Marie Lall

Community Cohesion and the Role of Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh

No. 76

About HPSACP

This occasional paper series is run by the Department of Political Science of the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg. The main objective of the series is to publicise ongoing research on South Asian politics in the form of research papers, made accessible to the international community, policy makers and the general public. HPSACP is published only on the Internet. The papers are available in the electronic pdf-format and are designed to be downloaded at no cost to the user.

The series draws on the research projects being conducted at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg, senior seminars by visiting scholars and the world-wide network of South Asia scholarship. The opinions expressed in the series are those of the authors, and do not represent the views of the University of Heidelberg or the Editorial Staff.

The Heidelberg Papers welcome submissions at any time.

SAI POLITICAL SCIENCE

Community Cohesion and the Role of Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh

Marie Lall[1]

ABSTRACT:

The article contrasts how the concept of community cohesion is viewed in Pakistan and Bangladesh and explores if community cohesion can be improved through education. The argument is developed in light of the increasing number of international development programmes that aim to increase community cohesion in developing countries through targeted education programmes.

The research was conducted between 2011 and 2012 in 38 schools in both countries that were part of a schools network programme aiming to foster community cohesion. The research found that in Pakistan religious and ethnic differences between communities are recognised but that the education system – public or private does little or nothing to address these. Class and gender differences seem to play less of a role and religion is widely seen as the biggest faultline. It seems however that the more homogenous community, the more difficult it is to address issues of difference and tolerance, as the minorities seem to prefer to remain invisible. Education programmes targeted at improving community relations in and between schools seem to have had an important impact in the schools visited, especially in heterogeneous settings. In contrast, in Bangladesh religious and ethnic differences in society are not acknowledged and, therefore, the education system does not deal with differences between communities at all. Socially only class and gender differences are recognised. In such a situation, the concept of community cohesion cannot be fully understood and propagated, even with the help of international programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Community cohesion has become a new buzzword in the development world[2]. From the perspective of international development agencies community cohesion is an aim to be achieved in multicultural and religious societies and seen as a particular priority in highly fractured societies that have religious, ethnic and linguistic strife, where social cohesion is generally perceived as too ambitious a goal. The article explores how community cohesion is viewed in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, contrasting the two countries that have their fair share of fragmentation and communal problems. The article discusses why community cohesion as a concept is understood differently in both societies, and then goes on to discuss if community cohesion can be improved through education. The argument is developed in light of the increasing number of international development programmes that aim to increase community cohesion in developing countries through targeted education programmes.

The research was conducted between 2011 and 2012 in 38 schools in both countries that were part of a schools network programme aiming to foster community cohesion. The research found that in Pakistan religious and ethnic differences between communities are recognised but that the education system – public or private does little or nothing to address these. It seems that the more homogenous a local community, the more difficult it is to address issues of difference and tolerance as the minorities seem to prefer to remain invisible. However in more heterogeneous communities, class and gender differences are perceived as less important and religion is widely recognised as the biggest faultline. In these cases, targeted education programmes can have a marked effect on helping bridge differences. In contrast, in Bangladesh religious and ethnic differences in society are NOT acknowledged and, therefore, the education system does not deal with differences between communities at all. Socially only class and gender differences are recognised. In such a situation the concept of community cohesion cannot be fully understood and propagated, even with the help of international programmes.

The article first introduces the concepts of social and community cohesion, before giving some background on both Pakistan and Bangladesh. The article then turns to the data that was collected and looks at a schools network programme that aimed at increasing community cohesion in the schools and areas where it was implemented. The research results are then critically reviewed in light of the issues thrown up by the discussion on social capital and community cohesion, concluding that education and external programmes can only be effective if the differences

---

[2] Community cohesion, just as social cohesion is a western concept, developed by social scientists with western conditions and contexts in mind. However, as many other western concepts, community cohesion has migrated through policy borrowing and through the 'development industry' to developing countries. The discussion of community cohesion in this article is within the ideological constraints of Pakistan and Bangladesh, and takes the local context into account. There is however a clear tension between what western development agencies and programmes aim to achieve when they apply largely western concepts to South Asian societies. It emerges that whilst the focus in western societies tends to be on cultural differences that emerge through religious and ethnic divisions, the focus in Pakistan and Bangladesh is much more on gender and class. However, as shall be seen ethnic and religious differences are in some cases also addressed through these programmes in these two countries.

between communities in a society are recognised and acknowledged locally in the first place.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY COHESION?

Social and community cohesion have become social and political buzzwords. Whilst to date they are mostly heard in western policy circles, globalisation in the form of international education aid and development programmes[3] and 'policy export' (Steiner-Khamsi 2004) have resulted in this discourse also being 'applied' and adopted in developing countries, especially in more fragmented societies where inter-communal violence based on religious or ethnic issues has been prominent. More cohesive societies are seen as less violent, as consequently the international aid agenda has taken up these concepts and sought to promote them. However born out of a largely 'western' policy approach, their definitions and origins need to be explored before they are discussed in both the Pakistani and Bangladeshi contexts.

Community cohesion deals with intra-community and inter-community tensions (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011) and refers to a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging, in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued, where similar life opportunities are available to all and strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider context (Johnson 2006). Andy Green (2003) argues that social cohesion differs from community cohesion, but that there is some level of debate about what constitute these differences. Jenson for instance (1998:1 in Green et al. 2006) argues that social cohesion does not necessarily involve shared values (bonding) but rather relies on the legitimacy of democratic institutions, effective institutional mechanisms and active civic participation. Maxwell (1996:3 in Green 2006) on the other hand argues that social cohesion is built on shared values and community interpretation, reducing disparities among members.[4] Cohesion in a society involves not only bonding and trust within particular groups and communities but also between them, and this entails a common sense of citizenship and values (ivi:33). Green maintains that social cohesion is measured with social capital, whilst community cohesion requires other indicators such as associational membership, tolerance and political engagement (Green et al. 2006: 52).

Whilst social cohesion is hard to achieve in large postcolonial societies with many different and separate ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, community cohesion is often seen in developmental terms as a cornerstone of reducing inter-communal violence that can be triggered on religious or ethnic grounds. Community cohesion therefore is seen as a more immediate goal and policy-wise there has been a substantial shift from the macro-societal perspective on social cohesion to the micro individual and community level (Green et al. 2006:24).

Today globalisation and new technologies enforce interconnectedness in the world and generate centrifugal forces that dislocate traditional bonds and create

---

[3] A number of international aid programmes that focus on education have as a part of their success indicators community cohesion. Schools are seen as a vehicle for societal change and for promoting cohesion at community and societal level.

[4] In the literature, debates around social cohesion are located within the broader debates of the withdrawal of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberalism. This is not the focus of the article.

more fragmented societies (Green et al 2006:1). The assumption common among social capital theorists that countries with communities rich in social capital will also usually be more cohesive as societies, is largely unexplored in the literature and highly debatable, because, in reality, this all depends on the norms and values of particular constituent communities and whether the different communities are at war or at peace with one another (Green et al. 2001: 249). Putnam argues that social capital is good for social integration and it represents the levels of voluntary participation and civic engagement. However, these two features are facilitated among more homogenous communities rather than larger social groups. This implies that Putnam's focus on social capital as a requirement for interpersonal integration should be applied at community level rather than to societies (Storper 2005).

For Putnam (1993) social capital represents a shared set of networks, norms and trust. He adopts social capital to explain economic and institutional development in different countries, arguing that levels of social capital determine civic life and the level of democratic trust. Putnam differentiates between two forms of capital, physical and social and argues that

> 'Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital' (Putnam 2000: 19).

In this perspective, social capital represents the formal and informal ties that link together people and enables the building of trust, cooperative behaviour and civic engagement. Societies rich in social capital are more harmonious and citizens more engaged with their civic responsibilities.

There is a significant link between levels of education, social capital and community cohesion, such as trust within a community, but this is not reflected in aggregate data at national level, where education levels are not reflected in increased tolerance (Green et al. 2003). It is not the level of education that matters for social cohesion (trust, tolerance, political engagement and civil liberties) but rather how education and skills are distributed and the values[5] that children and adults learn in education (Green et al. 2006: 4). It does not automatically follow that because education raises levels of community participation among individuals, it will also increase cohesion. Nor does it follow that the mechanisms through which learning generates community participation, and social capital are the same as those by which it may help to promote societal cohesion (Green et al. 2006). It is therefore particularly interesting to look at projects that aim to link education and community cohesion and to assess critically how these projects operate in highly fragmented societies in developing countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh.

---

[5] This is also relevant when thinking about the *type* of school

POLITICAL AND EDUCATION BACKGROUNDS IN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

This section will give some background on the political and education landscapes in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, before turning to the data collection methods and the discussion.

Political backdrop – violence and fragmentation in Pakistani society

Pakistan has a very fragmented society. Like many developing countries there are large wealth differences between the tiny rich upper class, the small but growing middle classes and the wider large, poor population. The lack of a social contract (Lall 2012b) and state support structures in health and education, mean that the poor have to fend for themselves or rely on a network of local philanthropic or international aid organisations. Class differences are stark and there is no social mixing across class-lines.[6] In areas where few landlords hold large tracts of land, in particular in Sindh, class structures are maintained through feudal and kinship structures (Lyon 2002 and Lieven 2011).

In the last decade, Pakistan has increasingly been perceived as a failed or failing state. Whilst the reality on the ground is nowhere near the rhetoric across news channels, the frequent bomb attacks, military interventions in tribal areas and constant drone attacks by the US do not give an impression of stability. In addition to terrorism and the war on terror, sectarian violence and increasingly ethno-political violence in Karachi showcase a very divided society, which has fuelled the violence that has plagued Pakistan.

When examining Pakistani society three main faultlines are usually discussed and used as a prism of analysis: ethnic/linguistic or provincial identities, sectarian identities, and the army vs. the rest of the population (Lall, 2012a). Whilst all these faultlines do exist and indeed divide Pakistani society, the ethnic and religious identities are often superimposed, combined and even compatible unless and until they are politicised and subsequently may lead to violence.[7] More recently there has been increased religious radicalisation leading to violence and anti-state movements. The first two issues – ethnicity and religion are discussed below, before a short analysis is given of the more recent radicalisation moves in light of Pakistan's geopolitical position and its role in America's 'war on terror'.

Ethnic /linguistic lines; explaining Pakistan through regionalism:

Pakistan was born with a temporary sense of national identity, many suspending their regional, ethnic and linguistic identities during the period immediately preceding independence. Even Jinnah regarded all identities as subservient to Islam, and regionalism was seen as negative and detracting from Islamic unity. Pakistan struggled with the balance of power between the region and state. Because of regional conflicts Pakistan took nine years to frame a constitution. The institutions that rose to power in Pakistan engendered much resentment and little confidence as they were ethnically dominated. The military in particular, was controlled by a disproportionate number of Punjabis. This situation alienated other ethnic groups, especially the Bengali majority group, notably under-represented in the government, and increased the intensity of the divisive forces for regionalism. In addition, a

---

[6] Aside from in mosques at prayer

[7] So many individuals will not see any contradiction in being a Seraiki speaking Punjabi Shi'a or a Sindhi speaking Baloch Sunni.

relative paucity of economic wealth was apportioned to Pakistan after partition. This wealth, in turn, was unevenly concentrated and invested in the western wing of the country, only furthering provincial tensions and ultimately leading to Bangladesh's secession. Even the ideology of 'Islamic Socialism' under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto failed to cut across ethnic structures. In the elections of 1970, Bhutto's support was mainly from Punjab and Sindh, not Baluchistan, NWFP or East Pakistan.

Ethnic Punjabi bias became synonymous with a class bias in the new state. For many Punjabis, there is no conflict between a Punjabi and a Pakistani identity. However, the other provinces have not been as able to identify with Pakistan's institutions. To this day there are ethnic divisions and grievances based on provincial origin. They are very real and reinforced by the renaming of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as the flaring up of Balochistan's insurgency. However there are many cases of compatible and superimposed ethnic identities. The calls for secession (especially in Balochistan) are politicised and/or used as political bargaining chips which are badly managed by the centre.

Religious conflict, looking at Pakistan from the religious conflict angle:

Pakistan was conceived as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia. At the time of independence the question of what kind of Islam was not addressed. The first sectarian conflict which emerged in 1953 was that surrounding the Ahmadiyas in Punjab. In 1974, the government capitulated to long standing demand to declare the Ahmadiyyas a non-Muslim minority. The issue was intensified under General Zia-ul-Haq's rule with the blasphemy law (especially Article 295-C) that brought in the death penalty or life imprisonment for blasphemy against the Prophet and effectively put each and every Ahmediya at risk by simply practising his or her religion.

More prominent however has been the conflict between Sunni and Shi'a, which really took off after Zia declared that Sunni Islam would be enforced across the country. Zia's Islamisation program was in contrast to the popular culture, in which most people are 'personally' but not 'publicly' religious. An unexpected outcome was that by relying on a policy grounded in Sunni Islam, the state fomented factionalism: by legislating what was Islamic and what was not, Islam itself could no longer provide unity because it was then being defined to exclude previously included groups. This had a particular repercussion in Shi'a –Sunni sectarian disputes as people started to ask 'Who is a Muslim – really?' (Lall 2008)

The fact that Islam can mean different things to different communities is at the bottom of Pakistan's sectarian problems. That Pakistan professed to be an Islamic state meant that Islamic laws would not merely be observed but that the state would enforce them. Which school of Islamic law would hold sway, and how that would affect those who do not recognise its authority was not taken into account.

Radicalisation, violence and anti-state movements:

For many years, more Pakistanis were dying because of sectarian violence than any other issue. However since the start of the 'war on terror' in 2001 with US troops in Afghanistan going after militants based in Pakistan's tribal territories, the violence levels in Pakistan have increased dramatically. Whilst there are still Sunni Shi'a killings, the main violence in the last few years has come in three new forms: the US drone attacks to kill militants in tribal areas (and this results in large numbers of civilian casualties as well); the diverse groups of militants (some of which operate cross border and others who operate only in Pakistan) have increased their bombing

campaign and feyadeen attacks against Pakistani military and state targets, often with large civilian casualties as well; and the Pakistani military fighting limited campaigns in areas (first Swat, then South Waziristan and most recently North Waziristan) where militants are based. The violence has resulted in increased anti-state religious movements gaining momentum across the social classes, especially in particular areas (where the violence is highest – KP, southern Punjab) but for different reasons and not at the same pace. The situation has not been helped by the fact that Pakistan has been led by two unstable and allegedly corrupt civilian governments, first by President Zardari at the helm of the PPP and since 2013 by President Nawaz Sharif and the PML(N). Whilst the violence seems to have peak and troughs, [8] the result has been even more fragmentation across all ethnic, religious and class groups and an increased trust deficit with the west.

Education in Pakistan

Article 25-A of the Pakistan constitution guarantees education to all children until the age of 16. Despite this commitment, Pakistan's education problems remain acute. The education system faces issues of resources, access, high drop out rates, low teacher retention, gender disparities, and low quality of teaching and learning.[9] 25 million children between the ages of 6 to 16 are out-of school. Learning levels of those attending schools have deteriorated over time. The gender gap in both literacy and numeracy skills has persisted.[10] Disparities in quality of learning also exist between provinces, as well as across rural and urban areas.

Pakistan has a history of parallel education systems where private schools have catered for the middle classes for many decades. As the government sector weakens, private schools, especially Low Fees Private Schools (LFP) have emerged across the country, claiming to provide quality education. While there is slight improvement in student learning outcomes between government and private schools, students continue to under perform.[11] However, LFPs cater to a small percentage of the population, and remain inaccessible for the poorest segment of society (Muzaffar and Bari 2015). 77% of students in government schools are from a poor background (Saeed and Zia 2015, p.19). Furthermore, the quality of private schools also fluctuates depending on location, often under resourced in rural areas, and the slums in urban centres. The diverse types of schools have underpinned further fragmentation across Pakistani society as different groups of children are taught different curricula and schools are based on different ethos. A majority of

---

[8] At the time that the research was conducted the spate of violence that had characterized the end of 2009 was abating, but in the course of 2012 violence, especially sectarian violence against civilians was again on the rise.

[9] Annual Status of Educational Report, ASER – Pakistan 2014; Sustainable Development Policy Institute and Alif Ailaan (2015) Alif Ailaan Pakistan District Education Rankings 2015.

[10] http://www.aserpakistan.org/document/report_cards/2014/summary_report_cards/National.pdf

[11] For example, learning indicators in rural areas suggest that 60% of class 5 children enrolled in a private school "were able to read at least" a "story in Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto", against 42% of government school students. For the urban centres, the figures indicate 64% of private school students performing the same task against 54% of government school students. In arithmetic, similar indicators existed - 54% in private schools performing better than 37% in government schools (rural); 59% in private schools against 44% in government schools (urban). *Annual Status of Educational Report, ASER – Pakistan 2014* p. 77; p.87.

children still go to government schools, with increasingly stark differences in terms of resources within the government sector.

Access to schools is limited in remote areas, especially for girls. In 2013 Pakistan was rated 135th country out of 136 with regard to its Gender Parity Index (GPI).[12] The total number of out of school children at primary level is 6.2 million including 58% girls (Pakistan Education Statistics 2013-14). The quality of education generally is poor, primarily relying on learning by rote and repetition. Often, they are being taught by teachers who have little more than an elementary education themselves. The amount of continuing professional development for serving teachers is limited and their salaries are low. The physical infrastructure of schools is very poor with only 61% of schools having a boundary wall, 57% schools having access to water and 51% usable toilets.[13]

The Pakistani government spends less than 2,49% of GDP on education (2013), whilst UNESCO recommends countries spending at least 4% of GDP.[14] Historically priority was given to higher education and little was spent on universalising elementary education. Pakistan has over the years been the recipient to large packages of international development aid from the US, the UK, the wider European Union and Japan to name just a few. Many of these aid packages will have had an education component, aiming to help Pakistan to deal with the development issues of access, gender gap and literacy amongst others. Yet despite all this aid, Pakistan's education public sector has not improved, but has in large parts stagnated or become worse. Western aid packages are not making the difference needed in particular in the rural areas (Shams 2012).

Education history

The regions that went to make up Pakistan had been regarded as border regions under the British Empire and consequently they did not have access to the same kind of education infrastructure as the territories which made up India. Education infrastructure and resources had been focused in and around the three presidencies – Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, which all came to India after partition. At independence the priorities for the new Pakistani state was the creation of a new nation. Pakistan had done badly at partition (e.g. receiving only 30% of the army, 40% of the navy and 20% of the air force). But the lack of infrastructure was not the only issue as the five very different provinces (Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, NWFP and East Bengal) had to find common ground despite the different cultural heritages and languages. At independence Pakistan has a literacy level of 16% and only around 10,000 primary and middle schools as well as 408 secondary schools. Only 1,700 and 64 respectively were for girls.[15] Education was not very high on the political agenda despite the 1947 All Pakistan National Education Conference outlining the aim of free and compulsory education for the first five years with the aim of redressing the imbalances left over from colonial times. However, national unification was seen to

---

[12]   http://tribune.com.pk/story/622372/yemen-aside-pakistan-worst-country-in-gender-parity-world-economic-forum/

[13]

http://www.aserpakistan.org/document/report_cards/2014/summary_report_cards/National.pdf

[14] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/public-spending-on-education-total-percent-of-gdp-wb-data.html

[15] ICG report, 2004, p.3

rest on one language and religion rather than the creation of an educated middle class. The same conference made Urdu the national language despite the fact that Urdu was not spoken in any of the five provinces. Whilst the state struggled to set up a countrywide education infrastructure, a parallel system of private schools (where English was the medium of instruction) and Madrassas existed from the start. As a result Pakistan's children have been educated in separate and parallel education systems from the start. The development of a strong national education system was further hampered by a lack of a unified vision as to the purpose of education and the role of religion in education. (Lall, 2010) The portfolio of education in the first Pakistani Government was initially held by Fazlur Rahman (Qureshi, p. 28). 'There was no doubt in Rahman's mind about the aims that the education system should seek to achieve: he believed in the necessity and importance of religious instruction. He declared that 'unless the moral and spiritual growth of man keeps pace with the growth of science, he is doomed to utter extinction' (Qureshi, p.30). Along with other key Pakistani educationalists and intellectual leaders of the time Rahman thought that an emphasis on religious instruction should take precedence over on the promotion of education in science and technology.

In 1949 the central goals of improving quality, achieving 80% literacy in 20 years, and requiring 75% of children of school going age to be enrolled were formulated. The subsequent 9 five year plans (1957-2003) set out to increase the quantity of the schooling infrastructure and increase the enrolment of children through mass literacy programmes. None of the targets of these plans were however achieved as envisaged. Literacy was raised from 16% in 1951 to 51.6% in 2003, but did not reach 100% by 1975 as had originally been envisaged.

In 1959 there was a significant change in government thinking, shifting the responsibility from the state for universal education, to the parents, resulting in an increased number of private schools selling quality education at rates out of reach to the majority of Pakistanis. This shift was largely due to the government admitting that the state education system was underfunded and not managing to meet the needs of the wider Pakistani population. The Sharif Report (or Report of the Commission on National Education), written in 1960 under the rule of General Ayub Khan (1958-1968) was a detailed and comprehensive document, which laid the foundations for the Pakistani education system. At the same time the textbook board was created, whose primary task has since been to ensure that government's policies are reflected in the textbooks. Khan saw Pakistan's future as one where the education system would change the 'national consciousness' and would reconstruct it according to 'modernity, development and Pakistani Nationalism' (Saigol, p.2). The two national objectives were national integration and the modernisation of the economy and society.

In 1969 when General Yahya Khan imposed martial law, a new education policy was formulated, entitled the New Education Policy (GoP 1970). Pakistan was on the verge of civil war which resulted in the secession of Bangladesh. This traumatic event resulted in a national identity crisis, as Islam as a unifying tool had faltered in light of Bengali nationalism. The role of Islam in Pakistan's national identity had to be re-affirmed lest other provinces (such as Balochistan) went the same way as East Bengal.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced another new education policy upon coming to power in the new truncated Pakistan, which did not however move away significantly from the previous policies. Adult literacy officially became a priority, and 3,334

private educational institutions were nationalised. Despite his secular leanings, Bhutto promoted a brand of Islamic socialism, and he tried to gain the support of the Islamic parties by banning alcohol and instituting the study of Islam (Islamiyat) in schools. Bhutto's government ended when General Zia ul Haq took over in July 1977. Zia took a number of steps to islamise Pakistani society which included a radical overhaul of the curriculum. (Lall 2009) The failure of the education system culminated under his rule between 1977 and 1988. The fifth five-year plan (1978-83) had envisioned educating 8.5 million adults to combat illiteracy – however in the end the programmes reached only 40,000 adults. The sixth plan (1983-88) promised a push on primary education with a fivefold increase in funds allocated. However none of the education targets such as the expansion of primary schooling or combating adult illiteracy were met and the military regime prioritised military spending over that of public education and health, resulting in an increase of private schools and madrassas as alternatives to the public education system.

The civilian governments that followed Zia's rule and were led alternatively by Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, did not reverse the Islamisation process intensified by Zia. The National Education Policy 1998-2010 put forward by the Sharif government vowed to focus on the universalisation of primary education by 2010 and an increased emphasis on IT.

Under General Musharraf's government the Education Sector Reforms were engendered encompassing both a curricular reform as well as policies that sought to tackle Pakistan's general education problems. Private sector investment in secondary and higher education continued to be encouraged. After 9/11 USAID supported Pakistan's education reform through the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) and resulting in curricular reform crisis as schools saw US involvement as undue interference in domestic affairs as well as an imposition of westernisation through the back door. (Lall and Vickers 2009) Today the new curriculum is finally in use. Government schools were lagging behind as the matching textbooks were only printed in 2011.

The current situation of Pakistan's education sector is critical. This is nothing new. The SDPI report in 1999 already concluded that 'the state of public basic education is an unmitigated disaster.' (Khan et al. 1999, p.24) As the state is increasingly less involved in the education sector, the private sector has come to in to fill some of the gap. Today the public sector still offers the majority of primary education. Whilst private schools used to cater to the middle classes and the very rich, a new brand of private schools (for profit) for the poor has also seen expanding numbers, both in semi-rural and in densely populated urban areas. Whilst government schools are largely seen as ineffective with not enough teachers, overcrowded classrooms and no access to furniture or materials, the private for profit provision for the poor is a dangerous alternative as there is no control on what the children are taught. In part the drive towards private provision is driven by the poorer classes emulating the middle classes, in part it is driven by the provincial governments themselves, where for example in the Punjab poor families are given money which they can chose to spend on school fees of a private school of their choice. The recent proliferation of private schools catering to different segments of society is a reflection of international neoliberal education policies driven by the Wold Bank and other international organisations which advocate the private sector as a credible alternative to government education provision across developing

countries.[16] This has resulted in a situation where the poor often have the choice (if they have any choice at all) between bad government schools and quite awful private provision.

The 2009 National Education Policy aimed to lay out the way forward for Pakistan's education sector. It built on previous, similar plans – yet came earlier than expected due to the alleged non-performance of the 1998-2010 policy. It based its call for the adaptation and innovation of the education system on the 'Vision 2030' report of the Planning Commission. The policy drive for the document, however, seemed to stem from Pakistan's international commitments on reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and providing Education For All (EFA). The principal vision of the document was to bring the quality of public schooling on par with what the private sector is offering more affluent sections of society, creating a more equitable country.

In 2010, Pakistan's education policy and context were radically changed by the 18th Constitutional Amendment. This has been hailed by many as revolutionary for Pakistan (HRCP 2011, Burki, 2010, ISPS 2011), changing the relationship between the provinces and the federal centre by loosening up the federation and increasing provincial rights. It has a significant impact on the education sector: First, with the introduction of Article 25-A, the state is now obliged to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age five to sixteen. Second, the key areas of education policy, planning, curriculum, standards, and Islamic education have been devolved to the provincial level with little or no central coordination. This in turn is increasing divisions across provincial lines. Problems have emerged at 2 levels – one the increased fragmentation of a national education system and second the inability of the provinces to meet their constitutional responsibilities without resorting to the private sector for help.

Political background and the Bangla narrative of Bangladesh

Bangladesh was originally a part of Pakistan till 1971. It seceded after a violent war, wanting to rid itself or western Pakistani and particularly Punjabi distance rule.[17] Unlike Pakistan that is made up of 4 major provinces, each with their own language and culture, East Bengal was largely Bengali speaking and culturally and ethnically more homogeneous.[18] The four fundamental principles of state policy of the first Constitution of Bangladesh adopted in 1972 were nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism. Article 9 of the Constitution points out that the Bangladesh '[…] derive[ed] its identity from its language and culture attained sovereign and

---

[16] See for example 'Learning For All' The Wold Bank Education Strategy 2020 available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/ESSU/Education_Strategy_4_12 _201.pdf

[17] This resulted in a major Pakistani identity crisis as Pakistan had been created as a homeland for South Asia's Muslims and Bangladesh's secession showed that Islam was not enough to keep the country together.

[18] However Bangladesh is also home to a number of ethnic and religious minority groups encompassing tribals, Hindus, and Buddhists. According to http://www.bangla2000.com/bangladesh/people.shtm '98 percent of the people of Bangladesh are Bangalees. The major religion is Muslim with 80 percent of total population. The second major religion is Hinduism which constitutes 16 percent. Other religions include Buddhism and Christianity. Minorities include Biharis and tribes. Among the tribes Chakma is the biggest.'

independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence […]'.[19] Mujibur Rahman called this ideology 'Bengali nationalism'. The 'Bengali' identity was the central plexus utilised by the urban elite to uphold the mass agitation movements against the Pakistani State. Liberals, largely composed of the upper social stratum were the secular nationalists who sought to unify the country through linguistic & literary symbols as opposed to religion. Their cardinal reference points included ardent nationalism based on the Bengali language and culture that generally ignored any differences in society. These elites have been fervently critical of Muslim radical groups that allegedly opposed the Bangladesh independence movement in 1971. However, there remained a divide between the educated elite and the less secular-minded wider population.

In 1977 under the rule of General Zia, religion found its way into politics again. In 1988, General Ershad declared Islam to be the state religion of Bangladesh. Politics today swings between the centre-right BNP-led coalition that advocates Islamic values in politics and the Awami League (AL) led coalition that advocate secular principles. The first free election in 1991 was won by the BNP, and the AL won the 1996 election. The 2001 election was won by the BNP coalition, including the previously banned Islamists party Jamaat-I-Islami. After a state of emergency in 2007, an election brought the AL back to power in 2008. They were re-elected in 2014 under controversial circumstances as almost all opposition parties boycotted the elections.

Despite a resurgence of religion in public discourse and political life, there remains a 'Bangla narrative', which permeates all debates around national identity and does not really take into account the position of religious or ethnic minorities. Neither Hindus (or indeed the smaller communities of Christians and Buddhists) nor tribal communities are seen to have a separate identity in the public discourse where 'we are all Bangla' dominates. As such, Bangladesh presents itself as a largely homogeneous society. Therefore, today's faultlines in Bangladesh are not seen as religion and ethnicity; they are rather based on gender and class (the latter includes the urban-rural, and the rich-poor divides as well).

Education in Bangladesh

Education, as in Pakistan is highly fragmented. Private schools cater for the elite, the government focuses its expenditure on primary education, and in the secondary sector a large number of private schools have emerged to cater to the poorer sections of society. Many of these non-government schools have teachers paid through the government Monthly Payment Order (MPO). State regulated private madrassas are known as *Aliyah* madrassas where alongside Islamic education, modern general education is also provided. Given that majority of these private registered madrassas operate with state funding; they are regulated in terms of curriculum content and teacher recruitment policy under a unified state recognised Madrassa Education Board. There are also an unknown number of private, traditional madrassas exist outside the state sector that are popularly known as *Quomi* madrassas. Most madrassa secondary schools in Bangladesh are now registered, follow a modern curriculum alongside traditional religious subjects, and have

---

[19] The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1972, p. 5

become co-educational (50% of the enrolment in Madrasa high-schools are now females). (Asadulla et al. 2009).

Bangladesh has made substantial progress in improving access to education, especially at the primary level. Net enrolments for primary school ages, which stood at less than 50 percent in 1971 increased to 85 per cent in 1999 with females making up 48 percent of enrolments. Primary enrolments increased from 12.3 million in 1991 to 18.4 million in 1998. In 2007-2009 primary enrolment reached 89 per cent.[20] According to the Bangladesh government, EFA review of 2014, 97 percent enrolment had been achieved in 2013 and access to schools is no longer seen as a problem.[21]

This is thought to be largely the result of the passage in 1991 of the Compulsory Primary Education Act that provided for universal primary education (Article 17 of the Constitution). The Food for Education Program introduced in 1993/94 also contributed to higher enrolments and retention of children from poorer families. This Program provides 15 kilograms of wheat per month to poor landless families for sending their children to school, covered 17,403 schools in 1998 benefiting 2.3 million students belonging to 2.2 million families. There has also been a Primary Education Stipend Project.

Most of the increase was accommodated by increases in enrolments in non-government schools, either in schools initiated by local communities or by non-government organisations. The latter play an important role in providing primary education to underserved populations. However, the quality of education remains extremely poor, and there are high dropout rates at the primary level and high failure rates of secondary students in public exams. Another way of accommodating the increased number of students was by reducing the length of the school day and accommodating several shifts.[22] Access to primary schools also remains unequally distributed among different socioeconomic groups. The net enrolment rate for slum children of Dhaka City in 6-11 year age group is lower than rural enrolment rates. Enrolment rates are also low for very poor households – only about 40% of children from such households are enrolled in schools because of the high opportunity cost of sending children to school.

The improved access to secondary schools is due to the fact that tuition fees are heavily subsidised by the Government (and a stipend for girls at secondary schools outside municipal areas). Tuition fees are nominal in government secondary schools as the government virtually bears the full cost. Government schools tend to have better exam results and are therefore more popular with the middle classes. Their prestige makes them highly competitive. This has led to the absurd situation where the better off sections of society will access free schools, whilst poorer sections of society will have to pay some form of fees towards education at non-government schools. Non-government secondary schools are also subsidised with the Government paying 80% of basic salaries, house rent, and medical allowances to teachers appointed against sanctioned posts of all recognised non-government secondary schools. The government also provides occasional grants for construction and maintenance and for teacher training at training institutes. The remaining

---

[20] UNICEF data at the time of the fieldwork – internet oage no longer available.

[21] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002305/230507E.pdf p.XIII

[22] In some schools visited there were 3 shifts with just 3-4 hours of schooling for each shift.

resource needs are met largely from student fees, but there is sometimes also some income from other sources.

Non-school costs for uniforms, transport, especially private tutoring (in addition to tuition fees) add significantly to the cost of schooling, thereby limiting access of children from poorer families. Another reason for differential enrolments across socioeconomic groups is differential physical access. Schools, most of them belonging to the private sector, have not been set up on the basis of any school mapping exercise. Consequently, some backward and poorer regions are not served by any secondary school whereas prosperous regions have experienced a proliferation of schools.

Despite all of this Bangladesh's Gender Parity Index is much better than that of Pakistan – UN data pointing to the fact that in education, Bangladesh has achieved gender parity at primary and secondary schooling levels.[23]

All indicators point to gross inefficiency and poor management of the education system. Public spending on education since 1995 has been on the decline (Behrman et al. 2002). Bangladesh spent 2.23% of GDP on education in 2009, the last time this was measured.[24]

Recently the ministry of education has made child centres forms of teaching compulsory in all schools. This has resulted in training being rolled out to government and non-government school in a national push for participatory teaching and learning. This, of course, fits in well with international education policies propagated by NGOs, UNESCO and UNICEF across the developing world (Lall 2011).

METHOD AND DATA

Data was collected as a part of a review of an internationally funded education programme that aimed to create school networks and improve community cohesion. These school networks usually comprised of government and private schools, as well as in some cases madrassas. Each school and each cluster had a coordinator to develop and deliver in and cross-school programmes. The aim of the programme was to help bridge communal differences based on religion, ethnicity, class and gender by bringing teachers and students together with a common aim and by creating self-help networks between teachers and schools.

In Pakistan the research was conducted over 30 days in November and December 2011. Individual semi-structured interviews focusing on issues pertaining to community cohesion were conducted with principals and coordinators in 24 schools. Most of the schools were secondary schools, however there were a few primary schools as well, or schools which had both primary and secondary sections. The schools were located across 11 clusters in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Azad Kashmir. The schools in Balochistan could not be visited due to the early end of the school term in December. However teachers and principals were met both in Karachi and in Quetta at a hotel. Care was taken to choose clusters which had a variety of different types of schools and the research

---

[23] http://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg3.html

[24] http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/public-spending-on-education-total-percent-of-gdp-wb-data.html

team visited government, private, and trust schools as well as madrassas and charitable schools serving the poorer sections of society in urban and rural areas. Focus groups were held with 123 teachers and 71 parents or grandparents across the selected schools. A classroom exercise was conducted with around 20-30 students in every school. Interviews were also held with a number of members of the local community who has been invited by the schools.

In Bangladesh the research was conducted over 15 days in March and April 2012. Individual semi-structured interviews using the same instruments as in Pakistan were conducted with principals and coordinators in 14 schools. Most of the schools were secondary schools, however there were a few schools which had both primary and secondary sections. The schools were located across seven clusters across five divisions. Care was taken to choose clusters which had a variety of different types of schools and the research team visited government and private schools as well as madrassas. Focus groups were held with 93 teachers and 85 parents, siblings or grandparents across the selected schools. Interviews were also held with a limited number of members of the local community who has been invited by the schools. A classroom exercise was conducted with around 20-30 students in each school.

Some background on the schools and the network programme

The schools network programme from which the data stems works on the basis of school clusters, where different types of schools, often located in different areas of the town or city are linked up with each other to work towards a set of agreed projects and goals together. The intention behind this clustering model is to bring together different types of school who may not otherwise have much or any contact, allow for schools with better facilities to help those where the facilities are less abundant and to break class and gender barriers. The projects that are undertaken within each school also aim to bring together students from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, if the school is heterogeneous or has minority representation. The hope is that in working together, differences between schools and between the students attending these schools can be overcome, leading to greater community cohesion. Given that education, especially in Pakistan, has often been used as a political tool to exacerbate religious and other differences (Lall 2008 and Lall and Vickers 2009), such programmes try to 'use' education in the opposite way, by aiming to bridge differences through common projects and visions.

The schools visited explained that it was the cluster model that had allowed them for the first time to work with other types of schools and people of different backgrounds. In Bangladesh, the private schools (generally poorer) saw inter-school cooperation as more valuable than the government schools. Government schools, on the whole, seemed a little less engaged than the non-government schools, citing parental pressures for good exam results and a tight curriculum as reasons. In Pakistan, it was the opposite, with government schools (generally poorer) explaining how they had benefitted from the clustering model. It can be concluded that schools with less resources and serving the poorer sections of society benefitted from being linked up with schools that had better means and served the middle classes. However, government schools in both countries suffered from less autonomy than their non-government/ private counterpart.

Collaboration and cooperation between the schools are driven by the cluster coordinator (generally not a head teacher) in Bangladesh and by the head teacher – often also the school and cluster coordinator in Pakistan. The role of the head teacher in both countries is key, and the project was most successful in those schools where the head teacher was personally involved or took a keen interest and had a vision as to how the project would benefit the school.

The inter-cluster collaboration structure differed again between the two countries. In Bangladesh the coordinators worked with each other, and then collaboration moved directly down to the students of the various schools, as groups of students from each school were selected for different projects to work across school lines. In Pakistan cluster connections and network creation generally started between principals or coordinators, later, through certain projects inter-school links move down to teachers; however not all were involved. There were hardly any intra-cluster student connections. In both countries some clusters became particularly close. In Bangladesh this was usually in small town communities where staff had known each other for a while, but were now linked by a common goal; in Pakistan this was driven more by externalities such as cooperation during the floods.

In both countries, there was a strong sense of a newly formed community with schools wanting to do more work nationally across clusters. There are already inter-cluster connections in Pakistan for example, with inter-cluster skype sessions to share and discuss issues between Balochistan and Punjab. In Bangladesh, it is the national competitions that bring the clusters together.

SCHOOL NETWORKS FOR INCREASED COMMUNITY COHESION

School networks are often part of the 'toolbox' used to increase community cohesion, as they are seen to improve the social capital of students and teachers and bring people of different backgrounds together. Schools are often seen as 'safe' in that the network is based on programmes that do not necessarily directly address issues pertaining to communal tensions, but rather focus on curricular issues, with the interaction and networking between groups resulting as a positive 'side effect'. The OECD defines 'network' as the relation between different schools with a focus on the idea of community and common principles of connection between institutions (Chapman 2003). School networks are different from mere clusters (geographical proximity) or groups (accidental agglomeration) in that networks are established with the aim to achieve common goals and interests. (Chapman 2003:42). Communication can only take place in contexts with shared norms and conventions (Ackerman 1980 in Chapman 2003:43) and schools can be a perfect tool in this sense in that they are delineated as communities for the evolution of streams of thought and knowledge (ibid:43).

This was exactly the aim behind the schools network programme in both Pakistan and Bangladesh, where societal fragmentation lines are seen to start at schools level. In order to start reducing the gender, religious, ethnic and class differences, it was felt that schools, principals, teachers and students should learn to network with each other and work towards common goals. Networking also refers to the systematic use of external and international communication, interaction and communication between people and organizations to improve performance (Van Aalst 2003). In order to assist with the networking, the funding of the programme helped with the purchase of information technology and training so that the schools

could stay in touch with each other and that teachers and students learnt the skill to use the new technologies. In this programme school networking was presented as a means to improve education outcomes through shared knowledge and in conducting joint programmes across schools within clusters, schools would learn to help each other and improve teaching methods and attainment.

McMeekin (2003) investigated the impact of school networks on education performance from the perspective of institutional economics. His argument draws in particular on the role of institutions inside school organizations in reducing agency problems and facilitating transactions between actors in school communities. Based on results from school networks in Latin America and in the US he found that: (1) the institutional climate in schools (formal rules, informal rules, mechanisms for enforcing both kinds of rules, clear objectives and an atmosphere of cooperation and trust) has a strong influence on school performance; (2) 'networks' of schools such as the Accelerated Schools Project in the U.S. and the Fe y Alegría schools in Latin America help improve school performance in a variety of ways, and have been successful in providing good education to disadvantaged children; (3) that one of the reasons some networks are successful is that they promote the creation of sound institutional environments in member schools (ibid). These three outcomes were also largely reflected in the networked schools in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The institutional climate had changed and school performance had improved largely due to the network programme and increase interaction between schools. In some cases this had created a healthy sense of competition and in other cases one of collaboration between school communities. Nevertheless there were differences as in Bangladesh students were able to interact across schools within clusters. This was less the case in Pakistan, where the interaction between school communities was more heavily based on teachers and head teachers and students from different schools really only met each other on sports days and similar occasions.

Lubbers (2003) explains that students networking and working with each other is led by *homophily*, namely the tendency to associate with similar others (Lubbers 2003:311). The programme tried to break the tendency for students to stick with their own social class or gender, by requiring students of different gender, class and religious backgrounds[25] to take part in projects together. McPherson et al. (2001) argue that homophily organizes social networks linking people with similar preferences; however, ties may also emerge as a consequence of shared social environment, e.g. being grouped together. The composition of a classroom therefore constitutes the constraints and baseline within which students are allowed to take their sociometric choice. I.e. ethnic heterogeneous classes provide students with wider opportunities to choose from in larger groups (Lubbers 311-312). By taking the children out of the classrooms and mixing them with others, new horizons were opened, as was testified by the classroom exercise conducted in each of the participating schools.

It was clear from the study that the school networks were established successfully. The next section will discuss in how this affected community cohesion and what the differences were between the two countries.

---

[25] Ethnic mixes in schools were rare. In Pakistan most students pertained to the same ethnic group and in Bangladesh, only one school has a mix of tribal children and Bangla children.

CREATING COMMUNITY COHESION THROUGH SCHOOL NETWORKS IN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

The social barriers in Pakistan and Bangladesh vary widely as Bangladesh is a comparatively more homogeneous society, whilst Pakistan is much more multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic. Religious differences, especially sectarian differences are much more pronounced than in Bangladesh. That does not mean that Bangladesh does not have minorities - Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and ethnic tribal minorities are present, but these social divides are much less prominent and much less acknowledged than in Pakistan. As mentioned above, within more homogeneous societies, it is harder for minorities to assert a different identity and many prefer to integrate or keep a low profile rather than challenge the national identity. What Bangladesh and Pakistan share however are gender and class barriers. The programme aimed to mix people from different backgrounds together both within schools and between schools. Whilst the primary aim of the programme was presented as networking schools together in order to improve performance and teaching methods, the main aim behind the programme was to try and help teachers and children think about difference differently.

Community cohesion within schools

Community cohesion as a concept seemed strange to many when it was first mentioned in a broad discussion about communal differences. In Pakistan teachers and head teachers would acknowledge that society was highly fragmented but argued that there was no place for communal or other differences to spill over into schools and that any such problems were left outside the school gates. However whilst all principals in both countries reiterated that they did not feel there was any active discrimination between different students, they admitted that the projects they were engaged with through the schools network programme had created a platform where students of different backgrounds were able to work with each other and that this in itself helped reduce any differences and misconceptions.

In Pakistan schools maintained that the teachers treated all students the same way. This was particularly emphasized in very homogeneous schools with small minorities where it seemed at the time of the fieldwork that the minorities preferred to go unnoticed. In more heterogeneous schools the principals admitted that taking part in the project had given them a platform to discuss differences and reduce religious tensions. This was the case for example with religious festivals and most schools from this programme now celebrate Christian as well as Hindu[26] festivals with all children taking part. In some schools the programme allowed for inter-student interactions to change drastically. This was the case in the schools that had a larger group of religious minorities, such as for example the Hindu children in a Sindhi school.[27] Having a common goal within a school that was not directly linked to the national curriculum meant that teachers and students who might have never met started to interact with each other, increasing cooperation and a sense of community within the schools.

---

[26] If there are Hindu or Christian children in the school, or if it is a Christian school.

[27] In this particular case Muslim and Hindu children had never played with each other and had not shared food either. The parents testified to the fact that since the programme the children visit each other across religious lines and play and eat with each other.

Gender differences did not play much of a role as, unlike in Bangladesh, in mixed private schools boys and girls work and play together. Most other schools are in any case single sex as of secondary level. It is therefore fair to say that the projects the schools undertook allowed for certain religious gaps to be addressed in more heterogeneous schools with larger minorities, rather than bridging the gender gap. There were also rarely big class or ethnic differences within schools in either country. The cohesion issues the schools faced centred on religious (including sectarian) differences in Pakistan and on gender in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh most schools were quite homogeneous from an ethnic, religious and class perspective. This also coloured the views that students and teachers had of their country, as they rarely acknowledged that there were any religious or ethnic minorities that might be different from them.[28] In that sense ethnic and religious differences within the schools were not seen as much of an issue. However there were gender barriers that the project helped bridge. Although many schools in Bangladesh are co-ed, girls and boys sit separately and usually don't interact with each other. In working on joint projects boys and girls were required to interact with each other and this, parents and teachers acknowledged normalised gender relations within schools and at home.

Overcoming differences between schools within clusters

Communities within schools tend to come from similar backgrounds. This is the case except in smaller towns or villages, where there is less choice in schools and where all parents have to send their children to the local school. So in general, children from better off backgrounds tend to cluster in one school and those from poorer backgrounds in another. This is also the case for religious or ethnic minorities, who tend to choose a school where their community is already represented. The bigger differences, therefore, tend to be between rather than within schools. The class gap was widely seen as being bridged by encouraging the schools to network with each other. Both countries have a highly stratified society, and middle class parents will make sure their children attend the most highly achieving schools, be that public or private. By mixing teachers and students across schools, those from richer and poorer backgrounds had to interact with each other. Although such student interaction across schools was less frequent in Pakistan than in Bangladesh, teachers in both countries explained how this kind of mixing across class lines opened the eyes of many of the more privileged children. In Bangladesh, parents made it a point to discuss that they felt this cross school interaction had broadened the mind of their children.

In all the single sex schools in both countries being part of the network was credited with bridging the gender gap as students from boys' and girls' schools had a unique chance to interact with each other. This was particularly significant in Pakistan where girls' schools and female teachers had for the first time the possibility to interact with boys' schools.

In Bangladesh, the clusters with a madrassa whose students are from more traditional, religious backgrounds were also able to interact with students from more secular families. The madrassa students were able to interact across the gender line

---

[28] Cantonment schools, were the principal exception because the army schools cater to all sections of the army from cleaners' to officers' children as well as the local community.

and this had a great impact on the students and teachers alike. This seems to have been less the case in Pakistan where madrassa students and teachers had fewer opportunities to interact with the non-religious institutions and gender segregation was seen as having to be maintained even within a network. It seems therefore that between schools, bridging class and gender gaps were the biggest achievement, with a more limited result on religious lines, as students and teachers of madrassas had to interact with students and teachers of secular schools.

At a teachers-only level in Pakistan, one can even argue that the debate the project initiated went on to include ethnic issues, as school clusters had some limited interaction with each other across provincial lines, allowing for teachers from different ethnic backgrounds and provinces to collaborate. However, the effects of this were not assessable in the same way as the gender, class and religious differences that the project was able to bring to the table.

The effect on students – differences and similarities between communities across society

As a part of the research a classroom exercise was held at each school with around 20-30 students. The aim was to see how aware students were of differences within their societies and how important they thought these were. The students at all schools were very aware that there were differences within the society they lived in but were very accepting of these and most had a very open world view. Many groups either argued that the basic humanity between people was more important than any difference dividing them, or that in fact it was important to understand differences in order to be able to respect them and reduce misunderstandings. In all of the schools they discussed in very articulate ways how differences could be overcome and how similarities needed to be built on.

Whilst it is difficult to attribute these attitudes to the programme their school had taken part in, many children were clearly influenced by the various projects they had undertaken as a part of the schools networks project. The issue of climate change, recycling and pollution came up repeatedly as communal problems that the whole world had to solve together. What was interesting is that international issues (and collaboration between people to solve these) seemed more important to many compared to local communal issues and differences.

In Bangladesh the students never mentioned religious differences as a barrier. In Pakistan however there were clear differenced between students at different types of schools, with students at a particularly conservative Muslim private school arguing that there was only one community – the Muslim one and that differences with others could not be overcome.[29] Overall however it seemed as if the worldview of many of the students was wider and more open than that of even their teachers or parents.

---

[29] Unfortunately these views are becoming more prevalent, as are these types of schools.

HOW THE SCHOOL NETWORKS DEVELOP SOCIAL CAPITAL AND INCREASED COMMUNITY COHESION

The question that arises is what effect the schools network programme had on the schools it was implemented in, and if the positive world views displayed by the students can be attributed to some of the projects that allowed students to interact with each other across gender, class and religious lines. The argument put forward in the literature is that school networks develop social capital and that this, in turn increases community cohesion.

The National College for School Leadership has investigated the role of school networks extensively. West-Burnham and Otero (2004) argue that social poverty plays a central role in educational outcomes, and deprived communities tend to have lower outcomes. Schools that linked to the wider community through strategies that implement dialogue and build relational trust end up with higher levels of respect, competence, personal regard and integrity (Bryk and Schneider 2002 in West-Burnham and Otero 2004: 5). It is clear that the networks created between the different schools in Pakistan and Bangladesh have not only bridged certain social gaps, but also created awareness within their student body of how to respect difference. This effect is particularly pronounced in the schools serving the poorer sections of society, as they would have less access to social capital through their families. So in a limited way the project has allowed for increased social capital to be created in the partaking schools. As mentioned above, Putnam's (2000) definition of social capital represents the formal and informal ties that link together people and enables the building of trust, cooperative behaviour and civic engagement. Research shows that societies rich in social capital are more harmonious and citizens more engaged with their civic responsibilities. Whilst the project cannot claim to change Pakistan and Bangladesh's society as a whole, it seems to have instilled a certain sense of civic responsibility in its students who now speak of climate change and reducing pollution as part of their generation's responsibility. Teachers reported that students cleaned up their classrooms, schools had a greater sense of order and hygiene, and respect between students of different backgrounds had improved.

However the research also showed that in order to bridge any gaps, these gaps have first to be acknowledged. Mostly the curriculum in both countries does not teach much about ethnic and religious difference and often schools spectacularly fail to teach tolerance vis-a-vis others. The effect of joint goals and projects was biggest in heterogeneous schools where teachers and families alike were aware of communal fragmentation, especially across religious lines. Unfortunately school network programmes can only help bridge gaps that are recognised, and for this to be the case, the education system needs to adequately deal with such issues first. [30]

Projects that focus on improving achievement through school networks are therefore more likely to achieve some level of increased community cohesion, simply by not mentioning this aim. In addition, such programmes aim to improve education

---

[30] It was also found that it is absolutely unproductive to have the *community cohesion* agenda spelt out by funding agencies, as this will only serve to develop resistance to what will be seen as foreign interference. Projects that focus on improving achievement through school networks are therefore more likely to achieve some level of increased community cohesion, simply by not mentioning this aim.

through teacher training and school collaborations. This is particularly important for schools serving the poorer sections of society. Following authors like Green (2006) and West-Burnham and Otero (2004), an equal distribution of education is also crucial to build social and community cohesion. This would support the focus on student's outcome in the long term to reduce social poverty and increase cohesion.

CONCLUSION

Societies have faultlines typically across ethnic, religious, class and gender boundaries. Issues occur across these faultlines, usually when these are politicised leading to violence or repression. Community cohesion programmes, focusing on education and networks have a crucial role to play in bridging these gaps as they target and educate young people through projects that create joint goals and visions.

Schools have been identified in the academic literature as microenvironments. At the same time, social networks have been widely acknowledged for shaping the emergence of social capital and determining the level of civic life of a community (Putnam 2000). However what seems to be less developed in the literature, is how the social networks that shape school dynamics also influence civic participation for students and increase tolerance across gender, class and religious lines. This article aims to contribute to that debate by having discussed how school networks in Pakistan and Bangladesh have helped bridge the differences between communities that are acknowledged.

The article discusses how community cohesion is understood differently in both societies and concludes that the understanding of community cohesion is directly linked to how heterogeneous a community is. Research has shown that in Pakistan the lack of community cohesion is only recognized as an issue (and something to be worked towards) in places where the society is heterogeneous and problems between religious or ethnic communities are clearly articulated. In Bangladesh, on the other hand, the lack of community cohesion is not seen as an issue, as society overall is more homogenous and the Bangla narrative overrides possible faultlines. In Bangladesh the main social faultlines are perceived as class and gender based. Similarly, in Pakistan, where communities are more homogeneous with small minorities, society does not see cohesion as an issue either. In both homogeneous settings, religious and ethnic minorities are ignored and the only differences that are recognized and respondents felt needed bridging are class and gender based.

Therefore, for community cohesion network and education programmes to work, recognizing faultlines is important as projects that aim to target community cohesion issues are only effective when the society where they are implemented intrinsically acknowledges the issues in the first place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annual Status of Educational Report, ASER – Pakistan 2014 http://www.aserpakistan.org/index.php?func=report

Asadullah, M.N., Chaudhury, N., Al-Zayed Josh, S.R. (2009). Secondary School Madrasas in Bangladesh: Incidence, Quality, and Implications for Reform, Human Development Sector, South Asia Region, The World Bank.

Behrman, J.R., Deolalikar, A.B., & Soon, L.Y. (2002). Promoting Effective Schooling through Education Decentralization in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Philippines. ERD working paper n 23, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

Burki, S.J. (2010) The 18th Amendment: Pakistan;s Constitution Redesigned, ISAS Working Paper number 112, ISAS, Singapore.

Chapman, J. (2003) Schooling for Tomorrow: Networks of learning in Schooling for tomorrow. Networks of innovation. Towards new models for managing schools and systems. OECD 2003. Available at: http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&st1=962003041P 1. (Accessed on 07/11/2011)

Gaffikin, F. and Morrissey, M. (2011) Community cohesion and social inclusion: unraveling a complex relationship. Urban Studies, 48(6) 1089–1118, May 2011

Green, A. and Preston, J. (2001) Education and Social Cohesion: Re-Centering the Debate. Peabody Journal of Education and Development, 76 (3 and 4), pp. 247-284.

Green, A. Preston, J. and Janmaat, J.G. (2006) Education, Equality and Social Cohesion: a comparative analysis. London, Palgrave.

Green, A. Preston, J. and Sabates, R. (2003) Education, Equality and Social Cohesion: A Distributional Approach. Compare, 33 (4), pp. 453-470.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2011) Federalism and Provincial Rights, implications of the 18th Amendment, HRCP, Lahore.

Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (2011) 18th Constitutional Amendment: Issues and Challenges in Curriculum and Standards, ISAPS, Islamabad.

Johnson, A. (2006) Secretary of State for Education and Skills, speaking in Parliament on 2 November 2006 in Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion, Department for Children, School and Families, Communities and Local Government, 2007.

Khan, S.R., Kazmi, S. and Latif, Z. (1999) *The State of Basic Education in Pakistan: A qualitative, Comparative Institutional Analysis,* SDPI Working Paper Series #47, SDPI, Islamabad.

Lall, M. (2008) 'Educate to hate – the use of education in the creation of antagonistic national identities in India and Pakistan', *Compare* Volume 38, Number 1. pp 103-120.

Lall, M. and Vickers, E. (eds.), 2009. Education as a Political Tool in Asia, Routledge, London.

Lall, M. (2009) 'Gender and education in Pakistan – the shifting dynamics across ethnic groups', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 9 Number 1. pp. 114-121.

Lall, M. (2011) 'Pushing the child centred approach in Myanmar – the role of cross national policy networks and the effects in the classroom', *Critical Studies in Education*. Vol. 52, Number 3. Pp. 219-233.

Lall, M. (2012a) Citizenship in Pakistan: state, nation and contemporary faultlines, *Contemporary Politics.* Vol. 18 Number 1. pp 71-86.

Lall, M. (2012b) Why education matters – school 'choice' and differing views on citizenship in Pakistan, *Citizenship Studies.* Vol. 16 Number 2. pp 269-286.

Lieven, A. (2011) *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, Penguin, London.

Lubbers, M. J. (2003) Group composition and network structure in school classes: a multilevel application of the p model. Social Networks Volume 25, Issue 4, October 2003, Pages 309-332

Lyon, Stephen M. (2002) Power and Patronage in Pakistan, PhD thesis http://www.dur.ac.uk/s.m.lyon/Publications/Lyon.pdf

McMeekin (2003) Networks of Schools, Education Policy Analysis Vol 11 number 16 (Retrieved August 2015 from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n16/).

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., Cook, J.M., (2001) Birds of a feather: homophily in social networks. Annual Review of Sociology 27, 415–444.

Muzaffar, I. and Bari, F. (2015) Improving the Public Sector Schools in Pakistan: Strategies for Introducing Voice into the System. In A. Rashid and I. Muzaffar (eds.) *Educational Crisis and Reform. Perspectives from South Asia*. Pakistan: OUP.

Putnam, R. (1993). Making Democracy Work. Civic traditions in modern Italy, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Putnam, R. (2000) Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Qureshi, I.H. (1975) Education in Pakisian, An Inquiry into Objectives and Achievements, Ma'Aref Publishers, Karachi.

Saeed, S. and Zia, H. (2015) Gender and Educational Inequality – Addressing the Marginalized, *Annual Status of Educational Report, ASER– Pakistan 2014.*

Saigol, R. (2003) *Becoming a Modern Nation: Educational Discourse in the early Year of Ayub Khan (1958-64)* Council of Social Sciences, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Shams, F (2012 unpublished) IFS report, Institute of Education, London.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2004). The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending. New York: Teachers College Press.

Storper, M. (2005) Society, Community and Economic Development, Studies in Comparative International Development, Winter 2005, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 30-57.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute and Alif Ailaan (2015) Alif Ailaan Pakistan District Education Rankings 2015.

Van Aalst (2003) Networking in society, organization and education in Schooling for tomorrow. Networks of innovation. Towards new models for managing schools and systems. OECD 2003.

West-Burnham, J. and Otero, G. (2004) Leading together to build social capital. National College for School Leadership. Available at: http://networkedlearning.ncsl.org.uk/collections/what-are-we-learning-about/issue-03-Community-leadership-in-networks/nlg-wawla-03-02-leading-together-to-build-social-capital.pdf. (Accessed on 07/11/2011)