

# Low Cost Private Schools: 'Helping' to Reach Education for All Through Exploiting Women

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## Abstract

The rapid growth of Low Cost Private Schools (LCPS) in developing countries has led to increasing interest in the model's 'sustainability'. Nearly all the literature is based on the proponents' claims that the model is more cost-effective than government schools rather than of the implications of the model depending to a large extent on very low paid young women teachers. The article is written against the backdrop of the model of an autonomous, respected, well-prepared teacher and framed in terms of human rights and gender (dis-)empowerment. Drawing on material on literature mainly from India and Pakistan, it documents the educational levels and employment opportunities for women; reviews the arguments for and against the model pointing out the lack of attention to the high rates of profit and the plight of teachers; and demonstrates that the (mostly young women) teachers are not only very low paid but are also poorly qualified with very precarious conditions of employment. Simply put, paying women teachers less than the minimum wage denies their human rights, further disempowering those who are already socially marginalized and excluded. This is not sustainable for gender equality in the long term and, finally, detrimental to education in developing societies as a whole.

**Keywords:** Exploitation of young women teachers; India and Pakistan; sustainability of low-fee model

## Introduction

### 1. JUSTIFICATION AND APPROACH

#### 1.1 The Low Cost Private Schools Model

The model of low cost private schools, referred to as LCPS, has grown for several reasons over the last 25 years: inadequate or uneven distribution of government finance leads to a demand for schooling that non-government schools can fill (Colclough, 1997); non-government schools provide alternatives to (perceived) low quality and/or inefficient public education; hidden costs in government schools; and language of instructions or religious preference (Phillipson et al. (2008). In addition, Tooley (2010), one of the major proponents of the model, claims that low-cost private schools are likely to provide lower teacher absenteeism (due to increased accountability to school owners and thence to parents), more engaged teachers (due to more local recruitment), smaller class sizes and therefore potentially more individualized attention.

India and Pakistan are two developing countries receiving widespread attention in education and development research because this low cost private sector provides millions of children a primary education, with nearly one-third of all pupils in South Asia aged 6-18 attending private school (Dahal and Nguyen 2014). This has supplemented the national progress to EFA—for the universal primary education as well as gender equality goals - leading to both praise for and questions about the involvement of the private sector in education, in particular concern over the quality of the education that is being provided.

#### 1.2 Major problem of education in developing countries seen to be quality

As all development institutions have stated, quality is one of the most significant issues to tackle post-2015. UNESCO first defined its mission as promoting education as a fundamental human right; but now also emphasises quality. However, this has proved hard to achieve. In particular, it requires the teachers who are capable of delivering that quality education. In

developed countries, most commentators now agree that excellent teachers play a critical role (e.g., UN, 2013). This is seen to be a consequence of:

- pre-service teacher education programs that prepare teachers in content, pedagogy, and educational theory, as well as the capacity to do their own research;
- significant financial support for professional development, reasonable and equitable salaries, and supportive working conditions;
- teachers having considerable authority and autonomy, rather than just a technical implementation of externally mandated standards and tests;
- teacher's work is an independent and respected profession, attracting the most able young people to teaching. (Sahlberg, 2011).

This model of teaching as a respected, well-prepared and well-paid profession with autonomy and independence to deliver quality education is the backdrop to this paper where we are focussing on the sustainability of the LCPS model in terms of the situation of the teachers – and specifically of the female teachers – drawing on evidence from LCPSs in several States of India and several Provinces in Pakistan.

### 1.3 Increasing Emphasis on Human Rights

In the twenty-first century, emphases on human rights, gender empowerment and education have cut across global development efforts. There are clear international compacts against human exploitation and trafficking as well as to protect a child's right to free and compulsory education. The rights-based approach (RBA) became widely used in education in the 1990s, following Jomtien and the initial EFA declaration. The RBA 'puts people first and promotes human-centred development, recognizes the inherent dignity of every human being without distinction, recognizes and promotes equality between women and men, promotes equal opportunity and choices for all...' (Hausermann, 1998). Whilst international law and global compacts do not easily apply to non-state actors, such as individuals or corporations running LCPS, when evaluating the behaviour of those providers towards their clients and their staff, this definition emphasises the objective situation of the latter (has their dignity been recognised; has equality and opportunity been promoted, etc.) and not their felt situation. It applies equally when evaluating the position of those who support LCPS providers – whether corporations, donors or governments.

UNICEF and the EFA Global Partnership Team (2014) said 'Effective regulation is crucial to ensuring that private schools work with government to deliver equitable and good-quality education.'(p.17). This has been followed by the recent UN Human Rights Council resolution urging States to regulate and monitor private education providers and recognising the potential 'wide-ranging impact of the commercialization of education on the enjoyment of the right to education (Geneva, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2015) adopted by consensus of its 47 members. The resolution demands that States '**put in place a regulatory framework**' that establishes minimum norms and standards for '**monitor(ing)aa private education providers**'. It confirms that '**education is a public good**'; and insists on the '**significant importance of public investment in education, to the maximum of available resources**'. Overall, it is a striking response to those who have been trying to reduce education to a private commodity, rather than a universal right.

The gender implications of the growth of low-cost private schooling have been a key public policy concern. Two main questions dominate the literature in this regard. First, are girls disadvantaged in terms of their enrolment in LCPSs? Second, are they more (or less) disadvantaged in LCPSs than in government schools, in relative terms? On each of these questions, the evidence is inconsistent and not generalisable (Day-Ashley et al., 2013). But, apart from observations that a pool of unemployed female secondary school graduates is fertile ground for the growth of LCPS (Andrabi et al 2008;Day-Ashley, 2013), there is no discussion of the gender implications in terms of disadvantaging *teachers*.

### Empowerment

A rights-based approach also often overlaps with an emphasis on empowerment, in the sense that education is meant to be a process of removing barriers to making informed choices. This is an understanding of education as a positive human right—one that must be actively provided and protected, as opposed to the idea of education as a good or service to be delivered (McCowan, 2011). From this perspective, this involves the provision of or realisation of the three following rights:

**to** education—access and participation; **within** education—appropriate education environments, processes and outcomes; and **through** education—relevant education outcomes that link education to the wider process of justice in society (Subrahmanian, 2005).

#### Women's Rights and Gender Empowerment

In comparison with human rights (Coleman, 2004), the recognition of women's rights is more recent. A generation ago, gender issues were avoided in international accords; now, gender justice serves a focal point of many educational initiatives implemented in developing countries.

Empowerment as it relates to gender is difficult to measure and assess. We take the definition to be a combination of process and agency that together comprises empowerment, which, as Kabeer (2001) explains, is 'the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.'

Of course, women's empowerment is more than just education; it is economic space and how women participate within such economic contexts. Women may now have wage employment and be active in the labour force to some extent, but income or income increases alone mean little. There must be parallel increases in property, access to assets, and—most importantly—*control* over such property, assets and income (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005: 111). Similarly, Malhotra and Schuler (2005) argue that, whilst schooling has traditionally been used as a proxy for empowerment, it would actually be better understood as a catalyst of change, an enabling factor or source for the process of empowerment. They conclude that not all interventions in education for women are necessarily toward the process of 'empowering' women; increasing access to resources does not necessarily translate to increasing in control over resources—or even oneself.

#### 1.4 Methods/Approaches

In the second section, we document the educational levels and employment opportunities for women in India and Pakistan; in the third, we summarise the arguments of the proponents and of the debates on either side, noting the lack of attention to profit margins in LCPS and to the plight of female teachers; in the fourth, we present the main thrust of the argument, demonstrating that (mostly young) women are being paid well below the minimum wage and have very few employment rights.

### 2 WOMEN AND GIRLS IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Of course, sexism and low pay is rife in India and Pakistan. Traditionally, women and girls in India and Pakistan experienced protracted discrimination and exclusion from education because education was seen as leading to employment in the modern sector, which were not culturally available to women. But, this has been changing in India [and Pakistan]: 'And now ..... poor people have started thinking that education is for empowerment, education is for emancipation.' (Satyarathi, 2015)

At the same time, just as education for employment, education for emancipation and empowerment still promote the value of learning as an important step toward gainful employment. Attitudes toward female education have changed in every country in recent decades. In India, many parents now see investment in girls' education as much more important for her marriageability prospects and her ability to run a good household through keeping accounts (PROBE report, 1999, p.19).

#### 2.1 Development of Schooling in India and Pakistan

##### 2.1.1 Primary Schooling and Educational Attainment of Females

In 1990, the literacy rate among adult women was 34% in India and 20% in Pakistan (compared to 62% and 49% for men); and the gross enrolment ratio (GER) for girls in secondary was 38% in India and 13% in Pakistan (Table 1). With such low school attainment levels, most women had little or no skills and were unable to find gainful or well-paying jobs. Poor(er) parents were therefore reluctant to invest in their daughters' education, preferring to marry them off young (Aslam et al, 2008) thereby 'triggering a vicious cycle'. But now, both India and Pakistan are reporting primary GERs around 100 and GERs in secondary have nearly doubled in both countries, with mean years of schooling now having reached 4.4 and 4.6

respectively<sup>1</sup>. The average time girls are remaining in school for these two countries, and the proportion of the female population 15+ that was receiving any secondary schooling in 2010 was still low overall (Table 1) for both Pakistan (30% compared to 40% for males) and India (66% compared to 71%) but the trend since 1990 is indicative of changing times, a paradigm shift valuing women learning.

## TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

### 2.1.2 Types of Schools and Schooling

In India, there are three distinct types of school management in India: government, private aided and private unaided (Kingdon, 1996). Government public schools are completely funded and managed by some level of government, private aided schools are privately-managed with all salaries usually provided by the government (Tooley et al., 2010); whilst unaided schools must meet all the costs including teacher salaries. These private schools<sup>2</sup> enrol about 30% of children at primary level (James and Woodhead, 2014).

Private unaided schools themselves can be divided even further. There are recognised private schools that are licensed either because they actually meet the state requirements or through 'unofficial' – i.e. undocumented – payments to officials. Unrecognised private unaided schools do not exist in any official government lists or census data, so that learning about what goes on within unrecognised private unaided primary schools is difficult. The limited fieldwork suggests that unrecognised private schools perform less well than recognised private schools, although still better than government schools (Tooley and Dixon, 2005). In this paper, we are including both recognised and unrecognised low-cost private schools in our evaluation.

In 2009, the Indian government passed the Right to Education Act (RTE), re-iterating that primary education is compulsory for all children and provided by the state. The parts of RTE most relevant for private schools were (a) it did not differentiate between private and public schools in specifying that teachers' pay, working conditions and qualifications needed to become a teacher were to be the same for teachers in all schools (b) the section 18 requirement that all (unregistered) private schools had to be registered within three years and (c) the section 12(1)c requirement that all private schools set aside one quarter of all enrolments, from the start of the primary cycle until completion, for children from families defined as disadvantaged (Srivastava and Noronha, 2014), with the state subsidising the tuition fees that private schools would otherwise charge, to a fixed limit.

There have been many critiques (Sadagopal, 2010) but little evidence. Limited research (e.g. Singh, 2010) suggests that, although unrecognised schools do understand the threat of closure they face in principle, the implementation of the section 18 requirement has been patchy. More extensive research on the actual implementation of the section 12(1)c requirement (the 25% rule) suggests that it has been poor (Singh, 2010; Srivastava and Noronha, 2014); and RIGCS (2015) report that less than 30% of the mandatory 25% reservations had been utilised; and very few, if any, in unrecognised private schools. Whilst India Institute (2016) documents the closure of several unrecognised schools, this is an isolated example. Despite the importance of RTE in Indian education policy debates, we argue that the implications for our evaluation of the conditions of LPCS teachers are limited.

In Pakistan, about 59% of primary school population is in government primary schools, 38% in LCPS, 2% in NGO/Trust run schools, a small number in elite private schools, and some in madrassas<sup>3</sup>. The growth of LCPS has been encouraged by aid agencies, mainly through foundations (e.g., in the Punjab and Sind) or other forms of Public Private Partnerships.

## 2.2 Education and Employment for Women in India and Pakistan

Although the proportion of educated women in developing countries is growing, the employment opportunities for them have not grown at the same rate. In South Asia, the drop in labour force participation rates since the 2008 global crisis is partly explained by a strong increase in enrolment in education. Bhalla and Kaur (2012) also suggest that discrimination,

<sup>1</sup> Unrecognised schools do not report enrolment to the Ministry (e.g. Singh, 2010, p.3), the cited estimates are based on household surveys, which are themselves suspect and likely to over-estimate in low income countries [Author x 2].

<sup>2</sup> There are an unknown number of unrecognised private schools, which are nearly all low cost, and also religious schools but the latter are small in number and not the focus here.

<sup>3</sup> There are about 13,000 madrassas compared to 163,000 government primary schools (i.e. madrassas are about 8% of all establishments), but their total pupil population is only about 1% of all enrollees at all levels.

both in terms of wages and of type of job (e.g. difficult entry for women into paid employment), is among the reasons for low participation. They estimate that the share of urban Indian women who work or study was 5 percentage points higher in the 2000s compared to the 1980s.

Ghani and Kharas (2010) explain that the transition of the economy from agriculture to services in South Asia helped to bring new workers, such as women, into the labour force. Similarly, they find that in East Asia, assembly jobs in the garments and electronics industries have been mainly taken by women who left family farms.

But there remain 5 key gaps for women vis-à-vis men (ILO, 2012): being in employment, being unemployed, their Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), their vulnerability, and occupational segregation. For example, in terms of vulnerability in India and Pakistan, of women who were working in 2012, only 16% were in waged or salaried occupations compared to 23% of men.

It is often argued that women in developing countries often turn to teaching – usually locally - because it is one of the only socially acceptable activities in which to be involved outside of the home. Female teachers in India display, ‘a feeling of privilege because the job opportunities that are available for women in their area are limited to teaching and these women were lucky to be employed as teachers’ (Ohara, 2012, 81). This gratitude is confirmed by others (Tooley and Dixon, 2003; Aslam 2009; Sommers 2013), reinforcing the low cultural status of women. Indeed, Tooley and Dixon (2003) believe that teaching as a profession for women, single or married, is respected in the cultural and religious perspectives of India and Pakistan, although the evidence suggests that the level of economic development and social as well as religious norms are relevant as determinants of female LFPR (Ghose et al, 2008, p.16). Studies specific to female teachers are careful to mention that teaching and education are ‘feminised spaces’, offering a cultural acceptance of women becoming teachers (Manjrekar, 2013). This is partially due to the fact that teaching in a local school allows a woman with an education, and possibly familial obligations, to be seen as *supplementing* her household income and, at the same time, tend to household responsibilities (Indumathi and Vijaysimha, 2011; Manjrekar, 2013). We must emphasise that we are not challenging the courage of these young women in overcoming social and cultural barriers that have held her, her mother, and her grandmothers back for generations, nor their gratitude or job satisfaction; but we are problematizing:

the legitimacy of the consequences in terms of their salaries and working conditions;

the extent to which their situation can offer a role model for girl pupils (de Silva et al., 2015); and

\* querying the intentions of the providers and especially of their international supporters.

### 3. LOW COST PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Parents want their children to get an education and eventually have good and productive lives, regardless of wealth. Poor parents have drastically fewer choices than the affluent, but their hopes remain the same: educating their children. Increasing dissatisfaction of parents with government schools is one of the reasons for the growth in private provision (UNESCO, 2008, p.16); although of course, failure of one system does not *de facto* mean success of another.

#### 3.1 The Origins

LCPS<sup>1</sup> charge a ‘small’ fee to poor families for enrolling a child (Dixon, 2012). We use the term ‘Low-Cost’ because our evaluation is focussed on teacher salaries, which is the largest cost a school spends in education delivery. When they first began, LCPS ran on a decentralised market system, solely owned and managed by individual local entrepreneurs, totally without state control; and, as shown above, in India, there has been little change since the RTE (2009). These LCPS for the poor seem to respond more to parental concerns about the quality of government schools than to government regulations.

LCPS in Pakistan and India are subject to community demand and local supply. According to Tooley and Longfield (2014), this means poor localities, including urban slums and rural villages, although earlier Andrabi et al. (2008) had found that LCPS were more likely to flourish in areas with already-existing infrastructure and higher populations than those of

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<sup>1</sup> While we refer to this schooling model as LCPS, Srivastava (2013: 4) uses the term ‘Low-Fee’ (operationalized as charging a monthly tuition fee not exceeding about one day’s earnings of a daily wage labourer at primary and junior levels) to differentiate them from private schools catering to the elite charging substantial fees.

geographically isolated villages. Usually LCPS are created near already-existing government schools, which offer a cohort of potential pupils; and also a pool of young women who have completed secondary education. The latter's availability and their inability to find other employment because of cultural constraints is a very important factor for LCPS.

Unlike elite private schools, looking for significant profit from the wealthy, or 'free' government schools<sup>1</sup>, LCPS offer the owner a moderate but usually guaranteed revenue stream without substantial government regulations—although sometimes subsidized by governmental bodies or NGO donors. Operating costs in these private schools are much lower than those of public schools, but the fee required to enrol a child is not negligible for poor Indian and Pakistani families (James and Woodhead, 2014; Srivastava, 2013). Tooley (2013), even though a vocal proponent of LCPS, acknowledges that paying tuition may not be ideal for parents whose income is very low already, but argues that the fees are paid, and thus affordable. At least for some: Härmä (2009, 163) repeatedly found interviewees saying, 'we have to cut our bellies to afford private schools'.

### 3.2 Functioning corporations, model

If centred only on the individual LCPS, one might conclude that, because primary education is an individual's human right (and hence a responsibility of the state to provide to its citizens), there is a wide gap between the state's public education provision (or supply), and its citizens' need (or demand) for education - whether because of excess numbers of new students or because parents are searching for different types of schools (Lewin and Sayed, 2005) - the growth of LCPS is justified (at least in the short term). If the state could provide an education that parents feel is adequate for their needs, there would not be a market for LCP schooling creation or expansion.

But the 'market' has changed. There has recently been a surge in scaling up the LCPS model in India and Pakistan, partly due to their 'healthy' net profit margin of more than 50% (ILM Ideas, 2014, p.40), as well as in countries like Kenya and Ghana; unsurprisingly therefore larger actors, including private corporations, bilateral aid agencies and public-private partnerships (PPP) have become investors in the sector (Srivastava, 2013). Tooley himself is the founder of the Omega School Franchise, a chain of LCP schools in Ghana, which have enjoyed 'significant investment from Pearson's Affordable Learning Fund' (Tooley's website at Newcastle). This connection to the world's largest textbook company is curious given the lack of books in these LCP schools.

Aid agencies – for example, DFID and the World Bank - invest heavily in public-private partnerships, supporting the Indian and Pakistani governments financially where primary education is structured as LCPS. They vary in terms of cost to enrol the student, although payment by agencies does not appear to affect the employment structure for teachers, despite the agencies being signatories to various international conventions about employment. (DFID, 2012; World Bank, 2012).

### 3.3 For and Against

Researchers are split about the effectiveness of LCPS for ensuring universal quality primary education. Those broadly or strongly in favour cite some or all of the reasons given in the introduction to this paper. Those broadly or strongly against have six major arguments, most strongly and consistently expressed by Lewin (e.g. 2007), against the use of non-government schools to achieve universal basic education: (i) that basic education is a human right that only states can deliver; (ii) that non-subsidized providers depend on community revenue; (iii) that claims of greater efficiency can only be true under conditions of informed choice, accountability, and an effective regulatory framework; (iv) that no OECD country depended on non-government schooling to achieve universal basic schooling; (v) that relying on private schools can undermine the public system; and (vi) that low-cost private schools will never be able to accommodate the poorest households.

We can agree with most of the latter arguments, but our concern is about the very low salaries for the teachers and specifically the gender implications of those low salaries. For this reason our choice of literature is also focussed on those which have evidence about the salary levels - which is why we have only cited a small proportion of Tooley et al.'s production (especially as, when he does present information on salaries, it is not disaggregated by gender).

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<sup>1</sup> Government schools may entail 'voluntary' contributions to various funds, charges for school means, expenses for travel to school, uniforms, etc.; and so are not actually 'free'.



### 3.4 Summary

The LCPS model rests on the claim that LCP schools or LCPS-based schools provide the poor citizens of developing countries with primary education that is not only better than that of the respective public school, but also primary education that is much more cost-effective and efficient than that of the state sector. Most agree that the LCPS system addresses a gap in education provision that the state has not addressed while, at the same time, they provide employment and a minimal income for women with at least a secondary school education (all of those 'for' and some of those 'against'). Nearly all point to the low salaries for teachers without further comment; but this is the issue that concerns us: for the profit levels to be high, the - mostly women - teachers have to be very cheap!

### 4. TEACHERS: QUALIFICATIONS, TEACHING AND SALARIES

The number of teachers in India has almost doubled between 2000 and 2012 from just above 3 million to nearly 6 million; but the proportion of female teachers has increased from 33% in 2000 to about 47% in 2013; equally, in Pakistan the number has doubled from 200 to 400 thousand in 2013 and the proportion of female teachers has increased from about 33% in 2000 to about 49% in 2013 (Table 2). The absolute increase in the number of female LCPS teachers has been even sharper from about 150 to 338 thousand<sup>1</sup> (Mehta 2013; NEMIS 2013). In both India and Pakistan, the proportion of females amongst all LCPS teachers is now well over half (59% in India and 79% in Pakistan), whilst the proportion of females amongst all Government teachers is now well under half (42% in India and 39% in Pakistan).

In Pakistan, over four-fifths (82%) of teachers in private schools are female compared to 39% in Government schools (NEMIS, 20140); in India, the breakdown by gender does not appear to be available but Karopady (2014) reports from a randomised study in 5 districts of Andhra Pradesh that in 2013, 57% of teachers in 599 government schools are female compared to 78% of teachers in 427 recognised private schools.

Female teachers are important. Parents are more likely to consider sending daughters to school if there is a female teacher for safety reasons, and the presence of female teachers should show girls that there is a reason to learning (Muralidharan and Sheth, 2013). But do female teacher in LCPS in fact provide a positive role model for girls?

### TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

#### 4.1 Qualifications and Conditions

LCPS do not require the same teaching certificates and official qualifications as required by the government to teach—requirements vary across the unregulated LCPS system. However, it is generally required that teachers must have completed some secondary schooling in order to teach at the primary level (Andrabi et al 2008; Sommers 2013). Over ten years ago, Mehrotra (2006) reported that over half the teachers in Private Unaided schools across 8 Indian northern States were untrained (compared to less than 12% of government teachers being untrained). At the national level, in both India and Pakistan, the percentage of female teachers in private schools is much higher than in government schools (see Table 2); In India, in States with high levels of training, there was not much difference according to type of management but in States with low levels of training, teachers in Private Unaided schools were half as likely to be trained (Table 3); and whilst there does not appear to be a breakdown by type of management in Pakistan, Carr-Hill and Murtaza (2012) showed that 43% of the teachers in their sample of private schools had a B.A. or higher.

### TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

#### 'Advantages' of Flexible Private Schools

Some authors argue that teachers in LCPS are more accountable, more often actively teaching and exerting more effort into teaching than those in government primary schools (Andrabi et al 2008; Day-Ashley et al 2014; Tooley and Dixon 2003; Tooley and Longfield 2014). At the same time, even Tooley and Dixon (2003) have described the curriculum of these budget private schools as just as 'stultifying' as many government schools. Parents were very willing to have periods in other subjects converted into extra English classes. The practices of the teachers were completely geared towards rote

<sup>1</sup> Note that this is a recent phenomenon – of the twenty-hundreds - as Muralidharan and Kremer (2008) present results of a 2002/03 representative survey in rural India, where the female share in private schools was 41% only slightly larger than the female share in public (36%).

memorisation. If anything, these budget private schools are likely to stress children by compelling them to engage with extensive rote learning of incomprehensible English 'Question-Answers'; hardly something that one would associate with 'quality education.'

## Summary

The LFPS model relies on 'flexible' hiring of teachers, many of whom are untrained. In Srivastava's study in India, parents spoke of teachers' inexperience, frequent turnover, and lack of qualifications. As teaching is a specialist skill, an under-qualified workforce cannot usually be able to adequately teach to a high standard (OECD, 2016).

## 4.2 Reliance on Low paid – mostly female - teachers

### 4.2.1 India

Minimum wage legislation is complicated in India with as many as 1,200 minima specified but a rough median now (2015) would be c.300 Indian Rupees or US\$4.50 a day. Teacher salaries reported in a number of studies are shown in Table 4<sup>1</sup>.

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

All of the salaries found offered in LCPS are less than absolute minimum wage current at the time. The highest monthly salary (in a recognised private school in 2013) was equivalent to 2.5 days at the national then current minimum wage. More recently, Kingdon (2017) reported that the ratio of salaries in Government schools to those in Private Unaided schools was 12.5. Given that the starting salary in a Government school was about INR34,000 per month, this puts the average salary in LCPS at 2,720 or US\$42 per month.

### 4.2.2 Pakistan

Andrabi et al., (2008, p.16) found that the average female teacher in a public sector school was paid PKRs.5,897 per month, with a male getting Rs.6,408 (8.7% more). In private schools the average female teacher was paid PKRs. 1,069 per month with a male getting 1,789 per month (67.4% more); respectively 18% and 28% of the public sector salaries.

Carr-Hill and Murtaza (2012) conducted a survey in the Punjab province, finding salaries in schools under EVS (Education Voucher Scheme), where the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF), a government organisation, pays tuition fees. The PEF - a Public Private Partnership with no differences in the teacher structure from an actual LCPS - is heavily subsidized by DFID. The breakdown of their salaries is shown in Table 5: half of the sampled teachers, mostly women<sup>2</sup>, are paid less than one dollar a day (although the 5 male teachers were paid 40% more than the females); and the contemporaneous minimum monthly wage in the Punjab was 8,000 PKR, equivalent to about US\$2.60 a day.

#### TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Monthly salary for all teachers sampled ranged from 1,500 to 10,000 PKR, but only one person reported a salary of 10,000; the next highest reported salary was 7,500 and only reported by two teachers Carr-Hill and Murtaza (2012). Excluding the handful with education higher than a BA, 31 EVS teachers earn an average of 2,702 PKR a month, equating to \$0.95 a day for full-time professional teaching (using contemporary currency conversion rate).

ILM Ideas (2014) surveyed 305 schools in KPK, Punjab and Sindh. Average salaries in LCPS primary schools were PKR2,000/- for those with only Matriculation, PKR3,000/- for those with FA and PKR4,500/- for those with a B.A; all well under the minimum wage.

Malik et al. (2015) surveyed 122 private school teachers in Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan (not divided between LCPS and other private schools but most would have been LCPS). Although the salary levels were not broken down by gender, 78 of his 122 teachers were women. In the year of his study, the national minimum monthly wage was PKR8,000/-; just under half of all teachers surveyed earn below minimum wage<sup>3</sup>, with one-fifth earning significantly less (Table 6). If one looks at these rates taking into consideration purchasing power parity for private consumption (the last column), then roughly half of the

<sup>1</sup> Some of those studies were from 2000 and so would have much lower minimum wages, because of inflation as well as real growth.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that only 20% of the managers of LCPS are women (ILM Ideas, 2014, p.22).

<sup>3</sup> Fees are twice as high in urban than rural areas (ILM Ideas, 2014, p.12), resulting in higher salaries.



teachers earn less than the national minimum wage in one of the most dangerous areas of Pakistan, for full time, professional teaching.

## TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

### 4.2.3 Other Restrictive Conditions

There are no standard benefits, pensions or other assurances for teachers in LCP-based systems. Should a women teaching in a LCP school decide to start a family, she has no recourse to retain her position after going on (unpaid) maternity leave. In effect, women in low-cost private schools and schools based on the LCPS structure can be forced to choose between work and family. From the employers' perspective, private schools retain better teachers by renewing their contracts and firing the less effective ones (Dixon, 2012).

Adding to low pay and restricted employment choices detracting from women's empowerment is the lack of stability in teaching and therefore the lack of stability for pupils. Large proportions of the budget private schools studied in literature are short lived. Decentralised and de-regularised, LCPS can open and shut without checks or repercussions, which "...directly suggests that we have no reason to believe that they are stable players in the 'market'" (Sarangapani and Winch 2010, 507). Female teachers in LCPS suffer very uncertain employment due to the short history of schools. A woman has few choices for gainful employment, no standing to demand a higher salary than she is being paid in the LCP-based schools, and can be cut off from that pay with no recourse. Sarangapani (2009) goes so far to label teachers as the 'sacrificial lamb' in order to make the system function.

### 4.2.4 Other commentaries

Otherwise, commentary on the remuneration structure for teachers in LCPS within policy studies has been limited to date. Some authors cite reasonably well-funded programmes as evidence that women appreciated the financial security and independence: for example, Bangay and Latham (2013) analyse the Gyan Shala programme in Gujerat where community teachers are paid about INR4,000 (c.US\$80 a month at the time), on a par with the minimum wage for non-teaching staff, considerably above the levels noted in Table 4 for unrecognised private schools and higher than those in recognised private unaided schools. Others, for example Andrabi et al. (2006a and 2007), argue that rural, young, less-educated or -certified women are attracted due to limited employment opportunities.

Walford (2014) recognises that critics would call the pay levels exploitative but explains that teachers are 'prepared to tolerate these low salaries for a short period while adding to their experience of teaching and waiting for a job in a government school'. This is naïve, at least for India and Pakistan: when looking at the requirements, there are very few LCPS teachers who would be eligible for a position in a government school. Moreover, even if teachers do obtain professional qualifications and become eligible to apply for government-funded schools with good salaries and security, 'it is highly competitive even for those with professional qualifications and generally requires an unofficial cost (bribery) in addition to [having] a connection with the officer in the influential post', (Ohara, 2012; Interview, School G, 4 February 2010; see also Jain and Shelly, 2013).

Day-Ashley et al (2014) refer to the salaries for mostly female teachers in developing countries as 'possibly exploitative'; McLoughlin (2013) lists the exploitation of women with restricted mobility as a possible 'unintended consequence'. Whilst the teachers may be glad of the 'pin money' to supplement their household income, apart from these being weak excuses ('possibly', 'unintended'), neither cite any evidence; Srivastava (2013) calls this the 'potential exploitation of the female labour market'.

Teachers working in private schools accept lower pay for a variety of reasons, including dedication to teaching in the case of non-profit schools, or because the teachers did not meet public sector teaching qualifications; some private school teachers were simply individuals, particularly women, seeking any form of employment, as they were unable to access stable employment opportunities. Even teachers with professional qualifications voiced contentment with their status for personal reasons such as being able to look after small children. While many private schools may provide employment opportunities – especially for female teachers in rural areas – they undermine the full realisation of the right to work (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976).

In countries that require parity of salaries and working conditions between public and private teachers, this creates a situation whereby some private schools operate outside of the formal system, which means that these schools are not accountable and are often corrupt<sup>1</sup> (Kingdon, 1996; Ohara, 2012).

## 5. LOW COST PRIVATE SCHOOLS; DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Impact of Low salaries

Andrabi et al. (2008) agree that female wages and thus fees are kept low, by a distorted labour market and specifically a restricted female labour environment. Tooley (2010,p.183) goes further to argue that LCPS should be praised, not condemned, because they give jobs to thousands of college and high school graduates in countries with massive unemployment problems and is unconcerned about the low salaries. Dahal and Nguyen 2014, 27) turns this around, saying 'One common indirect finding of studies on private schools is that government teachers are greatly overpaid with respect to student achievement outcomes'. In terms of student achievement, they are - probably rightly - more critical of how *much* public teachers earn, and not how *little* private teachers earn.

Regardless of qualifications or experience, women are paid very little to teach in low cost private schools. This endures in spite of international efforts – both public and governmental - to stop exploitation in general. Carr-Hill and Murtaza (2012) highlight the irony, explaining:

'DFID has also signed up to the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work programme in which "Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income"..... These LCPS schools are the only source of employment ..... Essentially, this is an exploitative exercise of non-competitive (monopsony)<sup>2</sup> market power' (Carr-Hill and Murtaza, 2012, 27).

For Jain and Saxena (2010, 80), 'paying this salary without the benefits of job security and pension and health-related benefits is not seen as exploitation [by the employers], but the introduction of market discipline in the period of globalisation'. They contrast the globalising, commercial world with that of human rights, capabilities, and sustainable development. It should be emphasised that we are not taking issue with the views of teachers in LCPS who may welcome the 'pin money', but with the growing involvement of corporations, donors, governments and PPPs in what is objectively exploitative in practice (Srivastava, 2013). Most teachers are not being paid the minimum wage.

When the Rana Plaza collapse happened in Dacca in 2013, killing more than 1,100, but where the garment workers were already being paid more (US\$40 a month) than teachers in LCPS, the Bangladesh government increased the minimum wage by 77% and commercial companies such as Gap and Next were forced by public pressure in the West to demand better working conditions of their Bangladeshi sub-contractors; why should Pearson et al. not be subject to the same market pressure?

### 5.2 Education as a Human Right

Both India and Pakistan have mandated primary education for their respective citizens as free and compulsory. Whilst gross primary enrolment rates—including both public and private — are closer to 100 per cent than ever before<sup>3</sup>, learning levels are still very low (ASER, 2014; ASER, 2015), private schools account for an increasing proportion of primary provision (although the increase has to date been more modest in Pakistan). Expanding private provision of education raises two concerns. Firstly, the state has the responsibility of providing a quality basic education to all its citizens (UNHRC, 2015), which means that all primary schools should be subject to the same minimum regulations and standards. Secondly, as a human right the understanding of gender inequality, and what would constitute gender equality, in development is concerned with more than parity in numbers and quality of provision between girls and boys in schools but also in the extent to which they can benefit from ('*through*') their education. Some authors reluctantly accept the low salaries for the sake of EFA but women's rights *through* education are not being recognised to the same degree as the right *to and within* education.

<sup>1</sup> For example, maintaining one account to submit to government officers to show that teachers are paid as prescribed and another account to the actual records of teacher salaries (Ohara, 2010; Kingdon, 1996b).

<sup>2</sup> A market where there is only one buyer who consequently has total control.

<sup>3</sup> With the caveat that these are certainly over-estimates.

Note that we are not arguing against the principle of low cost schools. To paraphrase Barakat et al. (2014, p.10) who say that 'A lowcost school should charge fees that are still affordable to parents earning poverty line wages.', we are saying that a teacher – usually female – should be paid a living wage; and that donors should not be subsidising any programmes that pay less than that.

### 5.3 Education for Emancipation

It is in the environment of increasing demand for education for children as a right clashing with the frustration of lacking access to effective provision for the poor that the LCPS model found its niche, growing from the bottom up into a 'system' in countries like India and Pakistan. It is possible that LCPS do offer cost-effective alternatives to public schools and may also be offering students better learning than in state schools, although this is contentious (Sarangapani, 2009; Tooley et al., 2010); but children's right to a free quality schooling (UNHRC, 2015) is being denied.

Our specific concern with the LCPS model regards these rights one should have *through* education; that LCP schooling perpetuates gender inequalities through education, denying the rights and capabilities of the teachers. Throughout, policy-makers and experts alike do not seem to acknowledge the process of disempowerment occurring through LCPS. Primary schools based on the LCP model are essentially disempowering large numbers of educated women in developing countries for the sake of meeting Millenium Development Goals about access. Negating the rights of teachers for the rights of children in primary schools, does not promote equality and respect, especially when one remembers that teachers in the LCPS system are overwhelmingly female. In fact, we have argued that, for these women teachers, education could even be considered a dis-enabling resource because women are actually dis-empowered in LCPS.

### 5.4 Women's Empowerment.

The model of LCPS offers a restricted set of opportunities to women through education. When assessing the impact of their programs based on the LCPS model in Pakistan, the World Bank (2013) found that the female teachers made the female students want more from life than to simply be housewives; they were more likely to 'envision their future as teachers'. No other profession was mentioned and the issue of teacher pay was only discussed regarding quality of education; there was no consideration of gender empowerment or equality.

Instead, we suggest that until the teacher profession is treated as a skilled, professional occupation for which someone should be paid a liveable wage, girls cannot develop agency or empowerment; without that, becoming a teacher would bear strikingly similar characteristics to housewifery: no economic assets or control over such assets, no independence, and reliant on another. Educated women in those developing countries where LCP schools have strong growth rates seem to be caught in a cycle of *dis-empowerment*

### 5.5 The Impossible Fiction of Sustainability of Very Low Cost Schools

When evaluating the sustainability of LCPS, Barakat et al.'s (2014, 13) DFID-funded report suggests that the availability of educated women to teach at low wages would be more accurately described as an 'enabling' factor rather than a sustainability factor. Of the 44 studies in their final data set, only 15—or about one-third - mention teacher pay or availability as a factor that would affect the long term viability of LCPS; and the reviewers overall comment is that 'increased employment opportunities for these women [might] mean that they can demand higher salaries', thus forcing LCPS to raise fees. The term *exploitation* is only mentioned in the review of Verger (2012) who laments the constraints on exploiting teacher labour more intensively!

These issues regarding teacher pay also raise concerns the rights of children to receive quality education, which requires having qualified teachers. The impact of having under-qualified, under-paid teachers on students may be devastating, as they are left with potentially inexperienced, dis-incentivised, and disenfranchised educators at the head of the classroom. Improved teacher pay alone is not likely to resolve all issues regarding teacher accountability and quality education, but it is a key factor. The recent GMR report (2015) expounds on the good influence that female teachers have on female students, especially in terms of student formation of gender identity and gender roles. But, as Jain and Saxena (2010, 80) paraphrase from Erich Fromm, 'a servile and docile teacher create independent learners?'. Walkerdine (1990) would call this conundrum the 'impossible fiction'.

### 'And we have to actually work a little bit harder for that'

Kailash Satyarthi (2015) may not have meant quite what we mean here, but his statement rings true as a warning that education for emancipation, education for empowerment will be a much more difficult task than education for employment. From a rights-based perspective, we as a global community need to work much harder—not just a bit—for emancipation and empowerment both through and by education, and this has been reinforced by the recent UNHCR Resolution on regulating private education.

But nearly all of the studies we reviewed, nor the recent study by the India Centre for Civil Society (2015) did not examine the position and status of female LCPS teachers. Effectively, these women being paid less than the minimum wage are denied their human rights, disempowering those who are already socially marginalized and excluded. This is not sustainable for gender equality in the long term and, finally, detrimental to education in developing societies as whole. The global community is either supporting - or at least passively tolerating - exploitation of female teachers and the violation of their human rights. This must be turned around to ensure instead that education is a process for empowerment and for developing agency of the individual – and especially women.

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**Table 1: Female (compared to Male) Educational Attainment, 1990 to 2010 in India and Pakistan**

	India			Pakistan		
	1990	2000	2010	1990	2000	2010
Female (Male) Adult Literacy Rate %	34 (62)	42 (69)		20 (49)	28 (56)	
Female (Male) Primary GER %	91 (113)	104 (111)	112 (112)	30 (57)	57 (80)	83 (101)
Female (Male) Secondary: GER %	38 (59)	47 (58)	66 (71)	13 (28)	19 (26)	30 (40)

Sources: Mehta, 2011; NEMIS, 2013

**Table 2 Primary School Teachers in India and Pakistan: overall numbers ('000s), percentage female and percentage trained (2013 data)**

	INDIA			PAKISTAN		
	Government	Private Unaided	Total	Government	Private	Total
Total ('000s)	4,612	2,208	6,529	317	98	423
% female	57% (AP only)	78% (AP only)	47%	40%	83%	51%
% trained	83%	75%	80%	86%		

Sources: for India, figures in total column from Mehta (2013), breakdown between male / female for government and private, for Andhra Pradesh only, from Karopady (2014); for Pakistan all figures from NEMIS (2016).

**Table 3 INDIA: Percentage of trained teachers in different types of schools in selected States compared to percentage teachers who are female in those States, 2013-14**

	Low levels of training			High levels of training		
	Assam	Bihar	Tripura	Andhra Pradesh	Rajasthan	Tamil Nadu
Government	51	47	46	100	97	100
Private Aided	6	57	43	99	87	100
Private Unaided	11	27	25	91	83	93
Unrecognised	4	14	12	81	85	87
% female, All Schools	34	40	49	48	33	74

Source: DISE (2013-14) Elementary Education in India; Progress towards UEE

**Table 4 Average Monthly Salaries in Several studies in India**

Notes (1) In Karopady's study 78% of teachers in private schools were females compared to 57% in government schools; (2) Singh and Sarkar were studying mainly English medium schools; (3) the higher salaries in Lall's study were for those in higher classes, and for teaching specific subjects; (4) the minimum wage in Bihar is about double the national median.

**Table 5: Average Monthly Salaries for Primary School Teachers in PEF's EVS by Gender**

	Average Salary	US \$	Number in each Salary Range		
	Rupees (PKR)		< 3,000	3,001-5,000	>5,000
EVS (38)	3,608	38.10	22	12	3
Male (5)	4,800	50.80	2	1	1
Female (33)	3,428	36.20	20	11	2

Source: Carr-Hill and Murtaza (2012)]. US Dollar conversions are by authors'

**Table 6: Gross Monthly Salary Ranges for Private School\* Teachers in Peshawar (2012)**

Pakistani Rupees (PKR)	Percent of Respondents (N)	US \$	US \$ (with PPP)
3,000-5,999	20.7% (25)	32.15—64.28	109.85—219.66
6,000-7,999	28.9% (35)	64.29—85.71	219.70—292.90
8,000 & above-	50.4% (61)	85.72+	292.93+

Source: Malik 2015. US Dollar conversions are authors' calculations.

\*Includes Primary and secondary- data does not differentiate