

Methodological Hybridization to Study Micro Politics and Education Quality in Rural Contexts

Pradeep Ramavath J

PhD Scholar, Development Studies, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, (Karnataka) India

Abstract

Different patterns of relationship between intersecting systems of ‘politics’ and ‘education’ is useful in understanding the quality of schooling in local contingencies. Given the evolutionary nature of state sponsored programmes, interaction between power structures for want of public resources create ‘political disequilibrium’ where lobbying by actors and legitimizing of decisions by institutions become detrimental factors to influence processes related to education quality and its outcome. Only technical means of understanding problems related to education quality by adopting ‘empirical approaches’ have the tendency to invariably quantify the evidences. In this process it silences the voice of the ‘stakeholders’ and thus examining such complex phenomenon in very shallow depths. This paper is an attempt to challenge the well-established paradigms of educational research practice in India; it proposes alternatives through the process of ‘methodological hybridization’. Understanding of education quality using micro political frameworks is the core of the paper, complex interplay and dynamics of interaction between micro politics and quality have been discussed using two methodological paradigms of ‘empiricism’ and ‘constructivism’.

Key Words : Micro politics, Education Quality, Methodological Hybridization, Empiricism, Constructivism

“As is the state, so is the school” - James S Coleman (1965)

Introduction

School in India is a democratic institution which has been visualized based on the constitutional aspirations of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternityⁱ. These ideals embedded in our constitution propel our state to ensure right to ‘equitable quality education’ⁱⁱ for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years irrespective of their religion, caste, class, gender or any other hierarchical social identity. Perhaps it is one of the critical and urgent responsibilities to be accomplished in order to realize our demographic dividends (Altbach & Jayaram,

2010). National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, explicitly gave impetus on substantial improvement on quality of education in order to reaffirm this constitutional commitment (Govinda & Vargese 1993).

Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 provides the 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 2011). But, hierarchical values and attitudes have deeply entrenched in Indian village communities; it has not disappeared completely even after

sixty years of independence (p199, Beteille, 2007). Hence, it is very challenging to understand the capability of ‘formal rural government schools’ as social democratic institutions establishing dialogue among ‘unequal partners’ⁱⁱⁱ in order to bring qualitative improvement in educational services through a ‘package deal’^{iv} (p 167, Naik. J.P, 1979).

Efforts to universalize elementary education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) by Government of India (GoI) even after pouring enormous resources largely ignored the quality of education provision, compelling many parents shunning the government schooling sector (Harma 2011). Even after rapid quantitative expansion of the schooling system, the understanding of the quality parameters have remained poor, thus making us to see a contradiction between quantitative expansion and deterioration of quality. Thus even after the emphasis made in NPE 1986 on quality aspects the focus has largely remained only on access and not success (Govinda & Vargese, 1993). 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).

This paper makes an attempt to broadly explore different dimensions of quality in elementary education and its relation to the politics at the local level. ‘Politics at the local level’ is academically rephrased as ‘micropolitics’ in order align the conceptual notions around local politics with more rigorous empirical discourses to establish link with the quality of education. Scope of this paper is to understand the application of

methodologies to study interaction between ‘quality’^v and ‘micropolitics’^{vi}. Thus this is a rationale paper to blend methods from the paradigms of ‘empiricism’ and ‘constructivism’ in order to uncover the hidden dimensions of interactional patterns between quality and micropolitics in two different socio-political contexts. Before proceeding into establishing an interactional pattern between ‘quality’ and ‘micropolitics’ it is essential to understand the notion of ‘quality’ and ‘micropolitics’ ; a nuanced understanding of both the concepts. Then application of ‘empiricism’ and ‘constructivism’ to study these two entwined concepts, their interactional patterns will be useful in order to establish rationality for methodological hybridization.

1. Understanding education quality and micropolitics: issues, concerns and methodologies

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, school management by local community, socio-economic and cultural factors and for others it is only learners’ cognitive achievement in the schooling system. Dakar framework for action (2000) declared that, access to quality education was a fundamental right of every child. It affirmed that, quality was ‘at the heart of education’- a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Thus expanding the definition of quality as “desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and

systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation).” This established an agenda of good quality education; but it did not ascribe any relative weightage to the various dimensions identified (page 29, EFA- GMR 2005). Hence it was realized that, comprehensive definition of education quality, its ingredients and enabling dimensions has to emerge from a nuanced interdisciplinary perspective.

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. Dependent variables that were taken as proxies for school quantity and quality in most studies were: test scores, repetition and dropout rates, and completion rates, enrolment ratios at the primary and sometimes at the secondary level. The studies aim to institute the extent to which increases in school resources- habitually measured as people teacher ratios, expenditure per pupil, proportion of gross domestic product or average teacher salaries etc., augment educational outcomes.

Micro studies in education borrowed modern economic approaches to investigate 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.

But 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, in parallel with the economic tradition a different empirical approach to study schools and classrooms began to emerge. Education researchers became increasingly concerned that standard production function approaches ignored important aspects of the processes of learning and teaching in schools. New emerging approaches tended to treat what happened in schools-the quality and nature of teacher pupil interactions, the ways resource inputs were used, time spent in class, amount of homework, ways of assessing pupil progress, and teacher expectations, experience and in-service trainings etc., were seen to affect the student outcomes apart from the resource inputs to schooling. This paradigm was termed as ‘school effectiveness approach’ but it also remained quantitative in orientation and mainly focused on school as unit of analysis. But, schools are social institutions in which day-to-day educational processes interact with the shaping of educational outcomes which are largely qualitative hence it is difficult to capture these volatile experiences through empirical means.

Interaction between stakeholders in education such as students, teachers, parents, community members, panchayats, line department functionaries, and community based organizations becomes determining factor to understand the quality outcomes and the processes surrounding them. Such a

situation of evolutionary interaction of various power structures for want of public resources create 'political disequilibrium' where lobbying by actors and legitimizing of decisions by institutions becomes critical aspects to influence processes related to education quality outcomes. Hence, only technical means of addressing the challenges of education quality will not work but the politics of schooling process, as well as details about its nuances have become increasingly important in contemporary studies of education quality (p 78, EFA-GMR 2005). Thus, denying of interference of politics in educational decision making deliberately ignores and suppress the realities of educational change processes at micro level impacting quality and makes it very complex to understand the processes which contributes for enhancing or degrading quality outcomes in education. It has been a well established knowledge that, from a school management committee at village level to advisory bodies' education is 'Politics'. 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 analyzing 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.

Further, interaction between education and other social institutions is characterized by 'give and take' relationships. Both material and financial resources, day to day dependency of education for physical resources makes it a subordinate institution. The fundamental imbalance between education and its suppliers makes education highly vulnerable and responds to the demands imposed by the institution that supports it. Thus educational structure and educational processes have impact on quality inputs for education. There is a significant association exists between school quality inputs in villages with different structural characteristics (Anita B.K, 1993). These signals for the influence of micropolitics on school outcomes in rural areas.

Naik (1979) criticized the elusive triangle of equality, quality and quantity and demonstrated the effects of power structure on the allocation of resources to education, examination of quantity aspect revealed the dual nature of the system as presence of high standards in small groups of institutions and less favorable situations in the majority in terms of fewer resource allocation by the central authorities. This makes us to ponder on the notion about local ownership of schools, financing, decision making and the process of ready acceptance of centrally initiated quality reform at local level that has not reached the desired level of maturity. Micropolitics is thought to be one important lens which might explain the possible reasons for the deterioration or improvement in education quality at village, district and sub-district levels.

Lack of research studies related to policy implementation at micro level makes it difficult to identify implications of quality improvement. Studies on micropolitics appear to provide shelter to understand the interactions, negotiations and bargaining between stakeholders at local level. Micro political research has emerged as one of the new thrusts in understanding the complexities of local level political impact on education quality. Hence, reforms initiated to improve quality from state level involve both conflictive-coercive (power over) and cooperative-consensual (power with) political processes at the local level.

Micro political behaviors across rural schools where common set of acts, policy guidelines, frameworks decided by central authorities will help us to understand the effectiveness and interaction of quality with

local politics . Recent emphasis on importance of decentralization in educational governance and in turn its impact on bringing quality could become important dimension to be explored in the micropolitical terrain. As transfer of power to local level educational committees provide, the opportunity, but not guarantee, for the quality of school decision making and action to benefit (Sharpe, 1996). Set of reforms as envisaged in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) such as improvement in curriculum, teachers, management, school environment, supervision and learners' assessment etc are facing a severe challenge of translating the big visions into little details, state governments are noticed to be unconcerned about the intricacies of the programme, no one is interested to enforce the standards as they exist. SSA has only enabled the pumping of more money down a very leaky pipe (Nilekani, 2008).

Micropolitics can be situated across different dimensions in the canvas of SSA for example- in management and community support the role of PRIs and SDMCs and their micropolitical interactions will have a detrimental effect on basic infrastructure and other facilities at the school level. Similarly the micropolitical association between academic support structures and teachers will have a significant bearing over the classroom practices and learning. The lowering of quality was attributed to inefficiency in decision making process by the different hierarchies in the local level (Ushadevi, 1989).

Teacher accountability is a greatest challenge to quality issues at the local level;

teacher absenteeism is a serious issue impacting the quality outcomes. Most of the rural schools severely suffers from long teacher absenteeism from schools, these teacher absenteeism are due to association of teachers with local political forces and alignment with local political patronage (Beteille, 2009). To bring accountability among the teachers and administrators, incapable local governments were assigned the task of bringing the accountability failed at every level of the government. The lack of awareness of the elected members of their power and political clout of teachers' union does not ensure the accountability in the system. Thus, teachers too have many biases and think that decentralization and assigning more responsibilities to PRIs as an encroachment over their professional domain and supremacy by layman and local politicians. It is clearly evident from the study of teacher union's demand forwarded to government (Chakrabarti, & Ramavath, 2011). The dimension of teacher unionization and their politics at block and district level are empirically proved to impact the quality of education. Aggregate learning outcomes and achievement of students which forms the basis to determine the efficiency of educational governance system to deliver quality is negatively correlated with the teacher participation in union activities in Uttarpradesh (Kingdon & Muzammil, 2010).

Interaction of teachers, department officials, and politicians during election time demonstrated by 'incentives' and 'disincentives' they pass on to each other (Beteille, 2009). Teachers have shown the significant influence on vote bank politics

and decide the political fate (Kingdon and Muzammil, 2003). Private tuitions by local government school teachers are very detrimental in deciding the quality of education at the local level. In rural areas there are lot of evidences for growing number of tuition and coaching classes. Only elite and economically affluent classes are able to afford this additional cost of education depriving the quality to the poor and marginalized groups.

Detailed survey by Narain, Pande & Sharma (1976) was conducted to explore the dimension of how far the effort to maintain a depoliticized zone of education is empirically vindicated in the light of experience of management of primary schools under Panchayathi raj institutions. The exploration focused on the rural local politics as factor in the management of primary schools. It is being increasingly realized that, association of local leaders with the management of primary schools was felt to be desirable for recognizing the local conditions and aspirations and for on the spot supervision and control. It is also being recognized that if such association tends to involve the teachers in local politics, it may do more harm than good. Thus the possibility of a depoliticized zone seems to require association of local political leaders with the management of primary schools on the one hand and protection of the schools against appropriation by local politicians on the other.

In Karnataka even after 73rd constitutional amendment full and effective decentralization of power had not yet been delegated to the Panchayati Raj Bodies with

respect to education and that, difference between elected representatives and government officials over administrative bodies existed. Half of the Panchayati Raj members were illiterate and male domination was prevalent in the management of education. (Seetharamu, 1995). Lack of adequate understanding of the roles and responsibilities by the Village Education Committees (VEC) members, their low levels of engagement in VEC functions coupled with conflicting interests in the local politics made VECs less effective in improving school governance (Ushadevi, 2002). Study of aftereffects of School Development and Monitoring Committees formation, its functioning and governance processes became very important to understand the micro political dimensions of interaction between the stakeholders involved in school governance and local level democratic institutions such as Gram Panchayath's impact on determining the quality of delivery. Absence of local participation has lead to phenomenon of 'elite capture', unjust distributional outcomes and failed to achieve the expected developmental of goals in an efficient manner (Kumar V.A. 2006; Ramavath PJ. 2012).

Non involvement of lower tiers of panchayath in planning process and irrational means of 10% increase in funding allocation at the Zilla Panchayath were commonly noticed for which no rationality was attached (Anitha K, 1997). There is a wide gap between the role perceived and role performed by the village education committee members (Betageri, 2003). Interestingly Ganapathi (2007), in his study

entitled "Role and Functioning of School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) in School Development in Uttara Kannada District of Karnataka", found that functioning of SDMC has resulted in increase in enrolment of students and lessened the teacher absenteeism. Further has says, "Political interference is very less in the present SDMC than the previous because old SDMC chairman was directly nominated by the local MLA" , but these findings do not support the evidences gathered in IRMA (2009) studies about politicization of the SDMC and inefficiencies brought after the formation of SDMCs in Karnataka .

These are some of the demonstrated cases where micropolitical forces have a negative impact on the education quality. Though there might not be a causal relationship between quality and micropolitics, they seem to be intertwined. There might be instances of positive association between good micropolitics, neutral micropolitics with education quality. The evidences have to be explored in the local context using micro-social approach. The micro-social approach to explore the linkage between 'micropolitics' and 'education quality' will be informed by disciplines like community psychology, social psychology and using ethnographic techniques.

In India the educational structure at the village, taluka, district and state level are most fundamental parts of political system. Interaction of stakeholders at the local level such as parents, teachers, members of school education committees, educational functionaries (such as CRC,BRC,BEO,DDPI etc) , panchayath

representatives at different levels (GP, TP, ZP), elected representatives (MLA,MLC,MP), political leaders, CBOs, teacher unions and non –parent community members produce varied pattern of ‘micropolitical situations ’ which are speculated to impact the quality of education. Interaction of interest groups at micro level particularly from village level till ‘block level’ is an area of curiosity.

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 (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 impacting 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. Present, RTE 2009 has naively defined quality^{vii} from a supply side perspective and thus providing opportunity for studying education quality beyond the bureaucratic interpretations. Present study was intended to probe and investigate 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 block level. Thus study was carried out to understand the,

- a. Micropolitical activities and behaviors existing at different levels (school, village, cluster, block) of rural education system.
- b. Manifestation of micropolitics in different educational contexts and its impact on educational outcomes
- c. Perception of quality by different stakeholders in education system
- d. Different interactional patterns of micropolitics and education quality in different socio-cultural rural contexts

2. Sample, data and respondents

Habitations in Indian situations are used for educational planning purposes; hence it was appropriate to select the habitations at the village level as samples for examination. These habitations were selected from two educational blocks (taluka) through purposive sampling methodology. Extreme-case sampling^{viii} method was adopted to select the blocks .A list of rural districts in Karnataka containing top 5 and bottom 5 districts was prepared based on Education.

Development Index (EDI)^{ix} for the selection of districts and blocks. Further the educational clusters were selected based on the consultations with educational functionaries and selected stakeholders at district and block level.

Following illustration could be employed to select the blocks and districts:

| Table 1: EDI rankings of districts and blocks | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Top five EDI districts | | Top five EDI blocks from Da | |
| EDI Rankings | Districts | EDI Rankings | Blocks |
| 1 | <i>Da</i> | 1 | <i>Ba</i> |
| 2 | <i>Db</i> | 2 | <i>Bb</i> |
| 3 | <i>Dc</i> | 3 | <i>Bc</i> |
| 4 | <i>Dd</i> | 4 | <i>Bd</i> |
| 5 | <i>De</i> | 5 | <i>Be</i> |
| Bottom five EDI districts | | Bottom five EDI blocks from Dz | |
| EDI Rankings | Districts | EDI Rankings | Blocks |
| 26 | <i>Dv</i> | 198 | <i>Bv</i> |
| 27 | <i>Dw</i> | 199 | <i>Bw</i> |
| 28 | <i>Dx</i> | 200 | <i>Bx</i> |
| 29 | <i>Dy</i> | 201 | <i>By</i> |
| 30 | <i>Dz</i> | 202 | <i>Bz</i> |

From the above table district Da from top EDI ranking and district Dz from bottom EDI were selected. After this block Ba from district Da was selected and block Bz from district dz was selected. 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 five habitations were selected which are spread across two gram panchayats. These habitations were selected based on the diverse representation showing a difference in caste composition, amenities, and basic facilities etc., in the habitations. In total there were ten habitations selected across four gram panchayaths from two educational clusters. At the block level the opinions of the Block Education Officer (BEO), Block Resource Person (BRP) became very important to select the clusters. There were lots of biases in this

process, but triangulation of opinions from BEO, executive officer of Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI), BRP, Taluka Panchayat (TP) members and standing committee members helped in arriving at decisions about selection of clusters and panchayats.

In the current proposal the respondents for the study included students, teachers, parents, teacher unions at block level, community members, education functionaries (at all levels and all hierarchies at the block level), SDMC members, community based organizations (CBOs), local NGOs, civil society organizations, Panchayath representatives at village, taluk level, local politicians influencing educational processes, private school management representatives etc., In-depth Interviews based on open ended questions covering the aspects of quality, micropolitics and their interaction were carried out . Focus group discussions at different levels at TP,

Gram Panchayat (GP), Schools, community was carried out and empirical data and qualitative information were triangulated with the help of field observation notes, audio and video recordings of interactions of formal meetings and informal group discussions, observation sheets on selected behaviors.

The primary data collection was done directly from the stakeholders, communities and the schools. Interaction with students, teachers, teacher unions, parents, community members, education functionaries (at all levels and all hierarchies), SDMC members, Panchayath representatives at village, taluk and local politicians influencing educational processes and impacting quality at the micro level.

Secondary sources of the data on quality included school report cards generated by National University of Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA) for last five years. Records like SDMC guidelines, circulars, schools registers & records, SDMC records, relevant circulars and frameworks on UEE, SSA, RTE-2009 issued by the state government from time to time with an intention of quality improvement. Government documents like all SSA annual reports, annual work plan and budget of SSA for 2010-11, educational plans at village, cluster, and taluka were used. Minutes of TP, GP meetings and Jamabhandi minutes, resolutions at Gramsabha, and Makkala Gram Sabhas(children Gram Sabha), News paper articles which were of interest to proposed topic were used. Content analysis of bye laws of SDMCs, SDMC meeting minutes, teacher association's bye laws etc. were

carried out. This secondary set of data helped to analyze the situation of the selected blocks before going to the field.

1. Imagining hybridization process

Quality and micropolitics in this study were defined in the initial stages as separate concepts. This was achieved with the help of review of literature on the issues and challenges of educational quality and micropolitics in international and national contexts. In the second stage of the research comprehensive, nuanced definition of 'micro politics' and 'quality' was arrived using social constructivist approaches. thus,^x

Education Quality(Q) was defined with respect to " school outcomes and processes considering certain macro indicators such as number of school working days, number of instructional days, enrolment, attendance, retention, completion , transition and progression ratios . 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."

and,

Micropolitics was 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”.

In the final stage micropolitical interactions between key actors (such as teachers, students, parents, community members, panchayat members, cluster resource person, village leaders, educational administrators, teacher union representatives), and organizations (such as schools, panchayats, school management committees, cluster resource centers, block resource centers, block education office, district education office, teacher unions, parent councils etc.,) role in influencing education quality was analyzed through interactionist methodologies^{xi}. Finally, a detailed force field analysis^{xii} of the driving forces (positive forces) and restraining forces (negative forces) relating education quality was arrived using key micropolitical factors. The idea is to capture the hidden dynamics, implicit micropolitical processes in rural areas of Karnataka which have a significant bearing on education quality. From the design point of view present proposal used emergent design (Cavallo, 2000) in order to construct the knowledge from a close vantage point. The basic idea is to understand the existence of micropolitics in school educational systems in rural areas and explore how it interacts with educational quality from an interactionist perspective. Hence, ethnographic methodologies which have their roots in local socio-cultural frameworks were used to understand diminutive details of micropolitics and education quality in an organic manner.

Micropolitical relationships may exist in the form of positive or negative forces, hence drafting a crystal-clear hypothesis would masquerade the vital phenomenon which are useful for a nuanced understanding. But in many cases as speculated, micropolitics and education quality never had a direct interaction and they did not brunt each other directly. They impacted each other through an interaction mediated by critical actions and actors at a given point of time. These interactions did not exist in linear fashion, nor they were perceptible in the ceremonial actions of the actors, but it was imperative and unseen brighter side of school governance process. Hence, this exploration was not intended to find a causal relationship between micropolitics and education quality but to document the processes in order to understand the pattern of interactions between them. As stated earlier also intention is not to prove or disprove any hypothesis. Researcher in the present research did not go with any programmed assumption whether micropolitics is good or bad, hence present research followed ‘explorative’ and ‘emergent design’ in its blueprint as developed by Cavallo(2000).

Emergent design is what managed the overall method, due to the prominence on impending the wisdom by building on the available knowledge of the actors through their animated assembly and reconstruction of the processes of their own choice; this process by definition had strong emergent tendencies. However, design also emphasized on the other actors in the school system who have interacted with the students, teachers, parents or any other

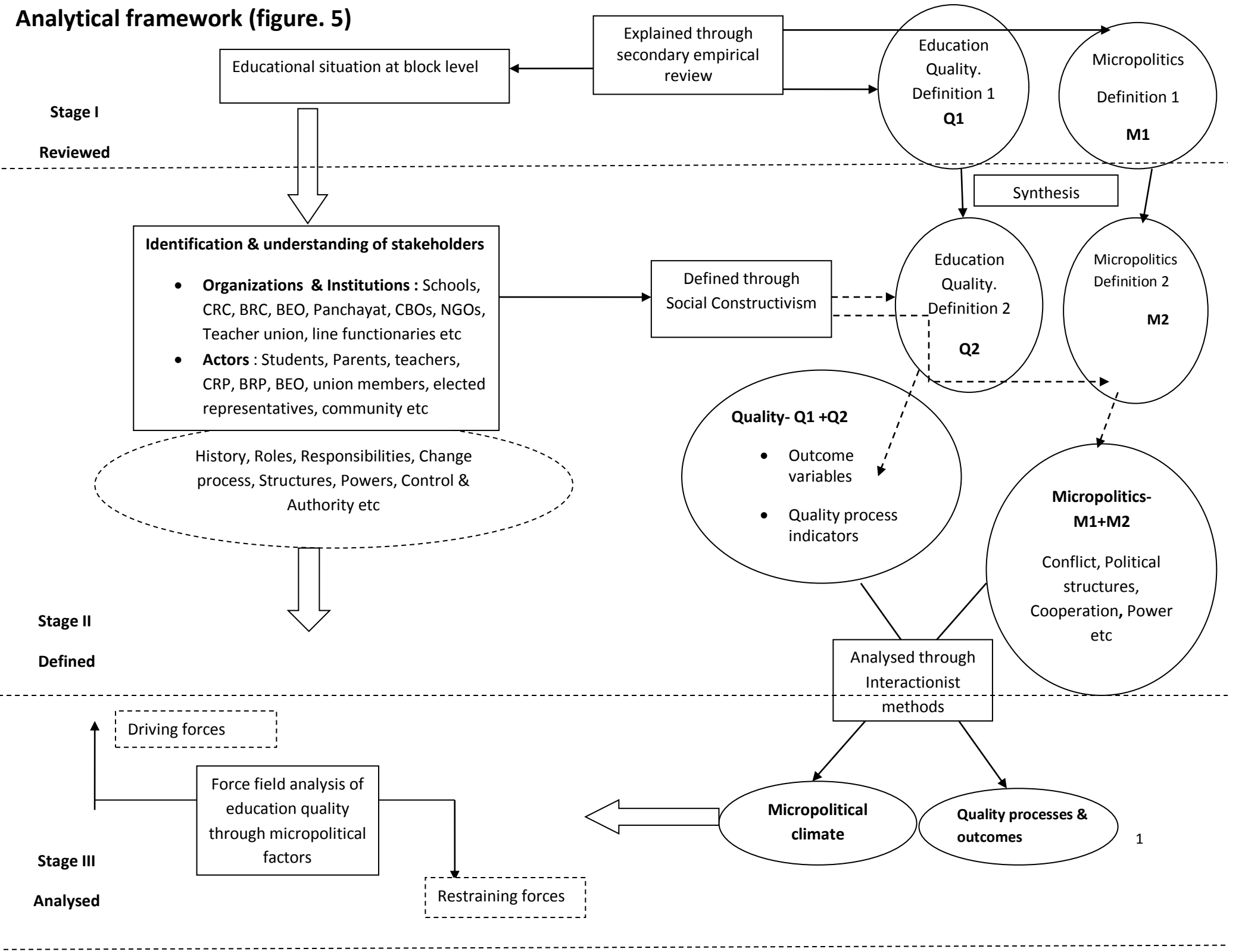
community members. This integrated process played dynamic role in assisting to assist and guide the researcher to construct his understanding of the educational processes through ‘micropolitical’ lenses along with the actors and institutions under examination.

The thought of adopting emergent design was to confine the micropolitical processes in school environment in relation to its sub systems with a constructivist mindset. Focus of the research was on the specificity that also reflected in ideological stance of the methodology. Hence present research drew the concept of emergent design, which asserts that ‘specificity can’t be deduced from a far’. Emergent design stresses an inductive approach to research that requires immersion prior to hypothesis. Triangulation of processes and analysis of evidences in the educational setups starting from school to block administration became important to arrive at conclusion about the processes and establish the relationships which demonstrated the interaction between micropolitics and education quality. Series of consultations, focus group discussions, interviews, observations through regular field visits and interactions with stakeholders made present research to get immersed with field realities. Micropolitical-interactions between the stakeholders impacting school quality was studied in two educational clusters of Karnataka employing social constructivist methodologies. Ethnographic evidences gathered from different institutions such as schools, panchayaths, BEO office, CBOs etc were triangulated to arrive at conclusion.

The information was collected through formal and informal interactions with the stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, community members, education functionaries, SMC members, Panchayat representatives, at village, taluk and district level and local politicians. Most of the discussions were unstructured interview, attending review meetings, Gram Sabhas etc. Hence, it became very important for the researcher to be very cautious and wear the lens of power, authority, autonomy and its manifestation on controlling educational decisions impacting quality. After careful and comprehensive examination of the body of literature on micropolitics, and educational quality this study arrived at the definitional and conceptual understanding of micropolitics and education quality with the help of secondary review. These definitions of micropolitics (M1) and Quality (Q1) were used to construct the research tools (refer figure- 1). Hence the definitions were tentative and changed after the field investigations.

Synthesis of definitions of micropolitics (M) and Quality (Q) were arrived after hybridizing the ‘empirical’ and ‘constructivist’ methods. Further these two concepts were examined to understand the interactional patterns through the ‘interactionist’ methodologies such as focus group discussions, case study analysis, observations, and open ended interviews. Finally a detailed analysis of positive forces and negative forces of micropolitics impacting the quality outcomes and quality processes were analysed using force field analysis technique (refer figure 1).

Analytical framework (figure. 5)



1. Conclusion

The basic methodological assumption on which this study was based on the fact that the problems involved in the operation of educational institutions may be better understood when these institutions are analyzed within their local context. For this reason micro-social approach was proposed through a constructivist lens. A careful analysis of the local contexts and political interactions at the school, village, habitation, cluster and block level in which schools operated became important information sources.

The micropolitical interactions among selected key stakeholders in specific socio-economic and cultural conditions had detrimental effect on the education quality. This was analysed using

ethnographic principles where nuanced understanding on the interaction between 'micropolitics' and 'quality' was established using interactionist methodologies. But substantial amount of 'empirical data sets' which were largely quantitative in their nature were used to complement and contradict the relation between 'micropolitics' and 'quality'. The scope of this paper did not go beyond discussion around methodological hybridization process. The results, interpretation and reflection relating to interplay between the 'empirical data sets' and 'constructivist information' relating to 'micropolitics' and 'quality' is the future scope of this working paper.

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ⁱ adopted from preamble to the constitution of India.

ⁱⁱ It is defined with respect to school outcomes and processes considering certain macro indicators such as number of school working days, number of instructional days, enrolment, attendance, retention, completion , transition and progression ratios . 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 will assume centrality.

ⁱⁱⁱ students, parents, teachers, educational functionaries, panchayath representatives and community members etc.,

^{iv} The programmes of qualitative improvement in elementary education form a package deal in the sense that they are mutually supporting. The best results are therefore, obtained if they are

implemented together. These include (1) improvement of curricula; (2) improvement of text books and other teaching and learning materials ; (3) adoption of dynamic methods of teaching; (4) examination reform; (5) improvement in general education and training of teachers; (6) improvement in supervision; (7) encouragement to initiative and experimentation on the part of schools and teachers; and (8) involvement of students, teachers, members of the community in programmes of qualitative improvement of elementary education through a system of institutional planning and school complexes (adopted from p 90, Naik. J.P(1975). Elementary education in India: A promise to keep. New Delhi. Allied publishers).

^v Education Quality in this paper is defined with respect to school outcomes and processes considering certain macro indicators such as number of school working days, number of instructional days, enrolment, attendance, retention, completion , transition and progression ratios . 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 will assume centrality.

^{vi} Micropolitics(M1) 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”.

^{vii} 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.

^{viii} identifying the extremes or poles of some characteristic and then selecting cases representing these extremes for examination

^{ix} 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.

^x **Social constructivism** is a sociological theory of knowledge that tries to apply broader philosophical constructivism and constructivist methodologies into real life social settings, wherein groups construct knowledge for one another, collaboratively creating a small culture of shared artifacts with shared meanings.

^{xi} **Interactionism** is a theoretical perspective that derives social processes such as conflict, cooperation, identity formation etc., from day to day human interactions. Examples of few interactionist methods; unstructured interviews, focus group discussions, covert participant observation, overt participant observation, and analyzing historical, public and personal documents by content analysis.

^{xii} **Force field analysis** originally developed by Kurt Lewin (1943), provides a framework for analyzing at the forces that influences a situation positively and negatively, particularly social situations. It analyses driving forces/ movement towards a goal (helping forces) or blocking forces/ movement towards a goal (hindering forces).