

**RESEARCH PAPER****Micropolitics of Educational Access and Quality: Reflections from the Interactional Patterns in Rural Schooling****Pradeep Ramavath Jayanaik**

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ABSTRACT

This is an attempt to explore the interactional patterns between 'education quality' and 'micropolitics' by capturing the narratives of stakeholders feeling of 'being' and 'doing' a particular role in two selected rural schools of Karnataka. Decline in birth rates, changing socio-economic conditions illustrate some demographic reasons for decline in 'schooling access' and 'education quality'. Micro political processes surrounding availability of school choices, neglect of classroom transactions, fear towards the bureaucratic procedures and neglect of core activities in school environment are significant reasons for degradation of school quality which have significant bearing on the community mobilization and social work practice in these contexts.

Key words: Education Quality, Access, Transition, Micropolitics, Rural Contexts

INTRODUCTION

Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 provided essential legislative framework to schooling for all the children aged between 6 and 14 years of age to access equitable quality of elementary education in rural areas of India (Lewin, K.M. 2011). However, it failed to sustain the government schooling system due to lack of imagination particularly with respect to its catchment that comprised of marginalized social groups. Efforts to universalize elementary education and quality through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) by Government of India (GoI) even after pouring enormous resources largely ignored the quality of education provision and equity concerns thus compelling many poor parents shunning the government-schooling system (Harma 2011). This is not just because of rapid quantitative expansion of the private schooling system but contextual understanding of schooling in rural areas for marginalized sections has remained very poor. Hence, there is significant contradiction between quantitative expansion of public and private schools on one hand and high degree of deterioration of schooling quality.

Even after seventy years of independence, focus made in school education have largely remained only on macro indicators of access ignoring micro level education quality and equity factors. Political leadership and educational establishments at local as well as at national level could be very well accused for not acting on the issues of quality, equity with a sense of emergency (ASER 2010). Linkages between education quality and its political manifestations at institutional, local, regional, national level seems to be a matter of policy interest in order to comprehensively understand the issues of educational delivery to the masses. This would definitely help to design suitable educational interventions and enhance the perspectives of social workers and organizations operating in local educational environments. This could possibly surface fundamental questions about the nature of politics at the individual, institutional and community levels questioning the enslavement of stakeholders involved in process of educational delivery. Hence, the dimension of micro politicking and its connection with the ideological dependence of the state educational apparatus needs a critical examination particularly with respect to operationalization of programmes relating to educational quality.

Given the evolutionary nature of educational programs (referring to DPEP, SSA, etc) there is lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved. Political lobbying, negotiation, are integral part of dynamic programme implementation processes, thus having impact over quality of

education at the local level. Overlapping roles and co-option is very common issues shaping the micropolitical climate and influencing the quality on a long run. These complex dynamics of interaction between micropolitics and quality of school education (refers to both quality outcomes and processes) is rarely studied phenomenon in rural context. RTE 2009 has naively defines quality from a supply side perspective and thus providing opportunity for studying education quality not beyond the bureaucratic interpretations.

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 organizational perspective. Major focus in micropolitical research was on finding out the behaviours 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 than finding out causal relationship between educational variables. Present study uses the elements of micropolitical framework to understand the education quality, hence resulting in ethnographic examination of interactions in family, community, institutional and village levels affecting access and quality of education. Hence the study 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.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study uses the theoretical frameworks 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 though emergent, flexible research design embedded in interactionist, constructivist traditions. The study aimed to collect the data in two villages in two educational clusters of two different educational districts. Educational blocks (taluka) were selected based on purposive sampling method. Schools are the primary units of the study. The schools were selected from two educational blocks (taluka) through purposive sampling methodology. 'Extreme-case sampling' method was applied to select the blocks. Channapatna in Ramanagara district and Sidlaghatta in Chikkaballapur district were chosen based on the Educational Development Index (EDI) for the year 2012-13. One block was chosen which has slightly higher EDI and other with the lower EDI. Thus Channapatna, which has an EDI (for 2012-13) of 67th rank, was chosen as first block for the study and Sidlaghatta with 125th rank was chosen as second block for the study. Further the educational clusters are selected based on the consultations with the selected stakeholders at district and block level. From each block, one educational cluster was selected based on the opinions of the educational functionaries, teacher union representatives, and elected panchayat members at the block level. In each cluster four villages are selected which comes in two different panchayats.

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 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 outcomes and designated as 'better performing school' as compared to rest of the schools in the given educational cluster were selected for the study (Table-1)

Table 1: 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 |

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

a. Declining Quantity and Quality: Case of Kannesara and Mailalli:

There is steady decline in overall enrolment rate in Kannesara government higher primary school (GHPS). The major factor attributed for such sharp decrease is due to decline in overall birth rate. Table-1 shows the decline in enrolment over the years (2004 to 2013). From 2004-05 to 2012-13 there is 50% decline in overall enrolment of the school. Only 41% of children were carried forward from class 7 to class 8 during the year 2010-11. Admission, attendance and transfer certificate registers provided critical information related to entry and exit of the students and reasons for their dropout. Teachers like Kaladhar and Devaraj who have served more than 15 years in Kannesaraschool are very familiar with every household in the village. They provided case by case information/ narration about the reasons for drop out, entry and exit. They helped to find out the students who dropped out in the middle to reconstruct their narratives/stories.

Table 2: Entry and Exit of Students in Kannesara

| Class | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 22 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 12 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 2 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| 3 | 21 | 19 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 16 | 14 | 7 | 5 | 3 |
| 4 | 31 | 22 | 18 | 20 | 19 | 14 | 15 | 12 | 6 | 4 |
| 5 | 27 | 30 | 22 | 17 | 20 | 16 | 13 | 15 | 12 | 5 |
| 6 | 33 | 26 | 30 | 21 | 17 | 18 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 10 |
| 7 | 35 | 32 | 25 | 29 | 22 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| 8 | NA | NA | 15 | 16 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 14 | 14 |
| Total | 188 | 169 | 171 | 157 | 136 | 117 | 102 | 88 | 72 | 55 |

Source: Admission, attendance and TC registers as provided by HM (2013)

Students like Amulya (Caste- Okkaliga), Harisha (Catse- Lingayath), Prashantha (Catse- Vishwakarma Achaari), Prasanna Chandra (Catse-Kumbara) wanted to opt for english medium private school in Chintamani and taken transfer certificate during 2010-11. Honnamma (Catse- Hoolaeya), Umae Salma (Muslim), Kavitha (Caste- Kuruba), Lokesh (Caste- Madiga) have reasons of their 'daily survival' to drop out from the school. Lokesh works with masonry contractor in Kannesara, Honnamma has stayed back in her home, Umae Salma works in her relatives silk reeling unit, parents of Kavitha want her to learn the household works as they are planning for her marriage when she attains 17 or 18 years.

Table 3: Category Wise Enrolment During 2012-13

| | Total | Generl | | SC | | ST | | OBC | | Minoriy | |
|-----------|-------|--------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls | Boys | Girls |
| Mailalli | 92 | 7 | 4 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 7 | 12 | 15 | 7 | 4 |
| Kannesara | 117 | 8 | 5 | 13 | 18 | 16 | 14 | 17 | 13 | 8 | 5 |

The head teacher in Kannesara feels that,

'there is overall looseness as government schools don't have corporeal punishment, increasing source of entertainment, unattractive school curriculum, more than that there is no guarantee that the children will get a decent employment even after completion of their education in Kannada medium government schools might be some of the reasons for disinterest among the parents in government schools.'

But these reasons were not validated by his ownfellow teachers. They feel that, the larger reasons could be for decrease in the interest among parents in government schooling system are;

'increasing aspiration of the parents through change in the socio-economic conditions, parents wants their children to study in private english medium schools, decreasing panchayath and SDMC cooperation and age old teaching methodologies'.

Teacher Kaladhar says;

"we in education sector imagine (Kalpane) too much and decide(Nirdhara) whatever we feel is comfortable; we don't ask either the parents nor the students about their aspirations(Ashabhavane), their ideas, what they expect from our school etc. we have designed this system to be an one-way traffic and now this is the age of change in directions and aspirations. I guess private schools understand the aspirations better than us".

Teacher Devaraj says;

"sir this system (vyavaste) was designed to fail after the entry of market approaches (maarakatteya parikalpane) in education".

Teacher Jaishree says;

"We have to think like what Kendriya Vidyalaya's, CBSE schools are doing and need to enrich our knowledge suiting to this competitive world."

During the year 2009-10 the school was upgraded to have class 8th and they had only 15 students from among 32 who have joined class 8th. Most of them joined the private high schools located in Kaiwara, Chintamani, and Shidlaghatta. This trend continues till the current academic year. There are few entry and exit till class 7th but maximum departure is seen after class 7th. Teachers feel the school has not matured enough to keep the students after class 7th. Head teacher in this school seems to be too much engrossed with the idea of completion of essential rituals within the school site and he does not nurture any new ideas. He discourages participation of teachers and parents in running of the school. As stated by his fellow teachers he is an 'autocratic personality' and will not listen much to his fellow teachers.

Important factors attributed to decline in quality as described by the parents during a focus group discussion in a parents meeting are (on 17-11-2013)-

- a. no importance on learning of the children
- b. inability of the children to do simple mathematics (Baayi Lekka)
- c. inability to read newspaper, letters, magazine
- d. no separate English teachers in school, no smart uniforms,
- e. decrease in number of teachers in the school
- f. no separate teacher for each classes
- g. indiscipline among government school children
- h. no career guidance, no punishment, no detention,
- i. forceful enforcement of Nali-Kali

.....and list goes on. All the teachers, head teacher in the school, cluster resource person (CRP), SDMC members, and panchayath members also subscribe to these opinions expressed by the parents. During the discussion except two families which emphasized on the issues of livelihood all the other parents emphasized more with the school related quality factors. Case studies of few

students, parents with respect to reasons related to dropout, their entry into the middle of the academic year, exit during the middle of the academic year are under progress.

Table 4: Entry and exit of students in Mailalli

| Class | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| 2 | 19 | 20 | 18 | 18 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| 3 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 17 | 18 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| 4 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 11 | 12 | 10 |
| 5 | 22 | 18 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 7 |
| 6 | 20 | 21 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| 7 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 17 | 16 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| 8 | NA | NA | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 |
| Total | 138 | 133 | 137 | 127 | 117 | 92 | 71 | 66 | 64 | 56 |

Source: Admission, attendance and transfer certificate register (2013)

The major factor attributed for decline in number of children attending the MailalliGHPS is fall in overall birth rate in the village among the SC, ST, OBC and Muslim community. In this school also majority of the students coming to the government school are from SC, ST, OBC and minority Muslim communities (refer-Table: 2). Important factors attributed to decline in quality as described by the parents during house hold visits are-

- a. children spend lot of time in watching TV
- b. no home work is provided
- c. they do not bring books back home
- d. insult by the panchaytah members to the children who attend the government school
- e. school wants our children to clean toilets
- f. no importance on learning of the children.

The myth that the parents from the lower social and economic strata are not able to afford and send their children to private fee paying school has been demystified; as many parents in Mailalli now wants send their children to private schools in Channapatna. SDMC in this village is becoming redundant structure and only fight over the construction activities; school is completely disconnected form the realities of the village; it is used as a 'casino' during evenings and no one is actually bothered about its protection. The same children who attend the classes during day time learn to 'play cards' and other gambling games during evening times. Teachers, HT, panchayath members do not agree to what parents are saying. Here also case studies of selected students, parents with respect to reasons related to their entry, exit during the middle of the academic year, reason for the drop out are under progress. There are few rare incidences such as Hema (age-7, caste- Madiwala) who took the transfer certificate from the school as her mother moved to her husband's house in Hunsur during 2008-09.

In terms of facilities (refer table-4) overall impression from the teachers, parents and students is not good. But availability of incentives such as scholarship, midday meal, bicycles, textbooks, uniforms was very much appreciated by the parents and students. Parents, teachers are not happy about what the children are learning in these government schools.

One teacher Nagarathna in Mailalli says,

"if quality of teaching, curriculum, government textbooks is at least up to minimum expected level and standards; why should we send our own children to private schools?, we should have preferred to get our kids also to study in our own schools."

Head Teacher Ramachandra says,

"sir, let my own children at least should not suffer the kind of voicelessness (Mauna) which I am suffering as part of this system; I am very happy to listen to my daughter talking about issues such as experiments through computers, national politics and more than that I am happy that my daughter is progressing well and scoring good in all class tests, she speaks good english and she is just 6th standard now."

Quality has different meaning to different groups; it's 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. But when it comes to issues of quality for their own children it is about the higher order critical thinking, English knowledge, computer awareness etc. The basic question need to be explored further with respect to this aspect is on;

"how can the education system deliver quality education to rural masses; the quality on which it is not at all confident/ sure of and feels that the present education quality is of substandard/ suboptimal levels ?."

Thus schools are 'intrinsically political and must find directions among people with potentially diverse and conflicting interests.' Teachers seems to have interest to perform their duties as prescribed by educational bureaucracy, they have over the time have become people who perform only rituals at school sites. Most of the time teachers do not understand the rationality of some of the programmes and their intentions. Why should they need to think ?, as the prescribed semesters in the school are so heavy and they need to complete the syllabus and need to complete the activities such as teaching, evaluation(continuous comprehensive evaluation) conducting sports, cultural programs, distribution of the incentives(uniforms, text books, scholarships, meals) and writing records with in a short duration of three months. Most of the time it has been observed that they are busy writing one or other record, documents as assigned by the head teacher. Three of the young teachers in Kannesara and Mailalli are busy in preparing for their upcoming civil services exam.

When asked they say,

"This preparation for civil services exam of ours will help the school to enhance its general knowledge."

In a day on an average each class gets hardly thirty minutes of teaching time. Rest of the time children have been told to sit and read on their own, either under a tree or in separate classrooms under the supervision of a monitor or midday meal worker. The duty of the monitor is to sacrifice his readings and make sure that all his/her batch-mates sit quietly looking at the text books.

b. Household Visits and Enrolment Drives (Dhakalaati Andholana):

During the start of the academic year 2012-13 the first ritual of house hold visit was carried out before the opening of the school. It was stated in June month's Thingala Tirulu(monthly standardized planner sent by the SSA), that each teacher, SDMC, panchayath and community members, students, parents to take very active role in door to door campaigning and bring back the drop out children. These house hold visits, Andholana, Jatha were carried out within a time span of two days and it was expected that the parents are convinced to send their children to the government school. Two teachers in Kannesara and three teachers in Mogenhalli participated in these household enrolment drives. None of the SDMC, panchayath members participated in these drives; female teachers took excuse of saying that they will help in preparation of the programme at the school level. Few students shouted "Gunamattada Shikshanakke; Sarkaari Shale"(Government school for the Quality education)..... "Amma Koolige Kalisabaeda; Shaalegae Kalisu"... (Mother don't send me to wage earning send me to the school). These programs were very much stereotypic programmes which hardly attract any parents, children and community members. Most of the parents of the needy children were out of the village for work. During the same time Jai Bharath private school in Chintamani has put a large banner near Kannesara bus stand which said "100% success at low fee" — "We provide instalments to the children fees".

The Jathas and enrolment drive campaigns were restricted to few main streets and streets of upper caste families. But, sensitive teachers like Devaraj and Kaladhar understand the true intentions of such enrolment drives. They planned to go to the Madigara Oni and Holeyara Keri after 6 pm.. 6.30 pm In Hologaeri in Kannesara village

Teacher Devaraj: Dyawalamma where are the children..Mahesha (Mahesh nu) and Naveena (Naveen Nu) (yelli)??

Dyawalamma: Near brick kiln (ittige goodu).....

*Teacher Devaraj: You only send them to eat meal and take uniforms to our school.....you want them also to be like you or what.....what happened to your promise (aane, pramana)?
Dyawalamma (smiled and said)...you did not give scholarship (Kaalarshippa) last time
Teacher Devaraj: How many times should we give you that?; no one can help your fate.....Go to hell! (HaalaagiHogi!)*

Even though most of the children from Holagaeri attend the school but they are not very regular. On an average they will attend the school for 3 days a week. Children like Mahesha are very quick learners as Teacher Devaraj says,

"In class 4th itself Mahesha use to tell multiplication tables (maggi) till 19, but now the horse has become donkey (raayara kudre katte agoytu sir). He cannot read Hindi, English and can't remember the Kannada poems. But he is very talented he sings Kaivaara Taatayya's Nudigalu, performs Kolata; he is good in doing Maarikunita. I feel that given his family circumstances and his inclination towards folk music and dance we guess he will drop the school and continue to work in brick kiln like his father and grandfather."

Teacher Kaladhar informed that the children if they are not coming to school, they are found near Vekkanna's brick kiln as there is pond near the brick-kiln where children go for swimming. Based on this clue, with the help from Satishaa (one of the member from DalitaSangharshaSaene), I had the opportunity to meet four children namely Mahesha, Suma, Naveena, Venkatesh on 13-6-2013 (11.30 am). Except Suma all three kids belonged to Kannesara. Children were putting the wet mud, clay into the brick molds (with the label of K.V-505). I (Pradeep) went near the entrance of the brick kiln and smiled at them.....sat near them... Satishaa said he will come after an hour.

Pradeep: Hello.....Do you all go to the school?

Naveena: Smiles...and says..Yes...

Pradeep: Then what are you doing here??

Venkatesh: We just came to give food to Taatlu (grandfather)

Suma: No sir, we stopped going to school..We don't go there every day..

Pradeep: Which school you study?

Suma: Chikkalli

Pradeep: Then what are you doing in Kannesara?

Suma: Came to Taatlu's house.. Father and mother have gone to KGF, Bangalore, Mysore.. So no one back home. That's (adka) why I came here.

Pradeep; If you people have come to give food to Taatlu..Why you are working with these molds (acchhuu)?

Taatlu (Grandfather of Suma, Venkatesh) enters and asks who are you?

Pradeep: I just came to speak to these kids as I saw them working..

Taatlu: They don't work here they just came as today is holiday (raja)for school.

Pradeep: Who said its holiday?, I am just coming from the school; teachers are worried about these children not coming to school... What is your name (nimmaesru) ?

Taatlu: Mudduraayi

Pradeep: Whose kiln is this?

Mudduraayi: Owner is in Kolara.. Relative of Muniyappa..

Pradeep: Which Muniyappa??

Muddaraayi: Rail Minister

Pradeep: OK

Muddaraayi: What you do?(neevaenumaadkandidira??

Pradeep: I am teacher...

Muddaraayi: Have you come newly to Kannesara School?

Pradeep: No... I have just come to understand about the school...

Two more fellows (fellow-1, fellow-2) who are loading the dried brick also join the discussion.....

Muddaraayi: Are you from Bangalore?(Bengalooru ??)

Pradeep: Yes...

Fellow-1: Are you from any NGO or society (Sanga)??

Pradeep: No... I am here to understand more about the school...

Fellow-2: Please take all these kids to school...these people don't understand anything....

Pradeep: Do you send your children to school?

Fellow-1: Yes I sent my children to school I have three children.. Two girls and one boy.. Elder girl studied till 6th and she just recently got married, son-in-law works in Bangalore factory, son is doing BA in Kolar and younger girl has studied till PUC and in home

Fellow-2: In our street all send the children to school...

Fellow-1: Now it is not like earlier days sir... I also studied till 3rd standard..

Muddaraayi: Yes these people had land and tamarind trees and they were able afford to send the children to school....

Fellow-2: who stopped you? Who stopped not to send the children to school Muddaraayanna?

Muddaraayi gets up and goes near the mud heap.....

Muddaraayi (age-around 56) belongs to scheduled caste community (Holeya-Balagai) in village they are known as Thotigaru (village servants); Thotigaru are responsible for keeping the village clean, from generations they are doing this work. If any cow, bullock, calf dies in the houses of Okkaliga, they use to bring them on the shoulders using a role and stick. They use to keep them near their houses or in Holagaeri. If the cow has died with some good disease they use to eat it. One Hanumappa use to come and take the dead cows for 300-400 Rs and he use to make drums (Halage) out of it. Muddaraayi had three sons and one daughter; one son died of habitual drinking, younger son Kumara works as cleaner in Kolar bus. Daughter Ningakka is married to Raachlu who works as village sweeper. Dyavamma is wife of Kumara. Naveena and Mahesha are their children.

Pradeep: Naveena do you like school?

Naveena: Yes,, sir.

Pradeep: Mahesha what about you??

Mahesha: Me too sir...

Pradeep: Then why don't you go to school?, do teacher beat you ??

Mahesha: No sir...teachers are good.. But I feel sleeping when teacher is teaching...no interest (dyaanairalla) sir

Pradeep: If you don't study you will also become like your Grandfather (Ajja)

Naveena: Sir, did you see SangolliRayanna, Madakari movie....

Pradeep: No..

Mahesha: Sir..You have to see them.. Super movie (Sakkath Movie) sir..

Pradeep: Why?

Suma: Sir, these two don't like school... I like going to school. Sir, are they giving cycle for class V this year??

Pradeep: I don't know

Suma: Sir, please call the Kannesara teacher and find out...

Pradeep: Why Kannesara teacher?? Why not Chikkalli Head Teacher?

Suma: No Sir (Baeda Sir)

Pradeep: What did you learn in English last year??

Mahesha: ABCD.....

Naveena....smiles and shouts Zaddu Naka Naka... ABCD...

All laugh and run from the brick kiln entrance to Mud heap

There is lot of mystery about the reasons for children dropping out from the school. After discussing with the family members they feel they don't have problem sending the children to school and they don't want their children to work for them. But they are also not very strict of forcing their children to go to school. Teachers like Devaraj feel that, family is disinterested and children are not engaging with the current type of syllabus and curriculum (Patya). He feels the curriculum tries to exclude the experiences and culture of these children and undermines their strengths. For example,

“every day at the start of the school we (teachers) force them to sing anthems which they do not understand; we never tried to tell the meaning of these anthems. Even we do not understand the real meanings of these anthems.”

He goes on,

“Kannada language used in text books are so much urban centric texts, we feel it is difficult to transact the lessons which these kids can understand; these children are good in quick maths (Bai lekka) for example- they know addition, division through Mutton Paalu Lekkachara(division of meat mathematics),Duddina Lekkachara(money maths),Saerina Lekkachara(measure for grain). We don't help these to integrate with their learning. English is toughest one Sir...Sir honestly no one in our school including all teachers are confident about teaching in English as we ourselves are not equipped to teach English language....We tried some experiments like Saamanti and other innovations(Hosa Prayoga) to integrate children experiences into school curriculum but CRC and present HT were very harsh on us.”

Narrative like this helps one to question to authority of teacher, politics of curriculum and integration of native knowledge (children knowledge and experiences) into the school curriculum. But this is not the case of children from Upper caste/ class background in these villages they have parents who understand what their children are learning, most of the parents from upper caste households (Okkaliga) have studied at least till class 5th or 7th and they read newspapers, discuss the political issues in their households. They have respected as Gaudre (Master) where ever they go. In school also these children make very smooth sailing as these children come very clean (physically), with clean clothes, shoes and chappals. HT in Mailalli village belong to Okkaliga community and encourages Okkaliga children to study for competitive exams. He took seven Okkaliga boys to Adichunchanagiri Makkala Utsava during a weekend in July along with other Okkaliga students from Channapatna. Teacher in Mailalli school Channappa(who belongs to Madiwala) community says,

“ Sir... this HT is great casteist sir; he only encourages people from his community”.

These kind of caste based preferences, biases have divided the school into many halves. One can divide the school (teachers, students, community) in as many number of ways as they want- caste, class, gender, equal qualification. These schools give high regard to teachers, parents, children (as observed through repeated observations for one academic year) from upper caste background very high status and they fear not to question anything from these groups. Mailalli HT invited all Okkaliga Sangha members for the celebration of Kempegowda Jayanti even though it was not identified as an official celebration. One scheduled caste SDMC member questioned about this. HT said,

“we celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti and it is holiday for entire nation. Ambedkar is not known to any of our villagers but still we celebrated his Jayanti....., you never questioned during that time and now it is state master Kempegowda's(Naada Prabhu Kempegowda) birthday celebration you are questioning. Please don't bring your dirty politics (holasu raajakeeya) into the school; students should learn to respect all leaders, kings and Maharajas.”

SDMC members enter the school premises whenever the HT informs them about the arrival of some funds or in case of any programmes which they are expected to preside over. Gram Panchayat members will come when there is some large gathering of the parents during some function; usually they come for inauguration and appreciate the work performed by the head teacher during that year. Most of the panchayath members send their children to private schools, in both Mailalli and Kannesara only. Bhairamma(who is a scheduled caste panchayat member) sends

her children to the government school. As she doesn't have any choices left for her or don't understand what the choice entails to her.

Most of the parents who send their children to these government schools are neither happy nor understand what is happening to their children. But they say they don't have any good option left except sending the children to government school. But, most of them now started thinking of sending the children to nearby private schools as these private schools have started offering the concession in fees, taking fees in long instalments; even they are ready to arrange loan facilities to the parents through local institutional money lending sources. In Kaiwara they have Chinnaswamy Gold Finance Company Limited which provides the loan at lower interest rates to the children who attend the convent schools through an agreement between the school and parents that money is repaid as per the norms. School authorities ex: Jai Bharath School in Kaiwara acts as a party to collect and repay money in time. It has been observed that both the finance company and school belongs to same management. All the panchayath members except Bhairamma send their children to private schools in Kaiwara, Thummanahalli and Chintamani.

Everyday 2 mini buses come to the village to pick the children and take them to nearby private schools in Kaiwara, Thummanahalli and Chintamani.

CONCLUSION

Through the above field experiences we have seen that micro-political frameworks helps one to see the overt (intrinsic) and covert (extrinsic) processes through individuals (parent, teacher, head master, student, bureaucrat) and groups(teacher unions, panchayat members, departmental officials, caste groups) in the schools immediate environment acquire and exercise power to promote and protect their interests. Field insights in two rural school settings (Kannesara and Mailalli) did not show much positive influence of such overt and covert political activities on quality processes and outcomes.

The 'official' and 'unofficial' transactions only help to strengthen the bureaucracy, hegemonic brahminical social order through school sites in the name of imparting 'equitable quality education'. For the sake of negotiation of resources (monetary and human) based on standard departmental norms- ignorant parents, voiceless teachers, local educational administration, top-down policy intentions interfere and retard the future prospects of rural children. These children are used as 'laboratory animals' to validate the assumptions set at the higher educational bureaucracy. The school systems in both these settings (Kannesara and Mailalli) show a constant decline in student enrolment and quality of schooling.

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