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**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Southampton Education School

**Democratic Participation in Educational Reform: The case of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Campaign for Universal Education) in rural India**

by

**Angeline Dharmaraj Savicks**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2017



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

## **ABSTRACT**

FACULTY OF SOCIAL, HUMAN AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

Education

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

### **DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM: THE CASE OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (CAMPAIGN FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION) IN RURAL INDIA**

Angeline Dharmaraj Savicks

Since its inception in 2002, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has achieved only limited success in implementing its goals, especially in rural sections of India. There appears little basic awareness of the policy, not only among the members of the community but those involved in local administration and the teachers employed under SSA. With SSA's mandate for community involvement in policy implementation, the purpose of this research is to seek to understand if and how community involvement is effective in the local-level educational leadership and, if so, how it helps in the process of implementing SSA to ensure greater success in access and quality of education. The research utilises a qualitative case study methodology to gather in-depth data from local-level educational leaders within SSA's management structure in two rural villages in Odisha. Documents were analysed and used as supportive evidence to the data. The analysis of both case studies generated three major themes: management structure that does not foster effective community participation; dominance, both institutional and social, that leaves little scope for inclusion of the marginalised in the implementation process; and how support from the government and policy-makers that is made available to the community is insufficient in terms of resources and accountability procedures. The study makes recommendations to: policy-makers to make changes in the way policies should be contextualised in their time frames and promoted; policy evaluators, government planners and those issuing checks and controls at the local level to strengthen the implementation process and work out better ways of involving communities to be part of the local-level leadership within the implementation process; and community members, especially the marginalised, so they have the chance to reflect and express their honest opinions. The process enables them to understand the legalities of their position and the responsibilities that were being ignored because of their tokenistic position. The thesis makes suggestions to empower both people and systems.









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# DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Angeline Dharmaraj, declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research:

**Democratic Participation in Educational Reform: The case of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Campaign for Universal Education) in rural India**

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission
- 8.

Signed: .....

Date: 27 January 2017.....



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## DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM: THE CASE OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (CAMPAIGN FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION) IN RURAL INDIA

Angeline Dharmaraj

Since its inception in 2002, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has achieved only limited success in implementing its goals, especially in rural sections of India. There appears little basic awareness of the policy, not only among the members of the community but those involved in local administration and the teachers employed under SSA. With SSA's mandate for community involvement in policy implementation, the purpose of this research is to seek to understand if and how community involvement is effective in the local-level educational leadership and, if so, how it helps in the process of implementing SSA to ensure greater success in access and quality of education. The research utilises a qualitative case study methodology to gather in-depth data from local-level educational leaders within SSA's management structure in two rural villages in Odisha. Documents were analysed and used as supportive evidence to the data. The analysis of both case studies generated three major themes: management structure that does not foster effective community participation; dominance, both institutional and social, that leaves little scope for inclusion of the marginalised in the implementation process; and how support from the government and policy-makers that is made available to the community is insufficient in terms of resources and accountability procedures. The study makes recommendations to: policy-makers to make changes in the way policies should be contextualised in their time frames and promoted; policy evaluators, government planners and those issuing checks and controls at the local level to strengthen the implementation process and work out better ways of involving communities to be part of the local-level leadership within the implementation process; and community members, especially the marginalised, so they have the chance to reflect and express their honest opinions. The process enables them to understand the legalities of their position and the responsibilities that were being ignored because of their tokenistic position. The thesis makes suggestions to empower both people and systems.









## Definitions and Abbreviations

EC	Education Committee
BRC	Block Resource Centre
BRCC	Block Resource Centre Coordinator
Campaign	People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning
CRC	Circle Resource Centre
CRCC	Circle Resource Centre Coordinator
Dalits	Socially Oppressed. Also known as Schedule Caste
DEO	District Education Officer
DI	District Inspector
DIETS	District Institution of Education and Training
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EC	Education Committee
EFA	Education for All
EPG	Empowered Participatory Governance
<i>Grama Sabha</i>	A grassroots-level democratic institution in each village <i>panchayat</i>
IAD	Institutional Analysis and Development
MS	Multiple Streams
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPE	National Policy on Education
OBC	Other Backward Caste
OPEPA	Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority
<i>Panchayat</i>	Otherwise known as Village Council
PB	Participatory Budgeting

RTI	Right to Education
<i>Sarpanch</i>	Elected head of the <i>Panchayat</i> who governs matters, including education
SC	Schedule Caste
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Schedule Tribe (ST)
ST	Schedule Tribe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
VEC	Village Education Committee





## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research studies the community involvement of local-level educational leaders within the decentralised implementation structure of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – Right to Education (SSA-RTE), the flagship programme of India's Right to Education policy. Despite the decentralised management structure, there appears a stark inconsistency in education provision in the marginalised sections of India. My motivation is to explore if and how democratic participation of rural communities in local-level educational leadership within SSA-RTE's process of implementation can ensure greater success in improving access and providing quality education for the marginalised.

This chapter will provide the socio-political background of the national (India) and local (rural Odisha) contexts, focused on the research problem. A brief historical context of the educational system, its relation to the problem and a justification to pursue this research will follow. The conceptual framework that this research will be based on and the methodology to conduct the study is briefly explained. The chapter concludes with a succinct description of the research participants, using SSA's organogram to explain their roles and position within the management structure.

### 1.1 Social and political background of India

India, the country with the second largest population in the world, has shifted from the status of an under-developed to a developing nation (World Bank, 2012). It is important to consider that this development is concentrated in the urban and urban–rural sections of the country, leaving the rural and tribal sections in a state of underdevelopment (Rajasekar and Sahu, 2004). This disparity is measured in terms of the population who live below the poverty line (earning below \$1.90/day: World Bank, 2012). The Government of India has laid stress on eliminating regional socio-economic disparities, but unfortunately economic development may be increasing the level of inter-State, inter-District and intra-District disparities. Despite a large proportion of public sector investment being deployed to develop marginalised sections, the inequality of development that is focused in only a few of the marginalised areas is not addressed or followed up for correction (Mallikarjun, 2002). In addition, the disparity in demand and supply along the parameters of educational need is said to originate from or be aggravated by problems related to governance and financial constraints (UNESCO, 2014). Thus, even in the best circumstances, the rich become richer and the poor become better off, but much less so than the rich.

## Chapter 1

When it comes to education, there may be a distinct disparity between the quantum of access to basic facilities, as in the case of healthcare, safe drinking water and sanitation. Though communities might see their conditions improve, the disparity between the rich and the poor continues to increase, possibly causing growing inequality between rural and urban areas. The economic conditions that change and benefit some of the population disadvantage other groups, allowing only a few to escape poverty (Rajasekar and Sahu, 2004). As in most democracies there may be debate and competition over who controls education in the different States of India and what their intentions might be. In other words, it is not whether politicians and politics will influence the educational process, but how they do so and to what degree (Gould, Rudolph and Rudolph, 1972). Educational systems are not free from political intervention. Educational institutions that receive government funds will almost certainly experience political influence over their decisions. A factor that may be important to consider is the identification of the kinds of political pressure and the politicisation that may be detrimental. This identification could support an understanding of whether educational purposes are woven into the political implementation system or if politics becomes a means to strengthen and redefine educational goals (Klein, 1972). To understand the changes in political, socio-economic and educational changes that are now prevalent, I provide a brief history of India, highlighting the national decisions and implementation that have had a direct or indirect effect on educational goals for the country.

### **1.2 Context**

An understanding of the Indian education system pre- and post-independence is brought together in this context section. The influences on both the international and national policies of India in her attempt to meet the educational challenges nationally and globally are explored. This is discussed in the light of changes in the administration system of the country. The impact of the 1991 economic reform of education and the role of the State in implementing educational policies are considered, drawing attention to the democratic process that has contributed to the current state of education, political decisions and the neoliberal administrative structure. The chapter concludes with consideration of issues of leadership and power and how power is used by various actors in the context of educational policy implementation, specifically implementation in marginalised sections of the community.

### 1.3 A profile of the Indian education system pre- and post-independence

Colonial rule in India from the 1700s until independence in 1947 contributed to an educational system that was geared to strengthening the position of the privileged. Educational policies reinforced pre-existing elitist trends of admission to academic education and advancement in government service, making education a gatekeeper, an avenue of growth only to people with resources (Cheney, Ruzzi and Muralidharan, 2005). In the nineteenth century, the British Crown introduced a State system of education. Between 1858 and 1919, the Crown, via British administrators, controlled education policy, and the responsibility for education was next transferred to the province under the control of Indian ministers, and 1919 thus marks the end of direct colonial responsibility for education. Numerous acts were passed and various recommendations made to expand the public education system, using both public and private funds (Chaudhary, 2009). Despite these efforts, after almost sixty years the new system still did not seem capable of achieving mass literacy. Specifically, basic primary education reflected an average literacy of 6% with a marked difference observed between the genders, regions and social groups. Tribal groups were even more disadvantaged educationally than the lower castes, with an average literacy rate of less than 1% (Census of India, 1913).

Attaining Independence in 1947, India went through a revolution in its political background and educational policies were defined between the Centre and the States. This definition brought significance to the board as a supreme advisory body where the Centre and the States could collaborate for a common purpose. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, moved the 'Objective Resolution' in 1947 and proposed that the Centre only exercised the specific powers vested in it. Important subjects such as defence, international relations, currency, ports and railways belonged to the powers at the Centre, whereas education and almost all other services termed 'social' belonged to the concurrent list (Sargent, 1968).

Elements of the new public administration were recognised and made part of the good governance agenda after continued concern about State-society relationships. Leaders of the anti-colonial struggle vocalised the importance of good government, suggesting that powers be used for and by the people (Corbridge, 2005). Consequently, India has an administrative framework that has long been decentralised. The country follows a federal system with 28 States and seven Union Territories, the constitution of which was conceived after Independence.

In the 1950s, control over education was vested primarily in the State governments rather than with Federal government. In 1976, a constitutional amendment shifted education to the

concurrent list, placing the responsibility on both the State and Federal governments, although the Federal government had supremacy in all matters concerning education (Majumdar, 1999). At a local level, the Panchayati Raj (village level self-governance) institutions enjoyed significant responsibilities as well. Although in the initial post-independence period interest in Panchayati Raj institutions fluctuated, they were the focus of a significant revival in the 1980s. This revival led the Central government in 1992 to pass two constitutional amendments requiring all State governments to form a three-tier responsive and viable system at village, intermediate and District levels of rural areas (underdeveloped and marginalised), as well as in the municipalities of urban areas/cities (more developed and with more access to resources). State governments were required to devolve adequate power, responsibilities and finances to elected bodies, and to support them in planning and implementing schemes for economic development and social justice (Ambasht, 1996). India, like many other countries, classifies its settlements into rural and urban areas that serve as contrasting contexts to formulate development strategies and frameworks for policy planning and local governance. Much structural adjustment in local-level administration was initiated to meet the local, national and global challenges and needs, two of which are highlighted in the section following.

The changing historical context in India after Independence requiring that education policies are positioned to be implemented by both the Centre and the State meant that 'Education For All' is part of a larger change in social policies that have become dominant in recent years (Raman, 2008). India has a long tradition of both government and private school systems (Srivatsava, 2006; Kingdon, 2007). Liberalisation and economic growth may be instrumental in the growth and development of these school systems. Implementing educational policies within a globalised economy since 1991, specifically on the education front, was observed when the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, committed to privatisation during the full planning commission in 2007 ('PM for staggered fee rise', 2007). The Ministry of Human Resource Development's promotion of private partnership in government schools (Raman, 2008) may have given rise to neoliberalism.

### **1.4 Impact of the 1991 economic reform and 'Education For All' policy on State- and local-level administration**

India embarked on the economic reform process in 1991, whereas the policy shift was implemented much earlier in many East Asian countries. The focus was on reducing poverty and achieving high economic growth, implementing policies that encouraged the private sector along with a significant export orientation. Although India made attempts in a similar direction in the 1980s, a systematic shift that included a significant inclusion of the private sector and a



restructured role of the government took place in 1991. Both the Central and State governments had to bring about improvements in their respective spheres of control (Ahluwalia, 2002). In comparison to Southeast Asia, social indicators for India lagged behind by approximately twenty years (Dreze, Sen and Hussain, 1995). Adult literacy in 1991 was 52%, in comparison with other developing countries such as Indonesia that had 57% and Thailand with 79% in 1971. The social development gap had to be addressed to improve the wellbeing of the poor and increase their earning capacity, besides creating the conditions for economic growth. The economic reform required the State to withdraw from services and it was argued that the private sector could do well, if not better. The need for expansion of the public sector was also required to support development of the social sector. Saxena (2001) documents problems in the delivery system and governance in the educational services provided by the social sector, particularly in rural areas. Some of the problems were directly related to the resource delivery system and caused decision makers to tackle this problem through greater participation by beneficiaries in supervising education systems, requiring decentralisation at the local level and meaningful participation. Non-governmental organisations were called upon to play a critical role in this process (Ahluwalia, 2002).

The 'Education For All' (EFA) policy aimed to ensure that all children, specifically girls and those from ethnic minorities or marginalised groups, could access free and compulsory primary education of good quality by the year 2015, which is a policy similar to the 'Universal Primary Education by 2015' policy aim as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Despite efforts towards achieving this goal, many of the poorest countries were reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to be struggling and slowing down in their progress (2011). Responding to this problem, there were questions raised on the potential of non-government schooling to contribute to achieving EFA and other education related MDGs (Lewin, 2007; Tooley, Dixon and Gomathi, 2007). India adopted the EFA policy, which has caused both discursive and structural changes in education and society.

When a policy affects the people directly, the more organised the people tend to be, the greater is the potential for mass politics (Varshney, 1998). Varshney (1998) also states that ethnic disputes are more prone to entering politics as they can isolate groups or individuals on the basis of the stratified system and qualities of their social class that are beyond their control. Ethnic disputes may directly concern political parties that may be ethnically rooted, and therefore defend attacks on their ethnic group or multi-ethnic parties that may fight against attempts to pull away from their coalition. One of the major initiatives of Indian education system was the establishment of a common school system to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, but this effort does not seem to have diagnosed the roots of inequality and

discrimination but regards the State as responsible for this neglect. There seems to be a gap in identifying how the national-State-knowledge matrix may be creating the existing educational inequalities (Kumar, 2008). The following is an overview of how the State has responded to national policy changes and contributed to education.

### **1.5 The rise of neoliberalism**

According to Tabb (2002, p.7), neoliberalism stresses ‘the deregulation of the economy, trade liberalisation, the dismantling of the public sector (including education), and the predominance of the financial sector of the economy over production and commerce’, which leaves education to be considered in the same light as other public goods and services. With the country modifying many sectors into profit generating zones, education in India is facing difficulties as part of the privatisation of institutions. Given the current discriminatory nature of education that continues to struggle to achieve literacy amongst all citizens, the serious consequences of neoliberalism come as no surprise (Kumar, 2008). Institutions that believe that improvements can be brought about within this system emerged as saviours, advocating legal measures to ensure equality in schools (Ferreira, 2006). Alternative centres for education were initiated to bring about changes to the education system in their own small way, but have not withstood the larger economic and social changes (McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2005; Kumar, 2008). Alternative centres for education (for girls, children with disabilities, bridging the learning gap) do not seem to have succeeded as a tool to organise people and resolve inequalities in educational systems or address discrimination in access to educational facilities. Instead, they reflect a series of actions that isolate issues of educational implementation from system, social relations and capital-labour conflict (Kumar, 2008).

One of the dominant social issues that affect educational inequalities and participation in educational policy implementation is the caste system. Caste, in India, is a representation of status that is based on religious and ideological grounds (Gupta, 2005) and with class inequalities that are seen as being epiphenomenal to caste, the Indian caste system takes a sociological character, setting it apart from other social inequalities (Desai and Dubey, 2012).

### **1.6 Contribution of the caste system or elitism to neoliberalism**

Gupta (2001) argues that changes are taking place in the caste structure. Arguably, in India, caste is seated within capitalism and therefore remains a fundamental determinant of the structure of society, to many, and is still a powerful identity influencing development of theory as well as

practice, even in national politics. According to Gerth and Mills (1946, p. 189, in Desai and Dubey, 2012):

A status segregation grown into caste differs in its structure from a mere 'ethnic' segregation; the caste structure transforms the horizontal and unconnected coexistences of ethnically segregated groups into a vertical social system of superordination and subordination.

When government policies are based on caste and define privileges that select castes can access, this can create and strengthen caste identities and might have a counterproductive impact on marginalised groups. Desai and Dubey (2010) address caste and disparities in various outcomes, and state that although there are promising changes observed in civic and political participation of the marginalised (*dalits* and *adivasis*), it is difficult to claim that caste no longer affects the opportunity structure or the outcomes. Thus, caste backgrounds do determine opportunities, and access and participation are unequal (*ibid.*).

The emergence of elites within castes, particularly amongst the schedule caste, schedule tribe and other backward castes, shows how identities are used to expand and sustain national politics and the national government (Kumar, 2008). With identities being progressive and affecting the rule of the national government, it is difficult to understand clearly the relationship between knowledge of the progression of identities and governance resulting in misreading and negating such a conflict as an influential aspect of educational policies and systems (Kelsh and Hill, 2006; Kumar, 2008). In Indian economic reform since 1991, a distinction can be made between mass and elite politics. Within a democracy, specifically in marginalised sections, mass politics can redefine elite politics as an expression of common or popular beliefs and opinions, and places tremendous pressure on an elected politician.

It is important to understand the political economy of education as an issue that is seated in its material conditions, not divorced from the interests of different classes, the political–class relationship, the movement of national decisions at varying points of time and the changes to education policy. The need to democratise accessibility to education at the grass-roots level requires particular attention. Despite policies mandating people's participation in educational management, the system remains hierarchically controlled. The causes of educational inequality may therefore be seen at two different levels, although in reality the causes may be united when considered as a whole system. Discrimination may be reflected at the school and education system levels within society, and reflected in issues such as caste and gender discrimination (Chanana, 2016). Policies within a State are meant to correct such discriminations, but have instead continued or even institutionalised inequalities in education within our globalised era,

dictated by neoliberal capital. Marginalisation within the school system might also reflect marginalisation in wider society. Similarly, at the macro-level, State policies have promised other methods of education to be followed for out-of-school children (Kumar and Paul, 2006), and one such programme introduced in 2002 is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

From the above discussion, there is an understanding of how SSA, the implementation of which is the focus of this study, might be planned and organised within a State management system that has institutionalised inequalities through several practices. SSA mandates community participation in policy implementation and devolves significant decision-making powers to community members; this concept also resonates with neoliberalism, as described by **Harvey** (2005, p.2) as:

a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework.... The role of the State is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for such practices.... Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, healthcare, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created by State action if necessary.

SSA was promoted to ensure that every child has access to quality education, thus may be seen as a reform that is characteristic of globalisation, as designed to increase efficiency, accountability, fairness and equality (Hursh, 2007) while closing the education attainment gap between India and other countries.

### **1.7 SSA within a neoliberal framework**

Indian policy formulation since Independence, including the Kothari Commission, has not shown an adequate understanding of the critical association between equality and quality (Sadgopal, 2008). This limited understanding appears to have diminished since 1991 with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and SSA, which were developed under the neoliberal policy framework imposed by the IMF–World Bank command (Sadgopal, 2008). Both the DPEP (1993–2002) and SSA (2002 to date) converted the school system of the pre-neoliberal era into a new multi-layered system in the government and the private school systems, which is believed to have led to the lower quality and credibility of government schools (Sadgopal, 2008). The fragmentation led the elite to move their children to private schools, causing only the marginalised to stay at government schools. Educational systems are understood to be struggling and demonstrating tension between individuals and groups (political, governmental and beneficiaries) who wish to transform them, and those who engage with the system largely as an

agency of social reproduction and control (Sarup, 1982). With powerful members diverting attention from the policy agenda to personal agenda, methods are adopted to justify the present exclusionary system in education. Even within the process of democratic decision making within SSA in India, there seems to be a specialised class involved in making significant decisions, while the common people or the community members act as mere spectators to the evolving social reality (Singh, 2016). Although community members are chosen as representatives on decision-making committees, the system does not seem to promote equal participation in decision making due to power differentials between the members through position, social class, literacy levels, gender and so on.

## **1.8 Power within SSA's management structure in a neoliberal State**

Education in a neoliberal government is seen as an instrument of national development, but the question to be raised is whether all children, irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status, can gain access to quality education, as SSA hopes to achieve through community participation. The present education system is based upon the ability to pay for quality education, and privileges those with resources and social status, and has removed the most powerful sections of society from the vast government school system. As a consequence, the government school system has lost its voice of activism at the highest rank of Indian democracy. Political leaders, non-educational organisations, professionals and the media might have little or no vested interest left in improving the quality of government schools.

Isaac and Harilal (1997, p.3, in George, 2016) noted at a special Committee on Decentralisation of Powers that 'power should flow through the elected bodies and their members to the people and should not be blocked at any level, as power ultimately belongs to the people and it is only legitimate that it is handed over to them'. The blocks may be in the form of local-level expertise development, community representation, transparency or autonomy (Frankie and Chasin, 2016). Isaac (1997) also observed that actors who understood the nature of the tasks involved in policy implementation were in short supply, and that actors at State level were unable to work with local-level bodies on delegated powers and projects. Another important factor was the lack of capacity in parents and community representatives to deviate from traditional practices that influence leadership. Political inclusion by leaders of STs through representation and its implications on their empowerment in democratic local governments of India, such as the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) was another issue observed. Political inclusion through representation is viewed as a process, and actors explore the potential of such political representation to include and empower the STs in decentralised governance. It is therefore evident that there are issues of power in the micropolitics of policy implementation.

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I have considered micropolitics as the formal and informal power held by individuals and groups to achieve their goals, where conflictive and cooperative processes are integral components. I will next discuss the issue of power and its effect on the different levels within the implementation process.

In context of this research, the issue revolves around the devolution of power to communities for meaningful participation in policy implementation. Notwithstanding the various approaches and meanings of the term 'empowerment', it is essentially related to the sociological concept of 'power', and challenges the conditions of powerlessness and the skewed distribution of power relations in a society/community (Patnaik, 2013). Sociological literature broadly identifies two methods of describing the meaning of the concept of power. Weber (2016) and Dahl (2015) associate power with domination and coercion, positioning power in social relations, with one individual exercising power over the other by virtue of his/her domination of resources, which increases his/her power. In contrast to this view, which regards power as 'power over someone', the second view underlines the understanding of power as 'power to do something' (see Dowding, 2016 and Goehler, 2000), which does not necessarily involve social relations of power between individuals. It rather focuses on the capacities of individuals or groups to produce outcomes without engaging with a structure.

Empowerment as a concept relates to the second view, extending power to individuals or groups to increase their capacities, capabilities and choices to produce outcomes on matters affecting their life. This could aid in redistributing unequal power relations within and between families/societies, thereby working towards an acceptable social status while at the same time reducing the power of social structures and institutions that were previously instruments of unequal power distribution (Sharma, 2014). In the given context, empowerment would change the social status of women and the marginalised sections. Within decision making in SSA, empowerment will demand political inclusion and a definite change in power distribution from the top to the bottom of the management structure, which would allow the inclusion of those who remain outside the decision-making arena due to their gender or socio-cultural backgrounds. This would also require meaningful representation where their voices are heard and their participation in decision making results in a change in education for their children and their lives (Spicker, 1994). Further, the political presence of excluded groups like STs and SCs could lead to a transformation of politics and challenge the structural barriers that have marginalised them. Political inclusion would represent the extent of significant representation and influence in political decision-making that could be achieved (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Browning, Marshall, and Tabb et al., 1984; Mohanty, 1995; Roy, 1995).

## 1.9 Educational leadership and policy implementation

Having looked at the difficulties in ensuring equality and inclusion in education leadership within SSA, I would agree with Ainscow and Sandill (2010) that establishing equity is seen as one of the greatest global challenges that school systems face, as nations address issues of social inclusion and economic disparities. Having discussed neoliberalism in India and the role of the State, I draw on Foucault (2008), who argues that the State continually appropriates more power and that contemporary power relations are governmentalised. On the other hand, he argues that power relations are 'rooted in the whole network of the social' to signify that individuals have the ability to take 'action on the action of others', thus support or dismiss decisions/methods of governance (ibid, p.346). Looking at the mandates on community participation in policy implementation in both rural and urban areas, it seems there is an inclination to overlook the conceptual basis of policy on equity, whereby strategies of school leadership are expected and non-contestable, rather than a political influence on individuals (Ainscow and Sandhill, 2010). Although local-level educational leaders in SSA reframe social interactions between their communities that are defined by caste, and with government and political leaders who are defined by their positional power, it is important to consider the argument of Ball and Carter (2002, p.104), that successful corporations are 'led by heroes'. In the case of SSA, the management structure reflects in its roles and responsibilities that the head teacher takes a central position in being responsible and accountable for the successful implementation of the policy goals. I will discuss this issue while addressing educational leadership and distributed leadership in Chapter 2. Brown (2006) believes that, under neoliberalism, an individual (citizen) is both a consumer and the subject of substantial managerial control and parallels can be drawn with SSA's local-level educational leaders at village level, who are given significant decision-making authority while benefiting from the provisions of the educational reform. These examples result in a contradiction in the equity that is portrayed by SSA to be implemented in such a micropolitical environment, with centrally defined standards supporting a neoliberal management system. Equity may thus be brought into a neoliberal education policy document to address the removal of barriers to engagement and achievement.

With the State holding control of the final decisions on deployment of resources, finances and monitoring progress of SSA, there is another contradiction to the neoliberal free market principle, as the role of the State is not shrinking in aspects where the State is the provider of services for its people (Crouch, 2011). The extension of 'official honors and symbolic privileges' (ibid., p.170) to the elites is seen to increase bureaucracy. State leadership and decisions being largely politicised in India, it is important also to question political commitment to goals of the reform to their personal or political goals and how this may support equality in participation. For this reason,

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power in this case may be held by the powerful, as giving it away might make them less powerful. Arendt (Habermas and McCarthy, 1970, p.44) states that:

Power is never the property of individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is in power we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people.

Reflecting on Arendt, I refer back to the community, in which the power of local-level educational leadership does not seem to be used in the manner that it should to ensure successful implementation of SSAs goals. When power within a community is only its ideologies, and if empowerment is a possible solution, ideologies may be recreated and reinforced not just as a part of an individual's choice but to reflect that of a community. In this way, power may be distributed. This brings me to two other concepts of distributed leadership and related social issues such as caste and gender that are bound to arise. These concepts and issues will be addressed in Chapter 2 under educational leadership.

### 1.10 Summary

The context of the Indian education system and educational leadership and management discussed above has set out the complexities of policy implementation in a neoliberal environment in which the role of the State and the role of actors involved in local-level educational leadership are co-constructed. Considering these challenges and the changes that the nation has dealt with enable a better understanding of policy implementation and the way that actors at the Centre, State and local levels engage with the management system and the power that is available within this system. It helps to consider the way in which neoliberal objectives conflict with democratic objectives and the complexities that arise in meaningful democratic participation through this ambiguity. I will now discuss the policy reform that this thesis is based upon.

### 1.11 'Right to Education' – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

With the establishment of the Indian constitution in 1950, free and compulsory education for children up to 14 years of age was one of its core principles. However, the focus was not primarily on elementary education but was aimed at a balanced development of primary, secondary and higher education. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'Everyone has the Right to Education', and Article 26 was declared to the world as education being an agency of social control and social transformation. With education policy and



governance going through major changes in India, the National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated in 1986. In 1992, the programme was revised and SSA was launched in 2001/02, after world governments adopted the six Education For All (EFA) goals and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aiming to universalise elementary education to fulfil the Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act of 2009. The education priorities of UNESCO are shaped by the objectives of EFA and MDGs, and the global Education For All movement aimed to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (Gupta and Singh, 2013). Similar to other countries, India adopted the educational goals in accordance with the constitutional aim and commitment to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. With elementary education being a salient feature of the Indian national policy since independence, efforts have been made by the Central and State government to expand education in the country. One such effort is SSA, which this thesis explores to understand its management structure and how the State adopts it to ensure that the constitutional aim is attained, specifically in rural areas.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) translates as 'Campaign for Universal Education'. SSA, the flagship programme of RTE, aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children between 6 and 14 years of age in India. It also aims to bridge the social, regional and gender gaps. Abiding by the vision of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Constitution Act, Government of India, 1992b), the National Education Policy and recommendations from the Committee on Decentralised Management of Education, Village Education Committees (VEC) were established under the District Primary Education Policy (DPEP). This process was reinforced under SSA, since the funding is channelled through community-based bodies for all school related expenses (more than 50% of funds of SSA). To improve the social and economic status of the marginalised, SSA has specifically targeted rural India (Shekhar et al., 2008) in a scheme that is sponsored by Central government. SSA provides additional funding to the states to: enrol out-of-school children and improve school quality; fund civil works to construct new schools or improve existing structures within a kilometre radius of habitation; establish alternative schools and education guarantee schemes; form and maintain Block and Cluster resource centres to support the implementation process; conduct bridge courses for school drop-outs; provide salaries for extra teachers to maintain teacher–student ratios; and deliver in-service training for teachers and teaching materials (Kingdon, 2007). Within its limited timeframe of eight years, SSA intended a hundred per cent enrolment by 2010 (SSA, 2001). Since the goals of SSA were not met in 2010, a revision was made to achieve them by 2015 with additional intervention to improve quality and learning standards (SSA, 2014).

The greatest importance appears to be lent to systematic mobilisation of the community and in creating an effective system of decentralised decision-making (Rao, 2009). The organisation of community-level structures varies between states in terms of size, tenure and arrangement. Community monitoring is intended to focus on enrolment, retention, girl-child and other marginalised groups, the deployment of funds and the construction of schools and related facilities, thus ensuring attainment of programme objectives. The community structures are to play a key role in micro-planning by developing the village education plan and school improvement plan. Under SSA, the annual work plan and budgets are to be prepared through a planning process, taking into account local needs and specificity. Monitoring tools/format for quality are meant to be provided to the community to ensure prominent community involvement in monitoring school effectiveness, following up with out-of-school children and their attendance (SSA, 2001; UNESCO, 2014).

### **1.12 SSA organogram**

This section will discuss the SSA's management structure at State, District and community level, according to Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA). The organogram provides an understanding of the relation of one department to another and the hierarchical structures that this entails. Then follows a brief explanation of the roles of specific members and departments who participated in the research.

The organogram of the state level is seen in Figure 1.1, as prescribed by OPEPA. At State level, SSA seems to be largely controlled by the level of the State Project Director of OPEPA, Member Secretary of the Education Committee (EC). Actors seem to be more involved in implementation of policy objectives between this level and the School Management Committee (SMC) at the community level. The local-level planning and implementation of the reform takes place between the level of the District Project Coordinator and the SMC.



Figure 1.1 Educational reform of the Right to Education Act, SSA's Organogram according to OPEPA

The local-level educational leaders being studied in this research are seen in Figure 1.2, from the District level (the Collector) to the community level (the SMC). The roles of the actors in these stages will be briefly explained following the District-level organogram.

### District level Management Structure

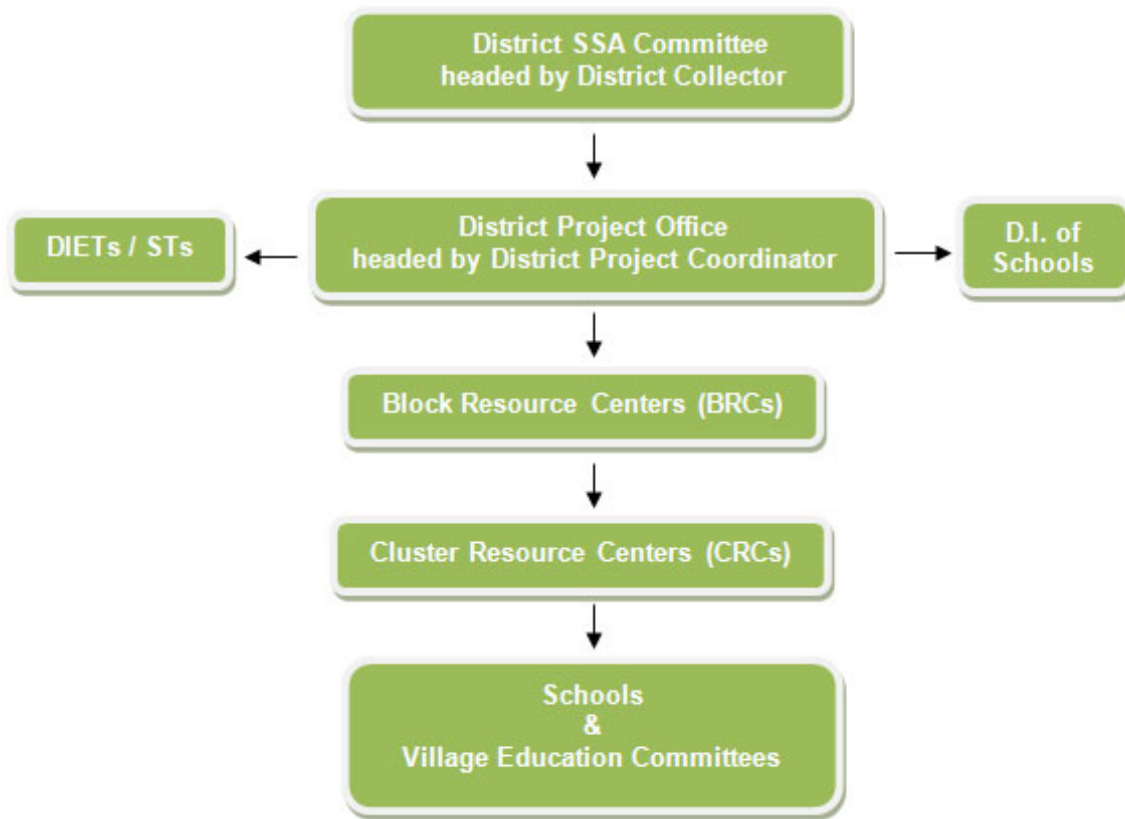


Figure 1.2 District level organogram, as prescribed by OPEPA

In every District, SSA has a management headed by the District Collector (District Magistrate). The constitutional amendment in 1992 (after the rise of neoliberalism), introduced a traditional Panchayat system (village self-governance) following a study conducted by various Indian committees into ways to ensure a more decentralised administrative system through which each village would be responsible for its own affairs. At the District level, the Panchayat provides basic services and facilities to the rural population, and updated agricultural support, and establishes and runs schools, primary health centres and libraries, plans and executes development of scheduled castes and tribes, and provides employment and employment schemes (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, 1992). With the advent of the Panchayat Raj, a political system that is the oldest form of local governance supporting decentralised administration, the District Collector plays multiple roles in administration. She/he looks after the other two tiers of the Panchayat bodies – the Block and Cluster Resource Centres – providing the necessary assistance and technical help. The District Collector supervises plans within the District. One of the significant role is to ensure that no conflicts develop between the District administrative staff and the members of the Panchayat bodies who are elected (OPEPA, 2012). In Phase 2 of the District Primary Education

Programme, one officer from the District cadre acts as the District Project Coordinator (ex-officio). Within the existing structure at District level, the District Inspector (DI) of schools, institutions such as DIETs (District Institutes of Education and Training) and secondary training schools assist in academic and administrative support to the District Project Coordinator.

The Block Resource Centre at the sub-District level has a Block Resource Centre in each Block and a Cluster Resource Centre (1 for every 10–12 schools) with one coordinator, a teacher who is experienced and resourceful. These coordinators are to strengthen community-level management, and support VECs and schools (OPEPA, 2012). Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCC) provide academic and technical support to the Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCC), research Block-specific issues, organise orientation programmes, training and seminars for teachers, monitor the functions of schools and hold meetings for academic CRCCs (SSA, 2012).

CRCCs are seen as the main pillars of SSA's activities, as they are in regular contact with members of the community, VECs and teachers. They provide pedagogical support for teachers, are in charge of academic quality control, maintain Cluster-level data, identify issues, conduct school-based research studies, develop needs-specific teaching and learning material that are activity-based and prepare innovative procedures to streamline out-of-school children (SSA, 2012).

The roles and function of the other members and committees in the management structure of SSA, Odisha are available in Appendix A. Within the hierarchical system, the District comprises an area with a population of 5,000 or more with at least 50% tribal population, and is called a Cluster. Some 14 such clusters cover 13 Blocks in 10 districts of the State, covering 62,021 ST populations (2001 census). There is a BRC (headed by Block Resource Centre Co-coordinators (BRCCs)) in every Block, and several Cluster Resource Centers (CRCs) (headed by Cluster Resource Centre Co-coordinators (CRCCs)) within each Block to cover and manage a few schools within easy reach. This enables them to maintain close contact with the teachers of the schools, which are managed by the CRCs. The BRCs and CRCs are expected to organise in-service teacher training, providing support to teachers within schools and helping in community mobilisation. The BRC Co-coordinator is the academic co-coordinator at Block level, providing in-service training for teachers and Village Education Committee (VEC) members, and guiding CRC Co-coordinators. They collect material from the District Project Office and pass them on to VECs and schools through CRCs, while regularly ensuring the required support to schools and VECs. They also monitor the implementation of pedagogical and other interventions for schools. CRCCs provide constant support to teachers, monitoring their performance, identifying their needs and liaising with the VECs, the community and NGOs working towards education goals. Monthly meetings are

conducted at the Cluster level and schools are visited regularly to monitor teachers' performance and to provide them on-site support (SSA, 2012).

From the management structure and the roles prescribed, we can see that there is a top down approach to management and the flow of power despite the claims of a decentralised democratic system.

A gram panchayat (elected village council) is the cornerstone of a local self-government organisation at the village level. It has a *Sarpanch* as its elected head who governs matters, including education. The *Sarpanch* plans, supervises, controls, hold custody of reports and documents and maintains periodical reports (Panchayati Raj Department, Orissa, 2002–03).

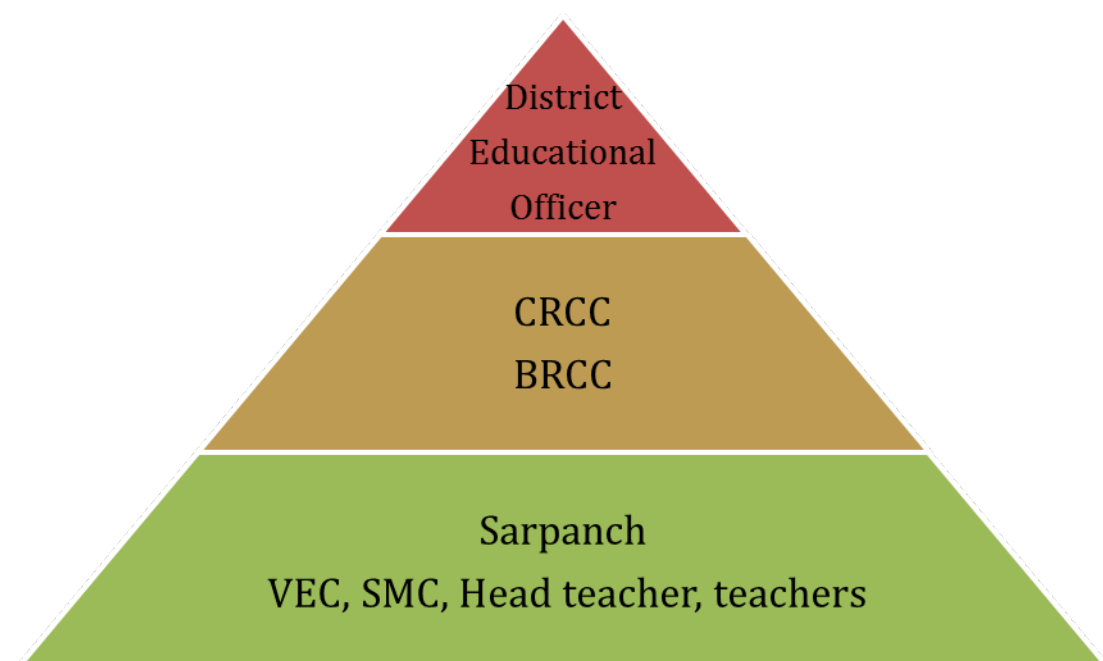


Figure 1.3 Hierarchy of local-level educational leadership

Figure 1.3 reflects the local-level educational leaders at the community level, Block level and District level who were included in this study. At least one representative was interviewed from each of the groups.

### 1.13 Role of the State and community in ensuring access and quality education

India has the world's largest democracy. There are 28 states, each ruled by a State government with sole power to legislate on issues such as law and order, taxation on agriculture income, education and so on, while Central government has exclusive authority over defence, transportation, taxation, foreign policy and so forth (National Portal of India, 2015).

Many theorists acknowledge that one of the central roles for the State is education (Unicef, UNESCO, 2007; Buchermann et al., 1995). The State has the responsibility for organising opportunities, determine the educational structure through its related policies and spark the demand for education through quality enrichment. State laws on compulsory schooling are established and its benefits are to be emphasised to its people through awareness programmes set up by the State. These macro structural forces are important in evening out educational stratification (Fuller, Singer and Keiley, 1995). One of the main contributing factors to achieving a community's educational goals is family (Buchmann and Hannum, 2001). In less-developed sections of a society, State laws on education may be achieved through support from families/groups of families within a community, by raising awareness of the laws that provide educational support (Buchmann and Hannum, 2001). Within a neoliberal society, issues of power that are present socially, politically and structurally can be addressed if the State empowers people, and organises educational needs and structures for implementation.

Getting the community involved in education leadership could be an important means to attain success in educational provision, as it could increase responsibilities of both the members in the community and the providers of education for improved access and quality education. Community leadership is believed to be more outward looking, focused on improved outcomes and working towards the wellbeing of the community, as it identifies and responds to local aspirations while being oriented to innovation and change (Sullivan et al., 2006). A community may be classified in three ways, according to Taylor (2003). As a descriptive term, it represents those who share common interests; as a normative term, it directs the values and conditions of a ways of living; and as an instrumental term, it connects the two with a more localised service provision. Therefore, it is important to recognise that communities also refer to several associations of groups with varying group dynamics and values. It is therefore likely that only a minority of the population from a community are active decision-makers or involved in other functions of implementation at any given point in time (Kaufman, 1959). In circumstances such as these, the State is responsible for working with groups that are marginalised or excluded to ensure that issues of power and power struggles do not further marginalise or exclude.

The mention of stratification, equal opportunities and access relates to inclusion, where all citizens can participate on a par with others as full members in a political community. According to Fraser (2005), this requires access to resources and respect in order to be able to participate equally. Democratic participation may need the State to ensure social arrangements that permit everyone to participate as peers in social life. In order to achieve this, Fraser sees the need for a certain amount of institutional dismantling to allow equal participation. Economic structures triggered by class structures increase distributive injustice, disallowing people the resources they

need to participate with others as peers. Institutional hierarchy can cause status inequality or misrecognition through cultural values and thereby hinder parity. Political dimensions of inequality, that in many ways constitute and determine the reach/access to both distributive and recognition inequality, could determine who is included, who is excluded and those who should be provided with greater equality through distribution and recognition. The political dimension that sets the platform to resolve issues of cultural and economic dimensions may cause inequalities. Therefore, Fraser (2005) believes that it is necessary to scrutinise if the political communities intentionally include or exclude some who are entitled to representation, if the communities are given an equal voice in deliberation and allowed a fair representation in decision-making, to identify issues of power and power struggles and make conscious efforts to reduce them.

Communities with the required training and motivation may be able to bring about shared values collectively and revitalise their surroundings, while the State focuses on its primary role. This may be more facilitative in nature, providing education, developing capacity to overcome the barriers between communities and recording an evidence base for what works (Home Office, 2004).

Community leadership may not only promote active citizenship but social rights, which is a citizen's capacity to act dutifully and be active in public responsibilities, enabling citizens to strike a balance between rights and duties (Burchell, 2000).

Active citizenship – that is, 'participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violence and in accordance with human rights and democracy' (Hoskins, 2006, p.5) – ensures participation and representative democracy. It promotes social cohesion, reducing the gap between the citizens and the governing organisations (Hoskins and Mascherini, 2009). Considering the various rights of citizens, there have been developments that promote the idea of individuals' participating in community or social action, where their voices are heard and they act with the intent to make a difference (Verba and Nie, 1972). Active citizenship might have the potential to increase social cohesion. This is because involvement brings a sense of belonging, equality and understanding of the various cultures and their respective opinions (European Commission, 1998).

Large-scale involvement of people through decentralisation has been a popular strategy that has been adopted in several developed and developing countries to deliver public services (Tooley and Dixon, 2006). Decentralisation as a system of educational administration is largely promoted by the World Bank (World Bank, 2008) and is suggested to be the most sensible method to adopt in a very large nation (Varghese, 1996). However, the decentralisation of planning, management and implementation of education is a major concern in most developing countries. Though it is



perceived as an aid to reducing inequalities in provision and access and improving efficiency of operation, it has failed to do so (Varghese, 1996; Meade and Gershberg, 2008). It is disquieting to have the (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics state that 'India has the highest absolute number of out-of-school children' and is also one of the 35 countries that is least likely to meet the goal of education for all by 2015 (UNESCO, 2005, p.20). This situation has not undergone significant change, and India is now one of the top five countries in terms of numbers of out-of-school elementary-age children (UNESCO, 2014). These inequalities of education provision that exists under the decentralised system also appear to prevail predominantly in the underserved sections of Indian society.

The discussion shows us that the conception of inclusion in a community may not be possible without deep democracy, and vice versa. Both inclusion and democracy hold a notion of individual rights and the overall good for a community. Decentralisation and citizenship to ensure inclusion may therefore need to be interdependent. Community goals may have to be brought together by both the government and representatives of the community. Although community goals are expected to benefit the community as a whole, inclusion in a democratic community can adapt Banks' definition for this research: 'Having the capacity to choose, the power to act to attain one's purpose and the ability to help transform a world lived in common with others' (Banks, 1991, p.32). The State might have to adapt to the changing nature of policy decisions, political demands and the needs of the community, as they constantly shift. State governance is about maintaining collective order, meeting collective goals and common process of rule, therefore it has to be clear and ready for a constant transformation of ideas, methods and strategies as it works with local authorities and communities (Pierre, 2000).

### **1.14 Decentralisation and decision-making**

In an educational context, advocates of decentralisation claim that it provides local people with the opportunity to have a say in educational governance and restores a feeling of not being powerless, and by this means to gain control of their destiny. Its main purpose is seen to inculcate collaborative decision-making that is suited to their community (Spinks, 1990). Decentralisation in the First Nations, a few Latin American countries and Africa has been seen as a more responsive approach to meet student needs and mobilise greater participation by parents, which shifts the loci of power to native communities. With aims of increasing access and quality through decentralised decision-making and control as the main interest of these governments, the question of accountability under a decentralised set-up has been a concern (Parry, 1997; Agbo, 2002; Tooley and Dixon, 2006; Meade and Gershberg, 2008). It is important to acknowledge that decentralisation since the 1990s was one of the major changes that World Bank advocated

following the economic reform. With many nations adopting a neoliberal form of governance, decentralisation was further promoted to distribute power, both geographically and institutionally (Santiso, 2001; Faguet, 2014).

In India, a system of decentralisation is also employed, as it may be the most effective method of governance, considering the vastness of the country. Planning and managing such a large system is a challenge. Decentralisation is perceived to reduce inequalities in access and provision and to increase efficiency in operation (Bray, 1991). India follows a multi-level planning framework. State-level educational activities are implemented by the Secretariat (responsible for policy-making and coordination) and the Directorate (responsible for direction and regulation). Most states have a planning cell to look after educational planning activities, but seem to have a relatively small proportion of effective staff who are technically trained (Mathur, 1980). Issues of power will be manifested within this neoliberal management structure, where decision-making powers are held by experts and those at the top of the structure. Accountability is a problem, because of the lack of understanding of the implemented programme, frequent changes in personnel at the State and District level of leadership and delays in both bottom-up and top-down decision making. This may reflect inefficiency in the general administration (Varghese, 1996) and/or power struggles within the multi-level planning and implementation framework.

In the 64<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill that was adopted in 1992 as the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments, the constitutional mandate recognised that good governance would be possible only when local people participated and practised democratic decision-making concerning the quality of their lives. This recognition was enforced after the impact of the 1991 economic reform on education and the changes in the role of the State in education policy implementation under the neoliberal administrative structure (Tabb, 2002; Kumar, 2008). The following years saw an increased justification of community participation in education (Article 243, Government of India, 1992a). Local-level leadership (VEC, SMC, etc.) was adopted by many states and was therefore seen as being representatives of the collective (Meade and Gershberg, 2008). This research will aim to explore the barriers to and contributions by such community involvement, if any.

### **1.15 Educational policy and policy evaluation**

The meaning of educational policy, especially in developing countries, appears often to be taken for granted and can be easily witnessed as an unproblematic attempt to solve a problem, expecting the policy to make nationally driven interventions translate into practice (Ozga, 2000). Policy-makers can be unfair in failing to take into account the complexities involved in the policy enactment environment (L. Ball, 1997). Looking at the relationship between policy and practice

could provide a practical understanding of the challenges faced and the accommodations that may need to be made to make educational policy implementation successful (Dunleavy, 1987). Policy evaluations may be a way to create awareness and develop accountability. Reviews and visits to inspect institutions may unfortunately be viewed as occasions rather than systems that are used to shape and reshape the course of practice (Ranson, 2007).

Policy-making, monitoring and implementation might have to take into consideration the problems of redistribution and recognition in order to ensure inclusion to which active citizenship may contribute. Non-recognition could be a form of oppression (Taylor, 1992). The hidden injuries of class that appear to rule India and Orissa, in this context, may be remedied through assertion, rather than remedies that focus on amending partial outcomes of social arrangements without unsettling the underlying framework that produces them. Transformation remedies, on the other hand, might amend inequitable outcomes through restructuring generative frameworks if the framework does not institutionalise inequalities. This may be sustainable as it might amend the political-economic structures that hold them, which could ultimately change the conditions of living for everyone. Transformation remedies also consider democratic decision-making with regard to basic socio-economic priorities (Frazer, 1993). The above ideas may be successful if the State ensures that the methods that eliminate or reduce power struggles related to caste systems do not define opportunities for the marginalised. Understanding these aspects could contribute to this research by surfacing issues that are social, administrative and political.

### **1.16 The problem**

Since its inception in 2002, SSA has achieved only limited success in implementing its goals in rural sections of the country compared to urban (Shekhar, 2010; SSA, 2014; UNESCO, 2014). In the Indian stratified context, achieving social equality and democratic participation in policy implementation may require concerted planning and effort, as it addresses social and cultural issues that have historically prevailed. Changing attitudes and gaining confidence in the change agent can be difficult. Public involvement in the process of decision-making, management and accountability is important, but preparing the communities for such action is equally crucial to ensuring success in implementation (Meade and Gershberg, 2008; UNESCO, 2014). Local governments can be unfair in their redistribution (Accountability Initiative, 2012), as the political view of the need could be different and, at times, partial to certain pockets of society, causing disparities (Prud'homme, 1995).

When citizens have information on the quality of the provision, they might find ways to influence action towards implementation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the role of the State is to

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devolve adequate power, responsibilities and finances to elected bodies (in context, including SSA, VEC, *Sarpanch*) and ensure that pre-existing elitist trends are not preserved through the educational system. The role of the civil society is strengthened by the State through support, - creating awareness of the problems in the system, issues of inequitable provision of services and how provision in poorer communities is different from non-poor communities, citizens' voice may be strengthened. It may be equally important to educate them about the non-tangible outcomes of their involvement, such as developing and strengthening communication skills, building action networks, trust, developing innovative solutions and understanding issues through shared knowledge (World Bank, 2004). This may improve the accountability between those involved in provision of service such as politicians or policy-makers, the organisational providers responsible for managing service implementation, the front line service providers such as teachers and teacher administrators and the community. This would allow quality, efficiency and equity in the decentralised implementation process to rise.

Community participation in policy implementation is an area that has been brought into focus from 2008 by the Right to Education Act, since the community appears to have been given a crucial role in helping SSA through monitoring and ensuring availability of child entitlement and quality. Capacity building of these community leaders might be ensured through sensitisation and training. Despite two of the main goals of the reform being bridging gender and social category gaps, there appears to be an inadequate focus on exclusion, though it seems to have been manifested in different forms. When major issues such as these are neglected, the effect of such neglect might have on policy goals can be negative. The Right to Education Act states that inclusion and monitoring should be viewed as a cross-cutting issue and an integral part of the quality agenda (RTE, 2010).

Though the government-published statistics reveal successes in achieving the objectives of SSA, other research seem to contradict this, more so for the rural and tribal sections of society (Accountability Initiative, 2012). There appears little basic awareness of the policy among not only the members of the community but also among those involved in local administration and teachers employed under SSA (Rao, 2009; UNESCO, 2014). Almost all states and union territories have to have the School Education Management Committee constituted under SSA, to ensure community participation. A key role is being involved in micro-planning, mainly to develop a village education plan, school improvement plans and budgeting according to specific local needs. With no or little awareness of SSA, there seems negligible community participation, which is an indication of power struggles caused by the skills/expertise that implementers and community members face. This is reason to question with local and State leaders the available expenditures, facilities, implementation, monitoring and success statements and statistics documents (Rao,

2009). This is also reason to question the symbolic privileges that the community members hold, especially the marginalised, which increases bureaucracy.

This brings us to another problem caused by the lack of administrative supervision, a significant factor in the implementation of any programme (World Bank, 2008). Communities may be able to ensure good governance, as community members may be in a better position to handle problems than others involved in planning and decision-making but who are not part of the community (Bowels and Gintis, 2002). For example, community members may immediately address parents who do not send their children to school, regularly conduct spot checks of teachers' presence in the class or speak to local-level leaders in the government regarding issues related to SSA's implementation. Such collective efficacy of community members who are closer to the problem may be able to govern and handle problems in time if they are empowered and are able to take action on the actions of others.

### **1.17 Reasons to pursue this research**

The purpose of this research is to seek to understand if and how community involvement in the local-level leadership is effective and, if so, how it helps in the process of implementing SSA to ensure greater success in access and quality of education. Can the synergy and power of a community enable effective decision-making, planning, monitoring and make the government and service providers accountable, and thus improve access, enrolment, retention and quality education? Would its involvement cause disruption or can it make the current situation better? This may be an area that could enable policy-makers and implementers to gain a better understanding of why barriers exist in implementing SSA. It would help them to consider improved structures of decision-making, planning, monitoring and accountability that could permit equal opportunities for all children, in both rural and urban segments. The research will generate greater awareness among the rural communities on the importance of their knowledge of SSA and their right to involvement under decentralised governance through their interest, involvement in local-level leadership, and expectation of standards and accountability to ensure they receive the maximum benefit through SSA.

Research aims in relation to SSA in the rural communities of Odisha, India

This research will seek:

1. To explore current participation and understand the barriers to rural community involvement in local-level educational leadership for policy implementation.

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2. To understand and recognise the efforts/inattention of the government in adhering to policy mandates on community involvement in the implementation process.
3. To determine whether the policy-makers, government and rural communities working together in the decision-making policy process can increase meaningful and effective participation of marginalised communities in local-level educational leadership.

### Research questions

1. To what extent are the rural/tribal communities involved in the implementation process of SSA, particularly in local-level educational leadership through the SMC?
2. Are there groups/members of the rural community who are less active or are excluded in the local-level educational leadership structure of SSA?
3. What is the nature of response in terms of accountability procedures to support policy implementation made available to the community by the government?
4. What is required of policy-makers and the government to improve participation of the communities in the roles conceived for them in SSA?

## 1.18 Research participants

In order to manage the scope and focus of the study, I have limited the geographical scope to the State of Odisha, which is located in the north-east of India. The choice relates to three main factors. The politically influenced governance structures undertaken by local leaders appear to have a marked impact on policy implementation which, according to SSA, should be undertaken through community leadership. Moreover, I had the ability to gain access to rural villages and government officials through an NGO with whom I used to work. Furthermore, the literacy rate of Odisha is one of the lowest in the country. Odisha seems still to be under-achieving under SSA.

The literacy rate in India is 74.04 per cent. Odisha is among 10 of the 28 states with the lowest literacy rates, at 72.87 per cent (male 81.59%, female 64.01%). The rural population in India is said to be 67.8 per cent literate, and the urban population is 84.11 per cent literate. Odisha is the eleventh most populated state with 411,974,219 people. The sex ratio is 979 female per thousand males. Odisha also has a huge rural population of 83.31 per cent living in villages, where 12.94 per cent are children (79.6% male literacy and 60.7% female literacy) (Census of India, 2011; Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha, 2015). This data reveals the difficult conditions where SSA could make a difference, especially to the rural population.

The rural belts in the State of Odisha seem to have varying success in implementing SSA. Odisha is governed through a parliamentary system that functions through a representative democracy, as

so all the states in India. Involvement of community members aims to increase success in implementing SSA. Odisha has been working on increasing its literacy levels and has managed to do so in the past few years, but this has now been reported to have stagnated (UNESCO, 2014). Effective, rigorous and consistent leadership and community involvement in decision-making, budgeting, running and monitoring the programme are claimed in the local and District government reports available in the official online portal for education in Orissa ([www.opepa.in](http://www.opepa.in)). However, these do not appear to be reflected in the educational success rates that have been evaluated by external organisations (UNESCO, United Nations International Children's Fund-UNICEF) and from the gaps in inclusion that are projected in the national statistics (Census of India, 2011; UNESCO, 2014). Some of the main evidence is seen in the number of out-of-school children, who are not part of data that is considered as a main indicator for policy decisions. Enrolment may be the only indicator taken into consideration, and schooling status might change over the year and result in drop-outs, which may not be accounted for in the reports.

Some of these issues may be directly linked to the inability of local-level educational leaders in the community level to provide data in an explicit way, revealing the shortcomings, difficulties and actual status of children in the community in relation to schooling. Restricted leadership as a result of insufficient skills and other socio-cultural factors may have contributed to several problems. These are in relation to deployment of funds, meeting infrastructure needs, access, caste and gender differentiation, a lack of comprehensive monitoring and accountability systems, and an absence of community involvement, leadership or ownership of the programme (UNESCO, 2014, p. 72). The main objectives of SSA do not seem to be effectively met. This is evidenced by discrepancies in qualitative reports and statistical data (UNESCO, 2014) that arise due to the need for multiple indicators of continued schooling and reasons for dropout. Moreover, the definitions and methodologies of local-level educational leaders in the government and other data sources do not seem to reflect a comprehensive understanding of methods of data collection and analysis. These can be further disrupted by corruption among local leaders and government officials (UNICEF, 2014).

According to OPEPA, the term 'local-level leadership' refers to those involved in making decisions regarding the deployment of funds within the District (District project officer), BRCC, Cluster Resource Centre coordinator, school-level leadership (head teacher) and community-level leadership (parent-teacher association and village panchayat (otherwise known as the village council also involved in school governance) (OPEPA, 2012). Inclusion may refer to 'acting in accordance with fair treatment regardless of economic status, race, ethnicity, age, citizenship, disability, or sexual orientation' (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008, p. 28). Exploring these can be helpful in gaining a fuller rationale of a policy focus on educational quality

and inclusion at a context that is bound by such socio-cultural issues (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). The term 'rural India' here refers to areas with a population density of up to 400/km<sup>2</sup> with a minimum of 75 per cent of the male working population involved in agriculture and allied activities. Most of the rural population is illiterate or semi-literate (have attended a few years of elementary education) and is considered socially marginalised. These areas have surveyed boundaries, but no municipal board (National Sample Survey Organization, 2001).

The research utilises a qualitative case study methodology, as it is the best method to gather in-depth detailed data from various actors involved with this policy implementation structure. Two case studies were conducted in the rural sections of Odisha to gather evidence to assess the knowledge claims and the usefulness of a new model of policy implementation. Documents were analysed, based on their ability to provide evidence to support the data. The methodology will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. Chapter 4 will present the data, which will be interpreted through a thematic analysis and discussed as case studies. Conclusion and recommendations will follow in the fifth chapter.

### **1.19 Conclusion**

A government through the community, using community capabilities and resources to implement policy reforms with an emphasis on responsible self-help, may be able to bring greater success in educational involvement. This study aims to gain insights into claimed democratic community participation in the decision-making process of implementing SSA-RTE and explore how access to, and provision of, quality education can be achieved for the marginalised.

The literature review will therefore focus on two sections. The first is policy, exploring various decision-making models that contribute to an understanding of policy-making and policy implementation. A new model of policy process is developed, giving a contextual perspective through five stages of policy process, from problem identification to evaluation. The second is community and its contested nature, while exploring participatory democracy in policy implementation. The chapter will conclude with thoughts on empowered participatory governance with a focus on decision-making. The following chapter details the methods and methodology that were incorporated for this research. The findings and discussion chapter explains the results of the fieldwork, a discussion on which is incorporated into the various stages of the policy process. There are adjustments made to the new model resulting in four stages, which are further justified. The final chapter answers the research questions, details the contributions made through this research and makes recommendations that might be considered for further research.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature in the areas of policy and community. Policy may be generally viewed as the need for regulation, and the need for checks and controls to improve socio-economic and cultural conditions (Page and Jenkins, 2005). Policies may be specifically framed to impact various factors that contribute to societal improvement. One of the main factors might be education, and my focus will throw light on the involvement of local-level leadership in policy implementation, as outlined in Chapter 1. Policies, especially educational policies, are intended and implemented to benefit people, ultimately, and therefore may be community-based or community-driven. Although community involvement is reviewed as having mixed effectiveness in policy decision-making and implementation processes (Sabatier, 2007), it may be a crucial influence on policy decisions, especially in local-level implementation. This chapter is structured to provide an overview of policy definitions, policy as a political process, and the psychological process that actors within this process might go through as they individually and collectively influence policy decisions. A section on community follows, which leads to an understanding of how empowered and deliberated participatory governance may help local-level leadership in policy implementation.

The concept that I use while reviewing both policy and community is local-level educational leadership. This is involvement of local-level educational leaders in the process of policy implementation and the contribution this involvement might have on decisions with respect to implementation. In order to understand the influence of policy decisions on policy implementation, I explore models of policy processes, and the involvement and contribution of communities within these processes. This could help me to: gain a better understanding of: current participation and barriers to local-level leadership; identify members who are less active or excluded within the implementation structure; and view the accountability procedures from the government that are made available, to support me in arriving at the concepts upon which this research will be grounded.

### 2.2 Policy

Political scientists Hogwood and Gunn (1984) describe policy as a field of activity, a specified proposal, a common intent, a decision that requires legalisation and a programme of action for implementation. From these descriptions we see that the term 'policy' may be linked closely to

problems, and the strategies that may be required to solve them. Though, historically, policies may be seen to arise from conscious deliberations and reflections, they might also reflect various unconscious and emergent intentions (Page and Jenkins, 2005). Educational policies are promoted to increase the level of educational attainment to meet some of the challenging socio-economic inequalities faced, especially by developing nations (Glewwe, 2002).

### 2.2.1 Conceptions of policy

Key contemporary understandings of policy processes are also tilted towards an understanding of action and intervention. (McConnell and T'Hart, 2014).

- A policy consists of a web of decisions and actions (Easton, 1953; Anderson, 2014).
- A set of interrelated decisions concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation. (Jenkins, 1978; Hill and Varone, 2014).
- The concept of policy denotes deliberate choices of action or inaction (Smith, 1976; Kraft and Furlong, 2012).

Defining the concept of policy may suggest difficulty in treating policy as a definite and concrete phenomenon (Hill, 2009; Kraft and Furlong, 2012). The concepts above could suggest that policy may be a term that does not refer to a single decision that needs to be implemented but rather a form of generalised decision-making, where many decisions can be considered and the contexts for such decisions reviewed. The authors propose policy in terms of goals, means and consequences with the intent to accomplish a desired end. One might also recognise certain levels of ambiguity related to whether policy refers to more than the course of action that was projected, as the intention of policy-makers may not coincide with the operation of policy in the outside world. Policy, like decisions, could also include what is not being done (inactions) that may have an effect on the group/society. Thus, the boundary to study policy may be quite fluid (McConnell and T'Hart, 2014).

Policy may be a term that is used to indicate a formal decision or a plan of action that is adopted to achieve a certain goal, while public policy might refer to a formal decision or a plan of action that has been made by or has involved a State organisation (Richardson and Smith, 2002). We study public policy to know why certain social, economic and political decisions are made and the effect they have on society (McConnell, 2010: 149-153). Education policies may be categorised as public policies with a motivation that education occurs in public interest (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). There are many perspectives that governments and policy-makers take as they understand, respond to and make decisions regarding problems in various countries.

The meaning of policy is often seen as an attempt to 'solve a problem', expecting this policy to take on the form of a legislative policy text or nationally driven intervention. This suggests a more 'closed preserve' of the formal government apparatus of policy-making (Ozga, 2000: 42). I assume that policy is broadly and repeatedly contested as actors interpret it in different ways according to how they would see it applicable and feasible in their context. Therefore policies may not be a closed preserve within a governmental apparatus (S. Ball, 1994, 1997, 2008). Educational policies can thus also be seen as a bureaucratic instrument that may be used to administer public expectations for education. This suggests that education may no longer be discussed as broad visions and ideas but as what the government believes is possible which may often be convenient, and what actors and interest groups believe they can persuade governments to do (Kemmis, 1990). While creating pre-conditions for educational growth, the State's response to policy changes may be promoting centrally defined standards and implementation structures that connote a certain control over the implementers' decision-making powers.

I should like to reflect on the contested nature of policy, considering Easton's (1953), Anderson's (2014) and Jenkins' (1978), Hill and Varone's (2014) concepts that a policy may include a series of actions or a web of decisions. I wish to view it from the perspective of educational policy implementation to frame my definition of policy to support this research.

Policy decision networks for education may be involved in influencing or producing action. A web of decisions may include decisions that are made over a period of time, beyond the initial policy process. There may be fierce competition and power struggles between both macro- and local-level actors such as education and other related departments, Central and local governments, and many other elements in a complex system of the country where the policy is implemented. The concept of policy networks recognises the stark dichotomy between State/civil societies, where there may be State actors who are also part of the civil society. Although State actors living in the societies may have constant contact with the school and local-level educational leadership that may represent a deep educational interest or need, developing the interest of the State actors over such interests or needs may be difficult, owing to the political interests that may be weaved into policy interests. The changing political interests of State actors influence actions, changing the policy decisions of action from time to time (Smith, 1993). As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, the response of the State and its leadership to policy changes will be reflected through the decisions, the power deployed within the decentralised implementation structure and the kind of support that is offered to implementers at community level. Educational policy initiatives may therefore be a State response, in the shape of a reform, and presented as a plausible response to social and economic changes/needs. Policy reforms presuppose legitimacy and, therefore, may request support for the proposed ideas. In this way the State may not be neutral to the changes

occurring in society. We may thus recognise that the State supports a few changes in policy, while preventing others.

As pointed out by Smith (1976) and Kraft and Furlong (2012), policy analysts should examine and analyse policy inactions to support an understanding of the dynamics of a policy process. Implementation of policy may be viewed as an association between production of policy and policy practice. Policy is practised under a complex social environment, which could cause a part of the intended policy goals not to converge with local interests and/or needs (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Anderson, 2014). Implementation may be promoted or stifled by the traditional preoccupation of individual roles and capacities in a policy process that may be bound by culture and social expectations, and compatibility of values and ideologies that may vary with different actors and changing political agendas (Cairney, 2012). At the local-level, this could be caused by restricted problem-solving capacities, inadequate information on which to base decisions and expensive or low-quality evaluation that may result in inadequate/incomplete/misleading information. Power in communities to implement goals and carry out roles assigned to each actor is used based on its ideologies, which will determine the extent of goals that the community achieves. Therefore outcomes may contribute to policies changing incrementally, as these factors may simplify decision-making processes and limit the alternatives that could be considered. It could even lead to ignoring the consequences that the possible policies may bring (Hill, 2009). Such capacities, information, outcomes and decisions suggest that policies are dynamic, leading to changing definitions of the issue they were initially formed to address. Policy decisions at the local level may be precarious. As a consequence, there may be unpredictable outcomes due to the intricate interrelationships of the contextual factors that contribute to opposing or different interests, linguistic ambiguities and the various player involved in the implementation process and policy management structure (Ball, 1994, 2012).

From the above discussion, we can see that policy processes, especially implementation processes, are complex and challenging. For this study, I define policy as a course of action or inaction planned and implemented through a web of formal and informal decisions, which are influenced by perspectives of governments and policy makers about specific goals, and the means of achieving them within a specified period to impact a specific problem in a country.

### **2.2.2 Summary**

Policy is thus seen as the declared objective that a government or political party seeks to achieve and preserve in the interest of the people. When policy decisions and implementation systems are dominated by political agendas, there may be results with differing effects on different

communities. With decisions and actions of local-level implementers being influenced by political actors and groups, some sections of the society may be more successful in achieving policy goals than others, depending on various factors (Page and Jenkins, 2005) which will be discussed in the following sections.

We may also draw from the overview and from the policy conceptions of McConnell and T'Hart, 2014, Easton (1953), Anderson (2014), Jenkins (1978), Hill and Varone (2014) and Smith (1976), and Kraft and Furlong (2012) that policy process reflect objectives influenced by hidden agendas of the different actors and how they would like others to view their support/efforts, when they refer to the term 'policy' (Hill, 2009). Policy decisions may be made at every level, frequently by powerful actors without much or, at times, any involvement of the beneficiaries. The decision-making process may be a key factor to consider for understanding the actors, their agendas, the methods of implementation and the need for regulation, checks and controls. This may also imply that policy may not be a single outcome or event, but it may appear a cycle that is steered by power, interactions between institutions, ideas and interests (John, 1998; Kraft and Furlong, 2012).

### **2.3 Policy models**

Policy analysts have developed various perspectives that may support a critical analysis of the motivations and decisions of various actors and policy processes. Within educational policy implementation, the actors involved in the implementation process may contribute to the way policy decisions may develop and work towards policy outcomes. Not every actor's influence may be equal, as conflicts and contradictions in perspectives and interests may be inevitable resulting in unequal benefits within different sections of the society (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Anderson, 2014). In this section, I provide an overview of rational and political models and concepts. This will enable inferences from the discussed models and concepts to support the development of a new model that reflects the involvement of local-level leadership within the policy implementation process.

The policy cycle developed by Lasswell (1956) assumes that rationality may not be a feasible basis for a policy process, as it assumes a linear process. The step-by-step approach of the policy cycle assumes a linear process that might rarely be possible (Dunn, 2015). As discussed, actions may occur erratically in the policy implementation process, problems may be linked to policy ideas that might support political interest, and implementation is usually carried across a political domain. It may not be accurate to state that decisions must take place only at a certain stage in the policy process, as problems may be inevitable at any stage during implementation (Kingdon

and Thurber, 1984; Hill and Varone, 2014). This assumption leads me to explore other perspectives of political models of policy processes using the institutional analysis framework and the multiple streams perspective. Politicians and bureaucrats may be lenses that refract the various pressures, questions, problems and options for policies that stem from countless internal and external sources (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963; Anderson, 2014; Kraft and Furlong, 2012).

With the research focusing on the participation of local-level leadership within SSA's implementation process, I will also examine the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups within the community, who are or arguably ought to be involved through these complex, politically bound policy processes.

### **2.3.1 Institutional analysis and development**

Institutional analysis and development (IAD) is a framework that evolved out of research on political theory and policy analysis. It identifies the various significant structural variables that are present in institutional arrangements, where the values of variables differ from one institutional arrangement to another. I concentrate on two important aspects of the 'action situation' and 'action arena' (Ostrom, 2011), which is relevant to my research focus on involvement of local-level leadership in policy implementation. The action arena contains an action situation (problem) and actors. IAD in this respect focuses on the action situation that might lead to interactions between the various actors in the process and the outcomes of such interaction. It also helps to explore the action situation that could assist in specifying how one analyses the actors operating at that level (Ostrom and Hess, 2005). The framework helps to see how different governance systems that may be followed in the same District may enable actors to solve problems democratically. The framework could help organise diagnostic, analytical and prescriptive capabilities, taking into account the past efforts of the policy or reforms (Ostrom, 2011). IAD will help this research to identify inbuilt neoliberal governmental systems that might include or exclude members of the community through the opportunities for interaction between the actors in the different stages of implementation. The power struggles within system between the actors and between the various stages that might be institutionalising issues of power and exclusion can be understood.

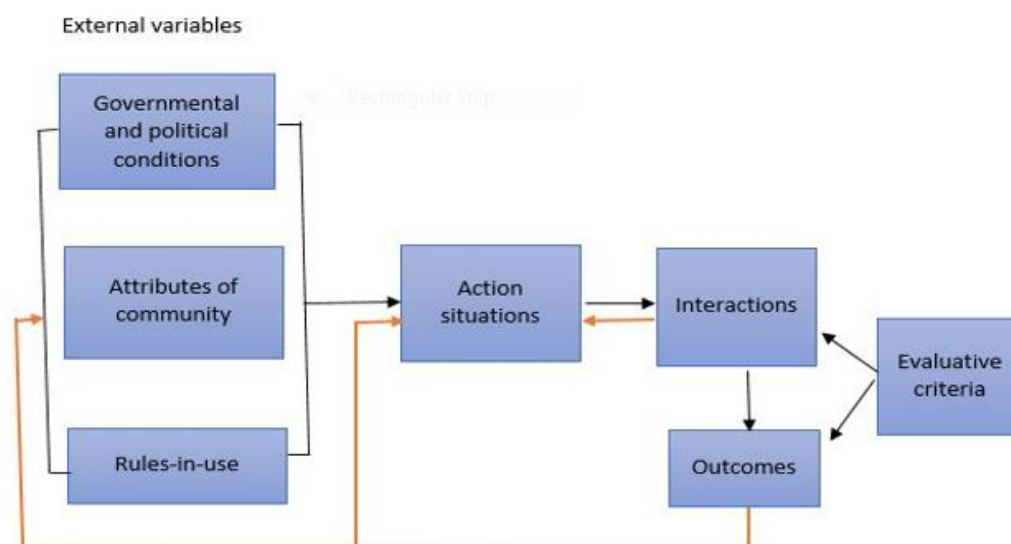


Figure 2.1 A framework for institutional analysis. Adapted from Ostrom (2005, p.15)

I would like to emphasise the right half of Figure 2.1 and the identification of action situations, the subsequent patterns of interactions and outcomes, and their evaluation. The problem could be at the operational tier (local-level implementation), where the actors may interact based on the incentives that they may receive to produce outcomes. Examples of operational problems include: exploring why the implementation of SSA differs in various District and village levels; evaluating those actors who coordinate and act as a link between the schools and government offices; and investigating how investment in training, monitoring and evaluation capacities might affect involvement of local-level leadership. Such an evaluation can identify issues of power in micropolitics of policy implementation.

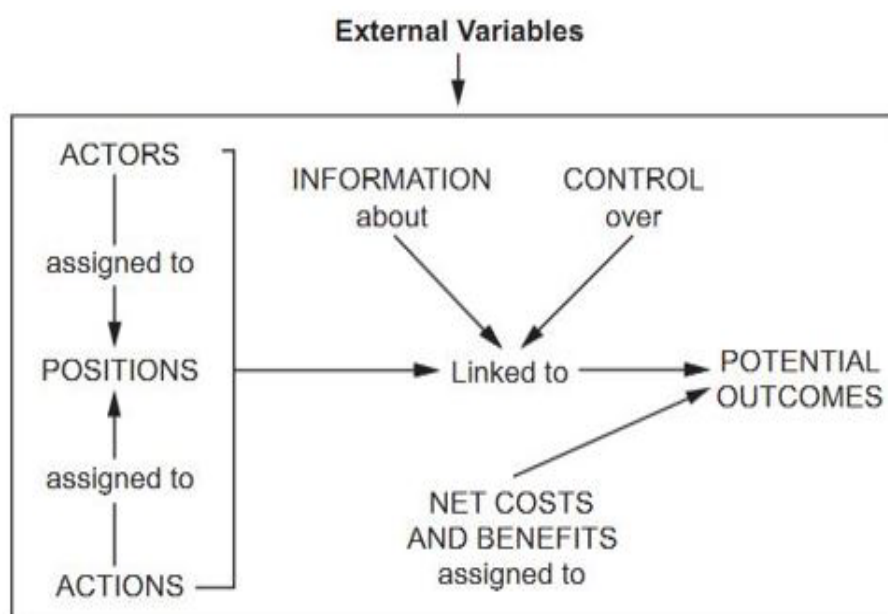


Figure 2.2 Internal structure of an action situation. Adapted from Ostrom (2005, p.33)

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The problem may also be at the tier where there is collective choice of problems and related decisions. Policy-makers with a constrained set of collective-choice rules may make decisions. The problem could also be at the constitutional tier, where the decisions are made regarding who is eligible to participate in policy-making, and regarding the rules that may be used to undertake such decisions. I draw parallels from problems linked to collective choice and the possible issues in the constitutional tier with decision-makers in the local-level leadership (Figure 1.2) to understand their contribution within the decentralised decision-making and implementation process (Ostrom and Hess, 2005). This would help in drawing a perspective on the efforts these actors commit in adhering to policy mandates on inclusion and achieving policy goals as well as the role of the State in ensuring empowerment and making structural adjustments to support inclusion.

IAD suggests that the first step in analysing a problem is to identify a conceptual unit called the action situation. This may be used to describe, analyse, predict and explain the behaviour within the institutional structures, and their functional arrangement. The framework assumes four groups of variables in this situation: the resources that the actors can contribute to the situation; the assessment of actors towards the state of the actions that may be decided; the ways actors collect, process, retain and use knowledge and information; and the processes that actors use to make a choice of actions to be implemented (Ostrom, 2011).

Thus, IAD enables evaluation of outcomes to take account of both outcomes and the processes of achieving them. Redistribution inequity may also cause actors to be less accountable to the communities that they serve. Actors may observe conformance to morality and adaptability when outcomes may or may not be acceptable in the community, making the policy difficult to adapt. These decisions may affect the operational decision-making structures that would, in turn, directly impact communities.

### **2.3.2 Multiple streams perspective**

The multiple streams (MS) perspective is drawn from the interaction between institutions and agency in order to explain the working of policy processes in organised anarchies with several participants, opaque technologies and unclear preferences (Kingdon, 1995). MS reflects a neoliberal system where there is room for inequalities to be institutionalised through external institutions involved in the implementation process who are more profit driven, concentrating efforts in some areas and not all. MS has been used to study agenda setting in education (Lieberman, 2002) and has been a useful tool in examining policy implementation in a democratic set-up where authority and power are transferred from higher to lower levels of governments



(Ridde, 2009; Faguet, 2014). The focus of this research is on examining policy implementation in a politically led environment where local-level leaders, especially in marginalised areas, work through ambiguous conditions. MS may therefore support the understanding of agenda setting and the involvement of local-level leaders in decisions and actions regarding implementation of an educational policy in the different policy phases that MS prescribes.

MS often raises questions regarding public policy agenda setting (determinants of the emergence of some ideas over others and the choice of governments in using certain ideas for public policy formulation) by assuming a temporal order. This is the adoption of alternatives, depending on when policies are made, and proposing a theory of political manipulation through the positional power that political actors hold, which could promote discrimination between leadership in the upper and lower levels of the management structure. The perspective also identifies three streams flowing through policy systems: problems; policies; and politics. Each has significant dynamics and rules (Kingdon, 1995). MS views choice as a collective output that is a result of the push and pull of several factors, especially ambiguity, which is a situation that lacks clarity. Local-level educational leaders implementing SSA work in a politically influenced management structure that may give rise to issues of equity/exclusion at the local level segregating the actors/leaders involved into superordinates and subordinates within their own groups. This can further condition tokenistic positions of elected leaders. This may be due to the political and authoritarian selection of choice regarding problems and decisions regarding implementation (Kingdon, 1995). In addition, I have established my assumption earlier about policy processes not being linear (Lasswell, 1956; Dunn, 2015). Implementation often deviates from the plan as the needs and intensity of issues differ according to the context.

MS deals with policy-making under ambiguous conditions, which is a state of having several perceptions about a single condition or phenomena (Feldman, 1989; Zahariadis, 2014). Under the condition of ambiguity there is no clarity on what the problem is, as there may be no way to reconcile one particular way to view a condition, which in turn may create vagueness, stress and confusion (March, 1994). With the local-level educational leaders interacting with each other in specific arenas within the implementation process (school, community, *panchayat* or District level), strategies and potential for manipulation of every actor may lead to negotiated decisions by coupling problem and policy agendas or politics and policy agendas (Ridde, 2009). Therefore, information may not easily be classified as relevant or irrelevant. In this situation, choices made by local-level leaders may be focused on making sense of the situation rather than solving problems of implementation (Weick, 1979; Zahariadis, 2014). Information may be requested and produced, but may not be used for decision-making (Feldman, 1989).

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Though, from the outside, the political view might seem to satisfy only self-interest, political manipulation is seen to aim at providing meaning, clarification and identity. Policy entrepreneurs clarify meaning for policy-makers who have problematic preferences in the midst of ambiguity (March, 1994). This aspect is distinctive in MS, unlike other theories that employ rationality or persuasion. Unlike rationalists, who may assume individuals to be utility-maximisers engaging in clear and consistent ways to satisfy self-interest, and constructivists who conceive policy-making to be driven by the social construction of identity and meaning and persuasion, MS uncovers rationality by including mid-course adjustments in policy decisions for implementation (Zahariadis, 2003; 2014). This differentiates those with power and status who manipulate from those who are manipulated – for example, leaders chosen from the community.

MS has five structural features, as listed below, which will be further discussed in the following section in the light of local-level educational leadership.

Problems are what policy-makers and citizens see as the needs to be addressed. The framework recognises that identification of problems may be guided by people's values and beliefs, and that problems may be categorised without comparing current and past performance (Sabatier, 2007).

Policy stream includes a group of ideas competing to win acceptance in the policy networks (mostly bureaucrats, congressional staff, researchers and academics in think tanks) where policy makers and experts operate based on their power to influence decision in these policy networks. Ideas debated in policy forums may survive unchanged, may be combined with other ideas to form fresh proposals or be rejected, based on feasibility and acceptability. Proposals that may be considered difficult to implement or do not conform to the values of the policy-makers might have a low chance of surviving this process (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2014).

Politics includes the governmental mood. This may change frequently. Pressure group campaigns that respond to this mood may increase the pressure on politicians to respond, leading to administrative turnover, which can affect choice in local-level implementation (Zahariadis, 2003; 2014). Local-level leadership at the community level in such situations is left with little or no decision-making power or choice but to implement the changes brought in. Outcomes of such decisions and implementation can be detrimental to achieving educational and social goals.

The policy window is a point in the process when choices are made, coupling the three streams at a critical moment to advocate a proposal or to draw attention to special problems. There is a belief that problems might arise when policy entrepreneurs use the wrong policy windows to pursue their goal.

Policy entrepreneurs are governmental actors or individuals from the local community who attempt to couple the problem and policy streams with the political stream, when problems remain unsolved. They are known to be power brokers who manipulate problem preferences to form a new policy focus.

The links to the various streams are further discussed in Section 2.5.

## 2.4 Stephen Ball's policy cycle

The policy cycle developed by Steven Ball after his earlier work on policy analysis (Ball, 1990, 1994; Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995) has a non-linear, interactive approach to understanding policy processes. The policy cycle is explained in three contexts: of influence, production of policy text and of practice suggesting a representation of localities where policy maybe initiated, articulated and rearticulated (Ball, 1994). There are subsequent additions of evaluative frameworks in terms of first-order policy effects (outcomes/impact of policy practice) that are measured against goals specified by the policy, and its second-order effects, which are the political strategies/tactics to work against inequalities and injustice (Lingard and Sellar, 2013). The need to globalise the policy cycle was recognised by Ball (Ball, 2007), resonating with the idea of an emerging field of global education policy that recognises the role of international organisations and multilateral agencies in policy construction and in setting expectations on national education systems (Langard and Rawolle, 2011).

We can understand the insights of policy analysis from Ball's (1994) definition of policy. He states that:

Policy is... an economy of power, a set of technologies and practices which are realised and struggled over in local settings. Policy is text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map onto the 'wild profusion' of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. Policy as practice is 'created' in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom. Thus policy is no simple asymmetry of power. (Ball, 1994, pp. 10-11)

Here, Ball gives us a picture of how policies are simplified by policy makers but, in practice, policy production inside the State is complex and unpredictable. He considers the impact of globalisation on educational policy by making a distinction between the policy specificities. However, he also reflects the broader convergences of policy rhetoric and policy problems that need to be addressed at national, State and school-level, and so on, in translated forms.

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In addressing policy issues, Ball argues that national systems face new problems, but he also implies unimagined solutions through policyscape: 'a landscape densely laden with policies created in the past that have themselves become established institutions, bearing consequences for governing operations, the policy agenda, and political behavior' (van der Heijden and Kuhlmann, 2016, p. 1) and the significance of neoliberalism as one of the reasons for the solutions that affect the State policy-producing structures and their ideas (Lingard and Sellar, 2013). Ball's re-emphasis on the State in 'Education plc' (Ball, 2007) portrays the State within the global economy to be producing a new structure, describing the State as a 'commissioner and monitor of public services and broker of social and economic innovation, rather than deliverer or even owner and funder' (Ball, 2007, p. 5). Within this space, he discusses the occurrence of multiple privatisations that are involved across the education sector, distorting the divide between the public and private institutions that are a part of the policy creation community, drawn from Mahony, Menter and Hextall (2004). This view of Ball addresses the role of the State, which was seen as a weakness in his earlier contribution, dismissing the idea of State holding power (Ball, 1994). Ball also documents the rescaling of policy in agenda setting, planning and implementation for educational policy, while building new relationships with the global, national, State and other supportive organisations (Ball, 2007, 2012).

Ball's work on policy has contributed to understanding the public/private relationship within the policy cycle in education. Ball's policy cycle takes into account the fundamental attributes of a policy process that resonate with my discussion of policy models (Chapter 2, section 2.3), where he records: the presence of various actors in the different stages of the policy process; the contextualisation of policy (policy interpretation); and the complexity of relationships within the structure, external institutions and actors. The policy cycle broadly covers national and State influence on policy text and offers possibilities for new sociology in education policy analysis in a neoliberal context. Political response and actions within public/private relationship that occur within the process could be further addressed in the policy cycle (Lingard and Sellar, 2013). The issues of power within policy process only implicitly indicate the power relations that arise. This is seen with the addition of political strategy to the policy cycle, along with the context of outcomes and when Ball quotes Ong on the need to 'explore new spaces of entangled possibilities' (Ball, 2012, p. 90).

Although the role of the State was recognised by Ball in his later works, the power that the State holds to control the policy outcomes does not seem to be sufficiently acknowledged. Despite the democratic process giving room for policy interpretation/translation by policy implementers at the local level (in context, District and community level), the accountability for the achievement of policy goals may be held against the State government. For this reason, the State might be more

controlling of decisions that are made at the local level (District and communities). It is also important to point to the power elite within the State – in context, politicians, government bureaucrats, government officials, intellectuals and other members of the community – to whom power (in context, decision-making, resource allocation/access) might be confined (Lingard and Sellar, 2013) within the context of practice where the policy is interpreted/translated/contextualised (Rosie, 1992). Within the same context, there is little said about the disruptive strategies of political actors and other policy entrepreneurs (Hatcher and Tryona, 1994).

The political model of the process of policy implementation that I have developed (presented in Section 2.7) is one that helps us to understand policy implementation within the marginalised context of developing nations, particularly when policies mandate community participation. Therefore, this new model takes into account specific groups within the policy process, including political actors and community members. It considers the gaps within the different stages of the policy implementation structure that may be barriers to inclusion and meaningful participation of community participation, while giving room to uncover the way that power is distributed, held and used to influence decisions and practice within a neoliberal context.

## **2.5 Discussion of the policy concepts**

Although decision-making is viewed as the heartbeat of leadership (Elsass and Graves, 1997) and both the policy concepts discussed earlier analyse decisions made by actors in the various stages of the policy process, I will explore the transferability of the discussed concepts to the involvement of local-level educational leaders in policy implementation. I will particularly consider how the involvement of local-level leadership is viewed and carried out by the actors involved in the decentralised policy implementation structure. The discussion will help draw ideas and support the development of a new model that might be useful to base my research on.

IAD and MS are based on political frameworks that fit this research, as SSA may be implemented through the State government and their local- and District-level elected representatives. These representatives hold critical or honorary positions in the institutions involved in implementing SSA, thus have a significant influence on the implementation (Chandrashekhar, 2014). In such a political model, the presence of political behaviour and power across policy processes may cause problems with discipline and ambiguity within the implementation process, and with decisions due to conflicting ideas, priorities and power struggles. This may be seen in this research through the involvement of several agencies (Department of Water and Sanitation, local Non-Governmental Organisations, Municipal Corporation, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, etc.) and interest groups at all stages of implementation. These concepts recognise

the biases and personal agendas that actors may base their policy decisions on (Green-Petersen and Walgrave, 2014). Therefore, the quality of decisions and achievement of goals and plans may be compromised with significant decisions made by external organisations rather than community members addressing immediate issues that require immediate attention. Success may therefore be seen in small proportions over long periods of time (Sabatier, 1991).

The issue of identification of shared norms and strategies of the various actors suggested in the IAD perspective could translate into instructions for policy implementation at the various levels. SSA's democratic set-up includes local-level leadership with representation from the rural communities. The inclusion and participation of these community members in the roles assigned may be low due to their interpretations of roles and responsibilities. This may be caused by the lack of clarity and specificity of policy documents. Unclear or misinterpreted roles could lead not only to confusion within the management and implementation system at the local level but to difficulties in accountability in such circumstances. This, in turn, may not allow actors involved within the implementation process to be held accountable. The model focuses on problems that may arise in the implementation process, which is also what this research is exploring. These are the gaps and barriers at the different stages of policy implementation created either through the management system, the actors and their decisions which might limit or exclude community members from the implementation process. The values, resources employed, information and beliefs of actors at different stages of the policy process are specifically studied through IAD. Therefore, giving substantial importance to the actors involved in the various stages of SSA's implementation may be an area to consider, especially when evaluating marginalised communities. This may bring to fore the related socio-cultural factors that affect behaviour, decisions and reasons for inclusion/exclusion of local-level leaders, especially those from marginalised communities.

MS identifies problems, policies and politics and recognises how these streams are coupled together at the different stages of implementation. The research problem seeks to understand the barriers to the involvement of local-level leaders in policy implementation. Therefore understanding the dynamics of the means to successful and effective participation when policy, problems and politics are coupled could shed light on the barriers and gaps.

## **2.6 Decision-making model**

After analysing different concepts of policy processes, I am able to state with more confidence that decision-making is the hub around which the different stages of the policy process revolve. For this reason, it is important to understand the meaning of the term 'decision' and what

contributes to various people's choices. I will draw from a management perspective to provide an overview. From the decision-making model and explanations, this section will attempt to draw parallels to the decision processes of local-level educational leaders in SSA's implementation process. A management perspective on decision-making might be a way to understand how individuals resort to strategic and incremental decision-making in a situation where there are goals and a greater demand for accountability and responsibility.

The garbage can model of choice (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) is discussed to characterise a management perspective, as policy goals and management goals may require a harmony of values and interests between all the groups and individuals', organisational processes and expertise involved. This may not always be possible, especially in democratic policy implementation structures. This discussion will give us a view of how decisions are made for policy implementation in organised anarchies (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972).

### **2.6.1 'Garbage can' model of choice**

The 'garbage can' model provides an approach to explore governance at a place not governed by authority and hierarchy. Rejecting conventional linear models of decision-making in organisations, it assumes that in many situations decisions may be a result of unanticipated convergence of opportunities, individuals and ideas. The model appears to be useful to understand decision situations that are bigger than individual organisations and it could be made applicable in individual organisation where the organisation is the principal player (Peters, 2002). For this reason, this model is suitable for this research as we look at local-level educational leaders, some of who are members of several committees within SSA's implementation structure. The garbage can model has been used to understand governance in political environments where there usually are complex and less-defined decision situations, which is another perspective that fits this research. In context, decisions made by policy-makers are adapted to fit both the local and political needs. SSA's decentralised management structure fits several actors who may bring their personal/political agendas to every stage of decision-making in the process of policy implementation. The garbage can model may help us to understand the complexities of the involvement of actors and their decision-making process, which could bring more clarity to the actions that follow. It is useful for this research, as it helps to understand: 1. the considerations of the actors within complex, inconsistent and ill-defined preferences pairs with the research context; 2. Illiterate or semi-literate community members and other local-level leaders are involved at different times at different levels, making decisions on a trial and error basis. The model of choice considers problematic preferences and unclear technology that will support my research context; 3. Goal ambiguity (also referred to by Ball, 1994, 2012), and making choices in a

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situation where there are few shared goals, are issues that may be similar to those that arise from this research. The 'garbage can' model of choice thus explores several issues and the underlying power struggles within the decision-making process that are similar to the ones that I hope to explore and understand through this research.

Organised anarchies (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) of decision-making may be characterised by three general properties. Problematic preferences may have no coherent structure for organisational choice, but resemble a loose selection of ideas where preferences of decisions may be a result of actions, instead of actions being based on the problems that may need to be addressed. Unclear technology may be a situation when organisations work on the basis of learning through trial and error. Actors might be unclear about organisational processes. Fluid participation refers to a situation where the members of an organisation might commit to different levels of effort and time. The participants and decision-makers for a given choice may also vary unpredictably.

This theory might be particularly relevant to public and educational organisations. At any point in time, the theory could be used to describe an activity of any organisation but might not be able to describe all the organisational activities. The reason may be because activities that are based on a loose selection of ideas may vary with changing procedures and preferences. This makes it difficult to gain a clear understanding of all the organisational activities. It is important to understand how decisions are made with ambiguous and unshared goals, and little or no negotiation, as would be the case with the different levels of local educational leadership (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972).

Negotiations could lead to interpretation of what is being done and what has transpired while in the process of executing the activity. Social decision-making may involve two or more parties, such as in the conflicting ideas of a government-appointed head teacher and the members of the SMC, combining the disparate points of view into a single decision. Within the SMC, in the context of this research, it is more likely that final decision-making power is exercised by the head teachers (expert), male members (gender differences practised) and those from the upper caste (caste defined opportunities). When actors come to an agreement over a decision through a process of discussion/persuasion/ coercion, one might be able to observe that some actors/leaders are able to exercise their powers over the final decision more than the others. This situation could also leave the various actors with conflicting decisions of political leaders, which continuing implementation with no room for other actors to discuss or reach an agreement (Zartman, 1977). Such actions may bring together a collection of choices that seek problems/situations that require decision-making; solutions that may seek situations for which



there might be an answer, and decision-makers looking for work. Such a view of choice may disclose the way in which the meaning of choice changes over time.

Processes in an organisation could be understood by looking at choice opportunities as a garbage can into which participants dump their problems, and the solutions when they are generated. The mix of cans available and the label on each determines the mix of garbage that can be expected in a single can, the kind of garbage produced in each can, and the speed at which garbage is collected and removed.

When decision-making is viewed on the basis of this theory, there may be complexities in the interplay of the problems generated, the personnel deployed, the solutions developed and the opportunities made towards an agreed choice at all the levels of the local-level educational leadership (Figure 1.2). There may be familiar organisational features in the structure that stem from a combination of deliberate managerial planning, independent and collective learning and replication.

The decision style may be categorised in three ways, also portraying the underlying power struggles. These are by resolution, when problems are resolved in the time after which they are worked on. Another is by oversight, when a fresh choice is introduced to a problem that is attached to other choices and, when there is the ability to make the fresh choice swiftly, it may be undertaken without its consideration. This style has significant possibilities for powerful actors/groups making decisions with little or no consultation with lower-level leadership (exclusion). The final category is by flight, when choices continue to be implemented, despite being unsuccessful, until a more attractive choice comes along. Unsuccessful choices may take longer to be resolved or changed due to the inability of leadership in the lower levels to exercise their decision-making power. Some choices involve a combination of flight and resolution, so only part of the problem is solved.

There might be a tendency for decision-makers to find problems and vice versa through choices, as the process of decision-making may often be interactive. There are greater chances for important problems and problems that surface early to be solved than those that are less important and those that take more time to surface. It could also be that unimportant problems are resolved as they may be made by resolution, unlike important problems that may have choices of solutions made by oversight and flight. This may also mean that the success of choices is concentrated among those that may be considered least important (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972).

The garbage can model of choice may be helpful to understand local-level governance in a political environment. It will provide a useful method of interpreting changes that happen in the governance structure and issues of power within decision making, which in turn may help in understanding the involvement of local-level educational leadership.

### **2.6.2 Discussion on the decision-making model**

Despite decision-making being a complex process, it is a fundamental aspect of every stage of policy implementation. Decisions are to be implemented in whole societies and nations, and might have the potential to enable socio-economic growth or have a detrimental effect that could take years to correct. It may therefore be important for macro-level policy-makers, Central and local governments and communities to be responsible for the decisions that are made. They may need also to be accountable for the consequences. Internal and external influences in a decision process might have to be taken into careful consideration before a decision is made legal.

Using the garbage can model of choice (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972), we may be able to understand the intentions of the various actors involved in the policy process, their independent and interdependent agendas, ethical issues and the rationality that they bring into decisions. The promotion of community participation in decision-making within policy implementation may be understood when considering the decisions to be made by local-level leadership in ambiguous situations, with politically driven agendas, in the midst of power struggles and having to meet policy goals in a limited timeframe. This may give us a clearer picture of the study as we will be able to consider all actors working on problems and solutions while trying to reach the goals.

The purpose of reviewing the policy- and decision-making models and concepts was to gain a deeper understanding of policy processes, the issues within policy processes and also to understand local-level educational leaders. The aspects of the models and concepts that give a clearer perspective have been drawn out to form a new model. This will be used as a tool to understand the complexity of decision-making within a policy implementation process. The new model is further explained in the following section, using it to understand and bring perspective to the research aims and objectives. Following this explanation, the model will be used to explore community participation within the policy implementation process. Following the fieldwork, data analysis will be undertaken using the new model as a tool to explore the ground realities through reflections from the data.

## 2.7 The new model

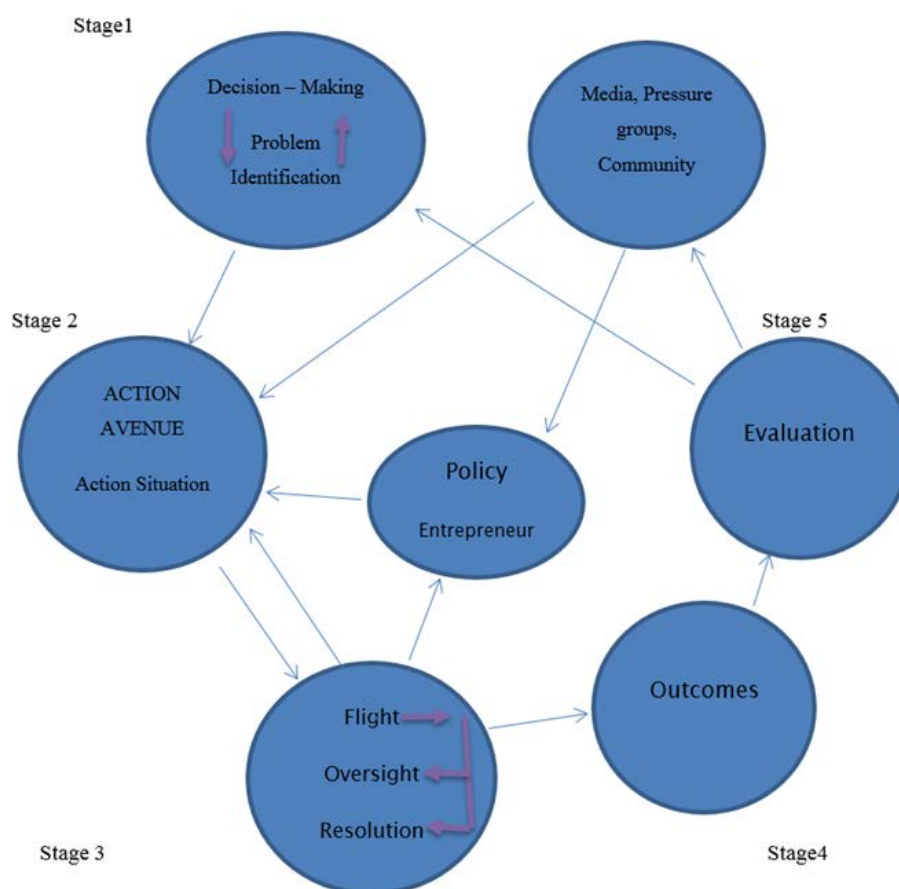


Figure 2.3 New model: A political model of the process of policy implementation

Figure 2.3 has been conceptualised based on the political perspectives of policy and decision-making. The model has taken into account the practical aspects of policy implementation that emerged from the literature review. The discussion of the different stages in the policy process will focus on the involvement of local-level educational leaders within this process. The model also encompasses stages where macro-level leaders are involved, which will also be discussed briefly.

### 2.7.1 Stage 1 – Decision Making

Drawing from the garbage can model (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972), Stage 1 provides a visual representation of how political systems work with the problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation that I would like to incorporate in the new model.

The model proposes a policy process where: policy-makers at national level may bring their political influence; the national and international organisations involved directly or indirectly may bring their political/social agendas; and State-level administrators who implement policies may

include their political manifesto into policy goals and objectives. With the accommodation of agendas brought by the various actors involved, identification of new problems may be common.

The policy decisions made nationally or at the State level lead to the action avenue where policy decisions are implemented. Within SSA, the predetermined goals and structure for implementation signify the control that is being held centrally. Progress that would be checked against the policy goal being addressed to see if there is a significant deviation caused by implementers is another form of neoliberal governance control that is exercised. Issues of power may be manifested between decision makers and implementers. The freedom of democratic decision making and inclusion of community members is already limited by the national and State government. At this stage, there is a possibility of cyclical progression in the stage as actors, mainly from the State and District, engage in decision making leading to problem identification, and vice versa. When a decision is arrived at, it leads to a progression into Stage 2, the action avenue.

### **2.7.2 Stage 2 Action Avenue**

This stage has been adopted from the IAD framework (Ostrom, 2011). 'Action Avenue' is a complex conceptual unit within which lie two sets of variables – the action situation (problem) and the actors (local-level educational leaders). The interaction of these two variables may lead to problem explanation and prediction of actions that may be more contextualised, as leaders who are closer to the action arena or the communities make these decisions. Actions and priorities towards redistribution and equity could vary between government-level actors and community-level educational leaders with differences in values and other factors influencing their decisions. The priorities of leaders at the government and local level are based on need, but decisions to meet these needs still depend on their ideologies and power to carry out their decisions.

There is substantial importance given to actors in this stage. Decision-makers may mainly constitute politicians, District- and local-level educational leaders, information/knowledge providers (evaluators, researchers) and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries represent the communities where the policy is being implemented. Members of the community contribute through many significant ways (as discussed in the next section). Educational leaders, both governmental and community representatives who are involved in this implementation stage, may be involved with a motivation to satisfy their self/political/social/cultural interests and may have a significant influence on decisions and the way policy is implemented. This may expose the values and beliefs of the leaders, and the institutional arrangements that influence actors' behaviour as choices and

actions may depend on the assumptions, values, traditional beliefs, resources available, skill, information processing capacity and mechanisms employed to decide strategies.

Though there may be representatives from the community who should be involved in this stage, all may not be included. It may be that politicians, State and District level implementers are more involved in decision-making regarding implementation, than information providers and community representatives. The role of the State in ensuring the inclusion and deployment of power appears to be curtailed by member leaders of the State. The complexity in the environment of policy making and implementation could be the result of the varying number of actors (Lall, 2007). There may be direct impact on the education of children in the marginalised communities when the wrong policy decisions are taken and when local-level leaders do not have real powers to adapt decision to address issues that are real in their context. Such decisions may be repeated when outcomes in a time constrained situation are not considered, when information providers and/or evaluation reports are not considered, or where actors who are non-experts are involved in decision-making.

### **2.7.3 Stage 3 Decision Styles**

At this stage there may be fewer actors involved, mainly local-level educational leaders from the community level. That is, personnel deployed by a political party/school head teacher/District Education Office/NGOs/the community itself may also operate under the rules laid out by the policy for the governing bodies (SMC, VEC, panchayat). There may be constraints for the District educational authorities, who may be heavily influenced by political rule and power to comply with political goals more than the policy objectives and goals. We may see three kinds of decision styles during implementation, as proposed by the garbage can model (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972).

Flight is the stage in the implementation process where decisions are continued being implemented despite not being successful over a period of time. In the community level of policy implementation. This could occur when the policy being implemented has a defined time frame to achieve policy goals, such as SSA (10 years, extended to 15 years), making it difficult for local-level implementers to develop and execute all the needed changes. Although SSA was initiated in 2002, Odisha implemented it in most o districts only from 2003 (UNESCO, 2015). A new policy, which is decentralised in its governance, also makes serious effort in terms of training and restructuring its management and implementation structures. A lack of training among rural community representatives is observed in many evaluation reports (UNICEF, 2014; Rao, 2009; Kingdon, 2007). Decisions made in these situations may not be the best for the given problem. When evaluation is

de-emphasised, the choice may shift to addressing a new problem that may seem to need immediate attention, as seen with the changes in the EFA policy reforms in India (UNESCO, 2014). In context, despite community participation that is emphasised for policy implementation and within SSA, there may be several issues that surround the failure of active local-level leadership (such as SMCs constituting parents from the community), and yet it continues to be implemented without change or effective evaluation.

A policy that is implemented despite little improvement of the problem being addressed could lead to resolution. Political actors are also left with a limited period of time to fulfil their own agenda, as well as those prescribed for socio-cultural and economic development. Therefore, some decisions are left unchanged by actors who might be unable to apply their efforts to policy implementation.

New decisions may be activated for a problem that already has a choice attached to it. In context, the policy's mandate of women being chosen to be the panchayat head is a new decision that was introduced. This choice was made despite the heavy socio-cultural gender bias that may be practised in a society where women may be excluded from effective involvement in policy implementation. Evaluating the old choice that did not allow women to participate effectively, and making necessary changes to accommodate the old choice or completely remove it before a fresh choice is attached, might bring more success in implementation.

In all three decision styles, it may be important to note that the community, local organisations, NGOs and evaluators may have restrictions on the actions they might be able to introduce to control the problem. These may be in the form of: political agendas that limit efforts towards policy goals; pressure to fulfil policy goal requirements within a stipulated time that may be insufficient due to geographic location and other deep-rooted issues that have to be addressed first; and insufficient authority to make or execute decisions, although they may possess the expertise to carry out all these activities. Evaluators at this stage may not be encouraged as, when exposed, failures may reflect on the capacity of the political leadership. This could lead to the possibility of some choices having flight and resolution, a situation where some problems may be ignored while the remaining problems are solved. All three decision styles lead back to Stage 1 and the implementation process may thus continue.

### **2.7.4 Stage 4 and 5 Outcomes and Evaluation**

Decision styles have a direct impact on the outcomes of policy implementation and the consequences faced by the children and the community when we consider the educational and social goals of the policy. Evaluation may be one of the ways that government and funding

organisations ensure their accountability procedures within the implementation process. The analysis of actions/decisions and the interventions at each level may be visible when a rigorous evaluative system is made available. Ambiguities and possible manipulations may be determined through decisions and actors included within the process. An understanding of how the policies were translated and why, giving room for a greater understanding of the reasons for outcomes that may be different to those predicted, can be made possible through evaluation. Within a political process, if evaluations are planned and executed well, the bureaucratic processes that administer public expectations for education can be controlled through diagnosis, analysis, and prescription of the implementation process and outcomes.

Further, decision styles could lead to outcomes that are evaluated, the reports of which may trigger the media and the pressure groups (community, opposition government, funders, social and political researcher, etc.) to react in certain ways that may pressure the policy decision-makers to reconsider or change decisions. Communities may demand justice through strikes and refrain from re-electing the present government, opposition governments may use this as an opportunity to make new promises to resolve the problem, and funders may resort to restrictions in the availability of funding or may lay rules to encourage more accountability. These reactions might temporarily stop the implementation process and revert to stage 2 to cause changes in the action avenue. The third stage might also draw out new or special problems when there may actually be a need for fresh decisions to be made. This point is referred to as the policy window.

Policy window caused by new or special problems attracts policy entrepreneurs who may be able to clarify the meaning of the issue in focus for the policy makers who may have problematic preferences. Policy entrepreneurs may take the evaluated reports to address the policy window that might in turn influence the decision-making stage and the action avenue stage (Stage 2). Drawn from the multiple streams perspective, this stage highlights problems that are identified according to the values and beliefs of actors. It also emphasises the role of policy entrepreneurs who engage in manipulation. It may be that those policy entrepreneurs who are successful are closely linked to policy makers.

Outcomes from these stages could either cause a cyclical effect in the whole policy process or may lead to the policy implementation to come to a stand-still where a fresh policy may have to be introduced to resolve the problems transpired by the inefficient anarchical leadership that resulted in unproductive decisions and implementation structures. This being said, outcomes and evaluation will occur at every stage and between stages of policy implementation.

## 2.8 Summary of the discussion of the new political model

There is a task that is paramount and faces policy-makers, researchers and social scientists to test policy concepts at a variety of empirical settings, to refine and expand those that are successful or promising and develop new models to take the place of those that may be discarded.

The new model that I have developed also highlights the role of actors and how they consistently make, modify and/or change decisions based on the successes or failures observed in the various stages of the policy process. The effect of policy decisions in the macro level may have a significant effect on the involvement of local-level educational leadership in policy implementation. The new model may not be complete and can be developed further. There are other models of policy processes that may be more applicable, depending on the context. I will now look at educational leadership and management and explore the issues in leadership. This section leads on to present how communities, their culture, traditions and social positions have implications on the effectiveness of their involvement.

## 2.9 Educational leadership and management

Education institutions in India have been required by the World Bank (after the Education for All World Conference in Jonteim, Thailand) to make changes to their management structures and leadership to ensure that State schools are transformed into community-managed schools (Rajbhandari, 2011). Such changes were initiated to assure quality and access for all children through productive resource generation, resource mobilisation, infrastructure building and collaboration with donor agencies (Rajbhandari, 2007). Leadership is known to be associated with the ability to influence people and groups, directing their efforts to fulfilling a set of objectives (Virgil, 2012), and management associated with a focus on the role of organisation and group performance (Virgil, 2012). Different leadership approaches may be adapted in different situations. Leadership may be understood as a process of influencing people based on the leader's values and beliefs, leading the educational institution to achieving the goals previously set out.

I choose to focus on leadership, as my research studies the inclusion of and meaningful involvement of community members within rural communities in what I would like to refer to as local-level educational leadership (school management committee, village education committee, *Sarpanch*) in SSA (refer section 1.2). This section will therefore begin with a discussion on educational leadership within a neoliberal context and the issues surrounding it. Considering the role of the head teacher as conceived by SSA and the pivotal role that he/she plays, I explore the kind of leadership approaches that head teachers might have to adapt and how power is used to



influence the achievement of policy goals through local-level educational leaders. Finally, I consider leadership in relation to the members of the community in which this research is conducted.

### **2.9.1 Educational leadership and management in a neoliberal context**

Literature on leadership has shown a direct, reciprocal, mediated and positive relationship between effective leadership and organisational culture (Bush, 2010; Maringe et al., 2015) through the commitment of leaders and teachers; leadership and instructional organisation; and the direct reciprocal effects on organisational effectiveness (Huber and Mujis, 2010). Day et al. (2001) discuss several dilemmas in school leadership, one of which is the management of systems and leadership that relates to developing people. According to Leithwood et al. (2003), influencing other people to generate improvement, effectiveness and efficiency within the organisation is a part of leadership. It also involves creating a vision (Bush et al., 2011), working with and through others (Spillaine, 2005) and empowering them to achieve organisational goals (Leithwood et al., 2007). Considering the heterogeneity of the environments in which Indian rural schools are located and the imperative of quality and equity of access set by national and international policies, there are concerns about the inequalities that continue to exist, for example the disparity in access to schooling, retention of girls and those from lower castes in the rural and urban areas, as referred to in Chapter 1. Bush (2003) links management to implementation and leadership to values or purpose. Although there is a global interest in leadership and management because of its importance in successfully maintaining and developing educational institutions, there is less clarity on the most effective leadership behaviour to ensure the most favourable outcomes, especially in marginalised sections. According to Grace (1995), what educational and school leadership should and could be is the centre of political, educational and ideological debates. Traditional views and alternative forms of leadership, besides constructs of what proper school leadership is, by boards of education, governors, communities, critical theorists and so on, may be the reasons why educational leadership is widely documented with varying constructs. It is therefore necessary to look beyond the study of educational management and better understand what education leadership might be (Grace, 1995).

In the educational context, leadership often tends to be linked to administrative power and assumptions that pre-defined educational goals are achieved through effective leadership (Rosemary et al., 2002). According to Gunter (2014), educational leadership has become more closely associated with managerial approaches to leadership focused on organisational efficiency and control, with the rise of neoliberalism. Difficulties in reframing the understanding of leadership begins with the word 'leadership', as the concept brings to fore images of people in

authority possessing particular traits, skills and knowledge (Giles et al., 2010). Educational leaders live in a global world with social processes and institutions that encourage new forms of individualism, contributing to more selfish modes of living. Therefore, as educational leaders, they have a greater responsibility to use effective leadership methods and processes to ensure that learning experiences transform the lives of the children in school and, in the long run, contribute to the common good (Summerville, 2000). This requires educational leaders to be morally, socially and educationally responsible for making a difference to the wider community. This would ensure that the accountability of educational leaders is not just judged against external benchmarks and standards but also against their social responsibility. Social responsibility here refers to being conscious of and acting on values of impartiality and ethical standards while challenging unethical practices within the education implementation process wherever they are found (Duignan, 2012).

With economic and educational policies and reforms adapted by India, as in many other nations, as discussed in the context chapter, there is a move towards self-management and an enhanced emphasis on the practice of educational leadership and management (Huber 2004). Ehrich and Kimber (2006) emphasise ethics, moral purpose and a recognition that leadership is a value-based function. They also suggest that 'communities expect those holding leadership positions to act justly, rightly and promote good... as well as demonstrate moral and professional accountability' (p. 106). Literature, in examining educational leadership in rural areas where communities are marginalised, largely focuses on the pivotal role that a head teacher plays in the achievement of educational goals. To support the above statements, studies reflect on factors that promote successful leadership in marginalised areas include head teachers. These factors include: forming strong ties with community members and related governmental and non-governmental departments to gain their support in implementing educational plans; being generous with their time; focusing on addressing issues of poverty that deter children from attending school; and attentive on quality improvement of teaching and learning (Mbokazi, 2014). The role of the head teacher in school leadership and policy implementation is discussed later in this section. Issues in educational leadership such as inclusion and power are seen in most contexts, and more specifically in marginalised sections of nations. Issues are context dependent (for example, caste inequality and meaningful participation), and may depend on the skills and knowledge that leaders bring, the priorities of leaders, the promotion of inclusion in leadership and so on. Head teachers who favour issues that their colleagues, educational department or State legislature do not support or pose a threat to a valued status quo could struggle more than those who are complacent about them (Ryan, 2012). This could impede plans of inclusion. James Ryan (2012) also argues that those who make real efforts to include all members of the school communities, including parents, in school governance by addressing social issues such as gender, class and so on

struggle more in their role as leaders. These struggles or issues in a neoliberal context are taking on a new urgency, generating more challenges of accountability towards inclusion. We can already see the complexities and possible issues of inclusion and contemporary accountability that head teachers and local-level educational leaders can face within a neoliberal context, as discussed in the context chapter. I will therefore look at the kinds of leadership approaches that may be adapted by school leaders and briefly bring to fore the issues that that leadership style may bring in the context of this research.

### **2.9.2 Leadership approaches**

As stated in the introduction, different situations require different leadership approaches in leading and influencing people to achieve predetermined goals. The goals are articulated by a leader who seeks to gain the commitment of other leaders and stakeholders to the betterment of the institution and the wider community. Leaders can adopt various leadership approaches to seek the required commitment to achieve goals, and I will now briefly discuss a few, in the context of the research problems.

Managerial leadership as proposed by Leithwood et al. (1999) seems closely related to the formal model of leadership proposed by Bush (1986), and can normatively be seen to follow a cyclic process, from goal setting to evaluating (Cadwell, 1992). It is important to consider that this type of leadership does not prioritise the concept of vision that is considered central in other leadership models. Taking into consideration the Indian stratified context, the differing needs of the marginalised rural areas and the kind of leadership that the marginalised communities are accustomed to, to ensure success in achieving policy goals efficient leaders may need a clear vision and to revisit it at different points of time (Rajbhandari, 2007).

Within the neoliberal context of India, I discuss the role of the State in the context chapter, where I consider the way that neoliberal objectives conflict with democratic objectives and the complexities that arise through this ambiguity. This consideration leads me to conclude that bureaucracy and by consequence managerial leadership may be often preferred by leaders for educational systems at State and local levels. McLennan et al. (2003) argue that this approach to leadership is associated with hierarchical and inaccessible management approaches and that the head teacher's authority may be perceived as 'God-given' and 'juridical' (pp.7-9). Bush (2003) does talk about certain advantages of managerial leadership within a bureaucratic system, but within an educational context it could cause professionals such as head teachers, to implement the State-imposed changes without enthusiasm, as they may not have the space to 'own' (p.46) innovations. There is also the danger of power being misused by head teachers within this

context. Spurred by power differences, local-level leadership at the community level may take on tokenistic positions and not operate efficiently within the roles assigned to them.

Transformational leadership (Leithwood et al., 1999), which links to the collegial management model (Bush, 2003), assumes that the commitments and capacities of members in the organisation should be the central focus of leadership (Bush, 2003). He assumes that extra effort and greater productivity are gained through higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals and greater capacities to achieve them. Leithwood (1994) views transformational leadership through various dimensions that include: building a school vision; establishing goals; offering intellectual motivation and supporting individual growth; modelling organisational values and best practice; setting performance expectations; creating a productive and positive culture; and creating structures within the school environment to foster participation in decision making.

In the context of this research, in a challenging socio-cultural environment while working alongside significant issues of power differentials, due to the requirement of SSA for school leaders (SMC, head teacher) this model of leadership might seem useful. Giving local-level leadership the responsibility for formulating individualised plans to ensure successful implementation of policy goals is making each school autonomous, to a large extent. This view resonates with Caldwell et al. (1992), who argue that transformational leadership is essential for autonomous schools, as gaining the commitment of leaders (SMC and head teacher, in this research context) is almost imperative to achieve the transition to a system of self-managed schools. With issues of neoliberalism and democracy coexisting (refer to context chapter), the appropriateness of transformational leadership in a democratic set up is questionable. Allis (2000) argues that transformational leadership has the potential to become authoritarian, due to the compelling and strong features of the leaders within a democratic organisation. The State policies are set out and systems redefined to achieve the major aim of access and quality education for all, which may be 'a more centralised, more directed, and more controlled educational system [that] has dramatically reduced the possibility of realising a genuinely transformational education and leadership' (Bottery, 2001, p. 215). Transformation, to be effective, will require action at all levels and there may be limits to what head teachers can achieve in the absence of financial, physical and human resources (Bush, 2007).

Participative leadership assumes decision making by the group as the central process of the group (Leithwood et al., 1999), based on assumptions that school effectiveness can be increased through participation; any stakeholder can lead in contexts of site-based management, and democratic principles are justified through participation. Participation leads to a bonding between

the leadership and could thereby reduce the burden of head teachers when leadership roles and functions are shared, and a sustainable plan when there is a need for replacement of any leader (Sergiovanni, 1984). This model relates to the democratic values prescribed by SSA for the SMCs' participative decision making. Despite this requirement, there is little empirical evidence for equal representation and meaningful participation in rural India (discussed at Chapter 1). Similar issues have been observed in governance bodies in South Africa (Bush et al., 2003; Bush and Glover, 2016) that share similar socio-cultural and economic disparities to India. Research evidence reflects the need for co-operation between governance bodies and head teacher; setting up a well-planned and parent-supported democratic structure (Maile, 2004); power differences between head teachers and governing body members due to positional power in the school, education levels in comparison with governing members; and access to information and responsibility to ensure implementation (Bush, 2007; Bush and Glover, 2016). Similarly, studies reveal issues with governing bodies lacking in communication, conflicting priorities over finances, lacking in implementing democratic decisions made and the availability of members (Ministerial Review Committee, 2004; Department of Education, 2007). Considering the socio-cultural attitudes of people, practised for generations, participative leadership could take many years to achieve a change in attitude that can alter the whole education and management system in the discussed contexts.

Within the neoliberal context in India, despite the claim of democratic participation, the country seems to be working under a hierarchical order with little or no authority exercised by those at the lower levels of the hierarchy. According to Spillane et al. (2004, p.11, leadership is best understood as a practice that is 'distributed over leaders, followers, and the school's situation or contexts'. In the literature on distributed leadership, rather than roles, the emphasis is on the nature and quality of leadership practice (Harris et al., 2008). This brings us to an understanding that leadership does not imply an absence of hierarchy and we see this through leadership teams, committees and work groups all working within an organisation in which leadership tasks are distributed within the hierarchy and can be related to the management structure and local-level educational leadership prescribed by SSA, as discussed in Chapter 1. Spillaine et al. (2001) refer to leaders working separately but in an interdependent manner towards the same goal. With the focus of distributed leadership based on the intersection of diverse stakeholders, contexts and structures rather than on single actors/leaders, the importance of community participation may be understood.

Political and transactional leadership (Bush, 2003; Bush and Glover, 2016) states that conflicts arise between stakeholders and are won by the more powerful, while Miller et al. (2001) view transactional leadership as an exchange process to establish a political strategy within the

processes of an organisation. Having established the pivotal role of the head teacher in school leadership, there is a certain level of authority that arises from their position, while requiring the cooperation of others to ensure effective management. The limitation that they specify is the disengagement of staff and leadership beyond immediate gains from their transaction. Disengagement of staff leads to failure of long-term commitment to the vision and values defined by the head teacher (Miller et al., 2001), at the same time giving rise to conflict between stakeholders and leadership (Bush et al., 2004). The educational structure in context has a strong political influence along with the prevailing socio-cultural issues and related power differentials. With an understanding and practice of political and transactional leadership, these problems can be addressed. These styles of leadership can bring a foresight of issues of cooperation that can be helpful.

Contingent leadership offers an alternative approach, considering the diverse nature of educational contexts and the benefits of adapting leadership approaches that would best help particular situations, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance (Bush, 2007; Bush and Glover, 2016). Leithwood et al. (1999) consider the response of leaders to unique organisational issues and argue the need for leaders to master various leadership practices to be successful. In the Indian context, the disparity in access and quality of schools in urban and rural areas is a good reason to prescribe a flexible approach for leaders to decide to follow, rather than a universal approach, such as is observed to be practised by the State. Leadership requires a reflexive and well-considered approach to address issues, rather than relying on limited leadership approaches (Bush, 2003).

### **2.9.3 Summary of the leadership approaches**

Each of the approaches discussed above is limited to a unidimensional perspective on educational leadership. Within the context of this research, the leadership style that might be favourable and serve as the primary focus is participative leadership. This may be able to foster and ensure inclusion of community members in decision making and monitoring the successful implementation of SSA. Contingent leadership is part of effective leadership and, as it suggests, leaders will have to adapt different leadership approaches in addressing the issues that arise. Having discussed leadership styles, all of which reflect the head teacher playing a pivotal role within a school context, I will explore the role of the head teacher in educational leadership along with the role of the parents who form the SMC, as conceived by SSA. This will help me to understand if and how the distribution of power and responsibility adds value to implementing SSA's goals in marginalised communities that are bound by socio-cultural issues of caste, gender and literacy. Democratic participation and shared leadership roles that are distributed between

the members of the governing body link with the recent development of the theory of distributed leadership that allows for both a conscious encouragement of the contribution of many to leadership from the wide group of people, including the community, and the emergence of informal and spontaneous contributions.

#### **2.9.4 Role of head teachers and parents in school governance structures**

Democratic governance, with an intention to include community members to participate in active and responsible roles, has been the trend in many nations. In an educational context, research in South Africa and other developing nations seems helpful (Mncube, 2009). Parental involvement in school governance is said to develop greater interest in their role, reduce dropout rates, and lead to higher retention and academic benefits (Miedel and Reynolds, 1999). Having assumed that the needs of the community are better determined by parents, as needs are unique to the context, around the world democratic community participation in school governance has been widely promoted. Management structures are developed to create opportunities for all stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership and thus take responsibility, which also implies that powers and responsibilities are distributed (Mncube, 2008; Sithole, 1995). It is important to consider that governance is a political activity and that power relations among its members (parents and school staff) may remain central.

In my research context, the power relations being exercised may vary from village to village, depending on the extent of literacy, issues of caste and gender, local and village level leaders and so forth. Fostering democratic governance in villages is vital, especially as school governance bodies may not only consist of community representatives but also experienced educators. Working with less literate people, those who have had no formal education or have less than five or seven years of formal schooling would require training and development in order to ensure there is more equal participation from all members. Most of these responsibilities for training, stimulating and sustaining are seen to rest with the head teacher, who may be the one person with both the capacity and the frequent access to community members (Sithole, 1995). The head teacher exercising the practice of distributed leadership in this context may be challenging as maximising potential of distributed leadership to improve the process of policy implementation may be difficult.

Head teachers also hold the responsibility of entrusting authority to community members to conceive policy on a range of issues such as budgeting, planning and monitoring. This is undertaken to an extent so that parents (community members) feel a sense of ownership and are accountable for the development of the school or, in this context, the implementation of the

policy (Chapman, 1995). In this situation, it has been found that parents often relinquish their duties to the school head teacher and teachers in the school, as they feel inadequate to deal with professions and their fellow members in the community (Deem, Brehony and Heath, 1995), due to reasons such as their level of literacy, a clear understanding of their roles and related power, caste and gender differences, and related issues of power as discussed in Chapter 1. Rigorous deliberations and power struggles that potentially cause conflict are some of the reasons given by parents for either surrendering or remaining as inactive members on the governance board (Deem, Brehony and Heath, 1995). Most members of the governing body felt that the role of the head teacher was the most powerful in the governing body (Mncube, 2009; Mncube, Davies and Naidoo, 2014). Community members suggested that the head teacher is in charge of the professional management of the school, ensuring the everyday running of the school, solving problems and setting the tone of governance meetings. This study of research in South Africa shows the influential power of the head teacher. Many members also showed their concern about the confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the head teacher and the governing body members, as they see the head teacher as the engine of an institution (Mncube, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for parents to be informed about school governance and what the policy is aiming to address. There is also evidence that parents do not assert their rights, despite knowledge of these rights. When parents from minority groups were involved in the activities of the school, they found a positive impact on the quality of academic performance in their children as parents appear to develop a sense of worth that makes their contribution more meaningful. However, it was found that sufficient time and space was required for parental involvement in fruitful engagement in deliberations and responsibilities (Hofman, Hofman and Guldemond, 2002).

Parents/community members may have little say in school activities or not make their voices heard if they lack effective representative bodies (Mncube, 2005, 2007). Parental involvement may be affected by the school's expectations of them. Parents may not want to interfere with professional practice, especially if they are less literate. Head teachers, on the other hand, may regard all aspects of the school as their responsibility (Heystek, 2003). Also, knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities in relation to parents' involvement in school governance largely determines their involvement. Communication between community representatives and school could reflect a co-equal partnership to ensure sufficient participation. Participation may be more successful when parents feel confident in their ability to support their role (Epstein, 1991). Ongoing communication can stimulate interest and transparency, which in turn can inculcate ownership and inclusion. It is therefore imperative to create space for local-level educational leaders' (parents') voice to be heard.



### **2.9.5 Summary of the role of head teachers and parents in school leadership and management**

One of the main issues that stand out in discussing the role of head teachers and parents in school governance structures is the issue of power and ambiguity. There is acceptance of the head teacher taking on the central position, and of the interaction of the head teacher with the parents. Training and deliberating with community and governing body members could generate leadership practices. Complexities in inclusion and implementation within a democratic structure seem to be progressively emerging as a reaction to neoliberal policies that promotes a managerial leadership style, instead of participative leadership. Studying the distributed perspective offered by Spillane (2006), leadership practice is generated with the interaction of leaders, followers and their situation, and understanding their interaction can give a clearer view of the internal dynamics of practice. With even a glimpse of such interaction as has been discussed, we still recognise the need for empowerment of individuals to be meaningfully involved in leadership roles that may be distributed to them and share the responsibility of implementing policy goals.

I will now discuss empowered participative governance to gain a better understanding of how it could help in inclusion and meaningful participation.

### **2.10 Community**

As an overview of community in context, in the past few decades there have been several developments in the concept of how it is viewed and understood, where power and influence in the working of a community are given serious consideration. According to Heller (1989), every individual belongs to a geographical and relational community impacted by policies and decisions. Having discussed the influence and impact that individuals or groups could have over decision-making in the policy process, and recognising the importance of such influence and impact in the previous section. I will now proceed to discuss the factors affecting effective participation in policy implementation and governance by community members who may be chosen as representatives to form the local-level educational leadership. With various social and economic policies echoing the need for community participation in policy decisions and implementation (Duffy and Hutchinson, 1997), despite evaluation reports presenting mixed success, I argue that the concept of community is a crucial factor to consider in relation to their involvement in policy implementation. The discussion will explore the power, influence and control that communities may or may not be able to administer in the decentralised policy implementation process.

This section will reflect a working conceptualisation of community, with a focus on the power and influence of citizens. This is approached through exploration of participatory democracy.

Examples from developing countries are drawn upon to reflect the merits and challenges of these conceptions and their possible effect on the process of policy implementation. This will enable an understanding of the possibility of involvement of rural citizens in policy implementation. It will also seek to work out the scope of participatory democracy if citizen involvement could bring inclusion through the educational provision, which as citizens they should rightfully receive.

### **2.10.1 Community dynamics**

This sub-section begins by exploring a variety of conceptions in order to gather an understanding of the different ways community may be conceptualised. I go on to analyse the ways these may hold communities together, the potential inequalities within participating communities and the conflicts that may be present in terms of their aims and needs. Understanding the subsequent examples and concepts will be clearer through the foundations built in this section. This understanding will be used to draw parallels to community involvement in local-level educational leadership, an area that may be new and challenging to members of the community.

Concepts of community are defined as follows:

- 'Community refers to the structure of relationships through which a localised population provides its daily requirements' (Hawley, 1950, p.180).
- 'Community arises through sharing a limited territorial space for residence and sustenance and functions to meet common needs generated in sharing this space by establishing characteristic forms of social action' (quoting Reiss, 1958, by Kaufman, 1959, p. 9).
- 'A community consists of persons in social interaction within a geographic area having one or more additional common ties' (Hillery, 1955, p. 111).

The three elements that may be drawn from these definitions are that community may be: a social unit where even a relatively small geographical place could be a primary factor; a structure of what people want and how people do things; and a concept of collective action where people may frequently act together in what they commonly share (Sanderson and Polson, 1939). The relational aspect of communities, a common factor in the definitions, gives reason to assert the importance of interdependence, networks, shared needs and interests, and the ability of a group of individuals to interact with each other to fulfil their needs. Social cohesion may be required to meet the varying needs of individuals or groups of individuals, and this cohesion might require structural and interpersonal factors to be identified and developed (Heller, 1989). This is a rational view of a community where mediating structures that connect individuals to the wider social

order provide a means for group attachment or associations to satisfy personal and societal/community needs (Berger and Neuhaus, 1977).

The importance of societal interdependent interactions has led researchers to study community dynamics (Bernard, 1951). There is literature that depicts community as a group, a development of community action, a development of leadership and power struggles within a community, and the interactional fields of a community. Bess et al. (2002) describe community as being a group of people – a network of relationships where people share common interests and that cooperation between them is based on this common interest. This association may be the central feature of a community and may highlight significant relationships that lead to studies of actions and interactions within the demographic and physical settings, and the interaction between the local and mass society (Kaufman, 1959). This suggests the contested nature of community that might not be seen as a single large unit.

As a relational community with emphasis on the quality of interaction between individuals and social ties that bring people together (McMillan and Chavis, 1986), the focus could be on the networks formed through interactions between formal/informal organisations and institutions (Heller, 1989). Interaction with mass society may involve interaction to address social action, and this may be one of the ways individuals in a community influence and address complex issues. Community as a collective social power may also form social structures as a lever to social change, as social power may be responsive to the needs within the community. This discloses ‘community’ as a multifaceted term (McKeown et al., 1987) that may include varying degrees of power and influence of those who belong, and of those working closely or connected to the community. Another facet are those communities and/or parts of communities that may be marginalised and deprived of social and economic benefits, who may be heavily dependent on other communities, politicians and networks to meet their basic needs (Midgley et al., 1986). This leads me to explore various factors that may contribute to effective participation of citizens within the community – the kind that may be powerful enough to influence change, give equal opportunities to citizens in every community and thus increase inclusion justice.

## **2.11 Empowered participatory governance**

In order to gain a fuller perception of empowered participatory governance, I now bring my insights to a critical review of participatory democracy through two examples from India and Brazil. The examples are explored to give a perspective on how the solution to improving capabilities in disadvantaged contexts could be achieved by providing new forms of governance to build capacity and foster social inclusion. The focus on effective citizenship, where individuals in a

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community make use of their actual capacity of formal political and civil rights under a decentralised governance structure, is my main motivation to choose these examples. The comparison of Brazil and India is fit, as it is one of the developing countries in the global south, with a comparable level of political, social and economic conditions, especially in under-developed sections of society. Both countries have increased the space for subordinate politics that has mobilised people from under-developed sections and those from lower castes (Heller, 2012). Despite these formal representative institutions, inequalities seem to prevail, limiting effective representation and meaningful participation in both countries. The chosen examples will help me see the struggles and the barriers to effective participation.

Local people may be in the best position to identify current concerns and challenges facing the school and its resources. They may be able to assist with management and ensure the schools provide and are provided with the resources required for access and quality education (Ranson, 2000).

### Example 1: Participatory city budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Porto Alegre, the capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, like other states in Latin America, was ruled by a clientelistic government in recent decades. This allocated public funds to raising support for political personages rather than public needs (Santos, 1998). In 1998, the Left coalition led by the Workers' party took control of the municipal government and won two consecutive elections. Their central focus attempted a reform measure called 'Participatory Budgeting' (PB) that successfully transformed a vote-for-money budgeting system to a bottom-up, publicly accountable, deliberative system led by the needs expressed by the residents of the city.

The multi-tiered administrative arrangement of interest articulation has 16 administrative regions covering the whole city. Within each region a Regional Plenary Assembly meets twice a year to settle budgetary issues. Members include city executives, administrators, and representatives from community entities and interested citizens from the region. The assembly is coordinated along with members of the municipal government and community delegates. The representatives of the city government present the prior budgets that are reviewed at the first meeting. Delegates are also elected from representatives who participate in meetings in neighbourhood regions in the following three months, working out the region's spending priority. The range of possible issues and projects (transport, sewage, education, health care, etc.) that the city could fund for the region are considered. At the end of the three months, the representatives propose a budget that is ratified at the second plenary meeting.

At the second plenary meeting, two delegates and substitutes are elected to represent the region at the city-wide body, called the Participatory Budgeting Council. This meets over five months to formulate the budget from the regional agendas. The council comprises two elected delegates for each regional assembly, two elected members from each of the five thematic plenaries representing the whole city, a municipal workers' union delegate, delegate from union of neighbourhood associations and two delegates from central municipal agencies. The council meets once a week for three months to form a municipal budget compliant with the priorities decided at the regional level, while it works on coordinating the spending for the entire city. Training for non-professionals on budgeting is given to elected members and other interested citizens. These training and workshops can be seen as a part of empowerment in Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG). At the end of the five months, a report is submitted to the mayor, who accepts it or asks for revisions to be made to the budget. This may be accepted by the councils or overridden by a super-majorities vote (two-thirds) (Fung and Wright, 2003).

At this point I would like to acknowledge the work of Gandin and Apple (2002) in studying the educational project in Porto Alegre, working in tandem with Participatory City Budgeting towards a thick version of education change through democratic institutional mechanisms. Similar issues of power, literacy, representation and meaningful participation were observed that were addressed through transfer and construction of technical knowledge similar to Participatory City Budgeting.

#### Example 2: Decentralised democratic planning and development in Kerala, India

India's democracy complements the party system, but it also has a culture of tolerance and pluralism (Fung and Wright, 2003). However, there is evidence that there is little achievement in reducing social, political and economic exclusions in all segments of society (Heller, 2000). In this context the representative democracy, along with a strong bureaucratic administration, may be limited in its capacity to address challenges of justice and equity. Reasons for this may be because of elite interests that rule decisions, and/or opportunistic political interests that may narrow the possibility for equal participation (Bardhan and Roemer, 1992). Developmental failures caused by top-down, unaccountable decision-making may have triggered this acute crisis in the Indian democracy. This may have led to political agreements to promote more democratic and decentralised forms of governance, yet obstacles to such reforms have been observed to be significant across the country, except in Kerala. In Kerala, with the Left Democratic Front returning to power in 1996, there followed a decentralised programme strategy to improve administrative effectiveness and restore its electoral base through village-level participatory planning. The 'People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning' (The Campaign), was able to empower its local

government to a greater extent than in any State in the country by its fifth year (Isaac and Franke, 2002). The necessary components for a meaningful and genuine effort towards democratic decentralisation (Manor et al., 1999), administrative, fiscal and political decentralisation were observed. However, these may not have promoted success if the institutional and political designs had not been redesigned. Bureaucratic decisions had to be replaced by representative structures, just as in the Porto Alegre project. Developmental responsibilities were widely decentralised to the elected local governments, which may have contributed to the change in relationship between the governments and the society. This could have further altered the everyday practice of democracy through the space created for citizen participation.

A multi-stage iterative deliberation between elected representatives, government officials from different levels, activists, society experts and ordinary citizens developed plans to address local problems and needs. The deliberation process begins with the Grama Sabhas (open local assemblies), where members discuss and identify developmental priorities. There are developmental seminars that are required to improve assessments of local problems and needs. These seminars also provide a scope for multi-stakeholder task forces to design projects that are developmental sector-specific. These projects are submitted to panchayats (locally elected municipal councils) that engage in formulating and setting budgets for local plans. These final plans are then presented to the Grama Sabha for discussion and later integrated into higher-level plans at the Block and District levels when projects are scrutinised for fiscal and technical viability (Fung and Wright, 2003).

### **2.11.1 Institutionalisation and principles of empowered participatory governance derived from examples of Porto Alegre, Brazil, and Kerala, India**

Participatory Budgeting and The Campaign were able to empower local governments and communities to address practical problems and promote bottom-up participation where historically marginalised groups (rural citizens, dalits and women) were almost never involved, and to foster deliberation (Isaac and Franke, 2002). Reversing an administrative structure may require drastic changes in the allocation of power, functions and resource control (Bardhan, 1994), which may in context also involve redeploying government staff and personnel at District level and training them. This may result in frustration to those already in significant positions (those in power and with vested political interests) and, therefore, may cause such a change not to take place, at least not completely. Kerala and Porto Alegre were able to control and execute this change by allowing local government to enjoy freedom of discretion with budgets and planning, and also by shifting the budget authority to the grassroots level, giving limited scope for top-down departments to dominate the process, in a similar system to SSA.

With complex and longstanding inequalities in Brazil and India, Participatory Budgeting and The Campaign were able to achieve success to a large extent also because of the time devoted to working out a suitable deliberative decision-making environment. This was made successful when large groups were further divided into sub-groups, enabling participation of women and other marginalised people which further facilitated development of confidence, skills through training, and incorporating local knowledge in decision-making through the informed experts who mediated the groups (Fung and Wright, 2003). In the case of SSA, decentralised governance does not seem very successful, possibly because of the lack of skills, knowledge and confidence besides other socio-cultural barriers such as gender and caste (UNICEF, 2014). This could escalate social exclusion as a result of inadequacies in participation (Room, 1995), where such inadequacies translate into their (excluded members') power and confidence in the leadership, which may be experienced as merely tokenistic. Conformity to law may be one of the reasons for women holding tokenistic positions. Women heading local governance structures was brought in as a mandatory quota (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, Constitution of India, Government of India, 1992b) whereby women were made heads of local governance institutions. Some evidence suggests that women took on their roles when the men in their families persuaded them. The inspiration for men to persuade the women was not driven only by positive motives but because they may be able to control some of the resources by proxy. Though there is participation through inclusion, supported by the policy mandate, there are barriers to participation through exclusion supported by social and institutional practices (Jayal, 2006). As discussed in Chapter 1, caste defines opportunity structures and outcomes, and this seems to be the case in the context of this research. With opportunities defined for the more powerful, there is a danger of institutionalising inequalities.

The Campaign also raised a few concerns that are continuously being addressed. Investment plans of the local- and District-level governments, special investment plans for tribal and rural segments, and a 'one size fits all' plan posed difficulties in implementation. Training a large population, and participants' time commitment to training to improve the quality of project design, regular non-availability of participants in meetings due to constraints in transport and inefficient coordination of plans were challenges that The Campaign had to address (Isaac et al., 2002). On the other hand, Participatory Budgeting faced issues of justified representation for a large population, their relationships with those they would represent and the unseen presence of bureaucracy. The ongoing tension between councillors and Participatory Budgeting delegates, dominated by open conflicts, had given rise to problems that the municipal government had to address (Wampler, 2000). With the research context being similar to these examples, I can boldly anticipate issues of contextualisation, non-availability of members for training, inconsistency in

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carrying out their roles in local-level governance and representation, in a context of caste and gender disparities, to be possible barriers to the involvement of local-level educational leaders. Empowerment reduces the power of the social structure and institutions, and gives local-level educational leaders in the communities the knowledge, power and the ability to take action on actions of others. Similarly, symbolic privileges that increase bureaucracy can be reduced through empowerment. Therefore, reducing or managing power struggles is one of the important factors that supports empowerment.

It may be important to consider two more important issues that, if addressed, might enable sustaining EPG. One is changes in government that might not support deliberative decision-making and sharing power, because of fundamental beliefs/differences in priorities/significant differences in political agenda. A second is the main criticism that decentralisation has faced – that it has a great potential for corruption if groups at grassroots level are led by nominees/contractors of the District or State government (Fung and Wright, 2003). EPG may not sustain or be effective in supporting local-level educational leadership when there is no room for deliberation between the various actors and the community members, if power is not distributed, or when responsibilities have little or no power attached.

In developing countries with significant economic and social inequality, nurturing a clear understanding of what would create social institutions free from oppression may have to go through the process of creating a political will that would, in turn, create changes to reduce oppression radically. This may require ideas to evolve through the actual potential of communities that might be capable of developing practical designs of tasks to work through imperfect conditions, in order to achieve the needed social change (Fung and Wright, 2003). Also, due to the low confidence developed in the communities, it might be important for the State to rebuild confidence in order to promote participation of local-level leadership in SSA's implementation process, and to encourage effective and new State interventions and responsiveness. EPG structures may be designed to strengthen the ways in which participation of community members may influence policy decisions that may directly have an impact on their lives. These actions may be considered as participatory, as they rely on the commitment and capabilities of ordinary (untrained) members from the communities to make appropriate decisions through empowerment and deliberation, as they work towards matching actions to decisions. Instead of a discussion-based democracy, deliberation (public justification) among local-level leaders (including those belonging to different castes and women) may place them as equals in the place of authority and may transform preferences and intentions, leading them towards social cohesion. This may be possible since decisions of the reform may devolve to local units that might be supported, and not controlled, by the central body (Cohen, 1996). Such a situation could result



as consensus arrived at through negotiations, and negotiations might satisfy both local-level leaders and political leaders.

### **2.11.2 The principles and design of EPG**

The model of deliberative democracy seen through PB, Porto Alegre and The Campaign, Kerala, may be practices that can be expanded into other policy areas. Deliberative democracy practices could also reach higher and lower levels of social and institutional frames, including local-level educational leadership in implementing SSA. From the examples, the following are the three principles of EPG (Austen-Smith, 1992):

- Focus can be established on specific, tangible problems. Immediate concerns of the people in the community on such specific and tangible problems may not be the same concerns prioritised by the government when a top-down approach is practised. The reasons could be d competing powers or resources that might begin to work in cooperation. This could work to the community's advantage or disadvantage, depending on the extent of participation in local-level educational leadership. The downside may be neglect of broader conflicts as concentration is constrained to relatively smaller issues.
- People who are close to the problem and are affected may be involved. The bottom-up approach may provide an opportunity for ordinary citizens and field officials to apply their experiential knowledge to formulate solutions, contrary to the belief that experts have the best knowledge to bring solutions. This statement may not dismiss the need for expert contribution, but the latter would not enjoy exclusive powers in making important decisions. Direct participation of those at the grassroots level may increase accountability and may also reduce the involvement of agencies attached to political parties and bureaucracies.
- Solutions may be deliberatively developed as participants value each other's positions and with due consideration generate a group choice. Though there may be little that participants have in common, they may reach a point where the need to bring the best solution for individuals (the children in their community) and common gain might bring them together. This may occur when participants recognise that solutions are justified in meeting the common need, instead of a select few.

### **2.11.3 Concerns raised and clarified within Deliberative Democratic Theory**

It is essential to consider the barriers to EPG's reaching wider policy areas and institutional frames in order to make necessary amendments during the process of planning and execution. There may be three main problems that could be raised and clarified from the model of deliberative democratic theory:

#### **1. Inequality**

Despite the poor/marginalised being well represented in deliberative democracy, there may be a need to question if their representation is as effective as other groups (urban/educated/skilled/leaders and officials) and if they receive the same or similar benefits as other groups. The need to question this may arise as the representatives gather as equals to debate issues but may be dominated by the powerful.

Inequality in representation of the uneducated men and women (especially in patriarchal societies) may need to be considered, as there may be the possibility of prejudice. Both examples (PB and The Campaign) have confirmed that, once there is empowerment through training and building skills, the balance in equality among the representatives is not a major concern. Also, once experience is built, education or gender do not pose a huge barrier; although people may learn naturally from attending deliberative meetings, the intentional design of the meetings gives everyone an opportunity to learn (Baioocchi, 2003). That being said, I would like to consider that both Porto Alegre and Kerala constitute a distinct population possessing a household income, fewer gender biases and some basic education (Santos, 1998), which may be a reason for EPG to be successful to the extent described, yet this may not be the case in all sections of a nation, since some nations are stratified.

Unless there is care, there may be a danger of electing delegates with prior experience of clientelistic groups/associations. This could lead to another problem, the question of how delegates are chosen and by whom, to ensure a just representation and to avoid problems associated with autonomy, accountability and transparency (Abers, 1996).

#### **2. Uneven development of civil society**

There may be differences in prioritising investment according to the needs of each community. This may be solved by the presence of a distribution criterion to ensure progressive distribution of resources so that more funding is provided to poorer areas.

Problems of communities not addressing issues beyond their immediate needs may be rectified if delegates ensure they have enough information and support to understand the overall policy goals of the city/State which might help them see the long-term impact their decisions could have. This might need the involvement of other social groups, which might also help the shift from short-term needs (Santos, 1998).

### 3. Politics

Participatory reform, a concern that arises from prior, less successful experience, is addressed in both examples. Institutional capacities that delivered the planned results through deliberative participation enabled the legitimacy of governance to be enhanced. One of the key contributions was the timely production of results in the form of public goods, which made it worthwhile for the participants (Dietz, Ostrom and Stern, 1998).

The municipal councils were largely successful also because they may have given room to experiments in participation, thus allowing learning from various experiences. Although this may allow practices for 'good governance' to emerge (Judith, 1997), it could also be time consuming and lead to an increased lack of interest in time if the results were not positive.

Governance through democratic participation did not initially experience systematic organisation of the population, but there are examples of PB when the local government stepped in to mobilise and organise the community. Systematic organisation could be a common problem, especially with the marginalised. These people may be apprehensive, as they may have no prior experience of being part of such organisations (Azevado and Diniz, 1997).

The role of conflict in EPG that can be seen between citizens and political leaders might make minority groups in the community less likely to vote in line with the decision on the policy, creating an opinion ambivalence (Mutz, 2006). Similarly, in other instances of conflict with EPG, understanding any disagreements may be important to initiate social communication between the various actors that can address political behaviour. Citizen participation in the political process of implementation can be addressed when individual preferences and their reaction to various viewpoints that cause an adjustment in their behaviour are understood (Klofstad, Sokhey and McClurg, 2011). In contexts of social disparities, the process of arriving at a decision that similarly benefits all people will be difficult. Good governance in such situations might have to focus on reducing conflict rather than satisfying all people equally.

The increasing presence of leftist parties may be a requirement for EPG to be successful. Governments who may not favour highly decentralised governance may destroy the process of

change initiated by EPG, as power and responsibility may not be totally under their control (Santos, 1998).

## **2.12 Possibilities of citizen participation in decision-making through EPG within the process of policy implementation**

Having critically studied the examples of Porto Alegre, Brazil, and Kerala, India, in terms of their implementation of EPG, I now look at the possibilities of community participation in local-level leadership in the process of policy implementation.

Change in institutional structures; the principle of EPG is attractive, but the question is whether it is a feasible institutional arrangement or if social conditions can enable the change in practice in ways that are deep and sustainable. With EPG focusing on problem-solving through participation in both issues in a defined geographic space, the reality of its institution requires an appropriate reorganisation of the State's administrative and political structure through devolution. This is a factor that may be difficult to change in a large and politically driven government such as in Orissa. On the other hand, while EPG suggests substantial power and discretion, the local communities may not operate as an autonomous body in decision-making, as they may be linked to superordinate bodies such as the panchayat, Block resource centres and District education departments for accountability, quality, problem-solving and communication. This is necessary when local groups cannot solve their own problems to prevent them from making incompetent decisions and to enable learning across boundaries and diffusion of innovations. This coordinated decentralisation (relying on superordinate bodies mainly for communication and problem-solving) may fail to respect the local situation and knowledge, as the people may not have time to learn from experience. Moreover, the strict decentralisation isolates local citizens into small units, leaving those unable to solve a problem stranded and awaiting a solution from the top (Fung and Wright, 2003). The management structures where powers are devolved, allowing a system of uninterrupted and efficient problem-solving and policy implementation process, may be more in the policy-makers' strategic interest than what is practically possible. Within neoliberal governance that is promoted by the State through privatisation and or involvement of external organisations, development may be concentrated in some areas, if the restructuring of management systems, power delegation and implementation systems is poorly handled.

Governments handing over powers of decision-making, financial deployment and the control of power/power to stop planned action; People in power may not favour handing over power to those they govern. This may cause governing institutions to manipulate power in such a way that decisions appear to be participatory, while the actual decisions continue to be made elsewhere.

For communities to recognise the degree of manipulation and be able to engage effectively in exercising their available power, they need to be given sufficient awareness.

Training and building skills-availability of experts and participants; giving away power to community representatives who may not have the technical capacity or the political experience may be a hard decision. Under-funded administrations may also find it difficult to operationalise participation, as reframing structures and the support of such restructuring may be expensive (Abers, 1996). The availability of participants and trainers, especially in the initial stages when local-level leaders are experimenting with systems and decisions, may be time consuming and expensive for everyone. It may keep them away from earning their daily wages or family responsibilities. It may also require those trained to have a long-term interest in being part of the system, not only to achieve success but to formulate and build sustainable structures (Santos, 1998). Training may need to be supportive of the context and therefore provide training where 'one size fits all' may not be practical or useful when implemented. The marginalised and those who are generally excluded, such as those from the lower castes and women, may need extra support through training and awareness.

Inclusion of the marginalised – tribals, dalits, women; mobilising people may be possible if the issues addressed are local, as the issues may directly affect them and therefore interest them. It is also important to note that information in both projects was not easily available for the poor to access and there were no efforts made by the media or others involved to inform them. Since the marginalised have to cope with new systems, new people and the pressure of learning to voice their concerns/opinions, if they are not sufficiently supported until they are confident, there may be drop-outs or a growing lack of interest. Women and dalits in societies where there is strong discrimination may conform to the discrimination they are used to, and therefore stay away from participation as they find it pointless.

Managing deliberation in large and diverse populations; deliberation may be effective when it stems from self-interest, that is, deliberating issues of education and governance that people recognise and therefore seek solutions to that may change or improve their lives. The examples had an element of competitiveness that probably gave it vitality, which again may not be present in all cases. When there is no incentive of returns to meet the specific needs or concerns, participation may be reduced (Selznick, 1949).

Evaluation and accountability and the problem of corruption (Chauhan, 2009); A common criticism of decentralisation is that it devolves corruption, especially when beneficiary committees are nominated by political contractors (Isaac and Franke, 2002). As the needs of the marginalised and other communities have been long neglected, the people could fall prey to vested interests.

Therefore, strengthening the capacities and accountability of committees is still a main focus (Isaac and Franke, 2002).

Several issues, as discussed, could obstruct effective participation of citizens in empowered participatory governance. Nevertheless, policies mandate citizen involvement in policy processes also for reasons of equality, accountability and inclusion. I would like to study these issues and examine what governments and citizens could do to ease these problems to enable effective EPG.

### **2.13 Conclusion**

Having reviewed literature on policy and community, it is clear that both are deeply contested. They are influenced by the needs and agendas of policy-makers, governments and the local communities. With the different actors trying to make significant efforts to fulfil their goals, it is not difficult to explain why policy goals often do not address the problem for which they were formed. Decision-making within this implementation process is therefore a paramount task, as actors within the implementation process contend with the varying agendas and power. Communities for whom these policies are made have an unequal standing in this process, caused by the power differentials and their social position. Although policy-makers and governments have responsibility to correct this situation, they have not done so, yet policies mandate community involvement. Corrective measures such as EPG are seen to have been formulated by governments, but do not always seem successful. The role of the head teacher is also crucial in democratic policy implementation, as she/he may be the person who can play a significant role in ensuring effective participation of parents. It may therefore be imperative to train head teachers in parental involvement, to assist in deliberation regarding school activities and to foster inclusion.

Policy implementation is complex and operates in ambiguous conditions. Political and personal agendas, coupled with the problem and policy goals, make it difficult for local-level educational leadership to ensure effective implementation. Ambiguity that may be a result of this complexity could cause confusion in roles and the problems being addressed. This, in turn, makes analysis of the implementation process problematic. Local-level implementers may be able to get away with little accountability and eventually limit their interest in participation. There may be room for the powerful few to dominate and manipulate decisions and actions to suit the demands of the State. Exclusion of individuals and groups of individuals may be common in many stages of the implementation process when accountability is ignored and deep-rooted socio-economic issues are not dealt with. Empowering leaders towards effective involvement might encourage

meaningful and responsible involvement of community representatives who are chosen for local-level educational leadership.





## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed literature on policy and community in relation to local-level educational leadership, and concluded by reviewing the possibilities for their involvement within a political model of a policy implementation process in school governance structures. The similarities and differences in theory and practice that emerged may be explored through empirical research. The purpose of this chapter is to review the broad methodological perspectives relating to this thesis. Through the review, the methodological perspectives will be mapped against the research questions (Chapter 1, p.13). The appropriate research methodology is shaped by a suitable ontology and epistemology, and has been identified to meet the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity for the research design and data collection presented. The chapter will conclude with an indication of how the empirical data has been analysed and the considered ethical aspects of the chosen research methods.

### 3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy involves an approach that may be delineated by several core assumptions concerning ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge), human nature (may or may not be predetermined) and methodology. These assumptions may be significant to the research process and thus follow a logical connection to the research (Holden and Lynch, 2004). This section will clarify my assumptions that have had a significant impact on the issues being researched.

#### 3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology, the starting point of research, is defined by Norman Blaikie (2000, p.8) as:

claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality.

The nature of social reality, in the context of this research, assumes unequal provision of access to, and quality of, education in the rural parts of Odisha. It is untrue that there have been no improvements noted in educational disparity, but observations of achievements of policy objectives seem marginal. This stands against the claims of the official educational and governmental reports of higher achievement of policy objectives. This view is supported by critical

evaluations stating that the degree of improvement in access (providing access to school within a kilometre of a village) and quality of education (quality of teaching and learning and infrastructural facilities) appears marginal, especially in rural belts (Shekhar, 2010; UNESCO, 2015). Within SSA's decentralised policy implementation, particularly in rural belts, community participation plays a significant role in ensuring access and quality education. The new model of the political process of policy implementation depicts the fluidity in participation of community members in the different stages of this process.

There are four stages where fluidity in involvement within the implementation process can be demonstrated (Figure 2.3, p. 31). This fluidity of interaction between the stages assumes that the implementation process may not be linear. The reasons may be due to decisions that are based on outcomes and other contributions from the social, economic, cultural and political factors that alter the direction of the policy process, suggesting a near anarchic interaction between the stages (Lasswell, 1956). The degree of involvement and influence of the policy-makers, politicians and the community in the four stages appear to vary and influence the fluidity of the process. Fluidity within policy processes may be seen disadvantageous, as achieving goals may require longer periods, with decisions having to be revisited, negotiated or even changed. On the other hand, fluidity could be advantageous as it may result in careful consideration of decisions and actions (Kingdon, 1995).

The extent of community involvement or the inclusion of community in local-level leadership by policy-makers and politicians may be higher in certain stages than others. Policy-makers, politicians and other government officials may be more involved in stages where crucial decisions on problem identification and choice of actions in relation to the problems addressed are concerned. Actions may be based on incentives and the beliefs of individual actors, therefore success might be dependent on the importance political actors, who have a greater influence on decisions over the problem (Ridde, 2009). Policy entrepreneurs, media and pressure groups may also influence the fluidity of the process, but may or may not have an influence on final decisions. Communities are closest to the problems they face and may therefore have a better understanding of the problems to make a meaningful contribution towards remedial decisions that political leaders may seek. Local-level educational leaders may also be involved, after the evaluation stage when they need the intervention of policy entrepreneurs who can mediate with political leaders on their behalf, as well as when they can influence further or new decisions in the action avenue.

SSA mandates community participation in decision-making within the implementation process (SSA, 2001, Rao, 2009), but policy decisions may be largely influenced by political agendas that do

not advantage the community. For this reason, community members who are part of local-level leadership may be allowed minimal or sometimes no representation in the implementation process, especially in rural sections (UNESCO, 2015). Rural community members in educational leadership might lack sufficient knowledge of SSA, its benefits, the implementation structure and the influence the members of the community ought to have in the implementation process, especially in decision-making.

I have therefore paid attention to the varying perspectives of the politicians and rural community members who are part of the local-level educational leadership and are involved in SSA's implementation process. Hence, the aim of the study has been to capture multiple perspectives. This has assisted a verification of the assumptions of the community-level leaders and the political leaders in relation to the situation. It also verifies the exclusion or inclusion of people in the process, as suggested in the new concept.

With these considerations, the research has taken an ontological position that participation of local-level leadership within the policy implementation process is fluid and is undergoing swift change, which makes it difficult to capture.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge, especially methods, validation and 'the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be. In short, claims about how, what is assumed to exist can be known' (Blaikie, 2000, p.8). Empirical research needs to be secured in a sound manner of acquiring the required knowledge (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). Reflection of epistemology raised questions on: how reality can be known; the relationship between my knowledge and the known knowledge; the characters, principles and assumptions that direct the process of knowledge acquisition and deriving the findings; and the possibility of sharing that process and replicating it to ensure the quality and reliability of those findings (Charmaz, 2006).

Considering the ontological assumptions, conducting an exploratory study with the government-appointed educational officials and the community members who are part of the local-level leadership has enabled the verification of my assumptions of my ontological position, as discussed earlier. The varying perspectives of the actors concerned in the study arose from the reality of the problem being situational, relative or propositional. Political leaders in the District or community level, village-level educational leaders and members in the educational department might have been subject to political and non-political (social, economic and cultural) pressures that may have influenced their response (Fung and Wright, 2003; Abers, 2003). The fluidity and complexity of the

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interaction between these actors has resulted in data that could lead to an interpretation that has considered some of the key contributing factors. To gain a representation of the knowledge or evidence of the social reality under investigation, the epistemological assumption has been constructed from an interpretive paradigm.

Literature in the previous chapter discusses the two significant factors – policy and community in relation to involvement of local-level educational leadership in the education policy implementation process. The gaps that have emerged from this review contradict the positivist perspective which believes that there is a single, external and objective reality to answer a research question that can be predicted and controlled, irrespective of my beliefs (Carson et al., 2001). In context, this research has not depended on only one source of data (e.g. government documents) to interpret and verify the problem, as it was important to consider that government documents could be biased and may not have considered other factors that contributed to the recorded outcome. Social problems may be complex and therefore it was important to collect supporting sources of information to investigate and verify, using information. This has also helped in validation. In qualitative data, triangulation as a validation strategy enables ‘increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem’ (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254).

Researchers who completely distance themselves from the researched when it includes people and cultures may not support an understanding of the culture and/or socially constructed and subjective interpretations. My research stance has therefore taken an interpretivist position, as I believe that reality (complex, unpredictable and multiple) can be relative and that there is more than one way to access those realities. This gave me room to consider factors that are not bound only by context and time but through human actions. These can be interpreted and explained by causes that affect their life/situation/action that may precede their behaviour (Carson et al., 2001). In context, as mentioned earlier, discrepancies between official records and what is seen to exist or not exist, a minimal or no democratic participation in policy implementation, were reasons strong enough for me to take an interpretivist perspective. This has been helpful in finding reasons for the gaps in the system and possible solutions through close interaction with the community members, to understand and experience the research problem.

Interpretivism may be viewed as an epistemological position that interprets data on the basis that there is a need for a strategy that respects the natural differences of people, leading to the need for social scientists to understand the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2001). The available knowledge of the implementation process and successes of SSA that were acquired

through the educational and governmental records may be insufficient. To ensure that the research design is not rigid, I needed to construct an open account of reality, along with the research informants, through interviews and focus group discussions. This belief also reflects one of an interpretivist: that humans have an ability to adapt to the available knowledge of time- and context-bound social realities. This belief has not restricted the analysis, or me, as the goal is to understand and interpret behaviour rather than to generalise and predict cause and effect (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Interpretation has also been a suitable way, in these circumstances, to strengthen the study and decipher the complexities of human behaviour (Darlington et al., 2002).

The multiple realities that have emerged from the various actors were contributed by people's understandings and beliefs (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008) on policy, their rights, their role within the policy process, past experiences and so on. The term 'rural' here refers to the sections of the population who are marginalised and live under the poverty threshold, in areas with minimal or less than minimal basic facilities (electricity, water, sanitation, healthcare and access roads). Part of this population, who are considered marginalised, live in forest clearances that have since undergone change and may offer some basic facilities of water and electricity. One of the foci chosen for research comprises a slightly more educated, vocal population where there is stronger infrastructure than the other. This has made a marked difference to their ability to reason, as they appeared to be more aware of SSA, could access resources (basic social and human rights) and had the ability to approach the means through which they can reach the provided resources for SSA's implementation. This difference has not only helped in producing a rich, substantive account but shows the complex, multiple perspectives that the differences in these rural sections could bring to the success of SSA through community involvement in local-level educational leadership and the implementation process. This is important, as it has given me an understanding of the similarities and differences that can contribute to or hinder community participation in local-level educational leadership. In both villages, the population not only relates to each other geographically and culturally, but also falls under similar political control, fiscal provision for SSA and the financial allocation available for the implementation of SSA.

### **3.2.3 Case study**

This section will begin with a definition and explanation of case study, followed by the rationale for using this as a research framework and a research plan.

Case study allows exploration of individuals or organisations, through complex interventions, relationships, communities or programmes, to enable a detailed explanation of a case (Yin, 2003)

and supports the deconstruction and consequent reconstruction of varying phenomena. It enables development of theory, interventions and evaluation of programmes due to its flexibility and rigour. The ability to explore data through a variety of lenses allows the understanding and revelation of multiple facets of a phenomenon (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Adoption of a case study approach allows a logical development of my study, and also gives me an opportunity to pursue my interest in looking for complex social behaviour within the policy implementation process. Given the complexity of the research context, the room to explore issues and new issues that may arise during the process of empirical research is made available through individuals, groups and systems. The research included the use of field notes: observations of people, systems and behaviour other than the various actors representing the community, government and the department of education in the District. These varied and rich perspectives were captured within the case study.

Recently, case study research has been criticised as a social research method, on the grounds that: small numbers of case studies may be unstable grounds to establish reliability; the intensity of my exposure during the study of the case might lead to bias in interpretation; it is useful only as an exploratory tool (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Given the problematic and contentious issues of the term, it is important to define the term 'case study', as it is broad and can relate to several disciplines. To justify the use of case study in this investigation, I choose to draw on Stake (1995, p.11), who defines case study as, 'the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'. Also, I use the definition by Yin (2003, p.13), who states that 'a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'; and Cohen and Crabtree (2008), who defined it as 'an observation of characteristics of an individual unit which can be a person, a class or a community'.

From these definitions, we see the emphasis placed on a 'case' and the boundary or context that makes the study different from other approaches of research. Case study, in this research, has been helpful in context-dependant knowledge and experience. A nuanced view of reality was important to understand the various actors involved at the different levels of the implementation structure. A distant view of the problem and views of actors that has helped in my reflection of the study could have led to unclear and untested study results (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The case that was studied here is local-level educational leadership within SSA's implementation process. Cresswell (2014) and Yin (2013) mention case study as an appropriate approach to study a social situation, as it enables an unfolding of its context, which fits into the context of this research. Using case study in this research not only enabled me to draw a border between the case and the context, but enabled maximisation of knowledge (Stake, 1995), as it helped explore the socio-cultural and

other contextual influences to the case that has been studied. Situating local-level educational leadership within SSA's implementation process within its context is important to establish similarities to compare other contexts for future research. The uniqueness and the ordinary within key issues of inclusion, gender and other such barriers to meaningful participation of local-level educational leaders in policy implementation being researched can be identified and evaluated within a case study, which produces context-dependent knowledge. Context-dependent knowledge was important to ensure that relevant analysis and recommendations were made. A decision on what was in the case and outside was based on the boundaries that have been officially drawn by the government – management structure, actors involved in each level of the management structure and their roles and responsibilities. Interpretation of roles and responsibilities of actors in the local level and the district level that overlap had to be carefully untangled and clarified. Referring official documents therefore helped in drawing the border.

After considering exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies (Bruce, Berg and Howard Lune, 2012; Yin, 2013; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013), the type that I expected to work best in this research context is exploratory case study. This type of case study may be used to explore situations in which the evaluation of context has no clear, or single set of, outcomes. This may be true in rural sections of Odisha, as the disparity in access and quality education is significant. The reasons for this disparity needed to be explored. With a lack of previous research on this focus of the research, I needed first to collect data and look for patterns that allowed me to explore the reasons for the existing low level of community involvement in local-level educational leadership through the case study.

This case study is based on a new political model of the process of policy implementation that emerged from the reviewed literature. Supporting the research questions and aims, this model allowed an exploration based on collaboration between the different actors involved in the process and me, and my ability in enabling participants to narrate their stories that describe their view of reality. This has allowed me to understand participants' actions better (Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Lather, 1992) and also to use the policy framework to achieve empirical progress through understanding participants' actions within the policy implementation process. This has in turn assisted by making possible recommendations for improvements in policy and practice.

#### **3.2.4 Research design**

The elements of inquiry, that is, knowledge claims, strategies and methods, are brought together to develop different approaches to any research. The developed approaches are converted into relevant processes when a research is designed, which will assist in assessing the knowledge

claims. Such assessment has supported me in considering suitable strategies of enquiry that have been used to analyse methods that could fulfil the research purpose (Creswell, 2002).

The function of a research design is to ensure that the obtained evidence enables me to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. This led me onto probing the evidence that was required to answer the research question in a convincing way.

The design compatible with my ontological and epistemological position had to be able to give enough room for exploration, in order to gain knowledge and engage with the information that unfolds through the process as the context is largely influenced by people (political and rural community). As my research was bound by time, I designed the study to collect information from individuals, groups and documented material over a period of two weeks. The challenge in this design was in selecting the villages and people to conduct the research. The choice of cases was such as to make it more likely that those using my study could understand any points of similarity, differences and comparison with the context in which they may face similar challenges. The credibility of the study was strengthened through choices and design of the analysis to assure that data were properly collected and interpreted. The research design gave room for discovery, but also allowance for unanticipated events through an informal but rigorous field routine that is discussed in the methods section and recorded in field notes. I will now present the methods undertaken in this research.

### **3.2.5 Research methodology and methods**

Research methodology may be broadly classified as qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, and may be intricately connected to the research questions and the sources of data (Grix, 2002). An exploration of in-depth information and understanding of the range of meanings that are enfolded within the research questions have been possible through a qualitative research method, using individual and focus group interviews. Therefore, before the interview schedule was designed, I was required to gather information on the policy reform of SSA (its proposed implementation structure and specifics of community involvement). I needed all other published/official records that could be supportive evidence for community participation in decision making, and confirmation of successes in policy implementation. The grounds of knowledge or relationship between research and reality have been further understood through the study of policy documents and data on the successes recorded in policy implementation in the rural sections in Odisha. With this information, I have focused on the research questions, seeking to understand and interpret the specific context of the contribution of democratic participation in policy implementation in rural Odisha. This background information provided a related



understanding that has helped me to obtain relevant evidence that was specifically required to evaluate and accurately describe some phenomenon (Yin, 1989).

Political actors were hard to access, as they were not free at the time of my availability in the research field (even if appointments were made in advance). Recorded interviews were not permitted, in order to safeguard them, and their responses were not completely open. Village-level educational leaders in the community did respond to interview questions, but their responses may or may not have been politically influenced, depending on the freedom that they enjoyed under political leadership, the knowledge of the programme (SSA) that they were interviewed about, and their convictions and their trust concerning the data being used anonymously. The availability and freedom of women varied from village to village and therefore representation might not have been consistent. The documents that were made available by the government and the Department of Education contained data with discrepancies in relation to what was observed. The research used a naturalistic, interpretive approach to obtain a rich description of all the actors involved through the analysis of documents. Though the responses of participants may have been affected by my presence, the interview process and observation, the research across two villages among similar kinds of participant representation, have been able to draw varying responses and aid in its interpretation.

Also, given the lack of official information on rural communities in Odisha, or evidence of their participation, and the underlying socio-cultural and political issues, qualitative research was able to help me to understand and make the individual case significant through in-depth information, enabling verification of the conceptual framework and opening up new perspectives on the available knowledge (Gobo, 2005). Qualitative research was able to help to develop descriptions of perspectives on political accountability, democratic practices in decision making, the reasons for community representation and how certain political/social events have an influence on these perspectives. Such perspectives could increase the understanding of the cause and effect process in the local context (Maxwell, 2004). This understanding further assisted me in answering the research questions, specifically on the socio-cultural and economic factors that contribute to the problem, which the community members might not have recognised or been able to articulate. The complexity of the interaction between the various actors at different levels would have been difficult to understand if I did not conduct an in-depth study of the case specified.

#### *Field notes*

Observation as a research method may be used in two ways: structured and unstructured observations (Pretzlik, 1994). Within the interpretivist paradigm, where the importance of context and the construction of knowledge between the researched and me are acknowledged,

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unstructured observation seemed to fit well. Field notes take central position in this method (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). According to Van Maanen (1988, p. 223), 'field notes are shorthand reconstructions of events, observations, and conversations that took place in the field'. Field notes have given me an insight into the context/process, interactions between people and influence of the physical environment with the subject being researched (Mulhall, 2003).

My conceptualisation of the field has had an influence on the assumptions and practices observed within it. It could be considered a natural entity that required an objective description by me, as I have been the channel conveying the information to the reader (Atkinson, 1992). It provided an audit trail enabling the readers and myself to track my actions and decisions (Sandelowski, 1986) and how I, as an instrument, have affected the focus and direction of data collection (Waterman, 1998).

The field notes of my observations focused on:

### 1. Recording structural and organisational features within and surrounding the school

I observed incomplete school buildings in both villages which led to students of different classes seated within one large room with no dividers, just facing towards different sides. The structures of toilets were seen in both villages but they were unusable, with no pipelines and children had to use open spaces instead. Teachers in both villages had one toilet, for which water was fetched in a bucket. Drinking water was available in an earthen pot which was refilled, but was only used by the staff in Village 2. Village 1 had water in several pots available for the children as well. The school in Village 2 was inaccessible during the monsoon, as the surrounding area floods and sewage overflows. During my visit, the monsoon had just begun and the children were wading through stagnant water with overflowing sewage to get into the school. The school in Village 1 was located on the main street of the village and therefore it was safe from flooding, but the access roads to the village that teachers had to use were muddy and could not be used during the monsoon. The teachers did not have teaching aids for their subjects. One blackboard was available in the shared classrooms, but chalk was in limited supply. Village 1 used the computers that it had managed to receive to use as aids for children once a week, as the internet was expensive and had poor connectivity, and the head teacher downloaded what was requested by the teachers once a week. The schools had limited furniture, leaving most children to be seated on the cement floor. Different grades were combined, as the schools had an inadequate number of teachers.

### 2. Community – interactions between community members from different caste groups.

This was strained and was only observed to happen when there was a need, even between those in leadership (SMC members). This was observed while women were interacting when collecting drinking water from the village drinking water tank and when a few of the SMC members came to meet me during the first week of my visit. Village 1 seemed to have a more open platform for communication, created by the head teacher, and members of different castes interacted with more ease. Women were vocal only when there were no men around in the second village, and those in leadership (SMC) would not come together for a meeting.

### 3. SMC activities.

Policy implementation within the community was observed to be carried out by all SMC members in Village 1, whereas such involvement was not obvious in Village 2. Relationships between the community and the leaders were strained in Village 2. Positional power seemed to be used to the advantage of the leaders (head teacher, chairperson), who also misused their power for personal gain. Members of the SMC were seen checking the presence of teachers, the quality and distribution of mid-day meals, the attendance of students and teachers, the interaction/discussion with the head teacher and so on during school hours in Village 1. Only the head teacher in Village 2 was observed to take care of school management.

These notes are products of complicated decisions, and the actions of the community and other actors involved in the policy implementation process, and therefore have assisted me in drawing out the 'underlying pattern'. Aspects of the process appeared to surface (Heritage, 1984, p.86), which acted as a support to the data gathered through interviews and document analysis. Field notes may seem deviant and stand out in comparison to data gathered through other instruments or from my existing knowledge. This has aided in controlling my tacit knowledge while recording and interpreting the field notes that were worthy of annotation (Garfinkel, 1967).

### **Interviews**

Within the interpretive process, interviewing being a suitable method, the research purpose was to draw on data from members of local-level educational leadership both at community and at government level. Information relating to the research purpose was available with a number of key informants with varying views and an understanding of democratic participation in local-level educational leadership within the community.

Interviewing, a qualitative data collection method, yielded rich insights into human behaviour (individually and collectively) and its meaning and purpose, with an insider's perspective of the individuals and groups. The significant context and its insight that is hard to gather for interpretation through quantitative methods are also reasons for my choice of a qualitative

research method. Interviews was the most attractive choice (Tyler et al., 1998) considering the research involves: a majority of illiterate and a few semi-literate community members who may be involved in local-level educational leadership; politicians/government officials who are part of the leadership some of who would not respond to questionnaires; and the need to research issues involving personal experience, which includes dialogue.

Interviewing for this study has enabled the gathering of information that otherwise could not be directly observed (Patton, 2002). It also allowed data to be gathered in the words of the informant, allowing an interpretation of the area being studied (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998) in a guided conversation (Yin, 2003), while gathering information that meets specific research objectives (Powney and Watts, 1987). Further, this suggests that interviews have been purposeful conversations that are bounded, deep and detailed. I recognised the need for guided conversation in this context, as the majority of the informants are illiterate and may not be familiar with thinking or speaking in length about policy, policy processes or decision-making, and those who govern them locally and politically. Some of the informants belong to rural sections where people live with limited basic facilities (water, sanitation, and electricity), most of whom have had little exposure to life in developed areas, apart from a few who may travel to developed cities or towns for work.

As informants speak a different language, interviews were conducted through a translator (discussed in the following section). This was another reason to follow guided conversations, as it helped to ensure that the translator avoided his own interpretation and translated word for word. Interviews were made flexible enough to guide informers with questions that triggered their thoughts and helped reflections follow in line with the interview topic. It was important for both the translator and I to not act from a point of authority, but rather as an inquirer in guided conversations (Labov, 1984). Guided interview conversations were successful, helping to move informants from general accounts to private accounts by expressing feelings and personal views. Another interest in the interviews was the belief that informants were more open in expressing views that they might have been through a questionnaire (Flick, 1998). It gave me the scope to ask extra probing questions to support the evidence. Having said this, the openness, richness of the conversation and spontaneity made progress after I had built rapport with the interviewees, but care was taken to ensure minimal influence on interviewees (Bodgan and Biklen, 1998).

I conducted my study as an outsider, as the villages are accessed through a non-governmental organisation (NGO) for which I have worked in another State. Therefore, I had no contact with the communities being studied. Despite not having worked directly with these communities, my association with the well-respected NGO made them more accepting and open to being part of

the research than if I had approached them on my own. Researchers (Banks, 1998; Chavez, 2008; Zinn, 1979) have evidenced the advantages of a unique and nuanced insight into the underrepresented communities to which they belong. Having been brought up in India, even if I do not belong to the rural community, I can to some limited degree understand the cultural perspectives and values of the community (Chavez, 2008). Nevertheless, from my point of view, although I am relatively well informed, I believe that I have maintained a degree of detachment from the community, its culture and issues. I can therefore state that my position gives me an understanding, despite being an outsider. I have taken into consideration that my limited knowledge of the community and the reasons that drive my interest to this research could change my perspectives during my interactions with interviewees and the community.

From the point of view of the respondents, I had to be aware that my advantaged access (as a trusted outsider) might shift from person to person because of the vulnerability of the group affected by caste, religion, social class, literacy and positional power. Informal visits to the villages were made before the interviews were conducted to build rapport with the community and those identified as respondents. Ethical issues of positionality will be discussed in section 3.8.

My relationship with the NGO was important as it were my first point of contact with the communities and government officials and was instrumental in introducing me to potential interviewees. Its influence in helping me build rapport was important, as the rural communities are vulnerable, so gaining their trust and acceptance is imperative to conducting this sensitive research. The research could have a considerable impact on their children and their involvement as leaders, since it is a politically driven leadership structure. The reduction of fear and distrust was addressed through gatekeepers who have an established and good relationship with both the communities and the government officials. This gave me a better chance of gaining a more honest and open response with the respondents.

Data from the interview may be supportive or incongruent to the data gathered from observations and document analysis. There are possibilities that data from different respondents will bring different perspectives, which might highlight the importance of respecting different perspectives of respondents and the additional data. This similarity or incongruence of data would aid in reflecting on the theoretical assumptions of the model developed for this research.

### ***Individual and focus group interviews***

Individual in-depth interviews are widely used by researchers to co-create meaning with the respondents, as they together reconstruct perceptions of events and experiences (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Individual interviews have given me room to explore deeply into social and

personal areas, whereas group interviews have allowed a great range of experience but might have restricted a deep discussion because of its public nature (Johnson, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2005), especially where caste and gender differences prevail. In this research that needs individual opinions of personal involvement and experiences as leaders in SSA's implementation, which might not be expressed in the presence of others due to various personal and social reasons, I made the choice to conduct individual in-depth interviews with various actors (see Figure 3.9). With qualitative research being an iterative process in which the research matches data collection, there was a need for questions to be altered as I learnt more about the subject through interactions. This required me to digress from the planned questions to obtain rich and productive data (Johnson, 2002). Therefore, semi-structured, that is predetermined open-ended interview questions, were used to would allow other questions to emerge through the dialogue between the respondents and me (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Focus group interviews were also conducted to allow multiple participants to share their views, knowledge and experiences on a specific subject (Barbour and Schostak, 2005; Owen, 2001). With both individual and group interviews I had the opportunity to check if there are variations in personal and public responses about experiences and views on the questions posed (Merton et al., 1990; Kitzinger, 1996; Morgan, 1996). Carey (1994, p. 226) defines a focus group as 'using a semi-structured group session, moderated by a group leader, held in an informal setting, with the purpose of collecting information on a designated topic'. Focus group discussions provided a deep insight into caste, gender, power relations, attitudes, beliefs and opinions in relation to involvement in local-level educational leadership. This appears useful to reflect on social realities of the two communities when directly accessed through the local language and concepts that structure the participants' experiences (Hughes et al., 1993). It has supported analysis of data collected from focus group discussions that include my description of the group's dynamics and analysis made with details of the dynamics included in the analysis (Morgan, 1997; Duggleby, 2005).

In both individual and focus group interviews, there might have been issues where the research topic and questions, if not explained well, may have silenced individual voices (Kitzinger, 1996). The need for a strong interview guide may have led to a compromised quality of discussion and conversation, if ignored, as I might have found it challenging to direct the group and to stimulate conversations to obtain the desired information (Dilorio et al., 1994). Carrying out such a task with the help of a translator may have been even more difficult and could have disrupted the flow of the discussion. Ensuring equal contributions to discussion seemed simpler in individual interviews than in focus group interviews, as women and those from lower castes appeared not to be confident enough to voice their thoughts. I ensured that discussions were directed from

general to specific discussions and questions/statements were made in a non-threatening manner to encourage participation from those members marginalised within the group (Kingry et al., 1990). Focus groups varied in size in both villages. There were as few as five members when interviewing women belonging to local self-help groups.

The interview schedules were designed using the new model to assist in answering the research questions. The different stages of the implementation process, and the issues and barriers that could be expected, as considered in the new model, helped to develop the research instruments. Separate instruments were developed for local-level educational leaders in the community and those employed by the government/government officials. This was done to capture aspects of motivations, power and other socio-cultural issues that affect implementation of SSA. The research instruments are available for reference in Appendix C.

### 3.3 Using a translator in research interviews

The translator performed a multifaceted activity of processing information while responses in Kuvi (tribal language) were taken and translated into English, bringing it as close as possible to the meaning of the response in Kuvi (Wu, 2006). It was important for me to make a choice of who would undertake the translation, as it was important to check possible technical issues that had to be avoided while collecting the data. The translator needed to be truly bilingual (Kuvi and English) and educated sufficiently to be familiar with the concepts being explored. This enabled interviews to be translated more accurately. Back translation, a process where translation from the target language back to the source language is done several times until it makes sense in both the source language – Kuvi – and the target language – English – was carried out until we reached agreement that we had reached the correct version of the data (Temple and Young, 2004). Back-translation helped in identifying any misunderstandings in the first translation, and the misunderstandings mostly occurred in people's understanding of the title. When questioned about the *Sarpanch*, interviewees spoke about the brother/father/husband of the *Sarpanch* instead of the woman herself, the *Sarpanch* holding a tokenistic position. This process helped to ensure that both the translator and the interviewee had understood the interview questions and the translation was a good reflection of the responses to the research questions. It also ensured the relationship between culture and language, acknowledging the need to depend not just on the words but to identify to a certain extent the translators' culturally bound perspective, as he was a native, and technical factors influencing the translation (Chen and Boore, 2010). This process was undertaken with a few random samples to ensure a good-quality translation. The detailed explanation of the translation process and back-translation is explained in section 3.7.

Reduction of bias was one of the main concerns, especially since the translator is a local and I, as a researcher, might have tended to have subject bias. Although there was a need for a translator in this research, the role of moderator was held by me. Basch (1987, p.415) reflects the role of a moderator to:

create a non-threatening supportive climate that encourages all participants to share views; facilitating interaction among members; interjecting probing comments, transitional questions and summaries without interfering too brusquely with the dialogue; covering important topics and questions while relying on judgements to abandon aspects of the outline, noting non-verbal responses.

Some of the issues that could have transpired due to this need for interference are that I may have had to interrupt when actions/reactions were observed and to clarify thoughts through extra questions that may have interfered with the flow of the discussion. Moreover, it could have been time consuming, as the translations needed to take place during the interview process. This could have caused the interest levels to dip as people might have become impatient. Further, there might have been a gap in clearly understanding culturally bound opinions, attitudes and attributes. These issues were reduced by forming a good rapport with the translator before the fieldwork, ensuring that the translator had a clear idea of the research aims and building rapport with the community members to ensure they were comfortable with discussing the interview questions in my presence (Chen and Boore, 2010).

### **3.4 Document analysis**

A document is any material source that gives information about the phenomenon that is being investigated. Specialists produce it for a specific purpose other than for the purpose of research, and it includes websites, records, diaries and newspapers. The significance of documents chosen to analyse depends on the historical reasons for producing the documents, the places they have been circulated, how much they are valued, and the social functions, interpretations, effects and uses that may have been associated with them. Documents were used for cognitive and triangulation purposes (Corbetta, 2003). The most important use of document for a case study, according to Yin (2003), is to validate and strengthen evidence from other sources.

In the villages, documents maintained by local-level educational leaders, schools and those produced by the State that are made available in the SSA website for Odisha may or may not be congruent with what the government and educational authorities state. Although the information is expected to be updated periodically, this may not have been done. However, the information that was available supported my investigation of the current position, helped in comparing



development since the inception of SSA and verified the same with data that were empirically collected (interviews, management structure and school committee minutes). Further, documents may help us understand meanings, develop a deeper understanding and ascertain insights that may be directly or indirectly linked to the research problem (Merriam, 1988), exposing issues of political influence, governmental response and so forth. At the same time, the available documents might not be firm evidence of what is reported, as all the information that is documented may be incongruent with observed reality. Data that are published may be made suitable to project a situation of what the government/educational department wants people to see, and not the actual position. This does not mean that such documents can be ignored, but may be used as social facts alerts and therefore approached for what they are, and what they may be used to accomplish (Atkinson, 1992).

Analysing the documents involved an iterative process of both superficial (skimming) and thorough examination (reading) and interpretation that combined content and thematic analysis. In this research, documents were analysed to draw supporting links to the data that were collected. Content analysis was carried out through a process of categorising information that related to the central question of the research (Silverman, 2000). This required me to be objective through fair representation of research material and sensitively to respond to subtle cues to the meaning of data that may develop from the documents (Bowen, 2009).

The process of sampling documents and selecting them was important, as relevant documents that supported the exploration of the problem and the generated data were required. Documents such as formats of SSA's management structure, roles and responsibilities of those involved in the implementation process, and developments of the programme implementation, were chosen for their availability, to help track the progress of policy implementation. This included records and reports of meetings conducted during the planning phase and reports of implementation (available from the District Education Office), and training with and for the community members indicating the number of people trained, representatives of people who had been trained and training planned and implemented (available in Block Resource Centre). There were critical reviews of decision-making and implementation processes, records from websites for the implementation structure and those involved in policy governance. These documents did not only provide a detailed understanding of the socio-cultural and political contexts but served as a useful pre- and post-interview development of knowledge, as it might aid in asking additional and probing questions. They may also serve as leads to events and situations that needed to be observed (Bowen, 2009).

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I assumed that access to the minutes of committee meetings in the various levels of the management structure would be easy, since SSA has a policy of transparency where all information should be made available to the public. Although the SMCs were very supportive in providing the required details, one village could not tell where the minutes were stored and the other village did not seem to have copies of the minutes sent to the Panchayat/gram panchayat or Block Education Officer.

Attendance registers were available for analysis and reflected what we had heard from interview respondents. This was that signatures were taken from members even if there was no meeting or if members were not present at a meeting. All the attendance registers showed that there were regular meetings, conducted according to the requirements.

In the government offices, although it was possible to access the minutes of District-level committee meetings, permission to copy the minutes was not given. Since the interviews were in English with the government officials, I was not allowed to take a translator who could make notes of relevant points.

The management structure of SSA, roles and responsibilities of members in each level, and the District profile of Rayagada District have been obtained. These can serve as evidence and supporting documents in the analysis of the data.

I collected newspaper clippings (for 2 months) to show the documentation of how Rayagada perceives SSA, its implementation and the current struggles. A few of the articles could be used to compare the thoughts and responses of the community and to check if there are issues and problems that are faced by the community that differ from what the government is currently focusing on. Reports of evaluations and research done in the tribal belts of Odisha have been obtained.

### 3.4.1 Strategy for document selection and justification

Table 3:1 Aims of document analysis

Documents selected	Data analysed	Purpose
Original SSA program document, 2001	Aims, objectives, implementation structure	Analyse the mandate for community involvement in decision-making within implementation process
1 <sup>st</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> year Annual reports of SSA, Odisha	Indications of political agendas, politicians and local leaders short term working plan	Areas where community or members of community are being included/excluded by political, governmental and local leaders
Critical reports of SSA Odisha published by evaluators from the Right to Education Policy, Times of India media reports and peer reviewed research reports on education in rural Odisha.	Observations of media, educators and researchers on decisions made and those responsible for the same.	Areas within the implementation process that have been neglected.  Role of policy entrepreneurs, if any.
SSA, Odisha website	Implementation and governance structures, governance meetings and reports.	Official record of those involved in policy governance, planning.  Frequency of meetings and decisions taken to compare with records of meetings and attendees in the rural villages.
Minutes of meetings in the villages and district educational office in the 1 <sup>st</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> year (one from each year)	Attendees, decision-making process	Inclusion and exclusion of community members.

## 3.5 Sampling

In qualitative research, the selection of the sample may greatly affect the quality of research (Kitson et al., 1982). Selective sampling, according to Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p.93), is 'shaped by the time the researcher has available to him (sic), by his framework, by his starting and developing interests, and by any restrictions placed upon his (sic) observations by his hosts'. For this study, two rural communities in the State of Odisha were chosen as a convenience sample,

mainly for reasons of access to the community members and other local-level educational leaders at government level. Access was established through my ex-colleagues working in a local NGO catering to the developmental needs of the chosen villages. Access to local leaders and political leaders for permission to conduct this research was also gained through this NGO. The NGO acted as my gatekeeper, without whom entry to the villages and/or permission from government authorities may have been impossible. The chosen rural sections are well known for Naxalites or Maoist groups who control the territory, making it dangerous for an outsider, a woman, to carry out field research safely. Therefore, I have used convenience sampling based on access, the safety cover provided by the NGO and its assistance in gaining permission from governmental authorities for the study.

The reason of choice of these villages is to show the differences within the rural sections. One consists of a population with a few educated members who may be more familiar with SSA and are experiencing development within the village (living in houses instead of huts, with water and sanitation facilities, etc.). The second is a rural community with fewer educated members, living with limited basic facilities. Thus, one District qualifies as more economically and educationally developed than the other. In relation to the sampling, those who will be the main informants for the case study will be chosen from community members involved in local-level educational leadership (including women in SMC, VEC, BRCC) and a few who are not involved in leadership, community leaders (panchayat leaders, women representatives part of the leadership - *Sarpanch*) and District-level educational leaders (District Education Officer, BRCC, CRCC). These people have been identified to fulfil the aims of the research through information-rich data that can facilitate an in-depth perception of the problem. This is of central importance to the purpose of this research, and therefore it is termed a purposeful sampling frame (Patton, 2002).

The need for a homogenous focus group for data collection is a topic that has been debated. The need for homogeneity in age, status, class, occupation and so forth may have an effect on the interaction of participants. Carey (1994) also emphasises that participants should be strangers, while Fern and Monroe (1996) suggests that there are only minor differences in homogeneous and non-homogeneous groups, and therefore this criteria may not be necessary. I agree with Calder (1977), who states that the purpose of the group should define its homogeneity. Furthermore, I agree that in exploratory research heterogeneous groups may aid in producing rich information, while homogeneous groups may facilitate better rapport. Pragmatic reasons such as limited time, resources and groups of people who know each other may be an advantage. This is because they can provide a conducive, friendly environment that fosters open and quality discussions.

### **Sampling of interview respondents**

The selection of interview respondents was based on their role in the local-level educational leadership and their contribution to the desired research data. Convenience sampling was adopted to support this process.

The rationale for choosing women and men at community level is to ensure there is a fair representation of opinions and experiences gathered from both genders. It is also because there is evidence of gender discrimination in India, and more so in rural sections (UNICEF, 2014), while at the same time SSA mandates women to take up significant leadership positions (SSA, 2002). Data gathered from government officials and community members involved in local-level leadership may be able to give a richer perspective of the struggles and pressures that they face in their roles, as are those who may be immediately accountable for the successes and failures of implementation. Almost all respondents were chosen because of their involvement in SSA's implementation. Their role in decision-making as mandated by SSA was assessed through interviews conducted with them. Non-committee members and those not involved in the implementation were also interviewed to draw on their understanding of SSA and its implementation, how they perceive its successes and failures and so forth. Thus, data gathered have enabled me to answer research questions relating to the involvement of community in decision-making, inclusion/exclusion of individuals or groups in the process, the gaps in the implementation and management system and the support system made available for communities to be involved in effective decision-making.

Rural Village 1 (the more developed village with a few educated members): Representatives are two women and two men from the SMC (village level educational leadership group and representatives for the higher and lower caste). They are actively involved and, according to their assigned role, have a say in the decisions made for the community, the head teacher, teacher and the chair of the SMC.

Rural Village 2 (living with less than basic facilities and fewer educated members): Representatives are two women and two men from the SMC (village level educational leadership group and representatives for the higher and lower caste). They are actively involved and have a say in the decisions made for the community, the head teacher and the chair of the SMC.

Government-appointed local-level educational leaders: Two BRCCs and two CRCC and the head of the District Education Authority will be interviewed.



Figure 3.1: Individual and focus group interviews conducted in the community and governmental levels in Villages 1 and 2

### Government officials

With the research focus on the Rayagada District, initial contact was established with a retired BRCC from Rayagada District, who also worked with the NGO. The same person was the access point for all the government officials identified for research. Representatives from every level of SSA's management structure were identified for interview.

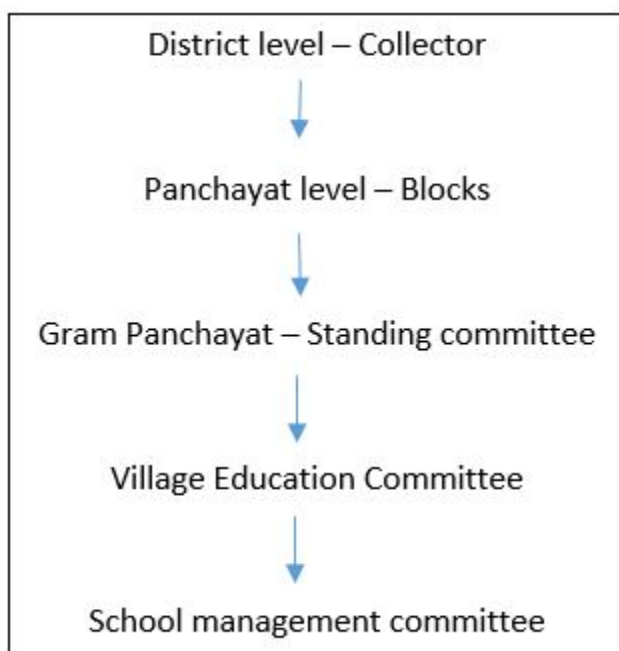


Figure 3.2: Management structure as prescribed by UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report on out-of-school populations, 2014

A preliminary discussion was organised with the retired BRCC to clarify my understanding of the working management structure, the roles and responsibilities of the members and the changes brought about since the inception of the DPEP, 1999, the transition to SSA from 2004 and SSA-RTE from 2013. This gave a realistic insight into the day-to-day functioning and realistic issues that may be faced or caused by officials involved in SSA's decision-making and implementation process.

Government officials in charge of the villages were identified and chosen, based on their role, time served in the current position and availability. They were approached by the retired BRCC, who established the first contact, gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the discussion, and fixed a convenient date and time for the meeting. Officials at the higher level of the hierarchy were more reluctant to agree to discussion, but eventually agreed to have an informal discussion without any kind of proof of identification (no signature on the consent form or audio recording). The consent was obtained verbally and was recorded in my field notes. Two officials (the Odisha Administrative Service officer and the BRCC) cancelled their interview discussion at the last minute.

### **Villages**

VEC members and School Management Committee (SMC) members were met informally during visits to villages to build rapport. Potential members for interviews were identified. On the second visit, informal meetings with individuals and in small groups were organised with identified members to explain the research purpose and find volunteers for individual and focus group interviews. A schedule for the same was prepared. Volunteers were informed of the importance of keeping interruptions to the minimum during the interview. All the appointments in the villages were scheduled in the evenings, when members were available after work.

Schools within the villages were approached through the chairman of the SMC. The head teachers in both schools were met and appointments fixed for the interview. One of the school was a model school for SSA in Rayagada District. One of the head teachers had to leave half-way through the interview, as he was called away on an unexpected official assignment.

## **3.6 Experiences with Interviews and focus groups**

### **3.6.1 Individual interviews**

Having gained a fair understanding of the communities, their culture and achieving a reasonable rapport with those who had given a verbal consent to be interviewed, the interviewing process

### Chapter 3

began. Both translators, the NGO representative and I met with all the interview volunteers apart from the government officials, as these interviews were in English, and appointments were made for only me to be part of the discussion.

Appointments with government officials were made but, since appointments might not be honoured, and be based on the availability of officials at a given point of time and the willingness of the officials to meet exactly at the agreed time, it was decided to plan one meeting per day. With the availability of the community members only in the evenings between 4 and 7pm, two interviews were planned for each day to cover 16 individual interviews (10 community members plus 2 community representatives in the government+ 4 government officials).

The research instruments, participant information sheet and the participant consent form were translated into Oriya and Kuvi to ensure clarity in the understanding of both translators and participants. The contents of the participant information sheet and the consent form were communicated through an informal discussion before the latter was signed. The interviews had to be conducted in an informal manner as the community members were more comfortable and open when the interaction was less formal. This could be attributed to community members not used to being in a formal set-up, and who may have felt the difference in power relations between them and me.

The respondents were comfortable to be at a place they were familiar with during the discussions as they were not disturbed by those who they may find intimidating, such as leaders and community members from a higher caste (there is a segregation within the village where Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribes and Other Backward Caste people live). For this reason I decided that the interviews be conducted in the homes of volunteers. The place I had originally identified was a youth centre, located in the centre of the village, which was later recognised as a place mainly accessed by the Schedule Tribe members. Once the interviewees knew of the decision to conduct the interview in their personal space, they appeared not to be intimidated with the research team and were willing to discuss at length. Although most interviewees engaged well in the discussion, there were interruptions that could not be avoided during the interview process. With the village being a small and close community, the interviews and the presence of the research team caused curiosity. There were family members and neighbours whose close movement around us could not be avoided. It is part of the culture that people interfere in what happens with other members of the community. Only one interviewee seemed uncomfortable when such interruptions took place. Once I noticed the discomfort, I requested the translator to stop and talk about general topics to avoid the interviewee's discomfort. Conducting the meeting



in each person's home was a better choice, also because there was enough privacy for those marginalised even within the community to be able to speak without restriction.

The three-way translation was not always easy, and it took longer than expected, but the second translator felt at ease after the first two interviews and was perform a quick translation. The first few interviews were long and intense, which prepared him well. Some of the points raised by people were similar and he also had a better idea of how the interviews worked. At moments when there was a need for clarity in translation, there was a little more time while the interviewee waited before the discussion continued. To ensure the interviewee's interest was not lost, I decided together with the translators that the first translator would continue talking to the interviewee while the other clarified my doubts/questions. This enabled the discussion to be resumed easily.

### **3.6.2 Focus groups**

Two focus group interviews were conducted, one in each village. Seven to nine members were chosen in accordance with the methodological decisions made, taking into consideration possible drop-outs. With the consent of all the identified members to take part in the focus group, a time and place were organised by the participants themselves. As anticipated, we had one or two members who could not attend the focus group due to personal reasons.

It was more difficult to keep interruption at bay in the first 15 to 20 minutes of the discussion, as community members did not understand that this was an exclusive discussion and were keen to join in. The project officer gently explained to the crowd the purpose of the meeting, but with the problem continued with other members of the community. We had to ask a few members of the youth group to help us. This proved a good way to minimise interruptions and therefore was followed in the second village as well.

The process of translation and keeping the interviewees engaged worked better, as there were many more people who engaged in conversation. One of the groups had a few members who did not engage in the discussion as much as the others, possibly because of the power relations, although much care was taken in choosing the participants.

Keeping track of field notes at this point was very difficult, as almost everyone was taking part in the conversation and I had to make the decision to take notes only when required and pay careful attention to the discussion and translation.

### 3.6.3 Data collection process

The table below details the everyday activity that was undertaken in the two weeks of field work.

Table 3:2 Fieldwork activities

Day 1	<p>Meeting with project officer and translator from NGO. Introductions, discussion of villages chosen and the plan of action for the two weeks.</p> <p>Briefing of the research aims and training of translator.</p>
Day 2	<p>Meeting with community members in Villages 1 and 2, village leaders, SMC members, visited school, teachers and head teacher.</p> <p>Conducted pilot interview with translator in another village. Feedback and discussion with project manager of NGO. Briefing and training with two translators.</p>
Day 3	<p>Meeting with BRCC, CRCC to explain the purpose of the research, gain and planning visits to government officials and making appointments.</p> <p>Pilot interview with both translators. Review, feedback and planning the interview and translation process. Discussed possible issues that can transpire and how they would be handled.</p>
Day 4, 5, 6	<p>Visited government offices and make appointments and request for documents that I could use.</p> <p>Villages 1 and 2: Building a rapport with the members of the community, at the school and specifically with those who I had identified as potential interviewees. I involved myself in interacting with the children and helping them with their home work as I also spoke to the parents about their work and life in the village. Once potential interviewees were informed, I engaged in casual conversation about what I do and what I am there for (although they were already informed on the first day of my visit). Almost all the people I had identified agreed to be part of the interview/focus group and were keen on talking more about the school and the local leaders.</p>
Day 7	<p>Visited Village 1 and 2 as all the members are available in the village on a Sunday giving me an opportunity to find members for the focus group discussion. At this point, I was able to make observations of the interaction</p>

	between the different caste members and their use of the various facilities within the village such as drinking water. This helped me engage in conversation more easily on my observations.
Day 8, 9, 10, 11	Mornings: Meeting BRCCs, CRCCs, Odisha Administrative Service Officer, District Education Officer  Afternoons: Individual interviews in both villages.
Day 12	Meeting with ex BRCC to verify details I had received from government officials, clarification of details and progress of SSA's implementation and related government decisions.  Focus group discussions in both villages
Day 13	Meeting with back translator, checking and verifying voice recordings, making detailed notes of discussion and clarifications made.  Collecting and verifying all the documents (consent form, voice recordings, copies of government documents, photographs).
Day 14	Meeting with both villages, offering thanks and clarifying points that transpired during back translation.

### 3.7 Translation Process

To a large extent, qualitative data analysis took place concurrently with data collection. This research used three related processes of analysis: to translate the data into English; to organise the transcribed data; and to analyse the organised data.

#### 3.7.1 Translating the data into English

Collecting primary data in an unfamiliar place and language required me to ensure a considerable amount of preliminary preparation, especially with the translator, in the field, before the actual research was conducted. This preliminary work included briefing and training translators, fixing appointments with government officials, and contacting and building rapport with village leaders, self-help group members, schools and community members.

Access to the translator was established through the NGO, the local point of contact in the field. As the villagers speak a tribal dialect not commonly spoken in Odisha, it was challenging to find a translator who could speak both English and the local dialect. The identified translator was met

and briefed about the research aims, followed by a four-hour discussion and training in conducting interviews using the research instrument.

To ensure understanding and clarity of purpose and instruments, two sample interviews were organised. During the practice interview, it was quickly perceived that there was a gap in the translator's understanding of me and his ability to communicate clearly the participants' response. A request was placed to the NGO for another translator with a better understanding of English. This was not possible, therefore I had to decide on a three-way translation of English–Oriya–Kuvi–Oriya–English. This involved another translator who spoke and understood English fluently and could understand Kuvi but not speak it fluently. Preparation with the extra translator required extra hours of briefing and training. To ensure effectiveness during interviews, considering the time, the level of interest that might vary with the time taken in translation and the issues that may arise with the presence of a third person, another set of trial interviews were undertaken. At the end of the trial interviews, the most positive aspect was the way participants were more open in expressing their thoughts and feelings during the discussion. This was because they were more comfortable with the second translator, who was the NGO's project fieldworker in that village. Being a fieldworker, he had interacted with the community, self-help groups, village heads and the school staff in various developmental projects for several years.

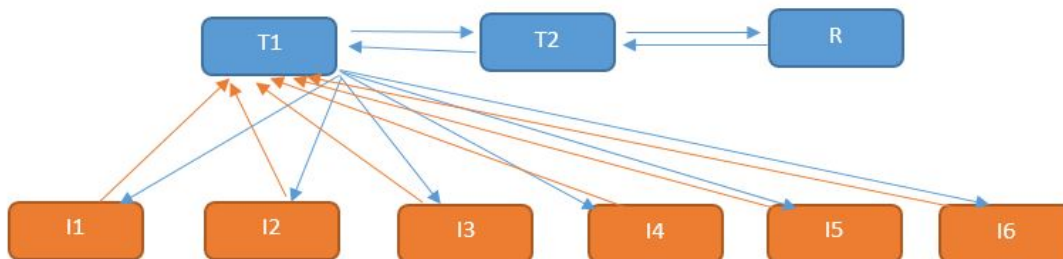


Figure 3.3 Using the three-way translation in a focus group between the T Translator, R Researcher and I Interviewee

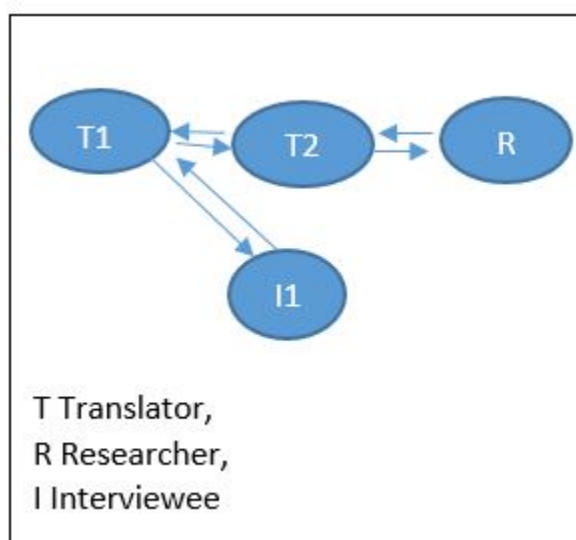


Figure 3.4 The three-way interview translation process

The rapport and understanding of the culture and struggles in the community enabled the project worker to interact in a way that made them more confident and comfortable to share and discuss. The challenges were in ensuring the time taken in translation was not too long to lose the participant's interest. To manage this problem, a third translator who was fluent in Oriya and English and also understood Kuvi checked all the recorded interviews and endorsed the accuracy of the translation. With this preparation, the translators agreed they were ready for the actual interviews. I was more confident to conduct the research with the best possible solution in the given circumstances.

Translation was one of the main challenges during the fieldwork. I had to keep a check constantly to ensure that the translators were not taking over the interview. The translators' confidence in translation grew, with a good understanding of the research questions and the purpose of the research after a few interviews. There was a need to halt the translators and request more frequent translation to enable me to include probing questions wherever needed and to take control of the translation. There was a need to make gentle reminders during the briefing every morning for such breaks.

A three-way translation had to be used due to the initial issues with the translator not being fluent in the tribal language and in the State language. As the researcher, I posed questions in English to Translator 1 who understands and speaks English and Oriya (State language). He also understood Kuvi (tribal language), but did not speak it fluently. Translator 1 posed the question in Oriya to Translator 2, who speaks and understands both Oriya and Kuvi fluently, but whose English is very basic. Translator 2 posed the question to the interviewees in Kuvi and translated the response to Translator 1 in Oriya, which was translated back to me in English. Figures 3.4 and

3.5 depict the above explanation. The reason to not let this process become a two-way translation (Oriya and Kuvi) was because this was the one way in which I could ensure that the right questions were asked and to help me to ask relevant and probing questions as and when required, drawing as much information as possible from the interviewees.

The briefing was followed by a discussion of the interviews that had been conducted the previous evening to ensure there was a clear understanding and interpretation of the interview discussions. There were clarifications that were made with the retired BRCC on the structural implementation aspects, the related responsibility and accountability, which gave me a deeper understanding of the responses of the community members. This in turn helped me alter my approach to the research questions, which proved helpful.

The significance of translation to understanding the cultural perspective of the data that are collected is important. In doing so, I conducted periodical checks in order to ensure validity and reliability. Reviewing the literature of Temple (1997) and Chang et al. (1999), I noted that ensuring adequate translation may be achieved through translating original source language (Kuvi, the tribal language) to the target language (English) and back translation. These two steps were repeated once more to ensure that the target language was acceptably close in meaning to the source language. To ensure there is almost an accurate representation of the narrative, the transcript has been presented verbatim.

The translated data were reviewed and modified, when required, by a bilingual expert using samples of the written documents and the voice recording of the interviews. This was carried out to ensure that the data were validated and to establish trustworthiness (Esposito, 2001) of this qualitative study. As I had taken notes during the interview process, interviews that I believed required further explanation or clarification were specifically chosen as the samples to be reviewed. A random sample of the other transcripts were also chosen and reviewed by the bilingual expert.

The translator was involved in the data collection process and in the first part of the analysis process, beginning from assisting in the identification of and requesting respondent participation, through to interviewing and translation of the collected data. Involvement during translation and checking the same is to gain the input of the translator, who is more acquainted with the culture, which would ensure that culturally bound responses are not misunderstood or misinterpreted (Edwards, 1998). Interpreting the language of the translator was important, as it assists in minimising the issue of power and authority (discussed in the following section) that may come into play in the translated terminology (Temple, 1997).

### 3.7.2 Organising the transcribed data

The transcribed data was organised and managed through coding and themes (Gibbs, Friese and Mangabeira, 2002). NVivo, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that supports coding segments of data, was used to save time, ensure systematic procedures, support completeness and give me the flexibility to revise the processes of analysis and data management (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Following the organisation of data, a sense of the database as a whole was achieved by reading and revisiting the interview in my mind. Notes of ideas or key concepts were made on the transcripts and field notes. This part of the process helped in forming large categories of the data, followed by describing and interpreting the data using codes (Creswell, 2013). The data were analysed using an inductive approach, through which existing ideas from the literature and my own ideas were used, and a deductive approach, through which the ideas that directly emerged from the data were used for analysis (Layder, 1998; Lewins and Silver, 2007). Additionally, I had created a coding outline to be applied during the coding process (inductive), which was created using the research questions, literature review and the new model. The coding process involved recognising important information before interpreting it, followed by encoding the classified information that was gathered into groups to form themes from them. The deductive thematic analysis used the additional themes that emerged directly from the data while using the inductive coding process. A theme was formed when a pattern in the information was observed, describing possible observations while giving a maximum interpretation of the issues being researched. The coding process was iterative and reflexive, and was checked to ensure that the themes were grounded in the original data.

Table 3:3 Example of the process of Inductive and deductive coding

<b>Inductive reasoning to form codes:</b> From a number of observations, a general conclusion was drawn leading to capacity building, access to information and support being the initial codes that were developed.
Observations: Only a few members have attended one or two training; Head teacher believes in on-the-job training; Training is not seen as beneficial by SMC members.
Conclusion: Insufficient support received by SMC members to attend training leaving SMC members with little awareness of SSA, their roles and rights. The actual theme that was finalised to accommodate these issues is Support.
<b>Deductive reasoning to form codes:</b> From a general premise, specific results were predicted
General premise: Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation
Predicted results: CRCC overloaded with work and neglecting monitoring and evaluation targets set by BRCC causing a ripple effect in schools where SSA goals are neglected by head teachers and teachers.

Reading and interacting with the data helped me to familiarise myself with the data to code them. Data collected with semi-structured questions required a coding system built to maintain the richness of the responses and be structured so that qualitative techniques of analysis could be effectively used (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002). The coding for this research was developed using the new political model of the process of policy implementation that emerged from the literature review of policy and community. This model helped not only in understanding the implementation process but in answering the research questions. Coding helped me segment similar data and sort these segments into separate categories that would further distil them into distinct themes (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002). The codes and themes were then analysed to answer the research questions and later verify the model.

This study used documents as a source of additional and supplementary evidence during the analysis phase to recognise the pertinent information that could support the themes and the analysis that followed. The use of document analysis was used not to develop an in-depth analysis of the documents, but as a form of corroboration and checking of the recorded experiences of respondents (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Documents were analysed keeping in fore the diverse contexts of the international non-governmental agencies and their expectations as well as the local level educational leaders' role in formulating the policy at the local level to suit the



context (Lall, 2007). This highlighted the meaning of the collected data, helped understand development processes and brought insights into various parts of the study that were explored through the semi-structured interview data (Bowen, 2009).

### **3.8 Ensuring trustworthiness**

Ensuring trustworthiness relates to aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In line with these aspects, an audit trail was carried out (Guba, 1981) on the fieldwork and decisions made during analysis, back translation, debriefing with translators rechecking the clarity of data, SSA's structural validation, categorising the data for analysis, and referential document analysis).

While undertaking complex tasks, the translators' potential to produce inaccurate data through miscommunication was considered. The task was complex, as they were involved in helping carry out a fruitful discussion, ensuring equal respondent participation and ensuring accurate translation (Esposito, 2001). This issue of establishing trustworthiness caused by the accuracy of translation was reduced by the translators executing a word-to-word translation, the triangulation of participants, back translation and engaging a bilingual language expert to check the translations (Twinn, 1998; Chen and Boore, 2010). Using a three-way translation process was carefully planned during the process of interview and after, as discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.7, when it was being revisited for accuracy. With such efforts, I hope to have controlled and stayed aware of the conditions in which the translation was produced during the interviews and with the back-translator. Although not every consequence can be anticipated, care was taken through clarification and respect for linguistic and cultural differences to serve the interests and values that the information was to convey.

Choice of respondents was considered important to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. With the translators aiding in the choice of respondents in the community, I found it important to know the reasons for the choice of respondents, which would have a significant impact on the data. During the process of choice of respondents, the translator was questioned regarding those he approached and did not approach, to check the impact that these respondents could have on what would be said (Berman and Tyyskä, 2011).

Developing rapport with interviewees may happen over time, but was also considered crucial to ensure the trustworthiness of responses that may be built on trust. It was therefore necessary for me to develop a positive relationship with the respondents before and during in-depth interviews as it involved trust and respect in relation to the information they share (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). The established relationship with the NGOs who have been working in the

chosen villages for over 35 years meant that the issue of trust seemed less of a concern, especially for the translator who has been part of the NGO and worked in these villages for several years. The NGO has been working with the chosen villages in areas of health, sanitation and advocacy, training and developing individual and group skills, and gender and human rights. Therefore, the community members seemed confident and were not reluctant to share information. The translator taking me to the villages made the villagers consider me as an insider, which helped reduce issues of acceptance and trust. Although there was a certain degree of reservation observed initially, the time taken to build rapport seemed to help, with the respondents being more open afterwards. This made it seem not difficult to talk about the issues being researched.

One of the issues that needed discretion while data was collected was to be aware that the communities are used to visitors from other organisations encouraging them to be part of advocacy on issues that relate to these marginalised people. This might have caused the respondents to suppress or exaggerate information in relation to the aid/development/support that they receive or do not receive for SSA. We attempted to identify such messages as they surfaced, particularly checking during interviews with other interviewees, debriefing discussions and documents, wherever relevant.

In the Odiya culture, where power relations are manifested through caste, gender and hierarchy within the village, it was essential to minimise these power struggles in the interview data. This was controlled mainly by the choice of the translator, who has good rapport with the interviewees, my rapport built with the interviewees before the actual interview process, the choice of interview location and ensuring the words used in the interview do not portray power differences. I had periodically to examine the possible power relations that manifested now and then and keep a check on how they shaped the relationships between me, translator and interviewees, and the ethics and politics of the construction of knowledge during the fieldwork (Elwood and Martin, 2000). The power relation that were manifested, checked and corrected frequently included seating arrangements, where the interviewees insisted that I sat on a chair while they sat on the floor. I had to insist on sitting with them or that they were brought chairs as well. Interviewees often brought water and shared the food that they had. Accepting them reflected on them accepting me, and my positionality not taking precedence. This was important, as participants' responses could be affected by perceptions, expectations or their interpretation of my identity and position.

Gender being a large-scale issue in India, and gender discrimination being more glaring in rural sections, I had to consider how seriously my purpose of being in the field was considered and how this would affect people's response. In the villages, people accepted my gender because of my

education and the reason for my research. Some of the men who I had identified to interview initially found it difficult to accept that I was enquiring about the management system and that they were going to be involved in a discussion where a woman would be present and take part equally. This situation was controlled when I spent more time in building rapport with them for a whole week. After a few days of interaction, they seemed more comfortable. I therefore believe that this is the most trustworthy response that I could have received from them. On the other hand, with the government officials it was more difficult to break the gender gap. It had to be done in a single meeting while focusing on gathering the data I was seeking. I could achieve this with most of the governmental officers by displaying my knowledge of the system and the progress in implementation of SSA. When I found this method worked with two government officials, I used it with all the others.

Responses of all respondents apart from the government officials at District level were recorded during the interview to ensure accuracy. The bilingual translator who validated the translated data also used the voice recording of interviews to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness.

The experiences of the people in the communities were compared with what the government/SSA had set out to achieve. Meaningful and relevant document samples produced directly in relation to SSA and its implementation in the last 13 years, and related reports produced by the national media and other organisations, were therefore used to triangulate the data and ensure conformability (which is a criterion of trustworthiness).

### **3.9 Ethics**

According to Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007, p.209):

the conduct of quality practitioner research is in its very nature ethical business. The dynamics which exists between practitioner research and professional practice for educators is such that ethicality cannot be divorced from quality in practitioner research any more than it can be divorced from quality in professional practice.

Ethics in qualitative research includes the appropriateness of the research design, methodological design and my behaviour in reporting the data (Orb et al., 2001).

There was a tension that I struggled with between the research aims making recommendations for the good of others and maintaining the rights of privacy of the participants. To a large extent this was resolved by ensuring the respondents gave informed consent to participate in the research and that they could withdraw from contributing to the interview at any point in the research. Although the participant information sheet and consent sheet were translated, read out

and agreed, I insisted on having a discussion on their understanding of what was read before consent was signed. This was not only to ensure there was no information misunderstood but to restate that they had the right to clarify any information at any time and that they were not obliged to sign or be part of the research. This was important, because the women are not accustomed to having a choice, especially when there are people who they might consider more powerful.

The personal interaction between me, translator and the participant was important as it ensured that the key focus was the research and being clear of my role as researcher. The determination of the situation being researched was sensitive, due to the socio-cultural limitations that I had to deal with, alongside the sensitivity of the problem being addressed. The translators and I were comfortable dealing with these complexities because of our background and experience of having worked with vulnerable communities, having a good understanding of the challenges they face. Equally important was our personality and the nature of interactions, which can be best described as friendly discussions (Punch, 1994).

Anonymity may not be absolute, but has been considered as a question of degree. Therefore, anonymity has been maintained to the strongest degree where respondents may not be recognised. The identity of local government authorities and village heads will also be masked (Wengraf, 2001). This will be fulfilled by numbering the participants and the villages. The government officials are referred to by the title of their position. This information was also conveyed to the respondents and, in doing so, can mean that there has been a negotiation of trust and renegotiation at various points during the research process, depending on the topic of discussion. This renegotiation occurred more often with the women in leadership, who were used to having a male member answer any topic of such sensitivity on their behalf.

With the individual and focus group interviews being conducted face-to-face and questions involving social and political opinions and experiences, the translator and I were aware of the same and attempted to be sensitive. Vulnerable people such as the disabled and children were not made part of the research directly, but parents of disabled children were chosen to be part of the focus group. A safe and familiar environment was chosen to conduct the interviews to ensure that respondents did not feel threatened or uncomfortable. The use of voice recorders was informed and the respondents were asked not to mention names, in order to protect identities.

Being aware of arguments that prevent recruitment of people from a study because of their vulnerability, I defend my case by stating that not recruiting vulnerable people is also denying them the right to independence, by not giving them the right to decide to participate or not in the study. It can also be considered as marginalisation (Alexander, 2010). By stating this, I do not

suggest that there are no ethical issues involved but, having recognised their vulnerability caution would be used to ensure that the issues they face are represented with care, especially since their words are used verbatim (anonymously) in my discussion.

Discussions were political and the potential for repercussions in future with more powerful people was weighed. However, the involvement of government officials in the discussion gave everyone a chance to talk about each other. Besides maintaining confidence, diffusing the urge to quote a member of the community to another or to government officials helped by not stirring up debate or raising suspicion about what was shared by those interviewed. On the other hand, almost all the respondents who took part in the interview agreed that the discussion not only helped them talk about their experiences but was helpful in gaining more knowledge of the management structure, their role and the associated power. In this sense, they appeared to feel empowered as the discussion almost always ended up being educational.

An audit trail was maintained to ensure the confirmability of the research, as the steps taken during the whole process of fieldwork were recorded, including the decisions made during the period. An honest and transparent record of the fieldwork now contributed to the trustworthiness and confidence of the research (Anfara et al., 2002). 'Transparency is necessary for accountability' (Bringer et al., 2004, p. 262), as it has supported the informed discussion about the analytical process, and the congruence between methodology, analysis of data and findings were questioned (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012).

Details of the interview and respondents have been protected from access through both a locker and a password-protected computer. I was granted permission from the University of Southampton's ethics committee to proceed with the field research and have made every effort to comply with the requirements for ethical research at the University and of the British Educational Research Association.

### **3.10 Analysing the data**

Qualitative data analysis involves a process through which the experiences, thoughts and beliefs of the study participants and the attached social and cultural influences may be better understood. This kind of interaction with the data, my field notes, documents and observations proved to be a process of discovery. It enabled me to be close to the data and develop an evidence-based understanding of the issues that were being researched (Hennink et al., 2011). The objective of analysing qualitative data was to categorise, form relationships and draw assumptions from the respondents' views and experiences of the issues (McCracken, 1988).

This section details the steps that were taken to analyse the collected data and to investigate community involvement in local-level educational leadership within the policy implementation process. Given that the qualitative data include data from individual interviews, focus groups, field notes and document analysis, I have carried out the analysis in two phases and used both the thematic and structural analysis that have been employed at the different stages of the analysis.

Thematic analysis was used, as it is 'a method for, identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). It supported the seeking out and identification of common threads that extended across all the gathered data. Once the common themes were identified, they were then assembled or structured into groups of related or linked patterns that helped to build an overall description of the problem being studied (LeCompte, 2000). Tesch (1990, p.104) says that the researcher assumes that the structure is inherent or contained within the data that may be uncovered. These phases will be further detailed in the following sections.

### **Phase 1**

The individual interviews and the focus group interviews that were conducted with translators needed to be transcribed. This was done with the help of the Express Scribe software. With the ability to control the speed of the speech and easy controls, the process of transcribing was quicker. These transcripts were exported into NVivo, qualitative data analysis software used for organising, coding and thematic analysis. NVivo helped to handle all the qualitative data that were gathered (interviews, field notes and documents) in one place, in a systematic and easily accessible manner. Field notes and documents have also been scanned and stored.

The new model (page 31) that was developed after the literature review was used to generate themes. This decision was carried forward, as it enabled both the verification of the new model and provided support in answering the research questions. The new model has five stages and an immediate process to follow. The main idea of each stage and the immediate process was translated into six themes. The codes under each theme have been generated using the literature that supports the model in each of the stages and the immediate process, that is, the possible actors and/or actions that contribute to the fulfilment of each stage (Figure 3.6).

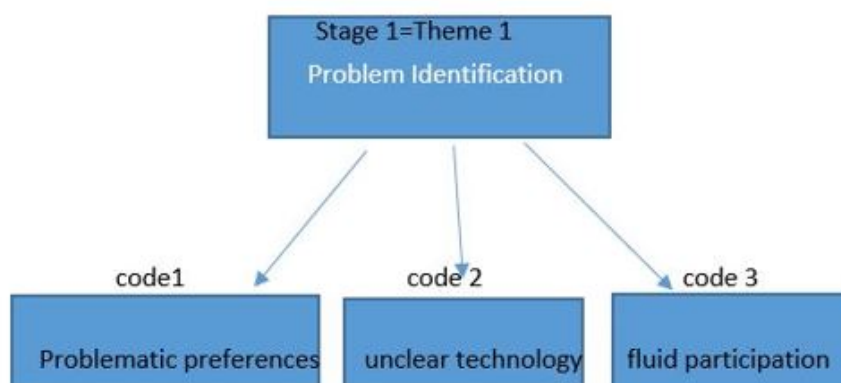


Figure 3.5 Codes relating to Stage 1

The data were further categorised according to the various actors who were part of the study – community, local-level educational leaders and government officials from the Department of Education (Figure 3.2). It was important to consider the varying knowledge, experiences, expectations and opinions that could contribute to understanding the problems and the gaps in the involvement of local-level educational leadership in policy implementation. This decision (Figure 3.7) was arrived at after a pilot analysis was undertaken using a longer process of analysis.

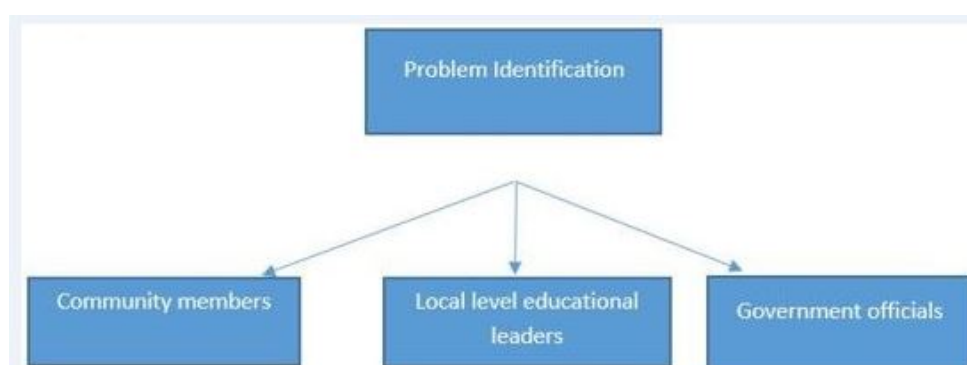


Figure 3.6 Data from each stage, categorised according to the actors who were part of study

Thematic analysis breaks down the text into smaller units and the content enabled the examination of the narrative materials from the life stories of the actors. It appeared a flexible research tool that is complex, yet provided a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

## Phase 2

The data that were now available in smaller units of themes and codes were further explored. This was done to check if all the interview extracts that were associated with each code fitted, and if there was one (or a few) common message(s) that described the essence of the meaning that was derived from each code. This kind of deeper analysis directed me to explore when, where, why and the particular circumstances that contributed to the meaning(s) that is derived (de

Casterle et al., 2011). An example of the findings for Stage 1 is presented in tabular form in Table 3.2. The supporting evidence for each of the findings will be detailed in the next chapter.

Each case study is presented individually to ensure the individual differences and issues are clearly represented. The contexts, the position and impact of members involved in the implementation process are succinctly presented. The major, minor and sub-themes are then discussed to keep focus on the importance of the issues that have emerged. The discussion concludes with checking the usefulness of the conceptualised new model in relation to how the data relates to practice.

Table 3:4 An overview of the findings that have been extracted for Stage 1 – Problem identification

<b>Stage 1: Problem identification</b>
<b>Code A: Problematic preferences (no coherent structure for decision-making)</b>
<b>Finding 1 Insensitivity of policy-makers and governments towards deep-rooted socio-cultural issues seem evident</b>
<b>Finding 2 Management structure does not appear to have effective monitoring systems or a balanced distribution of responsibilities and powers</b>
<b>Code B: Unclear technology (uncertainty in decisions issued to follow about actions/solutions/procedures)</b>
<b>Finding Democratic participation does not seem present, as governmental control seem to be evident in every level of the management structure through the imbalance in the distribution of positional power.</b>
<b>Code C Fluid participation (changes in significant people involved)</b>
<b>Finding 1 Fluid participation is seen more through the representatives of significant people involved in the process.</b>

LeCompte (2000, p. 147) states that ‘the task of analysis, which makes interpretation possible, requires researchers to first determine how to organise their data and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under the study’. Once patterns were derived, groups of related or linked patterns were assembled into a structure, here the structure of the new model (Figure 2.3). This helped to build an overall description of the problem that is studied. This also helped in the latter part of the thesis to make recommendations, by assessing effectiveness at each stage to improve the problems being addressed (LeCompte, 2000).



Using the findings, I was able to add, delete or modify the new model. This process also facilitated in verifying the revised model. The process of analysis that was used enabled me to review and develop ideas and findings. Once this was done, the themes, the related findings and the other sources of data (documents and field notes) were used to discuss and answer the research questions in the next chapter. The process of analysis and the revised new model allowed a critical view of the policy reform, the management structure, the implementation process, people involved and the governmental support. These in turn helped to explore the reasons for the current participation of community in local-level educational leadership and the accountability procedures from the government when political decisions contradict political actions, and the actions that may be required of policy-makers and the government to improve participation of communities and the roles conceived for them. An audit trail of all the decisions and developments that have been made was maintained. The next chapter details the two cases studied. The themes and sub-themes are discussed, based on the findings.



## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the results of the interviews, field notes and document analysis that will be detailed and used to further our knowledge and understanding of the problem being examined. From the analysis of both case studies there emerged three major themes: management structure; dominance; and support. The subthemes were similar in both case studies: role clarity, democratic decision-making, bureaucratic process, monitoring and evaluation; caste discrimination, gender and authority; and training, access to information and resources. The issues under these themes and subthemes will be presented individually for each of the two villages, thus developing the two case studies. A discussion will follow in two sections: the relation of the findings to the model presented at the conclusion of the literature review in the second chapter, and relating the findings to practice.

By means of a contribution from a variety of participants, I have data reflecting a range of experiences that increase the possibility of shedding light on the research questions from different perspectives. An account of those who were interviewed, their characteristics and the context will be provided for the readers' stronger understanding of findings and discussion. The chapter will report the key findings from each main theme, using verbatim quotes, field notes or documents to illustrate those findings. The discussion of the same will be incorporated within each stage of policy implementation. The chapter will conclude by collating the discussion of all the themes.

I have taken into account the potential transferability of the interpretation to other settings and groups, as the research intends making recommendations towards more effective involvement of local-level educational leadership within the policy implementation structure. Suggestions about transferability are given, but it is the reader's decision whether or not they apply to other contexts. To facilitate transferability I ensure a clear description of the context, culture and characteristics of the various participants. The process of data collection and analysis which supports transferability and trustworthiness (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003) is found in the analysis section of the methodology chapter.

#### 4.1.1 Context of the two case studies

As specified in the methodology chapter, the research was conducted in two tribal villages in Orissa where SSA is being implemented for the last 12 years. The villages are situated in remote

parts of the State and have seen some form of development. Both tribal villages have a minimal supply of electricity, water and sanitation facilities that is insufficient for their basic needs. The population within each village is 800 to 900, most of whom are illiterate. The main source of income is agriculture. We communicated with the study participants according to their position in the community and literacy level, therefore the research instruments that were administered varied.

Community members belong to different castes – Schedule Caste (SC), Schedule Tribe (ST), and Other Backward Caste (OBC) – which are the official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged people. These terms are recognised by the constitution of India. Of these castes, the ST is considered the higher caste, and the others are of a lower caste. The position in the community and the access to resources within the village depends on caste (Deshpande, 2010). The SC in these villages, which are in the same District, have a few members who are more literate than the other caste members. I would like to acknowledge here that the literacy levels of SCs, STs and OBC vary in different states, tribe-wise and caste-wise, depending on the access to and quality of education that was available. Although there have been measures taken by the government to ensure that efforts towards literacy are made to reduce such differences seen in these non-homogenous groups (Mondal, 2016), my experience in the field reflects otherwise. In these particular villages, the SC members were more dominant. Representatives from each of the castes were chosen and interviewed. Interviewees held positions as members of the SMC or at the higher levels of the management structure.

The following photographs were taken at the villages. The one on the left shows how a single teacher manages two classes: teaching takes place at one side of the room while the other side is involved in reading or writing. The photograph on the right is a typical scene one can witness every afternoon, when the children have finished the meal that is provided through the midday meal scheme. Children wash their plates and help each other to pump water from one of the two water sources for the village. Ash is used instead of soap. Overpage, the photograph on the left shows the access road to the village. During rains, the muddy road makes it difficult and dangerous to tread on it. The building that is seen behind the lady is that which was used as a school before the new structure was built by SSA. The picture overpage on the right shows two of the Adhivasi women whom I interviewed. Consent has been obtained from parents of the children, and the women who are in the photographs, to print these pictures.



#### 4.1.2 Structure for presenting each case study

A brief background of each of the two villages will be provided in order to gain a clearer understanding of the different village contexts. I have found the role of the head teacher to be critical, as she/he is the one person who is finally answerable to the government on the success or failure of the school's performance and the implementation of SSA. Therefore, I have included the position and impact that the head teachers have had on both villages (Villages 1 and 2 have men heading the school). This background is followed by the presentation of the major themes, their subthemes and related issues that emerged in the study. There are issues that I perceive overlap with other themes, but I have made a choice to discuss them under a particular theme to help me and the readers to understand the importance of the issue. At the end of both sections I will conclude with what these implications would mean in relation to the validity and helpfulness of the new model that was developed, and how the data relate to practice.

### 4.2 Case study of Village 1

Village 1, situated in one of the major districts in Odisha, is the more developed of the two villages. With a population of 824, the majority of the community, both men and women, are engaged in agriculture. The access road to this village is not paved and so it is difficult to access it during the monsoon. Public transport is available twice a day, but it still involves a fair walk to and from the village, and may not be safe after dusk. This village has an NGO that has been working with it for over thirty years and has influenced the changes observed in the areas of health,

sanitation, agriculture and other social issues, especially relating to women and children. The NGO members believe that the community appreciates them. Until 2011, children from the community attended a primary school in a single-room building situated at the entrance of the village.

According to the head teacher, not all children were in school when he was assigned to the village school. Middle and secondary schoolchildren have to travel to schools situated in neighbouring villages located a few kilometres away, and are accessed by local transport or by foot.

With the appointment of a new head teacher in 2011, there has been a significant change perceived in the provision, access and quality of education in the village. Although SSA seems to have been in effect since 2002, the previous head teacher does not seem to have made enough effort to implement its objectives in the village. This information was gathered from villagers' perceptions during informal discussions and interviews with community members. They also stated that many children in the village were out of school and engaged in agricultural work, that there was little or no involvement by the community in the school, and that the parent-teacher association and SMC had been formed but remained inactive. There were not many interventions undertaken by the CRCC. However, there were minutes of SMC meetings and all other school records, which were sent to the Block and District education offices, despite no actual meetings taking place:

Earlier there were no children coming to school regularly. Less than 50% were enrolled.

All of them were either playing in the ground or going with their parents for work. –

Head teacher Village 1

Previous head teacher didn't do anything. Just came and went. One teacher took class sometimes. Always came late and went early. SMC members were only signing reports, no meeting. We did not know anything. – Focus group member Village 1

The new head teacher seems to have taken the initiative to work with the parents, the children and the community to win their respect, confidence and interest. He appears to have created awareness about SSA, SMC and the importance of community involvement. Now the SMC seems very active, many of the members seem confident and the community is involved in implementing SSA in their village in some way (field notes).

The following section will begin to uncover the themes that emerged from data analysis and the implications of the issues that emerged regarding community participation in Village 1 in local-level educational leadership of the policy implementation process.

#### 4.2.1 Theme 1: Management structure

**Role clarity.** Within SSA's management system, one can note that the guidelines and functions of the committees and the head teacher are broadly stated (Appendix A, pp. 4–12). For such broadly stated rules within the democratic set-up, my assumption is that it gives room for schools to adapt it to their contexts. Roles can be specified in a way that allows the requirements for each committee member to be framed according to their skills and abilities. Examining the revised guidelines on the composition and functions of the SMC, we can assume that the head teacher and the CRCC are intended to play a significant role in terms of facilitating, and ensuring the effective participation of members and the functioning of the committee. With the CRCC being present only once a month in each school, it may be assumed that the head teacher is intended to play a more significant role, since he would be present in the school every day and therefore interact more often with the parents and SMC members:

I have to cover 15 villages in the 21 working days that I have every month. – CRCC in charge for Village 1

There is not much training or monitoring by the CRCC. He comes once a month to check registers. I train the members on the job and take care of the government work. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

The significant role played by the head teacher is reflected in similar responses of all the members of the community that were interviewed, SMC members and the other members of the community with whom I interacted during the process of building rapport in the village and choosing interviewees. They had all observed a significant change in the functioning of the school, the commitment of teachers, the improvement of quality in student performance and the interest of children in attending school:

Since the new head teacher came, it has been good... Now the school is very good- teachers are regular and teach well. All children are well dressed and clean, they read very well and are regularly going to school because they like it. –SMC member 3 Village 1

We also see the involvement of the community and the SMC through their expressed interest, members' awareness of most of the changes and SSA activities taking place in the school in the past few years. They appear to be actively engaged in promoting, supporting and implementing SSA activities. They seem to attribute this to the role of the head teacher:

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Presently I'm not in the SMC committee but I've attended all the meetings. Some of us from the community are also helping the head teacher to take the children to school, check the midday meals etc. All the changes are good since the new head teacher came. It is good for our children and so, we are willing to do our bit and give our support. – Ex-SMC member in Village 1

This may show the extent to which the head teacher has given room for the interested members of the community to be part of the SMC meetings, enrolment and monitoring process. He may have been able to do so by gaining the confidence and support of the community members using his strengths and finding innovative ways of doing so. The parents, grandparents, the self-help group, the local NGO and government officials who are linked to this village are reported to be periodically invited, encouraging them to be a part of celebrating growth and change in the school. These methods, where many people in the village may be encouraged to be involved in the school activities, may have enhanced the support received by the SMC members and the head teacher in implementing SSA and reaching the objective of community involvement as well:

The main difference was seen with the village members when I went to sub-collector's office and collector's office and collected all the voter ID cards for all village parents. Then the villagers slowly drew attention and saw that there is a new teacher and he has done something for us. Then, to those children who came to school, I was teaching dance, songs and did activities and children were very happy as there was no syllabus taught. Then other people and children found it attractive and joined...I always invited and welcomed parents. They are also participating in the school prayer, which gives them lot of satisfaction and joy of participating the school programme. We have programmes for grandparents and grandchildren as well. We conduct many programmes to celebrate all the religious festivals and also to showcase the talents of our children and I make sure the project officer of the NGO, our CRCC and our village parents are attending. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

The SMC in the village seemed very active and involved in supporting and assisting the effective implementation of SSA's goals. The SMC members appear enthusiastic and motivated to undertake the responsibilities that are specified and allocated by the head teacher. With the successes the school has achieved in the last three years (seen through the enrolment, retention and the status of the 'model school for SSA' in the District), the SMC members have bigger dreams and plans for the school, which they state they have proposed and discussed in the meetings. Actions to follow up some of these suggestions are said to have been decided and proposals sent to District level for approval. This may show the confidence that has been built in the SMC



members, in not only being involved in the planning and discussion of activities for the school but being aware of government officials in the management structure, who they might need to approach for approval and the means to obtain it:

Now the school has become smaller because the number of children has increased. School boundary (compound wall) and a playground are needed. I have proposed and it has been discussed in the SMC meeting and application has been sent to higher authority. It has not been finalised there... They (District Education Office) took 3 months to process the request for an extra teacher. Our president and a few members went and reminded them 2–3 times to follow up and then they sent us the teacher. – SMC member 1 Village 1

The influence of role clarity on implementation may be most visible in the attitudes of community members towards their role, but stronger evidence may be seen in the decisions and the way decisions are made. This takes us to the next theme, which is democratic decision-making.

**Democratic decision-making.** Although there seems to be a clear structure and role clarity among the members of the SMC, there may be room to doubt democratic decision-making by the local-level educational leaders in this established process of implementation within this village. To begin with, the process of appointing SMC members is noted to be different from the prescribed procedure (Appendix A, p. 5). Members are not elected or selected by the parent-teacher association (PTA) but are selected by the head teacher. The use of power to make such a decision without being questioned reveals that there is an unspoken indication to the community of the power difference between the head teacher and the community members that is accepted without question. The PTA asks for volunteers who may be interested in being part of the SMC and the head teacher states that he personally chooses the members, based on the criteria of the individual's ability to articulate their opinion and their confidence. Although this may bring positive support to the head teacher in implementing the goals of SSA, it may restrict the membership in accommodating only those who are already in some way powerful within the community. In following this method, the marginalised may not be equal participants in the process of selection, despite a few SC representatives being a part of the committee due solely to the stipulated need for representation. There is also evidence of people who are stated to have made substantial contributions to the school and therefore being placed in a significant position on the committee – for example, the chair of the committee. This can be a way that power is institutionalised within the community, where levels of superordination and subordination transpire between the more powerful and less powerful. There might be a possibility for such members to also have a stronger say or control over decisions that are made:

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The PTA selected me and many others. Those who were interested came forward and from those members the head teacher selects the SMC members. –SMC member 3 Village 1

The PTA, they are not bringing out any new ideas or strategies. But whatever I shared with them, they liked it and they are appreciative of these ideas. For the SMC there is no election. Only selection. This way the strengths of people are identified and then they are selected to be members of the SMC – who is able to articulate – who is able to speak their opinion... this was my criteria. ST 5% SC 5% representatives..... There is a man who contributed this land to build the new school. In recognition of his contribution he is also made a member of the committee. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

According to the management structure, the role of the committee may be understood to make decisions regarding all aspects of the school, including financial decisions. In this village, while there may be transparency in how the finances have been utilised, the head teacher may make the decisions regarding where and how the funds have to be deployed. The community members may not be used to accessing or being responsible for public funds, which may be the reason for the SMC members not to have questioned the financial decisions of the head teacher. SMC members may also assume that they are not in a position to question the head teacher or that, in doing so, they might question his integrity. The lack of power to make financial decisions that are not being devolved to them and SMC members' reservations about questioning the head teacher also reveal that there is insufficient empowerment. If they were sufficiently empowered, SMC members would question the head teacher's control of finances and be involved in decision making. Thereby, the roles may be modified and duties assigned, but democratic practices in decision-making may not actually be taking place to the extent that people may perceive:

With regard to money matter – I show them what is received and the kind of expenditure we incur. So, the members are aware. There are variety of activities in the school for their involvement. If they are involving themselves, they know that is their role. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

If they are not open about the financial decisions to all the members, it is not good. All financial management should be known to the committee members. If I ask, it will offend the head teacher. – SMC member 3 Village 1

The response of the head teacher to the above appears justifiable, considering he is working with community members, many of who are illiterate and not used to being involved in decision-making as a representative of the community. But, considering the number of years they have

been trained on the job by the head teacher and having arrived at a point where they seem confident and appear to know the goals and means to achieve the goals, this response could be classified as the head teacher not recognising, or underestimating, their growing strength and confidence. This perception could leave the community members in a state of dependence for a long period of time:

On their own they are not able to contribute anything. When they are assigned a job and asked to carry it out, 100% it is carried out.... but for decision-making, maybe it will come over a period of time. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

The creation of opportunities for parents to participate in implementation, the effectiveness of their participation in all aspects of SSA's prescribed governance and the reasons for the head teacher's response to a motivated community will be discussed further. Understanding the bureaucratic processes in the management structure, the following theme will support in further understanding the complexity of the problem that we see emerging and developing through the themes (both in the community and governmental levels).

**Bureaucratic processes** in a developing country may be affected by operational, structural and cultural limits that may be reflective of its political and socio-cultural practices (Tosun, 1999). As seen from an example earlier in this section, the needs and requests of the SMC do not seem to be met in time by the governmental actors at the higher level of the management structure. A need was stated for community representatives to visit the government officials and remind them two or three times. Although there are other local-level educational leaders in the governmental level, such as the CRCC and BRCC officers in charge of coordinating between the education department and the villages, delay in addressing requests of the SMC seems to be an issue that the village continues to face.

Requests from the village are passed on to the *Sarpanch*, who presents these requests at the *panchayat* meeting (where requests and reports of around forty villages are presented). If and when these are approved, they are then presented at the Block-level standing committee (around 70 to 140 villages are represented). If the requests cannot be resolved at Block level, they are sent to the Collector at District level. The hierarchy to support this is detailed in Appendix B. For example, the request for an extra teacher can only be granted by the District authority, but the process does not seem to allow the SMC direct access to the Collector, therefore an important request such as this appears to be a very long process. The length of the process leaves the school to manage quality teaching, monitoring and ensuring outcomes meet the requirements of the policy with the limited staff and resources available in the village. This is another example of the

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State not ensuring an efficient management structure and continuing to control decision making at the top of the management structure.

The school is noted to have two toilets within the compound with no direct facility for water, as the pipeline has not been installed due to a delay reported by the government. This example seems common in most villages. When there are other departments of the government that are involved, and there may be political links to sanctions, the bureaucratic processes may be stubborn and negligent:

Toilets are constructed but it is difficult to use because there is no water. Children have to carry water from outside the compound into the toilet. Water will be good but there is no pipeline. But at least we have a bore pump. This has already been discussed in the SMC meeting and the application has been sent to the higher authority. It has not been finalised there. – SMC member 1 Village 1

With the introduction of the new management structure, the bureaucratic process seems more difficult as there are standing committees that have been introduced at every level of the management structure (Appendix A). The gaps between the government and community do not seem to become narrower under this change that has included government officials and professionals providing expert advice. This change is likely to silence the illiterate/semiliterate representatives from the communities who are part of the SMC that may be caused by the power differences. The increase in members at the SMC level also causes an increase in member representation (from governmental, experts and community) at the panchayat and Block level respectively, thus further tipping the balance of voice towards non-village members. There appears to be no clarity or explanation provided by the government for this change, leaving implementers with various unanswered questions:

The extra members are not the parents – they are elected members or lead workers in the different departments who can speak while current SMC people cannot speak. Whether these people who have a better voice can over shadow these people. May even undermine these people. Ultimately will the 7 members make decisions on behalf of these people and call it as an SMC decision? This may be the danger of the new structure.... Also, whatever request we make, it goes to a *panchayat* standing committee where about 60–70 people are going to be there. From that standing committee it goes to the Block summittee-level standing committee with 150 people. How are these decisions going to be processed and decided about? – Head teacher of school in Village

Democratic processes promoted by SSA seem to be hindered with bureaucratic structures practised by State authorities that are responsible for promoting a democratic implementation structure. Such issues do not seem to be recognised as monitoring, and evaluation may not be in effect.

**Monitoring and evaluation.** From the above example, we may observe that monitoring and evaluation of policies that are being implemented might be important, and therefore should be an integral part of public policies. This is particularly true in developing countries, where the capacity of the public sector is not yet completely developed (Carnoy, Hallak and Caillods, 1990).

In Village 1, the CRCC in charge of monitoring, evaluation and providing the required academic support is reported to have made regular visits and prepared reports for the school. Such regular visits and support may be because Village 1 is also a model school in the District, which is therefore visited by many government officials, as observed from the visitor's book. I assume that this may be a reason that most documents are in place. Although reports may be in place, there seems to be little follow-up by the officials at higher levels to provide the school with the needs it has expressed (for example, water facilities and sanctions to complete the school building):

So many officers come here because ours is a model school and they write very good things about the school in the visitor's book but they're unable to provide the basic necessities of the school. – Head teacher of school in Village 1

Monitoring and evaluation by the SMC members and other interested members of the community appear to be carried out mainly to control enrolment and retention, and ensure the provision and quality of midday meals. There are only two members of the SMC: the president and the head teacher. They are reported to monitor and evaluate the finances. Real power is not held by all members of the SMC, as the decision for the use of real power is held by the head teacher. Although the income and expenditure of finances appears to be made transparent to the SMC members, they do not seem to be involved in evaluating or having a say in the deployment of finances:

Every weekday I visit the school, to see the children. See if they're eating proper food or not. They have to get 2 eggs a week... we also question parents when we see their child playing outside, when they should be in school studying. – SMC member 2 Village 1

the programme was sanctioned but I did not know how the head teacher and the president have taken and used the money or what the status of the building is. Then how can I speak to the head teacher about this? – SMC member 3 Village 1

Key elements in the management structure to ensure participation of local-level educational leadership appear to be fragile. We will now look at the other major themes that emerged from the study.

### 4.2.2 Theme 2: Dominance

**Caste discrimination** is one of the issues that SSA aims to address through equal opportunities and access to education (Shekhar, 2010). This goal may be reached in the community through equal representation of the various groups within the community in the SMC.

In Village 1, representation from the SC and ST seems evident in the SMC. Although the choice of members may be made by the head teacher (as stated by him), it could have had a positive effect, as decisions made by the PTA could be biased if their decision for representation was based on the common tradition of gratuitous respect. This would have left the committee with more powerful ST members. Some members who are significant in the community (PTA members from the higher caste) may be made SMC members by default, without going through the prescribed process of being chosen as a member of the committee:

Not all of us in our community (SC) can speak, so it is good that the committee is chosen by the head teacher. Otherwise nobody will say anything. Only a few will always talk –  
Focus group SC community member in Village 1

On the contrary, the head teacher made a choice of representatives based on criteria of confidence and the ability to articulate (evidenced under role clarity) that may have left the SC members at a disadvantage. This could arise because SC members may not be used to standing on equal ground in any context within the village, because of their social position. Other community members may still undermine the most confident and the most articulate SC members. There was also an assumption that SC members retaliate by not obeying the rules laid down for the community:

The SC members, they cannot do anything. How many ever times they are taught, they don't get it. When they attend meetings even after training, they do not obey the rules.  
– SMC member 3 Village 1

The head teacher and the SMC members seem to note whether all the children in the village are in school, irrespective of their caste. The SC community members seem pleased, as they feel they are made responsible for their children attending school. This attention by the head teacher and the committee members to the SC community seems new, but this may be considered or reported as a method adopted for inclusion:

If the child is absent for more than a day without any intimation, the head teacher or one of the committee members will be at our door step in the evening to ask us why we didn't send our child to school. No one has cared about our (SC community) children being in school or not earlier. – Focus group SC community member in Village 1

The issues of caste may take a long period of time to address with the parents and other elders within the community. Regardless of representation in the SMC, a general negative attitude was observed about the SC by the ST members. Through the work of the NGO, some of the women who are part of the self-help group seemed to differ from other community members and appear to help the SC women through motivation and training. From the response of SMC member 2 and 3, given below, we may gather that SC representation may not necessarily mean that they stand on equal ground and, therefore, may not enjoy equal participation. The reasons may be due to the discrimination faced over the years, which may have stunted their confidence in voicing their opinion, or that the attitudes of the ST leave little room for their opinions to be heard, or both. No evidence surfaced from the community members, head teacher or SMC members that the head teacher takes any initiative to ensure equal participation of SC and ST in his discussions, decision-making or implementation:

The SC people are not obeying the SMC rules. SHG members, are talking to motivate SC members and training the SMC committee members. – SMC member 3 Village 1

Our village and committee always have different views. Few members will not respond or respect my views. This is because I'm from a different caste. – SMC member 2 Village 1

Although there appears to be less caste discrimination than in other villages, it still seems present and strong enough to hinder effective community participation in the implementation process.

**Gender** representation in the SMC in Village 1 appears to be followed according to the specifications of SSA. There were many women representatives who seemed very articulate (all interviewees appeared confident and articulate) (field notes), and may have been part of the SMC for over five years (all 3 SMC members and the ex-SMC member were identified as members of the SMC for not less than 5 years). They stated they had time available to give to the implementation of SSA in the village. Nonetheless, it was the individual who donated land and who could take up the contract to construct the school buildings, who is a man that was given the position of chair of the SMC. This may not be seen as unusual in the village, because of the culture that might respect and acknowledge men in leadership more than women. Women in leadership, in context, were observed to take responsibilities for midday meals and encouraging parents to

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send their children to school, while decisions regarding finances and meetings with government officials are functions and responsibilities that appeared to be carried out by men (see examples in the above sections). In order to establish that this is a problem of gender discrimination, in a context where women in leadership is a concept that may not yet be completely accepted, it may be important to point out that women in these villages seem more than the men, who go away for work. This might give women many more and easier opportunities to engage in the daily affairs of the school than the men. The women who were interviewed echoed that they work part-time in fields close by, as they also are carers of their children and attend to all the household chores:

All the members you have spoken to have been members for at least 5 years. We have some free time after we finish our work at home or in the field. We also use any other free time we have to do some work for the school. When we are given duties, we will make sure we do it. – SMC member 3 Village 1

I finish cooking and cleaning and then go to the school to see the children doing activities in the evening. Some members go in the afternoon to see if the children are eating because they only work during harvest and some are home because of their children. – Focus group community member in Village 1

I have done lot of things for the school like buildings and I am the building contractor. Then all people selected me to be the SMC chair. – SMC Chair for Village 1

Head teacher and chair (male member) take care of the money matters. We see the expenditure in the report. That's all. – SMC member 1 Village 1

Gender discrimination and women in power are again issues that may be less intense a problem in Village 1 than in many villages. This could relate to the efforts of the NGO for over two decades to raise the status of women in the community. This could be an indication of the impact that external help could have on issues that directly affect the implementation process.

**Authority.** Policy and/or reform change is a decision that is made at government level. However, in the case where there is decentralised implementation, there may be a strong need for government officials to consider the specific successes and issues faced by the implementers. Village 1 seems to have few areas where local-level leadership struggles to participate in decision-making. Such ease and confidence may be because of the strong support available through the head teacher. He seems committed and motivated, and has established his positional power in the community and with government officials. This has allowed him to achieve many of the goals



of SSA. The authority of the head teacher here may be negative in a few ways, as discussed above, but it has also brought about significant positive change in the village and the school:

The head teacher knows everything. He will take care. Like now, all the children are going to school and the education standard is very high. Focus group SC member Village 1

The authority of the CRCC over the school, SMC or the head teacher does not give the impression of being significant. The head teacher is seen to be more powerful because of the success attained with SSA. The presence of the CRCC for academic input and training of teachers seems minimal. This may be a good example of positional power being either ignored (CRCC) or over-estimated (head teacher):

CRCC only comes to makes his reports. He is happy with the SMC and the teaching methods because we use innovative methods to teach our children. There is not much input or training from CRCC. – Head teacher in Village 1

The community members are observed to be divided by caste, and living in different parts of the village. The SC members, who do not exercise equal rights or power, live at the rear of the village, closer to the fields and barren land, far from access to water and other facilities available in the village. The younger women seem not to be too bothered about caste differences and to interact between these groups more than the men. Most of the decisions for the village were observed to be dominated by the ST community, which seems to hold the decision-making power, although the situation may be slightly better when it comes to education.

#### 4.2.3 Theme 3: Support

**Training** might be an important aspect of capacity building of individuals in order to improve their competencies and facilitate achievement of the desired goals. Training of SMC is planned and organised at District level with the aid of local government and non-governmental organisations. Although details of content development proved inaccessible, the basic requirement includes sensitisation of the communities on SSA-RTI, SMC roles and responsibilities, training in capacity building to address SSA related issues within the community, monitoring and evaluation, planning, progress mapping etc. (OPEPA, 2012; Sinha, 2011). Training is delivered by the resource team at the District level and delivered to large groups of SMC members (SSA, 2012). Sinha (2011) states that training is delivered by a resource team at District level, comprising government and non-government officials. In context, this may be important especially for key actors in the

communities to improve their skills, knowledge of the policy reform, confidence and to ensure sustainable participatory governance (Matovu, 2006).

The response to training offered to SMC members and the chair in Village 1 does not appear very positive. There is only one piece of evidence in the study of an ex-SMC member who stated to have voluntarily attended three training events, despite not finding them useful. Current members reported that they did not attend training, apart from two who reported to have attended one in their three to four years of being part of the SMC. There seems to be both a lack of interest and an inability to attend training by the SC members. Missing a day's wage in order to attend SSA's training may not be favourable, due to their economic conditions, and the government does not seem to match the training allowance to their wages:

I've only attended 3 training but it is not useful to me. –Ex-SMC member in Village 1

I have not attended any training because I have my personal work to attend to. Others people are not interested. They have to go to the field. Government only gives transport allowance, food and tea. Nobody is interested. –SMC member, SC representative in Village 1

On the other hand, there seems little encouragement given by the head teacher to attend training as he believes that training offered by the government is not very effective and that SMC members would learn more through hands-on experience in executing the assigned roles and responsibilities at the school. He considers SSA's training as a government formality that needs to be fulfilled. This opinion of the head teacher might not lead him to ensure the SMC members, teachers or the chair attend all the training that is provided. Given that the response from most of the interviewees regarding the effectiveness of training was negative, it might lead me to question the quality of the training and the trainers involved. One of the key responsibilities of the State towards civil society is to support and empower communities to ensure social justice (Ambasht, 1996), but this is evidence that this role is not fulfilled or efforts are ineffective towards the stated role. The response also suggests that there is not much effort made by the CRCC and BRCC in monitoring either the effectiveness of or attendance at the training:

Through training their learning to know their role will be very minimal. It may serve for formality purpose for the government and for the committee, but not for the real purpose. For them to learn and know SMC responsibility is by their participation in carrying out many duties or participation in the school activities. – Head teacher of the school in Village 1

This issue also prompts our understanding of what level of awareness the community members may have on the policy, their roles and rights. It leads me to discuss the subtheme of access to information.

**Access to information/policy** may develop transparency and engagement of the community and may encourage primary decisions to be made by representation. This may include structural changes made by the State to enhance effective local autonomy. Policy-makers may require sufficient information regarding the current process and what works. Considering the opinions of community members may provide essential feedback on changes made by the government (Edwards, 2003).

The new management structure issued by SSA has been prescribed and issued to the State, but no reason or clarification for it appear to have been provided by SSA. There seems to be insufficient detail in government documents or with government officials in the District Collector's office for the issued change. This may point to decisions being made by the State without consulting the local-level educational leaders who may be involved in implementing SSA. This kind of decision-making could also suggest the State's power, control and expectations of the local-level governments and the local-level educational leaders involved in implementation, blindly to adapt and follow the changes issued to them:

Yes, the government has brought about a new management structure. I am newly appointed and have taken position only 3 months back. The revised document does not give any reason and I have not had the time to find out. – Odisha Administrative Service Officer

It is the government's policy. As a government officer, it is my duty to implement the proposal. I cannot question it more. When the government proposes, it is for an improvement, so I'm assuming it is good. – CRCC of Village 1

On the other hand, at village level, the SMC members report having access to information on finances, income and expenditure, decisions regarding school and the responsibilities of the committee members. All this information was observed to be maintained and received through the head teacher. While the SMC members seem confident to follow up by making requests and needs with higher officials, it appears that they are not aware of much information beyond the basic information that has been provided to the school. Village 1 might be able to access information through the head teacher, if necessary, but for SMC members to want to do so might require more knowledge of SSA than they may currently be aware of. The head teacher, who

appears enthusiastic and focused on reaching the goals of SSA, seems to have made little effort to gather reasons for this change in management structure:

In the beginning we had a meeting and the HM and CRCC told us what the government will give and what we must do for our school. Money is given to purchase these things (provisions for food, bags, books, toilet facilities, good teaching material and teachers). The school committee is formed to identify all issues of the school – like buildings, new requirements and this is taken to the committee. A meeting is arranged and an application is written. – SMC member 2 Village 1

Minutes do show the expenditures and all the decisions. We do read it all and know what is going on. – SMC member 1 Village1

Little or selective access to information could give rise to issues of limited knowledge of the resources available. Access to information could enable local-level educational leaders to be able to pursue that which the community requires to fulfil effective implementation.

**Resources.** Tackling inequity in the educational system, which is also one of the main goals of SSA, would need coordinated action through resource distribution, incentives and support mechanisms (Government of India, 2012).

Provision of resources for the school appears to be given much importance by SSA. In Village 1, the provision of infrastructure, classroom resources, midday meals, uniforms, books, technology or an appropriate teacher–pupil ratio seem to be given equal importance. This is evidenced by the similar response of all the SMC members and members of the focus group, the chair and the head teacher. Incentives and support for CWSN (Children with Special Needs) is reported to be provided and children admitted to special schools according to their needs:

We have got everything that the CRCC said our children will get. Even this building here is new. In the classroom the head teacher got things that teachers use to teach our children. Last year, we asked for the computer lab and extra teacher. It took 3–6 months but we got it.... yes, few members went to the collector office to remind 2–3 times but we got it. – SMC member 1 Village 1

Special programme for CWSN. Physically handicapped and other special needs children – they're also coming to our general school. There is BRT – Block Resource Trainer. Those are visual impaired, hearing impaired, orthopaedic disabilities are taken to BRT and then admitted in regular or special school. They have special allowance –CRCC of Village 1

Requests for resources such as computer labs, water for toilets and teachers to meet the prescribed teacher–pupil ratio seem to be made by the SMC and followed up regularly. Some resources such as providing extra teachers to the school to meet the required teacher–pupil ratio, other than the allocated number, may be difficult for the government because of the lack of teachers willing to work in villages, due to the poor access and living conditions.

It is important to note that the involvement of local-level educational leadership at the community level in requesting the allocated resources does seem to have positive results. This is seen in Village 1 in its request for an extra teacher, infrastructure and a computer lab. When the District authorities delayed action on requests, the pressure from the committee members through frequent visits appears to have caused the sanctions for the requests made.

### **4.3 Summary of Case Study 1**

Having critically analysed the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in Village 1, I now summarise the first case to see who the key implementers of the reform may be, how democratic participation of the local-level education leadership might have been ensured or not, and the barriers that may be made visible through this research.

The head teacher seems to play a highly significant role in implementing SSA, where he appears to have ensured the achievement of many goals of SSA. These are enrolling out-of-school children, improving school quality through teaching and learning, ensuring new infrastructure and other facilities within the school, and enhancing the enrolment and retention of girls and children from marginalised groups, the inclusion of community in school-related decisions and the monitoring school activities and follow-up with out-of-school children. He has adopted innovative ways that seem to have gripped the attention, interest and respect of the community, and he seems to have used his and their strength together to achieve the goals. On the other hand, there is also evidence that there is tight control of the planned activities, funds and decisions by the head teacher. Such control feeds the existing power differences in the community between the literate and illiterate/less literate, creating a barrier to further achieving the goals of democratic participation. In the long run, the community and SMC could suffer in leadership and decision making if the head teacher leaves or is moved from the village, which could result in the community having to defer to the decisions and actions of the new head teacher. Even though there seems to be confidence among the SMC members to carry out SSA in the absence of the current head teacher, they might not be able to influence decisions and information that are currently being controlled by the head teacher. Although the head teacher has enjoyed much success in raising standards in the school and involving the community in feeling that they are

empowered, his own actions have, in fact, further embedded some of the differential in power in the ways that I have discussed in this section. His gender attitudes towards women involved in local-level educational leadership may be traditional, and therefore his decisions may reflect his gender attitudes. Bridging gender gaps, a deep-rooted issue and also a secondary goal of SSA, may therefore stand unaddressed and could be regarded as women being excluded from key leadership functions. The entire community, including the children who observe the position of women that is given by the head teacher in the SMC, reinstates the traditionally perceived capacities of women giving little or no room for change or improvement. Women, on the other hand, might be resigned to their given role and, in the long run, lose their motivation to develop capacities and skills. Another form of exclusion may be seen in the selection process of the SMC members. Here, those in the lower caste may still be at a disadvantage in representation, participation and decision-making. Although this method of selection process adopted by the head teacher has brought success in implementing SSA in the village, issues of caste – one of the most critical social issues that has to be addressed consistently– is unfortunately being ignored. Such a selection process would encourage the more powerful to be confident about relying on their caste to sustain their power, which can be detrimental to other efforts made within the community to address issues of caste.

Government officials and local-level government leaders may not be providing the kind of support and access to resources to meet the needs and requests of the community and/or the school. The long bureaucratic process and unclear roles may not support proper evaluation and monitoring of the entire implementation. Decisions and actions that follow do not seem to address the issues faced by implementers. Decisions seem not only to enhance the issues that are present but also risk room for new issues. Decisions regarding the new structure seems not to have recognised the issue of participation. The new structure might possibly cause lesser participation and increase dominance in decisions regarding implementation by more literate people. Support systems for community participation through the government appear minimal and unhelpful. The government may be struggling to meet some of the demands for resources, due either to unavailability (teachers) or difficulties in tackling and collaborating other departments that may have a strong political control (water and sanitation).

The involvement of local-level educational leadership, especially at the community level, alongside the government, in monitoring, follow-up and decision-making (although limited) may be strong enough to have a positive effect in ensuring attainment of some of SSA's goals for education within the village. The government does seem to respond to the needs of the local-level educational leaders, which may indicate a possibility for a mutually responsible and accountable process to support successful policy implementation.

#### 4.4 Case study of Village 2

With a population of 919, the village appears less developed than Village 1, observed from the living conditions, infrastructure, roads and lack of sanitation. There is a larger SC population than in Village 1, and these people live on the periphery of the village. The division of castes and their living space is more obvious. Most of the community is engaged in agricultural work. Difficult access to the village, scarce public transport and the absence of safety after dusk are similar to Village 1. The same NGO working in Village 1 has also been working here, but the effect and change has been reported as very slow. There is a youth club in the village that is noted by the community to be more active in developing the young people of the village. The group was informed to be initiated and led by the ex-president of the SMC, according to his interview.

On the day of my visit, there were very few children out of school. The head teacher of the school did not seem popular with parents, and the community reported little change in terms of improvement to the quality of education. The ex-president, who belongs to the SC, appeared to be one of the few educated and active members. Although there is an elected president in the SMC, the ex-president seems still to take interest and controls the school and some of its activities more than the head teacher. The PTA and the elected SMC members are reported by the head teacher to be elected according to SSA's norm of equal representation. The ex-president is no longer part of the SMC, nevertheless he seems to take the initiative with the affairs of the school, which is seen to be accepted by the current president, the other members of the SMC and interested members of the community. Power struggles between the head teacher, SMC members and the community seemed more complex than in Village 1. The PTA and the SMC appear almost inactive and uninterested in their roles. SSA is therefore reported as implemented mainly by the head teacher and the two school teachers:

the head teacher and the 2 teachers take care of all the matters of the school because the other members are not available or not interested' – Focus group member Village 2.

The PTA and SMC members, apart from the ex-president, seem not to have a clear understanding of SSA and SMC, evidence for which is elaborated in the following sections.

The reasons for Village 2 having greater issues than Village 1 may be mainly due to the socio-cultural issues of caste and related power struggles. The issues of caste and power are further discussed in this section. Other reasons may be the impact of stronger leadership, as seen in the head teacher of Village 1 and in the SMC members, than in Village 2. The support of SMC members in working with the rest of the village and their supportive role in gaining resources and monitoring seem absent from Village 2.

This section will present the themes that have emerged through data analysis and the associations of the themes on community participation of Village 2 in local-level educational leadership within the policy implementation structure.

### 4.4.1 Theme 1: Management structure

**Role clarity** may not be specific for each member of the SMC in the guidelines issued by SSA but, from the document analysis of the composition and function of SMC, it appears that the head teacher may be positioned to play a key role as he/she is required to manage, coordinate, guide and support the SMC, and ensure democratic participation of the community in implementing SSA. He/she may therefore be ultimately answerable for the school's growth and performance (Appendix A, p.8).

In Village 2, the head teacher is perceived by the community to play a very insignificant role in the implementation of SSA. In the last three years a significant increase in the number of students and a reduction in drop-outs has been observed by the local-level educational leaders in the community, but the increase is assumed to be mainly due to the midday meal scheme. Both the teachers and the head teacher are reported to come into school about two hours after the beginning of school working hours and leave an hour or two before school officially closes for the day. This problem might be linked to local transport, which may be unreliable. The presence of an SMC committee is seen in the records, but no regular SMC meetings were reported as being conducted apart from a few times a year. Involvement of local-level educational leadership from the community seems insignificant in the activities of the school, apart from the person who is helping to cook the midday meal. Although this member may be working on an everyday basis for SSA, she seemed to have little knowledge of SSA and SMC and how they are connected.

The meeting with the head teacher lasted less than three minutes, as he had to go away after a phone call that informed him that the truck carrying the midday meal's dry provisions for the school was stuck on the road. The meeting could not be rescheduled and did not give me the opportunity to understand the head teacher's efforts in working with the community, how his position as an SC helped or hindered his role as a head teacher, in influencing and implementing SSA's goals and the struggles that he faced that direct his actions and attitude towards the community, achieving SSA's goals and with the government. Although the community's and other SMC members' response (discussed below) gave me their perspective, gaining first-hand information could have strengthened my findings further and helped me compare the roles of the head teachers in both villages better.



I have heard the name SSA. I know through this they give notebooks, food and they teach the children in school. That's all I know about it. – SMC member 4 Village 2

No one else was interested in cooking and therefore the HM requested me and I agreed because of his request. Once in a way another lady comes to see if the children are given food. No one else comes. – SMC member 5 Village 2

The head teacher is coming at 9.30 or 10 a.m. but the others are coming at 11 am and leave by 3 pm. This is an issue that remains. Some of the SMC members know about this problem, some don't even know. – SMC President Village 2

The ex-president of the SMC, on the other hand, is no longer an SMC member after his three-year term, but he appears to continue monitoring a few activities, issuing checks and controls even to the head teacher. The post of president of the SMC, which may be viewed as a prestigious position to hold in the village, seems neglected by the current president. The role of president of SMC seems to be fulfilled by the ex-president. This is not because of a formal decision made by the SMC or the head teacher, but because of his voluntary interest in the school and the wellbeing of the children. The community, VEC and SMC appear to accept the ex-president's interest and therefore the actions that follow his interest seem to be taken seriously. Though the ex-president is not a formal member, he seems to hold a certain power over the SMC and the running of the school, because of his knowledge and experience and his successes in addressing various issues in the village. His informal power is largely accepted and respected. Over time, this may have the potential to be viewed as a formal role by the community. This being said, there may be only a few obvious issues that are addressed by the ex-president, the other roles of the president remain neglected:

I don't know the present CRC... Training is provided but I have not attended any of them... No, I have not checked the attendance....There are no meetings conducted anymore... I only represent the committee in the meetings, otherwise we do as the teachers tell us because we don't know much. – President Village 2

I am maintaining a separate diary, taking down notes about which teacher is attending or not attending, also based on the information gathered from the children themselves. I enquired about it with the teachers. The teachers gave certain excuses. Then I wanted them to write letters to the head teacher giving an explanation. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

The current president of the SMC is not seen by SMC members or the community as someone who plays a key role. He did not seem to have a clear idea of the goals and objectives of SSA and

SMC. He only seemed aware of the finances as made available to the school and where funds may be spent. There are issues concerning the school infrastructure that he reported to be able to represent at the *panchayat* and Block-level meetings, which was then attended to by local-level leadership. Besides these, there appeared no involvement in monitoring or support by him in the implementation process on a regular basis. The president's response to questions regarding the SMC seemed vague and not to the point, which might reflect his knowledge of the SMC. This was also evidenced by his response to the SMC carrying out instructions of teachers and the head teacher. This response could stem from the president not being aware of anything regarding SMC other than what is revealed by the head teacher and the teachers, which seems currently to mainly focus on midday meals:

Yes, I do know about some SSA where everyone should be educated, literate and there should be a community of educated people. It also says that we should be literate in order to relate to other sectors and people from the cities and we can be like them. We decided to keep the school environment clean. We decided to have a kitchen room and we have now constructed one. For disabled children, we decided to have ramps. Money came and so we constructed ramps... There are so many people, they do not know how to speak, they do not have any idea and therefore we are carrying on what the teachers are saying, what they are requesting us. – SMC President Village 2

This makes me infer that no one involved in SSA's implementation process in this village may be carrying out their roles and responsibilities as prescribed by the policy. The awareness of the programme appears vague to the members of the SMC and there may not be much effort made by the head teacher or local-level leaders to ensure awareness among community-level educational leaders. The assumed inability of the head teacher to execute the programme, despite officially having the power through his prescribed roles and responsibilities, may also be due to the common attitude of the village towards gaining help or wanting change in the way that the government might want to provide help and change. I assume this also because of the slow change that the NGO has been able to bring to this village in areas of health, social harmony and other issues after working with them for about two decades. There may be a deeper issue contributing to this tough attitude towards change that has not been recognised or addressed. This situation is a reminder of how different communities may be from each other. Therefore, the effort and support required to make policy implementation a success has to be varied to suit the context. The State and local governments do not seem to have recognised the need to make suitable help available to address the particular issues within this community.

**Bureaucratic process** could be traditional and powerful, and could have an effect on local-level educational leadership if the approaches to decisions are in conflict with what has traditionally been practised. This conflict may be an obstacle to effective coordination and cooperation among and between different bodies (Tosun, 1999). Not much information could be obtained from the head teacher, the SMC members or the president on the bureaucratic processes that the SMC has faced over the management structure and the government. This may be due to their possible lack of involvement in the activities of the school or in decision-making that may have required sanctions from the other authorities within the management structure.

The only information obtained from the president regarding the bureaucratic process was regarding the delay that might have been caused by the *panchayat* in releasing the official document of the new SMC committee after the new management structure was prescribed, possibly leading to an inactive SMC:

Now the committee is not valid, madam. As of now I am the de facto president. The new person is elected but the paperwork has not yet come from the *panchayat*. – SMC President Village 2

There is a lack of awareness of the programme, a lack of interest of those elected members caused by a lack of active SMC, tiredness caused by struggles of caste and power, unclear management structure, roles, preoccupation with regular everyday duties that is more real and important to them, a trend of elected members being inactive or holding tokenistic positions. These and the delay in the release of official documents for the new committee to take over may be a result of the bureaucratic processes and complex power struggles. These might be limited by the political practices followed, where political leaders may not emphasise right practice or may be involved in implementing their own political agendas. This leads me easily into discussing the next issue, that of monitoring and evaluation.

**Monitoring and evaluation.** A system of utilising management information may be strategies and protocols that enable people to gain the information required for effective management.

Monitoring and evaluation may be a key element to gain management information, as they may enable mitigation of poor performance, demonstrate accountability, aid organisational learning and support future decisions (Crawford, 2003).

Village-level monitoring by SMC members or PTA members does not seem evident and this is detailed in the previous section. When it comes to local-level educational leadership involvement in evaluation and monitoring, which the management structure suggests is its main responsibility other than improving the quality of education, it appears that very few PTA and SMC meetings

have been attended by the CRCC. Reports and records seem to be infrequently checked, apart from when CRCC visits the school, which is reported by the SMC president to be only 'occasional':

I don't know the present CRCC. I have been told that there is a Telugu person who has become the CRCC for this year. One other person used to come occasionally to the meetings or to check registers.... No, he did not give ideas or suggestions. – SMC President Village 2

Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by a local-level educational leader who might also have responsibility for quality improvement in the school. He appears to have no power issued to him to make decisions, but seems only to be permitted to make suggestions (BRC, CRC Guidelines). This position could cause problems of ineffective implementing of CRCC's roles, as there may be room for power struggles between the head teacher and CRCC. Although there are other reasons, such as responsibilities issued by the BRCC that are outside official duties, struggles of trust and acceptance of a government official by community members and so on, the problem of positional power in relation to evaluation seemed to be recognised by the CRCCs more than other contributors to power struggles faced by the CRCC. This perspective of CRCCs may be due to support, monitoring and evaluation being their main responsibilities. The inability to be effective in executing his roles and responsibilities may be a reason for the CRCC to neglect visits and monitoring duties. Such neglect might have a ripple effect on the head teacher's neglecting the goals of SSA in the school and village:

Yes, it surely will be better to be given the power to help make small decisions regarding implementation which could help this process of implementation faster. The quality can be improved as we are here to mainly improve pedagogy and thereby the quality. Now CRCC has no power. We suggest and advice. But if we have more power, this problem of dropout can be reduced drastically. Most of the committee's problems can be solved. – CRCC Village 2

Some head teachers are not listening. I have no administrative power to take action. – CRCC Village 2

The reports of the CRCC may be used by the BRCC to base decisions on support and aid for the schools. CRCC's report in this context might be based on the reports that have been submitted by the head teacher. This indicates that there may be no actual monitoring and evaluation conducted, giving room for more corruption, so the basic needs of education in the villages might remain unmet.

Assuming from the evidence provided above that SSA is not effectively implemented in this village, the government still receives reports from the village that state the mostly successful

completion of planned goals, despite the possibility that the result is the contrary. This could suggest that there are no checks and controls by those at the higher levels of the implementation process. With little or no knowledge of the actual state of implementation, the village continues to receive monetary benefits that may or may not meet the needs of the school. Here is an indication that there may be obstacles in coordination and cooperation between the local government, local education officials and the schools, which may have led to the management systems being ignored and therefore giving rise to practices that are unethical.

#### 4.4.2 Theme 2: Dominance

**Caste** is one of the main reasons for social exclusion which is reflected through the multiple disadvantages that a few experience (Sen, 2000). Primary education of children of the Scheduled Caste remains an unaddressed issue and therefore is still a significant barrier to children attending or receiving quality education (Jenkins and Barr, 2006).

This barrier seems glaring in Village 2. Despite not having direct confirmation from the interviewees, my observation of a larger ST population in the village might be a reason for the dominance and strained SC-ST relationship in the village, whereas Village 1 has a more balanced population between the castes. Milliken and Martins (1996) argue that of greater diversity within a group can cause less integration, due to complex and stark differences in knowledge, expertise, perspectives and causal beliefs that underpin decisions and actions, and this supports my reasoning. The dominance of the ST appears strong and can be seen through the few functions that the SMC members may be involved in and in the major decisions made for the school. Examples are the response of all the interviewees, especially in decisions regarding the school. It is important to notice that SC members, although they are considered a lower caste by the ST may be more educated so, although marginalised, may not be willing to accept too much help or suggestions from the ST:

As an SMC member, I get all the children from my street to be enrolled in the school. I don't go to the other side because they are ST. We don't know who the SMC members are from their side. Two of us are members and we send our children. She (points to another lady in the group) goes one or two times a month to see if the food is given properly to the children. Other than that, we only sign the meeting register when the children bring it. – Focus group SMC member 6, SC representative Village 2

But if I suggest anything, they respond by saying, 'ah, what does she know. She is an Adhivasi (ST)'. – SMC member 5, ST representative Village 2

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The head teacher is also an ST member from another village and therefore the village does not seem to question him on anything regarding the school, even when there are mistakes or areas of the school that are overlooked. This lowers the accountability of the head teacher and might give him room to continue activities and practices in the way that he prefers, which may not be contribute to quality education or meeting SSA's goals. The evidence for this problem will be furnished in the section on Authority:

The Adhivasi people (ST) are not able to put pressure on the head teacher because he is also an Adhivasi. Therefore he has no pressure to do anything the way it should be done. Maybe if he is not an Adhivasi, perhaps there could be an effective contribution to the school. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

We also see the issue of power with the ex-president, who appears to be controlled by the ST. Although the ST might dominate all the decisions of the village including the school, it may give room for the ex-president to monitor the school and issue checks and controls, as the ex-president seems to be kept in tight check by the ST members, and their word is final. The interest and the ability of the ex-president to take on voluntarily the role of monitoring and issuing checks and controls may be due to the power he has gained over the years:

I warned them about the bad quality material he was using but because he's an Adhivasi, they compromised on the bad quality construction and they opposed me... In some matters there is a support but face-to-face they (ST) will not support me... Meetings are not taking place. There is nothing called SMC meeting but members are there. I'm going to the school and trying to find out what is happening and tell them what to do and they listen. They listen because my knowledge is power – they know I have the power and past experience as president. Therefore they have certain respect. Based on this they are listening. – Ex-president of SMC Village 2

Dominance of caste may also allow related issues such as gender discrimination that might be strongly rooted in the stereotypical beliefs of particular castes.

**Gender** specifications as prescribed by SSA for SMC appear to be followed in the election of SMC members, where the ratio of women to men is equal. However, women's roles and responsibilities seem to be defined according to gender stereotypes. There was no outright declaration in the interviews that there is discrimination, but it seems visible in the roles they are assigned, exclusion from meetings where decisions may be made and their lack of confidence in being heard or questioning decision makers, or being more functional in their roles. The head teacher or CRCC of the school do not appear to have made efforts to include women in the

implementation process of SSA, assist in improving their skills or place them in roles where they are involved in decision-making. Roles for men in the committee, even if they may be non-functional, are: head of finance and budgeting; president; vice-president; head of purchasing and distribution. It is important to note that, although women are not given adequate power, they do not seem to recognise this as an issue to be addressed. This again reflects on how inequalities are institutionalised and therefore easily accepted. Women are seen to hold roles of cooking and mobilising children from their caste segregated areas:

There are members but there are no meetings. Since only the women can cook, one member cooks for the children every day. Sometimes one other member will come and check the food and the children being fed. If we find children out of school, we try to talk to the mother. Because the mothers are in the village taking care of the children, women members take care of this. The men, they care only for expenses and other things for the school, not for these things. Still, not everyone does it. Just one or two of us. – Focus group SHG member 7, Village 2

In the case of the *Sarpanch* who is supposed to be in charge of this village, this appears to be a tokenistic position. A woman is reported to be elected as the *Sarpanch* to fulfil the government's requirement. She does not seem to be elected because of her interest or skills, but because of the history of leadership by a male member in her family. The role of *Sarpanch* appears to be carried out by the male family member, in this case her brother, and the *Sarpanch* states that she presents the reports as prepared by the brother at the meetings that are held at *panchayat* and Block level. This practice may not be new, and may be accepted in all the villages. Due to the prescribed gender roles, any interest of the *Sarpanch* in carrying out her role seems to be ridiculed by the other members in the village, including the women, which might give her little/no opportunity to take on her responsibilities.

My brother was the previous *Sarpanch* and people know his work. He has done a lot of work and they know him. So, they made me the *Sarpanch*... My brother will take the initiative and do all the work and also write the reports. I only put the signature and report whatever my brother asks me to in the meetings... I depend on my brother. It's not necessary for me to know... If I say anything to the parents, they are ridiculing me. – *Sarpanch* for Village 2

(Translator: He does not agree to let her speak anymore. He only will respond) Right now she only holds a title of *Sarpanch*. I do all the work. She is not involved in anything at all... She only knows when the money comes. How much is coming or is being spent etc., she is not aware of. – Brother of *Sarpanch*, Village 2

The open acceptance of the brother in taking over the role of the *Sarpanch*, which may be an open secret, might be one of the reasons for the responsibilities attached to the role not to be completely respected and executed, possibly leaving goals of SSA and SMC being unmet. The fear of the *Sarpanch* during interview that her brother might appear unexpectedly, and her admittance that she depends on her brother and does not need to know anything, and his refusal to let her answer any more questions are strong evidence of gender discrimination.

**Authority** and responsibility may be transferred in a decentralised set-up in order for the public to function or implement a programme and possibly broaden the participation of those who may benefit its effects. In Village 2, the authority of caste may be stronger than the authority of the roles in the decentralised set-up. The reasons for this conclusion are given with evidence in this section. It is important to mention that most barriers to authority in the village appear to have root in the dominance of caste (ST). I have chosen to discuss these issues here, as I would like to emphasise the influence caste can have on authority and decision-making.

The authority of the head teacher in carrying out activities in the manner that is convenient to him, rather than what appears to be prescribed by SSA, may be more because of his belonging to the ST than the authority that is vested on him as a head teacher. He may therefore be able to influence those he works closely with through the advantage he might possess with the support of the ST members, the dominant caste in the village:

There was no management committee meeting held. The head teacher writes the minutes and send the minutes through the children for signature. The teacher on the instruction of the head teacher is giving the midday meal rice to the chair and therefore the chair does not question him about anything. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

We get a notice through the children just before the SMC meeting but when we go there, the head teacher always says, the meeting is finished and makes us sign the register and the minutes. So, we sign it and get back. – Focus Group SMC SC member 7 Village 2

The CRCC who is in charge of monitoring the implementation of SSA's goals in the village appears also to overlook the procedures and other activities undertaken in the implementation process. Such an attitude may be because he may not be able to cause a change or be motivated to fight the caste-based systems in the village by himself. Therefore, he seems to accept the reports and the final decisions without cross-verification or questioning of the actual implementation process. The CRCC does not seem to be present to monitor, control or support the head teacher, SMC members or the school (evidence also seen under monitoring and evaluation):



When the CRCC comes and sees that the group representatives are already selected, even though they are selected by the ST members only, it is agreeable to the CRCC. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

The members of the PTA who have the authority to question and monitor the functioning of the school and the SMC (Appendix A) seem unsuccessful in this function, even if they do belong to the same caste. This may be because the decisions seem to have to be unanimous, by the ST, and they seem to fear breaking the unity of the members of the caste, more than exercising their authority to bring benefits through improvement of provision and quality of education:

There are people who are intelligent and educated among the PTA members but they are scared of raising their voice about the activities of the head teacher and other practices because the unity of the community will be broken. – SMC member 5 Village 2

I find this an important issue since the authority given by the government does not appear to stand strong in the midst of the power that lies with the members of a higher caste. Caste differences have contributed to power struggles and even determined the structure of the community, which is seen through the function of the SMC and decision making. This may reveal the importance of addressing the socio-cultural issues that policy actions may have to consider and plan around and alongside policy implementation.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: Support**

Training and development should be an integral part of a policy implementation process as they deliver knowledge on the what, why and how of the policy and reduce the anxiety of the implementers, enabling more effective implementation (Hope, 2002). Evidence of local-level educational leaders in the community level who are intimidated by the educated and those in higher authority, due to them being unaware of the what, why and how of SSA, SMC, their roles, responsibilities and powers, seems to stand out in Village 2. This may be one of the main reasons for the SMC to not involve themselves in SSA's implementation process. It is also evident that the head teacher and the CRCC may not have made the effort to create awareness of the policy and of SSA. They seem not to have motivated or encouraged local-level educational leaders to attend the training offered by SSA (evidenced in the second interview extract under 'Gender'). The one person who seems to have taken the personal interest to attend training is the ex-president and, as a result, seems to be confident when decisions are made. He seems capable of questioning those involved in implementation as he seems aware of what should and should not be carried out. But the issue of SMC members not attending training might not be a problem restricted to just this village. The government may have to check if the accessibility to training for those in the marginalised sections is sufficient and effective. Such cross-verification may be important since

most of the interview responses resound with the same response of inability to attend training in faraway locations, as they are busy with their own work:

Yes, we are intimidated to talk in front of the head teacher, teachers and people who work for the government. If we know more, we will be able to say something... There are other people taking decisions on our behalf for our children... I would like to go for training but we have our own work in the field, so we don't go for training, meetings or go check what is happening in the school. – Focus group member 8 Village 2

This is the result after I have attended five training. I discussed with you about everything because I learnt many things in the training. Also, it is an opportunity to inform people what the problems are in this village. I informed about the teacher's late coming and early leaving during those training programmes. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

If there is not enough support from those in charge of monitoring and ensuring training, awareness and effective participation – that is, the head teacher and CRCC – there is reason to question the authorities' evaluation and monitoring of the local-level leaders and the fulfilment of their roles. In this situation, the local-level educational leaders potentially involved with implementation at village level may not have knowledge of where to access information about their roles and responsibilities, resources and so on that they require. This issue takes us to the next section on access to information/policy which, according to policy, is supposedly transparent and easily accessible to all actors in the implementation process.

**Access to information/policy** is of utmost importance in a democratic set-up, as barriers to such access could hamper information about changes in policy, political disclosure and the democratic dialogue between implementers and government

In Village 2 the access to information appears to be only through the head teacher and the CRCC. It was observed from the interview responses that there has been only one awareness programme conducted by the head teacher with regard to the kind of material support that the government gives children who are enrolled in school (books, bag, uniform, midday meal). It appears little effort is made to sensitise local level educational leaders about the roles and responsibilities of the PTA, SMC and the goals of SSA:

The head teacher gave his observation that the government is giving a lot of educational support – uniform, food, books and free education to our children and therefore we should send our children to the school... Told us that SMC is formed to maintain the school. – SMC member 5 Village 2

The SMC members seem to be only vaguely informed on: SSA's management structure; the training available for SMC members; the government offices and officers that can be reached for various complaints and support; support to learn and understand their roles and; to access the right sources to obtain information or inform personnel of their observations. This would give people space not only to build their confidence but also to take better control of the current management system at the village school.

**Resources** The ex-president is said to have had the experience of being a president of the SMC, and may therefore possess a clearer knowledge of what the policy states about governmental provision. He has made many statements about what the government would like schools to achieve, but has not given enough support to make it happen. The processes that the government may have decided to use to provide resources may not be effective. Such processes might in turn cause those in local-level educational leadership of the implementation to be less motivated to continue serving the goals of SSA. This seems to have left the staff at the school who are involved in non-teaching work giving way to the possibility of lower quality education:

The government is writing many things but very little is being done by them for achieving that in the village level. If the government is choosing and appointing one person to cook and distribute the MDM (midday meal), there is no one to monitor. So, the teacher is monitoring and maintaining the record for the whole day. This way, the teacher misses the lessons with the children. Two people are cooking. They are paid about Rs.1000 a month. It is not given to them every month but paid to them once a year. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

Although the enrolment appears to have improved and most children may have been in school in the past three years, the reason for their enrolment appears to be mainly down to the provision of the midday meal, books, bags and uniform for the children – mainly the midday meal, as it may motivate the parents to send the children to school to receive a healthy meal a day.

Other requests of the president and the head teacher appear to be approved: requests for school infrastructure and to enable access for disabled children. Although there may be no involvement of all the members of the SMC in decision-making and implementation, resources seem to be accessed and provisions reach the school. Others who may be interested in being involved, such as the ex-president, do not gain enough support or may be allowed involvement in selected tasks:

Well, I have a lot of ideas and I want to involve myself and do many things but I do not have support. People are not supporting my ideas and/proposals in implementing the SSA programmes. – Ex-President of SMC Village 2

Some members know but most of them don't even know that the teachers come in late and go early. – SMC president Village 2

On the one hand, it appears that financial resources are made available and thus infrastructural needs may be met, but resource control in other areas seem deficient. The method of implementation employed by the head teacher is that, although he may not appear to be a very influential person in the village, he seems to have control over all the resources made available by government. He is also able to exercise power within the village through belonging to the dominant community. This leads me to conclude that the access to information/policy may therefore be held back from SMC members in order to keep the people dependent on him for information and guidance.

### 4.5 Summary

The analysis of data in Village 2 brought out findings that may fit into the same themes that emerged from Village 1's data, with the exception of those that seemed more significant and therefore differed from Village 1. The summary of the second case will be undertaken to consider the key actors involved in the implementation of SSA, if and how democratic participation is ensured and the barriers to the involvement of local-level educational leadership that were discovered through this research.

There appear to be two key actors involved in the implementation of SSA in Village 2. The ex-president seems voluntarily to include himself in matters at the school, mainly checking and controlling the academic goals. He appears to try to ensure that students' results are maintained, classes take place, teachers and students are there on time and that students report the activities that take place at the school. Despite the ST members in the village not supporting him in all his decisions, they seem to allow him to carry out checks and controls. This is because he may be more literate and might have more experience and knowledge, not only in implementing SSA but also in dealing with government officials with respect to school affairs.

The other key actor is the head teacher, who appears to have ensured that all the infrastructure is in place. Although this may be true, these matters seem to be under the control of the ST members. They allow or disallow construction, and determine who will be involved and how it will be done. The head teacher may have used his position and support from the ST community to do little work and avoid being accountable for achieving the rest of the goals. The school may therefore not have any facilities other than what the SSA has provided (computers, usable toilets, and the right teacher–student ratio). There appears to be no evidence to ensure whether funds for the resources have been received but not utilised, or used unethically.

Government officials and local-level educational leaders seem to have failed to conduct the required monitoring and support. The absence of monitoring and support appears to have left the village with no evaluations of progress, and practices that may not meet or disrupt the achievement of all the goals of SSA. The universal (100%) enrolment of students in the village may be its only reason to claim successful implementation of SSA. The factors that enable sustenance of the rate of enrolment, such as the midday meal, uniforms, bags and books, seem to be ensured by the head teacher:

all the children are sent to school, because they get food every day. They also get bags, uniform and books for free. – Focus group member Village 2.

Quality of education, involvement of local-level educational leaders in the community level and democratic participation in the implementation of the policy may be neither met by the school nor questioned by the government.

SSA seems to be controlled and carried out through the ST members of the village rather than the SMC. The dominant presence of the ST members, who ensure all the decisions of the village, including the school that may be sanctioned by them, may not favour the attainment of SSA's goals. Their rationale to decisions is to protect the unity of the caste and its members more than the benefits they could achieve through timely issue of checks and controls or by establishing democratic participation of all castes in the village. The power of this unity of caste seems too strong for governments, NGOs and policies to break through, disallowing equal access to resources, control of authority, quality education, reduce caste and gender discrimination and so on.

## **4.6 Findings in relation to the conceptualised new model**

In Chapter 2, the contributing theories and models that influence the new political model of the process of policy implementation took into account the complexities of policy implementation and the local-level educational leaders involved in the process. They also indicated how the policy implementation process may not be linear but cyclical, within and between its stages. Having analysed the preliminary data, it has been possible to begin to understand how community participation in policy implementation is accommodated within the different stages in the new model and how it may need adjustment. This understanding suggests that there may be a need to rearrange the local-level educational leaders involved in relation to the activities at each stage. The progression within and between stages remains cyclical, but there is an indication that some adjustment may be needed. This may be a noteworthy indication that could bring more clarity to our understanding of the complexities involved in policy implementation and the involvement or

inclusion of local-level educational leaders, especially from the communities, within this process. In this section I will first enumerate further understandings of the new model, based on what the data analysis illuminates as the successes and failings in the implementation of SSA. I will then follow with suggestions of the adjustments that have been considered in order to bring clarity, as the initial model is yet not fully satisfactory as a conceptual model.

### 4.6.1 Stage 1 Decision Making

*Problem identification.* The decision of choice of the problem to be addressed in the context of SSA or similar policy reforms may largely be made at national level, and partly at State level.

Representation of local-level educational leadership from the community at national level does not seem to be indicated in documents, information available online or from interviewees, indicating a neoliberal governance with centralised control and a centrally defined standard for policy implementation, while giving an impression of decentralisation. In such a case, we can also expect control over decision making and outcomes. The management structure (Appendix A) does not seem to indicate community representation, even at District level. I therefore assume that there may be no community representation at the next higher level, that is, State level, as the highest level where community representation is evident is at Block level, as seen in Figure 4.1.

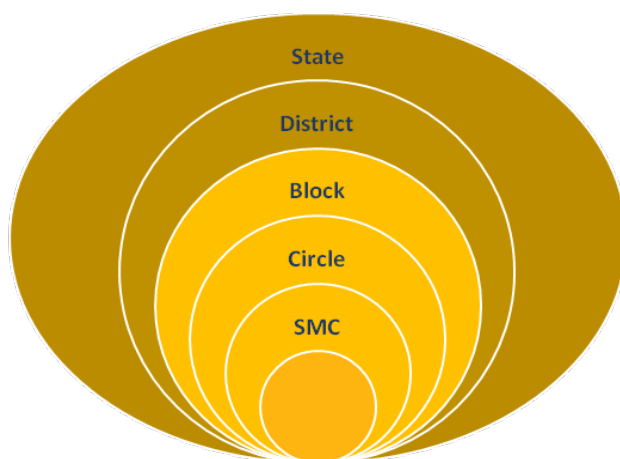


Figure 4.1 Decentralised structure, followed by the State and the extent of evident community representation. Lighter circles represent community representation in the committees and darker circles represent no community representation in the management structure

We can therefore understand the complexity that may begin at Stage 1, where the choice of policy decision may not include the grassroots realities that local-level educational leadership from the communities may face. When implemented, this may not be easy or practical, as decisions may not be contextualised but largely politicised. This stage may confirm what was said

earlier when the model was conceptualised; that there are several actors, and that problems are loosely picked, and bound by political interests and power.

#### **4.6.2 Stage 2 Action Avenue**

Policy decisions received for implementation by the District from State level may lead to actions prescribed by the State, based on what it considers important. Therefore, the State might carry out a method of implementation that it may consider most appropriate. Community representation at local-level educational leadership at this stage may not be evident at the highest decision-making committee at District level. The gaps in the management structure include community representation at the highest level, and limit the issues discussed and relevant/helpful decisions passed. It can be an indicator of power differences between policy decision makers in the State/District level and the communities that the democratic process should be addressing. According to the analysed data, representation may be evident in the other standing committees in the management structure, and therefore decisions may still be lacking direct participation or input of the community at the District level. This is also evidence of the lack of a feedback loop that would be enhanced due to insufficient resources (CRCC, *Sarpanch* or other SMC members) who can complete the loop by ensuring feedback. The feedback loop seems to be structured in a way that allows information to flow up the management structure from the community level to the State, but not effectively structured to ensure that the information flows back down to community level. Evidence for this is seen in the responses of head teachers and community members who have had to visit the government offices to gain a response for their requests, and from their lack of understanding or knowledge of the new standing committees that the State has made a decision on.

State-prescribed actions communicated to the villages may be taken by the head teacher, along with the SMC members, and contextualised to appropriate implementation. Primary data indicate the need to contextualise the actions according to the issues and needs of the village in order to ensure successful implementation. In the first case study, the head teacher decided to tackle the attitudes of the community to education and gain the interest of all members of the community, after which he began the process of implementing SSA in the community. This kind of context-based planning might need local socio-cultural issues to be identified, understood and considered before, or as part of, the policy implementation process. I recognise this activity as a repetition of Stage 1, as problem are identified at local level, this time with local-level educational leaders from the community as part of decision-making when policy-related actions are planned, developed and implemented.

### 4.6.3 Stage 3 Decision Styles

The decision styles that follow during the process of implementation may include flight, oversight and resolution, where flight influences oversight and resolution, as suggested in the revised new model. The findings also indicate that these decision styles may not be employed by local-level educational leaders in the community because, for example, when the decision style of oversight occurs, the government-level decision-makers may be the only actors involved. Decision styles employed during any policy implementation process indicate power and power struggles in decision making and implementation, as seen through this research with the decentralised structure (Figure 4.1) and through the financial decision-making process in Village 1 and 2.

Instances of flight, where decisions may continue to be implemented despite no improvement, and instances of resolution, where decisions may be implemented without the required change or sufficient support from the higher levels in the management structure, were observed to be the most common situations. In the case of flight, there may be delays in the bureaucratic process when powers of decision making are held at the top, leaving those at the implementation level to carry out decisions that yield little/no positive results. Actors at the implementation level struggle with these decisions as, although they do not see improvement, they are required to comply with accountability to the District and other government authorities. With instances of resolution, we can see how power makes room for unplanned changes at the implementation level, where actors have little or no space to question or gain support (for example, a new management committee with extra members). This could also give the beneficiaries a perception of powerlessness.

These examples suggest that actors/implementers are left with soft powers within the decentralised process, while the real power in decision making is held at the top. Despite the State indicating that powers are entrusted to every level (section 1.12), it does not appear to be so in practice, curbing the decisions to be made and implemented in the community level. As suggested in Chapter 1, power is distributed and held and used to influence decisions and practice within a neoliberal context. In Case Study 1, although there seemed an active SMC and universal enrolment of children, there were other objectives of SSA such as gender equality, issues of caste and power that were observed to have been submerged under the perceived success of a few goals of SSA. The outcomes of these few perceived successful goals, if and when evaluated by the government, might lead to oversight where a new decision is made and implemented, ignoring that not all goals have been successfully implemented. For example, the revised management structure's decision that the SMC should expand its membership, when it plans mostly to include extra members from government offices, may give rise to power issues in decision-making



between local-level educational leaders in the community and the new members. These kinds of new decisions may not be made at community level or by local-level implementers, as the power may not lie here. Such policy decisions were observed at District and State level, which suggests that the process moves back to Stage 1 or 2 and the following process, all over again.

At Stage 3, we also observe that outcomes and evaluation may happen. Evaluation that is conducted may be internal and led by local-level educational leaders involved in implementation, who also forms the link between the government and the community. This kind of internal evaluation of outcomes does not appear in the conceptualised new model, which may now be modified and included in the revised new model as an internal evaluation process.

#### **4.6.4 Stage 4 Outcomes and Evaluation**

Outcomes and evaluation at this stage indicate external evaluation of outcomes by funders or organisations that may be involved in issuing checks and controls. The reason for this statement is the accountability expected by funders and policy-makers who also hold the power to issue checks and controls and make changes according to the achieved success.

I had included policy entrepreneurs and the reactions of media, pressure groups and community as having an influence on decisions at State and District level, but these did not surface in the case studies. Reactions may mostly be seen in the media (newspapers), but this does not seem to have had a significant effect on a change in policy decisions. A sample of the reaction to the construction of toilets has been included in Appendix D. In this example, the news article is in response to the need for separate toilets for girls in schools. The article is dated 19 August 2014, 12 years after SSA has been operational in the State of Odisha. The article also states that the problem is not limited to girls, and that boys' toilets are also not available, and the implementation stands at 38%. This research was conducted two months after the issue was highlighted, yet there was no evidence of any new toilets. None of the interviewees were aware of such a change coming their way from government or community-level educational leaders. The decision was made by a political leader, but not incorporated as a policy decision.

### **4.7 Adjustments made to the conceptual model**

Based on the findings and analysis, I have made the following adjustments to the model. The changes may bring greater clarity to understanding the changes in the way the implementation process works when community is involved in local-level educational leadership and when political influences are also largely at work. The diagrammatic representation of the modified model is presented below in Figure 4.2. At Stage 1, the exclusion of community participation or

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representation in local-level educational leadership reflects the change in policy process – in the way implementation could take place when community involvement is included in the different stages of the process.

In the action avenue, where decisions on actions that would best address the problem may be decided, I assume an adjustment that divides Stage 2 into two. The top half depicts the possible interaction between the action situation and actions decided at District level, while the bottom half portrays the interaction between the decisions made at the District level and problem identification in the community level, and decisions on actions that local-level educational leaders may also be involved in (decision making). Here, I also include the involvement of significant people from the village with no representation in government.

Stage 3 shows the changes in decision styles that may be practised. Community representatives practice flight and resolution, where the only decision may be to continue implementing the policy, despite neither success nor support from the government. The outcomes of this kind of implementation may be evaluated by government or an external agency, the results of which may lead to oversight, the kind of decision that only the government may be authorised to make. The exclusion of community representation in local-level educational leadership through the oversight style of decision-making is recognised. These governmental decisions could lead to problem identification (Stage 1) or to the action avenue (Stage 2).

Policy entrepreneurs, as mentioned earlier, did not surface in the preliminary research. However, this does not mean they are always absent and therefore they are not removed from the model. This may not mean that there are no policy entrepreneurs, and only indicates that such people who influence decisions could also be significant members of committees or political groups, most of whom may not be visible to the public. As policy entrepreneurs can be significant members, I have decided to not depict them as a separate unit in the policy process.

Stage 4 of the model has been adjusted to include outcomes and external evaluation. These evaluations could influence change at State or national level. There was a decision to remove the reactions of media, pressure groups and community from the model. Although the media carried the voice of the people, it did not seem to influence policy decisions. This gives us a strong lead in answering the research question on the government's accountability procedures that are made available to the people.

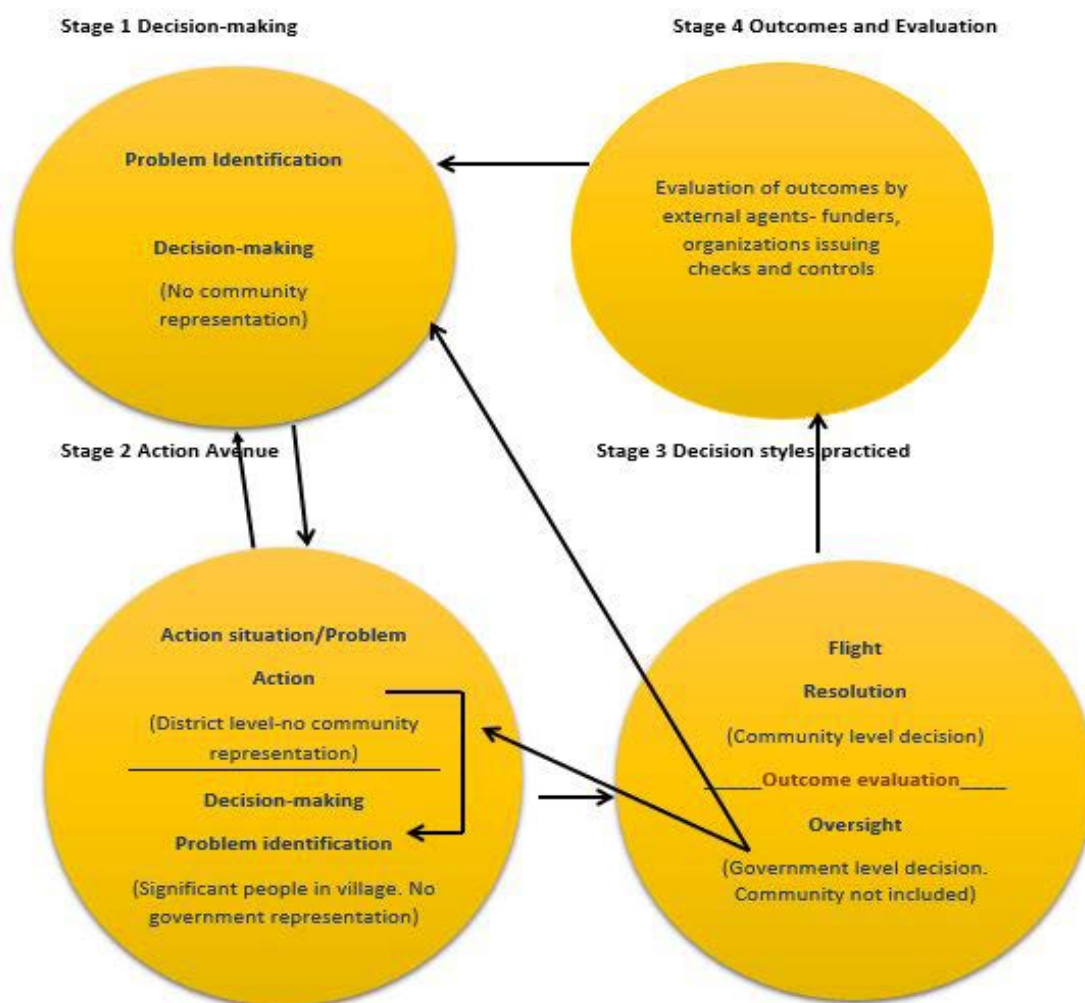


Figure 4.2 Revised New Model of decision-making after analysing the practice of decentralised implementation and community participation in local-level educational leadership

#### 4.8 Overview of policy and practice in the decentralised system

The decision at the national level to initiate SSA in India was based on the increasing demand for quality education and the need to make collaborative efforts by the State, Central government, private organisations and local governments to meet the demand. When these collaborations merged with the District Primary Education Programmes (DPEP), SSA was initiated as a time-bound programme (Srinivasan, 2010). I will now look closely at policy and practice at the national, State, local and school level and the effects that local-level educational leaders and their practices have in the short and long term while achieving policy objectives.

**Policy-makers** may equate policy intention to policy practice and frame a simplistic understanding of power relations between government and local organisations. This may contribute to their understanding of intentions and motivations of actors within the policy implementation structure,

which might influence the formulation of management structures. Management structures may enable local-level educational leaders in governments and communities to be informed and participate in SSA's implementation within the specified period. These frameworks provide a rubric within which all the actors involved may design, enact and re-enact SSA at various levels, where the actions are based on their own theories and interpretations of participation, democracy, power and the policy itself. The design may be enacted and re-enacted at the school/SMC level, therefore it is important to ensure greater care in understanding the intent of stakeholders since they may be active agents in creating conceptions of governance and participation. Policy interpretation at every stage of policy implementation is also reflected in the works of Ball (1997, 2007, 2012). He argues that policies are interpreted, realised and implemented in local settings, not implemented exactly as the policy decision that was passed by policy makers. Policy is made and remade at every stage of implementation. The varying perspectives of actors may be considered using their articulation of the theories of action (Argyris and Schön, 1974) that might provide a means to explore assumptions that would inform policies and practices of SSA at systematic, programmatic and individual levels.

Theory of action distinguishes the explicit/espoused theories and theories-in-use. In context, explicit theories may be likened to SSA's objectives or what the actors (government level) assert may be the objectives of SSA for schools, while theories-in-use may be linked to the functions that are actually undertaken by the actors in the village/school level. When policies promote democratic participation and practices, they tend to ignore the reality of the practised activities (Lewis, 2004). For example, the formulation of SMCs may have been to ensure democracy in the implementation process. However, in reality their activities may be focused more on supporting efficient functioning of the planned activities than to ensure effective democratic participation. Policies that are based on decentralised governance may typically be based on theories of action that may presume that institutionalisation of local autonomy could have considerable effects on education provision. An assumption made by most central policy-makers is that universally applied policy remedies are received by local schools in the same way (Fuller, 2009). Considering the theory of action, it might be short-sighted to believe that decentralised implementation of policies, especially in marginalised sections of a country, may achieve all the objectives that the policy intends, for example 100% enrolment, equal representation of castes and genders in SMC, and absolute control of decision making by SMC (SSA, 2002).

*Theory of action behind SSA:* The 'time-bound' objective of universalising quality elementary education is implemented by the Central government in collaboration with the states. With only a framework provided by the Central government, the State government develops the structure and content of the programme. What makes SSA truly decentralised is the community

mobilisation to participate in organising committees (VEC, SMC and Parent–Teacher Association) as local-level educational leaders and, without their involvement, the twin objectives of providing quality and enrolment may collapse. It also seeks to wipe out social inequalities, bridge gender gaps and monitor the quality of education through performance and provision (Government of India, 2011). Although these efforts may have been necessary, I would like to focus on the objectives that SSA hoped to achieve within a ‘limited timeframe’. The reason for this focus takes into consideration the vastness of the nation (India), the socio-cultural issues that rural sections are bound by and the problems related to resources – both human and fiscal, as discussed in the sections on analysis and discussion.

As mentioned earlier, **governments** may have a perception that local schools/local-level educational leaders will adopt State policies in the manner that was intended. They tend to normalise the situation of all societies, similar to the practice of discounting local-level socio-cultural obstacles and setting time limits for universal objectives (Kainth, 2006). What may look reasonable in theory may not be practical, and therefore socio-cultural prejudices such as caste and gender do not seem to dissolve under SSA’s prescribed training and workshops. An example can be taken from women and SMC members from the lower caste holding tokenistic positions in the management structure. The focus seems to be on developing the administrative needs rather than on appropriateness according to the context, leaving these efforts that are less effective at breaking down social hierarchies or improving community mobilisation (Rao, 2009). This is quite evident from the two case studies where there is a lack of training, and in the few instances where training has been attended, the members did not find it useful. There is also little effort made by local government to ensure that all the local-level educational leaders involved in the implementation process attend this training. Issues of caste and gender are visible in both case studies, which gives us an understanding of how much effort, time and consistent work might have to be undertaken to address these deep-rooted issues. Therefore I see the ‘limited timeframe’ prescribed by policy-makers as impractical, as changes and awareness may have to begin with actors from local government, village leadership, school head teachers, teachers and the community. A commonly accepted view of education, socio-cultural norms and practices may have to be established to achieve success in policy objectives. It may be a long process before effective participation and implementation can take place, and neglecting effective participation and implementation may result in inability or difficulty in achieving policy goals, as in the case of the second case study. Prescriptions from the government on how policies should be implemented may have a singular sense while, at school level, policy statements may articulate a strictly structured norm that may view participation of local-level educational leadership in policy implementation through a technical and political perspective. This perspective may prioritise the

structure and form of the policy and its implementation more than local context and processes (Lewis, 2004).

In the ***school or community level***, initially in Case Study 1, one sees a picture of increased/increasing involvement of local-level educational leaders from the community in implementing SSA and the ideal situation of a large part of the community working together and making decisions by unanimity and pursuing a common interest. All the interviewees and focus group members reflected confidence, transparency to a large extent, the ability to pursue the government and meet the needs of the school and achieve a sense of ownership of the school and its success. Most of the SMC members, head teacher and focus group seem to deny the diverse and competing ideas and interests, values and demands that arise from leadership, power, caste, gender and skills. In Case Study 2 these issues were more visible and strongly seated in the community, and the involvement of local-level educational leaders from the community in policy implementation was almost neglected. Neither case study seemed to evidence uncertainty about governance. As a result, both schools devoted great effort to ensuring that school reports stated what was defined and expected by the policy framework. An example is the election or selection of members, SMC meetings, midday meals, enrolment of children, minutes maintained and so on. Effectively, the theory-in-use reflected policy requirements, especially participation of local-level educational leaders from the community in governance decisions. In practice, participation was more often seen to be little more than information sharing or limited consultation.

A deeper study of the case studies revealed that participation of community members in local-level educational leadership may be individualistic and sporadic:

We go sometimes, when we can or when the headmaster calls us. – SMC member, SC representative, Village 2

At times it is difficult conduct meetings, especially during harvest season. They are busy. But one or two of them are very enthusiastic and will come to ask me why we don't have a meeting. – Head teacher, Village 1

Such participation depended on the head teacher's encouragement or the personal initiative of interested individuals, who may or may not have the power to question the current framework of participation formulated by local government or the head teacher. Therefore, participation of all SMC members may be limited to certain aspects of governance that may be determined by the head teacher. This is seen in both case studies, where head teachers included certain members who participated, depending on whether the decisions related to financial or non-financial

aspects of governance. This can now question the meaning of participation and its connection to aspects of influence in the implementation process. It is quite evident that participation may not be dependent on SMC membership or attending meetings alone, but it is certainly dependent on who has the power and what decisions are open to participation by those who hold power. This may be a common situation among a few elected representatives, where they tend to accept the tokenistic roles assigned to them. Here, tokenism is a little above non-participation and allows them to have a voice, but lacks the required power to ensure their voices are heeded by the more powerful (Arnstein, 1969). Therefore, not all the community is affected in the same way or benefits equally from every SMC decision, yet SMCs may be under pressure to reach a similar decision on most aspects.

**Representation** is an important factor of SSA's framework, where the different social groups within the community and their children who are affected by the goals and decisions are given equal importance and thus also ensure that the whole community is represented. This is evident from the revised composition and functions of SSA, available in Appendix A. In the rural segments, diversity in terms of socio-economic level and gender may be limited. Representation in these segments may be particularly problematic, as it is driven by power and related restrictions and exclusion. In both the case studies this is seen between the SC and ST groups, and between genders, where the dominant group seems to play a significant role in defining the community based on their historic identity, which they tend to preserve.

Although the community and its common interests are the focus, representation may not be homogeneous as each representative may represent a particular group and its specific interests, as in the case of the head teacher in Village 2. In both case studies, the interests of the head teacher or the caste of each local-level educational leader were perceived to define the decisions made for the school. For many, when elections were held and SMC was formed with representation from each caste, it meant representation had been achieved. Homogenising communities through representation may refer to an assumption of a community having a common good that involves shared common interests and agreement on policies and principles (Lewis, 2004). This need for agreement could cause problems of exclusion, as it may be the likely reflection of interests of the historically dominant groups. Therefore, the marginalised may have to set aside their identity, experiences and goals (Young, 2000). We see this more clearly in the second case study, where the ST members seemed to be marginalised and the ex-president, who was more interested, experienced and knowledgeable in dealing with the issues of the school, had to set aside his identity and experiences when his decisions were overruled by the more powerful group. I therefore analyse that participation of local-level educational leadership from the community in policy implementation may not have fully considered that the actual practices

of governance through community participation may depend on the theories of action, particularly in grassroots struggles. Governance of such a democratic nature not only depends on learning one's roles, skills and respecting official procedures, but may involve a fair amount of conflict resolution, negotiation and compromise by representatives of various groups to ensure that the whole community benefits equally (McDermott, 1999). If communities should equally benefit, differences in power between castes and genders are two issues that require a focused resolve.

### 4.8.1 Deployment of resources

SSA has promoted convergence of many kinds of groups, organisations, governments and individuals to gather resources to improve the effectiveness of interventions and facilities to ensure policy success (Khan, 2013). The structure of SSA was initiated as a demand-driven programme that visualised a decentralised partnership between all the tiers of the government reaching down to the *gram panchayat* (village level governing body). The gaps in resources at the lowest level are consolidated with the District annual plan. This is further consolidated in the State's annual work plan and budget. The State's institutional management structure is entrusted to the authority, which has responsibility to formulate and adopt policy decisions on a range of issues, of which deploying the available resources may be one of the foremost. Local needs of resources are determined through the district education office (CRCC, BRCC), which evaluates the needs of each village, and through the head teacher, who determines the need with the help of the SMC (SSA, 2002). It is noted that the implementing capacity of the states, specifically in marginalised sections, and the capacity to draw up the required allocations may be a constraint. This is evidenced in the previous sections where the lack of involvement of the CRCC and BRCC in the villages may not focus decisions on the real needs of the villages. It has been found that infrastructure, school resources and teachers are automatically given more importance than interventions that can lead to access and quality education (Mukherjee, 2007).

The allocations and expenditure within the State, District and Block may not be in line with the objectives of SSA. Given the population and size of the State of Orissa, it may require further decentralisation, especially in marginalised areas where the number of out-of-school children may be high, lacking infrastructure, with fewer teachers available and so on. With one of the main objectives focusing on addressing inequity and quality education, there may be a need for more finances to cater for these particular regions and communities (Mukherjee, 2007). As seen in the case studies, where facilities of water and sanitation are limited, access roads to the school are inaccessible and there are highly imbalanced teacher–student ratios, we can identify the need for extra financial allocation to cater to these specific needs.



The school/community educational leaders at the local-level may best determine the needs of each school, as the needs may be distinctive (Johnson, 1995). This being said, it may be important to understand that although the schools in both case studies draw out the needs of the school in terms of infrastructure, teaching and learning resources and teacher requirements, their requests may not be received at District level as they are presented. Head teachers and SMC members may be focused on aspects that they are sure the District government is likely to fund. For example, neither case studies seemed to have pursued the need for toilets, furniture for classrooms or materials to use as teaching aids, regularise salaries for the midday meal cooks and so on. Although District governments may have to work with other departments such as the department for water and sanitation and with those in the State governments to source and ensure resources are made available for the schools, the process may be slowed down or neglected when these requirements are not pursued from the community level.

Human resource availability, allocation and functioning within the institutional management structure may be potential causes of the difference in effectiveness of participation and successful implementation of a policy (Speer, 2012). Supportive functions for SSA within the decentralised system are made available through the BRCC, CRCC, HM, teachers and SMC. One of the common problems faced by schools in rural sections of India is the shortage of teachers (Chauhan, 2009), leaving the student–teacher ratio incompatible with quality teaching and learning, defeating the goal of quality education. The government has resorted to employing para teachers in order to eliminate the issue of single-teacher schools in marginalised sections. These teachers may not be qualified enough to be teachers, as they may have not have undergone professional teacher training. With the limited number of trained teachers willing to take up teaching in rural sections, these sections of the State may be left with no alternative. Teacher absence rates were also controlled to a large extent through the appointment of para teachers who live locally. But the issue of quality education may remain, because of the inability of these para teachers to provide quality education due to their limited training and qualifications (Colclough et al., 2010). Kingdon, Aslam, Rawal and Das (2013) argue that the quality and sustainability of para teachers vary, due to their unfavourable employment conditions, and the success of employing them is context specific. They also argue that the quality of para teachers can be improved if policy decisions to improve their employment conditions are improved and teaching efforts encouraged. This takes us to reviewing the resources set down as monitoring and support systems within the management structure.

Block resource centres and Cluster resource centres have been established to provide academic monitoring and to support teachers on site. The coordinators of these centres are required to mobilise members of the community to participate in school management. As evidenced in the

data, the CRCCs seem to be burdened with non-academic or administrative work by their superiors. This takes them away from ensuring and supporting quality improvement in schools. Supporting head teachers in training the teachers for pedagogical improvements and applying various other interventions on a regular basis may enable effective functioning of CRCCs in their roles. Monitoring roles of CRCCs do not seem to have any power attached, making the decisions and the issue of corrective measures take a longer time to reach institutions, as they have to be from the BRCC. With these complications come issues of power between head teachers and CRCCs, which may be resolved through the transfer of certain role-related power to the CRCCs (Mishra, 2014). The issue of power is further discussed in the following section.

### **4.8.2 Attitudes of local-level educational leaders and the government towards a democratic culture**

Although India has been a democratic nation for 55 years, the democratic culture seems distant with an overpowering political control. The historically marginalised communities may find it difficult to adapt to a democratic culture as they may be used to conforming to socio-economic inequality. Fostering democratic school governance systems in these communities may be a challenge, evidence for which we have seen in the data analysis section. SSA's management structure is supposed to foster democratic governance by involving communities in playing active and responsible roles, encouraging rational discussions and collective decision-making. However, we have seen that there may be uncertainty in the roles of actors at every level of the management structure designed by the government, and this hinders effective functioning. These inadequacies in the management structure and the State's support in empowering those at community level have led to inequalities and inadequacies being nurtured. Power struggles between actors remain, with longer bureaucratic processes leaving the attitudes of local-level educational leaders unchanged.

Democracy does not develop by chance but results from explicit efforts by government and educators, which brings democracy to life. Davies (2002) argues that the democratic theory of education may involve a process of 'double democratisation', meaning that both education and society should be simultaneously democratised if a democratic society is to arise. An example can be taken from Village 1, where members of the SMC, especially women, from both castes were involved. Although their roles were restricted, it was more because of the head teacher had not opened opportunities than the women being unwilling to be involved. This may require cultivating a culture within communities where participation is encouraged and an informed choice of decision-making is practised through deliberation (Starkey, 1991). For this culture to be cultivated, the local-level educational leaders, NGOs, other organisations working with the community and

head teachers may have to collaborate and work towards stimulating and achieving sustained change. But there may be issues of changes in attitudes in the very actors who may be involved as they may come from the same or similar cultures. Attitudes towards caste, gender and participation in decision-making could avoid being arbitrary, but are based on agreed and legitimised procedures of decision-making. Regardless of the cultural context, power relations may be an ineradicable feature as the governance of schools is largely be a political activity. This is because it deals with allocation and distribution of resources, and involves professionals and non-professionals with opposing or differing views, concentrated pockets of rural areas being developed and inequalities institutionalised within the management and implementation structure.

#### **4.8.3 Impact of community participation on SSA**

Community participation in decentralised governance has generally assumed a central position in developing nations. One can observe democratisation at local levels, which has a focused support from donors as well. One of the major promises of such decentralised governance is accountability of local governance, where the government at the local level becomes more responsive to the needs of the communities and thereby ensures effective service delivery. Community participation or public participation may be a desirable concept, but can be exploited by certain actors (Ozerol, Tacer and Islar, 2013) holding more power to legitimise their personal agendas. Ensuring participation requires a significant role of the State in ensuring empowerment of members and contribution of experts in providing the required information to foster participation, not just balance power asymmetries. Participation is also affected by contextual factors and what each government really means by participation, and such ambiguity in understanding can make participation a contested topic. I will therefore look at meaningful participation of community members within the context and evaluate its impact in ensuring implementation of SSA's goals.

With the requirement for real authority and responsibility transferred to local-level community members being lacking in both villages, effective democratic participation is questionable. In Case Study 1, there was clear control by the head teacher as agendas and plans seemed to be charted out by him, while the SMC members trusted and worked out what was assigned to them. In Case Study 2 the power of decisions towards school development seemed to be controlled by the ST members, while aspects within the school seemed to be controlled by the head teacher. This being said, both case studies showed significant improvement in the rate of enrolment, which seemed achievable by virtue of the provisions from the government to the children, the midday meal scheme, and a collective approach to checking with parents to keep their children in school.

Although a deeper analysis of Case Study 1 revealed that the head teacher was in control of decisions (for example, financial planning and deployment was done by the head teacher and the SMC members informed, rather than SMC members being involved in planning and deployment) taken for the school and SSA's implementation, the community seemed very positive about the implementation and were confident in voicing their opinions, meeting government officials and claiming what was due for the school. This attitude and confidence seems to be certainly one that was fostered with awareness of the policy, deliberation between SMC members and on-the-job training by the head teacher. This change in attitude has also had a positive impact on the rest of the community. This seems to be supportive of all their efforts. Therefore, empowerment of local-level educational leaders seems to enable delivery of the purposes set out for community participation.

On the other hand, having women in positions of power seems to be discouraged due to traditional beliefs. At the same time, caste seems to stand in the way of equal representation because of the power relations. Therefore, the distribution of power among local-level elected/selected leaders seems to rest more in the hands of male members of higher caste, causing the exclusion of women and minority groups. It may be possible to improve this situation, but it would need concerted effort by local government leaders, other groups and institutions that could work with the community to address caste and gender related issues slowly. It may be the right focus of policy-makers, but if it seems to come in the way of the heart of the policy, which is education, maybe this should be dealt with simultaneously but by other supportive groups (NGOs or other organisations).

Community participation therefore seems to be advantageous if the local-level educational leadership is aware of the policy and its role, and is familiar with the procedures involved in gaining access to government in order to keep it accountable to what was promised. Any person within the management structure playing their role and taking on the responsibilities of other members may usurp power and reduce other members to puppet status. If the heart of the policy is kept in mind, it may be necessary to introduce community slowly into other areas of governance.

### **4.9 Policy implications**

Analysing the case studies and critically reviewing the themes that have emerged, I will now present my understanding and views on implementation of policy practice, with specific focus on community involvement in decision-making.

## **Power**

With debates of participatory development and participation in recent years, practitioners and scholars have echoed the issue of power in explaining the ineffectiveness of participatory governance (Cleaver, 2001; Williams, 2004; Wampler, 2012; Newig, Voß and Monstadt, 2013). The issue of power also appeared to predominate in both the case studies. In Case Study 1, we saw the power of the head teacher in influencing the attitudes of the community, the SMC and the school. Although I questioned the power that seemed to be held back from the SMC members, which left questionable the goals of SSA in achieving community participation, gender and social equality in SMC representation and power assumed by members in making decisions within the SMC, it may also be necessary to consider how this power may have been handled by the committee members. Issues of gender and caste discrimination, along with issues of access to meaningful training for committee members, could lead to power struggles in management decisions that further affect the success of policy implementation. The formal and informal power held by various actors within the SMC and genders varied in the way they used them to achieve their goals. Empowerment, if focused on the particulars of power struggles faced by the village, may be able to strengthen the voice of the actors. This kind of focused empowerment, if absent, can begin to stagnate the abilities of individuals, which can in turn affect their interest and ability to perform their roles. At the point of the study, selective inclusion that strengthen existing social issues seems institutionalised in the village.

As Giddens (1984) suggests, school governance may be a political activity as it deals with allocation and distribution of resources, while dealing with professionals in government and lay people in communities who may have their own views on governance. Power relations between actors who may be involved varies from village to village and may depend on the development of the community, issues of caste, the interest and support from community and local leaders, and NGO involvement. Power relations therefore hold a central position in understandings of practice and the process involved in implementation in all the levels of the management structure. This makes it a complex issue, making aspects such as deploying resources problematic (Sayed, 2002). Power struggles seem apparent between the local-level educational leaders and the head teachers, government/political actors and their 'tight fistedness' in distributing power around the decentralised set-up. This might encourage a long bureaucratic process of decision-making and may disallow community participation in decision-making within the management structure as also discussed in sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.3. Although a great deal of the literature addresses participation of communities and the marginalised in local-level educational leadership, there might be a need to understand the deviations of participation (such as power and exclusion)

moving through the management institution prescribed by the government (Sneddon and Fox, 2007).

### ***Head teacher***

In comparison to the second village, the influence of the head teacher in Village 1 significantly stood out in: ensuring community participation; mediating between the government and community and SMC members themselves; training and development; and ensuring quality education and so on. It may not be an easy task to deal with issues within the school, its development, socio-cultural issues in the communities and working with a group of members (SMC, PTA, SSA management structure) with varying values and agendas, while attempting to meet SSA's goals in the village. This may be one of the reasons why head teachers resort to making decisions by themselves rather than working their way through issues and political structure within the community and management structure. The transformative capacities that seem to be the underlying requirement of the head teacher may be hard to ensure in every head teacher who is employed.

Could there be space for more than one person in the community or local-level leadership or other organisations that work closely with the community (NGOs, youth club, self-help groups) to share this responsibility? In developing the capacities of SMC members and training them in undertaking responsibilities and making decisions in areas that may be unfamiliar to them, sharing the responsibility may be possible. I would agree with the head teacher in Case Study 1 that on-the-job training may be important, yet training offered by the educational department may be equally important to ensure the right information is disseminated in a correct and consistent manner. Involvement of NGOs and other groups in supporting the head teacher through addressing issues of caste, gender and so on may be helpful, as it may share the burden of his/her responsibilities. When such responsibilities are shared, the head teacher may have the room to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning within the school and the administrative aspects as well. NGOs and other groups who specialise in dealing with socio-economic issues may be better prepared to handle these issues in a sensitive manner. They will also be able to act as an outsider in dealing with issues that transpire between members, taking the burden away from the head teacher.

### ***Social and cultural barriers***

In rural sections of developing nations, there tends to be many socio-cultural issues in the way of new policies being introduced. Unfortunately, in large nations where evaluation and monitoring may also be an issue, policy-makers may not be in a position to consider all the likely socio-

cultural deep-rooted issues and constraints when policy decisions are made with incomplete information and/or reports that they rely on for decision-making.

Traditions, values and practices that are followed by communities for many generations may be hard to change such as gender and caste issues, and it may be important for policy-makers to be more aware of decisions made at international, national and local levels. This could assist in giving higher priority to issues within the community and the stakeholders in generating knowledge (Mncube, 2007) for example, tokenistic positions held by women and those from lower castes, which policy makers could ensure they consider.

Encouraging community participation in local-level educational leadership may not be an easy proposition, as democratic participation may also be embedded in how people see themselves in relation to others (SMC members view of head teacher or CRCC and vice versa), the appropriateness and legitimacy in decision-making (head teachers making decisions on financial deployment or the process of selection of SMC members), how authority and responsibility is viewed, and in the culture of relating to formal and informal organisations. These could be threatening to local-level educational leaders in the villages. Unravelling and rebuilding political organisations and management structures may not be the only solution to be pursued by government, but also pre-conditioning communities before democratic implementation and participation in local-level educational leadership is asked of them (Barber, 1984). There needs to be more focus on the process of change and recognition of informed methods to identify how best to introduce and implement the reform. Change can only happen when there is a true change in the minds, hearts and attitudes of both the leaders and the community before the policy is introduced (Cooper, 1998).

### ***Resource***

Availability of resources in a developing nation, especially to cater to the rural section where access, safety and comforts are limited, may be difficult. The requests and needs of all the communities also vary. A dearth of teachers is one of the main issues that compromise quality education. Two teachers attending to three grades in the same room throughout the day on a daily basis may be a common problem in rural Odisha.

With SSA mandating a primary school in every village and considering the number of children who need elementary education in each village, it may be unreasonable to have a single teacher to teach each grade. Ensuring access may be essential but if the funds allocated for salaries of teachers are channelled into transporting children from two to three villages to attend a school within a close proximity, this problem may be reduced. Although the dynamics of community

participation may be affected, the issue of access to quality education, the primary focus of the policy could be largely ensured. Local-level leaders in collaboration with community members may be able to work out a management, monitoring and evaluation structure to support their plan.

Access to training for local-level educational committee members, presidents of the committees, the *Sarpanch* and so on does not seem feasible. One of the most common reasons encountered in the study was the need to travel and attend training for whole days, which does not seem to motivate them as they are more focused on their wage for the day that they might have to forego. It might be possible to have many more members attend the training if the resource person (CRCC) takes the training to the village and conducts it there. Knowledge of the policy and details of roles, power and basic rights they have access to might give local-level educational leaders in the community level more confidence. Also, if training is tailored to the needs of the local-level educational leaders in the community and the issues that surround the community that the CRCC may be aware of, it might lead to better and more effective participation.

### ***Governmental support***

At the moment, there does not appear enough space in the management process for community participation in local-level educational leadership. Creating a deliberative space in every level of the management structure may be important, as it could foster mediation between the government and the communities. Currently, the changes in the management structure – inclusion of extra members on standing committees and inclusion of standing committees at every level of the management structure – create a longer bureaucratic process that each decision will pass through. It is also a more complex process that would delay implementation and increase power struggles within and between each stage of the management structure. Democratisation and meaningful participation of community members in this situation may be minimal.

The urgency of the reform is felt with the efforts for the nation to attain its goals within the stipulated period of time. It may be important to understand that change most importantly takes time. Intertwining such important educational goals through community participation in leadership to such a large extent in contexts with deep-rooted socio-economic issues may be difficult and complex. It might be easier to include community participation in local-level educational leadership in a simpler and less challenging way, with fewer responsibilities, and gradually to build their progress in their level of participation while the government and other supportive organisations simultaneously work on socio-cultural issues that may affect these communities.



***Conclusion***

From the above reflections on the changes to the model after considering community participation in local-level educational leadership and on the effects on policy practice, I can confidently state the following. Local-level educational leadership at the community level, and policy-making and practice are convoluted and therefore policy implementation through democratic decision-making and governance in and through communities may be hugely complex. Even if this may have been largely explored over the years through research, participation remains a contested concept, especially in local-level educational leadership (Sneddon and Fox, 2007). Policy-makers and policy funders seem to continue mandating community participation in policy implementation. It may be easy to blame national and local governments for the limited success in their ability to achieve effective democratic governance, but it may be crucial also to consider support systems for policy-makers and funders in easing the attempts of nations in implementing these policies. I will now attempt to raise a few issues that I think policy-makers could consider to assist in making implementation more practical.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions

The final chapter interprets the issues and gaps in community participation at local-level educational leadership within the policy implementation process that have been identified in Chapter 4, in order to answer the four research questions. Through examination of the empirical case studies and the conceptual model, there is a deeper understanding of some aspects of community participation in local-level educational leadership in the Indian rural context. Recommendations that could be considered and further researched will be detailed for each level of the policy governance structure, including national level, which will also answer the fourth research question. Enumerating the conceptual and empirical contributions of this research to knowledge will follow. The chapter will conclude with reflections of my journey over the past three years.

### 5.1 Answering the research questions

#### 5.1.1 To what extent are rural and tribal communities involved in the implementation process of SSA, particularly in local-level educational leadership?

With the systematic changes in administration, finance and management since SSA was introduced, active involvement of community-based bodies was expected to increase teacher accountability and the whole school functioning process. This study suggests that the process of establishing these bodies and developing their capacities for effective functioning does not seem sufficient. The empowerment of illiterate community members in marginalised sections of the society, to be educated and stimulated to create substantial organisational changes, appears insufficient. At the village level, there seems to be involvement of community representatives in local-level educational leadership predominantly in two functions: mobilising parents to ensure children are enrolled into school, and monitoring and/or involvement in the preparation of midday meals. Participation of local-level educational leadership in decisions regarding infrastructure, follow-up of requests for resources, ensuring quality education, monitoring teachers' attendance, financial control and deployment, and representation in higher levels of the management structure appear to continue to follow cultural and/or governmental systems that reinforce existing forms of power and privilege. This has resulted more in representation than participation in committees, and may have caused a more quasi-legalistic sense, where the most powerful actors define the involvement and performance of roles of community members at each stage. Community members/*Sarpanch* are elected/selected to represent the community on standing committees, but their involvement or contribution may be limited to what they are

asked to report by the head teacher or the male member of the family, in the case of the women holding tokenistic positions. Little or no further contribution is made towards the issues discussed and decisions made, either because the representatives are ill informed of the problems, or due to power differences between them and the government officials and experts who are part of the standing committees. Thus, community members are physically present/community represented but participation, that is, involvement and contribution to decision-making, may be low or non-existent. In this situation, mere representation of community members on standing committees is accepted as inclusion by government officials, and it may be reported to evaluators/policy makers that community participation is achieved.

Government efforts to ensure community inclusion at every stage of local-level educational leadership, including District and State level, seems absent, as seen in the revised functions of SMC (Appendix A) and democratic management structure (Figure 4.1, 5.1). This makes it a neo-democratic structure (Piazza, 1015), a situation where conflicts within and between interest groups at the different levels of the management structure could lead to constrained forms of democratic engagement. An example is the conflict caused due to identity that could influence beliefs about policy and community participation. Although the government has the responsibility to ensure the maximum participation of community members by creating conditions and opportunities, efforts towards ensuring participation seems neglected, leaving community members, especially the marginalised within the villages, with little confidence to be involved. Power struggles between members on standing committees are evident, and when they are not addressed, inequalities and exclusion become institutionalised within a structure that ought to be working towards inclusion. The issues that confront access to primary education for children, such as physical, social and economic facilities, seem similar for community participation in local-level educational leadership as well. This has not been adequately recognised and addressed, giving little space for community members to take on their roles as local-level educational leaders.

The extent of inclusion appears to be largely in the form of representation, with participation only in aspects that may not require decision-making. The government's neglect of fostering effective involvement of community members, and therefore inclusion, can be referred to as tokenistic at the community level. Here, a few interested and confident members voluntarily become involved in implementation and decision-making, giving scope for power to be concentrated in a few members of the community.

The extent of involvement of community members at State and District government level, the *panchayat*, *gram panchayat* and the community level, is depicted in diagrammatic form below.

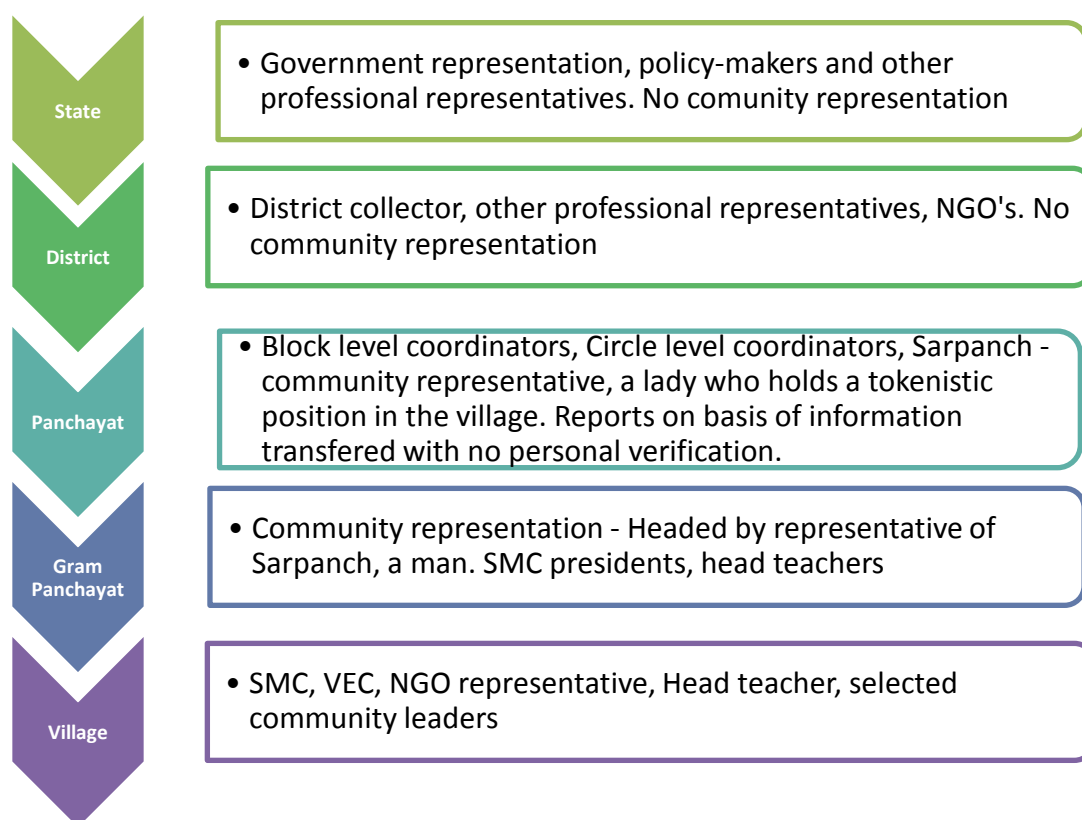


Figure 5.1 Extent of involvement of community members at different levels of the management structure

### 5.1.2 Are there groups/members of the rural community who are less active in or excluded from the decision-making process of SSA?

Exclusion, in this context, is viewed from the perspective of community members as being *in the process* but not being *part of the process*, where they are not actively involved in local-level educational leadership. Community members are seen to be included in the process, according to the framework of the management structure, but their inclusion is mostly seen only at the time of election/selection of members to the various committees, in the documentations required for official records and at District-level committee meetings. In areas where monitoring appears inadequate or absent, such as in the village, at *gram panchayat* or even at *panchayat* level, exclusion of members is not uncommon. At District level, where final decisions may be made based on the requests and feedback from the community, exclusion of community representation is observed. Similar to representation and participation discussed in section 5.1.1, at the community level this shows the scope for exclusion in the framework, despite its intention to include community members. It also reflects the lack of power and related power struggles within the community between SMC members and between the various levels of the implementation structure. This may be one of the main reasons for community members to be less active.

Members belonging to the SC community who are traditionally not included in important tasks, positions of power and in decision-making seem to remain with the same status, although they may be part of the SMC. This is observed in the importance SCs are lent by the ST members who are also part of the committee. Women appear to face a similar situation when they are part of the committee or are elected to take up a position of power in the understanding that their position is tokenistic and that the role will be played by a male member. Such socio-cultural issues of caste and gender that affect representation may be intended to be addressed through the policy framework, but do not seem strong enough to cause the intended change. These issues are deep-rooted and cannot be solved through a spill-over effect of addressing primary education or issuing community involvement in educational leadership.

Some of the SC members seem to be active in addressing issues of enrolment but restricted to operate within their caste. They do not seem to be included by the other caste members and therefore show little interest in the responsibilities that their role as SMC/VEC members require of them. In this sense, marginalised individuals/groups seem to exclude themselves, unable to withstand the power of social exclusion. Among the male members in the SMC committee, the more literate, economically and socially powerful members have a stronger position to voice their opinion and be heard. Despite this privilege, they do not appear to be interested in aspects other than those that involve financial decisions and control. This may be another example of people excluding themselves from meaningful participation in SMC roles.

Head teachers who appear to be accountable to the government for policy implementation at village level, and who also deal with socio-cultural barriers to community participation in local-level educational leadership, tend explicitly or implicitly to exclude SMC members. Getting SMC members who are illiterate and have little confidence to be involved meaningfully could be time consuming. Such exclusion may also happen when views on the community are different from an educated professional's view. Decisions are therefore still made by the more powerful actors within the system. Power and power struggles appear to be addressed, but continue to exist, maintaining the gap between the powerful and less powerful. Democratic governance in these cases is conceptually present but actively absent. Although community members are elected into the process, the avenues made available for their leadership contribution to ensuring SSA's implementation in the village do not seem sufficient to state that they are part of the process.

### **5.1.3 What is the nature of response in terms of accountability procedures and support from the government made available to the community in supporting policy implementation?**

An important barrier to the decentralisation process could be the lack of capacity that may be needed to carry out the roles and responsibilities envisaged at the different levels of the management structure. This includes education administrators and resource persons at the Cluster, Block and District levels. Less-developed states that have a large population are noted to have wider gaps in capacity, and therefore fall back in progress not only because of size but also because of the higher levels of social and economic inequality. This may have reduced the level of accountability that government officials have towards their jobs and caused similar degrees of accountability to percolate down to the head teachers and teachers at village level (UNESCO, 2014).

From discussions in Chapter 2, we have concluded that decision-making is central to policy and that policy decisions are largely political, which is also supported by the empirical study. SSA has political and professional leaders directly involved in its governance and management. The decentralised implementation process of SSA imply powers to be distributed but, with political leadership and control, political pressures and change in governments may have caused powers to remain at the higher levels, especially in decision-making. Such political action does not appear to be recognised by the local- and village-level leaders, as roles and responsibilities in the management structure may be concealed with power, but soft-power that limits the ability of those at the lower levels of the management structure to make the final decisions. In this respect, political decisions regarding decentralisation appear largely to contradict political action. However, communities, especially those that are marginalised and that have little experience of policy implementation and related powers, may not recognise such discrepancies in the system to question or hold the government accountable. An understanding of accountability is one of the key factors in democratic governance systems, as one the main reasons to have communities involved in local-level educational leadership is to hold actors and the government accountable for the services that they are to provide. Holding to account here refers to resources being sources and provided to meet the needs of communities and when it is not, the community being able to question actors/leaders on the delayed or non-provision. It refers to the confidence of community members to do so without being afraid of the power of those in the top level of the management structure. It refers to the knowledge of community members to know what and who they should approach for various issues. Similarly, the community members being accountable for their input in implementing the policy. With limited understanding and skills developed through training to recognise and manage discrepancies, a fundamental gap of the role of the State in

ensuring community participation and ensuring inclusion is seen. Contributions to decisions and evaluation can therefore be more limited and present conditions that can mislead future decision making. Further, power differences are maintained and those in power can continue to satisfy their personal agendas, while the less powerful continue to exist in marginalised conditions with little improvement. Ambiguous roles and responsibilities of the District and Block-level government officials could be reasons for accountability to be passed from one person/department to the other, making it difficult to hold particular people responsible. This could be another reason why the nature of response from the government takes a long period of time or is ignored.

The one obvious accountability procedure that may not only be clearly visible but also appear to be effective, to a large extent, is the open access of community members to the District government officials. Although it takes a few visits from community member representatives, they seem to receive a positive response to their direct requests to committees at the various levels that have either neglected or delayed action. But communities might pursue SMC requests for the school only when there are motivated members in active SMCs. Governmental responses are at times made with good intentions using the available resources, for example para teachers. The government could be commended for its decision to provide interim solutions, but it does not anticipate unintended consequences. When solutions to the problem cannot be achieved, there is not much action taken to improve the quality of the para teachers to impact educational quality, in turn. Rural communities may not recognise aspects of quality change but accept interim solutions as permanent ones, and therefore not hold the government accountable for the same. It could be argued that one of the reasons for difficulty in achieving SSAs goals as envisaged by governments and policy-makers may be because of the less effective democratic management structure, coupled with poor governance; that is, failure in making the system more active, transparent and accountable (Abers, 1996).

## 5.2 Recommendations

### 5.2.1 What is required of policy-makers and the government to improve participation of the communities in the roles conceived for them in SSA?

With the intention of providing a wide and convergent decentralised planning and implementation framework with the Central and State government initiatives in elementary education since 2002 to date, SSA has undergone two phases. In Phase 1, from 2002 to 2005, the linkage between school and community was the focus. To support this were the following: District annual plans to work through a bottom-up approach; planning, implementing and monitoring of



inputs; linkages through VECs; and systems for school level monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. Phase 2 from 2005 showed significant improvement in equity targets, but additional efforts were required to meet the goals of SSA. Therefore, the focus was shifted to retention, equitable access and quality, and the programme was extended until 2012. In 2009, after the Right to Education Act was passed, the report produced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development was used to broaden the SSA framework. The management structure was integrated with the State education structure in a few states, therefore many partnerships with Civil Society Organisations were established (Sekar et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2014).

One of the main concerns that we have seen above is the frequency of changes involved in short periods of time. We have discussed the changing nature of the State and the politicised governance in India in Chapter 1 – that such changes accompany changes in political goals that affect education, democracy and the power that is distributed within democratic governance. In rural villages, where the establishment of an institution and mobilising the community and children have their own challenges, keeping up with policy reform changes without neglecting previous decisions and initiatives of SSA could be impossible. Such changes would mean there are new goals to achieve. Considering the progress of SSA so far, it seems to have taken a decade to improve financial control, administration and management in schools (more in some states than others). With expenditure changing with alterations to priorities that may be inevitable, there may be sections of society left with unmet needs (UNESCO, 2014). From the research, we can see that the focus in Phase 1 (planning, implementation and monitoring of inputs) has not been sufficiently established in villages, while there has been a shift to improving quality improvement. While the establishment of village-level monitoring through community participation and through the BRCC, which falls under the first phase, was still weak, the school had to shift its focus to quality education. The period of change could lead to uncertainty while dismantling administrative structures of previous decisions and bringing in new ones. For example, with the Right to Education Act passed in 2009, there was a requirement to bring in transformative changes in a short period of time, and in 2014 the expansion of SMC and the establishment of standing committees at every level of the management structure seems to have caused unrest in the existing system. The adaptability of implementers, specifically community members, to changes in goals and systems of implementation could lead to ambiguity in goals and systems. While dealing with and adapting to systemic changes, achieving policy goals may be difficult. This kind of unrest, ambiguity and changes within a changing society is expected but governments and leaders have not been able to manage them

My recommendation for the national level government and policy-makers is first to reconsider the uniform goals set for all sections of the society to be achieved within a limited timeframe. It

may be important to set a timeframe to achieve goals, but in marginalised sections of society introducing a new system with the changing nature of the State and political goals may involve dealing with socio-cultural barriers as well as the challenge of implementing plans with limited resources, even if enough funds are available. These sections of the society may benefit from ongoing targeted support, therefore a different set of timeframes to achieve the planned objectives may be helpful. National governments may also have to consider whether previous policy decisions are achieved before new priorities are introduced by policy makers and/or political leaders, unless the need to change existing decisions is clarified. Although this might be the most desirable, it may not be possible within a neoliberal governance and political goals may not always be publicised. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place by national government and policy evaluators in order to check if previous decisions are established and can run parallel to the new decisions. New decisions are made to strengthen and move forward, otherwise may be useless and be a waste of resources. To ensure against this, it is important for the State to have a complete and clear understanding of the goals. For example, ensuring universal enrolment as one of the goals cannot assume that mechanisms for retention are in place. This gives room for drop-outs to be neglected and for local governments to give a report of universal enrolment in their villages without taking into account the number of drop-outs. These reports may be further used to make decisions on new priorities to be achieved. State governments should have accountability procedures at each level of their decentralised system to monitor such gaps.

At State level, government has to confront several issues related to implementation as it is intertwined with the circumstances, political, economic and social, in which the State is in at the time the policy has to be implemented (Lall, 2007). One of the main issues is the availability of human resources. Although my research has not collected data on issues surrounding teacher resources, I use the example of para teachers as, although it may be a sensible decision, it may have unintended consequences that need to be resolved. It is therefore proving a point that, although governments may bring in solutions, they may also have to be prepared to evaluate and modify the solutions periodically. The dearth of trained teachers willing to teach in remote sections is being addressed by allocating para teachers (Kingdon et al, 2013), yet this has caused the goal of quality education to be compromised, as para teachers are not trained to teach and most of them have no more than a 10<sup>th</sup> grade school certificate. Although the communities may be satisfied with the teachers available in the school, as opposed to a school with no teachers, the State may continue to have a problem in recruiting trained teachers. This problem has continued without a solution in many parts of the country (Colclough et al., 2010). I would recommend that para teachers are trained in pedagogy and given continued support by the government through

the CRCCs who are responsible for pedagogical improvements and improving educational quality. This leads me on the next issue of roles and responsibilities, and the related power struggle. The clarity of roles, responsibilities and the power specifications that enables one to carry out the task effectively could be recommended for clarification by State government and included in the management structure. The absence of this role clarity, which has been discussed in the previous chapter, appears to be an important aspect for neglect in accomplishing the responsibilities, causing issues of accountability and an inability to issue checks and controls when required. Changes in the state brought in by changing leaders, actors who move in and out of the process and new political agendas being interwoven into the policy goals are inevitable but the focus still needs to be on meeting educational goals. Without a reference point to specified roles, responsibilities and power, it may be impossible for evaluators and monitors to hold anyone accountable. Those responsible for implementation may pass on the onus to other actors without taking responsibility. Ensuring mutual accountability between community members and government officials may be a way forward but to do so, issues of power have to be addressed.

One of the significant issues faced at District level is the weak system for monitoring and evaluation. The weakness in the system may have been exacerbated by the power struggles as well as the lack of role clarity. The system of monitoring and evaluation seems to have many loopholes within the system and with those responsible for the same. National and State level checks on these systems, conducted both by funding organisations and the educational department, and empirical studies, have recommended ways to improve the monitoring and evaluation at District, Block and community levels. Soft powers (or tokenistic powers) are to be replaced with actual positional powers when it comes to major decision-making, ensuring that powers do not overlap while powers are devolved to various committees, as it may nullify the effects of devolution.

The idea that community participation in local-level education leadership will lead to greater quality and efficiency in schools may be a tall order, yet it seems to have popular appeal. The move to depoliticise education may not work unless the community is given democratic authority to enable effective implementation (Gutmann and Ben-Porath, 1987). Committees at the lower levels of the management structure should have the prerogative to take decisions in respect of finances, future plans and quality control. Strengthening the decentralised process, starting at community level, could increase the effectiveness of community involvement. Community members, as leaders in the political system of governance, need to be sufficiently empowered and capacities built to enforce their political rights. These also contribute to their interest level, which could otherwise dip. Empowerment, I think should be one of the main goals where community members have enough and updated information regarding policy and those involved,

the confidence to approach and question actors within the community and within the management structure, the ability to plan, mobilise and act. A mutual responsibility and accountability process to be developed. Through training, the government at all levels has planned this strengthening of community participation, but we see that training is inaccessible and inconvenient for those in the community. It is also insufficient, as it includes three days of training for an entire year. In order to make it effective, I recommend that training be taken to the people in their communities on a regular basis, possibly after every evaluation and when changes are introduced by the State. This would also enable contextualisation of the training to the needs of the community, taking into consideration the various socio-cultural issues. This would give opportunities for more participation (Mncube, 2007) and the changes brought in by the State, intertwined in discussions and decisions at the local level. Decentralised processes that provide autonomy to the communities should be understood by communities, giving them the freedom to plan and incorporate changes in a manner that is helpful to achieving the policy goals in the community. The key goal of empowerment of marginalised groups for effective community participation can be included. This would help increase their status and power to contribute meaningfully (Mncube, 2007).

With the head teacher taking on all the responsibilities of engaging the community in SSA's implementation process, dealing with socio-cultural barriers to successful implementation of SSAs goals, school development, resource management and ensuring quality education for the children is seen to induce pressure and therefore compromise the achievement of the goals, and resort to malpractice in order to please the government. Suggestions to improve this condition would be to collaborate with external organisations such as NGOs, educational advisors such as NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) and other professional institutions that have already collaborated with the State or District government to support SSA being implemented. However, the State and District have not made use of their expertise. If socio-cultural issues are addressed by NGOs, and issues of pedagogy and training are researched and handled by educational professionals along with the District officers, procedural and structural issues are shared by professionals. These can advise and contribute to the same, so head teachers can focus on quality education and play a watchdog role (UNICEF, 2015).

### **5.3 Contributions made by this research**

This is the first in-depth study of community participation in SSA's implementation process, specifically in local-level educational leadership, that has been conducted in Orissa. The study makes an empirical and theoretical contribution to enrich the understanding of the complexities and gaps in this regard.

*Empirical contribution*

The study involved District-level and Block-level government officials, who might benefit from the outcomes of the study. They may be able to use the recommendations to improve their management, monitoring and evaluation processes. This might enable them to identify the gaps within the process currently being followed.

The community-level leadership (SMC/VEC members), head teachers and those who took part in the focus group may be able to reflect on the discussions, as there were aspects of the school, their involvement and governmental support that emerged through the interviews and discussions. This was a valuable time when they all had truly been given an opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts on the current process. Especially the women who were elected as a leader but held only a tokenistic position, they were able to see the weaknesses and the kind of suppression they were under, and to understand the legalities of their position and the responsibilities that were being ignored because of their tokenistic position. The local NGO was able to witness the kinds of work that they could be involved in to improve the present condition of community participation, in order to improve the quality of education for the marginalised communities they have been working with for a few decades.

While the results from the study may not be generalisable to every marginalised community, the evidence from literature and the research study may suggest that there are many marginalised communities worldwide facing similar issues with democratic participation. Thus, the evidence may prove useful to policy-makers, policy evaluators, government planners and those issuing checks and controls at local level, to strengthen the implementation process and to work out better ways of involving communities to be part of the local-level leadership within the implementation process. It makes suggestions to empower both people and systems.

The lack of empirical studies to gain an in-depth knowledge of ground realities in such complex processes and contexts reveals the importance and usefulness of the same to those at the higher level of the management structure. The study illustrates in detail how the tight network between national, State and local-level implementers, planners and evaluators may need to be necessarily held together through the period of implementation. The usefulness of involving local organisations may be able to strengthen the process with an expert perspective and skill.

*Theoretical contribution*

The study makes a contribution to theory through the conceptualised new model of the process of policy implementation that was framed after reviewing literature on policy and political models of policy processes. It extends the theory in different ways to show the complex processes

involved that took into account the gaps that each of the other theories did not consider, specifically decision-making by local-level educational leaders in the policy implementation process. In this way it develops previous theories.

The study, though small in scale, has been able to answer the research questions that gave rise to some of the major issues that may curtail community involvement at both the local and national level. The data in relation to the new model were verified and adjustments made to indicate the changes that take place within an implementation process when communities are involved. It helped to identify the strengths and weakness of communities and governments that further enabled recommendation to rise from it.

Many scholars have suggested empowerment through training and the importance of deploying resources and power. However, the findings from this study were able to bring new dimensions of how to put this into practice effectively within specific contexts. Contexts and situations are different, even within a country, but the study has been able to prove that through collaboration and in-depth analysis of the situation, tailored systems may be made possible to achieve successful implementation and ensure that marginalised communities also benefit from policy.

The evidence also indicates that there are limitations. The recommendations could be considered through further empirical studies on the influence of socio-cultural beliefs in policy implementation, and the influence of political agendas on policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation in remote sections of society and so on, in order to be used in different contexts in similar situations and communities.

### **5.4 Reflection on my research journey**

Embarking on a three-year research journey has been rewarding and challenging at the same time. I briefly bring to you my experience of research productivity and evaluation of my experience in enhancing my research skills and thinking. As an international student who has over 10 years of work experience in the specific area of research I have now undertaken, I brought along my strongly preconceived notions about democracy, community participation and political influences in developmental efforts in marginalised sections of society. Although my passion for the socio-economic development of the marginalised through education spurred this research, the same passion along with my preconceived notions acted as both a barrier and a benefit, specifically with regard to the democratic process of local-level policy implementation that I assumed would ensure the education and inclusion of the marginalised.

Being an educator, I did not doubt the need to develop further skills, but it was shocking to recognise the extent of my own beliefs, thinking and writing skills that had to change in order to take a reasonably neutral position to reduce researcher's bias, and to view the problem and issues surrounding it from a broader perspective, and to express them in an academic language that is not normative. In retrospect, this was the biggest challenge, as I recognise that such changes have required an attitudinal shift. Skills such as critical thinking, contributing to scholarship, working individually and time management gradually developed in the first year and developed more rapidly in the latter stages of the research. This was apparent more specifically from the time of data collection, as most of what was learnt and developed was put to practice, which has led to an increased confidence as an academic as well. A good relationship with the supervisor who challenged my thinking and writing ability from the beginning has steadily supported and enabled my growth. Critically engaging with theory and contextualising my ideas/theories to fit what is practised in order to derive answers to my research has been the most rewarding experience. It took me several trials of working out the best way to work with literature and to process information. This was the point when I recognised that the passion towards the subject being researched helped me stay motivated and focused.

This research has taught me that the contribution to knowledge may be small, through every piece of research. It can and will be contested by many, but may often be the way to know what the problem may need in order to understand and address it. At every point of the research when I thought there was no way forward were points when ideas expanded, as there was a need to explore the issues with various views and methods. Peer-to peer support in talking through my research and being a part of the PhD community, without isolating myself, has enriched and shaped my thinking.





## Appendix A Revised composition and functions of SMC

### GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA SCHOOL & MASS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

#### NOTIFICATION

Bhubaneswar dtd. the 30-7-14

**Sub : Revised Guidelines on composition and function of School Management Committee.**

**No.IISME(B)45/2014/16485/SME** -As per the provisions under Section-21 of the RCFCE Act 2009, a School Management Committee shall be constituted in every school other than an un-aided school. Rule-3 of the Odisha Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010 indicates the composition and function of the School Management Committee. Govt., after careful consideration have decided that the following revised guidelines shall be followed for composition and function of School Management Committee in Govt./Govt. Aided, Primary and Upper Primary Schools of the State.

#### **1. Constitution of a Standing Committee on Education:**

The existing Standing Committee of the Grama Panchayat/ N.A.C/ Municipality/Municipal Corporation will be co-opted as the Standing Committee on Education.

#### **1.1 Constitution of Standing Committee on Education:**

- i. The Ward Member / Councilor/ Corporator of the concerned ward where the school exists shall be the members. In case a school caters to more than one ward then the Ward Members / Councilors/ Corporators of those wards shall be the members.
- ii. The Sarapanch/Chairman/Mayor of the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation shall be the Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
- iii. The Naib-Sarapanch/ Vice-Chairman/ Deputy Mayor shall be the Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
- iv. Elected Samiti Member of the Grama Panchayat shall be co-opted as Co-Chairman

- v. The Executive Officer of the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation shall be the member-convener.
- vi. The Head Master/Head Mistress (HM)s of all schools of the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation and School Management Committee (SMC) Chairpersons shall be the members.
- vii. One Educationist (preferably one eminent retired teacher) shall be nominated by the B.E.O in consultation with Sarapanch/Chairman/Mayor. In case of non-availability, a person having minimum 5-7 years of experiences / expertise in the field of education shall be selected as a member of the Standing Committee.
- viii. One member from educational background or from NGO or from Youth Club shall be nominated by the Block Education Officer of the concerned Block.
- ix. The Head / President of the Grama Panchayat Mission Shakti Federation shall be a member.
- x. One Health Worker nominated by Medical Officer as invitee member.
- xi. One Anganwadi Worker nominated by C.D.P.O as Member
- xii. The G.P./NAC/Municipal area headquarter CRCC shall coordinate with the Executive Officer for convening the Standing Committee meeting. If there are more than one CRCC in the G.P., these CRCCs shall be the members of the Standing Committee.

#### **1.2. Function of the Standing Committee on Education at G.P.:**

- i. The Standing Committee, as local authority shall look after the development activities in the area of school education, health, sanitation, public works etc. in the jurisdiction of G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation.
- ii. The Sarapanch/Chairman/Mayor or 02 representatives shall be present in PTA meeting for SMC constitution in all Govt. and Govt. aided schools.
- iii. It shall periodically facilitate and review the implementation of the Annual Work Plans of schools within the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation area and wherever possible provide necessary support.
- iv. The Standing Committee of the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation shall sit at least once in every three months in the academic year for the purpose of exchange of information and co-ordination. 02 members from SMC i.e. the Head Master and the Chairperson of all schools within the G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation shall attend the said meeting.

In the event of death or transfer of residence of Parent members from the local area of the school or a parent member ceasing to be student guardian for his/her child/children ward (s) leaving the school or otherwise, his/her membership shall cease.

All the parents shall be automatically the members of the Parent Teacher Association by virtue of the admission of their ward(s).

### 2.3. Function of PTA:

- i) PTA meeting shall be convened at least twice in a year (preferable March & Last week of June). It may be more as per the need of the school. The HM shall be the convenor.
- ii) The Head Master shall explain the powers, the functions, the role and the responsibility of the Parent Teacher Association to all parents.
- iii) Every Parent Teacher Association shall take decisions with regard to raising of Contribution in shape of kind only which in its opinion is required for the development of school infrastructure with the resolution of the SMC. Contribution in any kind shall not entail any liability on the part of the school / Govt.
- iv) In case of High school having elementary section, PTA may accept contribution for welfare of the school.
- v) It shall be lawful for the Parent Teacher Association to accept contribution from anybody or any organization in kind only.
- vi) The PTA shall elect / select the SMC members for constitution of SMC.
- vii) Head Master shall issue a receipt in **Form-II (copy enclosed)** as a token of receipt of the kinds.
- viii) The minutes of the meeting shall be recorded by the Head Master in the Minutes Book in **Form-III (copy enclosed)** in a separate register and signed by all the members of Parent Teacher Association present and countersigned by the Chairman.
- ix) PTA shall discuss the day-to-day progress and requirement of the school and bring it to the notice of Standing Committee through SMC.

## **2. PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA).**

### **2.1. Constitution:**

- i. PTA is a committee to be comprised of all the teachers and parents of the students of the school.
- ii. 40% of the total members shall constitute quorum for the Parent Teacher Association meetings.
- iii. The Head Master/Head Mistress of the school shall convene the PTA meeting in consultation with the CRCC and Standing Committee of the G.P./NAC/Municipality/Municipal Corporation by giving one week's notice to all parents sent through their wards returned duly attested by parents.
- iv. CRCC shall finalize the date of PTA meeting of the schools within his jurisdiction and submit the same to Standing Committee.
- v. One Nodal officer from the office of the B.E.O. shall attend the meeting.
- vi. At least two elected members of Standing Committee of G.P./NAC/ Municipality/Municipal Corporation (i.e. preferably Sarapanch/Chairman/Mayor or his representative and any one member) shall attend the P.T.A. meeting.
- vii. One register shall be maintained for the registration of parents and teachers in Form-I (Copy enclosed)
- viii. The HM shall convey the role and function of the PTA in the PTA meeting.
- ix. The Parent Teacher Association in each of its meetings shall select one of its members as the Chairperson to preside over the meeting. The Head Master shall conduct selection by show of hands. The time of the meeting shall be decided as per the convenience of the parents.

### **2.2. Membership:**

Only those parents whose children are studying in the school can become SMC members having voting Rights .They cease to be members once child is out of the school. The mothers shall be encouraged to participate in the PTA meeting. However, only one of the parents has the right to vote. The PTA shall elect / select the members of the School Management Committee.





In the event of death or transfer of residence of Parent members from the local area of the school or a parent member ceasing to be student guardian for his/her child/children ward (s) leaving the school or otherwise, his/her membership shall cease.

All the parents shall be automatically the members of the Parent Teacher Association by virtue of the admission of their ward(s).

### 2.3. Function of PTA:

- i) PTA meeting shall be convened at least twice in a year (preferable March & Last week of June). It may be more as per the need of the school. The HM shall be the convenor.
- ii) The Head Master shall explain the powers, the functions, the role and the responsibility of the Parent Teacher Association to all parents.
- iii) Every Parent Teacher Association shall take decisions with regard to raising of Contribution in shape of kind only which in its opinion is required for the development of school infrastructure with the resolution of the SMC. Contribution in any kind shall not entail any liability on the part of the school / Govt.\
- iv) In case of High school having elementary section, PTA may accept contribution for welfare of the school.
- v) It shall be lawful for the Parent Teacher Association to accept contribution from anybody or any organization in kind only.
- vi) The PTA shall elect / select the SMC members for constitution of SMC.
- vii) Head Master shall issue a receipt in **Form-II (copy enclosed)** as a token of receipt of the kinds.
- viii) The minutes of the meeting shall be recorded by the Head Master in the Minutes Book in **Form-III (copy enclosed)** in a separate register and signed by all the members of Parent Teacher Association present and countersigned by the Chairman.
- ix) PTA shall discuss the day-to-day progress and requirement of the school and bring it to the notice of Standing Committee through SMC.

- x) The Association shall meet as often as necessary as but not less than two times in a year. The Head Master shall be the member-convenor.
- xi) It shall be the duty of the Association to oversee the functioning of the school with regard to the following matters from time to time :-
  - a) Ensuring universal access & enrolment.
  - b) Motivating regular attendance of the children of the school, their retention and effectively arresting dropouts.
  - c) Creating interest in the children for education by improving infrastructural facilities in school and the quality of teaching & ensuring attainment of primary objectives of universal enrolment & zero dropout rate.
  - d) Mobilization for collection of contributions/ funds for the school.

### 3. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SMC):

As per Section-21 of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 read with Rule-3 of Odisha Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules 2010 School Management Committee shall be constituted in every school other than an un-aided school.

#### 3.1. Composition of School Management Committee

High School having primary and upper primary school (i.e. Class I to X, Class VI to X, Class IV to X, Class-VIII to X) shall also constitute the SMC in addition to SMDC

3.1.1. The members of the School Management Committee shall be elected from among the members of the PTA. It shall consist of 19 members within its jurisdiction as per the following specification.

**(a) 12 (Twelve) parents members as described below,**

- i. Male members – 50% - out of which at least one should belong to SC/ST/disadvantaged groups community and one should belong to economically weaker section according to availability
- ii. Female members – 50%-Out of which at least one should belong to SC/ST/ disadvantaged groups community and one should belong to economically weaker section according to availability.

(b) The remaining 07 (seven) members of the Committee shall be from among the following persons.

▪ **Ex-Officio Members:**

- i. One member such as Ward Member / Councilor/Corporator of the Gram Panchayat / NAC / Municipality/Municipality Corporation in which the school exists
- ii. One Health Worker / Asha Karmi working in the village as member
- iii. One Anganwadi worker working in nearest centre as member
- iv. Headmaster / Headmaster I/C. of the concerned school as Member-Convenor

▪ **Nominated Members:**

- v. One member from among the teachers of the school to be decided by the teachers
- vi. Two student members i.e. Head of the Student Cabinet and Head of Meena Manch.

The member-convenor and the teacher member at (iv) and (v) shall have no voting power in any selection/election process. (Govt. functionaries who are ex-officio members shall not have voting rights)

3.1.2. To manage its affairs, the committee shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson from among the parents' members. Out of these two (Chairperson and Vice chairperson) at least one must be woman.

3.1.3. In the event of death or transfer of residence of parent members from the local area of the school or a parent member ceasing to be student guardian for his/her child / children ward (s) leaving the school or otherwise, his/her membership shall cease.

3.1.4. Ward Member / Councilor / Corporator of a Gram Panchayat / NAC / Municipality / Municipal Corporation shall hold office in ex-officio capacity. He/she shall cease to be a member of school management committee as and when he/she ceases to hold charge of his/her office.

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- 3.1.5. Any member of the School Management Committee, other than Member-Convenor may at any time resign from the membership by sending a letter of resignation to the Chairperson. But such a resignation takes effect from the date on which the School Management Committee accepts it.
- 3.1.6. If a member of the School Management Committee other than the Member-Convenor absents himself / herself from three consecutive meetings without prior intimation to the Chairperson, his/her membership shall ipso facto cease. The fact of not intimating prior to absence should find place in the proceeding of the meeting of School Management Committee.
- 3.1.7. Vacancies of membership of the School Management Committee other than the Ex-officio member caused due to resignation or otherwise shall be filled up by PTA from among the same category of members following the similar procedure as envisaged for each category on request of SMC within 30 days of occurrence of such vacancy.
- 3.1.8. In case of transfer / retirement / death of the Member-Convenor or in case, he/she remains on leave other than casual leave and optional holiday, the senior most teacher of the school shall remain in-charge.

### **3.2. Formation of School Management Committee**

- 3.2.1. There shall be a separate School Management Committee for each Primary and Upper Primary School. The PTA of the concerned school shall elect / select the members of the School Management Committee except the Member-Convenor, Teacher member and Student members. The selection/election of such member shall be made in the open meeting of Parent Teacher Association convened for the purpose by the Headmaster of the institution as per the programme communicated to them by the Headmaster. At least 40% of the members of PTA shall form the quorum for the meeting in which SMC shall be constituted.
- 3.2.2. The committee formed in the manner prescribed in para 3.2.1 above shall elect chairperson and vice-chairperson through election/selection in its first meeting to be held within a week of its formation. At least 8 members of the SMC shall form the quorum for any meeting of SMC. In case of voting the member-convenor, teacher-member and Govt. functionaries shall have no voting powers. In case of a tie of votes the final decision shall be taken through a lottery.

- v. It shall resolve issues relating to formation and functioning of SMCs of schools within its jurisdiction.
- vi. It shall monitor the teachers' attendance. After receiving the teacher absenteeism report from the SMC it will recommend action to be taken against the person concerned by the BDO/BEO.
- vii. It shall fulfil the responsibilities as local authority and take necessary action for the implementation of the activities mapped in the notification.
- viii. The expenditure towards conducting the Standing Committee meeting shall be met from G.P./ NAC/ Municipality/ Municipal Corporation contingencies fund.

**1.3. Linking of Standing Committee with SMC under RtE:**

- i. Maintenance of record of children.
- ii. Ensure admission and attendance of the children.
- iii. Provide special training to the children taken admission on age appropriate basis.
- iv. Admission of children of migrant families.
- v. Monitoring, functioning of school including functioning of SMC.

**1.4. Linking of Standing Committee with ShikshaSamvad:**

- i. Sharing of progress by Government departments on new initiatives, orders and follow up of last meeting minutes compliance
- ii. Discussion within the group on merits and demerits of new initiatives
- iii. Sharing of results at ground level
- iv. Suggestions/Complaints if any, to be presented in writing to concerned Government Officer.
- v. Good practices to be presented and discussed.
- vi. Identification of 1 focus area every month for having detailed discussion.

**1.5. Linking of Standing Committee with Block and Zilla Parishad**

The Chairman of the Standing Committee shall share the progress and issues of the SMCs within his jurisdiction with the Chairman and others of the block in their monthly meeting and that shall be subsequently presented to the President of Zilla Parishad in his quarterly meeting.

## Appendix B      Research Instruments

### Democratic participation in educational reform: The case of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Campaign for Universal Education) in rural India

#### Research Instruments

##### Instrument 1: For District Education Authority

1. What are the efforts that have been taken to implement SSA in the two rural villages Village E and Village B in Rayagada District?
2. What kind of barriers/struggles have you had to deal with in implementing SSA in these villages?
3. In relation to SSA, how were the needs in these villages assessed? Who were involved? Why were these people chosen? Are the needs assessed on a periodical basis?
4. What stages do you go through in the implementation process?
5. Who are the main decision makers in each of these stages?
6. How are decisions arrived at?
  - a. Assuming that there may be changes in the focus of each new government who bring their own goals for education, how do such changes impact on how decisions are made?
  - b. What kind of effects do the decisions of the new government have in the implementation process?
7. Involvement of communities in decision-making and implementation has been given significant priority in the SSA mandate. Do you think they are being involved enough?

## Appendix B

- a. If yes, who from the community are involved? What kind of contribution do they make? In which stages are they involved in? What kind of support is given to strengthen their skill/position to make decisions and be involved in implementation of SSA?
- b. If no, what may be the reasons for them not being included? Is there anything that can be done to strengthen their capacity, so they can be included as per the mandate?

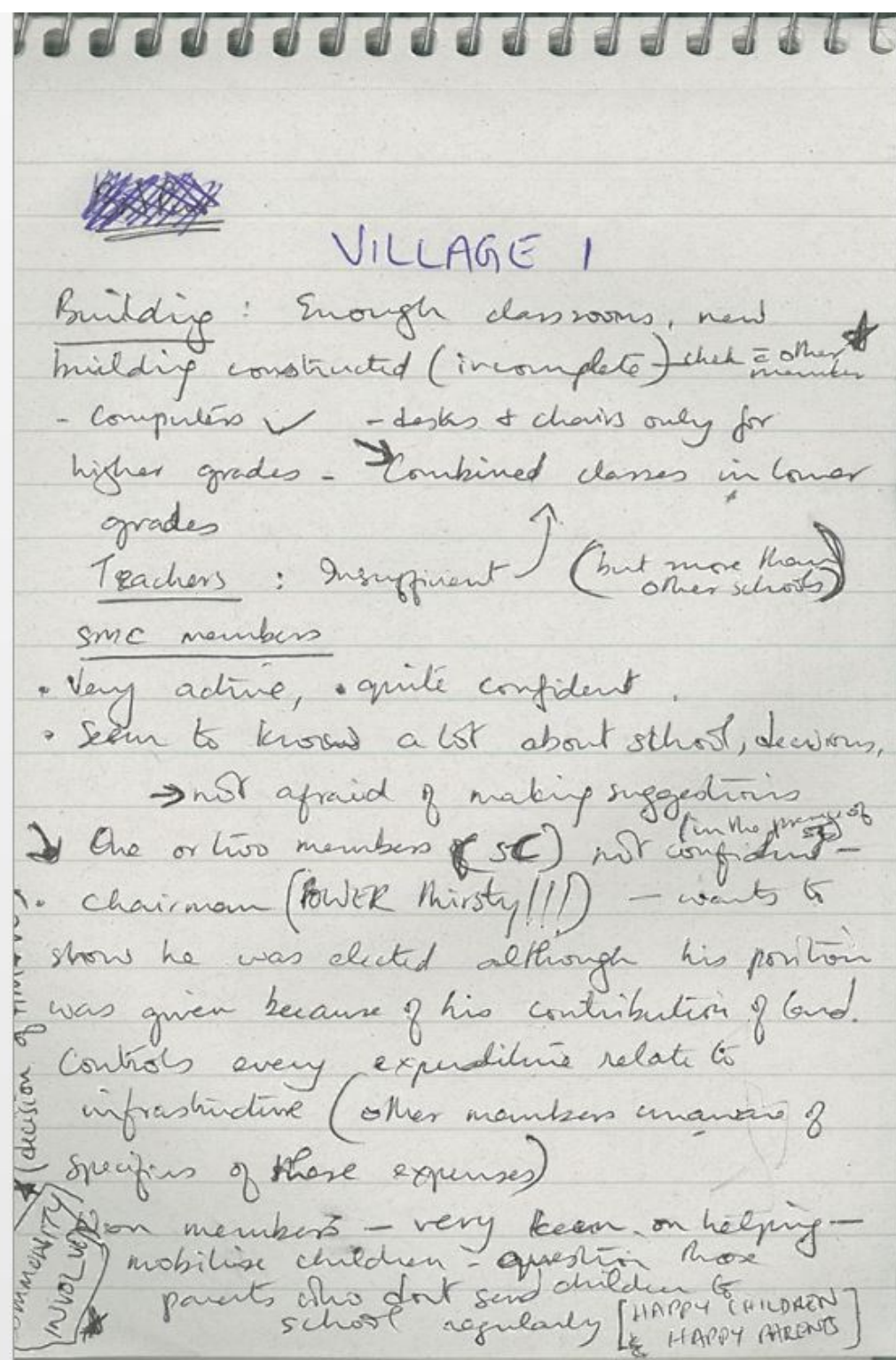
### **Instrument 2: For *panchayat* leaders (village leadership committee), community members and focus groups.**

1. What do you think are the aims and objectives of SSA?
  - Why has the government started SSA?
  - What are the benefits SSA has had to your community?
2. How involved are you in implementing SSA in your village? Do you think your involvement is important? Why/why not?
  - What is your role in SSA as an individual member?
  - Do you think your role is important? Why/why not)
3. How are decisions for SSA in your village made?
  - a. Do you contribute to decisions? If yes, how are your contributions made/considered?
  - b. Who else in the *panchayat* and community are involved in the decision-making process? Is this important? Why?
  - c. Are there any government officials present when you discuss problems/ideas/implementation process/planning etc.?
    - How often does SMC meet in a year?
    - Are all members are generally present?
    - Do you sign a register to record meeting attendance?
    - Is the register/minutes signed by members who only attend the meeting?
    - How many times have you attended the meeting this year?
    - Do you remember any decisions that was made in any of the meetings?
    - Do you remember if there has been anyone from outside of your village who has attended SMC meetings – e.g. Block/government officer?
    - Have you heard of any officer who has attended any meeting?
    - Is it because the government officers are present you haven't attended or attending meetings?

- Do you read or have someone read the minutes of the meeting before you sign it? Do you sign without knowing what is in the register/minutes?
- d. Are the discussions and decisions made in the village the same as the final decisions for implementation? If, no, why do you think there is a difference? Who controls these decisions?
- Do you know anyone who has raised a question/objection anytime against a decision, how is the objection handled- Is it by majority or minority?
- Do you attend meetings or not – draw reasons for not attending – time, other responsibilities, end with question relating to capacity.
4. Have you received any training from the government in relation to SSA in the last 3yrs? If yes, how did it help you? If no, do you think you need it?
5. If you have an issue with the decisions that are made or something you want to address/change, whom do you approach?
- a. What kind of response have you received?
- b. What do you do if the issue is not sorted for a long time?
6. What kind of changes would you like to see with regard to SSA in your village? (what changes would you like to propose for a good SMC)
- a. Do you think your opinion would be considered? Why/why not? (how will other people accept your ideas/proposal)
- b. What are your possible choices to have your voice heard?



## Appendix C Village 1 notes





## Appendix D A media report for document analysis

### Odisha Schools Cut A Sorry Figure in Girls' Toilet List

Express News Service

**Bhubaneswar:** With Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying thrust on sanitation for women in India in his I-Day speech, Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry has turned its focus to availability of toilets in government schools across the country.

Union HRD Minister Smriti Irani was quick to tweet the list of States and the status of schools which do not have toilets for girls. To say the least, Odisha cuts a sorry figure.

As per the Swachh Vidyalaya: Swachh Bharat report, at least 35 per cent government schools in the State either do not have toilets for girls or are dysfunctional.

Of the 58,412 schools, as many as 8,196 do not have toilets for girl students while another 12,520 have dysfunctional ones which can not be used. This means, as many as 20,716 government schools in Odisha do not have fully functional toilets for girls.

Strange it may sound but Ganjam district which happens to be the electoral home for Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and many high-profile BJD leaders has a poor record in providing toilets to girls in government schools. Of the 3,721 schools, as many as 1,218 do not have toilets for girls whereas another 585 have dysfunctional ones.

Similarly in Nuapada, as

many as 667 out of total 1091 schools have no toilets for girls while another 112 schools have non-functional ones.

Some of the tribal districts though fare well on this count.

Of the 4,385 government

schools up to the problem and launched a campaign to verify the school sanitation and monitor implementation of sanitation and hygiene in schools.

Secretary, School and Mass Education Department Usha Padhee has instructed

#### SWACHH VIDYALAYA, SWACHH BHARAT



At least 35 pc Govt schools in Odisha either do not have toilets for girls or are dysfunctional

As many as 20,716 Govt schools in Odisha do not have fully functional toilets for girls

Ganjam district, the home turf of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has a poor record

Some tribal districts fare well with just 452 out of 4,385 schools in Mayurbhanj dist not having toilet

schools in Mayurbhanj, just 452 do not have toilet for girls. In Puri, Boudh and Bhadrak, the report says, all schools provide toilets for girls.

However, the problem is not limited to girls alone. In as many as 13,452 government schools, boys toilets are not available while in another 9,040 schools, such toilets are not in usable condition. Taken together, their percentage stands at 38.

The State Government, in the meanwhile, has woken

Collectors to ensure that toilet facilities be made functional within the next 30 days.

The schools have been asked to undertake any structural repair required.

Since functionality and maintenance of sanitation and hygiene in schools are critical issues with serious bearing on quality of education and retention, the Department will start a verification of the school sanitation beginning September 1, Padhee said.



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