities, contrasted with the sense of urgency found in the treatment of girls and gender issues in policy documents and proposals for donor support. On one hand, the majority of governmental participants were remarkably sanguine with respect to the scope and depth of the problems emerging from socio-cultural norms and practices which have been historically understood to give rise to gender-based educational inequities in the country. On the other hand, representatives from each of the three focus NGOs and other key players, including the National EFA Network, insisted that “old” problems related to early

marriage, teenage pregnancy, and girls' domestic work burdens were negatively affecting the education opportunities of girls in The Gambia in the present.

Culture as barrier to educational equity. When directly asked about the challenges to achieving gender equality in education, every participant that I spoke with made at least some mention of “culture” and “tradition”, including both government and non-governmental actors. Factors such as girls' heavy domestic responsibilities, the practice of early marriage, parental fears of pregnancy or generally “immoral” behaviour amongst school girls, as well as parental preferences to educate sons because they presumably will “lead” the household in the future, whereas women are “married off” and any education received will benefit their husbands and in-laws, were all posed as constraints to promoting and enhancing girls' formal education.

Because traditionally, or some traditional beliefs have it that the boy-child takes forward the legacy of the family...Going back to traditional practices and beliefs, those are still a big challenge because some of our community members still believe that the girl-child has a time of marriage and when they begin to see their breasts growing they get worried.
(Alagie, Mid-Level Education Official, Central Government)

Poverty. Echoing the produced knowledge of the 1995 World Bank study on why Gambian households under-invest in girls' education, in identifying and describing what were believed to be the main sources of gender-based educational inequality, policy agents interviewed overwhelmingly connected inequalities in education with poverty, specifically economic poverty.

Studies revealed that the education of girls was lagging behind that of boys. One of the most contributing factors for that phenomenon is poverty. The girl-child is more disadvantaged because she shoulders the opportunity cost of educating the boy-child. (Alagie, Mid-Level Education Official, Central Government)

It was suggested that people concerned with survival are more likely to fall back on traditional gender roles that tend to privilege boys' formal education and the domestic roles of girls.

On paper it's wonderful [the NEP], but when you frame that within a context of literacy which is low, people who are rural-based, people who are poor and concerned with basic bread and butter survival, as it is here, implementing can be a gap. (Codeyel, NGO Representative)

Quality and efficiency issues in education. The idea that the quality of education in The Gambia was declining and had been for some time was a noted theme amongst government officials interviewed, as well as in the workshops, public meetings, informal conversations and in the national newspapers. Concern for the quality of formal education in the country surfaced most frequently in the context of the achievement discourse that focused on the success of policy initiatives in promoting access.

Three cornerstones to the Gambian Education Policy – access, relevance and quality. So for relevance and access I can say, not one hundred percent, but most of it has been solved. Now the issue of the day is quality of education. (Saul, Mid-Level Education Official, Urban Region)

Expressions of concern for educational quality were dominantly framed in gender-neutral terms. However, while recognizing the quality of education is something that impacts both boys and girls, one of the baseline studies conducted by DFID/BESPOR suggested that poor educational quality “may interact with a cultural pattern of ‘son preference’ to depress parents’ demand for girls’ education, especially at UB (Upper Basic) level, where the gender enrolment gap is still high” (DFID/BESPOR, n.d., p. 5).

It is no secret that within a context of economic restructuring and fiscal austerity, concerns for “efficiency” become paramount. Efficiency and effectiveness concerns are a clear

priority in donor aid to The Gambian education sector, as well as in national education policies and planning documents. The government needs to ensure that investments to the education systems are utilized in the most efficient way possible. Because government is paying the school fees and supporting the indirect costs of schooling, parents who wish to remove their daughters from school early are being told by the Government that “no, you cannot do that because we are paying the girls’ fees, so you cannot remove the girl” (Sunkuba, NGO Representative). It was noted that requiring parents who wished to pull their daughters out of school to repay the government for its investment was a policy announced by President Jammeh over national radio and T.V. in late 2006. While one rural-based cluster monitor (formerly referred to as “education inspectors”) saw President’s Jammeh’s policy announcement as an effective means of ensuring that girls did not drop-out, several NGO representatives expressed concern that this new policy could ultimately have a negative impact on girls’ access to formal education.

Because even though the government is paying money, the parents also own their children in a way – traditionally. If you say that you cannot remove your child because we are paying for that child, and these parents have sent the child to school, they have reserved the right of not sending other children to school. So somebody [a parent] made the comment that ‘ok, we will have to agree with you, but it will not happen again, because we will not send our girls to school’. (Sankuba, NGO#3)

Indeed the funding for girls’ education, either in the form of policy interventions aimed at creating “child-friendly” school environments or direct scholarship support, seems to have created a complex set of unanticipated issues. Prevalent discourses and ideas constituting public criticism and social backlashes were said to frame the direct support for girls’ education as discriminatory to boys. However, based on observation notes and interviews, I conclude that some NGOs shared this criticism and expressed the view that scholarship support should be

based on merit and that those girls who are not performing should forfeit their scholarship to a “deserving” boy. Thus, similar to the government officials interviewed, as well as the findings from the analysis of national newspapers, a key issue for NGOs was the performance of girls in school.

School-specific constraints. Features of the schools themselves were also said to pose challenges. The absence of female teachers (especially in rural areas) was problematized by government and non-governmental participants, including donors and multilaterals, on the basis that girls lack role models in schools. Moreover, a lack of women teachers in schools was perceived by some as fuelling parental concerns regarding the vulnerability of their daughters to potential sexual harassment. According to some civil society representatives who work closely with rural communities, early marriage is actually on the increase in The Gambia in some areas, although this pattern was not mentioned at all by the government and donor representatives participating in the study. Even when girls are enrolled in school, it was stated that many remain only as long as it takes for their family to find a suitable husband and then they are removed. A senior Gender Education Unit official (Fatou, Gender Education Unit Representative) relayed a story of one community in the 2005/06 academic year, in which a group of “school-girls” wrote the West African Education Council (WAEC) exam in grade six, but none returned to obtain their marks! It was assumed that these girls and/or their families had no intention of them continuing their studies, otherwise they would have retrieved their exam marks. Echoing Fatou’s concern for girls dropping out of school, a senior urban regional education official stated:

They [girls] are dropping out due to various reasons. One is early marriage. The other is teenage pregnancy. We have a culture of girls suffering in the education sector due to various reasons, one is either the parents don’t see value educating girls, or usually the girls are married off. Then

you also have the culture of male dominance in this country.
(Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region)

A common theme amongst government officials interviewed concerned the idea that some communities remain resistant to sending their girls to school, and particularly to “Western” schools. Participants frequently mentioned that some parents, mainly in remote, rural areas, viewed the formal “Western” education system as inherently hostile to girls with several participants offering the analysis that the biggest fear of parents was that their daughters would be sexually harassed and would get pregnant, bringing in turn both shame to the family and an “end” to the girls’ future.

Sexual harassment is one of the biggest challenges we face because it emanates within. That means from in the schools themselves, to the outside, to the wider community. (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region)

A lack of separate toilet facilities for boys and girls has been a problem in the past, although this has been rectified to some extent through funding from the donor community, i.e. through United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) and the African Girls’ Education Initiative (AGEI). While at one time schools were often located some distance from communities, school construction initiatives, also funded by donors, have improved this situation in recent times. Policy reforms aimed at expanding the physical infrastructure of an education system represent examples of what Stromquist (2008) refers to as a distributive reform in which girls, while not the focus of the intervention, nonetheless are assumed to benefit from the expansion of the education system.

While all participants interviewed named at least one factor that they perceived to be a constraint on the achievement of educational equity, the most senior education official

interviewed approached the question of problem analysis from a different angle, choosing to highlight what he saw as **not** contributing to the problem of gender-based educational inequities:

The problem is not with the curriculum...in fact the curriculum does not promote male domination or whatever. The curriculum that both boys and girls go through would prepare both of them in the same way to be able to take positions in society. (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

When asked to describe what they perceived to be the challenges to achieving gender equality/equity in education, all NGO representatives discussed the well-rehearsed barriers to girls' education, including early marriage (which was noted by a participant to be on the rise in some areas), early pregnancy/sexual harassment in schools, boy preference and girls' heavy domestic labour demands. Perhaps because the NGOs in the study all had more direct contact with "grassroots" constituents than, say, DOSBSE officials, their descriptions of these barriers/constraints to girls' education were more richly detailed and often included numerous examples to illustrate their points. Issues of disproportionately low girls' performance in school were also mentioned as a problem, frequently attributed by participants to girls' low self-esteem, lack of interest, as well as teacher attitudes and practices towards female students. These factors were viewed as contributing to poor school attendance, drop-out and failure to move on to higher levels of education.

Boys' Education: An Emergent Policy Concern

Boys' education and specifically the declining enrolment patterns for boys in some regions emerged as a powerful discourse amongst government, and to a lesser extent, donors. Participants dominantly used the language of "gender equity" to frame and justify policy initiatives in support of boys' education.

In the past we had what we called "Girls' Education Program"

but because of the tremendous success we have registered in that area, we decided to rename the unit Gender Education Unit rather than Girls' Education Unit because we realized that girls are overtaking boys in terms of enrolments, in terms of retention, and even in some cases in terms of performance. (Omar, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

Not only was concern for boys' education high amongst government participants, it was also reflected symbolically in the establishment of new institutions in support of a shift in focus from girls to "gender" and hence to boys' and girls' educational needs. For example, the flagship government intervention – The Girls' Education Scholarship Trust – now has a "brother", the "Angels Trust", which provides financial support from external sources to needy boys. Furthermore, the "Girls' Education Unit" of the Department of State for Education was changed in late 2006 to the "Gender Education Unit". As a Gender Education Unit official stated:

That is to help people to know that the Gender Education Unit will address both the needs of the boys and the needs of the girls, because we don't want to wait until it is too late. Because you have all these incentive packages in some regions [for] girls' education...yet some boys are beginning to suffer...Where parents would keep their boys at home and send their girls to school because of packages! We don't want to see that happen! We want to see them all in schools, so I think re-naming it Gender Education Unit would help conceptualize [what we are doing] the concept. (Kaddijatou, Gender Education Unit Representative)

The findings also suggest that the shift from the language of "girls' education" to that of "gender education" and the integration of the madrassa into the formal school system served as diffusion strategies for a "boys' backlash" and conservative Islamic reformist pressures. While the NEP notes a declining enrolment trend for boys in some regions as well as mentioning the potential for a "boys' backlash", the idea that something had to be done to address a looming, or actual crisis in boys' education was a theme that emerged from the interviews and observation of public meetings. The apparent disjuncture between the produced (emphasis on girls' education)

and constructed knowledge (emphasis on boys' education) concerning target groups for equity policies in The Gambia, is perhaps explained by the fact that the NEP was developed during a time when the government and DOSE were putting together proposals for EFA-FTI and MDG funding for girls' education, a priority area within each of these transnational instruments. In contrast to the achievement discourse noted in the study, girls' education within these funding proposals is framed as "in crisis" and of urgent need for remedial action. When the audience is donors (governmental or non-governmental), the problems of girls' education are highlighted, and yet when the audience is a "gender and education researcher" (me), or other national education policy actors, the discourse is one in which boys' education issues are consistently singled out as the "real" current challenge.

The biggest concern for the government officials I spoke with in terms of boys' education was that of access. The most senior government official I interviewed had this to say about the issue of boys' education:

We had to do something about girls. That was why we called it girls' education unit, girls' education program, but now we have realized that even though we have made a lot of gains in girls' education, we have started having some problems in some areas with regard to boys' education and that is why we named the unit to the Gender Education Unit. (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

This quote reflects what I have called the "achievement discourse" by linking up the policy achievements in the area of "girls' education" to the emergence of new problems in boys' education. Ideas and discourses of boys' education, as these emerged from interviews and field notes from participant observation activities as well as from document analysis, asserted to varying degrees a causal relationship between the success of girls' education policy interventions and the noted pattern of declining educational enrolments of boys. That is, the dominant

constructed knowledge of policy actors tended to construe the targeting of girls' education as a policy priority as somehow causing, or at least contributing to, a recent decline in some regions of the country in the number of boys going to school regularly, or at all: "Parents would keep their boys at home and send their girls to school because of the [scholarship] packages" (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region).

The idea that parents were choosing to educate their daughters rather than their sons because of the economic incentives offered by education scholarships is behind the recent expansion of such opportunities to boys.

So we sat back and said to ourselves, maybe we should revisit the interventions because the interventions were in favour of girls. Now we are coming up with interventions that are in favour of both boys and girls so that the parents would leave the boys to continue. (Omar, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

A common concern raised by governmental participants was the need to "nip the problem [of boys' education] at the bud", before it grew in scope and severity and became a problem of the magnitude of the "former" girls' education problem:

So we'll address the issue of boys as we move along. Because we don't want to ignore that problem and find ourselves maybe somewhere down the line in the same situation we were when we took up the issue of girls' education. (Omar, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

The majority of participants, in discussing boys' educational issues, discursively framed the practice of parents sending their daughters to school and removing their sons as a "backlash".

Initially we had problems with the girls, which resulted in the introduction of the Scholarship Trust Fund for Girls, which everyone agrees has been very successful. But in certain areas there was a backlash. We realized that in certain communities they were bringing the girls and taking out the boys. We've got gender parity [at the primary level] but the worrying trend

is that in certain communities the actual numbers for boys has actually dropped. So that's a big challenge. I mean we feel that at middle level, I think we're almost achieving gender parity. At the high school level also we feel that we're on target to achieve gender parity. But the only concern we have is this backlash of the boys. (Buturu, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

In framing the problem of boys' educational access as one precipitated by the success of policy interventions towards the promotion of girls' education, participants made frequent mention of the produced knowledge emergent from regional and local consultations during the participatory policy formulation process that drove the development of the current NEP.

I was the one coordinating all the consultations. One thing that kept coming out, even from the girls themselves – was this 'what about the boys?' You know 'what about the boys?' I think that was confirming, what we had already started noticing in our research. (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

However, despite the common framing of a "boys' backlash" as emanating not from within the sector, but rather as a "public pressure" to which the education sector had to respond, it was not uncommon for government participants, during interviews and especially during public meetings, to problematize the previous policy emphasis on girls' education that came "at the expense of boys" (Omar, Senior DOSBSE Official).

Under the Girls' Education Initiative they were providing communities with lots of facilities, labour-saving devices (wells with hand-pumps, milling machines). And girls were provided with stationary, uniforms, shoes, school bags – everything! And boys would not be provided with anything! (Salieu, Gender Education Unit Representative)

More than a reflection of the international shift from the language of "girls" to that of "gender", the renaming of the Girls' Education Unit to "Gender Education Unit" and UNICEF's "Girl-Friendly School Initiative" to "Child-Friendly" seems to have occurred in response to the

ideas carried in the achievement discourse and particularly to pressures to pay closer attention to boys' education.

So you see how there has been a paradigm shift based on progress made over the years. So now it is felt that some attention must be given to boys because it's no longer an issue of only the boys go to school and the girls stay at home, but now if you go to some classrooms there are more girls than boys. (Mariama, NGO Representative)

Reflecting also the relationship between the achievement discourse and the construction of boys' education as an area for policy intervention, a participant from an anti-poverty organization has this to say:

I think they're [the government] right on track and I think the only caution that I would be sounding is as we move over the years, I'm noticing a trend that's not going to be too good for the boys. I think that there's an over...I think that it's good to focus on the girls, but I think we're getting to the point where **we need to look at issues of poverty more than gender**. Actually gender – poverty is part of the gender issue. Because I think poor boys should also be funded. To be honest, when I was growing up there were special scholarships for poor children to go to school. And I've noticed that now most of the scholarships are really focusing on girls. There are still some [for boys] ActionAid gives them. (Isatou, NGO Representative)

The baseline studies conducted by DFID through its “Basic Education for Poverty Reduction” (BESPOR) program, as part of its efforts to implement a “Whole-School Development” model, do raise the “problem” of gender disparities in favour of girls in some regions, noting that this is a problem that the DOSE is interested in addressing (DFID/BESPOR, n.d.). However, the baseline studies also note that the scale of the problem was yet to be discerned, indicating that more research was needed. In taking this stance, the document suggested that the problem was isolated to a few communities in which the labour of boys was relied upon heavily. The document states: “However, in view of the comparatively small scale of

the problem in relation to overall gender disparities disadvantaging girls, BESPOR should avoid diverting a large amount of project resources into this problem” (DFID/BESPOR, n.d., p. 4).

Choosing Words with Care: Conceptual Confusion and Discursive Struggle

As noted in Chapter Two, exploring the emotional economy of “key words” (i.e. those concepts that ground our economic, political and social lives) in policy spaces is central to understanding policy as social practice (Apple, forward to Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. xi; Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Struggles to fix the meanings of key concepts such as “gender”, “gender equality” and “gender equity” in policy spaces and the wider society emerged as a central theme in the study. There were several different lines that these struggles seemed to take. Some policy agents were concerned with highlighting the potential that “gender” refers to both “men and women” and that in order to overcome resistance to gender and education policy, that the Gambian public needed to understand that “gender” was not exclusively about girls and women, but also included attention to boys. Here, the constructed knowledge framed “gender” as non-threatening to boys’ and men’s access to opportunities and was not an “oppositional” discourse in terms of challenging men’s overall social status and power in Gambian society. This was the approach advocated by most of the government participants, including senior DOSBSE and Gender Education Unit personnel. Amongst these individuals, the concept of gender was understood to refer to both men and women – it was understood to signal a shift towards “inclusivity”, and taking issues of girls’ and boys’ education seriously in public policy planning and support: “So I know when you talk about gender it’s good...it’s about both sexes” (Lamin, Senior Education Official, Central Government).

This quote is from the most senior government official I interviewed and was spoken at the beginning of the interview after he had interrogated me about my understanding of “gender

equality” and “gender equity”. While I had talked about gender as referring to the socially constructed nature of men’s and women’s identities, and that I understood gender to be about the relations between men and women, the participant seemed content with my inclusion of men in my definition of gender and explicitly on this basis, told me that he had decided we could proceed with the interview. Thus, after the first few interviews with government, donors and civil society representatives, I recognized that I needed to adopt a central “probing” question concerning what I have called the “the debate”. In this debate, the concept and principle of “gender equality” is perceived as incompatible with a particular interpretation of an Islamic worldview and instead, the principle of “gender equity” is said to define the core mandate of gender in education policy. While not always or even frequently explicitly connected with religion, the use of “gender equity” was interpreted by me as largely reflective of the underlying issue concerning whether or not “gender equality” is possible or desirable in a Muslim society. Nonetheless, the formal backing of religious authorities appeared to underpin and legitimize the concept of “gender equity” within the gender and education policy space. Those who exclusively used and championed the language of “gender equity” were dominantly senior central and regional education officials, including in some cases staff of the Gender Education Unit. For some the debate was an “academic” one, but for others it went to the center of programmatic struggles concerning the nature and goals of gender and education policy.

A key theme in the interviews and observation activities was that the concept “gender” has the potential to be culturally very sensitive, as used by feminists towards challenging and changing longstanding customs and beliefs:

I think gender as an issue has been a very touchy issue, it’s very touchy. So people’s cultural background really influences their approach to gender. And when you’re talking about gender equity

and equality, I think that the biggest challenge is to make people understand the difference between these two terms. And basically gender as an issue. Because I think that it depends on what understanding of gender you have. (Kaddijatou, Gender Education Unit Representative)

Because of the perceived sensitivity of “gender” as a concept, specifically understood as directing attention to the socially constructed and performed nature of gendered identities, the constructed knowledge of policy actors worked to depoliticize gender by framing it as synonymous with biological sex. Thus “gender education” was a language artifact that symbolically represented that education policy was concerned with issues of girls’ **and** boys’ education. In public meetings, interviews, and in the produced knowledge of external reports, the concept and language of “gender equality” was generally rejected and replaced with either “gender equity” or “women’s empowerment”. The terminology of “gender equality” was infrequently used in reports issued for donors and other external agencies (i.e. International Financial Institutions). It was noted by participants both as an observation and in some cases, belief, that “gender equality” generally refers to “fifty-fifty” – a situation in which women and men would split roles and responsibilities equally, which, given biological differences, was perceived as impossible by many policy actors. During interviews and in public meetings, some argued that there were “particular roles” for men and women that were divinely and/or “traditionally” ordained and as such were meant to be followed. During a workshop I attended, one participant suggested, responding to the idea of “fifty-fifty”, that it would not work in The Gambia because “This is a small country, everyone knows their role. There will be no trouble” (Anonymous Workshop Participant, field notes, March 2007). I interpreted this as resistance to challenging the status quo through the disruption of “traditional” gender relations in the family and beyond.

Picking up on the theme concerning the importance of language and local perceptions, a recent UNDP study on women's leadership capacity in The Gambia supports the view that the concept of "gender" and specifically the concepts of "gender equality" and "gender equity" are widely contested and "misunderstood" in Gambian society (2008, n.p.). Focusing on "popular" understandings and perceptions in wider society, the report states,

Gender equality according to the respondents means giving equal treatment to both men and women in spite of biological differences, so gender equality is unacceptable. In addition, they believe that gender equality means equality in everything including marriage, which is impossible to achieve. (UNDP, 2008, n.p.)

Culture, tradition and religion play central roles in shaping Gambian life and dominant ideologies (UNDP, 2008). Patriarchal claims to power over women are threatened by women's advocacy and activism. It was found that participants perceived "gender" as a concept that called for "women to become bosses and take control of men, thus overturning tradition and religion" (UNDP, 2008, n.p.). The concept of "gender equity" as an organizing concept for "women's empowerment" discourse and practice was preferred by participants surveyed in the UNDP study (2008). The acceptability of "gender equity" was understood to be broadly based on the idea that it does not challenge the patriarchal status quo; rather, it calls for, "Measures to be taken that compensate for disadvantages suffered by groups. It ensures that both men and women operate on a level playing field. Gender equity in the end leads to gender equality" (UNDP, 2008, n.p.).

Within the larger theme concerning the rural focus of gender and education policy, some participants felt that conceptual confusion and resistance was a problem largely confined to rural communities:

There's misunderstandings about gender; that is my analysis. I think it is how they are conceptualizing it that is creating the mis-

understanding. And wherever there is misunderstanding, there is a degree of resistance in many ways. But the good thing about gender in this country is that there is a political will...the political will is very evident. But then we still have to grapple with the grassroots to get them to conceptualize what this is all about. (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region)

In articulating their concerns for such confusion, participants also frequently made note of what they perceived as a “misinterpretation” of Islam. One participant leaned forward over her desk, getting closer to me and said quietly “there are power stakeholders”, followed by:

So our task is to bring them to a level that we want to, and in the process, we have to sensitize and lobby them to conceptualize the gender issues, because there is still a problem regarding concepts. When you talk about gender, they think it’s about girls. So we have that problem. (Awa, Senior Education Official, Urban Region)

A lead agent (non-Gambian) for a bilateral donor education sector project in The Gambia expressed the following, when asked about the gender equality/equity debate:

I think very much because of the militancy there’s been in the Gender in Development [field] - this was necessary in the early years just to be heard, but I think as far as we’ve come now, I think it’s time also to look at complementarity and how to utilize different sets of capacities, or skills, or qualities that’s natural in us. Not to say we shouldn’t give chances for let’s say, for boys to learn to be multi-taskers, or for girls to be single-tasking or something like that, but more, look at equality maybe in a different way and for me it’s equal opportunities, it means equal opportunities for girls and for boys, or for women and for men to use the skills they have for going in the direction they want. And that’s different from [pounding desk] everybody has to be the same. I wouldn’t like that. (Aaron, Donor Representative)

The above quote very much reflects the longstanding tension in feminist theory concerning the relative importance of sameness and difference in gender identities and gender relations. Aaron appears to equate “militant” feminism with GAD, and rejects what he perceives as a focus on sameness implied by the concept of gender equality. However, he also espouses an

essentially human capability discourse in connecting equal opportunities (a liberal feminist notion), with the ability of individuals to pursue particular functionings that they have reason to value.

Officials at the Gender Education Unit expressed different degrees of acceptance of the principle of “gender equality”, with the dominant preference given to “gender equity” by most participants in the unit. Using metaphor to express her views on the gender equality versus gender equity debate, an official at the GEU described a hypothetical situation in which one was caring for two birds – a stork and a sparrow. Say the stork needs five litres of water per day and the sparrow needs one litre of water per day. The participant asked me rhetorically, “Would you treat the birds ‘equally’ and give them both five litres?” Not waiting for my answer, she announced “no, you would not”. As was the case for many participants, “equity” for this woman seemed to mean that one should be given only that which they need. I interpreted this as implying that girls and women require less and/or different formal education men, according to their “roles in society”. I will return to this idea in Chapter Eight when I discuss the framing of gender equity in The Gambia’s Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper as focused on enabling women to perform better in their existing roles in households, and with respect to national economic development (RTG, 2008).

Participants noted that tensions surfacing from conservative circles concerning the compatibility of “Western” notions of “gender equality” with Islamic ideas of “gender complementarity” have been diffused in policy processes through the use of “equity” language instead of “equality”. As conventionally used the concept of “equity” refers to “the qualitative value of justice” (Dei, 1996, p. 176). In contrast however, the preference for “equity” as the guiding principle of gender and education-based policy reforms seems in The Gambia to

constrain a more substantive understanding of the concept, as is primarily used to refer to “parity” in educational access. While this aligns with many of the broad targets of the global EFA and MDG frameworks, the achievement of gender parity in formal education remains a necessary but insufficient indicator and agent of social transformation (Unterhalter, 2007). Ultimately, achieving parity in educational access does not necessarily translate into broader social change.

The issue of whether or not girls’ education policy supports “gender equality” or “gender equity” goals is not merely a question of semantics. “Gender equality” is the core objective of the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women as well as the 1998 National Population Policy, where “women’s...struggle for equality” is recognized as a legitimate social movement (RTG, 1998, p. 25). Yet, as noted in the previous chapter both the current NEP and its predecessor avoid using the language of “equality” and emphasize “equity” goals in terms of gender and education. Furthermore, the DOSBSE’s “Cluster Monitor Competencies” document which outlines the skills and qualifications that Cluster Monitors – those regionally-based actors responsible for monitoring and supporting schools (including teachers, headmasters, regional administrators and parent-teacher associations) - uses the language of “gender equity”: “[Cluster monitors will] understand the importance of promoting **gender equity** in enrolment, retention and achievement and be able to explain strategies to help schools in this area” (DOSBSE, 2005, n.p.).

The findings suggested a pervasive understanding of male-female equity as based on religiously pre-ordained “original” roles and duties for men and women which is in turn in tension with secular rights-based approaches to the promotion and enhancement of girls’ education. The theoretically more transformative agenda underpinning rights-based and human

capabilities approaches, which emphasize that the right to education serves as an entry-point to further rights-based and transformative change, is undermined by the emphasis on particular gendered “roles and duties” in particular constructions of the Islamic worldview. Formal education is an obligation for men and women under Islam, its purpose being understood as “human liberation” (Jah, 2007, p. 27). Yet, within the idea of “human liberation” there appears to be little space carved out for the imperatives of women’s liberation. In other words, education is viewed less as an instrument towards social justice, and more as important for the development of Islamic knowledge. For example, Islamists frame girls’ education imperatives as a means of enabling women to become better mothers and wives (Jah, 2007).

Instrumentalizing girls’ education according to faith-based ideologies concerning “proper” roles for women as wives and mothers is not so different from the instrumentalizing of girls’ education that has occurred through the dominance of the human capital paradigm in development theory and practice. Moreover, I argue that the overall influence of faith-based and econometrically-rooted instrumentalist assumptions, in terms of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action, is more similar than one might expect. As detailed in Chapter Two, within the human capital paradigm girls’ education has historically been predicated upon what more an educated woman can do for her family, community and society. While women’s reproductive **and** productive roles are targeted within the economic-instrumentalist paradigm, dominating the discourse is the idea that “even a few years” of formal education enables women to improve their own and their children’s nutritional status and overall well-being, including access to health care and formal education.

As was introduced above, another source of tension emerged between the idea of “equal opportunities” and that of “gender equality”. On one hand, the majority of government officials

repeatedly cited “equal opportunity” as the guiding principle of national education policy. When invoked by government officials and donor representatives, the liberal roots of the principle of equal opportunity remained intact, yet “liberal” women’s rights activists were largely demonized in interviews and public meetings. It was not unusual for a government and donor representative to use labels such as “militant feminism” and “gender extremists” to distinguish between “appropriate” and “inappropriate” perspectives.

“Fifty-fifty” is a widely understood phrase and further serves to demarcate positions on the gender equity/equality debate. During fieldwork in 2002 I frequently heard “fifty-fifty” brought up in discussions of the merits and otherwise of feminist organizing in the country and this pattern continued during my work in 2007. The discourse of “fifty-fifty” was very rarely used by women’s rights advocates; rather, it was almost exclusively mentioned by opponents in government and some donors, and was usually articulated with a sneer, grimace or even laughter, apparently at the audacity of “militant feminists” to try to push for “gender equality”. I interpreted this as perhaps reflective of a certain degree of resistance by the actors themselves to what were perceived as “gender extremist” ideologies.

A senior official at the Women’s Bureau, when probed about the “the debate” concerning the appropriate language and goals of the education policy suggested the adoption by government of the language of “gender equity” over that of “gender equality” was strategically motivated. It was implied that underpinning the choice to use the language of “gender equity” was the government’s recognition that special efforts needed to be made to minimize the resistance and “misunderstanding” of gender and education policy.

Policy Actors' Perceptions of the Policy Process

It was commonplace for participants to frame education, and at times, specifically “girls’ education”, as a way to meet the country’s “global commitments”, particularly with respect to Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals:

When you talk of low maternal and childhood mortality, gender equality, gender education and the like, we are trying to address poverty reduction. The EFA is the development agenda and we think that if this is achieved, then poverty will be reduced. (Alagie, Gender Education Unit Representative)

In this quote, gender equality in education is linked specifically to poverty reduction, thereby emphasizing the extrinsic, rather than intrinsic importance of education. I argue that the discourse of girls’ education for national economic development and poverty reduction tends to occlude attention to the broader transformative roles schools can play in the lives of girls and women and in wider society.

In highlighting the linkages between the National Education Policy and the EFA and MDG agendas, the majority of participants indicated that the primary goal of the NEP in relation to gender was formally “parity” in terms of access, retention and performance:

And when you talk about EFA, one of the goals is on gender alright? There’s gender parity. So essentially, I think that the linkage is there, the understanding is there that there is need for both government and civil society to support gender education Because gender education reflects in one of the MDGs; it also reflects in the EFA goals, both of which the government is very much committed to. (Omar, Senior Education Official, Central Government)

While most government and donor representatives participating in the study made at least one reference to The Gambia’s “global commitments”, particularly EFA and MDGs, NGO representatives tended to connect gender equality in education policy objectives and programs to

the country's commitments under CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and/or the African Protocol on the Rights of Women. These latter conventions arguably promote a more transformative understanding of the role of education in social change. During the 2005 parliamentary debate towards the ratification of the African Protocol on the Rights of Women (henceforth, the "Protocol"), one National Assembly member questioned the need for The Gambia to participate in the convention saying: "If we were not members of the African Union, United Nations and other international organizations we won't need it, for there are enough provisions in our Constitution (N. Baldeh, National Assembly Member, cited in RTG, 2005).

The member suggested that it was only because The Gambia was a "member of the Global club/s" that "we must play by the rules", concluding that "otherwise we don't quite honestly need a protocol like this" (N. Baldeh, National Assembly Member, cited in RTG, 2005). The member seemed very concerned that the Protocol demanded a "breaking away from tradition", and that this was something that needed to be questioned, declaring "We do not have to take everything lock, stock and barrel from the western culture" (N. Baldeh, National Assembly Member, cited in RTG, 2005). Several participants traced current policy tensions concerning the national gender agenda to the National Assembly debate on the African Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Despite highlighting the participatory approach used in the formulation of the last two national education policies, policy was viewed as something that happens at the top. The "technocratic, top-down" (Codeyel, NGO Representative) policy approach was not criticized so much as the need to "translate" and raise awareness and understanding of education policy at the local-level was emphasized.

And then the engine for change has to come from the

majority of people, of which the Gambian majority are illiterate and rural. If education is a gap, their awareness is low. You can have a wonderful something on paper, but they don't even know how to demand or claim those rights. (Codeyel, NGO Representative)

Not only are citizens largely unaware of education policies and their rights to and within education, it was expressed that teachers themselves lack awareness of policies and have been left “confused” by the educational re-structuring that has taken place in the system over the last few years.

If you look at the education system before and now it is quite different. The system has changed and the new system introduced, it seems that it has not been understood by teachers and it's not understood by the kids. (Halimatou, NGO Representative)

As one civil society participant stated: “But the ‘how’, that is the process, the structure, the mechanism, that is where the gap exists” (Codeyel, NGO Representative). Everywhere I went and almost everyone I spoke with noted that resource shortages (i.e., human, technical, financial) in support of policy programming were constraining the achievement of policy objectives. Moreover, there were pockets of concern for what was perceived to be a lack of political commitment to allocating the necessary resources to achieve gender policy goals. One participant stated that “we are very good at embracing them [MDGs and EFA]”, but that policy implementation was weakened by a lack of political commitment that in turn, led to limited or “intercepted” resource allocations in support of equity programming (Satang, NGO Representative). It was argued that in “localizing” EFA and MDG frameworks that:

Of course you enrich them with the perspective of the local people, and the weakness is that once that is done, when it comes to mobilizing resources, there is very little money or resources to be able to implement the policy. (Satang, NGO Representative)

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings concerning the constructed knowledge of policy actors with respect to the meaning and purpose of girls' education, as well as the challenges and prospects for the achievement of gender equality in education more broadly. In the first part I identified and discussed the dominant discourses and understandings concerning the role and importance of formal schooling in Gambian society, as well as girls' education specifically. The findings clearly revealed the dominance of human capital assumptions concerning the extrinsic socio-economic benefits of girls' education, particularly as expressed by government and donor officials, although not totally absent in the discourses of non-governmental actors either. Thus an emergent tension was identified between economic-instrumentalist/utilitarian and transformative perspectives concerning the importance of girls' education and the achievement of gender equality in education in the constructed knowledge of policy actors. Here, the framing of gender equality in education as important for national economic growth (the dominant government view) was contrasted with the human rights and human capability framing of girls' education as seen amongst participating NGOs.

In discussing how different policy actors understand and define key challenges to girls' education and the achievement of gender equality in education, I noted a further tension between those who framed "culture" (i.e. the gendered division of labour and distribution of power in households) and "traditional practices" (i.e. early marriage) as persistent barriers to educational equity, and those who, while mentioning that these had been issues in the past, were adamant that they did not currently pose significant risks to gender equality in education objectives.

The Gambia has been recognized internationally for its promotion of girls' education; however, while I was interested in exploring the actors, ideas and practices contributing to this

success, particularly against the backdrop of rising religious conservatism, I was not expecting to find such an overwhelming sense of achievement that emerged as a central theme in the research. As discussed in this chapter, the theme of success and achievement was emphasized by both government and nongovernmental actors, although many of the latter still insisted that “more needs to be done” with respect to girls’ education. The achievement discourse was explicitly linked with the accomplishments of the education sector in terms of promoting access, relevance and retention: “We think we’ve performed extremely well regarding access. In all of the regions, you’ve had this big expansion in the access area” (Awa, Senior Education Official, Central Government). Moreover, as was detailed later in the above, elements of the “achievement discourse” were used to justify and frame the policy shift from a focus on “girls’ education” to that of “gender education” and the concomitant shift in policy focus towards issues of boys’ education.

The “achievement discourse” appeared rooted in the idea that “gender parity” in enrolment at the primary level was the key policy priority. Interview data and document analysis revealed frequent statements to the effect that “gender parity” had been reached at the lower-basic level and was “on-track” to being achieved at the higher levels. I interpreted the achievement discourse as helping to explain the discontinuation, in the current National Education Policy 2004-2015, of the Girls’ Education Programme begun in 1998. In interviews, at meetings, and to a lesser extent in reports to donors and sector reviews, it was implied that the problems of girls’ education were largely solved - a *fait accompli* – and that it was just a “matter of time” before gender parity was achieved across the education system. Concern, it appeared was shifting towards an emphasis on quality and relevance of education as the policy areas most in need of reform.

In the following chapter I use my findings from participant observation at the national launch of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) to illustrate and triangulate my claims made in this chapter regarding the depoliticization of gender equality in education policy, a preference for distributive reforms that aim to benefit boys as well as girls, and what I have called the "gender equality-gender equity debate". In particular, I argue that the UNGEI launch served to demonstrate the power of government elites to control the language and thus the agenda of gender and education policy processes in the context of an international girls' education programme.

Chapter Seven
Tensions in Global-National Policy Transfer: Exploring the Contested Terrain of Girl-Focused Education Policy at the National Launch of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

In March of 2007 I had the opportunity to attend a two-day workshop organized as part of the national launch of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) in The Gambia. The event brought together a range of governmental, non-governmental and donor actors to develop the national Terms of Reference (ToR) to guide UNGEI activities in the country. In this chapter I present my findings from this workshop, based on data drawn from field notes, hard copies of keynote presentations, and the draft ToR document that was circulated at the workshop. Emergent themes concerning gender equality and education knowledge and action are explored in this chapter. I suggest that the findings help illustrate and triangulate my claims regarding tensions in the use of gender equity and gender equality, the dominant policy preference for distributive policy reforms rather than girl-focused, and the questioning of the national gender agenda. Ultimately, I suggest that the UNGEI workshop highlighted the power of national actors to control and direct the nature and scope of gender and education discourse according to endogenous understandings and priorities, against the girl-focused priorities of UNGEI.

Education for All and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is a product of the World Education Forum (WEF) held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 (Seel & Clarke, 2005). At the WEF, members of the international development and donor communities reconfirmed a global commitment to achieving quality basic education for all children by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). UNGEI represents a transnational multilateral girls' education initiative that focus on developing public-private partnerships towards efficiency and effectiveness of girls' education

programming, donor harmonization and coordination (V. Cristofili, field notes, 2007). UNGEI has specifically sought to highlight the importance of girls' secondary education as well as equity in education outcomes – a far more expanded conceptualization of “gender equality” in education as opposed to “gender parity” (numerical sameness)

UNGEI is a pressure group whose mission is to ensure that the EFA goals on gender equality in education are met through collaborative efforts among UN agencies, civil society, governments and donor agencies. (UNGEI, 2002, p. 1)

In another example, the UNGEI Vision Statement calls for, “A world where all girls and boys will have equal access to free, quality education” (UNGEI, 2002, p. 1).

The launching of UNGEI subsequent to the WEF reflected a shared consensus amongst donor and development partners of the importance of girls' education and the recognition that there is an ongoing need to target specific efforts towards the promotion and enhancement of girls' education in tandem with more broad-based EFA efforts (Seel & Clarke, 2005). Moreover, UNGEI formally advocates “gender equality” in and through education and thus encourages governments and donors to think and act in connection with a policy vision that goes beyond gender parity objectives (Seel & Clarke, 2005).

Launching UNGEI in The Gambia

The 2007 coordination of a the UNGEI launching workshop in The Gambia during which the terms of references for a Gambia-UNGEI network partnership were to be established, occurred after years of “inexplicable” delay (Gender Education Unit Staff Remark at UNGEI launch, March 2007).⁴² Three years later, as of 2010 the UNGEI website continues to indicate that The Gambia has not yet formalized UNGEI participation, although “discussions about an

⁴² It was noted in the keynote speech from the workshop that the UNGEI Network was launched in The Gambia October 2006 and the workshop represented the next step in setting up the terms of reference for the network and action plan (I. Lamin-Faye, field notes 2007)

UNGEI network have taken place...and the Gender Education Unit is fully sensitized and is ready to take the lead on mobilizing other partners”.⁴³ If and when The Gambia formally establishes an UNGEI network partnership, it will have been the last West African country to do so.

The two-day UNGEI workshop in March 2007 was held at a local tourist hotel outside Banjul. Several participants suggested I try to attend the workshop, and I was formally invited to it by staff at the Gender Education Unit, as well as leadership of the National EFA Network.

The format included presentations, whole-group discussions and smaller group break-out sessions. There were approximately fifty people in attendance and included representatives from a range of government ministries, civil society organizations and donor and multilateral agencies. Like the other two policy events I participated in during field research, and although they were billed to be, neither the Secretary of State for Education, nor the Permanent Secretary was in attendance. Over the course of two days, the following actors gave formal presentations at the workshop:

- Director of Basic and Secondary Education (two presentations on day one)⁴⁴
- Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education
- UNICEF representative
- UNICEF/UNGEI West and Central African Region Office Representative
- Executive Director of the Women’s Bureau
- Director of FAWE-GAM
- Head of EFA Network Campaign (The Gambia)
- Gender Education Unit representative

⁴³ UNGEI <http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/gambia.html>, accessed August 2009

⁴⁴ The Director of Basic and Secondary Education presented a prepared speech on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, as well as delivering his own presentation.

The presentations covered a range of issues and topics related to girls' education, including achievements, challenges and "the way forward" in terms of strengthening partnerships in girls' education advocacy and practice.

Framing Girls' Education Policy: Achievement and Challenges

The workshop focused on promoting and enhancing girls' education and girls' education advocacy networks and partnerships; however, an important backdrop to the discussions was the success of The Gambia in terms of girls' education policy, particularly demonstrated by the achievement of gender parity at the lower basic level and near-parity at the upper basic levels.⁴⁵ In further support of the idea that The Gambia was a "model country" in terms of girls' education, the keynote speech given on behalf of the Secretary of State for Basic and Secondary Education by the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Basic and Secondary Education (PS) highlighted The Gambia's winning of the "Commonwealth Best Practice Award on Girls' Education 2006."⁴⁶ The UNICEF representative, in her opening remarks, noted that The Gambia's "best practices...should be shared regionally in order to consolidate gains". The role of The Gambia as a model for other countries to follow in their own efforts to promote girls' education was noted by all workshop speakers. Some of the "best practices" highlighted were: the provision of scholarships to needy girls; the elimination of school fees for girls; the mobilization of civil society organizations and local communities in education governance; and the Mothers' Club initiative.

⁴⁵ This statement is based on the remarks made by the following workshop participants specifically: the Deputy Permanent Secretary DOSBSE, Director of Basic and Secondary Education; UNGEI Representative for Central and West Africa; FAWE-GAM Director; GEU staff; UNICEF Country Representative. Government officials in the audience also emphasized the success of The Gambia in terms of promoting and enhancing girls' education.

⁴⁶ This award was actually one of several "good practice" awards given to countries as part of the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards (2006) and was specifically awarded for the Girls' Education Scholarship Trust Fund
<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/files/177984/FileName/ReportonFirstEducationGoodPracticeAwards2006.pdf>

In contrast to the discourse of success, other presentations spoke to the challenges still facing girls' education advocacy and policy. During the keynote address, the PS (male) identified the "daunting" but "surmountable" challenges in girls' education, paying attention to both demand and supply-side factors. Demand-side factors identified included the following: "early marriage, teenage pregnancy, poverty, male-child preference, distance to school, peer pressure, low adult literacy rate, and religious misconceptions" (Faye, 2007, p. 2). Importantly, supply-side factors involving schools, teachers and the curriculum were highlighted as additional areas for policy interventions towards the promotion and enhancement of girls' education.

The importance of policy as both a "tool and engine of national development" in The Gambia was singled out by the Executive Director of the Women's Bureau as the guiding point of reference for "addressing the needs of men and women" and that most recent policies had been developed through "consultation with men and women" (Fye-Hydara, 2007). The official policy goal was stated to be the elimination of gender inequalities and the mainstreaming of gender into all government policy documents and approaches; however, the ED noted that "most stakeholders are not aware of the policy". The mainstreaming of gender was explicitly connected to the idea of partnership between men and women and the need for attention to "men's issues" (Fye-Hydara, 2007). Reiterating her point about the importance of policy and the need for greater policy awareness and understanding, the ED concluded that despite the existence of many gender-focused interventions, that, "behind closed doors, the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing" and that "access to information is a challenge". According to the ED, insufficient human, technical and financial resources further hinder the implementation of gender mainstreaming and the overall effectiveness and efficiency of gender and education policy processes.

The Politics of Terminology

Evident throughout the course of the UNGEI workshop was the importance and significance of the language used by policy actors in their discussions of girls' education issues and policy objectives. When the Executive Director (ED) of the Women's Bureau, Mrs. Ida Fye Fye-Hydar, rose to formally speak at the workshop she began by explicitly using the language of "gender equity", emphasizing it and saying it loudly, stating that "this is what Mr. Sanneh would like to hear", to some laughter in the room.⁴⁷ The ED then became serious and said, "gender equality *is* something to question": proceeding to then focus on the success of "women's empowerment" interventions in The Gambia (i.e. Department of State for Women's Affairs, Gender Focal Points), specifically in terms of improved women's agricultural production and affirmative action policies in the Local Government Reform Act.⁴⁸ The concept of "women's empowerment" is complex as well as vague enough so as to provide flexibility in its interpretation (i.e. economic or socio-cultural forms of "empowerment"). In this instance, the ED used the language of "women's empowerment", rather than "gender equality" or "gender equity", when listing the accomplishments, strategies and challenges facing women's advancement in The Gambia.

The Language of Rights: A curious absence

What is not said in policy discussions can be as important, if not more so, than what is said. The discourse and language of human rights and specifically the right to education was largely absent in both the written manuscripts from workshop presentations by government

⁴⁷ Mr. Sanneh is a senior government official in the Department of State for Education.

⁴⁸ Gender focal points in The Gambia have been institutionalized for almost ten years and at one time were quite robust and effectively coordinated and resourced. Now the budget has apparently shrunk and gender focal point positions are often left vacant. I was told by a representative of the Gender Education Unit that it was inadvisable to spend all the training resources on one person, so they would wait until there were a number of individuals who needed gender training before they would undertake staff training and development for placement in structures responsible for playing a lead role and supporting function to gender and education policy in The Gambia.

(including the Gender Education Unit) as well as during group discussions. The UNICEF and UNGEI representatives both emphasized the importance of rights-based approaches and connected these with international conventions such as CEDAW and the UNCRC; however, the idea that education was a basic human right was not mentioned explicitly in the other presentations (by government or non-governmental organizations). The absence of rights language was somewhat surprising to me given the draft terms of reference drawn up by the GEU before the workshop explicitly stated that one of the purposes of the UNGEI network was, “To promote political commitment, multi-sectoral involvement, and appropriate adoption of policies, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and human rights policies” (GEU, 2007).

The only time that the language of human rights was used was when the Executive Director of the Women’s Bureau brought up the draft National Women’s Bill that aimed to “protect the rights of women *and* men”. Field notes recorded that following this statement the audience broke up into laughter. In another instance, the presentation by FAWEGAM included no reference to education as a human right or women’s human rights more generally; rather, among the “core values” identified by the organization were “empowerment” (not specifically women’s empowerment) and “partnership”. Indeed, nowhere in the list of the eight core values of FAWEGAM do the concepts of “gender equity” or “equality” appear. Again, this was somewhat surprising to me because FAWEGAM’s parent association Fawe explicitly identifies education as a “fundamental human right” and that its mission is to promote the “transformation of girls’ education and gender equity” (Fawe Home, Retrieved on August 20, 2009 from <http://www.fawe.org/index.php/home.html>). While the workshop officially represented national commitment to the UNGEI agenda, including the adoption of a rights-based approach, the

absence of rights language and the seeming preference for “women’s empowerment” and “women’s contribution to national development” discourses suggests that advocating girls’ education from a human rights perspective was effectively “off-limits”.

“Do We Know Where We Are Going? Do We Know What We Want?” Rejecting Oppositional Feminist Politics and Promoting Partnerships between Men and Women for Socioeconomic Development

Returning to the presentation by the Executive Director of the Women’s Bureau, when speaking to the goals of girls’ and women’s advocacy and the concept of gender, Ms. Fye-Hydara emphasized that, “When we talk about gender we do not want to compare [men and women] and create a situation of competition: *we want partnership*”. The idea of partnership between men and women was connected by the ED to the global shift from the Women in Development (WID) to the Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks. She indicated that there had been an “over-focus” on women-only projects and that this has “caused problems”. The ED proposed the idea of developing a “National Gender Policy” to be implemented alongside the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW) as a means of addressing “the problems caused by the confusion that gender refers to women’s issues” (Fye-Hydara, 2007). Specifically, the ED hoped to use policy to “raise awareness so as to bring more men on board”, saying that “we took the wrong direction [focusing on women], but we’re trying to reverse” (Fye-Hydara, 2007). The audience responded to these comments with some of the loudest applause of the two-day workshop. All of the other presentations emphasized “partnership” between men and women as the necessary basis for future girls’ education advocacy. Two of the seven points under the “Future Plans” of FAWEGAM indicated support

for the idea that it was necessary to bring men onside in order to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of girls' education policy and practice.

- To strategise on how to work more closely with boys and men
- To work with the Department of State for Education to design a programme for needy boys (FAWEGAM Representative, field notes, March 2007)

Following the Executive Director of the Women's Bureau formal presentation, questions and comments were taken from the audience. The first comment came from a woman DoSBSE representative who suggested that the re-naming of the Girls' Education Unit to the Gender Education Unit should go "some way" to tempering the "boys' backlash" against the "over-focus" on girls' education. She noted The Gambia's success in terms of achieving gender parity at the primary level and that the DoSBSE has an active website that provides gender disaggregated statistics to guide efforts to promote "gender equality" in education. At this point a senior government official sitting beside the Executive Director of the Gender Education Unit (woman) called out "gender equity" in an attempt to "correct" the participant's terminology.

During audience questions and comments, many if not most speakers, spoke of "gender education" rather than using "UNGEI", or "girls' education". I was curious as to what the UNICEF/UNGEI representative would (or could) do to address this (i.e. ask questions concerning the meaning behind the concept of "gender education", why it seems preferred and the role it plays in dominant understandings of girls' education policy). The UNICEF representative stood to speak next and suggested that the workshop participants keep in mind that, while all the discussions of "gender education" were well and good, that the mission of UNGEI was to keep specific and focused attention on promoting and enhancing girls' education. Re-emphasizing her point about the priority need for sustained attention to girls' secondary and higher education, and drawing on human capital arguments, she said, "Completing primary

education is not enough if we want women to make a social and economic contribution to national development”. Field notes record that there were many in the audience who nodded to this statement and several who began speaking out loud about the problems of boys’ education. The ED responded to the UNICEF/UNGEI official saying, “**you** want to do a lot and are very ambitious...but do we have the capacity [for reviewing social sector policies from a gender lens]?” The rhetorical question posed by the ED was reflective of the earlier concerns she had raised concerning the lack of coordination and clarity of multi-sector gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Returning to the theme of responding to a “boys’ backlash”, the next audience member to speak was a man from the Management Development Institute’s Gender and Development Unit. He said that the overriding goal of girls’ education efforts was “sustainable national development” and that it was “not advisable to look at it from a feminist ideology or feminist point of view”. The interpretation represented was one that equated “feminism” with being “anti-men” with this man admonishing women’s activists to “Involve men if you want gender to be sustainable”. A representative (woman) from FAWEGAM spoke up in support of “bringing men in” and “addressing their needs” as a way of addressing “resistance” to women’s advocacy. However, she also stated that “you can’t turn a blind eye to the socio-cultural barriers to girls’ education” and that there was a continued need for girl-focused policy interventions to combat persistent barriers other than poverty. The FAWEGAM representative concluded by saying that “education was a start” in challenging socio-cultural norms and practices that constrained “gender equity” in formal schooling.

According to the draft Terms of Reference for UNGEI Network in The Gambia, the main purpose of the workshop was to forge a consensus on the vision for girls’ education advocacy

and policy practice as well as developing a plan of action for joint collaboration amongst national actors towards the MDG and EFA goals and targets regarding education for all and gender equality (GEU, 2007). During the presentation by the UNICEF/UNGEI representative, the need to “speak with one voice” and have a “clear vision for girls’ education” was emphasized in the context of developing “public-private partnerships” (PPP) between civil society, government and the private sector. However, audience responses suggested that finding consensus on a common vision for girls’ education posed more of a challenge than may have been anticipated by the UNICEF/UNGEI representative. The remarks of one woman DoSBSE official best illustrate what I refer to as the “questioning” of the terms and goals of a broad-based consensus concerning the terms and goals of a national “gender agenda”. Quite serious and at times appearing exasperated, this education official addressed what she called “the gender activists” and asked “Do we know *what* we want? Have we clearly thought about and discussed how it is we can get there?” She described as a “fundamental flaw” what she found to be a lack of clarity and consensus concerning a national gender agenda and the place of “women’s issues” within it. She asked if it was “fifty percent” that was sought by gender activists and connected this with MDG 3 concerning the achievement of gender equality, concluding with the statement that “it can’t happen overnight”. The official emphasized the importance of having an educated workforce for the achievement of national development, but stressed that boys and men are “being eliminated” from public policy spaces and “that’s a problem”. The UNICEF/UNGEI representative then formally spoke in support of the goal of including men in girls’ education policy spaces, saying, “the Women’s Bureau is very lucky because you have men that want to join you” (V. Cristofili, field notes, 2007). Following up this statement, the UNICEF/UNGEI representative re-emphasized the importance of targeted interventions into girls’ education,

particularly naming “socio-cultural barriers” and highlighting the importance of working with “religious leaders” and other community-based authorities.

After beginning with a comprehensive, yet relatively neutral and soft-hitting presentation on the successes and challenges facing gender and education policy spaces, the group discussion required the ED to respond to the sensitive and contested issues raised concerning the language, goals and practices of girls’ education and gender and education policy. She declared all the policy and implementation challenges that there were in the area of “gender education”, were not solely the “Bureau’s problem”. Framing local “stakeholders” as both policy subjects and objects, she announced that the Bureau was mandated only with “providing an enabling environment” for gender policy, the rest was “in the hands of the stakeholders”, many of whom she reminded the group lacked sufficient awareness of national gender policies. The ED proceeded by saying that there was “much confusion” between what were “gender” issues and what were “women’s” issues and that men were forced to “sit behind” in any case when it came to either of these topics. She asked, “Are our priorities rights? Followed by, “I don’t know? I don’t think so!” The ED declared that gender activists must see it that “men are not strangers” in order to avoid “problems”. Again she asked, “Would I advocate for something I don’t do at my own home? I don’t believe in those things. I see our sisters on TV [talking about] fifty-fifty and I think ‘we’re taking ourselves back’” (Fye-Hydara, 2007). Moreover, rather than speak to issues of girls’ or gender education, the ED again brought up the draft Women’s Bill saying that “what you want to put in it won’t go through...you can’t have issues that create controversy”. Claiming that gender activists had their priorities and approaches wrong, the ED indicated that “we have to ask for fifty percent not one hundred percent now because people aren’t ready”. As a policy response,

the ED advocated further “sensitization” and “awareness-creation”, proposing that these strategies would be successful in overcoming “cultural barriers”.

Speaking directly to promoting social change, the ED claimed that it was “expensive, takes time and is up to the person” – aligning with the individualizing discourse of “self-sufficiency” noted in the previous chapter. Seeming defensive and frustrated the ED moved to conclude her presentation with the statement “Look, I’m the Director, I have to do this presentation”, which I interpreted as reflective of a “Don’t shoot the messenger” sentiment. The Director of Basic and Secondary Education spoke up to say that “I feel for the women’s bureau” and challenged ministry representatives to identify their sector plans saying there was a need for coordination amongst sector planning units.

Break-Out Sessions

Following these presentations and discussions, group break-out sessions were organized. Groups of six to eight workshop participants were each responsible for brainstorming and coming up with recommendations concerning the development of an UNGEI network in the country. Initially I was assigned to work with one group, but eventually I moved around to several other groups, listening and participating occasionally (when my input was solicited) in their discussions. While the instructions for the break-out sessions were clear, it took considerable time for groups to come together and get to work. There was much looking around and questioning of what should be done and at least within the group I was initially assigned to, much discussion concerning who would take notes and who would write summary points of the group’s recommendations/ideas on the flip chart paper. The three men in my group were reluctant to perform these roles, seeming to prefer leading and facilitating the group discussion. Looking around at the other groups, I noticed that it was mainly women who were doing the

note-taking and flipchart writing. There was quite a lot of teasing and laughter as the groups worked and most seemed quite at ease. However, one regional education authority (woman) that I spoke with felt ill-prepared to participate in the group work saying that “this is not my area; I’ve been sent in place of the Regional Director. I will report back to her”. After about twenty minutes of group work, I noted that participants grew increasingly anxious for lunch and the flow of dialogue moved from issues of the UNGEI network and “gender education” to when lunch would be served. Soon, people were making their way towards the dining area, leaving behind a small number of individuals trying to complete the flipchart summaries that were to be handed in before lunch. Field notes record that it were only women who stayed behind to finish these tasks.

The remaining day and a half was spent listening to various presentations from NGOs and having further audience-based discussion concerning the formation of an UNGEI network in The Gambia. The same tensions over the “appropriate language” of gender and education as well as the overall national vision persisted, although not as acute as these issues appeared during the first quarter of the two-day workshop. Based on my observations and discussions with participants, it was not that these tensions had been resolved adequately; rather, they needed to be understood as part elements of wider and deeper cleavages between “secular” and “traditionalist” and/or “religious” discourses and ideologies.

Chapter Summary

The Gambian launching workshop for the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) revealed nationally-based tensions and questions concerning the promotion of girls’ education and women’s advancement. Divisions internal to official policy spaces concerning the purpose and relative importance of girls’ education policy are not discussed in any official government document that I reviewed as part of this study. In contrast to deficit accounts that

locate the main barriers to girls' education as located at the level of family/community practices rooted in "culture/tradition", the workshop revealed cracks in the officially constructed consensus amongst elite policy actors concerning the importance of girls' education and the urgency of continued girl-focused policy interventions. In particular, the workshop presentations and group discussions highlighted three main lines of tension mediating the Gambian encounter with UNGEI, a transnational gender equality in education initiative that specifically promotes girl-focused policy programming. First, findings from the workshop revealed the critical importance of the language used in the official articulation of perspectives on girls' education and "women's issues" more generally. Second, during the keynote presentations and participant discussion, government officials expressed a mixture of mistrust, resistance, and at times, an outright rejection of some of the global commitments made by the Gambian state with respect to a specific focus on girls' education. Lastly, presentations by both civil society groups and government officials underscored the importance of working with, rather than against, men. Here, the metaphor of "partnership" was dominantly used to describe the Gambian vision for promoting and realizing national socio-economic development. Ultimately, the findings from the UNGEI workshop suggest that reaching consensus, in terms of defining a national gender agenda in education and beyond, remains an ongoing and somewhat contested process in The Gambia.

This chapter largely concludes my presentation of findings from field work in The Gambia in 2007. Before moving to conclude this thesis, in the next chapter I present findings from the analysis of new national gender policies and legislation that was introduced and/or passed in the past three years.

Chapter Eight

Gender, Education, and National Development: An Analysis of New National Gender Policy Framework Documents

There has been movement in the Gambian gender policy arena in the three years since the field research for this study was completed, exemplified by the development of two new policy documents – the Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011, and the National Gender Policy (2008) – as well as the recent passing of Women’s Bill (2010), which establishes legislation to protect women’s rights in accordance with CEDAW and the African Protocol on the rights of women (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2009; RTG, 2010; 2008). These new policy documents have emerged as the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women 1999-2009 (NPAGW) has come to its conclusion. The development of these new documents been part of a push to both revisit and update the national gender agenda in accordance with nationally and locally defined needs and interests, as well as to maintain and attract donor support for women and gender-focused policy implementation in the country.

This chapter presents an analysis of the new national gender policy framework in The Gambia, with specific attention paid to the framing and direction of gender and education policy goals and strategies. I highlight three main themes emerging from the analysis. The first theme concerns the incorporation and framing of the concept of “gender” alongside “women” as a national policy concern. The second theme concerns the continued emphasis on human capital with respect to women’s empowerment, and particularly women’s economic empowerment for national development. The third theme concerns the inclusion of both strategic and practical approaches to promoting women’s advancement.

The Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011

As suggested in earlier chapters, the intended audience is an important aspect to consider when interpreting policy documents (Yanow, 2000). Almost a year after my return from The Gambia, the Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper (GESP) was presented to a group of donors in London, at a “Round Table Conference on the PRSP II Partnership for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (February 5th-6th, 2008). This conference was brokered by Gambian governmental authorities, including the Vice President of The Gambia, Her Excellency Isatou Njie-Saidy, and attended by delegations from twenty-eight bilateral and multilateral organizations including some major donors to the Gambian education sector: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, African Development Bank (AfDB), World Bank (WB), IMF, Kuwait Fund, Saudi Arabia, Germany, United Kingdom, and Japan (among seventeen others).

As specified in the document, the GESP represents an amalgamation of interests and perspectives drawn from its predecessor, the NPAGW; consultations with “grassroots women and their leaders” as part of the 2006 mid-term review of the NPAGW; as well as the planning priorities of the National Women’s Council and Bureau in 2006/2007 (RTG, 2008, p. 7). The first six pages of the policy are devoted to detailing the institutional, socio-cultural, and economic challenges and constraints to realizing women’s empowerment, with special consideration given to the education and agricultural sectors. The second half of the document presents the strategic framework for the GESP, and identifies a comprehensive plan for building the institutional infrastructure capacity for gender mainstreaming, as well as for designing and implementing some targeted gender-responsive policy programming across all public sectors. In this section I look more closely at the framing of gender and empowerment in the GESP, and pay

special attention to the representation of girls' education issues and the actions of the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBE) within the policy.⁴⁹

While the purpose of the roundtable conference was to facilitate coordinative dialogue between the Government of The Gambia and its core donors concerning the implementation of the PRSP II, the purpose of the GESP, in addition to representing an updated national gender policy agenda, was to secure donor funding for its implementation. The opening statement by Vice President Njie-Saidy contains explicit appeals to donors to support the program proposed through "substantial grant funds in the form of pledges, which will be honoured, and also highly concessional financing" (Njie-Saidy, 2008, p. 2), and concludes with the statement "we cannot afford to fail the Gambian people whose hopes lie on the productive outcomes of this conference" (Njie Saidy, 2008, p. 2). In the first part of the policy, under the heading "Situational Justification", the claim is made that it is the "stringent but cost-intensive demands of the UN-sponsored gender-based Conventions such as CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals", compounded by the fiscal austerity measures imposed on The Gambia by International Monetary Fund (IMF), that have forced the government to make appeals for financial support from donors in support of women's empowerment programming. Specifically, the GESP emphasizes the need for financial, material, and human resource support for its implementation (RTG, 2008, pp. 11-12). Costed at US\$3,300,000, the document states that implementation of the GESP is too costly for the Government within "the present climate of national economic poverty and fiscal limitations...hence the need for external sourcing of financial support" (RTG, 2008, p. 7). Towards appealing for donor support for GESP

⁴⁹ The Department of State for Education (DOSE) became the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE) in 2007 when a new Department of State for Higher Education (DOSHE) was established.

implementation, the document paints a bleak picture of women's rights and capabilities in The Gambia:

In The Gambia (as indeed in most countries in the developing world) women constitute the poorest of the economically and food poor; are victims of cultural and systemic discrimination in the division of labour and access to gainful employment; benefit the least from national policies, livelihoods resources allocation, social services related to education and health and in political representation. (RTG, 2008, p. 1)

As captured in the above quote, the wide brush used in the GESP to describe “Gambian women” and their lives, belies the truth that there is considerable diversity among women in The Gambia, particularly along class, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and geographic lines. Yet, the wide brush approach remains a potent strategy for arguing for donor funding based on need, and the GESP does this well, as evidenced in the substantial donor support garnered as a result of the roundtable process (UNDP The Gambia, 2010).

Women's empowerment is the key goal of the gender mainstreaming approach that the policy seeks to institutionalize across all sectors in The Gambia (RTG, 2008). The argument is made that the empowerment of women is necessary for the achievement of poverty reduction objectives; national development; and the securing and protection of women's economic, political, and citizenship-mediated rights (RTG, 2008). It is noteworthy that the GESP's focus on women's and/or gender/ed empowerment replaces the NPAGW's focus on *women's advancement*. This shift in conceptual language is consistent with the findings from the UNGEI launch described in the preceding chapter concerning the preference of key policy actors (i.e. the Executive Director of the Women's Bureau) for the language of “women's empowerment” over “gender equality”.

Reflective of the increasing conflation of women's rights and poverty reduction discourses in global and national policies, one of the goals of the GESP is to "enhance women's **contribution** to national material resources and food poverty" (RTG, 2008, p. 1) [emphasis added].⁵⁰ Yet in the preceding and opening paragraph, it is stated that "women constitute the poorest of the economically and food poor" (RTG, 2008, p. 1); although it must be noted that under the section "Situational Justification", it states that women are "allegedly" amongst the "poorest of the poor", suggesting a lack of consensus that this is in fact a true statement (RTG, 2008, p. 2). The solution presented in the document is to "eliminate systemic inequality" in order to "foster self-reliance as actors, not dependents, in national development" (RTG, 2008, p. 1). However, the qualifying statement that the GES aims to promote a "culture" of "enabling Gambian women to improve their capacities **to do what they are doing well...**" (RTG, 2008, p. 2) seems to preclude a more substantive understanding of what "women's empowerment" entails as for example in the human capabilities approach. Within this approach, it would not be a matter of helping women do what they are doing well (although this may be a part of it), rather, from a human development perspective women's empowerment would require that women be free and able to do things and be things that they were not able to be before, as per their own choosing (agency). In terms of strategies, the document's Background Rationale sections calls for a multi-pronged approach to women's economic empowerment for national development that includes providing "welfare"; conscious-raising (of women and public opinion); promoting women's participation in national development processes; access to resources and opportunities; and women's control "of their own assets, work outputs, infrastructure and programme benefits" (RTG, 2008, p. 1).

⁵⁰ For an interesting analysis of the evolving meanings of empowerment, see Ebyen & Napier-Moore, 2009. .

It is noteworthy that immediately after identifying these five key strategies of a supporting framework for achieving women's empowerment, the document is quick to define what this goal does and does not mean:

As the 'women's empowerment' concept is new and sounds threatening to the traditional and male power bases in Gambian society, it will be necessary to mount sustained awareness creation campaigns in all the communication media, fora and documentary materials, to enlighten both women themselves and the general public that empowerment does **not** mean dethronement of male heads of households, religious and political leaders! Rather that it **should entail** the endowing of women with the requisite perceptions, skills and socio-economic resources to make a more efficient and sustainable contribution to national poverty reduction and holistic development endeavours. Succinctly stated it implies an **ethic** that translates into a **culture of: *enabling Gambian women to improve their capacities to do what they are doing well, in order to promote progress and prosperity to households and national development!*** (RTG, 2008, pp. 1-2) (emphasis and bold in original)

Several issues related to the framing and understanding of, *women's empowerment*, are raised in this section of the document. First, as is the case throughout the document, this excerpt demonstrates an understanding of women's empowerment as entailing the improvement of women's capacity to contribute more to the well-being of their family and to national development. Such a perspective aligns with and reflects dominant human capital arguments for girls' education as promoted in global policies and discourses. When rights are mentioned, it is most often with respect to economic rights.

I was also surprised to find that, well over a decade since the establishment of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the proposal and implementation of a number of girl and women-focused policy interventions in The Gambia, that government representatives at the Round Table Conference would decide to frame women's empowerment as something "new". In order to

represent the concept as “new”, the GESP does not include mention of its predecessor’s number one goal of providing “concrete gender in development measures” towards “improving the quality of life of all Gambian[sic], particularly women” (RTG, 1999, p. 21).

I also want to suggest that this paragraph speaks to at least some degree of perceived backlash to women’s rights advocacy in The Gambia. The backlash is understood to be primarily based on the perception that “women’s empowerment” threatens patriarchal modes of control of women which underpin institutionalized male privilege in the country. To dampen and “correct” such responses and perspectives the policy is quick to argue that there is no need for men to feel threatened by women’s empowerment because it explicitly does not mean “dethronement” of husbands as heads of households, nor religious and political leaders (RTG, 2008, p. 1). This is a particularly telling sentence too because it effectively establishes husbands, religious elites and “political leaders” as “kings” through the use of the “dethronement” metaphor. Metaphorical language has been understood as both reflective and productive of different ways of seeing and learning, with metaphoric processes involving transference of “meaning from a better known entity to a lesser known entity” (Yanow, 2000, pp. 42-43). In this case, patriarchal privilege is represented in the king metaphor implied by the language of “dethronement”, and it is patriarchal privilege that is maintained by the explicit rejection of women’s empowerment as entailing a loss of male power.

Much the same as the early quote concerning the status of women in The Gambia, the GESP argues that girls and women continue to be disadvantaged relative to boys and men in the education sector, particularly with respect to access. Structural factors and socio-cultural traditions featuring “patriarchal biases” are singled out for their negative impact on girls’ access, retention and performance in formal education, including in madrassas (RTG, 2008, p. 3). The

GESP acknowledges the pattern whereby more girls than boys enrol at the primary-level; however, it concludes that “this propitious head start in access, is usually threatened by low performance and retention rates, negatively impacted upon by early marriage and teenage pregnancy” (RTG, 2008, p. 3). The GESP also notes that women have been underrepresented in the teaching force in The Gambia due to the same prevailing structural context, although the specific challenges facing women teachers are not elaborated.

Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe in their book *Educational Import: Local encounters with global forces in Mongolia* highlighted the pressure that aid-recipient countries are under to convince donors of the need for aid and support (2006). In turn, donors use crises in so-called developing countries to justify aid spending to their domestic audiences. The importance of proving need could help explain why the GESP uses fifteen-year old education statistics that show larger gender disparities in educational access than more recent ones, in order to argue the need for further donor support for girls’ education initiatives. The fact that no mention is made in the GESP of any past or current government and civil society-led policy efforts to enhance girls’ educational access, retention, and performance further demonstrates the GESP purpose of securing donor funds.

Moving beyond access considerations, the GESP highlights the need for gender disaggregated data on educational performance, retention, and outcomes. It criticizes the focus of gender disaggregated statistics on enrolment rates, claiming that

The simplistic habit of classifying educational data under sex distinctions or Male and Female (M/F) categories only, tends to mask the analytical criteria that could emerge from the use of more detailed and broader variables or indicators of , for example, how increased spending on girls’ education is impacting on the quality and performance aspects... (RTG, 2008, p. 4)

The GESP acknowledges that class intersects with gender in shaping the educational opportunities of children, and it challenges the DOSBE to better understand and address the “alleged poverty-induced male-child preferences” that have long been highlighted as a major constraint on girls’ education opportunities and outcomes, both in national policy statements as well as the broader gender and education literature (RTG, 2008, p. 4). Moreover, while the Girls’ Education Trust Fund and the President’s Education for Girls’ Empowerment Project (PEGEP) are mentioned in connection to “micro-funding” opportunities in support of girls’ education, the GESP argues that these interventions “are not robust enough to accommodate the holistic interventions that are implicit in Policy’s (NEP) gender mainstreaming objectives and strategies” (RTG, 2008, p. 4).

Indeed, the overarching message of the GESP with respect to education is that the DOSBE is not adequately prepared for mainstreaming gender in its sub-sector policies and programs. The DOSBE is criticized for the lack of gender analysis in its budget, with the GESP drawing particular attention to the failure of the department to include a budget line item in support of the “lofty gender mainstreaming ideals” laid out in the current national education policy (GES, 2008, p. 4). The GESP argues that the institutional deficiencies with respect to gender analysis and gender budgeting within the DOSBE, “renders any chance of rapid and adequate implementation of the Department’s gender mainstreaming programme a rather remote reality” (RTG, 2008, p. 4). The answer to institutional weaknesses in the area of girls’ education, according to the GESP, is to pursue “An integrated institutionalized approach to imbue financial data generation with greater focus is necessary within the DOSBE’s budget culture and structure (RTG, 2008, p. 4).

The National Gender Policy 2010-2020

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the National Gender Policy (NGP) was formulated in 2009/10 and replaces the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women 1999-2009. The GESP presented to donors in London in 2008 seems to have served as a precursor to the NGP; however, the latter details more extensively the specific policy objectives and strategies, as well as the roles and responsibilities of different actors. Similar to the NPAGW, and the GESP, the key message in the NGP is that The Gambia requires donor support for its implementation. Thus, on one hand the document clearly represents an effort to show donors a strong and well-planned commitment to meeting the country's obligations under various international conventions (i.e. CEDAW and the African Protocol) as well as its PRSP, JAS, and EFA-FTI agreements, as a means of appealing to donor interest in promoting gender equality. On the other hand, the NGP appears to have provided national policymakers with an opportunity to institutionalize the inclusion of men and boys under the rubric of gender, consistent with the study findings showing a growing concern with issues of boys' education as well as the fairly widespread belief amongst national policy actors (government and non-state) that men and boys must not be excluded from gender and development activities. However, my analysis suggests that the dominant use of gender as a noun in the document serves to maintain an air of confusion and ambiguity in terms of just what "gender" means, and who and what the NGP targets (i.e. "fixing women", "fixing the system", or "paying attention to men").

The NGP opens by referencing the NPAGW and outlining its main areas of impact:

The major achievement of the policy includes among others, increase awareness on gender as a development concern, increase enrolment and retention of girls in schools, improved health care delivery, increase women participating in decision making, and reduction in gender stereotyping and

discrimination. (RTG, 2010, p. 3)

Despite these policy impacts, the NGP states that findings from a 2006 mid-term review of the NPAGW made policymakers realize that a “gender policy” was needed to “adequately address the limitation in the NPAGW, ensure sustainability of the achievement of the NPAGW and address emerging development issues relating to gender” (RTG, 2010, p. 3).⁵¹ The policy specifically identifies the need to understand and address the gender dimensions of poverty, new aid modalities (i.e. sector-wide approaches), decentralization, public-private partnerships and civil service reform, and argues explicitly that these “new” issues and processes “necessitated a shift in policy direction from women empowerment [sic] only, to the promotion of gender equality and equity” (RTG, 2010, p. 3).

In contrast to the NPAGW, the NGP elaborates on the meaning and intent of its “guiding principles”: gender equity, gender equality, WID, GAD, affirmative action, partnership, and cultural pluralism and tolerance (RTG, 2010, pp. 12-13). Given the emergent themes in this study regarding the problem of conceptual ambiguity and the political struggles to fix the meaning of key terms, it is important to look at how the policy’s guiding principles are defined in this document. First, gender equity is understood to be

an integral part of the planning and implementation of national development processes. This policy emphasizes government’s commitment to eliminating all forms of gender inequality and empowers women and girls in the development process. Therefore fairness and justices in the distribution of resources, benefits and responsibilities between men and women, girls and boys in all spheres of life shall be the guiding principle. (RTG, 2010, p. 12)

⁵¹ During field research at the Women’s Bureau, I was not told of this review.

Second, gender equality is framed as

the recognition that equal opportunities and status of women and men, boys and girls to realize their potential will enable them to contribute to socio-cultural, economic and political development of the country. The principle of equality shall be promoted in education and health, opportunities to utilize capabilities to earn income and live a full potential; and agency which is the ability to influence outcomes. (RTG, 2010, pp. 12-13)

The ideas expressed in these quotes align fairly closely with widely accepted understandings of equality and equity, as introduced in Chapter One of this thesis. Whereas the former is characterized by an emphasis on sameness and the promotion of “equal opportunities”, the latter is characterized by its emphasis on “fairness and justice”, suggesting room for the inclusion of difference as advocated in the human capabilities approach. Importantly, equality and equity are connected in the policy document to outcomes and not merely access to developmental resources and services. As the quotes suggest, the policy is clear in that as part of its adoption of the GAD approach, it aims to, “...support women and men in their roles in development through advocating for structural transformation in the productive and reproductive spheres” (RTG, 2010, p. 13). Addressing the need for structural transformation is indeed a hallmark of the GAD approach, as commonly recognized in the development literature.

In addition to GAD, the policy reaffirms the Government’s commitment to *gender equality*, and the document acknowledges the need for the continued inclusion of women-focused policy interventions. Affirmative action continues to be a key policy action identified in the NGP, and is understood to entail

Closing gender gaps require temporal preferential treatment for the disadvantaged in some sectors. Affirmative actions [sic] will be pursued to redress historical and traditional forms of discrimination against women and girls in political, education, economic and other social spheres. (RTG, 2010, p. 13)

Partnership as a guiding principle is invoked with respect to building “networking and alliances with other line sectors, NGOs and international partners shall be pursued to ensure success and sustainability” (RTG, 2010, p. 13). Cultural pluralism and tolerance refer to the “Recognition of traditional norms and values, adoption of gradualist approach [sic], dialogue and respect for religious views and traditional institutions and structures” (RTG, 2010, p. 13).

The use of gender as a noun is a defining characteristic of the NGP. The failure of the NPAGW to account for the needs and interests of men is singled out in the NGP as a key policy weakness. Towards justifying the shift from a WID to GAD policy approach, the NGP argues that while the NPAGW sought to improve the quality of life of all Gambians, that

no objectives or strategies specifically targeting men or gender mainstreaming measures have been incorporated in any of its 18 Objectives and 112 Strategies. This has created the impression that promoting gender equity and equality are not priorities in the policy. (RTG, 2010, p. 4)

With reference to global policy movement, the NGP states that “best practices in the world indicated a shift of policy direction from women’s empowerment only to gender equality and equity through the elimination of all discriminatory practices” and that this shift was appropriate for The Gambia to adopt (RTG, 2010, p. 4). Similar to the renaming of the Girls’ Education Unit to the Gender Education Unit, and the Girl-Friendly School Initiative to the Child-Friendly School Initiative; to symbolize the shift to GAD, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Women’s Bureau have been renamed the Ministry of Women’s Affairs *and Gender* and the *Gender* Bureau respectively (RTG, 2010, p. 9) (emphasis added).

Somewhat confusingly, the document suggests that the mid-term review of the NPAGW recommended that when gender-based disparities “change significantly by the next policy design

cycle, the word *gender* should be included in the title and mainstreamed into all its objectives and strategies” (RTG, 2010, p. 5) (italics in original). Also unclear and potentially problematic in terms of the prospects for NGP success is the confusing distinction made in the policy between women’s empowerment and gender equality and equity. Based on my analysis of interview and observation data, I suggest that the policy is saying that men have problems too and an exclusive focus on women’s empowerment ignores consideration of these. Moreover, the policy suggests that if the overarching goal is gender equality, and equity is about fairness, then it is only fair that boys’ and men’s needs and interests are included under the rubric of gender.

In an example from education, the policy positions the declining schooling enrolment and retention rates of boys as indicative of the need to adopt a gender mainstreaming and gender equity approach. It is argued that scholarships should be extended to all children and that programs need to “equally target, encourage and support enrolment and retention of *boys* and *girls*...” (RTG, 2010, p. 4, emphasis added). This example also helps illustrate the NPG’s emphasis at times on resources over agency and outcomes in assessing need, as well as fairness in connection with gender equity policy interventions.

Conflict is another reason given in the document for the policy shift to GAD. Acknowledged is that the NPAGW’s women-focused activities faced “stiff resistance from some sectors” (RTG, 2010, p. 4). Unfortunately, the source and nature of this resistance is not elaborated in the document. In response to the perceived backlash, the NGP is said to be designed,

to equally and equitably address women and men concerns through mainstreaming gender in all policies, programmes and projects. This would breed social cohesion, effective participation and enhanced ownership by men, women, boys and girls. (RTG, 2010, pp. 4-5)

However, despite the adoption of the language of gender and the early example from boys' education, the content of the policy's "situational analysis" reveals no mention of gender-based challenges facing men or boys. Indeed, the entire section is devoted to detailing the extent of the constraints on women's empowerment efforts, including gender-based inequalities in terms of access to productive resources and credit, secondary and higher education, employment, decision-making power, and legal protection under the dualistic system.

The overarching aim of the NGP is to

...achieve gender equity and women [sic] empowerment as an integral part of the national development process through enhancing participation of women and men, girls and boys for sustainable and equitable development and poverty reduction. (RTG, 2010, p. 11)

Included under this vision are four mission statements:

- Gender equity and equality at policy, programme and project levels in all institutions and levels across all sectors of The Gambian society
- Sustainable eradication of gendered poverty and deliver an acceptable quality of life
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination and gender based violence
- The empowerment of women to be able to take their rightful position in national development. (RTG, 2010, pp. 11-12)

Gender and education is identified as one of six thematic priority areas for the policy, along with gender and health; sustainable livelihoods development; governance; human rights; poverty reduction; and economic empowerment (RTG, 2010, p. 4). Referencing the Beijing Platform for Action, the section begins with the statement that "education is a human right and essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace" (RTG, 2010, p. 14). Education is said to benefit both girls and boys and that "this ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men", although no further explanation of these educational impacts is offered (RTG, 2010, p. 14). In addition to education being framed as a

human right and beneficial to the individual, the policy notes that investment in both formal and non-formal education is “one of the best means of achieving sustainable development” attributable to education’s “exceptionally high social and economic return” (RTG, 2010, p. 14).

The NGP emphasizes the achievements realized in terms of girls’ access to education and specifically uses 2008 data to highlight that gender parity has been achieved at the basic level and that significant gains have been made in secondary and tertiary education (RTG, 2010, p. 7 & 14). Unlike the GESp, the NGP at least mentions some of the ongoing gender and education policy efforts being implemented, including eliminating school fees for girls in rural areas; re-entry policy for young mothers to go back to school after delivery; campaigns to encourage girls to engage in science and math; revising curricula to make it more gender responsive; inclusion of gender in refresher training courses; and the Mothers’ Clubs initiative (RTG, 2010, p. 14).

However, like the GESp the NGP uses older data (in this case from 2004/2005) to argue that girls continue to drop-out of school more frequently than boys. While the transition rate to senior secondary school is said to have increased, the policy acknowledges that girls continue to transition to tertiary education at a lower rate than boys. A further gender issue raised in the policy is the lack of girls’ engagement in science and math subjects, with this being attributed to the “an apparent lack of career guidance” (RTG, 2010, p. 7). The policy proposes that to address gender equality and equity, there is a need to improve several features of the education system: a) the quality and relevance of education, b) education finance, c) extension of scholarship scheme to boys, d) implement skill-training programs for out-of-school youth, and e) strengthen non-formal education and madrassa literacy training (RTG, 2010, p. 14-15). Moving beyond the realm of education, the NGP concludes that “a lot more needs to be done [including] changing

societal attitudes towards the value of females and promote their empowerment” (RTG, 2010, p. 14).

The policy specifies eight “gender-specific objectives” to be achieved as part of the overarching mission of ensuring “gender parity at all levels and equitable access to equality education and appropriate livelihood skills for women and men, girls and boys by 2015” (RTG, 2010, p. 15). These eight objectives cover a wide range of educational equity issues, including access; retention; teacher recruiting and training; “gender-responsive” curricula; gender mainstreaming/institutional capacity-building; attitudinal and behavioural change; participation in science and math subjects; remedial initiatives for drop-outs; and literacy training (RTG, 2010, pp. 15-17). Although the situational analysis focused almost exclusively on the challenges to girls’ education and women’s empowerment, most of the specific strategies identified to achieve each objective can be characterized as distributive, on the basis that they focus largely on reforms framed as to beneficial to both girls and boys equally. Only one strategy focuses specifically on girls, and that concerns the re-entry policy for young mothers to return to school (RTG, 2010, p. 15).

The National Women’s Bill

As introduced in previous chapters, the National Women’s Bill, the process for which took over three years to complete, was finally passed on Tuesday April 13, 2010 by the Gambian parliament (Sillah, 2010). In 2007, I attended a validation workshop for the Women’s Bill of 2007, participating in break-out sessions and observing proceedings. Afterward I was asked by the leadership of the Gender Education Unit (GEU) to submit my notes to her, saying that they were looking for information to “fill in gaps” in their own notes. In this section I use my field notes and policy texts to examine the objectives and strategies of the National Women’s Bill, and

specifically how women's and gender issues are represented in the field of education. It should be noted that I only had access to the hard copy of the Women's Bill Act of 2007 obtained at the workshop. The text of the legislation passed in April of this year is so far unavailable; however, newspaper coverage of the event and interviews with the Vice President provide details on what the newly passed Bill contains, and I have assessed that this current version is not much different from the draft document that I used in the analysis.

The Women's Bill text must be understood as a negotiated text and therefore representative of a compromise between difference policy perspectives and used for a particular purpose. In this case, the Women's Bill was meant to "domesticate relevant women-related conventions and treaties into our national laws" (Vice President Njie-Saidy) (Jabang & Marenah, 2010). The development and passing of the Women's Bill sends a powerful message to donors and other global development policy actors that The Gambia takes seriously its commitments made with the ratification of all the major international conventions and treaties pertaining to the rights of women. The document is highly developed, with seven parts covering women's human rights protection, to Government's commitment to elimination [sic] of discrimination, to a new National Gender Commission (RTG, 2007, pp. 1-3).

The passing of the Women's Bill is a triumph for women's rights activists in the country. It certainly represents a significant improvement over just 5 years ago when, after heated negotiations that lasted late into the night, the General Assembly agreed to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (hereafter referred to as "the Protocol"), with reservations on Articles 5, 6, 7 and 14, dealing with the elimination of harmful traditional practices, marriage, separation and divorce and the reproductive rights of women respectively.

Since then, the power of women activists' capacity to effect policy change has been amply demonstrated through the active engagement of women's organizations with National Assembly members (NAMs), as well as local communities. All of the organizations this study has focused on played a supportive role in the development of the Bill. One key example demonstrating the impact of women's rights advocacy in The Gambia is the provision in the Women's Bill making illegal "harmful social and customary practices" (RTG, 2007, p. 6).

That the Women's Bill represents a significant achievement for women's advocacy in The Gambia is undeniable. During whole-group discussion at the validation workshop, and as a result of the break-out sessions during which different part of the proposed draft Bill were debated in small mixed groups, some changes in the content and/or the phrasing of some parts of the legislation were proposed. Connecting with the study theme concerning the politics of gender equality versus gender equity language, the group discussing Section 62/clause b, "review proposals from Departments of State and other public sectors regarding Bills, laws, and written communications to ensure that gender perspectives have been considered to achieve equal representation of women and men in all programs and initiatives of Government, Local Authorities and all Public Institutions": proposed changing "equal" to "equitable" (field notes, 2010). Homophobic fears were expressed by one of the groups in response to the language of women's "partners" contained in the legislation: it was felt that this implied "lesbians and homosexuals" and that providing legal protection for same-sex partners was inappropriate (field notes).⁵²

⁵² Derogatory remarks about lesbians and homosexuals were made at several points during the Women's Bill 2007 validation workshop. In each case it was a man who made the remarks, and at no point during my observations were any of the speakers challenged in any way. In 2008 and in 2009, the President made international news with his "crack-down" on homosexuality, threatening to behead any homosexual, or anyone harbouring a homosexual (including hotels), and promising more severe laws and punishments "than Iran" (BBC News, 2008). In justifying

Newspaper coverage of the Women’s Bill further suggests some tensions characterizing the passing of the legislation. In fact, it appears as though the problems of conceptual ambiguity and confusion identified and in some cases demonstrated by study participants in 2007 persist today. For example, while defending the Women’s Bill the Vice President specified that the legislation is “for the family and not only for women”, much the same as the pattern noted in the GESP and NGP of emphasizing the benefits to both boys and girls, men and women of proposed policy measures. The VP argued that more sensitization work was needed to “avoid misinterpretation” of concepts (Sillah, 2010). It was also noted that it was necessary to remove the “controversial aspects of the Bill such as ‘Violence Against Women,’” and deal with this issue separately (Sillah, 2010). In my analysis the exclusion of issues of gender-based violence from the text of the Women’s Bill is likely to be due to conflict concerning the labelling of certain “cultural” or “religious” practices as such as female genital mutilation (FGM) as constituting an act of violence.⁵³

In the section concerning the elimination of discrimination of girls and women in the field of education, the draft Women’s Bill 2007 opens with the statement that “Every woman shall have right [sic] to basic education and training for self-development” (RTG, 2007, n.p.). This statement stands out for two main reasons: first, its explicit invocation of the idea that education is a human right, and second, how it explicitly connects education with “self-development”, a concept that seems to align with the human capabilities/human development

this stance, President Jammeh is quoted as saying “The Gambia is a country of believers... sinful and immoral practices [such] as homosexuality will not be tolerated in this country” (BBC News, 2008). Shortly after making these statements, President Jammeh did retract his threat to kill any homosexuals in the country, but not his threat to expel any (All Africa, 2008).

⁵³ Supporters of the practice of female genital cutting will often use the term “female circumcision” to describe the event.

approach. However, similar to the NPAGW, and not insignificant is the fact that the right to education is bound by the qualification that it is “basic education” that women have a right to.

The Bill specifies eight ambitious and far-reaching objectives to be realized through Government action in support of guaranteeing women’s right to basic education:

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training;
- Eliminate all stereotypes in textbooks, syllabuses and the media that perpetuate such discrimination;
- Protect women, especially the girl-child from all forms of abuse, including sexual harassment in schools and other educational institutions and provide for sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices;
- Provide access to counselling and rehabilitation services to women who suffer abuses and sexual harassment;
- Integrate gender sensitisation and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training;
- Promote literacy among women;
- Promote education and training for women at all levels and in all disciplines, particularly in the fields of science and technology; and
- Promote the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and other training institution [sic] and the organisation of programmes for women who leave school prematurely. (RTG, 2007, p. 12-13)

It is noteworthy that of all the sections constituting the Women’s Bill that were discussed and debated at the workshop I attended, the one dealing with the elimination of discrimination in education (Section VI) did not have one single amendment suggested following small-group discussions. Nothing was added following whole-group discussion either, suggesting that gender and education issues were relatively uncontroversial in the overarching context of the sweeping legal reforms implied by the passing of the Bill.

One further theme is important to note, and that concerns the calls for including religious authorities made during the Women’s Bill workshop proceedings. Specifically, with respect to the protection of women’s human rights, participants at the workshop agreed on the need to have

religious authorities represented on the proposed Gender Commission that would coordinate, monitor, and evaluate policy implementation (field notes, March 2007).⁵⁴

Overall, the development and passing of the Women's Bill represents a key policy win for women's rights advocates in The Gambia. The introduction of national legislation in support of realizing Government commitments under CEDAW and the African Protocol supports the idea that international conventions and other regulatory mechanisms can be leveraged by national and local women's rights advocates towards building strong institutional and legal frameworks for gender equality and social transformation. While it is too early to offer any sort of assessment of the Women's Bill impact, I argue that the process of its development and validation, as observed at the workshop I attended in 2007, was a valuable one in and of itself. It allowed a large group of government and non-governmental policy actors to convene for a prolonged and focused discussion on the need for national legislation concerning women's human rights. It was apparent that most people were genuinely engaged and interested in discussing the wide-ranging and multi-dimensional provisions established in the draft Bill. I believe that even though there were some tensions in terms of language (i.e. equality versus equity), and content (i.e. affirmative action quotas) arising at the workshop, that the openness of the dialogue and discourse (in most cases) represented real promise with respect to the prospects for women's rights advocacy. It would have been interesting and likely quite valuable to read the Hansard proceedings from the passing of the Bill; however, these were not available at the time of writing.

⁵⁴ The President of The Gambia would appoint members of the Gender Commission.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have looked at three recent national policy documents: the Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper (GESP); the National Gender Policy (NGP), and the Women's Bill (RTG, 2010, 2008, 2007). The production of the first two documents was donor-supported and they emerged in the lead-up to the conclusion of the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women 1999-2009 (NPAGW), as noted above. I have argued first, that these documents reflect some of the tensions over choice of language in the articulation of gender-related policy goals and activities that were a noted theme coming out of interviews with and observation of policy actors in The Gambia. In this regard, I drew attention to the formal incorporation of the concept of "gender" in the policy language, and its identification alongside that of "women" as a national policy concern. I also suggested that the language of the GESP and the NGP reveals a dominant emphasis on "women's empowerment", often framed in terms of the economic dimension (i.e. financial independence) as per the human capital approach. In terms of strategies, key themes revealed in the findings concern the inclusion of both targeted reforms aimed specifically at women (i.e. WID-based policy solutions), as well as those that sought to help boys and men as well. These latter solutions were framed as aligning with the GAD approach, although I argue that this perspective, in using gender as a noun, misses the opportunity to use GAD thinking to pursue more multi-dimensional and transformative policy reforms.

The discussion of the Women's Bill emphasized its importance in terms of helping establish an enabling legislative and institutional for girls' and women's empowerment. I argued that its passing represents a key policy win for women's rights advocates in the country, as well as showing the power of international regulatory and institutional mechanisms to shape and

support women's rights advocacy at the national level. Ultimately, I suggest that the Women's Bill offers real potential in terms of facilitating a more human capability-oriented approach to women's advancement in the country.

Chapter Nine

Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis has used a critical feminist lens to examine the production and construction of gender equality in education policy knowledge in The Gambia, as represented in government and donor policy texts and in the perceptions and interactions of different policy actors that have informed and underpin past and present policy solutions in the field of gender equality in education. The broad purpose of the study was to assess the scope education policies provide for positive change in the lives of Gambian girls and women. Towards answering this question, four sub-questions were addressed through documentary and ethnographic analysis:

- How are gender problems in education defined and represented in government and donor policy documents?
- What is the nature and form of the policy solutions devised to promote and support gender equality in education?
- How do different policy actors interpret the purpose of and strategies toward the achievement of gender equality in education?
- What is the relationship between the produced knowledge of policy texts, and the constructed knowledge of policy actors in terms of the purposes and practices of girls' education?

Human capital, human rights, and human capabilities/development approaches were identified as representing the core policy models informing gender and education policies in the South. Each of these models carries particular knowledge and assumptions concerning the “why” and “how” of girls' education, which I have conceptualized as part of a continuum constituted by economic utilitarianism, including narrowly conceived “economic empowerment” goals, at one end, and social transformation goals, including an expanded notion of empowerment in line with Naila Kabeer's conceptualization, at the other end (Kabeer, 1999). From a critical feminist perspective, where gender equality through education is considered just as important as the achievement of gender parity in education, I identified the human capabilities approach as the

policy model most conducive for the conceptualization and realization of broad-based women's empowerment and social change. A critical feminist stance also informed the analysis of power relations in and the politics of gender and education policy knowledge production and construction across and within three major policy groups: governmental, non-governmental and development partners/donors.

In this chapter, I summarize the key findings identified in the preceding chapters and link these with the broader emergent themes from the study. Linking the findings back to the literature I then draw conclusions concerning the study's findings and themes. Based on these conclusions, areas and questions for future research are identified. The chapter finishes with the identification and description of the study's limitations and more general recommendations and concluding remarks. The chapter is organized according to the following sections: summary of thesis and key findings; emergent issues and themes; future research; study limitations; and recommendations and conclusion.

Summary of Thesis and Key Findings

In Chapter One I introduced the study, including background context, purpose, research questions, and study overview. Key elements of the study's theoretical and conceptual framing were introduced. Competing perspectives concerning the role and purpose of formal education were overviewed, with utilitarian and transformative understandings emphasized. I also provided an overview of the socio-cultural, economic, and political context of The Gambia, highlighting key gender issues.

In Chapter Two, three broad literatures were reviewed and used towards conceptualizing the study's analytical framework: globalization studies, gender and development, and educational policy studies. The globalization and education policy literature provided insights

into the macro and micro processes of educational change as these interact with both each other and with the dominant forces of economic, political, and cultural globalization. The key question identified through the review of the globalization and policy transfer literatures concerned the distribution of power between donors, governments, and civil society in defining policy objectives and strategies.

The promotion of girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa has been largely driven by the machinery and actors associated with the international development community; therefore, this literature provided important information concerning shifts in policy approaches to issues of girls' education and gender equality. Of particular interest in this regard was the shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD), which intended to signal a broadening of historical policy concerns with women's productive roles towards issues of inequality in the reproductive sphere and the challenging of the structural factors of oppression and unequal gender relations. A critical feminist analysis of the gender, development and education literatures revealed three main policy models that could inform girls' education policy and practice: human capital, human rights, and human capabilities. Drawing on feminist ideals concerning the socially transformative role and intrinsic importance of formal education, I argued that the human capital approach was the least supportive, and human rights and human capabilities most supportive.

Chapter Two also highlighted key conceptual and practical tensions between the agendas and practices of indigenous African feminism and the "Western" liberal feminism which has historically informed feminist activism and gender policies within the development industry. The core tension identified in this literature concerned the relative emphasis placed on the principles of sameness and difference within competing feminist approaches. In addition, relations of

power were highlighted with respect to the truncated representations of “Third World” women, and/or women in Muslim societies in the produced knowledge of the international development community. I argued that essentialized representations of women in the South masked the significant diversity of women along class, ethnic, religious, and geographic lines, among other categories of social difference. On the basis that the human capability approach recognizes diversity and builds on cultural and other differences, I suggested that this model may be the most promising in terms of building consensus and country-ownership of gender equality in education policies, as well as national gender policy agendas more generally.

In Chapter Three I provided an overview of the main features of the Gambian political, economic, socio-cultural, and religious contexts. In so doing, I highlighted four main themes relevant to understanding the challenges, pressures, and opportunities concerning the enhancement of girls’ education as a catalyst for women’s overall advancement in The Gambia. The first theme concerned the growing political influence of conservative religious authorities and the emergence of Islam as a “public religion” in The Gambia, set against the backdrop of expanding Islamic reformist and revivalist movements in the West Africa region (Casanova, 2009). I emphasized the significance of the participation of religious authorities, particularly members of the Supreme Islamic Council, as spiritual advisors to government offices to ensure the alignment of political and policy agendas with Islamic law and practice. The second theme concerned the identification of the conditions that could be considered constraints on girls’ educational opportunities and outcomes particularly, and women’s advancement more broadly. Polygamy, forced/early marriage, female genital cutting, discrimination in the formal labour market, poverty, low female political representation and participation in public offices, legal dualism, and discrimination in access to productive resources (i.e. land ownership) all influence

the life experiences and opportunities of women in The Gambia, in all their diversity. The third theme was the high priority of education within national development policy. The fourth theme concerned the institutionalization of the partnership norm in The Gambia through the WID project and the development of government-civil society partnerships in the education sector. This fourth theme was set against the historical backdrop of modernization reforms and WID-based project interventions in the agricultural sector which, while specifically aiming to improve women's productive capacities as a means of promoting women's socio-economic advancement, were shown to have negative and/or ambiguous effects on women's lives and labour (Carney, 2008; Carney & Watts, 1991; Schroeder, 1999). Particularly, the discussion highlighted the pattern whereby men found ways to ensure they benefitted from women-focused development projects, as well as the more general pattern of men's resistance to efforts to promote women's control over productive resources and the income generated through their productive activities.

Chapter Four addressed methodological and research design issues. I began by identifying the three central constructs in my conceptual framework – knowledge, actors, and spaces – and how these were used in the analysis. Following the presentation of the specific methodological and conceptual framework the study used, I provided details of the study design, including the collection, organization, and analysis of data derived from documentary, interview, and participant observation field note sources. Policy actors represented in the sample were also identified and described, as were features of the different research sites. The chapter also included a discussion of how I comparatively analyzed the produced knowledge of policy text's framing of girls' and gender equality in education policy objectives and strategies with the constructed knowledge of policy actors as a means of illuminating relations of power in and the politics of gender equality in education policy processes.

Chapter Five presented the findings concerning the policy context in terms of what is on paper concerning girls' education specifically, and women's advancement more generally in The Gambia. An attempt was made to historicize and contextualize key government policy and donor project documents that structure and support girls' education and gender equality programming. The overall objective was to examine how girls' education and gender equality ideas are framed and what remedial strategies have been and/or are currently being pursued by government, non-governmental organizations, and donors. The chapter provided an analysis of the role and significance of human capital, human rights, and human capabilities principles and ideas in relation to both the policy rationales invoked regarding why girls' education is a policy priority, as well as in relation to the form and content of preferred policy solutions. The findings suggested that the favoured interventions (e.g. those selected for scaling-up), as well as some of the new interventions planned (e.g. boys' education scholarships) represented a down-playing or turning away from girl-focused policy attention. Moreover, I argued that key policy solutions such as Mothers' Clubs tended to work with rather than against the status quo, particularly with respect to their reliance on women's unpaid reproductive labour.

Chapter Six presented the study findings concerning the perceptions and perspectives of policy actors with respect to girls' education specifically and gender equality more broadly. Drawing on Levinson and Sutton's notion of policy as practice, I also explored how the interests of different state and non-state actors played out in the field of gender and education (2001). I highlighted the co-existence of economic instrumentalist/human capital and human rights/capabilities perspectives in terms of the explanations offered by different policy actors concerning their interpretations of the importance of girls' education and gender equality. While

less frequently expressed, ideas concerning the importance of girls' education for moral and religious development were also mentioned.

The chapter also discussed the way policy actors analyzed the nature and cause of gender inequalities in education, with culture, poverty, the quality of education, and the school environment itself emerging as the dominant issues believed by policy actors to be constraining the achievement of gender equality in education. I then juxtaposed the identification of barriers to gender equality in education with what I call the "achievement discourse" that emerged as a significant theme in the study. In this discourse, the challenges to girls' education were downplayed and framed as being "in the past". Moreover, the success of girls' education policy interventions were seen by many participants as contributing to the emergent problem of declining boys' enrolment, particularly at the basic education level. Based on interview and observation data, I suggested that there seemed to be strong pressures for policy discourse and practice to be "gender-neutral", for example, reforms were said to be focused on "quality" education for all and beneficial to boys and girls, and not just the latter. Indeed, I suggested that emergent issues in boys' education and educational quality seemed to be squeezing out girl-focused educational interventions.

Moreover, my analysis revealed tensions in the way the concepts of "gender" and "equity" were understood and used by different policy actors in The Gambia. While feminist ideals of transformation informed my conceptualization of "gender equity", this often appeared to be at odds with the practical ways that policy actors in The Gambia understood and used the language of "gender" and "equity". "Gender" was frequently equated with biologically-rooted and essentialized differences between men and women, which, in turn appeared to contribute to a depoliticization of the gender agenda in the country. The preference for using gender

synonymously with sex difference appeared, at times, rooted in a reluctance on the part of policy actors in The Gambia to embrace and pursue notions of equity rooted in feminist ideals of transformation, which, in the Gambian context were perceived to threaten the status quo that upholds distinct roles and social expectations for men and women.

Towards illustrating emergent themes concerning the importance of language, the problem of conceptual confusion, and power relations in global-national policy transfer, Chapter Seven examined the national launch of United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) in The Gambia. The analysis revealed nationally-based tensions and questions concerning the promotion of girls' education and women's advancement as well as a questioning and desire to re-evaluate the national gender agenda more generally, patterns linked in turn to the context-specific ways in which "gender equity" was understood and used in policy processes and by different policy actors in The Gambia. Ultimately, I argued that the UNGEI workshop illustrated the power of a small but vocal group of government officials (male and female) to shape the discourse and language of the workshop discussions in ways that were in tension with the specifically girl-focused orientation of the UNGEI international framework.

Chapter Eight presented an analysis of two recent national gender policy documents, published after 2007, in the time since the field research was done. These two documents were the Gender Empowerment Strategy Paper 2007-2011, and the subsequent National Gender Policy 2010-2020. The chapter also highlights the recent passing of the Women's Bill in The Gambia which introduces, for the first time in the country, legislation geared towards securing and protecting women's rights in line with national commitments under CEDAW and the African Protocol, among other international rights-based conventions. The analysis focused on

the apparent tensions in the meaning and the descriptive use of gender (i.e. to refer to men and women, rather than the relations between them).

Following the above review of the thesis chapters and key findings, I now summarize the major themes emergent from the study findings. I use the study's research questions to organize the discussion.

Emergent Issues and Themes

The study findings encompass and transverse several overarching tensions and themes of the research, specifically related to power and knowledge, discourse, and action. I argue that the findings from the research support the value of critical policy analysis in revealing how the interests of women and those of the state and donors intersect with and complement as well as contradict one another in the context of gender equality in education policy processes (Shaw, 2004, p. 59). I ultimately argue that human capital ideas and assumptions concerning the importance of girls' education for national economic and social development have been dominantly appropriated in The Gambia's national gender and education policy processes. While my analysis revealed the appropriation of some ideas and strategies associated with the human rights and human capability approaches within the gender and education policy field, this was largely at the level of policy talk: at the level of policy action, my analysis suggested that preferred policy solutions tended to work with rather than against an unequal status quo. Moreover, I argue that there was a clear preference for distributive reforms that aimed to benefit both boys and girls, rather than those that specifically targeted girls. While recent regulatory policy forms introduced in The Gambia have aimed to institutionalize gender mainstreaming as the dominant policy approach, such initiatives appear fragile in the country as a result of the anti-feminist politics of some elite policy actors, rooted in deeply held patriarchal and/or religious

ideologies and practices, as well as the limited financial, human, and technical capacities that would be required for mainstreaming gender in education and its sub-sectors.

Power and Knowledge in Gender Equality in Education Policy Processes

An important component of the analysis was my comparison of the framing of girls' education and gender and education issues as represented in policy texts and in the discourses and action of policy actors. I used the concepts of *produced* and *constructed* knowledge to organize the data generated through textual analysis and the ethnographic instruments my studies used: interviews and participant observation. I argued that the politics of gender equality in education knowledge and action are revealed at the nexus of produced and constructed knowledge and the policy solutions/actions that particular knowledge generates and supports. As can be recalled from Chapter Four, produced knowledge refers to knowledge as it is presented in formal donor and government statements, agreements, and policies. Produced knowledge is not value-neutral and is created by particular actors for particular purposes. Gender-disaggregated statistics and other research forms are used to produce formal representations of the problems under consideration and generally support the main conclusions and policy recommendations drawn by donors and other international actors. Key producers of formal policy knowledge in The Gambia include government, NGOs, and donors, particularly the World Bank and various United Nations agencies.

I used the concept of constructed knowledge for dual purposes. First, I used it to refer to the ways in which policy actors interpret, perceive, and discuss their perspectives on girls' and/or gender and education issues. Second, the concept of constructed knowledge also helps describe the process of my own sense-making as I organized and analyzed the documentary, interview, and observation data and wrote up my findings. That is, I explicitly recognize that the story I tell

in this thesis is based on my own interpretation of the content and tone of policy documents, as well as the interpretations of policy objectives and policy solutions expressed by different policy actors. Thus, I ultimately wield considerable power in terms of the choices I made in the analysis and how I have presented the findings.

In trying to understand relations of power in the field of gender equality in education policy processes in The Gambia, I have argued that attention needs to be paid to the power of externally-mediated aid processes. Specifically, I argued that national education policy processes in The Gambia have been shaped by international policy frameworks such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, and particularly as an effect of their associated regulatory mechanisms, including most notably grant-making proposals and assessment processes for endorsement under the Education For All-Fast Track Initiative, as well as bilateral, multilateral, and international financial institution lending arrangements. I found that the language, form, and content of policy documents and the policy discourses and meanings constructed by policy actors generally aligned with dominant human capital ideology and discourse as transmitted through the policy and practices of the international development regime. However, the ethnographic component of the study, including things I was told and things that I heard or saw during the course of interviews and observations at public events, suggested that beneath the veneer of consensus concerning the importance of girls' education lay significant tensions and emergent questions concerning the orientation and direction of the gender equality in education policy programming.

In examining the constructed knowledge of policy actors, the study findings helped to illuminate relations of power in the governance of gender equality in education discourse and language. Specifically, I argue that the study findings revealed the power of national actors to

control and direct the nature and scope of gender and education policy discourse and action, despite the sector being highly dependent on donor aid and therefore pressured to align national policies with the language and priorities of the aid community. It is clear that Gambian policy actors understand that as a condition for aid, it is necessary to speak the language and reflect the priorities of donors when it comes to developing national policy documents and aid proposals; however, it appears to also be recognized that there remains much latitude in terms of how key concepts such as gender equality, gender equity, gender mainstreaming, and women's empowerment can and are defined at the national and sub-national levels.

I argue that the latitude available to national policy actors in the appropriation of global gender policy frameworks and their associated objectives and strategies is largely facilitated by two factors. First, there is the conceptual ambiguity in the use of key concepts, including *gender*, *gender equality*, *gender equity*, *gender parity*, *gender mainstreaming*, and *women's empowerment*. At both global and national levels, defining and operationalizing these concepts is a political process shot through with relations of power. Second and not totally unrelated to the problems of conceptual ambiguity, is the reliance on gender parity as a proxy for gender equality in the targets and indicators for EFA and the MDGs. I argue that the effects of these two macro factors have fed into the constructed knowledge represented in the achievement discourse of policy actors in The Gambia with respect to girls' education issues and gender equality processes in the country. I argue that the pursuit of gender parity as a proxy for gender equality or equity has contributed to growing complacency amongst policy actors in The Gambia, now that gender parity has been achieved at the basic education level, despite the fact that at higher levels, girls continue to lag behind boys in terms of enrolment, performance, and completion.

With respect to the politics of gender equality in education policy knowledge, the analysis revealed that a great deal of effort has been put into depoliticizing the notion of gender equality and the principles of educational equity. In looking at the language and framing of gender issues in education across government, non-governmental, and development partner texts, I identified patterns of ideas and discourse that in my interpretation mirrored those of donors, particularly with respect to the emphasis placed on the social and economic benefits of girls' education as per the human capital approach. While the intrinsic and empowerment purposes of education were included at times in the discourse of policy actors and texts, when references were made to individual benefits these tended to focus on the economic dimension, relating income wealth to "empowerment". Ultimately, I suggest that the depoliticization of girls' education and gender equity has largely been accomplished and maintained through the work of dominant human capital assumptions and assertions concerning girls' education as important for national development, particularly defined in terms of economic growth - a perspective prevalent since the Jomtien Conference on Education for All in 1990 and the Lockheed and Verspoor study of returns to primary education (1991).

Another emergent theme in the study related to power and knowledge concerns the significance of participatory policy processes and the pursuit of public-private partnerships in the education sector. Popular pressures emerging in the context of participatory education policy processes have clashed with the history of top-down policy and planning in The Gambia that saw the Government positioned as the leader in efforts to promote women's advancement. While government responsiveness to the concerns and demands of citizens is normally applauded, it is concerning that the DOSBSE has been so quick to change "women-focused" programs to "gender-focused" (i.e. Girl-Friendly to Child-Friendly School Initiative) and to change the name

of the Girls' Education Unit to the Gender Education Unit on the basis that boys' education has now been recognized as a formal policy concern. The changing of institutional names was widely perceived to reflect the adoption of the GAD approach, with the shift from WID to GAD used to frame and justify the construction of boys as an equity group in the education sector. While shifts in institutional and policy language were framed by some as part of an effort to minimize a "backlash" against girls and women-focused education interventions, I believe that it also serves to triangulate the claims made by NGO representatives that there is a troubling lack of political commitment to a rights-based approach to girls' education and women's advancement for social transformation.

The power of religious beliefs and understandings in relation to gender emerged as further theme in the study. Specifically, the findings suggested that there are some important tensions between secular and faith-based ideas, discourses, and practices in relation to girls' education and/or gender and education policy spaces and processes. In the context of what I called the "gender equality-gender equity debate", the same central concepts and "key words" underpinning the global promotion of girls' education were interpreted and strategically used in quite different ways and for quite different purposes by policy agents in The Gambia (Apple, 2006). The main factor influencing the gender equality – gender equity terminological debate in the country seemed to be a particular interpretation of Islamic law that establishes different and distinct "original roles" for men and women and the idea that the principle of sameness implied by the concept of gender equality was not compatible with this notion of different but complementary gender roles to be played by men and women in a Muslim society (Jah, 2007). In this regard, I found that government officials were among those most adamant that girls' education policy was shaped by "equity" imperatives and not "equality", which I interpreted to

imply an emphasis on difference in the construction of knowledge concerning the educational needs of girls and boys, rooted in a particular faith-based understanding of “natural” and God/Allah-given gender roles.

A further theme in the study connected with knowledge and power concerns NGO advocacy for girls’ education in support of women’s advancement and empowerment. Here, women’s rights advocacy appeared to be shaped by both bottom-up and top-down pressures. It was clear that gender activism by and with women in The Gambia has and continues to have an impact on formal policy processes, both at the level of talk and action; however, towards gaining traction and voice in gender equality in education policy processes, women-focused organizations have found it particularly useful to use instrumentalist arguments based on the social and economic returns to Gambian society assumed to be made possible through investments in girls’ education. While formally adopting rights-based approaches and discourse, it was apparent that women’s advocates in The Gambia had to choose their words and strategies with care so as to manage antifeminist politics and maintain the movement momentum. This was well-illustrated in the discussion of the UNGEI launch workshop I attended in March 2007 as noted in the previous chapter. For some non-governmental and governmental feminist advocates in The Gambia, focusing on the economic benefits of gender equity in education was a purposeful strategy for gaining access to and credibility within national policy spaces and local programming contexts; however, for other policy actors, mainly government officials and politicians, their emphasis on girls’ education for national development seemed to represent a form of resistance to more transformative and intrinsic understandings of the value of gender equity in and through education, as called for in human rights and human capabilities approaches.

Policy Action: Working with rather than against the status quo?

Through the course of the thesis, I have identified a number of different policy solutions that have been developed and implemented in The Gambia in support of girls' education over the past two decades. I have argued that girls' education policy programming has dominantly followed an interventionist approach to addressing issues of girls' education, with a dominant emphasis placed on equal opportunities to access formal education, based on a minimal understanding of need (Unterhalter, 2007a, b). As noted above, the findings suggest that different gender equality in education ideas and practices have been selectively mobilized and incorporated into education policy processes in The Gambia. At the level of policy talk, girls' education is framed as important for both national economic growth, and "women's empowerment" defined in terms of income and ability to help others; however, the policy solutions designed and implemented, with the support of donors, have tended to work *with* rather than *against* the unequal status quo. Furthermore, the study findings highlighted tensions concerning the orientation of education policies specifically to girls versus those that aimed to assist needy boys as well as girls through the provision of scholarship support and the overall physical expansion of the education sector in the country. I argued that my analysis suggested there was a dominant preference in The Gambia for policy solutions that were distributive in terms of expanding physical schooling infrastructure. For example, "less radical" interventions, such as those that focused on providing financial support and nutrition services to girls, were emphasized as being particularly important and appropriate in the Gambian context.

Moreover, recent education sector reforms emphasizing cost-recovery, the privatization of education service delivery, particularly the post-primary levels, and the formalization of the madrassa system appear to conflict with the dominant policy perspective that poverty is the

major cause of gender-based educational inequalities in terms of access, retention, performance and outcomes. While the socio-cultural and economic barriers to gender equality in education were widely understood and acknowledged in policy documents and in the discourse of policy actors, the research found some dissonance between the gender analysis represented in the produced knowledge of policy and aid program documents, and the forms of policy intervention developed and implemented to address barriers to educational equity. I argue that in some ways policy documents and their associated policy programs send conflicting messages concerning the orientation of the national gender agenda broadly, and the role and importance of girls' education particularly.

For example, rather than working to challenge, disrupt and change the social, economic, and cultural norms and practices that are framed in policy documents as reproducing women's subordinate position vis-à-vis men in the country, the Mothers' Club initiative for girls' education relies directly on the unpaid labour of women in the maintenance and day-to-day functioning of schools. In another example, the provision of education scholarships as a means of promoting equity in education, while helpful in addressing poverty-related barriers to education equality, do not directly challenge gendered power and social practices that constrain gender equality in education.

Questions concerning the sustainability of gender equality in education policy programming in The Gambia was another emergent theme from the study. While the government has clearly committed to prioritizing gender equity in education as a policy objective, its ability to implement gender-related policy solutions has depended on the availability of donor aid in the form of financial, material, and technical assistance. Without external support, it appears unlikely that the Government and its NGO partners would be able to finance the full range of policy

solutions currently in place, including education scholarships, Mothers' Clubs, and sensitization campaigns. More broadly, distributive reforms that stand to enhance girls' education indirectly, such as those aimed at expanding the national education infrastructure (i.e. construction of classrooms) as well as those reforms aimed at improving education quality, all depend to a significant degree on donor aid. Thus aid dependence emerges as a central concern with respect to the sustainability of policy efforts to promote gender equality and equity in the education system and beyond.

Girls' Education as a Means or End of Development?

Towards the broad goal of "national development", it is clear that the education sector is a shared priority across Government, non-governmental organizations, and donor agencies. Specifically, education has been dominantly understood as an essential instrument for the realization of the key national development goals of poverty reduction, modernization, and economic growth. A need for funding and the recognition of the importance of girls' education as a prerequisite for "national development" has driven education policy efforts to enhance girls' education in The Gambia (Mitchell & Sowe, 2003). There was a strong and notable belief (at least rhetorically) among the participants of the relationship between formal education and "national development". I have discussed how, at the level of discourse, the power of ideas to persist and fold into official interventions targeting "girls' education", or in The Gambia specifically, "gender education", is strong and dynamic. Study findings suggest an overall pattern whereby policy solutions in The Gambia have emphasized and targeted the economic dimension of equality for girls and women, without considering the broader structural, cultural and institutional transformations that are called for by invoking constructs such as "empowerment" – a defining concept in the GAD literature (Parpart, 1995).

Echoing the critiques of the depoliticized and technicist approaches characterizing the global promotion of girls' education within the mainstream development community, this study found that in The Gambia – a country which in 2006/07 achieved gender parity in enrolment in lower basic education (grades 1-6) - the push for enhancing girls' education at the level of policy talk is, however, largely divorced from feminist goals of women's emancipation and advancement (Goetz & Hassim, 2003; Moghadam, 1998; Okeke & Franceschet, 2002). In the Gambian case, market-oriented education reforms such as education scholarships, pushed by the international community and adopted by national policy elites, have combined with reformist pressures to dilute, stall or otherwise alter the principle of gender equality within education policy processes.

The dominance of economic-based interventions and instrumentalist/efficiency rationales in the global-national policy transfer process that was evident in the study, and the continued donor support of education policy processes in The Gambia, indicates the alignment of national policy with depoliticized concepts of "gender justice" at the global level. I argue that "gender equality" as a global value has lost much of its original agenda for transformation as it has become increasingly institutionalized in the development community as well as a result of neoliberal economic globalization. Thus, the gap between policy goals, actions and outcomes that is evident in The Gambia is not simply a problem of de-coupling but rather I see it as a case of selective localization of dominant efficiency approaches as a strategy of by-passing national and sub-national opposition to the principle of "gender equality/equity" or gender justice (Meyer et. al., 1997). As such, a transformative agenda for gender equity through education is occluded by the primacy placed on equality of access to education and the instrumentalist orientation of policy interventions.

I have argued that the transformative, rights and citizenship-based understandings of “gender equality”, upon which political and civic commitment is built and deepened, are weak and overpowered by a drive for national economic competitiveness and in some ways, viability. For women to advance, access, retention, and experience in formal education of good quality may represent an effective entry-point. However it cannot stop there; and for social change to occur, and for women to assume their rightful place as partners in national development and in control of their individual and collective well-being, education policy processes must include attention to the socio-cultural, legal and religious expressions and practices that continue to impede the translation of gender parity and equity in education to gender equality *through* education.

Ultimately, I suggest that while The Gambia has achieved significant success in terms of girls’ access to education, particularly at the level of basic education (grades one through to nine), economic and political pressures, the ever-present risk of government cooptation of feminist organizations, feminist concepts and language, as well as the influence of particular conservative interpretations of Islamic understandings of gender roles and relations, each pose important challenges to the future of girls’ education policy and practice in the country.

Significance of the Study

This study stands out for the critical stance it takes to understanding the global promotion of girls’ education as a development investment par excellence. Throughout the thesis, I have sought to problematize the marketing of girls’ education as a “magic bullet” for economic growth and national development on the basis that such an approach can contribute to the marginalization of more transformative perspectives that emphasize the intrinsic importance of education and frame schools as instruments of social change and justice. In so doing, I have

asked questions that few have sought to answer, i.e. what is the relative weighting of instrumental and intrinsic arguments for girls' education in national policy? What are the reasons for favouring instrumental over intrinsic rationales for girls' education and what may be some of the implications for the achievement of social justice?

While not a specific focus of the current study, the findings nonetheless engaged issues of religion by way of the interpretations and expressions of participants during interviews, as well as in documentary and participant observation activities. While there is a growing literature on the political economy of Islamism in West Africa, there has been little attention paid to how Islamic reformist/revivalist discourse and practice are interfacing with secular notions and initiatives concerning gender, education and processes of social change. By exploring how gender equality in education policy is affected by secular, faith-based and indigenous-African discourse and practice, this study contributes to our understanding of the dynamics at play that continue to challenge the achievement of gender equality in education.

Ultimately, I see this study as serving to highlight an important set of new questions concerning the role of gender, civil society, religion, and education policy in processes of social change. The study contributes nuance to international representations and understandings of "women's activism" in postcolonial and "post-secular" political spaces. In The Gambia women's advocacy tends to emphasize partnership between men and women, and the need to include men in efforts to promote the advancement of Gambian women through and beyond formal education.

Future Research

Through the research process as well as the study findings, several lines of inquiry for future research in The Gambia are identified. First, both qualitative and quantitative research is required in order to better understand the nature and scope of the problems with respect to boys'

education – what are the causes of declining boys’ enrolment and how best to address them?

Second, further research is needed into the relationship between the formalization of the madrassa system in The Gambia and gender and education policy. Specifically, what are the opportunities and challenges for pushing the gender education agenda within the madrassa system? Third, longitudinal research is required into the qualitative impact of Mothers’ Club in terms of both promoting girls’ education as well as their contributions to broader dimensions of social change in gender relations and women’s capabilities.

A further opportunity for future research is cross-cultural comparison of gender equality in education policy knowledge and action. Such research could investigate how different governments’ and constellations of civil society actors frame and engage in girls’ education and other gender-related policy programming. Key questions could be asked concerning how women’s activists engage in formal policy processes to shape discourse and practice in ways that reflect nationally and locally-based needs and priorities, in relation to global policy frameworks and regulatory mechanisms (i.e. EFA-FTI, MDGs, UNESCO’s Global Monitoring Report).

Study Limitations

The study was limited by time and access constraints. While The Gambia’s small size was an advantage in terms of being able to conduct an ethnographic policy analysis, more time in the field would have added more depth to the data and analysis as well as helping triangulate the emergent themes, thereby increasing the credibility of the study claims and conclusions.

The Euro-Western secular bias of much mainstream literature on girls’ education policy and the relative scarcity of research concerning gender and religion in secular public policy processes make it difficult to support some of the claims that I have made in the thesis.

Compounding this limitation was my limited access to Islamic authorities in The Gambia. While

I was able to talk with several leaders in the madrassa system, as well as a few Imams, a more robust sampling of such actors would have enriched the analysis.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In conclusion, four broad recommendations relevant to the donor and Gambian policy communities can be made on the basis of the study findings and analysis.

First, donors and national policy actors need pay attention to gender equality in education at the post-basic education level. The focus on basic education at the expense of secondary and tertiary, including vocational and technical training, is constraining women's participation in formal education; fewer spots and therefore greater competition for access to secondary schools reinforces the perceived benefits of early marriage for daughters. Also, favouring basic education so exclusively is problematic for the rather obvious reason that secondary and tertiary expansion is essential for supporting the national economy and overall socioeconomic development of a country. Therefore, to enhance women's education and particularly to contribute to a process whereby gender equality is facilitated *through* education, the international donor community needs to move more quickly back into the secondary and tertiary education sectors and find ways to support societies to build democratic institutions that reflect the contexts in which they serve.

The second recommendation is that the international development community needs to pay more attention to the significance of religion in shaping public policy discourse and practice, in the education sector and beyond. This recommendation applies also to Northern feminists who have tended to work from a secular liberal perspective in their development activities. Recognizing the significance of difference in terms of Muslim and secular feminist advocacy is essential for moving the women's rights and women's empowerment agendas forward.

The third recommendation concerns the need for donors to continue working directly with national and locally-based NGOs working in the areas of women's rights and gender and education. While government-civil society partnerships have helped connect women's activists to the power centers of the state, the independent advocacy and watchdog roles of NGOs must be strengthened and supported. In this regard, I would also recommend the promotion of stronger linkages between the EFA and global women's movement as a means of developing strategies for building synergies between formal education and social transformation in the service of social justice objectives.

The fourth recommendation concerns the need to pay greater attention to sustainability issues in gender and education policy programming. Perhaps there are ways in which donors and governments can work together to build better sustainability planning into gender policy programming so as to encourage and help governments like The Gambia find ways to self-finance policy solutions in support of girls' education and the achievement of gender equality in education. This, I argue, could help catalyze stronger national ownership of gender policies and their associated programming.

Final Thoughts

This thesis has focused on the "why" and "how" of gender equity in education policy knowledge and action, as represented in formal policy and project documents and in the perceptions and discourses of different policy actors "on the ground" in The Gambia – a country with a long history of policy interventions in support of women's advancement. The findings speak to the challenges and opportunities facing feminist activism – at the international, national and local levels - in education and beyond, in terms of vision, representation, and practice. At the same time, the findings support the need for more substantive and sustained engagement by

feminists in formal education advocacy and policy development within the context of the Education for All and Millennium Development Goal movements. Additionally, the story the thesis tells helps illuminate the complexities involved in translating normative principles such as “gender equality” and “gender equity” into practical policy solutions, particularly given the power and transnational reach of anti-feminist politics and the, as yet, rather vague and imprecise conceptualizations of such principles in global policy frameworks.

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Appendix A: Education Sector-Related Documents Reviewed

- Education Sector Review and Linking Education with Human Resource Development and Utilization: Medium-Term Plan (Taal, 2004)
- Education Sector Report (Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE), 2006)
- Public Expenditure Review (DOSBSE, 2006)
- Technical Proposal for Support Under the Education for All/Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Trust Fund (DOSBSE, 2007)
- The Gambia Human Development Report 2005: Building Capacity for the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in The Gambia (UNDP, 2005)
- Reaching Out to the People: Review of Progress Towards Attaining the Millennium Development Goals at the Local Level in The Gambia (Policy Analysis Unit, Office of the President, 2005)
- The Gambia Millennium Development Goals Report (Office of the President, 2003)
- Report on the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (DOSE, 2006)
- Report on the Education For All Fast Track Initiative (DOSE, 2005)
- Education for All National Action Plan 2004-2015 (DOSE, 2004)
- EFA 2000 Assessment Report, The Gambia (DOSE, 2000)
- If Not Now, Then When? If Not The Gambia, Then Where? An Evaluation of the African Girls' Initiative in The Gambia (Mitchell & Sowe, 2003)
- A Preliminary Evaluation of the Scholarship Trust Fund (STF) for Girls' in the Central River and Upper River Regions of The Gambia (N'jie, Barry & Benett, 2003).
- Initial Proposal for Support of the Trust Fund for Girls (RTG, n.d.)
- Report on Schools Survey (National Assembly Select Committee on Education and Training, n.d.)
- Girls' Education Brochure (DOSE, n.d.)
- Periodic Reports to CEDAW (RTG, 2003, 2005)

Appendix B: Non-Education Sector-Related Government Documents Reviewed

Economic Policies

- Economic Recovery Program 1980-1985⁵⁵
- Program for Sustained Development 1985-1990
- Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (SPAII) (PRSP) (DOSFEA, 2002)
- PRSP/SPAII Annual Progress Report (DOSFEA, 2004)
- Poverty Reduction Strategy: 2007-2011 (DOSFEA, 2006)
- The Brussels Programme of Action Mid-Term Review of Progress (DOSFEA, 2006)

Governance Policies

- The Gambia Incorporated: Vision 2020 (RTG, 1996)
- Constitution of the Second Republic of The Gambia (RTG, 1997)
- Alliance for Patriotic Re-Orientation and Construction (APRC) Manifesto: Empowerment of The People (RTG, 2001, 2006)
- Governance Strategy Paper 2007-2011

Population & Labour Policies

- National Population Policy (Revised) (RTG, 1998)
- The Gambia Priority Employment Programme (GAMJOBS) (RTG, 2007)

⁵⁵ The Economic Recovery and Sustained Development Programs represented The Gambia's "structural adjustment" policies. Secondary sources dealing with these two programs were reviewed, as official documents were unobtainable.

Appendix C: Civil Society and Donor Documents Reviewed

- Civil Society Contributions to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in The Gambia (UNDP, 2005)
- West African Civil Society Position on Millennium Development Goals and their Implementation (West African Civil Society Forum, 2003)
- Integrating Gender in Education For All Fast Track Initiative Processes and National Education Plans (Seel & Clarke, 2005)
- Synthesis of the UN 2002 The Gambia UN Country Team Development Forum (Office of the Resident Co-Ordinator, The Gambia, 2003)
- An Integrated Approach to Education for All in The Gambia: A Proposal to the Department of State for Education (UNICEF, 2002)
- Commonwealth Education Fund Strategic Plan 2004-2006 (CEF, 2004)
- UNFPA The Gambia Annual Report 2000 (UNFPA, 2000)

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Government Officials

- 1) Perhaps we can begin with you telling me about yourself:
 - a) What is your position in government?
 - b) How long you have been in this position?
 - c) What do you do as part of your work? How are you involved in the National Education Policy (NEP)?
- 2) What role does formal education play in Gambian society?
- 3) Can you tell me something about the history of the NEP?[Probe for how it was developed, who was involved, what were key education priorities and how these were selected and strategic decisions made].
- 4) What are some of the specific priorities of the DOSE in terms girls' education?
- 5) How do you understand the problem of gender inequalities in education (i.e. their root causes, forms, reproduction, impact)?
- 6) What are some of the ways the government is approaching the enhancement of girls' education? [Probe for information concerning civil society-state partnerships, programs, committees, research, curriculum review etc.].
- 7) What do you think are the strengths of the NEP framework for addressing the factors of gender equality in education? Challenges?
- 8) Do you think that the cultural or religious composition of local communities has affected the NEP development, implementation or any other aspect of the policy process? [Probe for explanation].
- 9) What do you think are the advantages of engaging non-governmental groups in education policy processes? Disadvantages?
- 10) What is the nature of current government-civil society partnerships in education, and particularly concerning the enhancement of girls' education and gender equality? Strengths? Challenges?
- 11) Do you know if there have been any conflicts in the NEP process? [Probe for information on any conflicts arising in relation to the priorities for girls' education].

Appendix E: Questions for Non-Governmental Actors/Organizations

- 1) Perhaps we can begin with you telling me about yourself:
 - a) What is your position in your organization?
 - b) How long you have been in this position?
 - c) What are your main responsibilities?
- 2) Now, can you tell me something about your organization?
 - a) When was it established? How and why was it established?
 - b) Who are your members? How many members does your organization have?
 - c) What is your funding base? (generally, no specifics requested)
 - d) Who do you represent?
- 3) What role does formal education play in Gambian society?
- 4) In what ways has your organization been involved with efforts to enhance girls' education through the National Education Policy (NEP)? [Probe for information concerning how organization has engaged in formal partnerships with the government in the area of girls' education? How are such partnerships perceived by CSOs (i.e. advantages and disadvantages)?]
- 5) What are some of the specific priorities of the DOSE in terms girls' education?
- 6) What do you think are the strengths of the NEP framework for addressing the factors of gender equality in education? Challenges?
- 7) How do you understand the problem of gender inequalities in education (i.e. their root causes, forms, reproduction, impact)?
- 8) Do you think that the cultural or religious composition of local communities has affected the development or implementation of the NEP's gender equality goals or and programs? [Probe for explanation].
- 9) How does your group approach the enhancement of girls' education?
 - a) What are some of the specific priorities of your group with respect to girls' education?
 - b) To what degree do you think your activities are in-line with the NEP? [Probe for explanation].
 - c) Do you think that cultural and religious composition of your group's membership or the communities you work in influences your how you think about girls' education, and how you choose to engage with the NEP?
- 10) Are you aware of any tensions arising between or within CSOs around girls' education policy? Between or within DOSE? Within the context of education partnerships (between CSOs and government)?
- 11) What is the nature of current government-civil society partnerships in education, and particularly concerning the enhancement of girls' education and gender equality? Strengths? Challenges?

Appendix F: Copy of Permission Received

October 20, 2010

Dear Dr. McGrath,

I am completing a doctoral thesis at the University of Toronto entitled "Girls' Education as a Means or End of Development? A Case Study of Gender and Education Policy Knowledge and Action in The Gambia". I would like permission to allow inclusion of the following material in the thesis and permission for the National Library to make use of the thesis (i.e., to reproduce, loan, distribute, or sell copies of the thesis by any means and in any form or format).

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The excerpt to be reprinted is from Chabbott, C. (1998). Constructing Educational Consensus: International Development Professionals and the World Conference on Education for All. *International Journal of Educational Development* 18(3), 207-218.

Specifically, I am seeking permission to use an adaptation of Table 1 from the above article (p. 209).

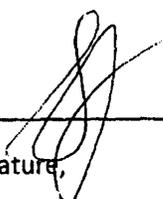
If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me by fax, as discussed in our electronic correspondence. Your time and assistance is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Manion

Permission Granted For the Use Requested Above:

 Signature,	PROF SIMON M. MCGRATH Print Name	24/10/10 Date
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Appendix G: Girls' Education Initiatives: Past and Present

Intervention	Year	Lead Actors	Goals	Activities	Major Funder(s)	Status
<i>Big Bang Campaign</i>	2002	Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) National EFA Coalition	Increase educational access and retention of all boys and girls.	Mobile advocacy and sensitization campaign t	CEF EFA	Completed 2002.
<i>“Free Education for Girls” – Supported by Girls’ Education Scholarship Fund.</i>	Est. 1999	Department of State for Education (DOSE) World Bank (IDA).	Increase girls’ access and retention in formal schooling.	Provide scholarships to girls on the basis of need and merit	World Bank	Ongoing.
<i>Angels Trust Fund</i>	2006	Unknown	Enhance/support boys’ education	Provide scholarships to needy boys.	Private/undisclosed	Ongoing.
<i>President’s Empowerment for Girls’ Education Project</i> ⁵⁶	2002	State House, independent from education sector	Increase girls’ access and retention in formal schooling.	Provide Scholarships to girls on basis of need and merit in Regions 1 & 2.	Central Government Bilateral Funding, mainly from Taiwan	Ongoing.
<i>Jammeh Foundation for Peace – Education Scholarships</i>	Unknown	Independent Foundation Claims “independent and non-political” status, but its President is the First Lady -Madam Zineb Yahya Jammeh ⁵⁷	Human development through support to Education, Health sectors. Ed. Sector Specific Goal: Support boys’ and girls’ formal education	Provide scholarships to needy and meritorious boys and girls.	President Jammeh Private Donors	Ongoing.
<i>Ambassador’s Girls’ Education Scholarship Fund (US Embassy)</i>	Est. 2007	FAWEGAM	Support for girls’ education at the upper basic and senior secondary levels.	Provide scholarships for girls at upper basic and senior secondary levels.	US Embassy The Gambia	Ongoing.

⁵⁶ President Jammeh Launches Free Education for Girls Pilot Project, available at <http://www.statehouse.gm/freegirlseducation24oct.htm>. Accessed July 10, 2008.

⁵⁷ <http://www.jammehfoundation.gm/>

Intervention	Year	Lead Actors	Goals	Activities	Major Funder(s)	Status
<i>Girls' Clubs</i>	2002	FAWEGAM	Enhance girls' education	Unknown	FAWEGAM	Ongoing.
<i>SMT Clinics</i>	2001	DOSE GEU	Increase interest of girls in science, math and technology fields. Enhance girls' performance in SMT subjects.	All-girl science, math and technology clinics held in public schools.	FAWEGAM DOSE	Supposed to be ongoing but have been stopped due to funding shortages.
<i>Mothers' Clubs</i>	Est. 2003	FAWEGAM UNICEF DOSE (depending on region)	Promote community participation in education; literacy training for women; support to girls' education; income generation	Provide "seed money" for reinvestment/income generation. Literacy training for adult women. School maintenance (by women) School feeding programs supported by MCs.	Initially funded exclusively by the African Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI) (UNICEF as lead agency) 2005-onwards MCs are supported by the DOSE (example of "scaling up") and in some cases FAWEGAM	Ongoing.
<i>Remedial Initiative for Female Teachers (RIFT)</i>	Est. 1995	UNICEF DOSE Gambia College	Increase number of qualified teachers (esp. women) and particularly in rural areas.	Admit women applicants to teaching certificate programs who have "attended High School and attempted 'O' levels but do not have all the pre-requisites to be	World Bank	Completed 2005. Ran out of funding.

Intervention	Year	Lead Actors	Goals	Activities	Major Funder(s)	Status
				accepted into the programme” (Phillot, 2000: 10).		
<i>All Girls’ Conferences (regional & national)</i>	2005 (March – July)	FAWEGAM	Disseminate research findings and develop new strategies for enhancing girls’ education.	Regional Girls’ Education Conferences National Girls’ Education Conferences Breakout sessions/works hops	African Girls’ Education Initiative (AGEI) (UNICEF lead agency)	Completed 2005.
<i>Provision of textbooks</i>	2000-2003	DOSE UNICEF	Enhance educational equity and quality	Provision of textbooks to lower basic schools. Developed textbook rental scheme.	AGEI	Completed
<i>School-Feeding Programs</i>	2000	UNICEF AATG FAWEGAM	Improve access, retention and learning.	Implemented school feeding programs at lower basic schools in impoverished communities throughout the country.	AGEI	Ongoing.
<i>Separate latrines for girls</i>	2000	UNICEF DOSE Regional Education Directorates	Improve girls’ educational access.	Built separate latrine facilities in lower basic schools where needed.	AGEI	Completed
<i>Development of Monitoring Learning Assessment (MLA) Instruments</i>	2000	UNICEF DOSE Regional Education Directorates	Improved monitoring and evaluation of educational quality and equity. Gender disaggregated data to feed into policy and programming.	Development of MLA instruments and capacity-building and training in their use.	AGEI	Completed
<i>Capacity-building in school management and education</i>	2000-2003	UNICEF AATG FAWEGAM DOSE Regional	Increase awareness and understanding of national education policy.	Promoted and supported the establishment and enhancement	AGEI	Completed

Intervention	Year	Lead Actors	Goals	Activities	Major Funder(s)	Status
<i>governance</i>		Education Directorates	Increase demand. Facilitate policy “ownership” through forging closer community-school links (related to broader objectives of effective and efficient policy implementation) Improved accountability and transparency.	of parent-teacher associations (PTAs).		
<i>Adult Literacy Training for Women</i>	2000-2003	UNICEF FAWEGAM AATG	Improve literacy rates of rural women.	Implemented locally-based literacy training – often within context of a Mothers’ Club (see above entry for MCs).	AGEI	Completed
<i>Sensitization Campaigns</i>	1997-2003	UNICEF FAWEGAM AATG EFA CEF DOSE/GEU	Change attitudes towards girls’ education.	National and locally-based efforts to raise awareness and concern regarding the importance of girls’ education and the educational disadvantages girls are challenged with.	AGEI	Completed