



INTERACTION OF MICROPOLITICS AND EDUCATION QUALITY: COMMENTARY ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM

Pradeep Ramavath Jayanaik

PhD Student, Development Studies, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Nagarabhavi, Bengaluru-560072

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to uncover the interactional patterns between 'micropolitics' and selected factors of 'education quality' in two rural settings of Karnataka. These interactional patterns obtained are used to analyse existing policies relating to 'quality frameworks' for rural schools as envisaged in The Right to Education Act of 2009 through mission mode program of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. This ethnographical exploration uses the micropolitical perspective on schools as descriptive and analytical lens to understand the manifestation on quality parameters. It examines the current strategies of improving school quality through better infrastructure facilities, curricular materials, and analysis of concomitant micropolitical behaviours.

Field immersion to the selected villages, educational institutions, and district and sub-district level units helped the process of triangulation and insights to get concretised. Though the findings from the study are not fit for generalisation, they raise important questions relating to visualisation of education quality at the Meta-Policy level and associated interpretation of larger vision of quality at the implementation sites. For understanding, micropolitical designs at school and sub-district levels empirical works of *Kelchtermans, G* (2007), *Iannaccone L* (1975) and *Blasé* (1991) have been contextually used to explore the interactional patterns. Descriptive reasoning for resultant quality expressions have been provided through interactive frame of quality and micropolitics.

Data, information, and evidences were subjected to variety of 'theoretical immersions' to explain how macro level programs of educational quality gets caught up in the 'black box' of micropolitics. Thus demonstrating the resultant interpretation, derivation of meanings having latent impact on implementation as well as outcomes related to quality improvement processes. Narratives, case studies, and limited statistical evidences were used to examine educational quality processes, outcomes at the micro-social contexts.

KEY WORD: Micropolitics, Education Quality, Infrastructure, Curriculum.

1.0. Introduction

"As is the *State*, so is the *School*"

James S Coleman (1965), Education and Political Development.

Educational policy affirmations are reactions to the existing societal situations. Thus, they are contextual responses to stimulate medium and long-term changes in educational systems in general and schools in particular. The ramifications of these policy intentions could only be understood through the effective observation of implementation strategies at the school and sub-district levels. Micropolitical perspective of school organization is one of the fine-grained approaches, which helps to observe the complex policy processes. This perspective provides a powerful conceptual lens to reconstruct and analyze the policy implementation related to school quality improvements (Kelchtermans, 2007).

In India education of '*equitable quality for all*' is an important promise made to the constitution by its people (Article 21A, Article 45). It is often portrayed, as one of the urgent responsibilities needed to prioritize in order to realize country's demographic dividend (Altbach & Jayaram, 2010) and social justice. However, this formal entry of school education into the list of fundamental civic right at present seems only a symbolic event and gesture (Kumar K, 2003). Political leadership and educational establishments could be very well accused for not acting on the issue of quality with a sense of emergency (p1, Chavan, 2010).

In India, we have varied consensus on the aspect of education quality (Dhankar, 2010). For some it is quality provisioning for school such as timely availability funds, teachers, infrastructural facilities, and school management by local community, socio-economic and cultural factors and for others it is only learner cognitive achievement in the schooling system. Thus, the term quality generally refers to high degree of goodness, worth or excellence in an 'object' or system. In the social context, it represents rather an abstract idea, which needs to be exemplified through certain indicators. Quality is an attribute of any object, structure, or system that is relative in nature and cannot be measured in isolation (NCERT, 2004).

Thinkers and philosophers have defined the notion of quality from their primary domain of experience. For *John Dewey* (1915) constructivist aims of education and democratic participation of each individual in the community to attain efficiency in school is the core. For *Gandhi* (1930) the impetus of education to achieve the democracy is at best an incidental outcome of the human urge for the divine. He emphasized on true relevance. *Tagore* looked at the aspect of perfection of the individuals and aspired for organic connection of the individuals with their surroundings. For *Ambedkar* (1936) justice, equality, fraternity is the core of any discourse on basic education.

Most of the macro studies (Lee and Barro 2001, Banerjee and Kremer, 2002, ASER 2009, 2010, 2011, Bishop J 1999, Banerjee et.al., 2003) conducted at the national level on education quality focuses on establishing whether there is a positive, strong, and significant causal relationship between educational expenditure and outcomes at the aggregate levels. Micro-studies in education borrowed modern economic approach 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 has long been important in economic analysis. 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, 2010). Hence, need has been felt to explore parallel tradition with empirical approaches which focuses more on processes and experiences in school sites. Micropolitical studies in schools belong to one such tradition, which focused on the domain of theory building through the process of reflection about the lived life experiences in the school sites.

2.0. Interaction of Micropolitics and Education Quality: towards an Interactionist framework

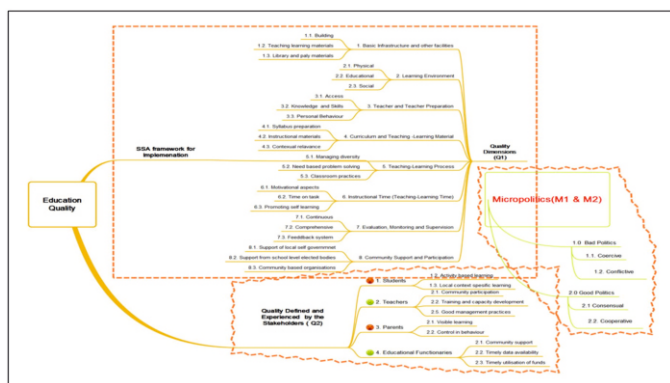
Politics, power, and policy changes determine the educational outcomes at the local level (Iannaccone L & Lutz F.W, 1970). The idea of school as a social right for the masses validates and demands for certain legitimate actions by the local authorities. Limited resources for these legitimate actions related to schooling and intense public competition for them coupled with inability of public authorities to generate resources to meet the demands makes schools as sites for political actions. Further considerable influence of democratic politics on public policy formulation and implementation has multiplied the points of interaction between the political and educational systems. In the analysis of the boundaries and interdigitations of these systems, Rudolph & Rudolph (1972) have distinguished three relationships between them: politicization of educational structures; political influence exercised by educational structures; and assertion by the state of a public interest in education. These three relationships are not always easy to distinguish in concrete empirical situations but distinguishing them has proved extremely useful in analysing influence of unexplained factors in educational systems (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1972). Application of these forms of relationship between politics and education system might prove useful in determining existence of association or interaction between political climate at the local level and education quality.

Iannaccone (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 organizational perspective or with the lens of power. Major focus in micropolitical research 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 emended 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 variables. Present research uses elements of this novel framework, which results in ethnographic examination of interactions in educational governance system at the school, and sub-district levels affecting quality of education. This study has the objectives of

- Examining the existence of micropolitics in rural school systems, and to explore nature of micropolitical relationship between the stakeholders.
- Constructing the definition of education quality from the knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives of actors, institutions, and organizations in the rural education system.
- Building an understanding on interactional patterns between micro politics and education quality in different rural contexts.
- Probing on the micro political processes, which have significant impact in determining the education quality at the school, village, panchayat, cluster, and block levels in rural areas of Karnataka.

Figure 1: Interactive frame of Micropolitics and Education Quality



3.0. Design and Framework Questions

In the present study schools selected for examining the interactional patterns are located in two administratively different education clusters with more or less similar 'quality dimensions' as defined in the SSA framework for implementation of 2011, thus it is a purposive sampling process. The selection criteria included post-facto measured quality standards and perceptions at the systemic levels. The Districts and blocks were selected based on the Educational Development Index (EDI) for the year 2012-13 as provided by the SSA planning wing. Further two educational sites are selected from among the schools in two educational clusters namely *Thummanahalli* in *Shidlaghatta* and *Myalanayakanahalli* in *Channapatna* based on the comparative criteria of higher enrolment rates, achievement levels and perceptions of the educational functionaries as measured during start of academic year 2013-14. One school in each educational cluster which fared better in terms of enrolment rates, learning outcomes 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-1).

Table 1: Sample Villages and Selection Criteria

Level	Selection Criteria	Sample	
Taluk	EDI	Channapatna (67 th Rank)	Shidlaghatta (127 th Rank)
Cluster	Perceptions of the CRPs and BEO	Myalanayakanahalli	Tummanahalli
Panchayat	Administrative	Mogenahalli	Kannamangala
Village (School)	Achievement tests, perceptions of CRPs	Mogenahalli	Kannamangala

4.0. Micro political interactions

The concentration of power with the educational settings and among the individuals has been explained by organizational theorists (Innacone 2007, Blasé 1991, Hoyle 1986); there has been consistent suggestions for the division and dispersal of power using the decentralized governance models at the local levels (Rondinelli & Cheema, 2007, Govinda 2003). Programs such as SSA called for building capacity of different institutions and individuals concerned with planning, programming, and monitoring of quality elementary education under SSA, particularly at decentralized levels of administration (Modules on Quality

Dimensions, SSA 2004). The pluralist tradition gave theoretical and empirical basis in support of such suggestions (Jha, 1999). Within the institutional contexts, the theory and practice of constitutionalism, hailed as 'an achievement of the modern world' (Friedrich 1966) has evolved as mechanisms of division of power along different axes.

Even though SSA provided an opportunity to the districts to develop their own vision of elementary education and plan and implement district specific interventions, it had inherent control from the state level planning and monitoring authorities to adhere to prescribed standards. Thus, decentralization of power, authority, and resources in rural schools cannot be understood only within the context of limited bureaucratic institutional framework. It has intimate manifestations of local- social, political, and cultural factors in it. These expressions in the educational context would be visible through the quality outcomes of the schooling processes.

These expressions are sufficiently evident during the field immersion processes in both, *Channapatna* and *Shidlaghatta* Taluks. Each time entry into these two educational contexts to understand the processes relating to 'quality', one unique behavior was observed among most of the stakeholders (teachers, parents, officials). This behavior pertains to the talk about a hidden, underground world. They attribute the status, apathy of the government school and schooling processes to this hidden world. They often use a word 'Politics' (*Raajakeeya*) which is not visible in any of the official documents (such as RTE rules 2012, SSA framework for implementation 2011), nor mentioned in any local memos, circulars issued by the local authorities as a critical factor (Gram Panchayath, SDMC, BEO office). It is a matter of epistemological curiosity at the sub-district educational settings to understand this hidden world of 'school politics'. Whether mapping of such political elements of school and schooling system at the micro level (village, school, and classroom) provide any better understanding of *formal world* of education quality is the core of this research exploration.

This mapping could precisely depict a process of

- opening a 'black box'
- digging of *school graveyard*&
- harvesting the seeds of micro-innovations about schooling processes

This mapping is useful for *introspection*, *interrogation*, and *internalising* of quality processes at the school sites. The details would be useful during the times of conflict, coercion, and confusion over the standard package of quality. During the times of celebration the same black box acts as an 'enthusiastic navigator', it takes the form of appreciative enquires, enabling force, positive energy.

Some would prefer to call the 'black box, graveyard, or seed' as 'assertion of local politics' (Jha, 1999) and 'micropolitics' (Innacone 1975, Hoyle 1983). The conceptual issues regarding the boundaries and properties of such 'black box' phenomena, determining the political, psychological, socio-economic prerequisites and determinants of localness, visibility of the micro phenomenon etc., needs

- an examination of micro quality processes within the broader context of higher (macro) institutions.
- analysis of local socio-economic inequalities rooted through caste, class, and gender.
- pattern analysis of leadership behaviors of head teacher, resource persons, and elected representatives.
- Understanding of linkages between local level developmental institutions and their circle of influence.

Thus, 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 depends on several contextual factors. These contextual factors are not completely separate from standard quality procedures set by the educational bureaucracy; they are integral part of the system. The 'Street Level Bureaucracy' (Lipsky, 1977) has no control over any of these processes, though certain forms of participation and types of talk in school would help them in arriving at certain strategies of control (Ball, 1987).

SSA framework for implementation (2011) formed the bases for understanding the standards of various quality indicators in this study. SSA framework for implementation was used as it included quality determinants of National Curricular Framework (NCF) 2005 and RTE Act, 2009. Major contributing factors of quality education as described in Modules on Quality Dimensions of Elementary Education in SSA prepared by NCERT in 2004 were used to understand the interactional and influencing factors between 'Quality Education' and 'Micropolitics' in the rural context. These contributing factors are

- Basic Infrastructure and other Facilities**
- Teacher and Teacher Preparation
- Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Material**
- Teaching-Learning Process

- v. Instructional Time (Teaching-Learning Time)
- vi. Evaluation, Monitoring and Supervision
- vii. Community Participation and Support

The interactional patterns between 'micropolitics' with Basic Infrastructure and Curricular materials are discussed in following section. Various sources of data through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), field observations, and reflections are collated in a sequential manner. Where ever necessary suitable Pseudonyms are used to keep the anonymity of the respondents.

i. Micropolitics of Basic Infrastructure and other facilities

Some of the basic physical facilities, necessary in schools may be as identified by SSA are classrooms, toilets, drinking water, playground, usable blackboard, seating facilities for the children (SSA, 2011). It is assumed that these facilities play an important role in improving teaching-learning environment and consequently overall school quality. There are many research evidences those links the availability of permanent classrooms, textbooks, desks, libraries, and running water with the take up of primary education and quality (Heneveld and Craig, 1996 and Verspoor, 2003). We also find that often in India the 'school building' is regarded by stakeholders and many commentators as the most important ingredient after the teacher (Michael Ward, 2007, DFID).

Kabir Vajapeyi (2006) an architect from Delhi confirms the strong linkages between learning levels of the children with the infrastructural facilities. The relation between observable schooling inputs such as school infrastructure facilities and student outcomes however is not consistent and is generally weak in most studies. World Bank Study (Goyal, 2007) on school quality attributed no significant correlation between the presence of infrastructure facility with the learning levels; but has shown positive association between the presence of quality infrastructure with the students wellbeing.

RTE act of 2009 provides a comprehensive mention of the infrastructure and facilities needed in the school. It provides norms and standards in the schedule through Section 19 and Section 25. Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) SSA has identified basic school facilities – General toilet, girls' toilet, electricity, playground, library, compound wall, drinking water, and ramp. However, the RTE rules for Karnataka state notified in 2012 is completely mute on the facilities in the government schools, it simply stresses for facilities and infrastructure required in the private schools. The inspection schedule of SSA only refers to the facilities of the private schools for providing recognition. When enquired about this aspect BEOs in both the educational blocks (*Channapatna*

and *Shidlaghatta*) inferred about ensuing of same mandate for government school as well. However, in essence there is no strict enforcement of these standards for the government schools until unless provoked by local authorities such as members of *Zilla Panchayat*, Members of Parliament (MP), and Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA).

As evident during the field observations, all the levels of educational governance system (from SDMC meeting to *Zilla Panchayat* education committee meetings) are busy merely deliberating the construction activities taking place in government schools. School infrastructure and facilities are only element of discussions in most of these meetings. Analysis of meeting notes of Civic Amenities Committees of *Gram Panchayat* to Education Standing Committee at the *Taluk Panchayat* to Education Standing Committees at the *Zilla Panchayat* to Assembly level, the major discussions are delimited only around educational infrastructure. MLA of *Channapatna* Mr. *Muneshwar* who belongs to ruling *Congress* party has never asked any questions relating to school education in assembly from past two years; whereas MLA of *Shidlaghatta* Mr. *Bhojanna* from *Janata Dal* has asked three unstarred questions relating to educational infrastructure facilities and one question relating to teacher shortages in his block (SIO, 2014).

As informed by the CRPs, the amenities in the schools in their clusters are present as per the prescription of 2009 RTE norms and they feel that, the available facilities are sufficient to provide good quality education. Teachers at the selected schools do not have clear idea about the material, financial and infrastructural facilities that they need it for proper job performance. SSA has an endowment of Rs 2000 per annum as school grant for primary and upper primary schools for replacement of non-functional school equipment and Rs 5000 per year for maintenance and repair of the school building. These grants have been utilised completely as per the utilisation registers present in the selected schools.

In both the villages (*Kannamangala* and *Mogenahalli*) for the year 2012-2013, Rs 10000/- is being spent on the repair of the school wall and flooring area; but teachers do not agree about any repair activities taken place in the school premises for that particular academic year. Functionality of these facilities is at great stake; none in the system is concerned about the functionality aspect-whether it is a toilet or drinking water facility (refer Table-2 for details).

In *Kannamangala* School, head teacher has complete control over the physical resources where as in *Mogenahalli* it is SDMC president who has greatest say in the matters concerning the facilities at the school. Such control of authority for both the individuals is derived from their status being upper caste *Okkaligas*.

Table 2: Comparison of Facilities and Infrastructure

	Facilities	Mandate as per RTE 2012 rules for Karnataka	Status	
			Kannamangala	Mogenahalli
1	(2) Building	All weather building consisting of:		
		(i) at least one class-room for every teacher and an office-cum-store-cum Head teacher's room;	2 Building Blocks in in dilapidated conditions, 2 classrooms needs major repair work, only 4 classrooms in good condition	2 building blocks, 2 classroom needs major repair and only 3 classrooms are in good condition
		(ii) barrier free access	There is a restriction for the children to access the school premises in the morning hours	Problem is faced by the children from the Holageri for easy access as fencing is drawn between their settlement and village
		(iii) separate toilets for boys and girls	Toilet is Present but locked	Present but locked and no water facility
		(iv) safe and adequate drinking water facility to all children;	No water source, Dalit boys and girls has to fetch water to the sump	No water source at the school level. The junior teachers have to stand for filling the tank
		(v) a kitchen where midday meal is cooked in the school;	Cooked in the school premises, no separate facility	Separate kitchen facility with unhygienic surroundings
		(vi) playground;	Not present	Present but lot infested with lot thorny weeds
		(vii) arrangements for securing the school building by boundary wall or fencing	Present and protected the school premises	Present and protected the school premises
2	(5) Teaching learning equipment's	Shall be provided to each class as required	Most of the materials are prepared locally by the students and teachers.	Materials supplied by the department are not provided to the students. Occasionally teachers for demonstration prepare some TLM.
3	(6) Library	There shall be a library in each school providing newspaper, magazines and books on all subjects, including story-books	Present, some 150 books are present most of them are purchased by the youth groups. Regular lending borrowing arrangement is made by the school	Present, 120 books are present but they have not been issued to the students. They are supposed to read and return during the class hours only.
4	(7) Play material, games and sports equipment	Shall be provided to each class as required.	Only football and cricket bat is provided	Both indoor games (carom, chess) and outdoor (cricket, football) equipment's are provided on every Friday for planning.

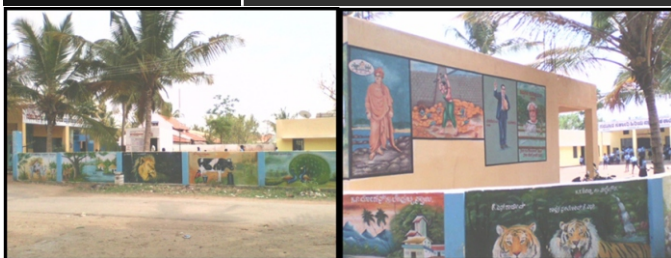


Figure 1 : Compound wall Painting in Mogenahalli School Site

The walls in both the schools (*Kannamangala and Mogenahalli*) are painted with animals, leaders of national importance, trees, and places of historical importance in Karnataka. *Taluk Panchyath* has invested Rs 40000 in *Kannamangala* and Rs 28000 in *Mogenahalli* for this purpose (during 2012-13). The head teacher in *Kannamangala* feels this as a method to use school building as learning aid. Similar initiatives have been carried to use school as building aid during the DPEP time and promoted extensively during *Lok Jumbish* programme in *Rajasthan*. Case studies from *Kannamangala* and *Mogenahalli* about how the school sites have been used and what it entails for the learning of the children and micropolitical climate.

In *Mogenahalli* the HT Mr. *Kempanna* wanted the school walls to be painted with icons such as *Kuvempu*, *Ambedkar*, *Rani Chennamma*, *Vivekananda*. One of the teacher Mr. *Venkatesh* raised his voice saying that, the wall needs *Basavanna* in the first place; that could be followed by other leaders. The issue became a meeting agenda for the SDMC to decide whose pictures to be painted on the walls. Mr. *Venkatesh* mobilised the *Lingayath* community leaders in the village to convince about having *Basavanna's* painting; Mr. *Kempanna* mobilised *Okkaliga* leaders and sought the support of few *Dalit* leaders to paint the pictures of *Kuvempu* and *Ambedkar*.

The matter has been documented in three consecutive SDMC meeting notes in *Mogenahalli*. Finally the resolution was passed to have the paintings of *Kuvempu*, *Ambedkar*, *Vivekananda*, *Chennamma* and *Basavanna*. Each caste leader wanted the icon from their community to be represented on the walls of their school. Even though this whole process never had, any positive influence what so ever on the learning of the children with respect to understanding the contributions of these leaders. However, this process has created sufficient caste conscious feeling among the students community. Available physical space at the school is a bargaining ground for the visible identity of the 'castes'. None of the students (Class 7) from the upper caste background during focus group discussion agreed *Ambedkar* as an 'icon' of national importance. They say he is a leader of '*Dalits*' and SC children in the village worship him as he has given scholarships for them. These type of caste based identification of national leaders, icons and places are most of the time becomes the discussions in school meetings. These discussions are extended integration of identity politics at the village and community level.

The infrastructure in the village more than providing space for the learning opportunities, provide a fertile space for negotiations of the community identities. During the *Valmiki Jayanti* in the village, the ST parents gifted *Valmiki* photo and eight sets of *Madhvalmiki Ramayana* printed by *Geeta Press of Gorakhpura* to the school in *Kannamangala*. Nayaka community leader *Ramanjani* insisted that, the teachers should read the *Ramayana* and then they should make the attempt to teacher the same to their children.

Teacher *Devaraj* has kept these bulky books in the library, he tries to read it, but he feels it is very difficult to understand as the compositions are in Sanskrit and even after the summary readings; Children are not interested in the *Ramayana* stories. The *Ramayana* books have occupied half of the library space without any relevance. Every time during the SDMC meeting *Ramanjani* asks about the progress made in *Ramayana* reading.

In *Kannamangala* village *Mudduveerappa* (aged 56) who proclaims the land being donated by his father for construction of school building has mobilised the villagers to build a *Ganesha* Temple in the school premises. He has also taken Rs 58000/ help from the Synfosis foundation to build this temple. Some amount of contribution has also been provided by Gram Panchayath for providing the water facility. The teachers *Kaladhar* complains- the temple have become an obstacle for the children games; even though all teachers requested to build the temple away from the school so that, children can have space for playing. *Mudduveerappa* insisted for having the temple on his ancestral property. He even got the clearances from BEO and took the matter until Mr. *Kawwageri* the then education minister (during 2011). SDMC was just a mute spectator in the whole matter and agreed whatever orders Mr *Mudduveerappa* provided to them. Now temple has a regular priest who comes daily and performs pooja before the opening of the school. No children are allowed to enter their school premises until the priest and upper caste households perform the pooja.

In the same school after the incorporation of '*Ksheera Bhagya*' scheme (providing 150 ml of milk to the government schoolchildren between the age of 6-14 years), the CRC brought few posters from the state education department to be pasted on the school walls. This move was opposed from the supporters of local MLA *Bhojanna* who belonged to non-congress fraction. This was a common stress factor in all the schools, as most of the people who supported the MLA never wanted the pictures of Chief minister Mr. *Siddaramaiah* on the walls of their school premises.

In *Kannamangala* GP an average of Rs 30855 is spent for the civic amenities purposes which included an average spending of Rs 24227 on educational facilities. *Kannamangala* GHPS received an average of Rs 5691 every year. The school has no record of spending the same but the GP has proper records, bills and spending on the items relating to drainage facility to school, repair of compound wall, repair of toilets, drinking water facility etc., Most of the activities shown on the book of accounts(from 2005 to 2013) relating to the repair and construction activities. School authorities deny any such spending and complain about misutilisation at the Panchayath level itself.

Table 03: Allocation of money from CAC-GP, Source: Book of accounts for standing committees

	Year	On Civic Amenities in Kannamangala GP (Health Educational facilities)	On School education	GHPS Kannamangala	On Civic Amenities in Mogenahalli GP (Health Educational facilities)	On school education	GHPS Mogenahalli
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	24227.77778	5691.1111	23287.7778	17119.7	4833.333

From the above table-04, it is evident that, *Kannamangala* School received an average of 18% of total allocation from the CAC and *Mogenahalli* received an average 20% of its share every year. In both the GPs more than 70% (78% for *Kannamangala* and 73% for *Mogenahalli*) 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 panchyath the Panchayath Development Officers (PDOs) inform about the erratic allocation on money on the issues relating Civic Amenities; most the funds utilised for these purposes comes from the state government through the *Zilla Panchyath* and around 30% of the money will be pooled from the local revenue collection. From the assessment of school head teacher in *Kannamangala* it would have been a sufficient grant for them to maintain the repair and small maintenance activities through the CAC funding; but he complain 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 Panchayath for any accountability in this regard and CAC do not send any intimation about the release of the money.

School buildings in both the villages are in dilapidated condition and do not have functional drinking water and sanitation facility. However, they have water tap, water storage tank, and toilets constructed in the school premises. They are not functional and none of the children uses them. In both the villages, the school building is maintained by Education Department with minimal assistance from Gran and Zilla Panchayath.

As per the 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 *Mogenahalli Panchayath* used to display such information rarely; the *Kannamangala* 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 have not sent any intimation of what is so ever to the School head teacher. On the contrary, in *Mogenahalli* the HT was informed about the repair and construction works undertaken by the panchayat in 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. None 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 *Kannamangala* 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 *Kannamangala* and *Mogenahalli* yielded a 'Matrix of Domination' as shown in Table-2, demonstrating 'Caste System' as an important contextual factor in deciding the educational outcomes.

Table-4 : Participation and types of talks in school decision-making (adopted from Ball, 1987)

	Forms of participation	Response opposition	Strategies of control
Authoritarian	Prevents access to voice Particularly prevent the participation of parents of scheduled caste children in schooling activities.	Stifle Frequent insults in the schools by the upper castes	Insulation, concealment and secrecy
Managerial	Formal committees, meetings and working parties Teacher weekly staff meetings, SDMCs meetings, Gram Sabhas	Channel and delay 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 Setting meeting agendas, writing of meeting minutes, discussions and voting on the subject
Interpersonal	Informal chats and personal consultation and lobbying Biases towards the teachers of same age, gender and caste	Fragment and compromise	Private performance of persuasion Praising each other during CRP, BRP visits
Adversarial	Public meetings and open debate	Confront	Public performances of persuasion

As per the Section 58, Clause (ii), (iii), (v) and Section 58, Subsection (2) of *Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act* of 1993, every *Gram Panchayat* need to ensure universal enrolment of children in primary schools. It is mandated for them to make provision for carrying out within the *Panchayat* area to promote the education and wellbeing of the children. Civic Amenities Committee is constituted once in three years after every election. In *Kannamangala* there was no democratic process of election of CAC members was followed. It was during the visit of the local MLA the members were usually changed through a resolution in the presence of the Panchayath Development Officer. In *Mogenahalli* even though the process of election, nomination was followed, it is ultimately the decision of the *Ooru Gowda*.

Commentary:

"The wastage in educational effort is immense and most educationalists are of opinion that there is no solution to this problem of wastage in educational effort in India, but compulsion. The total wastage of educational effort and its concurrent dissipation of educational funds in the primary classes is about fifty per cent of the total energy put forth."

Panchyath politics also has a distinct orientation toward material benefits, and its elected leaders are the media for channelling the material benefits (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 buckle that fastens the state level and rural local politicians. If one were to treat this development as legitimate, one should also accept as its logical corollary the entry of political parties in the area of local politics (Narain and Pande, 1972).

Local community in *Mogenahalli* and *Kannamangala* 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 Birth Day 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 evils' 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'. 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.

ii. Micro-Politics of Curriculum and Teaching –Learning Materials

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 the 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 mind-sets of the children. Their behaviour inside and outside the schools is affirmed hegemonic thoughts imposed by the texts mediated by the teachers. In total 120 classroom observation shaved emonstrated the patriarchal, brahminical indoctrination in the minds of the child to be obedient to the Brahminical value systems.

The children from *Maadiga* community in *Kannamangala* have no fear for the Graama Devathe "Maatangi" who is next to their house; but they are scared to curses of *Tirupati Baalaji* and are praying to the blessings of *Saraswati* for good marks in class tests. As observed during the class room transactions it is beyond doubt that the curriculum has served as the mediator of ideological dominance and hegemony evident in the sectioning of the knowledge, pedagogic practice and weak and distorted representation of subaltern groups, culture and ideologies. Any attempt to bring the synergy between the local knowledge systems with the state sponsored curriculum would be strongly resisted by the '*brahminical value system*'. Hence, teachers only end up delivering the lessons from the textbooks derived from *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. However, *Teachers in GHPS in Kannamangalatried* 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 *Kaladhar* and *Devaraj* to carry out more such innovations. He started speaking in different teacher forums about these two teachers and started demanding for such creativity in the work of teachers. This was the starting point of problems for these two teachers as many teachers in the neighboring schools criticized this initiative as waste of time and school hours. Both of them never gave up and further built a, colorful magazine *Shaamanti* (2011, 2012, 2013, 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 maths, science etc., The idea was to create the spaces for children to write their own texts, share, read and participate in the self-learning processes. Through a preliminary analysis of the texts in the *Shaamanti-1* (2010), *Shaamanti-2* (2011), *Shaamanti-3* (2012) it is evident that it is a text of liberation, text of expressing the children's world.

"..... the most depressed community in this world is children community. Because we think that, they don't have voice; neither have physical force to protest against oppression done to them. Combined with this we stereotype them as less intelligent beings compared to the adults!; This notion is made to be believed as a societal truth. Whatever children know it is not a form of knowledge; whatever we elders teach them they should learn. If it is able to reproduce the knowledge imparted by the adult community it is intelligent! All information it gathers should have its origin in the text books. The knowledge beyond textbook is not knowledge!, even it might be through child' experiential learning.*Shaamanti* is a textbook by the children, for the children to articulate their experiences, learnings. It is not a substitute for the textbooks supplied by the department. It has multiple purposes; it creates space for children to publish their ideas, integrate the creative expressions of the children with their environment and it is a reflection of the hierarchical nature of knowledge creation and dissemination"

Kaladhar, p14, editorial of 'Saamanti-3

3.0. Concluding Commentary

On the one hand, study demonstrates the existence of multiple innovative pedagogic, democratic practices, which are local, driven by the collaborative school leadership practices. On the other hand study discusses the delink 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 which 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 *Brahminical* values in the minds of the school community.

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