

Interaction of Micropolitics and Education Quality in Rural Karnataka

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to uncover the interactional patterns between 'micropolitics' and 'education quality' in two rural schools of Karnataka. The patterns thus obtained are used to critique existing policies relating to 'quality frameworks' for rural schools as envisaged in The Right to Education Act of 2009 through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. This ethnographical exploration used micro political perspective on schools as descriptive and analytical lens to understand the manifestation of quality parameters at the village level. Study through the analysis of 'quality' and 'micro political' interactional pattern signals at the stabilisation of 'systemic inefficiency equilibrium' of rural schooling system which has been strategically crafted through existing educational bureaucracy, caste hierarchies and brahminical value systems. Strategies related to enhancing the quality seems to be conceived in a vacuum, disconnected, unreal to the underprivileged, disadvantaged communities in rural educational settings. Thus, the paper brings out the inadequacies in quality frameworks of Right to Education Act in ensuring effective participation to positively influence the long-term growth of the children in rural society.

Keywords: Micropolitics, Quality, Interaction, Villages, Right to Education 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Formal schooling provisions enshrined through various provisions in our constitution pretends to perform twin functions of realizing country's demographic dividend and ensuring social justice to the historically disadvantaged communities through its 'Public' and 'Private' schooling system. Formal entry of elementary education into the list of fundamental civic right is at present only a symbolic gesture of the state (Kumar, K., & Sarangapani, P. M. 2004). Thus, during the process of policy implementation, interacting structures and actors have been discounted to express their desires, needs, understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. Local communities residing in the periphery and interiors have been silently excluded from

expressing their idea of education and quality. This process has significantly de-linked the aspirations of the stakeholders with the macro-policy objectives.

On the other hand, in India, we have varied consensus on the aspect of education quality (Dhankar, R. 2010). For some it is quality provisioning for school such as timely availability of funds, teachers, infrastructural facilities, school management by local community, socio-economic-political, cultural factors and for others it is only learner's cognitive achievement in the schooling system. Most of the macro studies (Lee, J and Barro, R.J. 2001, Banerjee, A and Kremer, M. 2002, ASER 2009, 2010, 2011, Bishop J 1989, Banerjee et.al., 2003) conducted at the national level focused only on establishing whether there is positive, strong and significant causal relationship between educational expenditure and outcome at the aggregate levels. Dependent variables that were taken as proxies for school quantity in most studies were: test scores, repetition, dropout, completion rates, and enrolment ratios at the primary and sometimes at the secondary level. The studies generally aim to establish the extent to which increases in school resources- usually measured as People Teacher Ratios (PTRs), expenditure per pupil, proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or average teacher salaries- enhance educational outcomes.

Parallel to the macro paradigm, micro studies in education also borrowed modern economic approaches to investigating the determinants of educational outcomes and developed well-established techniques from other economic applications to investigate into the issues of quality. The idea being there is a determinate relationship between inputs to production process and the outputs that subsequently emerge. However, the application of production function analysis to education is somewhat hazardous; also, using language to portray education through 'input' and 'output' approach is not very helpful as it obscures the key issues of assessing quality (Winch, C. 2010). Hence, in parallel with the economic tradition a different empirical approach to study schools and classrooms began to emerge. Micropolitics¹ of education and schooling is one such framework, tradition that tries to uncover the hidden, untold, underworld / (**labyrinth**) of school, which influences quality² significantly.

Micropolitics and Education Quality: Towards An Interactionist Framework

Realities encircling education clearly warns us that, every narrative on quality is political, but every politics surrounding it is simultaneously a macropolitics and micropolitics (Deleuze G and Guattari F, 1993). Researchers have drawn a distinction between two types of

politics in schools. The term micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organisations. Cooperative and conflictive processes are integral components of micropolitics. Macropolitics refers to how power is used and decision-making is conducted at district, state, and federal levels. Macropolitics is generally considered to exist outside the school, but researchers have noted that micro and macropolitics may exist at any level of school systems depending on circumstances (Blase, J. 2002).

Table 1: Differentiating Macro and Micropolitics

Macropolitics	Micropolitics
Subject: State, Nation, Corporation, Transnational State (IMF, WE, WTO)	Subject: Individual, Citizen, Community, School, Class room, people and other life forms
Realm: Sovereignty, Population, Territory, Security, Law, Resources, Trade, Property etc.,	Realm: Body, Learning, Teaching, Sense of Self, Identity, Gender, Domestic/ Public, Sexuality, Food, Aesthetic, Education, Health etc.,

In essence, deliberately denying “politics” in educational decision making ignores and suppresses the realities of educational change processes both at micro and macro levels. Micro level competitions for deriving ‘power’ and ‘authority’ in the educational decisions become a matter of curiosity in educational planning processes. Educational planning in developing countries need to focus on political, administrative decisions and must take into account the clash between traditional and modern systems of education and socialisation (Rowley, 1971). The dominance of one interest group over others and efforts to derive power, authority, and control are assumed to affect the quality in the long run. Micropolitics provide a conceptual frame for the analysis of both the processes and outcomes of school reform focused on improving quality.

Innaccone (1975), is one of the founders of special interest group in politics of education coined the phrase, the micropolitics of education. This new domain in educational politics was largely studied from an organisational perspective. Major focus in micro political research in education was on finding out the behaviors of stakeholders in education system through a psycho-sociological analysis of educational processes and concurrent political actions, at the local level, its impact on the administrative processes and teaching learning processes. This was a tradition largely amended in qualitative research approach and ethnographical methodologies. Hence, more emphasis was on processes and its interpretation

through constructivist approaches. Least priority was provided to find out causal relationship between the variables.

Studies designed to investigate the political relationships among parents, administrators, teachers, students, staff, representatives in local bodies, community, state and policy reforms initiated by the state is valuable and fill the research gap in the terrain of micropolitics (Blasé, 2005). Given the evolutionary nature of educational programs such as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*(SSA) there is lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved. Political lobbying, negotiation, are an integral part of dynamic programme implementation processes, thus having impact over quality of education at the local level. Overlapping roles and co-option are very common issues shaping the micropolitical climate and influencing the quality in the long run. These complex dynamics of interaction between micropolitics and quality of school education (refers to both quality outcomes and processes) are rarely studied phenomena in rural context. RTE 2009 has naively defined quality³ from a supply side perspective and thus providing opportunity for studying education quality not beyond the bureaucratic interpretations.

Present study actually probed and investigated the dynamics of power, autonomy, and control of inputs and its impact on the processes and outcomes through the micropolitical framework. The micropolitical framework took into consideration both consensual-cooperative and conflictive- adversarial micro political processes prevalent in the education system at the district and sub-district levels.

OBJECTIVES

- Examine the existence of micropolitics in rural school systems, and to explore the nature of micro political relationship between the stakeholders.
- Construct the definition of education quality from the knowledge, attitudes and perspectives of actors, institutions and organisations in the rural education system.
- Build an understanding on interactional patterns between micropolitics and education quality in different rural contexts.
- Probe into the micro political processes, which have a significant impact in determining education quality at the school, village, *panchayat*, cluster and block levels in rural areas of Karnataka.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses the theoretical framework of ‘symbolic interactionism’ as research design and thus the findings are majorly dependent on the interpretations derived from the interactions between ‘micropolitical climate’(established by the actors, institutions, networks, and objects) with the concomitant processes associated with ‘education quality’ derived through a process of ‘social constructivism’. Theoretical and empirical construction of ‘micropolitics’ and ‘education quality’ as distinct but interrelated, dependent phenomenon have been achieved through emergent, flexible research design embedded in interactionist, constructivist traditions. A hybrid analytical framework was constructed to evolve theoretical and empirical construction of micropolitical and quality perceptions from the associated stakeholders.

The schools were selected from two educational blocks (*taluka*) through purposive sampling methodology. ‘Extreme-case sampling’⁴ method was applied to select the blocks. *Channapatna* in *Ramanagara* district and *Sidlaghatta* in *Chikkaballapur* district in the state of Karnataka were chosen based on the Educational Development Index (EDI)⁵ for the year 2012-13. Study was carried over a period of one year (2013-14) understanding the context, nature, pattern of interactions between ‘educational quality’ and ‘micropolitics’ at the village and school level. After the selection of educational blocks based on EDI, initial selection of schools were based on the criteria such as performance of the school with respect to the outcome indicators - enrolment, retention, and learning levels. These selections had good predisposition with the opinions expressed by the educational functionaries working at cluster and block level. These predispositions were related to the perception of educational functionaries, their identification and judging capability of the schools as ‘Good Schools’, ‘Bad Schools’, ‘Medium performing schools’ etc. Even though on the official documents (school records, report cards) all the schools in the educational cluster showed more or less similar educational characteristics. One school in each educational cluster which fared better in terms of enrolment rates, learning outcome and designated as ‘better performing school’ as compared to rest of the schools in the given educational cluster were selected for the study(refer- Table-2) .

Table 2: Sample Villages and Selection Criteria

Level	Selection Criteria	Samples	
Taluk	EDI	Channapatna (67 th Rank)	Shidlaghatta (127 th Rank)
Cluster	Perceptions of the CRPs and BEO	Myalanayakanahalli	Tummanahalli
Panchayat	Administrative	Mailalli	Kannesara

Village (School)	Achievement tests, perceptions of CRPs	Mailalli	Kannesara
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After selecting two schools, it was decided to spend a complete academic year i.e. 2013-2014 in these two schools to understand the micropolitical activities that might have some influence on high achievement levels of the children and also demarcate from rest of the schools as 'Good Schools'. The central idea was to map the pattern of concurrent contributory '*micropolitical*' processes and activities, which might demarcate these two schools from the rest of the schools in the selected educational clusters. *Micropolitical* processes were mapped with respect to school as a unit of analysis; corresponding notions of *quality* have been gathered through a process of continued field immersion. A variety of tools were used as per the contextual need. Hence, study followed a 'mixed methodological' regime in selection of tools. Most of the tools used in the field were 'emergent' like -open ended questionnaire, unstructured interviews, focus group discussions(FGDs), observation of classroom and school processes, conducting of standard achievement tests, personal interviews, content analysis of school records, reports, texts, personal in-depth interviews

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Quality has different meaning to different groups; it is about the completion of physical and financial targets in time for head teacher, cluster resource person, and educational bureaucracy, completion of syllabus for school teachers. However, when it comes to issues of quality for their own children it is about the higher order critical thinking, English knowledge, computer awareness etc. When the question of explaining the factors influencing the quality of education in their schools, teachers in their responses have come out with a diverse set of responses. These factors and components were mainly with their own perceptions, inputs, vision to create better quality outcome from the present education system. Inputs for better quality included, inter alia, academic, pedagogic practices, management skills, community partnerships, training and capacity development of teachers, embedding leadership skills, ensuring good quality of infrastructure, technology deployment etc., (please refer Table-3)

Table 3: Meaning of Quality of Education and Influencing Factors

S.N	Factors	Percentage
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		Responses
1	Three Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic)	91.00
2	Community Participation	82.00
3	Training & Capacity development	50.50
4	Leadership Development	44.00
5	Universalisation	42.00
7	Teamwork	13.00
8	Good Management	24.00
9	Feedback	03.70
10	Time Management & Communication skills	03.70
15	Technology deployment	01.10
16	Improving the curriculum and pedagogy	60.00
17	Extra-Curricular activities	35 .00
18	Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decrease in corruption, - Recognise the importance of teaching as profession - More professional ethics 	04.10

Micropolitics of Infrastructure and Facilities

Basic physical facilities, necessary in schools as identified by SSA are classrooms, toilets, drinking water, playground, usable blackboard, and seating facility for the children (SSA, 2011). It is assumed that, these non-living elements, facilities play an important role in improving experiences of teaching – learning subtleties and consequently overall school quality. There are some research evidences that link the availability of permanent classrooms, textbooks, desks, libraries, and running water with the take up, progress of primary education and quality (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). We also find that often in India, stakeholders and many commentators regard ‘school building’ as the most important factor after the teacher (Michael W, 2007). School quality attributed no significant correlation between the existence of infrastructure facility with the learning levels; but has shown positive association between the presence of quality infrastructure with the students’ wellbeing. Most of these attempts seem to physicalise the spaces and living world of the schools.

The current RTE act of 2009 has just acted as state’s physicalising apparatus focusing primarily on quantum of infrastructural facility need to be present in the school premises. It prescribes a certain number of essential facilities to be present and proscribes such educational establishments, which do not follow its prescriptions. In practice these prescriptions by the RTE legislation negates the human elements of caring, bothering, loving, liking, feeling and bargaining. It never provided a space for imagination through local wisdom and sensitivities. Instead of providing life to physicality RTE seems to have taken

out the living aspirations of the infrastructural facilities. A typical example being presence of toilets, ramps, compound walls and their corresponding dysfunctionalities in the rural schools. These facilities internalise the inefficacies through complex immanence of human necessities rooted in their local socio, economic and cultural contexts. Thus, mere imposition through the toothless legislation of RTE would have void and null effect on these obligating physicalities.

Local community in *Mailalli* and *Kannesara* have used the school infrastructural facilities to penetrate the caste, political and religious identities through the '*space bargaining*' process. This bargaining process usually carried out through the formal spaces provided by state in the form of birthday celebrations of the National heroes and religious icons. SDMCs, local caste groups, *panchayat* authorities are the bargaining agents- where the interplay of caste, religious identities are clearly visible on the prominently visible physical spaces (such as school walls) and written documents (such as SDMC proceedings). Schoolteachers feel such processes as unnecessary but these bargaining processes are 'necessary factors' for their survival at the schools. Thus, the caste, religious- politics of school walls seemed more prominent than what positive effect the school infrastructure brought on the educational development of the student community.

This signalling of school infrastructure, learning environment in school premises as a space for identity (politics) bargaining for political clout without any positive association for students learning seems to be negative outcome but has positive bearing for local politicians to carry forward their 'micro-political' agendas over a long gestation period. Above case studies from the selected school sites further demonstrates how the caste, religious and political hierarchies of the society are being reproduced through the physical spaces of the schools through the 'objectified state'.⁶ Feudal forces in the village actually control the decisions relating to any infrastructural decisions; teachers, SDMCs are at the mercy of 'patronage' network of dominant castes. School facilities become reliable forum to build such 'dominating networks' at the village level, though these dominating networks and religious infrastructural facilities would not have any positive association with the education of the children.

***Panchayat* and Link Politics**

Panchayat politics and its effect on schools seem to have a distinct orientation towards material benefits, and its elected leaders are the media for channelling the material benefits for themselves rather than being altruists (Narain and Pande, 1972). Politics under PR for schools is treated as a case of "link politics" built on vertical alliances that serve as the

proverbial hyphen that joins and fastens the state level and rural local politicians. If one were to treat this development as legitimate, one should also accept the logical corollary of the entry of political parties in the area of local politics (Narain and Pande, 1972).

Table 4 : Allocation of money from CAC-GP

	Year	On Civic Amenities in Kannesara GP (Health Educational facilities)	On School education	GHPS Kannesara	On Civic Amenities in Mailalli GP (Health Educational facilities)	On school education	GHPS Mailalli
1	2005-2005	28000	14500		15000	8600	2000
2	2006-2007	49000	35550	3400	18800	10000	1700
3	2007-2008	35000	27000	3490	19800	15000	6000
4	2008-2009	23000	16000	6370	21000	13145	3400
5	2009-2010	21000	18000	6700	26000	17273	5800
6	2010-2011	27000	25000	5600	18990	16990	4500
7	2011-2012	20000	19000	6760	21000	14237	3900
8	2012-2013	39700	35000	2300	23000	19832	7800
9	2013-2014	35000	28000	11000	46000	39000	8400
Total Amount Spent in 9 years		277700	218050	51220	209590	154077	43500
Average Money Spent in 9 years		30855.5556	24227.7	5691.1111	23287.7778	17119.7	4833.333

Source: Book of accounts for standing committees

From the table-4, it is evident that, *Kannesara* School received an average of 18% of total allocation from the CAC and Mailalli received an average 20% of its share every year. In both the GPs more than 70% (78% for Kannesara and 73% for Mailalli) of the money from the CAC was spent on school education, indicating health component received very less priority in both the villages. In both, the *Panchayat* Development Officers (PDOs) inform about the erratic allocation of money on the issues relating to Civic Amenities; most of the funds utilised for these purposes comes from the state government through the *Zilla Panchayat* and around 30% of the money will be pooled from the local revenue collection. From the assessment of school head teacher in *Kannesara* it would have been a sufficient grant for them to maintain the repair and small maintenance activities through the CAC funding; but he complains of non-receipt and invisibility of the money at the operational level. Most of the spending is only on papers and in bills. SDMC members do not ask *Panchayat* for any accountability in this regard and CAC do not send any intimation about the release of the money.

As per Section 55 of *Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act* of 1993, the decisions at the *Panchayat* meeting shall be displayed within three days from the date of the meeting on the notice board of the *Grama Panchayat*; along with the details of the names of the members voting respectively for or against the resolutions passed in the meeting. However, during the course of field immersion only *Mailalli Panchayat* used to display such information rarely; the *Kannesara* PDO always complained of problem with the printing machines to display such proceedings on the notice board; though he used to circulate the proceedings to all the members. He declined to display any information to the public through the notice board and not sent any intimation of whatsoever to the School head teacher. On the contrary, in *Mailalli* the HT was informed about the repair and construction works undertaken by the *panchayat* in *the school* premises.

This lack of accountability could be attributed to the factor about the co-option of the members in SDMC through the GP members. In addition, influential political leaders of the village selected most of the members of GP and SDMC. These political leaders are close associates of *gram panchayat* members and MLAs. No one in both the villages remembers about election conducted in GP for the position of CAC or for the position SDMC memberships.

During the group discussions head teacher blamed GP, community for distancing itself from the school activities and on the other end SDMC members blamed head teacher for keeping them away and uninformed about the school matters. However, on *panchayat* account books, SDMC records the routing of the money for the construction purposes have been shown. PDO in *Kannesara* informed that the attendance of the SDMC members is through proxy signatures. Most of the GP and SDMC members in these villages are illiterate and hence not interested in reading the meeting proceedings or any notices. An analysis of participation of Dalits in the decisions related to school infrastructure and other facilities of *Kannamanagala and Mailalli* yielded a ‘Matrix of Domination’ as shown in Table-5, demonstrating ‘Caste’ as an important contextual factor in deciding the educational outcomes.

Table 5: Participation and types of talks in school decision-making with respect to infrastructure (adopted from Ball, 1987)

	Forms of participation	Response opposition	Strategies of control
Authoritarian	Prevents access to voice Ex- Particularly prevents the participation of parents of scheduled caste children in schooling activities.	Stifle Ex- Frequent insults in the schools by the upper castes	Insulation, concealment and secrecy

Managerial	Formal committees, meetings and working parties Ex- Teacher weekly staff meetings, SDMCs meetings, Gram Sabhas	Channel and delay Ex- Coordinated decisions of delaying the works due to discretionary powers provided to them in SDMC bye laws,	Structuring, planning, control of agendas time and context Ex- Setting meeting agendas, writing of meeting minutes, discussions and voting on the subject
Interpersonal	Informal chats and personal consultation and lobbying Ex- Biases towards the teachers of same age, gender and caste	Fragment and compromise	Private performance of persuasion Ex- Praising each other during CRP, BRP visits
Adversarial	Ex- Public meetings and open debate	Confrontation	Public performances of persuasion

Micro- Management versus Micro-Marketing

The teachers in Kannesara School had no mentors or senior teachers to induct them into the process of teaching. They experimented on their own to be inducted into the system. They faced challenges outside the classrooms of bringing the children into the classrooms. Even though they had support from community members, they spent a lot of time in building relations with the children, community, and other stakeholders. Even though teachers work on a collaborative mode, they do not get adequate support from the HT and other functionaries in the system. There are many dropouts from the marginalised communities, particularly Dalits, the reasons from them being excluded are not related only to the livelihood and poverty issues.

There are micro level practices in the schools, which need to be introspected by the teachers, community, and HT. The micro- management practice of HT has its repercussions on all the teachers who were forced to carry out tasks, which might not help students in the school. These micro management strategies have brought good amount of nepotism into the school system. On the other hand, the local private schools market themselves through intimate 'micro-marketing strategies' and sell their schools to the community. Hence, the micro-marketing strategies practiced in the private school have a countering effect on the government school. Thus pulling out children from government school catchment to shift to the private school. Even though the teachers have good practices and collaboration strategies, they fail to negotiate with the political economy in retaining the catchment of their school

Micropolitics of Curriculum and Teaching- Learning Material

Learning systems in rural schools are dominated by the 'Text book culture' (Krishna Kumar, 1988). Textbooks have taken the centre stage of Indian curriculum and teaching methodologies. In this process, they impose hegemony on the community by discarding the local learning systems. The entire standard quality assessment framework tends to measure the impact of textbook culture in schools. They invariably ask questions from the textbooks to validate children knowledge and understanding on the parameters of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The curricular change supposedly aimed at indigenisation in post-colonial educational policy, resulted in *Brahminisation* as a key defining feature (p vi, NCF 2005) An analysis of textbooks from class 1 to class 5th covering subjects such as Kannada, English, Social Science, and Environmental Science in the selected schools has demonstrated the following issues;

- There are around 644 pictures of the human beings in all these texts and 508(around 79%) pictures depicting the gender disparity in the society. This gender disparity is shown repeatedly and holds the patriarchal societal sentiments in the minds of schoolchildren. Most of the pictures relating to woman are related to domestic work.
- In class 5th textbook, there are mention of 54 temples, 5 mosques, and 2 pictures of Church without a detailed description of these images except the glorification and rituals, which are carried out in these religious places.
- The description of rural life is prominently pronounced through the context of livelihoods such as basket making, farming etc., and urban life as described through portrayal of white coloured clean jobs.

These stereotypic descriptions of the school texts and their deliberations by the teachers had significant impact over the mindset of children. Their behaviour inside and outside the schools is affirmed to be hegemonic as imposed by the texts mediated through teachers. In total 120 classroom observations have demonstrated the patriarchal, brahminical indoctrination in the minds of the child to be obedient to the Brahminical value systems.

However, *Teachers in GHPS in Kannesara* tried to break this mould of hierarchical knowledge creation and dissemination. They started thinking about the;

- Creative ideas to integrate some innovative methodologies to teach the syllabus prescribed by the state;
- Alternate learning methods to integrate the creativity of their fellow teachers and create supportive learning spaces in the school.

Block Education Officer (BEO) Mr. Hanumanthappa once during his visit to this school observed these works and encouraged teachers Sreedhar and Dhanraj to carry out more such innovations besides citing their initiatives in different teacher forums. This was the starting point of problems for these two teachers as many teachers in the neighboring schools criticized this initiative as a waste of time and school hours. Both of them never gave up and further built a colorful magazine *Shaamanti* (2011-2014) which was written by the students to share their own experiences: experiences of their interactions with the society, their observation of their environment, their learning's of math, science etc., The idea was to create spaces for children to write their own texts , share, read and participate in the self-learning processes.

“...education is not only providing knowledge within the four walls of the classroom, it is a continuous engagement of the children with its community and surrounding. To realise the potential of the child teacher plays very important role. In many instances, the hidden talents of the children do not emerge. This is due to pressure from the education system to memorise a specific type of knowledge. Education sector should thus have to have more sensitivity and nurture the creativity among the children. ...In a small village of Kannesara teachers in GHPS and Sneha youth group are doing a marvelous task of organising the school development activities, integrating the curriculum with the children's experiences and they are bringing children textbook titled Shaamanti. This is encouraging and it should become a role model for all of us who are working in education sector.” (Devaprakash A, 2012)

The study shows that teachers are busy delivering what has been prescribed to them from the higher authorities. They do not have any say in the curriculum which they transact, neither are they creative or talented enough to redesign the curriculum as per the local requirements. Even if they attempt some innovations (like children's text books in *Kannesara*) they are not encouraged, instead they have been criticized and discouraged. Short semesters with vast coverage of syllabus put the learning of the children at the greater risk.

Politics of Street Bureaucracy

The dynamics of interaction between teachers and functionaries such as CRPs in negotiating and bargaining power to control and exercise authority over available educational resources to produce the given set of educational outcomes depends on several contextual factors. These contextual factors are not completely separate from standard quality procedures set by the educational bureaucracy; they are an integral part of the system. The

‘Street Level Bureaucracy’ (Lipsky, 1969) has no control over any of these processes, though certain forms of participation and types of talk in school system would help them in arriving at certain strategies of control (Ball, 1987). These strategies of control in fact demolish the innovations practiced by the teachers in the local contexts. Control strategies in the local situations have been assimilated through the positional power and social capital gathered by the educational functionaries. Even though the executive orders from the higher authorities act as currency to scare the teachers to perform the proxy tasks of educational administration, social and cultural capital plays a significant role. This is further strengthened when educational practice sites such as CRC is utilised as a mediator of electoral politics. In addition, there is a clear evidence of assertion of power through the intersection of identities of being affiliated to upper caste hegemony. This power politics further aggravates due to men having situational and positional favors.

Cluster resource person comes to these schools not as an academic support functionary but as a ‘departmental postman’ with an authority to pressure; force the head teacher to provide the data and information. His ritualistic visits do not have any kind of academic significance for the teaching and student community. Weekly teachers meetings in cluster resource center (CRC) just end up in a follow up of his visits. Rarely do they also do some sharing in CRC on awards, prizes won by the students during some competitions. Most of the time it has been observed that CRC meetings have been structured to discuss the problems of confrontation between community, SDMC and teachers or else they will discuss about what syllabus they have completed till then , local holidays, funds for TLMs. They do not have time and space to discuss either on any specific topic, neither they intend to arrive at any solution to the problems they face at the school site.

Prior to *Loksabha* polls this platform was used for election campaign by sponsoring food, cold drinks, and gifts by the political parties. Local teacher union mediated the process; thus most of the time teachers act as ‘mediating actors/ brokers’ between the political parties and larger teaching community. These type of top down policy implementation strategies are endemic to local level administrative and political bargaining thus making school system to act as “ *Street level service provider*” (Lipsky 1969) .

Opinion of the teachers and HTs have some weightage and currency only if they belong to dominant castes (*Okkaliga and Lingayath*), upper castes (*Brahmins, Achari’s*) etc., Hence caste identity has due weightage in teachers identity at the cluster and school level. Teachers with some innovations, new practices etc., to be discussed with the fellow

teachers, do not get a chance as they belong to 'Dalit' community. Even women teachers also do not get chance to express their ideas due to gender bias. These type of 'intellectual untouchability' at the school and CRC level could be seen as reproduction of socio-cultural inequalities (Bourdieu, 1977) embedded in the feudal schooling system.

CRP in *Thummanahalli* teachers point out that, HTs have become mere administrative authorities than academic leaders in the school. Though one can categorise HTs work into annual, monthly, and daily etc., they cannot perform work in a systematic way. Schools are given the exhaustive Quality Monitoring Tools (QMT) from the education department and teachers are required to be prepared for the completion of QMT during second cluster level consultation meeting. These formats are very detailed and humanly not possible to compile each details asked. Teachers fail to understand how one can monitor the quality using these formats. By the time, they finish the first round of data collection; rather than reflecting on the data collected they are burdened with collecting one more set of data or information asked by the department.

Pseudo Decentralised Structures

Systematic co-option efforts to create parallel institutions in 'decentralised governance framework' with the establishment of school development and monitoring committees by centralised executive order is an unintended effort by educational bureaucracy to delink *panchayats* from mandated constitutional responsibility. Unplanned fund disbursal by *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and recent confusions created by 'Right To Education Act of 2009' on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, authorities, institutions etc., are seen as some of the common reasons for disfunctioning of school development and monitoring committees in most part of Karnataka. However, critical appraisal of this committee using institutional ethnography in *Mailalli* has helped to probe more on the ability of this '*pseudo decentralised structure*' in performing the roles and responsibilities prescribed to them beyond the educational bureaucracy. However, exhorting reluctant community members to take active interest in educational needs of their children demands a holistic and long-term strategy. The efforts taken by the local NGOs, community members in consultation with the teachers are worth replicating, but this cannot be a substitute for *Panchayats*.

Suboptimal and short-term solutions such as formation of SDMCs without situating them in a larger societal context is a serious mistake committed by educational bureaucracy, however situational strengthening of the SDMCs in place of *Panchayats* makes them

supplementary structures. Present SDMC structure in *Mailalli* does not owe its existence with larger PRI governance mechanism; on the other hand, PRIs see these SDMCs as a collection of voiceless parent community. SDMCs are puppets in the hands of head teacher and other higher level of educational bureaucracy. They are created as symbolic institutions representing democratic principles in school governance mechanism and help educational administrative machineries to spend resources channelised by SSA. The impact made by SDMCs is a larger question to be addressed but the mere existence of these improperly conceived pseudo-participatory structures are problematic to the educational system, as they do not indicate any sustainable structural affiliations. Rather they are situational leadership, momentary community driven strategies

The influence of teacher associations in affecting educational outcomes is an important discourse at the district and sub district levels. Qualitative enquiry into functioning of primary school teachers association in Channapatna and Shidlaghatta Taluks demonstrated the existence of ‘neo-corporate’ strategies at middle levels. Karnataka State Primary School Teachers Association (KSPSTA) is the largest ‘organised interest group’ of primary school teachers at the *taluk* and district level which influences the routine administration practices and in turn shapes the extra educational politics at the school and sub-district levels. Its actions have a larger inclination towards personal wellbeing at the cost of systemic educational goals and quality. It is largely connected with the issues of individual wellbeing of teachers such as, time bound increment in pay scale, transfer, posting, promotion, training and vacation related issues. Its ability to impact policy implementation processes and influencing curricular areas are hardly evident in its actions even after an explicit mention of such novel intentions in its constitution byelaw document of the association.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated the existence of multiple innovative pedagogic, democratic practices, which are local, driven by the collaborative school leadership practices. The study discusses de-linking of micro-innovative practices with existing ‘top down’ quality governance mechanisms. The study through the analysis of ‘quality’ and ‘micropolitical’ interactional pattern signals at the stabilisation of ‘*systemic inefficiency equilibrium*’ in rural school system. This has been strategically crafted through existing educational bureaucracy which is completely feudal; school, village level institutional networks which are dominated by caste identities, and school texts which strews only stereotypical values in the minds of the

school community. Study points out that teachers are made to work and teach in a highly politicized atmosphere in schools, influenced by micro political behaviors.

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Notes

¹ Micropolitics is defined as the “dynamics of interaction between and among several stakeholders in negotiating and bargaining power to control and exercise authority over available educational resources to produce given set of educational outcomes and quality of education in schools.” Alternative names Interpersonal Politics, School Site Politics, Power Relations, Small Organizational Politics

² At the micro level quality is defined with respect to (i) process indicators such as enabling and facilitating management and pedagogic practices, teacher and student engagement, effective utilization of school and community resources-both material and human resources. (ii) Pupils’ performance based on achievement tests. In both macro and micro indicators, efficacy and equity assumed centrality.

³ Chapter III in the duties of appropriate government and local authorities, 9(4) ensures for the good quality of elementary education conforming to the standards and norms specified in the schedule; section 19 & 25 mentions about some of the norms and standards relating to number of teachers, building standards, number of instructional days of school, working hours per week for teachers, library facilities, play materials and games facilities at the school.

⁴ identifying the extremes or poles of some characteristic and then selecting cases representing these extremes for an in-depth examination

⁵ Education Development Index is composite index comprising of access, infrastructure, teachers and outcome indicators prepared by Karnataka education department t in order to facilitate the process of educational planning in the state.

⁶ as described by Bourdieu (1986), Objectified state refers to the cultural capital at the community levels in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, paintings and physical spaces which are trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, ideologies and problematics.