

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION IN MEWAT: POLICY, POLITICS, PRACTITIONERS AND NEOLIBERALISM

by

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Abstract

Teachers have undergone a dramatic shift from being perceived as technicians to rational decision-makers taking decisions in uncertain and complex settings, as documented in teacher cognition literature (Ellis, 2009, 2013; S. Borg, 2003; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). However, much of the scholarship and empirical observations on teacher cognition are predominantly from the Global North and do not tell us much about how similar issues play out in educational settings in the Global South. This study investigates how neoliberalism impacts educational discourse and interacts with language in education policy (LiEP). With reference to India's Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act (2009), the thesis examines how neoliberal discourse affects teachers' beliefs and classroom decisions (teacher cognition). The way teachers, teaching and LiEP have been conceptualized under neoliberalism is an area that remains un(der)explored, if not entirely ignored, in the most applied linguistics and language policy research reports. In this thesis, I explore the linkages between the role of teachers, teaching and LiEP on the one hand, and the effects of neoliberalism on the other. I spotlight the tensions and contradictions of the RTE Act (2009), which was supposedly enacted to bring about a change in perception regarding the role of teachers, teaching and LiEP. One gaping hole in the RTE Act (2009) has been its failure to adequately address the question of medium of instruction (MOI), particularly when the code to be used is a 'dialect'. One of the major goals of this thesis was to collect, document and analyze the views of policymakers and teachers from two school types – rural government Hindi-medium and urban private English-medium schools – to assess their roles in influencing, negotiating and implementing LiEP in the Mewat district in the Indian state of Haryana. Through in-depth interviews coupled with supplementary data, which were thematically analyzed, three broad themes emerged on three levels: institutional, pedagogical and policy level. These themes demonstrated how the legacy of neoliberalism interacted with LiEP and influenced teachers' beliefs, judgements and actions inside the classroom.

The objectives of the research are three-fold. The first is to understand the perception and role of teachers in LiEP in Global South contexts, how it has changed over the years and the way teachers make in-class decisions. In addressing this objective, the study seeks to contribute a new set of data from a Southern context that could augment the existing body of work on

intersections of teacher cognition, LiEP and neoliberal discourse. The second objective is to investigate the nature of changes in the teaching paradigm – from traditional banking and constructivist models where teachers act as sole disseminators of knowledge to models where teachers are reflective sense-makers and co-constructors of knowledge along with students. In the third objective the study seeks to examine LiEP in the two school types and to assess the role of Mewati as a MOI. Spolsky's model of language policy (2004) that has three components; language practices, beliefs and management, was the underpinning pillar for exploring this objective.

The key findings of the study are as follows. Firstly, the analysis demonstrated that teachers could at best be described as 'boundedly rational'. Contextual factors (such as historical and socio-political forces, inter-ethnic dynamics and neoliberalism) and attitudinal factors (such as teachers' prior beliefs and biases) played a key part in effecting teachers' capacity to make fully rational decisions in students' best interests. Nearly all teachers perceived Mewati as an obstacle and opposed its classroom use, while simultaneously admitting that in its absence, most students struggled to follow both MOI and class content. This led to serious teaching and learning problems, often until as late as grade 8.

Secondly, while the RTE Act (2009) calls for a constructivist approach to teaching, this study found that this was seldom the case. Teachers in both school types mainly relied on the banking model to teach with minimal use of Mewati, which is spoken by most students. Teachers' lack of professional training and development, structural constraints, lack of autonomy and participation in key policy decisions were found to be among the major factors contributing to this, which bore the hallmarks of neoliberalism.

Thirdly, there is a discord between rhetoric and reality in terms of language diversity in the Indian education system. Much rhetoric has been generated which introduces and promotes language diversity. However, the prospects and spheres of possibility for using language varieties that lack official status, standardization, orthography and resources as MOI remain dire. The results suggest that while rural school teachers adopted a Hindi monolingual LiEP and espoused a nationalist ideology, urban school teachers followed a bilingual Hindi-English LiEP and held a pragmatic and globalist ideology. Both, however, perceived Mewati as an obstacle to students' overall learning and educational outcomes. Non-Mewati speaking

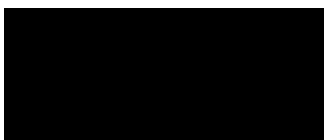
teachers in particular, held discriminatory views that are interpreted in this thesis as constituting a form of ‘dysconscious ethnicism and linguisticism’.

The conclusion is that language-in-education policies currently in place in Mewat result from historical exclusion of languages deemed ‘dialects’ from school education and unequal power relations between schools in an already hierarchical and multi-tier education system. The permeation of neoliberal ideologies into education policies has added yet another layer of injustice with grave implications for educational outcomes for minority language students, their language varieties and rights.

Overall, the thesis established that contradictions inherent in competing discourses of the RTE Act (2009), and rights to languages of choice, along with the complexity of neoliberalism, and India’s sociological dynamics contribute to sociolinguistic injustices and educational inequality. There is a paucity of research on the sociology of minority languages in South Asia in the context of global neoliberalism. This thesis offers an original contribution by being the first sociolinguistic study undertaken on Mewati and adding to the growing body of Critical Language Policy (CLP) research. By bridging the glaring divide between political economy, teacher cognition and language policy, this thesis makes major contributions to an under-researched area through its holistic lens that adopts a critical approach to rights-based discourse in education.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged. Data collection was conducted during candidature, and in part presented as a thesis for the award of the degree of Master of Arts (Research) at the University of Sydney. This thesis represents a significant extension of this original project, which is hereby acknowledged.

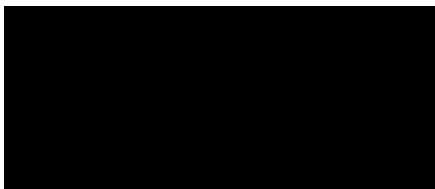


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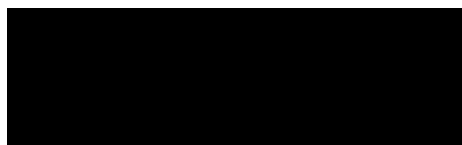
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List of Abbreviations

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
CABE	Central Advisory Board of Education
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCE	Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation
CLP	Critical Language Policy
CSS-NS	Common School System based on Neighbourhood Schools
CTET	Central Teacher Eligibility Test
D.Ed.	Diploma in Education
DIETs	District Institutes of Education and Training
DISE	District Information System for Education
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EFA	Education for All
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOI	Government of India
HBSE	Haryana Board of School Education
HCT	Human Capital Theory
IEA	International Educational Assessment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JBT	Junior Basic Training
L1	First Language
LHR	Linguistic Human Rights
LiEPs	Language in Education Policies
LPP	Language Planning and Policy
MDA	Mewat Development Authority
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLE	Multilingual Education
MLL	Minimum Levels of Learning

MOI	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother Tongue
NCERT	National Council for Education Research and Training
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCTE	National Council for Teacher education
NDGs	National Development Goals
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPE	National Policy on Education
NPERC	National Policy on Education Review Committee
NSS	National Sample Survey
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
POA	Programme of Action
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RBD	Rights Based Discourse
RTE	Right to Education
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SCERT	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SMCs	School Management Committees
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
TET	Teacher Eligibility Test
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLF	Three-Language-Formula
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Scope of the problem

In recent years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the preservation of languages. The same cannot be held true, however, when it comes to preservation of dialects (Tulloch, 2006, p. 269) or the preservation of endangered dialects in “safe” languages (Wolfram, 1996, p. 252). The scholarship dealing with language endangerment concerns itself with arbitrary decisions relating to the inclusion and exclusion of certain varieties, rather than emphasizing the relevance of all types of linguistic diversity and thus promotion of all language varieties that make up those languages (Wolfram, 1996, p. 253). This research stemmed from concern for promoting dialects, particularly those of minority groups, in education.

Exploring the role dialects may play in education settings can help in terms of achieving and promoting linguistic rights and in improving literacy attainment. A major problem found in both academic and non-academic communities is one about the ideological habit or practice of seeing dialect death or dialect loss as somehow less significant than language death or language loss (Wolfram, 1996, p. 253). Such a view leads to the loss of many of the world’s dialects and the consequent violation of linguistic human rights. As Wolfram (1996) argues, linguists rarely pay attention to endangered dialects of a “safe” language, that is, those dialects whose unique status may be threatened by different varieties of the same language rather than other languages (p. 253).

This is a particularly important problem in India, as Pandharipande (1992) argues, non-standard dialects shift to standard dialects and/or minority languages to dominant regional languages (p. 255). Benedikter (2009) similarly notes that minority language speakers in India are shifting towards regionally dominant languages and thus several smaller languages are facing swift extinction as a result (p. 179). A major factor contributing towards language shift and loss is education. Fishman contends that “schools are unreliable allies of language maintenance, frequently and appreciably leading to language shift” (as cited in Lo Bianco, 2010, p. 4). Additionally, Abbi (2009) claims that the exclusion of minority languages from schools, either as a medium of instruction (MOI) or as subjects, restricts them to the home domain or leads to a shift towards the more dominant regional languages in India (p. 306). By

privileging the more standard and dominant varieties, schools act as a major contributing force in the exclusion of minority languages and dialects. This is accentuated when minority languages/dialects lack standardized scripts and are not “fully developed”, deemed ill equipped to be the language of education (Koul & Devaki, 2000, p. 121). This is the case with Mewati, recognized as a ‘dialect’ of a safe language Hindi, by the Indian Census under the section Linguistic Survey of India. This status of Mewati as a non-standard language variety puts it at risk in education, helps cause a shift towards Hindi by possibly moving it closer to language endangerment, though this is not always the case.

The aim of this research is not to suggest that Mewati is or is not endangered and thus does not deal with language endangerment per se. This project rather concerns itself with the question of Mewati’s role in education. Exclusion of Mewati from education may have implications for Mewati’s maintenance as well as for students’ academic progress. Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy, and Gumidyala (2009) discuss exclusion of minority languages from education in India, suggesting “[It] has direct negative consequences for educational performance, socioeconomic wellbeing and sense of identity and empowerment of the speakers of minority and indigenous languages, severely restricting the chances of their development and survival” (pp. 285–286). This study attempts to explore the role of Mewati within schools’ overall language policy.

Though Mewati is classified as a dialect by the Indian Government, and is described as such by all the participants throughout this thesis, I will be using the term ‘minority language’ to refer to dialects in general, and Mewati in particular, as Mewati belongs ethnically and linguistically to a minority group, and since varieties spoken by minority groups are often at a disadvantage in society. Since other linguists tend to include and extend minority languages to mean dialects, I too will be adopting the term minority language for Mewati to remain consistent throughout the thesis. Like other sociolinguists, I do not make a distinction between a dialect and a language. The distinction between dialects and languages is often political rather than linguistic. This research is a critical enquiry into both political and linguistic concerns. Notably, (Meo) participants’ own description of Mewati, is to refer to it as a dialect. Where mentioned, my use of the term ‘dialect’ in this thesis thus is intended to remain consistent with participants’ use of language as well as to highlight the political nature of the language-dialect distinction.

This thesis thus investigates the scope of Mewati in education, the barriers that may limit its scope and the attitude of actors responsible for implementing language in education policies (LiEPs) that may result in perpetuating, reinforcing and reproducing inequality between languages that are part of the school environment. Given that LiEPs do not operate in a vacuum, it is important to look into education as a whole and the broader structural forces that give rise to such policies that impact the space language varieties occupy in schools and the reasons why teachers make the choices they do in order to either use these varieties or leave them out of schools altogether. The context in which teachers make these choices depends on the sociopolitical climate that at present is governed by neoliberal principles. One “gaping hole” that characterizes much of the applied linguistics research today, is the lack of engagement in dealing with the intersection of language and the political economy, and in particular critiquing neoliberalism as the hegemonic order and ideology of our time (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012, p. 3). One of the goals of this research is to fill this gap considering “in applied linguistics...studies on neoliberalism have been few and far between” (Block et al., 2012, p. 7).

Neoliberalism centers on deregulation, privatization and marketization of public enterprises and services and as a result has been credited for further widening disparities in India’s education that is already hierarchical, multilayered and unequal in character (Sadgopal, 2008; Thapliyal, 2014) with different schools catering to students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This study, therefore, will be a comparative case study looking at two types of schools – rural/government and urban/private – to see the LiEPs in place, assess teachers’ attitude towards using Mewati and the broader structural forces that limit its use. One instrument that has arguably played a key role in institutionalizing and legitimizing this inequality has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) (henceforth, RTE Act) (Gupta, 2014, p. 41). While the Act has been lauded by some and criticized by others for its universal education provision for children from six to fourteen years of age, what has been left out of this debate, however, is the issue of MOI (Bhattacharya & Jiang, 2018, p. 149). This study fills this gap by examining how the RTE Act (2009) has furthered inequality, what sociopolitical climate led to its origin, and more importantly, what its overall position on LiEP is and how teachers view it.

It is important to understand why dialect preservation has not received as much scholarly or popular attention as one would expect. One of the reasons it has attracted little attention is to do with macro approaches to language planning. They have traditionally ignored or undermined dialectal variation in the pursuit of a shared or common speech form (Tulloch, 2006, p. 269). This situation applies in India with Hindi being the standard language under which dialects are subsumed. This disadvantages and disempowers dialects, weakening their instrumental significance and affecting their vitality. This process of language disadvantage is best explained by Mohanty et al. (2009) in what is termed as a vicious circle of language disadvantage (p. 286) as illustrated by Figure 1.

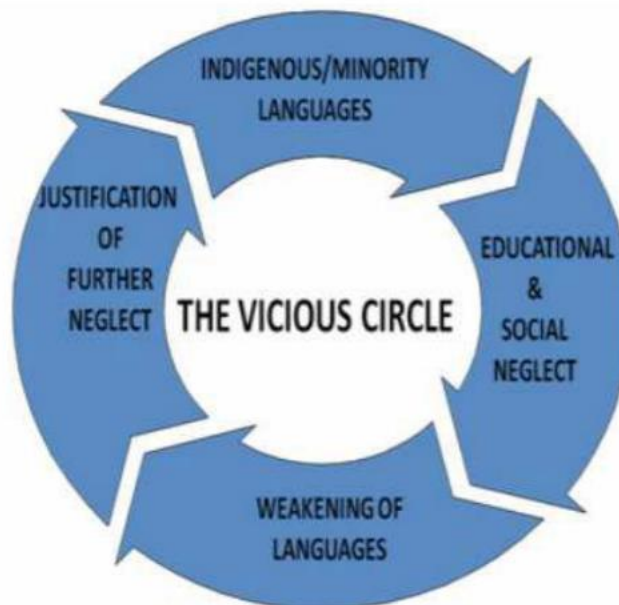


Figure 1 – The vicious circle of language disadvantage (adapted from Mohanty et al., 2009)

Mohanty (2009) asserts that this disadvantage is brought about by gross social, educational, statutory, official and legal neglect of these varieties in combination with the justification of the poverty of these languages with their so-called inadequacies (p. 4). These perceived inadequacies that are often expressed in terms of the deficit hypothesis include lack of standardization, orthography, literacy and pedagogical materials among other things. These

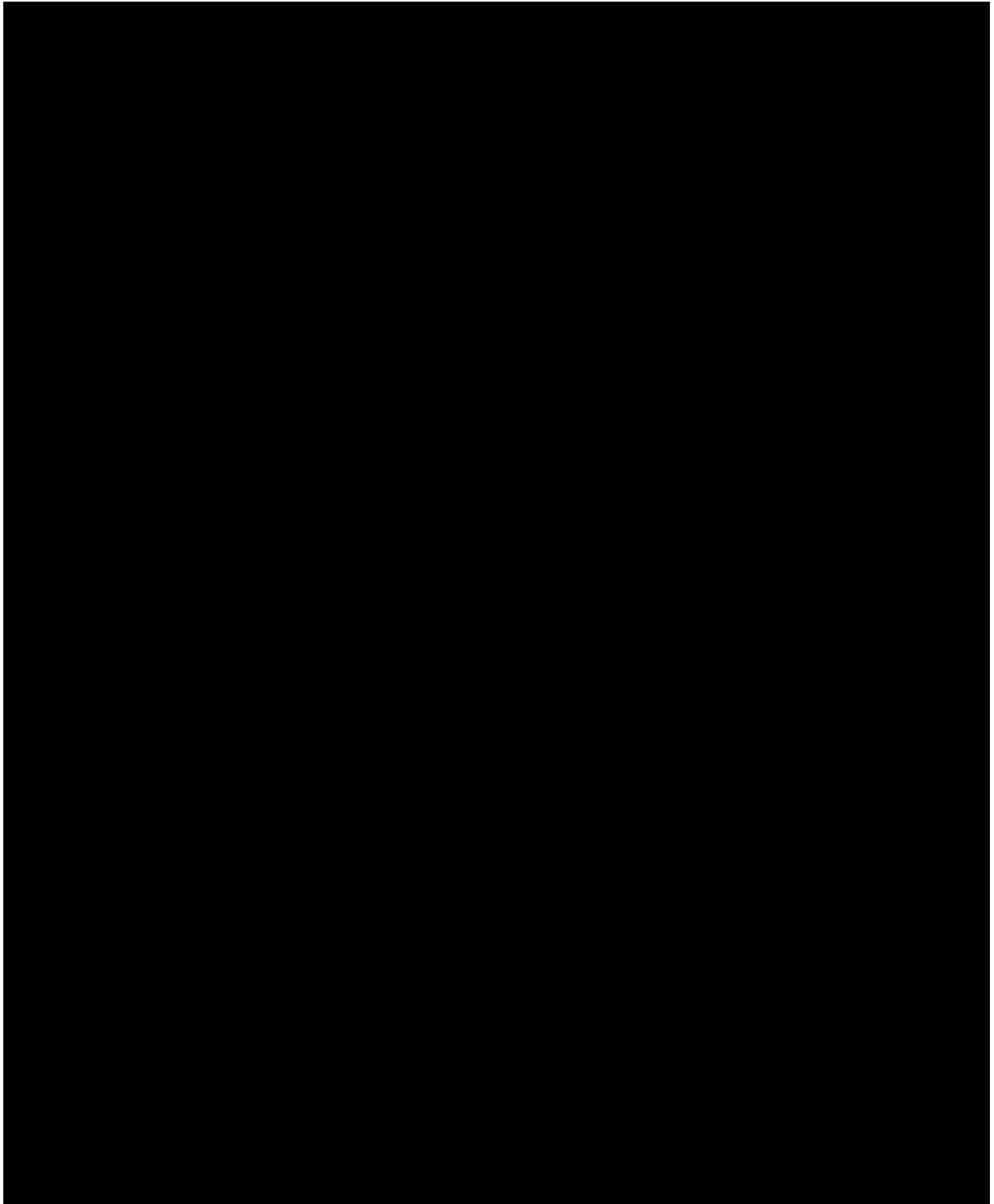
further marginalize these dialects, keep them out of schools and other domains of power and deprive them of privileges and resources (Mohanty, 2009, p. 4). This social and educational neglect, Mohanty et al. (2009) argue, further weakens these dialects thereby giving rise to the justification of further neglect (p. 286). To see how this happens in schools, it is necessary to examine India's LiEP under the present neoliberal climate that purportedly employs rights-based discourse, as evidenced by the RTE Act (2009). However, the RTE Act (2009) has very little to say on the question of using dialects (minority languages) in education.

1.2 Background information on Mewat, Mewati and Meos

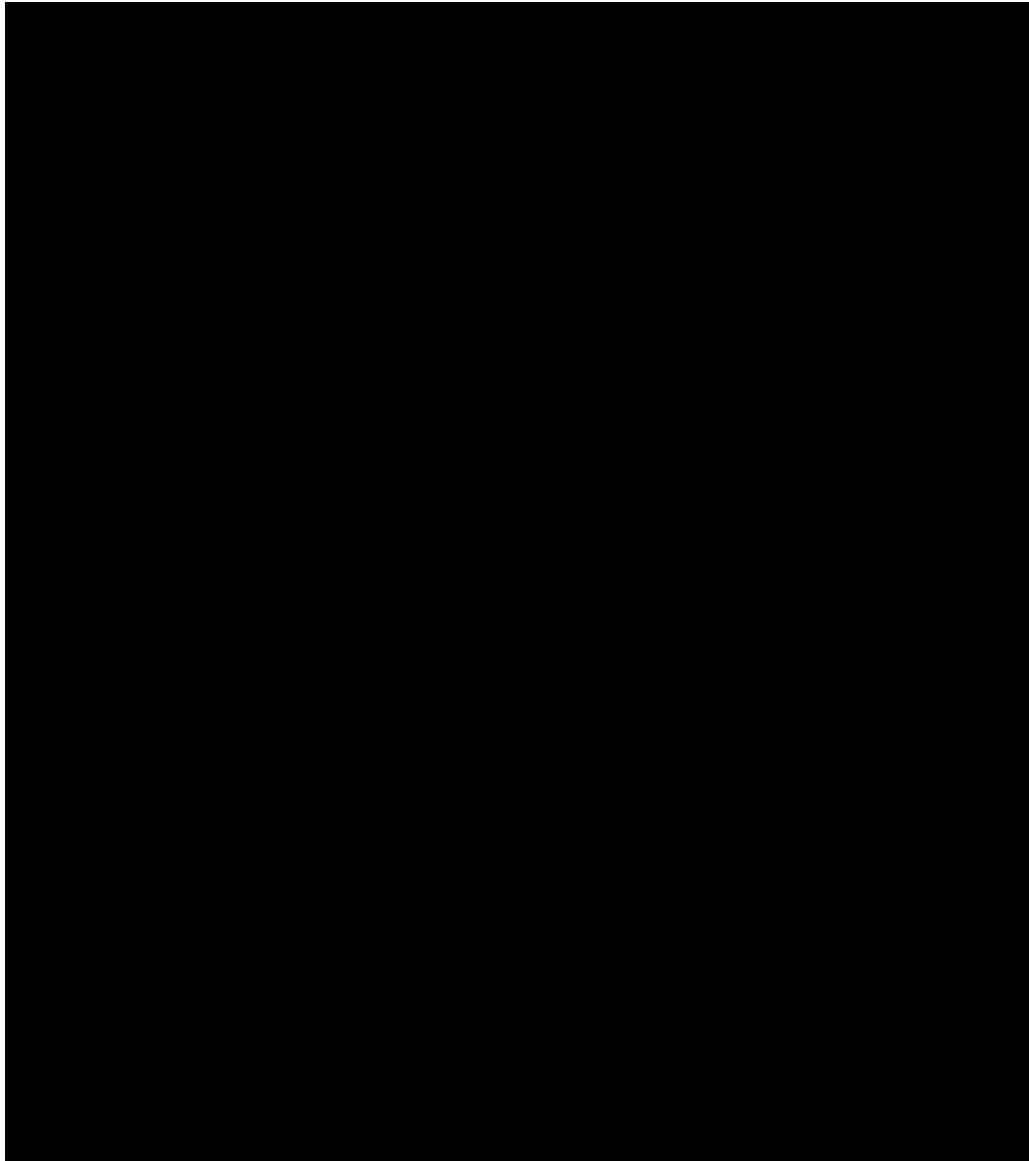
1.2.1 Mewat district

This study was conducted in the Mewat district of the state of Haryana. Two sub-districts were visited: Nuh (urban school) and Ghaghas village in Ferozepur Jhirka (rural government school). In development terms, Mewat stands behind all the other nineteen districts of Haryana on every socioeconomic indicator. Based on the 2018 report by Niti Aayog, a policy think tank of the Government of India (GOI), Mewat was ranked as the most backward district of the 101 districts assessed on 49 socioeconomic indicators, such as education, health and nutrition, agriculture and water resources, basic infrastructure, financial inclusion, and skill development (p. 8).

Mewat is named after its traditional inhabitants: Meos, and the region shares boundaries with the states of Rajasthan and Haryana. Although home to many language varieties, Haryana's official language is Hindi. One of the most widely spoken varieties in the region and identified with Haryana is Haryanvi, which is regarded as a dialect of Hindi. According to the 2001 Census, Mewat had a total population of 993,000 of which 95.36% is rural and 4.64% is urban (GOI, 2001a). The literacy rate was 44.07%, which was lower in comparison to both the state average of 68.59% and the national literacy rate of 65.38% (GOI, 2001a). Map 1 below shows Mewat district comprising of sub-divisions/towns and sites where the fieldwork was conducted (Nuh and Firozpur Jhirka) (Maps of India, 2013). Map 2 shows Mewat's geographical location in India (Wikipedia, 2006).



Map 1 – Mewat district and sub-divisions/towns (Maps of India, 2013)



Map 2 – Mewat's geographical location in India (Wikipedia, 2006)

1.2.2 Mewati

Mewati, with no official script of its own, is considered a dialect of Hindi in the sense that it is linguistically defined as a Rajasthani language variety (Gusain, 2003, p. 1), and Rajasthani is further considered a dialect of Hindi by the Government of India as per the Census of 2001. So, essentially, Mewati is officially considered to be a dialect of a dialect, thus making its status as a marginalized variety even direr. There are eight dialects of Rajasthani, namely, Bagri, Wagri, Shekhawati, Mewati, Marwari, Mewari, Harauti and Dhundhari. Out of these, Marwari is considered a dominant and 'standard dialect' of Rajasthani owing to a large variety of literature

and research work carried out on its grammar and dictionary (Gusain, 2003, p. 1). Mewati belongs to the Indo-Aryan family. According to the 2001 Census, in India as a whole, Mewati is spoken by 645,291 people as a mother tongue of which the majority lived in Haryana (347,260) and Rajasthan (289,731) (GOI, 2001b, p. 248).

1.2.3 The Meo Tribe

Meos are largely a pastoral-peasant Muslim community, classified as an ‘other backward class’ (OBC) by the Indian Government, meaning they are recognized as being socially and economically deprived. As per the 2011 Census, the literacy rate in Mewat was 53.2%, with Meo women’s literacy rate at 33.98% and Meo men’s literacy rate at 69.47% (Haryana Census, 2011). Historically, the Meo tribe has had a rich history. They have resisted state repression from the Mughal and British Empires, and regional Rajput and Jat kingdoms (Mayaram, 2003a, p. 16). Evidence of this can be gained through their oral history, well documented by Mayaram (2003a), an author who has provided an extensive account of Meos’ cultural identity and history.

Mayaram (2003b) recounts a key historical event that bears testimony to Meos’ resistance by playing a crucial role in reviving Indian nationalism (p. 338). The Alwar state disregarded the hardship for the peasantry, resulting from the great depression and successive famine years, and decided to raise the tax by over 30%. The Meo community in response mobilized one hundred thousand Meo peasants during the peasant movement of 1932–33 and refused to pay the tax (Mayaram, 2003b, p. 338). Mayaram (2003b) notes that it is this continuous struggle against state oppression and Meos’ efforts to resist the state that led to their stigmatized classification as a “criminal tribe” under British and Mughal rule (p. 338). The effects of this still persist today. This complex and rich history of Meos is what makes the Meos such an interesting group to study. The section below highlights the research problem and the questions this study seeks to address.

1.3 The Problem and Research Questions

The concept of dialect awareness is relevant in teaching and learning, and little emphasis is given to this issue (Wolfram, 2008). Wolfram (2008) claims that knowledge about language, and in particular dialect diversity, is virtually non-existent in the public education system (p.

189). He argues this trend is noticeable among students and teachers, in that neither the learning outcomes nor the teacher training programs incorporate knowledge about language diversity. Despite the significance attached to dialect diversity programs for their role in educational practices, very few linguists and classrooms teachers have been engaged in programs dealing with this issue (Wolfram, 2008, p. 189). Accordingly, dialects usually suffer from linguistic subordination where deep prejudices are held against them within the school environment.

This thesis addresses the issues surrounding dialect diversity in a number of ways. It explores teachers' attitudes toward Mewati, their views on its place in school, specifically in teaching and learning processes, their overall beliefs on language diversity and if they think Mewati should be maintained at home or at school at all by students. This question is examined from a broader perspective taking into account other languages forming part of the school, including teachers' and students' repertoire. In order to achieve this goal, schools' language policies were examined. The specific questions this research addresses are:

- What LiEP is in place in two types of schools visited – urban (private) and rural (government)? What role, if any, does Mewati play in the policy framework?
- How do the effects of neoliberalism manifest themselves in the educational domain, specifically in the context of the RTE Act, and interact with LiEP? In other words, how do the effects of neoliberalism in education shape teachers' classroom decisions, beliefs and actions (teacher cognition)?

Answering these questions sheds light on how policies reflect and reproduce social, educational and linguistic inequalities. Because there is a paucity of literature on Indian dialects, this study is the first sociolinguistic study on Mewati in education. Bhatt and Mahboob (2008), too, noted there existed “surprisingly small” literature that described the plight of minority languages in South Asia...“especially in the area of the sociology of minority languages (Paulston 1994): the perspective that allows us to ascertain whether and how the declining role of these languages is generally associated with issues of power and control, education and literacy, and demography, development, and planning” (p. 150).

This study addresses this gap by unsettling ideologies of power and control in the domain of education and literacy pertaining to a minority language in relation to LiEP. It conducts a critical analysis of the intersection of policy, politics and ideology in Mewat and how it may influence the LiEP followed inside the classroom. This research is broadly located within the

field of Critical Language Policy research, which is discussed further in Chapter 3. I call this study ‘critical’ since my objective is not simply descriptive or explanatory but rather critical examination of the underlying language ideologies, policies and practices. My aim is to raise questions of social justice and gauge prospects and possibilities for minority languages, such as Mewati, in the educational domain.

1.4 Teacher Cognition

In the last five to six decades, the field of teacher cognition has expanded substantially. The origins of this field can be traced back to the 1960s. During this time, the focus of much of teacher cognition has been on observing teachers’ behavior with the intended aim that this might result in finding out the best ways of teaching effectively as well as to finding out the best learning outcomes (Woods, 1996, p. 4). Before this, in much of the 40s, 50s and 60s research focused on observing, testing and evaluating which teaching methods were used and which ones fared better (Creore & Hanzeli, 1960; Chastain & Woerdehoff, 1968; Politzer, 1968). Thus, much of the research that was produced during this time asked which teaching approach produced the most effective learning outcomes.

As a result, many researchers compared, for instance, the “oral” or the “audio-lingual” approach to the previous “grammar-translation” approach (Fries, 1945; Moulton, 1962). However, in the 1970s, the focus shifted from teachers and their teaching methods to learners and their acquisition process in learning second languages (Woods, 1996, p. 3). For example, Dulay and Burt (1973), inspired by an earlier study by Brown (1973) in first language acquisition research, sought to find out if there was any regularity to the order in which certain grammatical morphemes were first acquired. From this study, they concluded that the process of acquisition of a second language was very similar to that of a first language and that there was a “natural order” that helped children acquire some grammatical items earlier than others. This had pedagogical implications as it meant learners’ acquisition order did not always correspond with how teachers were instructed to teach grammar lessons, how grammar rules were laid out in textbooks or how learning was set to occur in classrooms. It is for this reason Dulay and Burt (1973) argued that teaching grammar or syntax explicitly was not necessary, and that acquisition order studies like theirs had a lot to contribute “in the development of curricula, materials and assessment instruments” (Burt & Dulay, 1980, p. 266).

Taking the “natural order” view that was dominant from this era forward, one of the researchers who played a monumental role in second language acquisition studies and teaching practices was Stephen Krashen. He argued for a reduced focus on explicit grammar instruction and more emphasis on real-life communication, made possible using “comprehensible input” so learners could comprehend and participate in what came to be known as, the communicative language teaching approach (Krashen, 1981). He proposed that much learning took place through classroom interactions. Thus, in the 1980s much of the research on language teaching focused on classroom interactions.

The above studies by Dulay and Burt (1973) and Krashen (1981) in the context of second language acquisition research complicate implications for this study, given the confusion that arises between what qualifies for a first or second language. In the context of Mewat for instance, what is often taught as learners’ first language i.e. standard Hindi, in reality is closer to being students’ second language. As Jhingran (2009, p. 275) noted, this trend became common across India from the late 1960s with the introduction of the Three Language Formula (which will be discussed in a subsequent section). The implementation of this policy involved the first language of minoritized populations often becoming conflated with the dominant regional/state language. This was especially the case if the first language is subsumed under the regional/state language, as in the case of a ‘dialect’. This results in students being taught in/through a language which in essence is their second language at the expense of their first language.

The focus on classroom interaction in the 1980s witnessed a shift from the previously dominant paradigm in language teaching characterized as process-product (Woods, 1996, p. x) to a new paradigm in which teachers’ views and lives would take a central stage. In the process-product paradigm, Long and Richards (as cited in Woods, 1996) remind us that teaching was approached from the outside, as seen by the researcher or observer looking at discrete teaching behaviors or classroom teaching processes, which could be quantified, identified and described, “such as strategies used in opening lessons, questioning behaviors, ways of giving praise and feedback, error correction”, among other things (p. 3). The idea was that specific teaching behaviors characteristic of effective teachers, could be identified with learning outcomes, which may help in future to better train other teachers (Woods, 1996, p. 3). This popular paradigm of the time was thus concerned with “teachers’ actions and their observable

effects” i.e. exploring “the relationship between teachers’ classroom behavior, students’ classroom behavior and student achievement” (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 257).

In the process-product paradigm, learning was seen as the product of teaching, which was seen as a set of observable behaviors or performances by teachers in class (Ellis, 2009, p. 607). As Ellis noted, behind this lay the assumption that teachers were merely technicians who simply put their training into practice. This assumption was, however, challenged when Shavelson and Stern (1981) argued that teachers “are rational professionals who make judgements and decisions in an uncertain and complex environment” (p. 456). This shift came about as a result of significant developments that were taking place in the field of cognitive psychology.

The emphasis now shifted to studying the cognitive processes underlying teachers’ actions and consequently to the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that underlie teaching (Ellis, 2013, p. 451). The effect of this was that the field of teaching now began to be looked at from the inside rather than from the outside, that is, from the perspective of participants; teachers themselves. The focus was now on studying how teachers’ beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge and experience shaped their pedagogical choices, instructional decisions and understanding of teaching/learning processes.

What was missing from the process-product paradigm earlier was teachers’ perspective: What they brought into classrooms, the decisions and judgements they made that led to the learning outcomes, the rationale behind the teaching strategies they employed. In short, teachers’ “mental lives” (Walberg, 1977). The focus shifted from what teachers did in the classroom to how they arrived at planning and the kind of decisions they made inside the classroom. The role of teachers’ beliefs, from hereon, came to take center stage as these beliefs held by teachers were seen to shape their teaching behavior. Barcelos and Kalaja (2012) best describe the continued relevance of teachers’ beliefs as follows: “Teacher beliefs continue to be seen as one of the most important keys to understanding teachers’ cognitions, knowledge, and practices, as well as their process of learning to teach” (p. 4).

Similarly, Johnson (1994) described three underlying assumptions based on the literature that exists on teachers’ beliefs and why studying them is important: “First, teachers’ beliefs influence both perception and judgment which, in turn, affects what teachers say and do in the classroom. Second, teachers’ beliefs play a critical role in how teachers learn to teach, that is, how they interpret new information about learning and teaching and how that information is translated into

classroom practices. Third, understanding teachers' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices and professional teacher preparation programs" (p. 439).

Likewise, Allen (2002) proposed three reasons, justifying the need for further research on teachers' beliefs:

First, examining the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom actions can inform educational practices. Second, if teacher education is to have an impact on how prospective teachers will teach, it must engage participants in examining their beliefs. Third, attempts to implement new classroom practices without considering teachers' beliefs can lead to disappointing results. (p. 519)

Whether a belief is held consciously or unconsciously, whether based on objective reality or subjective perception by the individual, M. Borg (2001) maintained, it is always accepted as true, and is "imbued with emotive commitment", further shaping their thoughts and actions (p. 186). Since teachers' beliefs are formed early in life, partly as a result of their prior experience as learners, what Lortie (1975) termed as the "apprenticeship of observation", they become highly influential in shaping teachers' assumptions, behavior and classroom practices. Within the school settings studied in this thesis, teachers' generalized negative beliefs about dialects constrained the use of Mewati in the classroom.

Prior experience and belief development as learners are not the only sources of teacher cognition. Also important is the role played by contextual factors. Bailey's (1996) study, for instance, looked into what factors influenced teachers' decisions to depart from their lesson plans, and concluded that "the small and highly interactive classes, the teachers' preparation, and the use of a teacher-controlled syllabus and flexible materials all may have influenced their decision making" (p. 24). Bailey's (1996) admission thus pointed to the role of contextual and institutional factors in shaping teachers' decision making abilities. In this thesis, a range of contextual factors were found to impact teachers' capacity and willingness to incorporate Mewati into the LiEP adopted in schools. These included: unequal school funding, teacher shortage and contractualization, inadequate teacher training and inter-ethnic divisions between teachers and students.

Therefore, teachers' prior learning experience, classroom practice, teacher education as well as contextual factors all play a key role (Borg, S., 2003, p.82). This study will focus on the role

of teachers' beliefs and contextual factors, in particular, in shaping teachers' actions, thoughts and decision-making processes. My discussion of both teachers' beliefs and contextual factors holds greater importance considering the RTE Act (2009). The Act intended to make India's education system 'accessible' to children. It carried the expectation that teachers move away from traditional textbook-based instruction towards a more constructivist pedagogy. The secondary aim of this study is to highlight teachers' views about the RTE Act (2009) and their implementation of the Act. A connection is established between the limitations of the RTE Act and LiEP as it relates to Mewati.

1.5 Language Policy

Earlier models of Language Planning and Policy (LPP) such as Cooper (1989), Ferguson (1968), Haugen (1983), Kloss (1966), Nahir (1984), and Neustupny (1974) were either focused on policy decisions made at the macro level flowing top down from the state and other institutional bodies or relied on the technical and structural aspects of languages (Ricento, 2006, pp. 12–13). However, what these earlier models, as synthesized in Hornberger's integrative framework (1994), did not reflect, "was that planning for a given language never occurs in a vacuum with regard to other languages" (Hornberger, 2006, p. 33).

Recent years have witnessed new frameworks of language policy driven by postmodern thinking and critical theory, and a shift in focus from authoritative top-down to micro-level processes (Hornberger, 2006, p. 33). Unlike other previous approaches and models of language policy which dealt with explicit texts adopted by legislative bodies, the new frameworks of language policy focused on broader areas. Some such new frameworks included one proposed by Spolsky (2004), who argued for a broader definition of language policy because, "even where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent" (p. 8). For this reason, there is an emerging emphasis on concepts such as ideology, ecology and agency in LPP (Hornberger, 2006, p. 33). As Hélot and ÓLaoire (2011) point out, "until recently, the roles of individuals and groups in the processes of language use, attitudes and ultimately policies have been frequently overlooked" (p. xv). A discussion on language policy models is referred to more extensively in the literature review (Chapter 3).

Briefly, however, Spolsky's (2004) model was useful as it encompassed all three components (see Figure 2 below). Shohamy (2008) supported Spolsky's (2004) model by remarking: "[it] introduces a broader concept of language policy, one that incorporates ideology, ecology and management, arguing for a complex relationship among these components and thus providing a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of what language policy really is" (p. 364). Figure 2 below is a schematic representation of Spolsky's language policy model, as adapted by Shohamy (2006, p. 53).

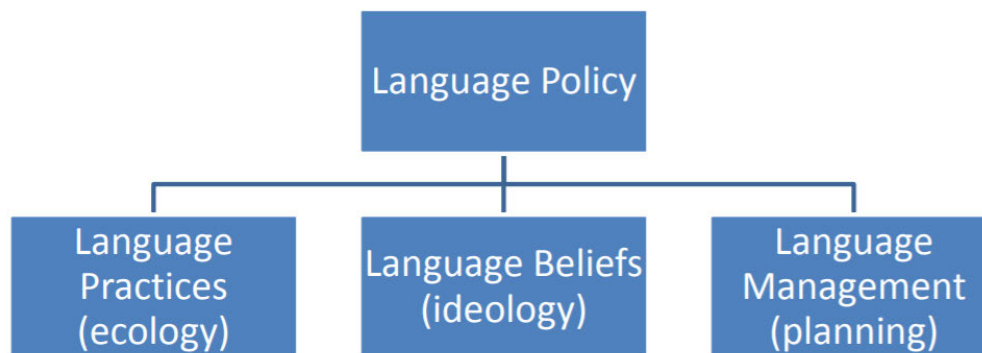


Figure 2 – Spolsky's (2004) Language Policy Model as adapted by Shohamy (2006, p. 53)

Spolsky (2004, pp. 11–14) contends that language policy consists of three components: language practices, beliefs and management. Spolsky (2004) distinguishes between these three components in the following terms:

Language practices – the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs or ideology – the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management. (p. 5)

Spolsky's (2004) model is used in this study to assess language policy in schools by looking into the above three components.

1.6 Addressing Knowledge Gaps

As noted earlier, both teachers' beliefs and contextual factors influence classroom practices and have been a focus of discussion in the field of teacher cognition, which S. Borg (2003) defines as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think" (p. 81). This study is located within the area of teacher cognition research. By making use of teachers' self-reported beliefs regarding education policy (including LiEP and in particular Mewati) with specific reference to the RTE Act (2009) and the neoliberal context in which teachers work, I argue how both context and beliefs affect teachers' decision-making skills and judgements. This further prevents teachers making fully-informed rational decisions in the best interests of students, contradicting both what the RTE Act (2009) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2005) mandated, including making education more accessible and adopting more constructivist-oriented pedagogy.

I argue that the dominant assumption in teacher cognition research has philosophical underpinnings in the rationality model, which perceives teachers as "rational professionals" who make judgements and decisions while working in an uncertain and complex environment (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 456). From viewing teachers first as technicians to rational decision makers, the current trend is to see them as constructivists or reflective sense-makers (Borg, S., 2006, p. 15). However, this is not always the case. By utilizing bounded rationality, I demonstrate that teachers are not always constructivists, nor do they always make rational decisions. Instead, it is more appropriate to call their decisions "boundedly rational" (Lee & Porter, 1990, 1993). This means teachers' decisions are affected by various constraints such as institutional (cost, time and resources), information (knowledge about content and teaching pedagogy) and policy (RTE Act) constraints, and individual personal biases (linguistic prejudices) such as favoring one language over another and discriminating against a language variety and its speakers.

Teachers' beliefs and contexts in which they work have an impact on their cognition which in turn influences teaching practices and language policies adopted in the classroom. In much of teacher cognition literature, relatively little attention has been paid to aspects dealing with teachers' professional identities, their decision-making abilities, and the role of biases in determining how they deal with language policy issues inside the classroom. This research brings the two areas of teacher cognition and LiEP together by demonstrating that teachers'

in-class decisions concerning teaching methods and choice of language policy could, at best, be termed ‘bounded rational’. The teaching methods used as well as the choice of language policy employed, both were rooted in discriminatory attitude towards Mewati leading to its exclusion from the classroom. This was despite teachers’ admission that doing so resulted in alienation on the part of students and bad learning outcomes (discussed in detail in Chapter 5).

Bounded rationality has thus far been used in research on classroom teaching by examining how teachers dealt with two classes differing in levels of student achievement (Lee & Porter, 1993) and by exploring teacher expectations and differential treatment of students (Lee & Porter, 1990). Lee & Porter (1990) mentioned that the subject of teachers’ expectations and students’ different treatment till now had been largely approached from the standpoint of “research on teacher effectiveness and interpretative research” (p. 164). But what was missing was an explanation as to “why teachers think and act in the ways that they do – from the perspective of teachers’ thought processes” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 164). Herein lies the power of bounded rationality. Lee & Porter (1990) remarked, “Bounded rationality has been recognized as a valuable concept for understanding human reasoning, problem solving, and decision making in complex real-world situations, including classroom teaching” (p. 159).

However, bounded rationality has so far not been applied in the context of minority language education policy, particularly in the Global South. The contribution of this study lies in using the concept of bounded rationality to explore how teachers deal with classroom complexity where a ‘nonstandard’ dialect is spoken by most students as their mother tongue. Teachers’ language beliefs and practices are used as an example. This is done because relatively little attention in teacher cognition research has been paid to the understanding of teachers’ thought processes and decision-making regarding the use of a dialect or vernacular language in education.

S. Borg (2003) in his seminal paper, “Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching: A Review on Research of What Language Teachers Think, Know, Believe, and Do”, pointed out the growth of teacher cognition literature in the last few decades. He identified 64 studies that were published between 1976 and 2002 alone. Nonetheless, he also reminded us that much of the research within language teaching and teacher cognition had been conducted with native language teachers working with small motivated groups of adult learners (Borg, S., 2003, p. 106).

S. Borg (2003) went on to say not much research has been conducted in primary and secondary state school settings, where languages are taught by non-native teachers to large classes of learners who, particularly in the case of English, may not be studying voluntarily (p. 106). Therefore, another aim of this study is to fill this gap by reflecting on teacher cognition of native and non-native teachers teaching large classes of learners, working in an underexplored institutional and regional context, such as Mewat. For this, two types of schools were chosen: rural upper primary government schools (Grades 1 to 8) and urban higher/senior secondary private school (Grades 1 to 12), which reflect these features.

Another area this study sets out to investigate, is the role of contextual factors and how they impact teachers' cognition and decision-making processes (Borg, S., 2003). When reviewing the literature on teacher cognition, S. Borg (2003) noted,

there is also a need for more research in contexts which, globally speaking, are more representative of language classrooms. I am thinking here of classrooms in state schools, taught by non-native teachers, and where syllabuses are to various degrees prescribed. Hardly any of the settings studied in research I have reviewed here reflect these characteristics. (p. 98)

This study thus seeks to fill this gap by investigating the cognition of non-native teachers working in settings that are more representative of language classrooms and where syllabuses are prescribed by the state, where teachers have less control or autonomy over designing the syllabus when compared with teachers elsewhere in the Global North, who have been the focus of, for the most part, much of teacher cognition scholarship.

Moreover, the discipline of teacher cognition mainly emphasizes “the active role which teachers play in shaping classroom events” (Borg, S., 2006, p. 40). Seferaj (2016) thus highlighted the importance of taking into account teachers' passive thinking or unconscious decisions and suggested: “Future research in teacher cognition should broaden the way teacher thinking is conceptualised to include both rational and tacit thinking” (p. 57). Another goal of this study, therefore, is to fill this gap by highlighting how teachers' tacit thinking interacts with broader sociohistorical, political factors and contextual constraints that lead to bounded rational decision-making.

Finally, while neoliberalism has gained considerable attention in education scholarship, it is underexplored within teacher cognition and LiEP research. This study bridges this gap by placing neoliberalism at the center and exploring the interconnections between these two fields. Neoliberal ideology has had a profound impact on the role of teachers and education with “teacher education [becoming] a key site of ideological battle” (Gray & Block, 2012, p. 120). Under neoliberalism, it is common to see initial teacher training as “unnecessary, even harmful [and] that teacher training courses actually diminish the effectiveness of teachers” (Gray & Block, 2012, p. 121).

For these reasons it is prudent that applied linguists must engage with debates in mainstream education literature to conceptualize how “education has been marketised by neoliberal practice and ideology” (Gray & Block, 2012, p. 121). Doing so is important, for as Block et al. (2012) stated: “For applied linguistics to be truly socially constituted, it must take account of the political economy of contemporary capitalism – a political economy which encompasses both social classes and their ideologies” (p. 4). One of the “gaping hole[s]” that continues to make its presence felt within applied linguists’ scholarship is “the most cursory of manners” in which they either “incorporate...the economic and material bases of human activity and social life” or continue to “ignore [them]” (Block et al., 2012, p. 4). One of the aims of this study is to bring these bases to the center of the debate.

The below section highlights the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study, and the rationale behind using them.

1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks Used

The frameworks used in this study to answer two central questions is based on an integration of research on LiEP and teacher cognition literature. The former employs Spolsky’s model to identify LiEP, to assess teachers’ language choices and practices and to help explain *how* teachers make those in-class decisions. The latter uses the construct of bounded rationality to explain *why* teachers make the decisions they do, specifically, looking into the role of beliefs and contextual factors that play a key part in teachers’ decision-making.

1.7.1 Spolsky's Language Policy Model (2004)

This study uses Spolsky's (2004) model to assess LiEP and to explain how teachers make decisions regarding MOI. Spolsky's (2004) model is useful because it holistically considers all three components that make up a language policy: practices, beliefs and management. Spolsky (2004) criticized earlier LPP work by arguing that inadequate attention was paid to the practices and beliefs of groups affected by LPP. More emphasis was laid on the stated language policy statements than on ideology or language choices. The Spolsky model (2004), however, entails not only the overt aspects of language policy (i.e. declared or explicit language policy statements) but also the covert aspects of language policy (i.e. practices and beliefs of group members). This expanded view of language policy gives a more complete picture of the language policy in place. For this reason, this study utilizes Spolsky's model as a theoretical framework and an entry point in identifying and analyzing the language policies of two types of schools: rural/government (Case 1) and urban/private (Case 2). This thesis examines the contents of, as well as relations between, all three components of the model concerning all available languages; namely, those that form part of the school and its teachers' linguistic repertoire, school curriculum and vernacular languages of Mewat.

However, the scope of Spolsky's model (2004) may be limited, in that while it provides a thorough framework for identifying language policy in place, it does not provide space for a transformative approach to language policy concerning minority languages. Nonetheless, this model is able to provide an organizing framework relevant to answering the stated research questions. Among the three components, language beliefs play a central role as they reflect the ideology behind the language policy. They are considered to "both derive from and influence practices. They can be a basis for language management or a management policy can be intended to confirm or modify them" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14). Therefore, language management can be influenced by the beliefs as well as can influence beliefs and practices. However, according to Spolsky (2004), it is the language practices component that holds the key as the real language policy is more likely to be found in the practices than in management (p. 222).

As Shohamy (2006) states, unless the management is consistent with beliefs and practices, along with other contextual factors at play, explicit policy statements reflect no more than declaration of intent that can be easily manipulated and challenged (p. 53). As dissonance can exist between the stated policy and actual language practices and beliefs held, it is pertinent to

examine all three components to get a holistic understanding of language policy. While there is a plethora of research examining language policy from either the practice or belief standpoints, studies tend not to examine all three components of the model (Wu, 2009, p. 2). One of the subsidiary aims of this study, therefore, is to address this gap and examine all three components of the model under one systematic mode of enquiry.

1.7.2 Bounded Rationality

This study uses bounded rationality to help explain why teachers make the decisions they do concerning MOI. The conceptual shift from rationality to bounded rationality first made its impact when it was introduced in economics by Herbert Simon (1956, 1957). Several scholars with an interest in cognitive psychology found this concept to be useful in explaining the relationship between human thinking and behavior in complex settings such as education.

Shavelson and Stern (1981) in their seminal paper took on the prevailing view of the time that saw teachers' observable behaviors as the main focus of any study. It implied that teachers were technicians, who simply put their training directly into practice. They noted much of the research on the thought processes of teachers rested on two assumptions: a) that teachers are rational professionals who make judgements and decisions in an uncertain and complex environment (p. 456); and b) that teachers' behavior is guided by their thoughts, judgements and decisions (p. 457).

Shavelson and Stern (1981) however, noted that it would be more appropriate to see teachers operating within a framework of "bounded rationality", rather than the "ideal" model of rationality. They say, this is due to the limited "capacity of the human mind for formulating and solving complex problems" and the complexity of the environment teachers find themselves in (p. 456). They argued, owing to the complexity of teaching environment, shortage of time and teachers' limited information processing capacities, teachers construct simplified models of the real context, behave rationally according to it and make reasonable judgements and decisions (pp. 456–457).

Agreeing with Shavelson and Stern's (1981) assertion, Clark and Peterson (1986) too asserted that "teachers seldom conform to the totally rational model" (as cited in Porter & Brophy, 1988, p. 77). Clark and Peterson (1986) insisted broader contexts in which teaching decisions and judgements are made (i.e., social, psychological, physical, political and metaphysical

surrounding) need to be recognized (as cited in Borg, S., 2006, p. 15). This was in contrast to the earlier trend, which studied teachers' decisions and judgements in isolation, detached from the school and classroom environment. Over time, the focus on teachers' thought processes meant that they came to be seen as problem solvers, "akin to physicians in diagnosing and solving problems", and as rational decision makers making judgements and decisions under complex conditions and constraints (Borg, S., 2006, p. 15).

I argue, this tendency to view teachers as rational decision makers who make informed decisions after carefully exhausting all possible alternatives, before settling for the most optimal alternative guaranteeing maximum utility, has its foundation in the rational choice theory (Nau, 1999, p. ii), which bears the hallmarks of neoclassical economic principles. The rational choice theory posited that individuals make decisions in their own self-interest by weighing costs and benefits before settling for an alternative that ensures the greatest benefit or satisfaction.

The concept of "bounded rationality", first proposed by Herbert Simon (1956, 1957), challenged this rational choice model. He questioned this idea by stating that human beings are at best, satisfiers, who after having established a criterion, generate and examine a limited number of choices in a heuristic or trial and error manner before going on to accept the first alternative that is "good enough", rather than searching for the best alternative or performing endless computation until they arrive at the best alternative (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 160).

Simon (1957, 1982) suggested that rationality is bounded because: a) humans have incomplete knowledge about all available alternatives, b) humans have only rough information about risks or uncertainties attached to consequences that follow from each alternative, and c) the complexities of environment are beyond the information processing capacities of humans as decision makers (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 161).

Comparing the rationality perspective that dominated the scholarship at the time with bounded rationality, Simon (1982) explained, the former assumed that "conditions and constraints" reside solely in the "objective characteristics of the environment external to the choosing organism" (p. 158). Whereas, the latter focused on "important constraints arising from the limitations of the actor himself as an information processor" (Simon, 1982, p. 162) and "its finiteness in comparison with the complexities of the world with which it must cope" (Simon, 1957, p. 198).

This, when applied in the context of education, holds true for teachers because constraints do not just arise from the school environment (heavy workload, infrastructural problems) but also arise from the limitation of teachers themselves (attention, memory, information processing capacities). Therefore, “Simon claimed that theories of human rationality should also consider the ‘characteristics of the organism itself’ or the ‘perceived characteristics’ of the environment” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 161). He termed this approach “subjective” or “bounded rationality”, instead of “objective rationality” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 161).

However, bounded rationality is not without limitations. As noted by Lee and Porter (1990), memory and information processing capacities (i.e. how information is stored and retrieved), get more focus than other human psychological components, which deserve equal attention (p. 169). These include, “selective attention, selective perception, schemata, belief systems, or implicit theories. In fact, many aspects of classroom teaching, ..., seem to be accounted for by these components more than memory capacities” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 169).

Additionally, bounded rationality fails to take into account social and cultural factors of the environment and how they interact with individual’s cognition and behavior (Lee & Porter, 1993, p. 398). This is evident in the context of Mewat, as will be discussed later (Chapter 8). Briefly, the findings suggest that teachers’ decision to exclude Mewati in the classroom, for instance, seemed to be guided by both their individual competence, beliefs and biases, as well as other contextual factors, such as policy and institutional constraints.

Another limitation of bounded rationality relates to “judgments of rationality between the simplified mental model and behavior” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 167). It indicates, for instance, that behavior of teachers is rational concerning the simplified model they construct, which is done to deal with the complexity of the real-world situation. However, as Lee and Porter (1990) argued, while bounded rationality “focuses on the complexity dimension of human rationality”, it “ignores the dimensions of validity and effectiveness” (p. 168).

Thus, for example, while teachers may construct a simplified mental model of using or allowing (exclusively) standard variety Hindi in the classroom, this may be an attempt to navigate the landscape of competing language interests, policy requirements and school expectations, the question however it raises is: how valid or effective is it in terms of serving students’ needs, improving their participation and literacy, reducing students’ anxiety,

affirming students' linguistic and cultural identity, promoting bidialectism or bilingualism in the classroom.

This is relevant given (as will be discussed in Chapter 5) nearly all teachers indicated that the (exclusive) use of standard Hindi severely restricted students' functional capacity and posed severe comprehension problems, yet they all persisted with it. Seen in this context, the rationality of the simplified mental model teachers constructed regarding which language(s) to use or allow inside the classroom is called into question. Even if the simplified mental model served the needs of teachers regarding simplifying the choice of medium for the classroom, it said little about the effectiveness or validity of teacher choices.

However, as Lee and Porter (1990) noted, "the three dimensions of complexity, validity, and effectiveness do not necessarily coincide" (p. 169). On some occasions some simplified models may be "inaccurate or even distorted concerning reality" (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 169). Therefore, Lee and Porter (1990) advocated, all these multiple dimensions involved in human rationality must be taken into account (p. 168).

Notwithstanding the limitations above, the framework of bounded rationality serves a valuable purpose in explaining human thinking and behavior in complex settings. It sheds light on teachers' tacit thinking, illustrating its influence on their decision-making and serving as a reminder that teachers' decisions may not always be rational (Seferaj, 2016, p. 53). This is particularly important as Seferaj (2016) notes, "teachers' tacit thinking has been ignored" and teachers' active thinking and acting has always been prioritized within the body of research in teacher cognition (p. 53). This study explores teachers' tacit thinking by highlighting the various ways it affects their actions inside the classroom.

1.8 Purpose of the Study

School is a crucial site where children at an early age are socialized into dominant language ideologies and value systems; where continued negotiation, reproduction and resistance of identities takes place; and where different languages compete with one another (LaDousa, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Ricento, 2006). It is for this reason that this research sets out to explore questions such as: Which languages are being used and at the expense of which ones in schools? Are language policies in education leading to maintenance and reproduction

of language inequalities with specific reference to a minority language variety like Mewati? And if so, how are practices, beliefs and ideologies accountable for this?

Generally, local languages and cultures in schools across India, tend to be ignored and marginalized within the broader LiEPs (Benedikter, 2009; Mohanty, 2019; Pandharipande, 1992, 2002). This research, therefore, sheds light on the space provided to minority languages in school settings. It also hopes to help explain how schools produce, sustain and reproduce language inequalities by keeping minority languages out of language policy frameworks and teaching and learning processes.

This study provides an analysis of LiEP in a rural setting in India with specific reference to a language spoken by a religious and ethnic minority group. The overarching objective of the research is a detailed sociolinguistic analysis of language practices, beliefs and management, in line with the model proposed by Spolsky (2004) in order to ascertain LiEP. Analyzing and applying the language practices, beliefs and management components of Spolsky's model will, hopefully, ensure the research questions are addressed. An attempt is made to provide a broad, holistic and rich account for Mewati in terms of LiEP. However, other languages are also considered and discussed.

Additionally, the main purpose driving this research is to endorse the need for mother tongue in education which would affirm linguistic human rights, ensure equitable distribution of resources, lead to linguistic pluralism, improve democratic participation and increase literacy rates. Ricento and Burnaby (1998) argue that researchers often try to separate "politics" from "policy" in their investigation (p. 342). However, this study is motivated by social change, and rejects the notion that "policy" is separate from "politics". In line with Cibulka (1995) who notes that "the borderline between policy research and policy argument is razor thin" (p. 118), this research attempts to position itself exactly on this borderline.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into nine chapters. The introductory chapter has provided background information on the language variety, speech community and the region in which this study was undertaken. Also discussed was the teacher cognition research within which this study falls, the framework of bounded rationality this study employs to make sense of the data

and present its argument, the research questions this study asks and the gaps this study seeks to fill.

The second chapter reviews literature in relation to education. It provides a historical overview of India's education policy pre- and post-economic liberalization, gives a brief overview of the RTE Act and two approaches to education that dominate national and global contexts.

The third chapter reviews literature in relation to LiEP. It provides a brief account of language policy and planning research as well as types, orientations and approaches to language planning. It briefly overviews LiEP in India, mother tongue-based multilingual education, and the language policy model proposed by Spolsky that this study aims to use in order to investigate LiEP in the two types of schools chosen for this study.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology employed in the study. It then describes the researcher's positionality, research design and challenges faced during the study. This is followed by a brief description of cases chosen for this study. It then describes data collection methods and process along with the sampling approach used for this study, and an overview of participants, before moving on to describe data analysis.

The fifth chapter presents findings of the individual case studies in relation to the research question that investigates what LiEP is in the two school types chosen for this study in order to examine the space occupied by Mewati. This chapter describes participant teachers' practices, beliefs and language management strategies used in the selected schools based on the model advanced by Spolsky.

The sixth chapter provides the analysis of findings in relation to the research question that investigates the LiEP followed in two types of schools visited during the study, discusses the theoretical implications of Spolsky's (2004) model and presents a way to build on this model further. It introduces (un/dys) consciousness as a key concept in light of the socio-historical and structural forces responsible for teachers' attitude and larger policy issues.

The seventh chapter presents findings of the individual case studies in relation to the other research question that addresses how the effects of neoliberalism in education interact with (minority) LiEP and influence teachers' views, judgements, decision-making abilities and behavior inside the classroom. It achieves this by reflecting on three broad themes – institutional, pedagogical and policy levels – that emerged from the analysis.

The eighth chapter discusses the findings in relation to the other research question that explores the link between the effects of neoliberalism and (minority) LiEP by specifically looking at the RTE Act (2009) to understand how they influence teachers' actions and judgements inside the classroom. It achieves this by first analyzing each case separately across the three themes, i.e. institutional, pedagogical and policy levels, before making a cross-case analysis. It then discusses implications of this study with particular reference to teachers' beliefs and contextual factors – two forces that affect teachers' cognition, before moving onto discussing the concept of bounded rationality that this study uses as an analytical framework to make sense of teachers' decisions. In the present neoliberal climate, teachers in India and Mewat particularly, act more as 'boundedly rational' rather than fully rational or reflective practitioners as one would ideally hope. Finally, the chapter concludes by highlighting the implications and usefulness of bounded rationality as a theoretical concept for practice and research purposes. Following this, limitations are outlined and finally the contributions to knowledge that this study makes are discussed.

Finally, the ninth chapter presents the conclusions of the study, discusses implications of the research findings, and provides some recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Global and National Contexts: Education Policy Discords and Contradictions

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the question of how the effects of neoliberalism in education interact with LiEP generally, and in the context of the RTE Act in India specifically. The aim is to understand the role of neoliberalism's effects in shaping teachers' views, judgements, decision-making abilities and behaviors inside the classroom (i.e. teacher cognition) with regard to the MOI employed. This is done in order to gain insights into why teachers make the decisions they do and what broad structural and ideological reasons lie behind those decisions. This is accomplished by critically examining ideologies (human capital theory (HCT) and rights-based discourse (RBD) (Robeyns, 2006)) and key historical events (pre- and post-Jomtien conference context (Sadgopal, 2006)) that led to the enactment of the RTE Act (2009) in India. The RTE Act (The Gazette of India, 2009) was ostensibly introduced to ensure 'equitable' and 'inclusive' education, and to 'transform' the teachers' role from being authoritative knowledge transmitters to that of being democratic or critical constructivists. The crucial point advanced in this chapter is that neoliberalism underpins contemporary educational policy reforms such as the RTE Act that strategically uses rights rhetoric, while simultaneously drawing upon human capital theory, which stands in stark opposition to it.

This chapter, thus, is divided into two main parts. The first part provides a review of the global context in terms of educational approaches guiding reforms such as the RTE Act (HCT and RBD), while the second part offers a background of the national context regarding India's education history that set the scene for the Act (the pre- and post-Jomtien phase) and the RTE Act itself.

In order to fully understand the RTE Act, it is important to discuss the global context, forces and broader approaches to education that led to its birth. I argue that in post-liberalization India, two approaches have run in parallel that have shaped the current RTE Act. These are HCT and RBD. While the RTE Act ostensibly uses rights rhetoric, it is inconsistent with both how fundamental rights are enshrined in the Indian constitution and how RBD is conceptualized globally. The evidence presented in subsequent sections of this chapter, and the findings generated from this study, suggest that notwithstanding its rights-based rhetoric,

the RTE Act is in principle, driven by both HCT and RBD approaches that are contradictory in their overall goals. The next four sections will shed light on this further.

The first section will briefly outline the two approaches to education, HCT and RBD, and the roles of international donor agencies and the Indian state in setting the scene for the RTE Act. The second section will look at HCT more closely and how it interacts with LiEP. The third section will explore RBD by comparing rights as defined in the Indian RTE Act (2009) to a global rights-based “4As” framework as developed by the former UN Special Rapporteur, Katarina Tomasevski (2006). Finally, the fourth section will conclude with the main argument of this chapter demonstrating how both these discourses often run in parallel, contradicting one another, informing the RTE Act under the current neoliberal framework.

2.1 Global Approaches to Education: Human Capital Theory and Rights-Based Discourse

This study argues that two approaches to education – HCT and RBD – have run in parallel and been adopted by the Indian state since the 1990s when India first liberalized its economy and launched market-based reforms. The stage that set the scene for the emergence of the RTE Act (2009), that purportedly employs RBD, was the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 followed by the Dakar Framework in 2000 (Sadgopal, 2010), this will be discussed later in Section 2.2.3. Together, these policy formulations supported by the World Bank and the UN agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF) along with the IMF and the World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) ensured a gradual withdrawal of the Indian state from key social sectors such as health and education (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 29). This ensured that the void left by the Indian state was to be filled by private organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate houses and religious bodies (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 34).

The neoliberal assault on education and privatization intensified during the span of the Jomtien and Dakar frameworks and this was evident with the emergence of low-fee private schools that sprung up across India in rural as well as urban spaces, public-private partnerships, school voucher systems (freeships allotted and funded by the government in the form of 25% seats to be reserved for economically and weaker sections in private schools as per 12 (1) (c) of the

RTE Act), private tuitions, and a rise in private schools including for-profit providers (Srivastava, 2010, p. 522). This laid the foundation for RBD that would soon be used in order to strengthen the case for a greater role of privatization in education. One way the support for privatization was galvanized by key actors involved in the EFA movement was through the strategic use of what Srivastava (2010) termed “mobilizing frames” or “ways in which global educational problems and their solutions are talked about and used to legitimate and motivate collective action” (Mundy & Murphy, 2001, p. 91). These mobilizing frames included: “scarce resources, efficiency, competition-choice-quality, and social equity” (Srivastava, 2010, p. 522).

The scarce resources frame is based “on a simplistic application of the supply and demand model” which implies that public institutions suffer from a scarcity of resources and thus in order to meet the increasing demand of providing primary education, private investment is necessary, and privatization must be encouraged (Srivastava, 2010, p. 525).

The efficiency frame assumes that public institutions such as government schools are incapable of running efficiently, that they suffer from “poor governance and weak institutions” and the solution offered is to either allow the private sector to completely take hold or enter into a public-private partnership with different actors such as NGOs, religious bodies and corporations (Srivastava, 2010, p. 525).

The competition-choice-quality frame relies on the assumption that a rise in the number of private schools will lead to parents having a greater choice (e.g. vouchers) which will ensure greater accountability on the part of schools as they will compete among each other leading to an increase in the overall quality of education (Srivastava, 2010, p. 526). The results concerning quality, however, as Srivastava reminds us, paint a mixed picture as India’s case demonstrates, where gender and social class factors tend to mediate. The presence and rise of low-fee private schools that have mushroomed all across India, for instance, does not necessarily indicate quality education as several of them employ and reinforce rote learning and teacher-centered pedagogical approaches, remain under-resourced and unrecognized or gain state recognition through corrupt means.

The social equity frame strategically employs RBD in favor of “individual rights in combination with the competition-choice-quality frame” to make a case for “increased privatization [that] will extend avenues of social mobility” (Srivastava, 2010, p. 527).

The World Bank played a key role in influencing the “development agenda” and placing “policy prescriptions” on borrowing nations in the Global South (Rose, 2003, p. 67). The Washington Consensus (1980–1990) that emerged in the wake of the oil crisis in the 1970s laid the foundation of the current neoliberal project by ensuring that multilateral organizations and donor agencies in the Global North played a key role in their dealings with low-income countries in the Global South (Tikly, 2004, p. 179). A part of this consensus was the IMF and World Bank led SAP and conditional lending which meant that countries in the developing world had to steadily reduce its public expenditure in order to be eligible for receiving various loans (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 30).

During this time countries in the Global North were in the process of restructuring their economies by implementing austerity, deregulating and liberalizing their economies, and opening up their markets for global competition (Al’Abri, 2011, p. 497). The neoliberal rhetoric was gaining ground and the idea was to encourage the debtor countries in the Global South to deregulate and open their markets, move towards a more export-led economy, allow foreign direct investments, and roll-back on public expenditure (Tikly, 2004, p. 179). The idea was to convince these debtor countries “that economic growth is principally linked to the development of individual entrepreneurialism and the extension of the market into the formally social sphere” (Tikly, 2004, p. 179). This was closely linked to the human capital approach to education (HCT) that emerged during the 1960s, led by economists from the University of Chicago, most prominently Theodor Schultz and Gary Becker (Robeyns, 2006, p. 72).

2.1.1 Human Capital Theory

HCT relies on a standard cost-benefit analysis, links individual investment in education to higher wages, economic growth and productivity, and views the value of education in primarily instrumental and economistic ways (Robeyns, 2006, p. 72). While it is not wrong to conceptualize education in terms of its instrumental value, viewing education solely in instrumental and economistic terms limits its role and potential (Robeyns, 2006, p. 73). This has implications for the use of minority languages in the context of LiEP. For instance, the human capital approach to education when applied in the context of MOI would lead one to opt for a language that gives the maximum rate of return on investment. Seen in this regard, the instrumental value of English is widely acknowledged, but an exclusive use of English alone at the expense of students’ mother tongue or the language most familiar, may alienate

them, thereby not proving the best strategy (Babaci-Wilhite, Geo-JaJa, & Lou, 2012, p. 637). This is particularly true considering minority languages are often deemed unfit for the classroom.

Among the most vocal advocates of HCT up until the 1990s had been the World Bank which endorsed the view that education is an investment made by rational individuals that when done properly leads to economic growth and development, boosts productivity, and reduces poverty (Mehrotra, 2005, p. 301). According to the World Bank, education provided a means to generate human capital which could help in reducing poverty and boosting the productivity of individuals. This was evident from its 1995 and 1999 strategy documents: “human capital...helps reduce poverty by increasing... productivity” (World Bank, 1995, p.1), “for the poor...human capital [i]s the main, if not only, means of escaping poverty” (World Bank, 1999, p. 1) and “human capital development→productivity” (World Bank, 1999, p. 5). However, as Ginsburg (2012) argued, these statements limit the aims of education to merely “developing through formal education the human capital of students as future workers” (p. 90).

Throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, several of the World Bank-backed educational policies, stemmed from what it perceived as “flawed” educational policies followed by the South (Menashy, 2007, p. 48). Holding South governments accountable for having their priorities wrong, mismanaging resources leading to inefficiency and inequity, the World Bank proposed “cost-effective” and “resource-generation” strategies. These included private provision of education that would give parents more “choice” to choose schools, students more “incentive” to work harder as they would be paying for their education, and promote “competition” among schools, all of which would improve “efficiency”, ensure greater “equity” and result in better “quality” and “outcomes” (Menashy, 2007, p. 48).

The World Bank’s emphasis on “economic efficiency and growth” has been criticized over the years for its narrow perception in how it conceptualizes education’s primary objectives (Menashy, 2007, p. 50). The World Bank’s proposal to improve efficiency by cutting education budgets would work the same way as “a factory manager would attempt to increase output while cutting costs” (Alexander, 2001, p. 304). The narrow ways in which the World Bank defines the aims of education has been observed by Klees (2002), who examined past World Bank documents related to education and found consistent references to terms such as “cost-effective”, “efficient” and “high rate of return” (p. 451).

Thus, by primarily viewing education “in an economically instrumentalist light, or as job preparation”, the World Bank endorses the HCT (Menashy, 2007, p. 50), which disregards “the very real institutional structures through which unequal power operates; it offers no satisfactory mechanism for understanding and dealing with problems of equity; and it cannot explain such phenomena as persistent discrimination along sex, race, and class lines” (Easton & Klees, 1992, p. 131). HCT perpetuates and rests on the idea of “meritocracy”, and consequently, social inequality is explained in terms of individual differences relating to “talent, preferences and effort” (Tarabini, 2010, p. 206).

Moreover, HCT has been fraught with problems from its inability to fully explain or engage with causal factors that contribute to social inequalities to the failings of the Jomtien and Dakar conferences (EFA movement) in achieving the results that the World Bank had anticipated or set out to achieve (King & McGrath, 2012, p. 8). Several of the developing countries, for instance, did not achieve the level of economic growth HCT had predicted, nor did they help in creating productive and high-skilled workers or ensure provision of quality education. Even when enrollment of students increased, they still struggled with retaining them in schools (Chimombo, 2005, p. 129). Due to the debilitating SAP loan conditionalities imposed on low-income countries by international donor agencies such as the World Bank and IMF, budget cuts in public education and increasing privatization resulted in a widening gap between those who had access to (quality) education and others who did not (Enns, 2015, p. 373).

Realizing the above issues, the World Bank had to shift its agenda from advocating for HCT during the Washington Consensus period to RBD apparent in the era of the post-Washington Consensus. Rose (2003) argued, the post-Washington Consensus in the 1990s did not emerge from thorough critiques or disagreement with the Washington Consensus that predated it, but partly due “to an awareness of the need to address the political realities of borrowing countries” (p. 76). She went on to argue: “The basic policy instruments continue to be based on Washington Consensus principles of free trade and privatisation, with the only significant change being a reassessment of a role for the state to ensure that they can be implemented effectively and humanely” (p. 76). Consequently, adopting a RBD for education could arguably be termed an attempt on the part of the World Bank to change its prior image, only now it remained “neo-liberalism with a human face” (Rose, 2003, p. 75).

The World Bank never fully parted ways from its association with the HCT (Mehrotra, 2005, p. 301). This was further supported by Jones (1997) who claimed that the World Bank never ceased advocating for the HCT, “what has changed is the bank’s perception of its own role, the most dramatic changes being corrections of earlier arbitrariness rather than any shift in fundamentals...the bank’s rationale has barely changed in 35 years, a celebration of the elegance of human capital theory” (p. 118). That said, a recent change in the World Bank’s attitude towards a more RBD has been attributed to the influence of other multilateral organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, equally involved in the EFA movement, both played distinct roles but espoused more “rights-based” agendas (Menashy, 2013, p. 757).

After becoming part of the globalized economy, the Indian state embraced the human capital approach to education (Majumdar & Mooij, 2011, p. 7). However, just like the World Bank, its agenda too has shifted over the years, judging by what it claims on paper and what happens in practice. One such example is the RTE Act and its usage of RBD. India’s RTE Act (2009) had its foundation in the global right to education discourse that was prevalent at the time of the EFA movement, in which international organizations working with children and education such as UNESCO and UNICEF, with a more rights-based agenda, played a key role (Robeyns, 2006, p. 75).

The World Bank though turned out to be the key actor being the largest external donor to India’s flagship programs such as the SSA. SSA is responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the RTE Act, introduced in 2001 by the Government of India after the EFA World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) to ensure the universalization of elementary education of children aged six to fourteen by 2010. Soon after the launching of the SSA, the foundation for the RTE Act was laid in 2002 when the 86th amendment of the Constitution took place and Article 21 A was inserted, thereby making education a fundamental right for students in the said age group “in such manner as the state may, by law, determine”. On August 4, 2009, the RTE Act was finally enacted and it came into effect on April 1, 2010, ostensibly utilizing RBD.

However, there is a tension between SSA and the RTE Act. The World Bank supported SSA is guided by a cost-benefit analysis and driven by HCT, while the RTE Act draws on RBD. While both SSA and the RTE Act emerged from the EFA movement, EFA itself suffered from internal contradictions. As McCowan (2011) claimed, “EFA – particularly through the work

of the World Bank – is also strongly influenced by human capital theory, which justifies education through cost–benefit analysis for individuals and nations, and thus in many ways is diametrically opposed to human rights frameworks” (p. 284). With the prominent position of RBD concerning global discourse surrounding education, it is pertinent to understand its origin and possible limitations.

2.1.2 Rights-Based Discourse

While HCT had its origin in neoclassical economics, RBD had its roots firmly in legal philosophy. Unlike HCT, which emphasized the instrumental role of education, RBD emphasized both its intrinsic and instrumental roles. RBD conceptualized education as a right and not just as an investment, and in the process, transformed how learners were conceptualized, as rights-holders, and not just “input factors for economic production and growth” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 75).

Although appealing, RBD does suffer from limitations. For one, it could be “overtly rhetorical” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 76). Unterhalter (2003) agreed:

It is widely held in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in documentation associated with the EFA movement, with the Millennium Development Targets and in the Constitutions of many countries that education is an intrinsic good for women and men. But sometimes these statements appear merely rhetorical. (p. 9)

Likewise, Robeyns (2006) argued, several of these rights remain on paper as declarations or as “outcome targets” but with no mention of who will oversee these targets, ensure they are met and hold relevant people accountable (p. 76). Thus, in several developing countries, including India, while students might have the right to education, they either may not be enrolled or present in schools or if present, teachers may be absent. Thus, the right to education, even if granted may not ensure equitable quality of education (Sadgopal, 2010).

The second problem with RBD, is a lack of clarity about whether the right to education is a moral or legal right, as human rights could be defined as either or both (Robeyns, 2006, p. 76). Since RBD is defined vaguely and is often reduced to legal rights, Robeyns argued, national governments could define such rights in whichever way they see fit. However, should the right to education be defined as a moral right, the accompanying responsibilities and obligations to implement it may extend beyond the government.

The third problem with RBD is that by simply laying out rights as declarations and granting them to citizens, the government may assume its job is done. Thus, Robeyns (2006) argued, it is not sufficient for the government to simply declare what the rights are, rather also to investigate what constrains them and help ensure that they are secured (p. 77).

Lastly, one of the problems with RBD is that it is “exclusively government-focused” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 77). This in part has to do with its conceptualization as only a legal right. This puts the onus squarely on the government, instead of the community at large, which as Robeyns (2006) argued, may not be the best outcome, since “in some countries the governments are part of the problem, rather than part of the solution” (p. 77). This, however, is not to suggest as McCowan (2011) cautioned, that privatization in education is the answer or that one must do away with RBD entirely, but that “broader societal involvement” and community engagement is required rather than relying on “formal state institutions” alone (p. 295). In the context of RBD, it is the state that is primarily responsible for ensuring and guarding rights. Thus, the state is what could be held accountable, should the need arise (McCowan, 2011, p. 288).

Overall, while Robeyns (2006) agreed that RBD plays an important role as it can “account for the intrinsic and non-economic roles that education plays”, nonetheless, it still “runs the risk of overemphasizing the legal aspects of rights” with the effect that “a rights discourse can induce policy makers to being contented when they have strictly followed the rules that a limited interpretation of the rights imposes on them, even when additional efforts are necessary to meet the goal that underlies the right” (p. 70). Therefore, she argued that RBD is only one way of approaching how education policies could be designed and thus should be used “strategically”.

McCowan (2011), on the other hand, while conceding Robeyns’ (2006) claim on overemphasis on the legal aspect of rights and issues surrounding its implementation, made a strong case in favor of the RBD approach by claiming that despite its shortcomings, “right language may be used rhetorically to achieve a particular effect” (p. 288). McCowan (2011) argued: “Affirming that something is a right is to give a moral claim a certain status. It is to say that it is a moral claim that trumps competing considerations, such that it cannot be infringed, whatever the benefits for others” (p. 288). While that may be true, however, merely stating that people have a right to something says nothing about the process or its outcome.

Nussbaum (2000), for instance, while drawing a sharp distinction between formal and substantive entitlements and how it plays out in gender discourse observed that RBD tended to overemphasize the former over the latter. She noted that while women in several countries had the right to politically participate, they did not have the right to do so in a manner that ensured their safety (p. 98). Merely granting a right may also not yield significant outcomes. If the right to education for marginalized and oppressed communities is to access “low-prestige institutions”, without ensuring an equitable quality of education, prospects of future employment and further opportunities, such a right would not amount to much (McCowan, 2011, p. 286).

It is to fill this gap in the rights-based framework that the work of former UN Special Rapporteur, Tomasevski (2006), on the right to education is helpful. She developed a “4As” framework, that provided a list of broad standards and conditions that the right to education needed to fulfill in order to be effective: *availability* – relates to the obligation on the part of the state to ensure sufficient infrastructure, teachers, teaching materials and equipment; *accessibility* – relates to schools being accessible to all without any obstacles, physical or economic barriers and discrimination; *acceptability* – relates to the quality and appropriateness of education that takes into account learners’ language and culture and curricula that is non-indoctrinatory; and *adaptability* – relates to education that is responsive to the changing needs of society and the needs of vulnerable groups in particular.

Applying this framework in India, however, reveals a different picture. The neoliberal policies followed by the Indian state, since market reforms were first launched in the 1990s, have ensured the ongoing deterioration and segmentation of the Indian education system. The commodification of education and privatization has been on the rise since liberalizing the economy. This has included the prevalence of private teacher training institutes, and a mushrooming of for-profit and low-cost private schools across India as an alternative to public schools which face decaying infrastructure and years of neglect (Kumar, 2001; Nambissan & Ball, 2010; Thapliyal, 2016). This crisis in the public education system resulted from a series of cost-cutting measures employed by the Indian state that included: reducing public investment in education and increasing contractualization of teachers (Sadgopal, 2010; Venkatanarayanan, 2015). Institutional malpractices and ineffective school management committees (SMCs) further plagued the education system (PROBE, 1999). A lack of emphasis

on teacher training, the prevalence of multigrade teaching, and teachers' 'old-fashioned' preference for an over-reliance on textbooks further worsened the state of education (Majumdar & Mooij, 2011). This has been compounded by growing far-right nationalists' influence on state curricula and the resulting indoctrination through curricula control (Sundar, 2004). Seen in this light, Tomasevski's 4As framework has to be assessed against these features that currently characterize the Indian education system.

Thapliyal (2012) analyzed the provisions listed in the RTE Act (2009) using Tomasevski's "4As" framework. Regarding the "availability" dimension, the RTE Act was found limited in that it only stressed providing free and compulsory education to children aged 6–14 (p. 74). It was unclear on how decisions were made regarding budgetary allocation, which is crucial to know to ensure sufficient infrastructure, availability of teachers, teaching materials and equipment. The absence of a financial memorandum at the time of the passing of the Act by the central government implied a lack of "political commitment" on its part and placed "an unfair burden on under-resourced states" for its implementation (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 75).

Regarding "accessibility", the "4As" framework was far more explicit and comprehensive in recognizing certain factors. These included: "geography, economic circumstances and cultural practices" that acted as barriers, preventing equal access to schools. The RTE Act however while recognizing some of these barriers, excluded other discriminatory cultural practices based on "sexuality, language, and nationality, to name just a few", and in this regard, suffered from "both being too specific and not specific enough" (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 78).

Furthermore, while the SMCs may have been entrusted with reporting any mental or physical harassment and abuse of children, "schools are not all ordered to protect all children at all times" (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 78). In addition, Thapliyal argued, government-aided but privately managed schools are exempted from following some of the RTE provisions and unaided schools are not even required to form SMCs, which means parents and students have very limited means to report any discrimination or harassment. Additionally, the RTE Act lacks a systematic, transparent and effective monitoring mechanism that could measure the quality of a student's experience and discrimination that occurs at all levels of schooling: pedagogy, curriculum, school culture and policies, data on the use of children's first languages and recruitment of teachers from historically marginalized backgrounds (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 79).

Grievance-reporting mechanisms, while present in the Act, need to be made more widely available, accessible and “child-friendly” because in the current state “institutions are not required to maintain confidentiality” (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 80). Currently, the SMCs have been entrusted with the grievance-reporting task to the local authority, but they are already burdened with administrative and supervisory duties, as was the case in Mewat. Moreover, unaided schools in the absence of any SMCs, have no provision for grievance redressal. Furthermore, Thapliyal (2012) argued, the Act does not do justice in how it intends to “counter effects of discrimination for out-of-school children” (p. 81). This period of transition when out-of-school children are mainstreamed into formal education can be challenging both for students and teachers, thus Thapliyal argued, by simply providing age-appropriate teaching material or special training to “regular teachers or specially trained teachers” for three months and up to two years, as it says in the Act, may not be sufficient.

The “acceptability” dimension relates to every factor influencing teaching and learning including pre-educational conditions influencing life chances, the education process and the monitoring of outcomes (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 82). “Acceptability” is thus exhaustive, but when applied to the RTE Act, it does not meet the curricula requirements of students in terms of considering their language and cultural backgrounds (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 87). Section 29 (2) (f) of the RTE Act for instance states that the “medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue”, thereby diluting the fundamental right of children to receive education in their mother tongue “to a matter of practicability” (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 83). This is inconsistent with the fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution: Article 19(a), i.e. freedom of speech and expression; and Article 350 A, which makes it obligatory for the state to “provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups...” (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 26). The Act therefore fails to make room for children’s mother tongues and cultural backgrounds, consequently failing in the “acceptability” dimension.

Overall, as Thapliyal (2012) noted, that with rights come responsibilities. The Act however, doesn’t ensure a rights-based curriculum that will address issues of discrimination, respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, human rights education and student participation, all necessary components for “democratic deliberation” (pp. 83–84). The Act does not have provisions for equitable quality of education. Rather, it legitimizes the existing multi-tier, hierarchical and

segmented education system that caters to different caste and class backgrounds. For instance, it sets minimum norms and standards required for schools lower than some of the specified category schools such as central schools (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 82; Sadgopal, 2010, pp. 22–23). The problem with these minimum norms and standards is that they are not universally applicable to all schools.

Furthermore, teachers in government schools continue to be burdened with non-teaching activities (election duties, decennial population census and disaster relief) and teaching in hostile conditions without much support or security (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 85). This while teachers are expected to attend to students with special needs (out-of-school children and children with disabilities) and do continuous and comprehensive assessment. As Thapliyal argued, this is further worsened by Section 23 of the RTE Act that allows states to hire undertrained, underqualified contract or para teachers without minimum qualifications for a period of 5 years. Citing the PROBE Revisited Report, Thapliyal alerted, that given most of the para-teachers belong to relatively privileged backgrounds (as was the case with this study), they are unlikely to be accountable to children and their families belonging to disadvantaged communities.

Lastly, the “adaptability” dimension expects that the kind of education provided to students will be flexible enough to consider the diverse and changing needs of society. For this to happen, an effective teacher must ensure a supportive learning environment where students can flourish and use the skills and knowledge that could “enable them to sustain themselves through social and economic changes that are certain to feature in their lives” (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 88). Additionally, Thapliyal posited, education should be provided in such a manner that children are enabled to link the right to education, for instance, with other human and children’s rights. Seen in this regard, the Act and its implementation leaves a lot to be desired as it only represents the needs and “best interests of some children”, does not ensure and promote linkage with other human rights, and does not ensure education that would be relevant for students’ “autonomy and self-sustainability” from an “economic and psycho-social perspective” (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 88).

In summary, Thapliyal (2012), while acknowledging the flaws of the RTE Act, is still supportive of the rights-based approach, the “4As” framework particularly, that could systematically act as a monitoring mechanism to ensure the implementation of the RTE Act

for it “gives as much consideration to ‘process’ as it does to ‘outcomes’” (p. 89). The “4As” framework is useful because it “conceptualizes education as intrinsically valuable, as a public good and a fundamental lifelong entitlement” (Thapliyal, 2012, p. 89). Overall, Thapliyal (2012) made a key point that a neoliberal conception of the RTE Act conflates access to education with right to education and reminds us that: “An unequal education system cannot create an equal society” (p. 90). Thus, for the RTE Act to be truly effective, it must ensure provision of equitable quality of education.

2.1.3 Human Capital Theory and Rights-Based Discourse Running in Parallel

Global discourse on education has been shaped by the two abovementioned approaches namely HCT and RBD. However, I argue, there is an overlap in how education policies are framed and implemented, as the case of the RTE Act in India represents. I propose that the RTE Act integrates aspects of both approaches, even if it seemingly uses rights-based rhetoric. In India, both approaches have run in parallel. This became even more apparent post-1991 when India first liberalized its economy, and post-2009 after the enactment of the RTE Act. While HCT articulates “the outlook and core themes of neo-liberalism”, RBD draws on “more traditional, liberal ideas” (Tikly, 2011, pp. 87–88).

The main focus of HCT has been development and economic growth, whereas, the realization of fundamental human rights such as rights to, in and through education has been the main focus of RBD (Tikly, 2011, p. 89). While the right to education primarily relates to access, rights in education deal with respecting and protecting learners, and rights through education ensure developing capacities among learners to exercise human rights (McCowan, 2011, p. 289). That said, it is the right *to* education, rather than right *in* and *through* education, that has received the most attention. Since the time when RBD was first codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the primary focus has been on ensuring children’s access to schools or increasing their enrollment rates rather than ensuring quality education or protection of children’s rights once they arrived in schools (Bajaj, 2014, p. 58).

Bajaj (2014) observed how the global RBD or the “rights talk” has been strategically used to promote different ideologies in education and cited the RTE Act in India as an example. She claimed that the RTE Act in India highlights the “productive plasticity of rights talk and how

human rights concepts are strategically engaged due to their international currency and discursive popularity” (p. 66). Bajaj (2014) noted that the rising influence of RBD globally not only informs education policies in how they are enacted but also how they are framed nationally. Frames are important for analysis because they do not simply reflect policy ideas, but also point to “a discourse that helps political actors sell policy choices to the public” (Béland, 2005, p. 11).

Speaking of how a case for privatization in education is made in India, Srivastava (2010) analyzed four mobilizing frames – scarce resources, efficiency, competition-choice-quality and social equity – that are deployed to make its case stronger, as mentioned earlier in section 2.1. However, these frames can also be used to comprehend how RBD is deployed strategically in the RTE Act, how the neoliberalism that underpins the Act interacts with schools and teachers, and its overall impact on teachers’ actions, language attitude and policies, which is an overall objective of this study.

As discussed earlier in section 2.1, international organizations and donor aid agencies have played a key role in the production and propagation of RBD and lobbying for privatization. In doing so, they have a considerable degree of influence in shaping educational policies (Bajaj, 2014). While the World Bank has traditionally backed neoliberal policies and embraced HCT, UN organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF have generally favored liberal policies and advocated RBD (Menashy, 2013, p. 757). Since the World Bank is the largest donor to fund India’s two biggest national programs preceding the RTE Act, the DPEP (District Primary Education Program) and SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or Education for All), its importance cannot be understated. The World Bank, however, remains deeply wedded to HCT, as reflected in its new “Education Strategy 2020, Learning for All” (Vally & Spreen, 2012, p. 177).

The RTE Act too, while in theory deploys RBD, supports HCT by strategically using “rights talk” (Bajaj, 2014). This furthers the neoliberal agenda through tactical use of “mobilizing frames” (Srivastava, 2010), but fails to ensure the right to an equitable and quality education. Despite its rights-based rhetoric, the RTE Act is inconsistent with the way RBD is conceptualized and endorsed by international organizations, legislations and policy mandates globally, as was shown in section 2.1.2. From its position on support for privatization to not focusing on the provision of quality education to a lack of attention on teacher quality and

training to budgetary cuts to education, the RTE Act leaves much to be desired. This is further compounded by implementation problems.

In terms of its implementation, the latest study by a civil society organization called Right to Education Forum, published in *The New Indian Express* in 2018, revealed 92% of schools do not comply with the RTE Act's provisions and several teaching posts continue to remain vacant in the face of unskilled and untrained teaching professionals. The report further noted the government had missed its 2013 deadline to make all schools RTE compliant and though several years had passed, it remained far from achieving its target. It further reported, the Indian Government continues to spend less than 3% on education (despite its obligation of spending 6%) with India's per capita spending four times less than that incurred by middle-income countries.

If one were to assess quality of education provided by means of measuring learning outcomes, then the RTE Act paints a dismal picture. Reading and arithmetic skills revealed in the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by the non-governmental organization Pratham, reported *Telegraph*, points to a downward curve in learning outcomes. For instance, reading skills of grade 5 students who could read grade 2 textbooks have consistently declined, with 49.6% in 2010, 41% in 2011, 37.7% in 2012, and 34% in 2013 (Sahuliyar & Ganguly, 2014). The *Telegraph* report further went on to say, the arithmetic skills of grade 5 students who could do simple division fell from 40.8% in 2010, 24% in 2011, 24.3% in 2012 and 21.9% in 2013.

The ASER report concluded that more than half of students in grade 5 were three levels behind where they should be in acquiring basic learning skills. While standards were bad in both public and private schools, the ASER report concluded that enrollment in private schools was on the rise with 28.3% in 2012 compared with 18.7% in 2010. It then went on to predict that if the same trend continued then 50% of students in India could be studying in private schools. It is important to mention that 'private schools' are not homogenous and include anything ranging from low-fee charging to elite schools.

In 2008, six thousand students from two Indian states – Rajasthan and Orissa – participated in the global Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test, coordinated by the International Educational Assessment (IEA). Out of 49, they ranked 43rd and 47th respectively (Mundle, 2017, p. 25).

Subsequently, in 2009 India decided to participate in the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test coordinated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), organized every three years, that measures the educational outcomes of 15-year-old students of member countries participating in the test in the areas of reading, mathematics and science and assesses their problem solving and cognitive skills. Of the 74 countries that participated in the 2009 PISA test, educationally the two best performing states from India (Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) found themselves at the bottom with ranks 72nd and 73rd (Mundle, 2017, p. 25).

Attributing this to “a socio-cultural disconnect between the test and Indian students”, the Indian Government withdrew from participating in the 2012 and subsequent PISA tests (Scott, Terano, Slee, Husbands, & Wilkins, 2016, p. 99). The Indian Government blamed its poor performance on the “western-style” test not being suitable for Indian children. However, this was a bad excuse considering other Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore, aside from performing exceptionally well in the 2009 PISA test, have gone on to perform consistently well in subsequent tests (Mundle, 2017, p. 25). So much so that other Western “Former education superpowers – the United States, England, France, Germany and Sweden – have lost their centre-stage roles” to these Eastern countries (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 136).

While there is a heated debate between the proponents and critics regarding the necessity and significance of these international tests and their capacity to measure the quality of education (Bautier & Rayon, 2007; Dohn, 2007; Goldstein, 2004; Prais, 2003; Riley & Torrance, 2003; Sahlberg, 2011; Schleicher, 2007), nonetheless they provide an insight, however limited, into what is being taught and learnt inside the classroom.

Aside from learning outcomes revealing the state of the Indian education system, the very act or opportunity of learning itself is not the same across the board. The exclusionary practices entrenched in the Indian education system were brought to the fore by the first international collaborative India Exclusion Report (2014) published by an independent research and advocacy organization, the Centre for Equity Studies (New Delhi). It concluded that women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and Children with Disabilities continue to face systematic exclusion from the schooling system. The nature of exclusion was characterized both in terms of access, and curricular and textbook content, not matching these students’ learning needs and socio-

cultural realities, and the pedagogy used inside the classroom acting as an exclusionary mechanism (p. 58).

The India Exclusion Report (2014) further stated that with the advent of the RTE Act, much spending had gone towards improving the school infrastructure and construction activities rather than on investing in teacher education and recruitment to improve students' learning outcomes (p. 23). Despite this, most schools continued to face neglect and severely lacked infrastructural facilities (p. 56). The report went on to suggest making changes in the curriculum, learning materials and teaching pedagogy by adopting mother tongue-based multilingual education and by recruiting an adequate number of trained teachers to serve that purpose to make the education system more equitable and inclusive (p. 69).

Subrahmanian (2002b) also argued that without changing the traditional relationships both inside and outside the school which have shaped exclusion, the exclusive focus of the RTE Act on 'access' to meet "international targets for enrolments and universalization...limits the agenda to a very narrowly framed policy agenda" (p. 7).

The RTE Act, thus, has failed to live up to its potential and stated purpose in terms of implementation and effectiveness, and the current neoliberal order has been a driving force for its failure. While the Indian state has used the rights-based rhetoric, as evidenced by the RTE Act, the human capital approach to education continues to guide the Indian education system and policies. This is apparent by the Indian Government's unbridled commitment towards privatization and its increasing emphasis on the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model of education, while simultaneously defunding public education.

This simultaneous talk of rights all while rolling back on public expenditure in education is contradictory and this view is echoed by Subrahmanian (2002a) who noted: "The proliferation of rights is particularly ironic in situations where rampant marketization has been encouraged, with states cutting back more and more of the essential services they are obliged to provide to meet the rights of their citizens" (pp. 210–211).

The Indian Government in its "Eleventh Five-Year Plan 2007–2012" made its commitment towards privatization clear stating "in the liberalized global economy, where there is a pursuit for achieving excellence, the legitimate role of private providers of quality education not only needs to be recognised, but also encouraged" (Government of India, 2008, p. 9). Furthermore,

it went on to list “philanthropic foundations, endowments, educational trusts, and reputed private providers” as potential education development partners (Government of India, 2008, p. 17).

Similarly, in the “Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012–2017”, the Government of India called for the expansion of the private sector and promoted private investment in education by “easing the regulatory restrictions” (Planning Commission, 2013, p. 64). The Twelfth Five-Year Plan was even “more explicit about the use of the private sector in social sectors, including in elementary education and in the expansion of secondary education” than the Tenth and Eleventh Five-Year Plans (Srivastava, 2016, p. 16).

The Twelfth Five-Year Plan justified the PPP model on the grounds of access. For instance, it welcomed the PPP model “as a viable alternative to improve access to quality school education while ensuring equity and social justice” (National Council of Education Research and Training [NCERT], 2009, p. 4). Like the Eleventh Plan, the Twelfth Five-Year Plan too justified the PPP model to “meet the government’s objective of establishing world-class schools for providing quality education to underprivileged children who cannot afford to pay the tuition fee that good private schools charge” (Planning Commission, 2012, p. 96). Thus, the Twelfth Five-Year Plan justified the PPP model on the grounds of quality, in addition to access.

One of the ways privatization has been encouraged by the RTE Act is through a government guarantee to subsidize private education by reserving 25% of seats in private schools which would be paid by the government. This provision, in Section 12(1) (c), helps remove “entry barriers for the further expansion of the private sector” (Srivastava, 2016, p. 16). This provision “opened a new chapter in the ‘state-private’ equation” and this must be seen in the context of an expansion of the range of private providers across the country, a definite shift of students from government schools to private schools, and a rapid proliferation of private schools” (Mehendale, Mukhopadhyay, & Namala, 2015, p. 45).

Drawing together evidence from three sources, the District Information System for Education (DISE), the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), a case could be made regarding the expansion of the private school sector and abdication of responsibilities on part of the Indian Government.

This open support for privatization and private investment in education is visible with the DISE data, an annual census collecting data on all schools in the country, indicating that in 2013 almost 29% of elementary school children in India were enrolled in private schools. An important caveat is that the DISE data does not include unrecognized private schools, of which there are many, and thus under-represents the number of private schools operating in the country (Kingdon, 2017, p. 4).

Similarly, the 2014–15 National Sample Survey, an annual household survey that periodically collects and publishes data regarding school enrollment and household expenditure spent on education, highlighted that 30% of Indian children in the age group of 6–14 were enrolled in private unaided schools.

Likewise, the ASER data in 2012 also reported the increasing share of the private school system and indicated that around 35% of primary school children were enrolled in private schools in 2012 and predicted this figure would reach 41% in 2014 “and by 2019 the government school system would be relegated to secondary status in providing primary education” (Mehendale et al., 2015, p. 44). Of course, it is important to remember that there is variation when it comes to student enrollment and the quality of private schools across states.

The increasing presence of privatization and private investment in education, can take many forms (Ball & Youdell, 2007): It could be endogenous (privatization tendencies within the public education system to make it business or more ‘business like’) or exogenous (privatization of the entire public education system) (p. 13). However, in the current neoliberal order, as Ball and Youdell (2007) reminded us: “It is not simply education and education services that are subject to forms of privatisation: education policy itself – through advice, consultation, research, evaluations and forms of influence – is being privatised. Private sector organisations and NGOs are increasingly involved in both policy development and policy implementation” (p. 10). The “privatization tendencies” become even more pronounced in the context of developing countries where education projects are “often World Bank or aid funded” (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p. 10). The two forms of privatization, however, are not mutually exclusive in that often the path for exogenous privatization is made clear because of prior endogenous forms (p. 13).

The drive towards privatization in India occurred under the pretext of access and quality. This was launched by the Indian Government and is

evident in a range of initiatives such as the PPP, voucher schools, refinanced loans and tax exemptions to both the investors (corporate houses, non-governmental organisations and religious bodies) and the consumers (children and parents) and a range of pro-market laws on the anvil, including the foreign university Bill. Policymaking [...] is being outsourced to corporate houses... (Sadgopal, 2011, p. 3)

This phase of privatization intensified post-liberalization in the 1990s as discussed above, and ever since then, the education and development discourse has been dominated with themes of “human resource development and human capital development” with the Indian Government only recently advocating for RBD owing to pressure from aid agencies and international conventions such as the Jomtien Declaration (1990) and the Dakar Declaration (2000) (Bandyopadhyay, 2014, p. 9). While the link between education and economic growth as advocated by the HCT could not be denied, viewing education primarily in terms of an investment, however, is in conflict with education when seen as a right (Ron-Balsera, 2011, p. 275).

This results in the commodification of education where those with the means to invest in good quality education invest privately, strengthening the hold of already dominant elite private institutions. Those who lack the means are left with public institutions suffering neglect and defunding. This further segregates a society where access to and quality of education is marked along class lines. In a highly fragmented and hierarchical society like India, social variables such as class, caste, gender and disability are markers for social exclusion, including in education. One of the key aims of education for a diverse society such as India, implied in the RTE (2009) and NCF (2005), is social inclusion. The HCT however emphasizes economic development “as an end in itself, over social inclusion” (Walker, 2010, p. 489).

From the perspective of pedagogy, HCT is incompatible with RBD in that the former claims to be “apolitical” in its aims while guided by “market analysis”, and adopts pedagogical practices that are “adaptive” rather than transformative, resulting in education that’s “individualistic” in nature where learners are “educational consumers” rather than knowledge producers (Baptiste, 2001). This approach to education in the form of HCT is inconsistent with the two major educational policy interventions launched in recent times: the rights-based rhetoric as seen in the RTE Act (2009) and the aims outlined in the NCF (2005) calling for a more “constructivist”, “critical pedagogy” and “child-centered education”. In conclusion, I

argue, India's RTE Act under the current neoliberal framework is driven by both HCT and RBD approaches that run in parallel contradicting one another, as the aims and values of each approach, along with the process, outcome and measures required, differ significantly.

While the former sections of this chapter focused on the global context and explored two dominant approaches to education that influenced the RTE Act, i.e. HCT and RBD, and posited that in India's case both run in parallel, the subsequent sections will discuss in detail the Act itself as well as provide a review of the national context within which the Act is framed by analyzing two key historical events that led to its birth: pre-Jomtien phase and post-Jomtien phase.

2.2 Review of India's National Context: Education Policy Reform and History

The subsequent sections shine a spotlight on the national context by examining the RTE Act (2009) in detail and providing a brief overview of India's education history, both prior and post the Jomtien phase of Indian education, considered to be a key event marking the advent of neoliberalism and influencing the manner in which policies regarding languages and education are designed more broadly.

2.2.1 The Right to Education Act (2009)

One of the ways the Indian state has tried to address the education question in the post-Jomtien era is by way of "right to education" discourse. As part of the post-Jomtien era, in August 2009, the RTE Act was enacted and the law came into being on 1st April 2010. The significance of the RTE Act could be drawn from the fact that "globally, while 135 countries have constitutional provisions for free and non-discriminatory education for all, as few as 20 countries have laws guaranteeing free and compulsory education for as long as eight years" (Thapliyal, 2012, pp. 65-66). However, the right of children to free and compulsory education was long overdue. Thapliyal (2012) reminded us that India passed the RTE Act almost 20 years after the Supreme Court declared that "the Indian state had evaded its constitutionally mandated responsibilities to realize the right to education for its citizens" (p. 65).

One of the first instances of ensuring the right to free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years was when Article 45 in part IV of the Constitution was incorporated

after much deliberation, it mandated the Indian state to do so within a period of 10 years (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 19). Though not yet a Fundamental Right, as Sadgopal mentioned, it was the only constitutional provision which prescribed a time limit. This however elapsed in 1960. The successive governments failed to fulfill this constitutional obligation and escaped the judicial indictment because Article 45 was a part of the non-justiciable part IV of the Constitution, also known as the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Nonetheless, the right to education was gaining momentum during the nineties when the Supreme Court of India began to interpret Article 45 in “harmonious construction” with Article 21 which relates to the Fundamental Right to Life. This is what happened in the historic case of the Unnikrishnan judgement (1993) vs the State of Andhra Pradesh when the Apex Court ruled that Article 45 in part IV of the Constitution had to be read in “harmonious construction” with Article 21 (Right to Life) in part III of the Constitution, “as right to life loses its significance without education” (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 26). Therefore, the Supreme Court accorded a status of Fundamental Right to Article 45 which was until then only viewed as a non-justiciable part IV of the Constitution or as a Directive Principle of State Policy.

Even before this judgement, in 1992, a similar interpretation was offered by the Apex Court in another key judgement. In the case of Mohini Jain vs the State of Karnataka, for instance, the Apex Court declared that the right to education flows directly from right to life. The Apex Court in this case observed as follows:

The right to education flows directly from right to life. The right to life under Article 21 and the dignity of an individual cannot be assured unless they are accompanied by the right to education. The state government is under an obligation to make an endeavour to provide educational facilities at all levels to its citizens. (Paliwal, 2015, p. 69)

Therefore, Sadgopal (2010) argued, these historic judgements made “India’s ruling class evidently uncomfortable” and created a sense of political pressure or urgency within the government to take Article 45 seriously or to make necessary changes in their policies (p. 27). However, in the following years, the central government took a series of actions to dilute and distort the concept of Fundamental Right to Education from appointing the Saikia Committee Report (1997) to the 83rd Constitutional Amendment Bill (August 1997) (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 27). However, due to public pressure and growing dissent among educationists, activists, grassroots organisations and intellectuals and their resistance in the face of the neoliberal

assault on the Fundamental Right to Education, “the entire matter was put in cold storage for the next four years” (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 28).

In November 2001, the 86th Constitutional Amendment Bill was presented to the Lok Sabha, and much like the 83rd Amendment Bill, it too was equally “flawed” (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 28). It was passed in both Houses of the Parliament without any dissenting vote. Through the 86th Amendment, the new Article 21A was introduced that read: free and compulsory education will be provided to all children in the age group of 6–14, “as the State may, by law, determine” (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 29). Sadgopal (2010) noted this was the only Fundamental Right with a conditionality and that “none of the other Fundamental Rights is tied to such a pre-condition” (p. 29).

Pointing to the weaknesses of the 86th Constitutional Amendment Bill, Sadgopal contended it led to: a) excluding almost 170,000,000 children in the 0–6 age group from the provision of a Fundamental Right to free and compulsory early childhood care and nursery or pre-primary education; b) restricting the Fundamental Right of attaining free and compulsory education of equitable quality of even the 6–14 age group children because of a conditionality, “as the State may, by law, determine” in Article 21A, giving the State the opportunity “to arbitrarily restrict, dilute and distort the Fundamental Right”; c) shifting the constitutional obligation from the State to the parents/guardians by inserting sub-clause (k) in Article 51A by making it their fundamental duty to “provide opportunities for education” to their children in the 6–14 age group; and d) reducing, “as per the Financial Memorandum attached to the amendment bill, the State’s financial commitment by almost 30% of what was estimated by the Tapas Majumdar Committee Report in 1999; this was achieved through dilution of norms” (2010, p. 28). Sadgopal thus claimed the above flaws of the 86th Constitutional Amendment Bill (2002) have since provided the basis for legitimizing and institutionalizing inequity in education that programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000) and later Acts like the RTE (2009) have only helped in strengthening.

The RTE Act (2009) has been surrounded with a myriad of controversies ever since its inception. There has been a heated debate on the Act by those who could broadly be divided into two camps: Those who consider it farcical, watered down or two steps back into the past and those who consider it revolutionary, a landmark or a step in the right direction. Gupta (2014) noted that these two starkly opposed camps view the RTE Act in a different light (p.

40). The first camp includes those critical of the RTE Act including scholars and activists like Sadgopal and Kumar who argued that the Act diluted and distorted landmark judgements such as that of Unnikrishnan (1993) and other policy frameworks (Gupta, 2014, p. 39). They argued that the RTE Act (2009) denies: Rights to early childhood care and pre-primary education to children younger than 6; the right to secondary education for children between 14 and 18; elementary education of equitable quality to children between 6 and 14 years old (Gupta, 2014, p. 41). Gupta further highlighted how the RTE Act does not even ensure the provision of required student support measures that will facilitate retention and regular participation of children in the six to fourteen age group. Additionally, the RTE Act neither supports government schools, nor regulates private schools. Furthermore, the RTE Act makes no provision for stopping private schools from hiking fees as they like, rather under the reimbursement scheme, it makes provisions for siphoning off public funds to private operators and in the process, which as Gupta stated, opens flood gates to the commercialization of school education.

This first camp believes that the RTE Act institutionalizes and legitimizes inequality (manifested in its multi-tier and multilayered education system), further widens the gap between children belonging to different groups, resulting in even more discrimination, and contributes to neglect and possible closure of government schools (Gupta, 2014, p. 41). Consequently, the RTE Act shifts attention away from achieving the long-cherished goal of establishing a fully-funded public (State) Common School System-based on Neighbourhood Schools (CSS-NS) ensuring equitable quality of education for all (Gupta, 2014, p. 42). Therefore, Gupta (2014) asserted, the members in this camp (Gupta, 2012; Niranjanaradhya, 2011; Sadgopal, 2010, 2011) insist for a complete overhaul of the present RTE Act, and propose replacing it with a new one, based on the pattern of CSS-NS (p. 42).

Another problematic aspect of the RTE Act deals with the question of mother tongue and the provision of Section 29 (2) (f) which reluctantly promises, “Medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in the child’s mother tongue”. The key phrase here is “as far as practicable”. This, however, goes against the Constitution which has a provision mentioned in Article 350 (A) which makes it obligatory for the State to “provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority

groups...”. Aside from this, the RTE Act also violates the Fundamental Right inherent in Article 19 (a), which guarantees freedom of speech and expression (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 26).

This denial of the mother tongue as a MOI in the Indian education system, however, has been an ongoing feature since independence (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 25). One of the driving factors, according to Sadgopal, has been the conflation of the state language with the mother tongue of the child. It is important to note, however, that even when Hindi or other state languages are the MOI, their “viability hardly lasts beyond the elementary stage”, as Sadgopal (2010) argued, “there is no policy commitment to make higher knowledge available through the languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution” i.e. languages which have been accorded the official status (p. 26).

As Sadgopal (2010) noted, this has serious ramifications for minority language speakers, not just because it violates their linguistic human rights but also because it affects their education, since “the most effective way to learn any language (including English) is through the medium of a child’s mother tongue” (p. 25). Not doing so can lead to a “rapid attrition of the capacity to articulate one’s thoughts or ideas” (p. 25) and any policy that ignores the role of the child’s mother tongue, in all likelihood, will also lead to a lack of participation in school, in matters of democracy and society as a whole (p. 25).

That said, the other camp includes, as Gupta (2014) described, “aficionados in a somewhat celebratory mood on the enactment of this long-awaited legislation, considering it as a creditable achievement of a poor nation after decades of delay – a milestone on which they expect more progress to ensure in the near future!” (p. 41). This was the case with popular media, including both print and electronic media (Gupta, 2014, p. 57). Aside from the media, almost every politician in the parliament in the Rajya Sabha debate dated 20 July 2009, claimed Gupta, called the occasion of approving the RTE Bill a momentous event despite a few voices challenging it. Within this second camp falls those who claim that despite some flaws in the RTE Bill, the government and international agencies at least attempted to adhere to a “minimalist approach” for the universalization of elementary education (Gupta, 2014, p. 40).

Gupta (2014) cited scholars like Krishna Kumar, according to whom, in the absence of an appropriate social movement in India striving for achieving (equitable) quality education as a fundamental right of every child, the RTE Act as such should not be held accountable (p. 57). Kumar claimed that had the Indian state not set its own educational standards for measuring

quality, it would have been compelled to accept educational standards in the form of standardized tests, set by international agencies (Gupta, 2014, p. 57). Thus, by implication some scholars argued, whatever may have been the flaws of the legislation, at least it ensured that education became a fundamental right (Gupta, 2014, p. 40).

In light of this, Rangarajan, however, asked an important question in the same seminar in which Kumar made his aforementioned statement (as cited in Gupta, 2014, p. 57). Rangarajan questioned if the “minimalist approach” itself doesn’t amount to shifting the discourse away from ensuring equitable quality education for all; if that in itself does not constitute dilution of right to education? (as cited in Gupta, 2014, p. 40). Likewise, Gupta asked, how relevant are the much talked about possible judicial potentials of the RTE Act and how much liberal interpretation is possible after all, given the Act is responsible for institutionalizing and legitimizing inequality? Furthermore, Gupta raised questions concerning the outcome of judicial intervention by the state since 2001 when the RTE Act was first recognized by the parliament as a fundamental right.

The relevance of the aforementioned points raised by the critics, is of particular significance for this research as during the course of the fieldwork, several implementational gaps became apparent with regard to the RTE Act. As will be shown in the findings, Chapter 7, during the course of the interviews, several teachers reported that they were unaware of the RTE Act and their schools either did not follow the RTE Act’s norms and standards completely or followed them partially and/or poorly. This is further confirmed by the recent report that shows over 95% of schools in India, since the RTE Act first came into force, do not comply with its guidelines (*The Hindu*, 2012) The report indicated lack of training facilities for teachers, which adversely affected the quality of primary education in India, something that was found lacking in this study as well, as will be discussed later. The report also pointed towards a lack of infrastructural facilities in schools including drinking and toilet facilities. This was found lacking during this study as well in all the rural government schools visited.

The report showed that nearly 36% of all sanctioned posts for teachers were lying vacant, even though RTE’s guidelines clearly specify that, schools “established, owned, controlled or substantially funded by the government or local authorities” must guarantee that teacher vacancies “shall not exceed 10 per cent of the total sanctioned strength” (*The Hindu*, 2012).

This was the case in Mewat where teachers confirmed acute teacher shortages in the required school subjects and the problems that arose as a result in filling the vacant spots.

Moreover, the report shed light on non-teaching activities teachers in Haryana were forced to take part in, such as assisting in construction work or mid-day meal programs. This was confirmed during this fieldwork as well. This, however, goes against the guidelines of the RTE Act which states, “no teacher shall be deployed for any non-educational purpose other than the decennial population census, disaster relief duties or duties relating to elections to the local authority or the state legislature or parliament”. The report also found that the national average for teacher-student ratio is alarmingly high at 1:80, which goes against the prescribed ratio of 1:30 for primary and 1:35 for upper-primary level under the RTE Act. This was again confirmed in all the rural government schools visited during this study. This shall be looked at in detail in the findings Chapter 7.

Having looked at the RTE Act (2009), it is pertinent to shed light on the context within which it emerged. For that, one must take into account India’s education history. Before moving onto that, however, it is important to mention at the outset that in the next two sections, I will be relying heavily on Anil Sadgopal’s scholarship who has done extensive work in the field of Indian education and the RTE Act, to establish the historical context and contemporary debates surrounding India’s RTE Act. Sadgopal (2006), in his seminal paper, “Dilution, Distortion and Diversion – A Post-Jomtien Reflection on Education Policy”, divides it into two crucial phases: Pre-Jomtien Phase of Indian Education and Post-Jomtien Phase of Indian Education. The following two sections, thus, will be structured along the lines of Sadgopal’s (2006) influential paper and deal with these two phases of Indian education respectively.

India’s history of education is the history of denial (Sadgopal, 2010). From the times of pre-independence India to post-independence, the masses have been historically denied the right to a free and equitable quality of education. This holds true despite the recent attempt by the Indian state which made education a fundamental right when Article 21A was inserted in the constitution (86th Amendment Act) in 2002, which stated that the government shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between 6 to 14 years. In order to understand how the RTE Act came into being and how it continues to deny free and equitable quality education to a vast majority, it is important to look at India’s educational trajectory, where denial of education, was an inherent part of its history.

Considering the political, historical and educational significance of the Jomtien Conference that was held in Thailand in 1990, it is seen by many as a “turning point” in India’s education history (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 109). Jomtien played a decisive role in shaping several developing countries’ education systems. Sadgopal (2006) divides the history of post-independent India’s education into two key phases: Pre-Jomtien and Post-Jomtien (p. 118).

2.2.2 Pre-Jomtien Phase of Indian Education

Sadgopal (2010) in his documentation of the history of the RTE debate noted that it all started with Jyotirao Phule in 1882 who initiated the debate on the right to education. Phule presented a memorandum to the Indian Education Commission, the Hunter Commission, in which he stated how the British government’s funding of education tended to “benefit Brahmins and the higher classes” while leaving “the masses wallowing in ignorance and poverty”, thereby drawing attention to the fact that it was due to the labor and the output of the toiling masses, that the British government could generate and collect revenue (p. 17).

The next significant event was in 1911, when Gopal Krishna Gokhale moved his Free and Compulsory Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Assembly. He was met with “stiff resistance” from the members representing the privileged classes from Mumbai, rulers of the princely states and landlords from feudal areas who claimed conditions were just not “ripe” enough to bring about such a change (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 17). Some even expressed concern about who was going to work in their farms if all children were required to attend school, as Sadgopal noted, such was the case with the ruler of Darbhanga from Bihar who collected signatures on a memorandum from 11,000 princes and landlords expressing their concerns over the proposal of the right to education for children.

The next most significant event was in 1937, when Gandhi at the national Education Conference held at Wardha (Maharashtra) made the proposal of Basic Education (*Nai Talim*) to provide seven years of education and allocate adequate funds for this purpose before the Minister of Education of the newly elected Congress governments of seven provinces (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 17). The ministers, however, cited a “resource crunch”. This was to be repeated during Constituent Assembly debates when a member argued against the “free and compulsory education” to children up to 14 years of age as mentioned in the Article 45 of the draft Article. Citing the rhetoric of ‘resource crunch’, the member argued that the age should be limited to 11 years since India did not have the necessary resources. Ambedkar, on the other

hand, who belonged to one of the oppressed communities, was heading the drafting committee, and he argued against reducing the age to 11 years since it was at this age a large proportion of children became child laborers (Sadgopal, 2010, p. 17).

Later on, as Sadgopal (2010) noted, “the report of the sub-committee on Fundamental Rights placed the aforementioned provision on education among the list of justifiable Fundamental Rights”, before shifting it to the list of “Non-Justiciable Fundamental Rights (later to be termed as Directive Principles of State Policy i.e. Part IV of the Constitution)” citing a resource crunch as one of the reasons, while some members suggesting deleting the clause (p. 18).

As Venkatanarayanan (2015) stated, the Indian Government chose not to reverse the colonial education policy. There was never an attempt made to enforce a legal binding provision in the Indian Constitution, despite much debate on compulsory education for all, rather a compromise was reached when it was included in the Directive Principles of State Policy within the constitution (p. 2).

It is against this backdrop, the history of the right to education discourse, which often did not consider free, compulsory and equitable quality of education for all children, needs to be understood. Post-independent India’s education history equally stands witness to the neglect with which the question of provision of fair and equitable quality of education to all children has been treated by the Indian state. This could be understood by critically interrogating and analyzing India’s education history and policy documents that shed light on the commitments and provisions made and how they were violated. This will be discussed in detail below.

Much has changed in post-independent India. Muralidharan and Kremer (2006) contended, although the state-funded education system still dominates the elementary school system in India, there has been a significant upsurge of private schools, particularly after 1990, when India opened its market during the economic liberalization phase. According to the World Bank, “about 40 percent of urban primary schools and more than half of all secondary schools in 1987 were private” (Guo, 2008, p. 207).

Based on data collected from the District Information System for Education (DISE) statistics, trends and earlier reports, the Annual System of Education Report (ASER) indicates that in 2012 around 35% of primary school children in India were enrolled in private schools (the actual number might be more considering DISE data does not take into account unregistered,

unrecognized private schools flourishing across the nation), which is likely to increase to 41% by 2014 and “by 2019 the government school system would be relegated to a secondary status in providing primary education” (Sarangapani, Mehendale, Mukhopadhyay & Namala, 2014, p. 9). Sarangapani et al. (2014) further forecasted that despite variations in quality, the rise of the private sector in India is likely to continue (p. 9).

The dwindling education expenditure along with state withdrawal from educational obligations have partially been the reasons for the growth of private schools and privatization in India. A large proportion of school-going children lack basic infrastructure facilities. According to the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA, 2014), around 40% of schools lack girls’ toilets, and around 72% of schools lack computer facilities (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 10). Despite RTE’s enforcement, nearly 95% of schools fail to provide basic infrastructure facilities as mandated by RTE (Dhar, 2012). Government reports reveal disproportionately high drop-out rates amongst historically poor marginalized groups including: Dalits (Scheduled Castes as defined in official demographic classification), Adivasis (Indigenous communities referred to as Scheduled Tribes), Muslims, girls, and rural students (Thapliyal, 2014, p. 123). Thapliyal (2014) pointed to the “disaggregated statistics [that] reveal a multi-tier or hierarchical education system in which caste, class and gender determine access to quality education” (p. 123).

It is for this reason, the Education Commission (1964–66), popularly known as the Kothari Commission, in light of the deeply hierarchical, multilayered and unequal education system in the country, conceived of an education system that would “bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society” (Sadgopal, 2008, p. 4). In order to achieve this objective, the Kothari Commission advocated for a Common School System-based on Neighbourhood Schools (CSS-NS) where everybody could have access to this school system “without any class-, caste-, or religion-based hurdle” (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 2).

Forging a sense of nationhood and emphasizing national development were the key goals in the post-independence era of the 1960s. Pathak (2002) posited that “the postindependence educational program was nationalist in character with two main components”: a) Science, technology and modernity received more emphasis, with a view of establishing an “industrially advanced modern state” progressing towards development; b) “National integration” and

“shared Indianness” became the focal point “overriding all local identities and regional differences” in order to create a newly emerging strong “nation-state” (p. 95).

This “direct link between education, national development, and prosperity” was also laid by the Kothari Commission (1966, p. 7) that

was entrusted with the task of making a survey of the entire field of educational development, reviewing the country’s national development, and, finally, to advise the government on the national pattern of education on the principles and policies to be adopted for the development of education in the country. (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 2)

In order to achieve this goal, the Kothari Commission advocated CSS-NS and asked for an overhaul of the entire education system.

The Kothari Commission asked for an increase in public expenditure on education to 6% of the national income, but this target was never met (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 2). The National Policy on Education – 1968 (henceforth, NPE) was the first coherent policy of the Indian Government on education. Following the Kothari Commission 1964–66 recommendation, it also emphasized the need for CSS-NS. According to a report, the NPE mentioned that a Common School System of public education should replace the present system, “which divided the management of schools into a large number of bodies whose functioning had been proving to be inadequate” (Viswanath, 2015, p. 200). The NPE’s aim was to bring different kinds of schools – government and government-aided – under one common system so as to provide education of equitable quality to the masses. The Commission criticized the present school system and stated:

The system of schools largely reserved for those who have the capacity to pay high fees was transplanted in India by the British administrators and we have clung to it so long because it happened to be in tune with the traditional hierarchical structure of our society...what is worse, this segregation is increasing and tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses. (Viswanath, 2015, p. 200).

Following NPE in 1968, another critical moment in the post-independent India was the NPE formulated in 1986 by the Indian Government that reemphasized Article 45, which advocated for providing free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years (Venkatanarayanan,

2015, p. 2). However, as Venkatanarayanan observed, it also became the first policy document to explicitly include Non-formal Education (NFE, henceforth) and to advocate a parallel stream of education, which was to be separate from the ‘mainstream’ education. Seen in this regard,

NPE-1986 gave legitimacy to a parallel stream, such as non-formal education, a layer below the formal level. Until then in principle, there was only one officially acknowledged, planned and financially supported stream in Indian education (i.e. government, local body and government-aided schools of comparable quality), the relatively minor streams of private unaided schools (erroneously called public schools) and Kendriya Vidyalayas (or Central Schools) notwithstanding. (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 97)

That said, the hierarchical nature of the Indian education system was very apparent, thus the Kothari Commission advocated for the idea of CSS-NS.

While the Kothari Commission may have been responsible for influencing the political discourse at the time by bringing the idea to the fore, ironically, it also ended up making “prescriptive observations” that could be viewed as “elitist” in character (Tilak, 2007, p. 881). For instance, it ended up legitimizing the multitiered, inequalitarian education system by giving emphasis to “special” categories of government schools such as Kendriya, Sarvodaya, Navodaya (known to accept the “creamy” layer of students) on the one hand, while simultaneously recommending restricting admissions on the grounds of “talent” and “merit” on the other.

Similar to the Kothari Commission that failed on the question of the implementation of CSS-NSS, NPE-1986 too failed by calling for the need to establish non-formal schools, operating on a level below formal or mainstream schools, to provide education to children from the weaker sections and/or those who have been pushed out of schools. Uncertain, however, was the quality of education provided considering budgetary constraints, lack of institutional support and a teaching workforce that included underpaid, untrained, unqualified and inexperienced teachers (Sadgopal, 2006, p 102). This was in line with the neoliberal times, to follow in the post-Jomtien phase wherein contractualization of the teaching workforce became rampant and hierarchization of schools became the norm, as discussed in detail in the next section.

One of the ways the NPE-1986 justified NFE was by insisting that as a parallel and alternative model of education, it was as capable of providing a comparable quality of education as a mainstream school. This claim was strongly refuted by Sadgopal (2006, p. 95) who gave a detailed account of how NPE both laid the groundwork and created a socio-political gap that was to be filled by international funding and donor agencies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank which further exacerbated inequality, promoted abdication of Constitutional obligation on the part of the Indian state, accelerated the pace of privatization and led to the exclusion of a vast majority of children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, thereby further weakening the movement for establishing a CSS-NS. The economic liberalization phase that was soon to emerge post-1991 as well as the steady dilution, distortion and gradual abdication of constitutional obligations on the part of the Indian state post the Jomtien Declaration in 1990, had its roots in the policy framework of NPE-1986 and its companion document called Program of Action (POA)-1986, both of which were approved by the Parliament and were later revised in 1992 (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 95).

Despite constitutional provisions that called for equality in access and provision of equitable quality of education, NPE-1986 read: “A large and systematic programme of non-formal education will be launched for school drop-outs, for children from habitations without schools, working children and girls who cannot attend whole-day schools” (NPE-1986, Section 5.8, as cited in Sadgopal, 2006, p. 96). This had significant implications for a vast majority of children since “as per Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report, out-of-school children were almost half the children of school-going age at the time NPE-1986 was adopted” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 97). Most of these out-of-school children were child laborers for whom NPE-1986 proposed providing education through evening centers or afternoon centers in the case of girls (p. 97). However, as Sadgopal (2006) pointed out: “rather than challenge, the gender stereotype of the role of girls in domestic chores and sibling care... [as well as confront the reality of child labour] ...the NPE [1986] legitimised both child labour and patriarchy” (p. 98).

It is for these reasons, both the Kothari Commission and the first NPE in 1968, had advocated for CSS-NS “in order to ‘equalise educational opportunity’ for all children and to promote ‘social cohesion and national integration’” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 97). In this sense, as Sadgopal (2006) pointed out, the provision of NFE amounted to violating not only the Constitutional

right and NPE-1968 recommendation but also NPE-1986 itself (and reiterated in the revised policy in 1992) which declared:

The concept of National System of Education implies that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, have access to education of a *comparable* quality. To achieve this, the Government will initiate appropriately funded programmes. Effective measures will be taken in the direction of the *Common School System recommended in the 1968 policy*. (p. 97)

An alternative and parallel stream of education – much below the standard of mainstream schools – was legitimized by NPE-1986. Its companion policy document POA-1986 called for setting up afternoon and evening centers. These policy documents also took great care in referring to a teacher as an “‘instructor’ whose levels of qualifications, teacher training, salary, and other service conditions would be of much lower order than those of the regular teacher of the formal school system” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 102). Despite this, these “instructors” with no job security, necessary skills or training were regarded as “talented and dedicated young men and women” (as per NPE-1986 Section 5.9) argued Sadgopal (2006), who were somehow better equipped “in attracting the presumably ‘unwilling’ and hitherto out-of-school children, particularly girls and child labourers, to the NFE centers than their counterparts in the formal school system” (p. 102). As Sadgopal remarked, all of this was to be achieved in the ‘miraculous’ 2–3 hour duration, since the policy stated that NFE’s “total duration is generally shorter than in formal education (4–5 hours)” (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), 1990, p. 53). That these “instructors” had to “come up with ways to set up or run the center effectively and arrange for teaching aids” themselves only made matters worse (NIEPA, 1990, p. 53).

These bizarre expectations and contradictions mentioned in the NPE and POA policy documents were questioned by the NPE Review Committee (NPERC or Acharya Ramamurti Committee) itself which questioned the policy stance on NFE and its relevance as a “parallel system” (GOI, 1990, Section 6.4.6). Instead, NPERC urged for changing the formal school system itself in such a manner that it was in line with the vision of the Common School System wherein children from all socioeconomic backgrounds could have access to an equitable quality of education (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 103).

However, as Sadgopal (2006) highlighted: “Both the NPE-1986 (Section 5.9) and POA-1986 (Chapter II, Section 25) insisted that... ‘NFE can result in provision of education comparable in quality with formal schooling’” (p. 103). This was ironic considering NFE was designed as “a layer of lower quality below the formal school, mainly for poor girls and child workers” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 103). Thus, the justification of NFE and claim to provide education of “comparable quality” without substantial change to the formal school system is contradicted by the statement:

Given the present condition of the schools in general, the challenges before the school system are many, e.g., enrolling and retaining children who cannot afford to attend school regularly; a harmonious interaction with the community around; improving the infrastructure, quality and learning environment; and ensuring that every student acquires minimum levels of learning. *These challenges are daunting enough and it does not seem desirable to overload the school system* with yet another formidable challenge of meeting the educational needs of children with severe para educational constraints. (GOI, 1992, Section 9.13; emphasis added)

As Sagopal (2006) said, “the policy erroneously assumes that it is the child, rather than the school system, that is handicapped by ‘severe para educational constraints’” (p. 104). This led to NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992) and the modified POA-1992 to retain the parallel layer of NFE without significantly improving the formal school system. This eventually led the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) Committee to reject NPERC’s earlier recommendation for setting up a Common School System (GOI, 1992, Sections 6.1–6.6). This cleared the path for the state in the nineties for liberalizing the market and for the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to impose SAPs on the Indian economy (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 104). How this impacted Indian education in the post-Jomtien era will be explored in the next section.

Interestingly, however, the viability or effectiveness of NFE was brought into question well before NPE-1986 in the perspective document entitled, “Challenge of Education – A Policy Perspective” released by the Government of India as a prelude to NPE-1986 itself, questioning the viability of this alternative to school education, and raising issue with difficulties in monitoring and evaluation (GOI, 1985, Section 3.14; Sadgopal, 2006, p. 107). Government policy documents indicate the dominance of financial imperatives in the decision to prioritize NFE. This leads to a situation where underqualified, unpaid, untrained and inexperienced

“instructors” are deemed better suited than formal school teachers to teach students perceived as “unwilling” or handicapped by “severe para educational constraints” (GOI, 1985, Sections 4.64 and 4.65).

The primary reason policymakers introduced NFE was not its supposed effectiveness but “perceived financial constraints”, which provided a way to avoid providing equitable quality of education to 60.9% out-of-school children (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 107). The Indian Government thus had no problem in institutionalizing NFE as a parallel system to the formal school system since it was “meant only for marginalised children, not for the children of middle-class families or those of the ruling elite!” (Sadgopal, 2006, pp. 107–108).

This was the vision shared at the Jomtien Conference, as part of a nationwide plan, held in March 1990. The Jomtien Conference was organized primarily for laying the groundwork for imposing the SAP of IMF and the World Bank, which required countries in the Global South to cut back heavily on their social expenditure (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 108). As part of the SAP conditions (which were outlined in the Jomtien Declaration), various schemes and projects were launched which were assisted or sponsored by a host of UN and international agencies and the World Bank, the basic agenda of these reforms however was privatization (Sadgopal, 2009, p. 22). The idea was to “starve the vast government education system”, so it resulted in worsening its overall quality, which would have brought down its demand even amongst the poorest of parents who would have stopped sending their children to government schools, which would have further provided justification in shutting them down (Sadgopal, 2009, p. 22).

In order to fill this void, low-fee charging unaided private schools (recognized or unrecognized) would mushroom across the country, while the low enrollment rate in government schools would ensure the possibility of converting these school campuses into elite fee-charging private schools or commercial ventures such as shopping malls in urban areas (Sadgopal, 2009, p. 22). In short, SAP conditions ensured that a hierarchical system was put into place where a parallel stream of education (of questionable quality), ran in parallel to mainstream education. This was made possible by establishing NFE.

In retrospect it is now recognized that “NFE provided the foundation for institutionalizing a range of parallel layers of low-quality streams of educational facilities for different social segments in the wake of the neoliberal agenda” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 108). This became more

evident, argued Sadgopal, when the Indian state formally adopted the New Economic Policy from July 1991 onwards, which officially marked the opening of its market. The post-Jomtien phase coincided with the post-liberalization phase and had serious implications for the education sector in India. It is to this I will return, but before that, it is important to understand what neoliberalism is.

David Harvey (2005) in his book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, defined the phenomenon of neoliberalism as follows: “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (p. 2). It involves a limited state that guarantees only the integrity of money, and repressive/legal structures to guarantee private property and market operation. State actors are discouraged from economic intervention, as they inevitably are captured by sectional interest groups distorting market equilibriums and creating what are seen as sub-optimal outcomes.

The policy implications of neoliberalism include a drive towards deregulation of the economy, privatization of services, reduction of social expenditure and state withdrawal in welfare. The Indian state officially accepted and implemented the economic liberalization program during mid-1991, though the period of economic reforms started to take shape much earlier than the 1990s (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 1). During this period, the Indian state drastically changed in its character. In line with neoliberalism, the Indian state worked towards protecting private property rights, subsidizing private schools at the expense of public money, ensuring proper functioning of markets by allowing private schools to thrive and privatizing educational services.

Neoliberalism first made its way in the 1970s globally and brought about serious changes in the Global South. Several countries opened their markets in the 1990s, leading to a major shift in political-economic practices, with the state gradually withdrawing from many areas of social protection, like education and health, for “efficient governance” based on the principles of “market economy” (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 1). Venkatanarayanan argued, these changes in the political-economic sphere not only changed the character of the Indian state but it also had grave implications for the education domain. This period marked the beginning of the post-Jomtien phase of Indian education.

Sadgopal (2006), in his seminal paper, “Dilution, Distortion and Diversion: A Post-Jomtien Reflection on Education Policy”, gave a detailed account of how the global market forces, led by powerful international financial institutions and funding agencies, along with the Indian state, were responsible for allowing the government school system to gradually deteriorate, that it was not a result of a random series of events but rather an “outcome of a well-designed deliberate policy” to make way for “the fee-charging private schools” (p. 93) Before exploring how this took place, a brief account of what unfolded in the Jomtien Conference is provided below.

2.2.3 Post-Jomtien Phase of Indian Education

The first World Conference on Education for All (also known as the Jomtien Conference) was held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, and was jointly organized by three UN agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF) and the World Bank (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 108). The Jomtien Conference turned out to be crucial since the Indian Government “gave a hasty concurrence to the Jomtien Declaration, without even consulting the Parliament on its major Constitutional and policy implications” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 109). This marked the beginning of the state’s abdication of constitutional obligation towards education, claimed Sadgopal, and the “steady erosion of Parliament’s role in policy formulation in education as well as of the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Human Resource and Development in formulating the agenda of Indian education and its priorities” (p. 109).

For the first time in post-independent India, for instance, external aid from global funding agencies operating under the World Bank was systematically allowed in the primary education sector “as a matter of policy” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 109). Sadgopal argued, the launching of the first externally aided the World Bank project, District Primary Education Program (DPEP), in 1993–94 was part of this requirement. Its aim was to achieve universal primary education. Soon after, the ongoing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2000–2001, and since then, it “has been designated as the [primary] vehicle to realize the provisions contained in the RTE Act 2009” (NUEPA, 2014, p. 50). Co-funded by the central government, the state governments and external funding donor agencies such as the World Bank, the United Kingdom Department for International Development and the European Commission, SSA was entrusted to perform the same role as that of DPEP but with an aim of achieving

universalization of elementary education (UNESCO, 2015, p. 3). It was launched to address three Education for All (EFA) goals: Access (Goal 2), Equity (Goal 5) and Quality (Goal 6).

EFA emerged in the 90s with the Jomtien Conference and was followed by the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The idea of the Dakar Forum was to continue the work of the Jomtien Declaration, reaffirm its existing promises that could not be met and achieve them by 2015. Over the course of the decade it became apparent that not only the goals set by the Jomtien Declaration failed to be met, the original goals of the EFA itself became further diluted by the time the Dakar Forum happened (Torres, 2001). For instance, in the Jomtien Declaration the “broad vision” included providing “basic education for all” wherein “all” included children, youth and adults, while in the Dakar Forum, the emphasis on “poverty alleviation” and “reduction in gender parity” reduced it to mean “education for (poorest) girls”, more or less (Torres, 2001, p. 5). Furthermore, the notion of “basic education” itself came to be called into question. While in the Jomtien Declaration, “basic” implied “universal access to... primary education or whatever higher level of education” that could effectively extend to secondary education, in the Dakar Forum it was reduced to mean primary level which contradicted its claim of reducing gender disparity at *all* levels, including secondary education (Torres, 2001, p. 6).

During the same period the Dakar Forum occurred, in September 2000 in New York at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) were launched. Two MDGs that dealt with education included universalization of primary education and removing gender disparity. India became signatory to the MDG as it did to the Jomtien and Dakar Declarations. However, Jha (2005) claimed, India’s performance in meeting the MDG targets, just as the Jomtien and Dakar targets, has been “far from satisfactory” (p. 3679). This became further compounded by the introduction of the neoliberal reforms in the 90s and by the Indian state’s attitude that demonstrated “no urgency to scale-up public spending to meet either the National Development Goals (NDGs)...or the...(MDGs)” (Jha, 2005, p. 3679).

UNESCO-launched EFA in 1990 and UN-launched MDG in 2000 turned out to be the two most significant global initiatives that played a decisive role in determining how developing countries in the Global South would design, monitor and implement their policies in education. These “global regimes of educational governance” (Tikly, 2017, p. 1), however, operate within wider and complex frameworks where power relations between the Global North and the

Global South involve the North as a ‘donor’ setting the agenda, while the South passively receives aid.

Competing institutions, for example, UNESCO and UNICEF vied for hegemony over EFA. This became apparent during the Dakar Forum when UNICEF objected to UNESCO being made the lead agency for EFA. UNESCO opposed UNICEF’s leadership on education for girls (Torres, 2001, p. 8). EFA and MDG set benchmarks, norms, and policies, often at odds with national targets. To be eligible for aid, these global targets become the precondition for South countries, eroding their sovereignty by strengthening “dependency” on the North (Tikly, 2017, p. 18).

One institution that has played and continues to play a dominant role in shaping the EFA movement is the World Bank (Tikly, 2001, p. 37). The Bank not only provides conditional aid in the form of loans and grants to countries in the South, but also technical assistance and policy advocacy, a euphemism for privatization and public-private partnerships. In its capacity as a “knowledge bank” i.e. producing, measuring and monitoring educational programs and initiatives, it makes policy recommendations to national governments. However, the Bank’s legitimacy as a knowledge actor has been contested by many, with several critics finding its reports self-serving, lacking evidence and reflecting a neoliberal bias (Klees, 2012, p. 60).

The role of the World Bank is important, not only because it has been India’s biggest source of external assistance but because “it is the major player in global education policy and has been at the forefront of the shift to neoliberal thinking” (Klees, 2008, p. 312). Its role in shaping India’s education policy, thus, in the post-Jomtien phase or EFA era has been controversial. One of the ways IMF and the World Bank imposed SAPs had an impact on India’s education policy was outlined by Sadgopal (2006, pp. 14–19) who described comprehensively how it was diluted in the post-Jomtien phase.

Firstly, education was made synonymous with literacy (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 14). Sadgopal noted, narrow frameworks of competency-based marked-oriented Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) were imposed. Under the NPE-1986 policy, which was responsible for officially launching a non-formal stream, parallel to the school mainstream, for millions of out-of-school children, more than 300,000 non-formal centres were opened during subsequent years. Several of the poor children and their parents alike rejected this non-formal stream alternative. This resulted in government desperation and a 1993 announcement that adult

literacy classes, initially meant for the 15–35 age-group, were now opened to the 6–14 age group as well (Sadgopal, 2001, p. 45). This was a blatant attempt by the state to make literacy synonymous with overall education.

Seen in this regard, Sadgopal (2001) observed: “One can envisage a girl child engaged in child labour as having been constitutionally educated if she can be enrolled in a non-formal stream for three years and then in the National Literacy Mission’s adult literacy programme for the next two years, without even having stepped into the village school” (p. 45). This policy of promoting the non-formal stream along with the adult literacy classes for the 6–14 age group as parallel streams equivalent to school education for almost half of the nation’s children thus, claimed Sadgopal, was part of the neoliberal agenda of gradual withdrawal of the state from performing its constitutional obligation of providing an equitable quality of education to all children and demonstrating the state’s willingness to co-exist with child labor. Additionally, in the post-Jomtien phase, Sadgopal argued, education of girls was limited to either reducing fertility rates, slowing population growth or increasing productivity (World Bank, 1997, pp. 1, 39, 53). This is to say, that education was “viewed in behavioural paradigm” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 14).

Secondly, a division between mental and manual labor is a key feature of Indian caste society and the post-Jomtien phase reinforced these social dynamics by separating the “the world of work” from the “world of knowledge” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 14). Sadgopal argued, primary education was delinked from upper-primary, thereby ignoring the concept of an integrated elementary education of eight years. There was an ambiguity and vagueness around the notions of “Basic Education” and “Basic Learning Needs” in the Jomtien framework (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 29). Sadgopal noted, the concept of “Basic Education” in the Jomtien framework or “Basic Learning Needs” in the Dakar Framework, was limited to primary education of five years but this posed problems in the Indian context because under the original Article 45 in the Indian Constitution and the now amended Article 21 A, elementary education of eight years is emphasized. Rather than sticking with its own Constitutional and policy imperatives, Indian policy makers “allowed the international funding agencies to dilute elementary education to primary education as the dominant framework for educational planning and financing in the post-Jomtien India” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 29).

Thirdly, “there was a gradual withdrawal of the state from performing its constitutional obligations, instead of improving the formal school system in order to build a CSS-NS. After NPE-1986 during the post-Jomtien phase, “multiple or parallel tracks of low-quality ‘educational’ facilities” were institutionalized as part of providing education to millions of out-of-school children belonging to the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe, other backward classes, linguistic and cultural minorities, people with physical and mental disabilities; two-thirds of each of these marginalized sections comprised of girls (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 14).

Aside from “continuing with NFE during the post-Jomtien phase, the following multiple tracks or parallel streams were introduced: adult literacy classes to accommodate the 9–14 age group...alternative schools...Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres... multi-grade/multi-level teaching...bridge courses and back-to-school camps ... and correspondence courses for the 6–14 age group” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 111).

Sadgopal (2006) exposed the state’s agenda of institutionalizing inequality in education when he claims that EGS, for instance, “has no provision whatsoever for any infrastructure (not even for a tent or thatched roof)” (p. 112). Instead, it expects the beneficiary of this supposed education, the children of the oppressed communities – the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, “to arrange for some space for the centre” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 112).

Similarly, in the case of the externally-funded DPEP program that introduced and justified the concept of multigrade/multilevel teaching, only one or two teachers were trained, “out of sheer necessity” (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 112), for teaching five classes simultaneously (making up “almost two-thirds of all primary schools”). Sadgopal informed us, this violated the Operation Blackboard norms of NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992), which were a minimum of three teachers-three classrooms (50% of teachers should have been women), and three large classrooms for every primary school. Operation Blackboard norms were diluted from three teachers-three classrooms to two teachers-two classrooms. These norms were institutionalized in the 1990s and have been continued in the form of the ongoing SSA (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 113).

Sadgopal (2006) claimed there is a pattern of dilution in government decisions on financial allocations (GOI, 2003, Table 9.3, p. 92). An additional example would be the government’s

underfulfillment of its own Tapas Majumdar Committee¹ recommendations by 30%. The committee had previously advocated increasing the educational budget in order to attain universal elementary education (p. 113). Dhankar (2002), regarding the DPEP's multigrade/multilevel policy, argued: "The need and rationale for multi-grade teaching is either socio-political or managerial; and pedagogical considerations are only grafted on to it....The real solution to the problem is to appoint more teachers...But appointing more teachers costs money" (pp. 8–9)

Another dilution occurred when the NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) recommended correspondence courses (euphemistically known as "Open Schooling or Open Learning System") for 6–14 aged children (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 113). This was in violation of NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992), Sadgopal (2006) said, which restricted correspondence courses for secondary and higher education. He stated, "apart from legitimizing child labour", it also ensured that girls would be "officially denied the relatively more liberating atmosphere offered by school", than the home domain, where patriarchy thrives (p. 113).

Additionally, in the wake of NPE-1986 and the years following NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992) throughout the nineties, whenever met with criticisms, the government claimed that these parallel streams or multiple tracks of education were merely "interim" or "transitional" in nature, used with an aim to "eventually mainstream all children to reach regular formal schools" (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 114). This was contrary to the government's promise (Section 5.8) that the NFE scheme "will be strengthened and enlarged". This was further reinforced by the EFA (1993) that assured, "many measures are being adopted to further strengthen this scheme" (GOI, 1993, p. 51). Similarly, in 1995, the externally funded DPEP claimed itself that it would "strive for the development of an effective NFE system which will meet the diverse educational needs of children" (GOI, 1995, Chapter II, Section 17). Subsequently, in 1998, DPEP declared that "every state is deciding to set up different forms of alternative schools to ensure participation of working children, street children, children of migrating communities, drop outs etc." (GOI, 1998, p. 18). However, this was nothing different as the same sections of out-of-school children mentioned in the DPEP of 1998 were also to be found in NPE-1986

¹ The Tapas Majumdar Committee was appointed by the National Democratic Alliance in 1999 to explore the financial requirements for achieving the goal of education for all as a fundamental right.

policy (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 114). Therefore, not much had changed in the course of all these years. Instead, policies were implemented to enlarge and strengthen the NFE scheme, undermining the formal school system and defunding public schools.

Fourthly, in clear violation of Sections 9.1 to 9.3 of NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992) that called for raising the status of teachers, in the post-Jomtien era, underqualified, untrained (or undertrained) teachers were increasingly being appointed on short-term contracts, as para-teachers (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 115). Sadgopal (2006) noted, different states across India refer to these para-teachers with different names, including: “*Guruji, Shiksha Karmi, Lok Shikshak, Lok Mitra, Vidya Upasak, Vidya Volunteer*...but care is taken not to call her/him a teacher” (p. 115). Sadgopal (2006) argued, this policy of recruiting para-teachers “is now being rapidly extended to secondary and higher education as well, clearly to facilitate privatization and commercialization of education” (p. 115). It is noteworthy to point out, this policy of recruiting para-teachers has been continued in the ongoing SSA program and was widespread across all schools visited during this research, as will be revealed in Chapter 7.

Venkatanarayanan (2015) too reminded us that “SSA provides wide scope for recruitment of para-teachers or teachers on short-term basis and at very low salaries” (p. 8). Since SSA norms authorize the state government to fix teachers’ eligibility criteria and salary amounts, there has been an unprecedented growth of underqualified, untrained (or undertrained) and underpaid para-teachers appointed on a contract basis at lower salaries (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 8). Along with this, as Venkatanarayanan (2015) noted, the central government has consistently been slashing salaries of teachers appointed under SSA over the past few years. For instance, it declined from 85% during the Ninth Five-Year Plan to 75% during the Tenth Five-Year Plan to 50% during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (p. 8). Govinda (2005) cautioned against the consequences of such a drastic cut in the financial allocation of SSA that:

first hides the real magnitude of the problem to be addressed in the long run, in financial terms; second, distorts the shape of the budget by projecting teacher salary, which should in the normal course be part of the recurring expenditure, unlikely to be absorbed as non-plan component as they are on contract basis; and third, this places the evolution and strengthening of a professional community of teachers in a serious jeopardy. (p. 11)

However, as Venkatanarayanan (2015, p. 8) said, “this trend of recruitment has gained global acceptance under the neoliberal ideology, as the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring

Report (2005) points out that a number of African and South Asian countries have appointed Para teachers at primary and upper primary levels (UNESCO, 2004, Chapter 4)". The Global Monitoring Report (2005) further went on to say, "the long term sustainability of the policy of maintaining two groups of teachers with blatantly unequal status is questionable. Senegalese experience suggests that the eventual absorption of Para teachers within regular government service may be difficult to avoid" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 167). During the course of this fieldwork, the division between 'regular' and para-teachers or 'contract' teachers became apparent and this will be explored later in detail.

Fifthly, in clear violation of the NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992) objective, which emphasized "education for women's equality" (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 115), the Jomtien-Dakar framework reduced girls' education to attaining basic literacy skills and enrolling them on school registers, all while ignoring patriarchy as an underlying issue (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 116). Sadgopal (2006) pointed to Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the NPE-1986 (as modified in 1992) in which it was clearly mentioned that education will be used as an agent to bring about a significant change in women's socio-cultural and political rights:

Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women... The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values . . . This will be an act of faith . . . (p. 115).

Mahila Samakhya was the only program that reflected this policy. Its aim was to elevate women's self-esteem, help them realize their contribution towards the society, polity, and economy, and enable them to think critically and make informed choices, particularly in the areas of education, employment and health, in particular, reproductive health, and generally ensure equal participation in developmental processes (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 116). However, as Sadgopal (2006) noted, *Mahila Samakhya* remained on the periphery throughout the nineties and over a period weakened considerably in budgetary terms (p. 116).

Sadgopal (2006) noted that in the post-Jomtien era, when the World Bank-sponsored DPEP program adopted *Mahila Samakhya*, "critical issues such as girls' participation in schools, gender sensitization of learning materials and teacher education and holistic educational aims were ignored" in favor of mere girl child enrollment (p. 116). Further, it was found that "the focus on collective reflection and socio-cultural action by organized women groups, as

advocated by the policy, was abandoned” (p. 116). Sadgopal (2006) argued that the World Bank diluted and distorted the goal of women’s education and reduced it to merely raising girls’ literacy levels and productivity, “turning them into mere transmitters of fertility control, health or nutritional messages”, resulting in a policy “that was guided more by the considerations of the market than by women’s socio-cultural and political rights” (p. 116).

This has implications for this study as girls in Mewat are surrounded by a myriad of socio-cultural and political obstacles and patriarchal limits (Sikand, 1995, p. 490). In Mewat, where the socio-cultural and political rights of women along with their school participation and literacy rate are extremely low, the near absence of local Meo or even non-Meo women teachers was noticeable. This is particularly striking considering NPE-1986 policy and the subsequent policy measures that called for appointing more women teachers since it is regarded a contributing factor in enrolling and retaining more girls in schools.

Lastly, the Jomtien declaration coincided with the New Economic Policy of the Indian state when the Indian Government officially opened its market which resulted in ushering in an era of privatization and commercialization of education, dilution of policy measures as a result of external aid and SAPs imposed by the World Bank and IMF which further resulted in the reduction in financial budget and allocation and led to “dependency syndrome” that CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) had earlier warned against (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 117). In short, the post-Jomtien phase, according to Tomasevski (2001, p. 10),

merged human needs and market forces, moved education from governmental to social responsibility, made no reference to the international legal requirement that primary education be free-of-charge, introduced the term ‘basic education’ which confused conceptual and statistical categories. The language elaborated at Jomtien was different from the language of international human rights law.

Sadgopal (2009) argued, one of the goals of the Jomtien Declaration in India was to make the Indian state progressively abdicate its responsibility of providing education for the masses and this was ensured by relying on external aid and partnering with NGOs, religious bodies and corporate houses (p. 21). This trend too was noticed in Mewat where educational services that were previously handled by the state government departments (such as teacher training and workshops) were increasingly being outsourced to NGOs and private/corporate houses; this however, will be addressed later.

One of the oft-cited reasons by the government for abdication of its responsibilities is “resource crunch”. However, the inception of this rhetoric can be traced back to the period when SAP was first imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. Before the Indian state first adopted its economic liberalization program in 1991, in order to reduce its public debt and to stabilize the economy, it had to turn to the IMF to obtain loans (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 4). Reducing government expenditure in the social sector (including education) was a major part of SAP’s, however, this had huge ramifications given the evidence that suggests “a strong association between reduction in social sector expenditures and social indicators” (Venkatanarayanan, 2015, p. 4).

Venkatanarayanan (2015) mentioned one such study by UNICEF (Cornia, Richard, & Frances, 1987), “Adjustment with a Human Face”, which was the first major study to have pointed out the impact of SAP on the marginalized (p. 4). This study concluded, he argues “out of 78 countries that were implementing IMF-guided structural adjustment reforms, 91% had put a constraint on government expenditure, 83% had reduced the budget deficits, and 65% followed a policy of wage restraint” (p. 4).

Dreze and Sen (1995) concluded that India had fared poorly on social development indicators in 1991 (when economic reforms were first launched) and that its performance was worse than several East and Southeast Asian countries. Post-1991 not much had changed. The state expenditure on the social sector was progressively reduced and according to Venkatanarayanan (2015), is “the central component of neoliberal program” and is a deliberate strategy on the part of the Indian Government that “proactively curtailed the development-oriented expenditure in social sector after the 1990s” (p. 4).

Several times, fiscal constraint is cited as a reason for cutting educational funding by a government. However, as Thachil (2009) reminded us: “various countries with per capita GDP equivalent to or lower than India’s have spent a higher percentage of their GDP on schooling” (p. 476). Thachil pointed to Lesotho (13.8%), Botswana (9.7%), Guyana (8.5%), Djibouti (7.85%), Tunisia (7.3%), Morocco (6.8%), Ghana (5.4%), Senegal (5.4%), and Jamaica (5.3%). This is striking when compared with India (3.21%), as per 2009. While as per 2017, the figure stands at an abysmal 3.32% (Centre for Child Rights, 2017, p. 2). Clearly then, fiscal constraints are not the obstacle, as Thachil argued, and as such does not quite explain India’s response under neoliberal reforms.

This chapter provided a brief historical account of two global approaches to education that underlie and guide any educational policy discourse – HCT and RBD. A case was made that while the RTE Act ostensibly uses the rights rhetoric, a brief look into India's historical education policy combined with the contemporary reality of hierarchical, segmented and multitiered system that now characterizes India's education paints a different picture. Problematizing the RTE Act, it was argued that it is guided by both HCT and RBD ideologies working in tandem.

- India's education policy could be divided into pre- and post-Jomtien eras. The Jomtien Conference held in 1990 in Thailand, organized by the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO was a key historical moment triggering a series of events coinciding with India's liberalization drive. Neoliberalism arrived when the Indian state first opened its market and India soon underwent a series of debilitating reforms unleashed through the IMF and the World Bank imposed SAPs, the key features of which included: privatization, deregulation, contractualization and commodification of education. It is argued that the RTE Act that emerged soon after ensuring the right to free and compulsory education for children from 6 to 14 years of age must be understood within this neoliberal context. Thus, discussion on the RTE Act and the context of its creation was followed by a discussion on the role of international organizations and donor agencies in the post-liberalized context. The next chapter deals with literature on language planning and policy, helping to answer the question pertaining to LiEP this study asks: What LiEP is in place in two types of schools visited – urban (private) and rural (government)? What role, if any, does Mewati play in the policy framework?

Chapter 3: Language in Education Policy

This chapter presents a review of literature concerning one of the central questions guiding this study: “What LiEPs were in place in the two types of schools (rural/government and urban/private) chosen for this study; and what role, if any, Mewati played in the overall language policy framework in these schools?” The language policy model proposed by Spolsky (2004), introduced in Chapter 1, is drawn upon as an analytical framework to address this question.

The focus of review revolves around five areas. A description of language policy and planning (LPP) is provided, followed by a historical review of types of language planning. Orientations to language planning are then reviewed, highlighting and justifying the orientation this research will take. Approaches to language planning are examined, in particular, a comparison between the neoclassical and historical-structural approaches leading to an emphasis on the latter approach guiding this research. This section also positions this research within the broader framework of critical language policy research. An overview of India’s LiEP is provided with specific reference to Three-Language-Formula and reasons for its failure. Literature dealing with mother tongues in education is presented with an examination of the important debates in this space. Also reviewed is the mother tongue-based multilingual educational programs implemented in India illustrating the vital role mother tongues play in education.

3.1 Types of Language Policy and Planning

Though scholars have frequently used the terms “language planning” and “language policy” interchangeably, Baldauf and Kaplan (1997, p. xi) maintain that these two terms denote different aspects of language change processes. They define language planning as an activity undertaken by governments aiming to “promote some systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers” and language policy as “a body of ideas, laws, regulation, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system” (Baldauf & Kaplan, 1997, p. xi). In many cases, however, there is no explicit document or set of rules that is followed as far as language policy is concerned. Blackmore (2004, p. 97) explains that while policy is often perceived as an official text, it may also be regarded as a

process, political decision, discourse, program or even an outcome. Similarly, for Spolsky (2006) the term “language policy” is used in two senses: Firstly, it is used to describe “the customary consensual judgments and practices of a speech community with regard to the appropriateness of a large number of significant choices among all the kinds of variants allowed in speech or writing” (p. 87). Secondly, it is used to refer to “a specific policy adopted and explicitly stated for a defined circumstance and place” (p. 87).

The model suggested by Spolsky (2004) indicates language policy consists of language practice, ideology and management (planning) as its key elements. This framework of Spolsky will be drawn upon for exploring the language policies adopted in schools and to gain a better understanding of teachers’ ideologies, language use patterns and management strategies.

Language planning deals with four types of planning activities: status, corpus, acquisition and prestige (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004, p. 56). Status planning refers to efforts directed toward the allocation of languages/literacies to various functions in a given speech community such as in the domain of education (Hornberger, 2006, p. 28). Whilst Kloss (1969) points to the notion of a language’s standing alongside other languages as being the focal point of status planning (p. 15), other scholars like Fishman (1974) link allocation of functions with status planning (p. 80). Seen in this regard, when speakers of minority languages are denied the right to gain an education in their language, their language has no status (Ferguson, 2006, pp. 20–21).

Corpus planning implies efforts directed toward the adequacy of the form and structure of languages (Hornberger, 2006, p. 28). These can include: graphization, standardization and modernization. Graphization involves developing, selecting and modifying scripts and orthographic conventions. Standardization involves developing a norm which overrides regional and social dialects and ends up being the “best” form of the language. Modernization involves expansion of the lexicon allowing the language to discuss topics in technical and modern scientific domains. Lack of corpus planning for many Indian minority languages is given as a reason to justify their exclusion from the school domain.

The core of acquisition planning (LiEP) is the aim to increase the number of speakers of a given language (Ferguson, 2006, p. 34) by educating speakers to employ it in both spoken and written forms (Wright, 2004, p. 232). According to Cooper (1989): “Acquisition planning is directed toward the increase of the number of users of a language that is speakers, writers, listeners, or readers” (p. 33). Cooper (1989) claims that the goals of acquisition planning may

be achieved by designing programs to create or to improve opportunities or incentives to learn (p. 40). In India, efforts with regard to the spread and promotion of learning of Hindi and English usually takes place through these mechanisms under acquisition planning (Sridhar, 1996, p. 344). This research explores acquisition planning through a case study approach, assessing the use of Mewati.

Prestige planning was added as a fourth dimension of language planning by Haarmann (1990), referring to efforts towards creating a favorable psychological background vital for the longterm success of language planning (p. 104). Prestige planning becomes crucial when a low prestige language is promoted for high prestige; frequently it is a precondition for status planning. The ‘nonstandard’ minority languages in India suffer from low prestige value and therefore any thought of making a serious change toward using them in education has to bear prestige planning in mind.

3.2 Orientations to Language Planning

Language planning is influenced by how language planners perceive languages and their role in societies. Three orientations form the core of language politics regarding diversity, dialects and minority languages in education. These three perspectives affect the way language planning activities are carried out in a particular domain. Ruiz (1984) refers to language planning orientation as a complex of dispositions toward language and its societal role. These orientations determine the basic questions individuals or language planners ask, conclusions drawn from data, and even the data itself (p. 16). He identified the following three types of orientations: Language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource.

The language as a problem orientation views minority languages as obstacles. They are seen as a cause of social, economic and educational problems rather than an effect of such problems (Baker, 2011, p. 377). School systems are responsible for overcoming this handicap by teaching a majority/dominant language at the expense of the home language. This is done to incorporate minority language speakers into the mainstream as language diversity in this orientation is seen as “a threat to unity and social harmony, or threat to national development” (Roy-Campbell, 1999, p. 69). Based on this, language planners deal with language diversity through assimilation (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004, p. 29).

In opposition to the earlier orientation, the language as a right perspective perceives language as a human right (Ruiz, 1984, p. 22). Language planners and policy makers in this approach focus on language maintenance/preservation and even revitalization of minority languages. Macias (1979, pp. 88–89) claims language rights include freedom from language discrimination and the right to use one's language(s) in the activities of community life, especially a student's right to attain education in their own language. Mackey (1979) adds that language rights include using one's language in legal proceedings and attaining bilingual education (p. 49). In addition to these language rights, many other scholars have contributed to this list which is by no means exhaustive. This kind of orientation to language planning usually reflects linguistic affirmation (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2004, p. 30) or a weak form of linguistic pluralism (Jeon, 2003, p. 133).

In the language as a resource orientation, every language is viewed as an asset. This perspective views language resources as something to be astutely conserved and developed (McKay & San-Ling Wong, 1988, p. vii). Just like natural resources, languages can also be threatened by competition, consumerism, globalization and new technological advancement (p. vii). Therefore, just as the value of natural resources depend on the ability to exploit them optimally, so do the value of Indigenous and other minority languages. This orientation views not only the majority or dominant languages as resources but also the minority languages.

Ruiz (1984) clearly favors the language as a resource orientation over the other two orientations mentioned above (pp. 25–26). His problem with the language as a right approach is that a “claim to” the use of a particular language is also a “claim against” someone hindering that right (p. 24). Ruiz argues that language as a right orientation causes automatic resistance and leads to tension between majority and minority communities. Wiley (1996) (as cited in Cassell, 2007, p. 45) also mentions the language as a right orientation leads to many unresolved problems and tensions, embroiling language planners in confrontation, advocacy and activism.

However, I argue that confrontation, advocacy and activism would inherently accompany the language as a right perspective due to the differential relations of power and resources between minority and dominant groups. Therefore, a claim made by the minority group within the existing social structure would inevitably lead to a claim made against the dominant group. This view finds resonance in the comment made by Jeon (2003) who maintains that “under

coercive power relationships in a society, minorities' claim to their language rights is inevitably a claim against majorities and other minorities" (p. 134).

Jeon (2003) mentions that Ruiz considers the language as a right orientation to be different from that of language as a resource orientation. However, the two orientations can be seen as interrelated and complementary with language as a right seen as a prerequisite for language as a resource (p. 134). As Jeon (2003) argues, without acknowledging, accepting and respecting others' language rights, perception of language(s) as positive or meaningful resources would not hold much value (p. 134). As mentioned in Chapter One, the objective of this research is to explore, as well as advocate, for the role of mother tongue (Mewati) in education. Hence, I make a case in favor of Mewati in the LiEP from the perspective of acknowledging, promoting and respecting language rights and from the perspective of considering it as a resource in attaining literacy.

3.3 Approaches to Language Planning and Policy

In the early decades of LPP research, a large number of models were developed (Cooper, 1989; Ferguson, 1968; Haugen, 1983; Kloss, 1966; Nahir, 1984; Neustupny, 1974). Hornberger's (1994) 'Integrative Framework of Language Planning and Policy Goals' summarized most of these earlier models and made two distinctions – LPP types and LPP approaches. LPP types included status, corpus and acquisition planning as discussed earlier in this chapter. The LPP approaches were further divided into two types – policy planning and cultivation planning. The policy planning approach focused on form and macro-level policy objectives, primarily concerning standard and official languages, whereas the cultivation planning approach focused on function and on micro-level policy goals such as the spread, revival or maintenance of smaller languages.

The earliest approaches to language planning were characterized by a focus "on the formal properties of language and the structural characteristics of language varieties" (Wiley, 1996, p. 116). Early approaches to LPP were motivated by concern for multilingual countries especially the newly independent countries, in issues that related to nation building, national cohesion and modernization (Tollefson, 1991). This approach was mainly influenced by the language as a problem orientation (Cassell, 2007, p. 47). In the literature, these early attempts and approaches to LPP were referred to as "the traditional approach" (Ricento, 2006, p. 12;

Tollefson, 2002, p. 5, 2008, p. 3) and also sometimes called “the neoclassical approach” (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007, p. 510; Tollefson, 1991, p. 35), the “classical approach” (Ricento, 2000, p. 206) or the “positivist approach” (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 405).

By focusing primarily on the formal properties of language and on technical aspects of language issues, the neoclassical approach has come to be seen as apolitical (Tollefson, 1991). Luke, McHoul, and Mey (1990) also indicate that LPP had been focused on maintaining a “veneer of scientific objectivity” and had “tended to avoid directly addressing larger social and political matters within which language change, use and development, and indeed language planning itself are embedded” (p. 27). Tollefson (1991) introduces a distinction between two broad approaches to LPP which he identifies under the labels of the neoclassical approach and the historical-structural approach. Unlike the neoclassical approach discussed above, the historical-structural approach, he argues is neither ideologically neutral nor ahistorical in nature (p. 31). Tollefson (1991) lists the major differences between the neoclassical and historical-structural approaches as:

- 1) The unit of analysis employed – While the neoclassical approach focuses on individual choices, the historical-structural, pays attention to relationships between groups.
- 2) The role of historical perspective – While the neoclassical approach focuses more on the current language situation, the historical-structural emphasizes the impact of socio-historical factors on language use.
- 3) Criteria for evaluating plans and policies – The neoclassical approach is amoral in its outlook and evaluations. Policies are evaluated by how efficiently they achieve goals. The historical-structural approach is concerned with issues of oppression, exploitation and domination.
- 4) The role of the social scientist – The neoclassical approach assumes the social scientist can/should approach language problems apolitically, the historical-structural approach assumes that a political stance is unavoidable as “those who avoid the political questions inadvertently support the status quo” (as cited in Wiley, 1996, p. 115).

The historical-structural approach is concerned with ways linguistic domination is achieved and maintained. As Tollefson (1991) notes, “the major goal of policy research is to examine the historical basis of policies and to make explicit the mechanisms by which policies’ decisions serve or undermine particular political and economic interests” (p. 31). The chief

perspective informing my approach is critical language policy (CLP) research using the historical-structural approach. While the body of CLP research continues to expand rapidly, a critical theory of language policy still remains to be developed (Tollefson, 2006, p. 48). CLP is critical of traditional approaches to LPP like the neoclassical approach which overtly focus on language without taking into account underlying sociohistorical and political forces at play. It is aimed at social change and draws its influence from critical theory (May, 2006, p. 256; Tollefson, 2006, p. 42). At the core of critical theory is the objective of human emancipation and the unmasking of underlying power structures. Critical theory generally deals with the processes by which social inequality is produced and maintained and the relationship between language policy and notions of power, inequality and ideology (Tollefson, 2006, p. 44).

The notions of power, inequality and ideology take center stage in this research. In the school environment, Mewati comes into direct contact with varieties that are regarded as dominant standard languages, namely Hindi, Urdu and English. This study looks at the effects of historical and structural factors on language use and policy and its effects on Mewati in schools. Ricento (2006, pp. 8–9) described the following points by which (critical) language policy can be characterized:

1. Language policy is always about more than language. One is required to take into account insights from subject areas (political, economic and social theory) other than linguistics to unravel what is at stake (hidden ideologies).
2. The way terms are defined and used ('language', 'language policy', 'the state' and so on) have consequences for analyses and recommendations.
3. Language ideologies have effects on language policies and practices (monolingualism or multilingualism).
4. Research in LPP must be an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary activity. Conceptual and methodological tools from other disciplines need to be borrowed and appropriately integrated.

This research, thus, is located within the field of Critical Language Policy (CLP) research and in particular draws on Critical Theory. The below section describes in brief LiEP in India.

3.4 Language in Education Policy in India

The All India Council for Education in 1956 recommended India's LiEP, The Three-Language-Formula (TLF). Following a series of modification, the TLF came into effect in 1968 (Vaish, 2008, p. 14). Vaish (2008) contended, all these series of actions demonstrated the entrenched nature of the TLF and also the sensitive language issues in India, "which the government thinks is best left untouched" (p. 14). The TLF is an educational strategy designed to cope with India's multilingualism by introducing languages at the national, regional and local levels (Srivastava, 2007, p. 43). The formula suggests teaching of the following languages in schools, "a) The regional language and mother tongue when the latter is different from the regional language, b) Hindi, or in Hindi speaking areas, another Indian language, and c) English or any other modern European language" (Das Gupta, 1970, p. 244).

Pandharipande (2002) claimed TLF "had an enormous impact on the minority languages" (p. 9). She emphasized the role TLF played in reducing the functional load (a quantitative base for evaluating the notion of power with a language functioning in relatively more domains being considered to having a higher functional load) of minority languages in the public domain causing a shift to dominant languages. As a result, minority languages (especially tribal languages) face language attrition (p. 7).

According to Vanishree (2011), TLF failed to be followed as state governments equated mother tongues with regional languages. This marginalized minority languages in the educational sphere (p. 350). For example, in Haryana, a state with Hindi as its official regional language, most schools (including those of Mewat) use Hindi as the MOI and a compulsory subject until grade 10, despite most students in Haryana using other languages as their mother tongues, predominantly Mewati in the region of Mewat.

Also, minority languages are not the only ones being kept out of the school domain. Urdu, a relatively dominant and standard language meets the same fate. Urdu is unique, as in India it is a language perceived to belong to the Muslim minority, yet it holds a significant place as one of India's major official languages. While Urdu and Hindi are linguistically similar, they are a playground for identity politics (Abbi, Hasnain, & Kidwai, 2004, p. 1). Abbi et al. (2004) argue historically, political tension between Hindus and Muslims led to linguistic tension between Hindi and Urdu by linking them with different social roles and group identities –

Hindi as Hindu and Urdu as Muslim. This sociopolitical context appears to have had a bearing on Urdu's image with Urdu being relegated from a language of the dominant elite to one associated with illiteracy, poverty and backwardness (Abbi et al., 2004, p. 3).

Hasnain (2007) attributed this to the covert policies of the states which contributed to the discouragement of Urdu as a medium of instruction in schools through lack of educational facilities, teachers, textbooks and teaching materials, consequently forcing children to take instruction in Hindi rather than Urdu (p. 4). This sentiment is shared by Mathews (2003) who noted that the State Board Curriculum of the North Indian states is usually blamed for keeping Urdu out of the educational domain, of which Hindi and Sanskrit are mandatory subjects (p. 62). Therefore, Mathews contended that those individuals whose mother tongue is Urdu are denied the basic linguistic human right to have education in their language.

With regard to the provision for Sanskrit in the Hindi speaking regions, the intention behind implementing the TLF originally was – for all students – “the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states”, according to the National Policy on Education of 1968 (Mathews, 2003, p. 62). However, as state governments had scope to allow for the teaching of a classical language such as Sanskrit and thus not a modern Indian language, the policy of TLF failed at the implementation stage.

Overall, Hindi plays a dominant role within the TLF LiEP. Minority languages in states where Hindi is the official language risk replacement by Hindi. Thus, Brass (2005) declared “Hindi chauvinism and the pressures for Sanskrit education and Sanskritization of Hindi” were chief reasons for the failure of TLF in the Indian North (p. 215). The TLF failed because of language politics reflected in how it has been applied, especially concerning Urdu and particularly minority languages. This is best captured in a statement by Mallikarjun (2001, Introduction) when he declares “the Three Language Formula has neither been implemented in letter and spirit nor has it led to the effects its proponents thought that it would”. As part of a religious minority, Muslims, Mewati speakers have an affiliation to Urdu. Mewati speakers are thus affected by the conflict between Hindi and Urdu as well as the conflict between Hindi and its related dialects. It is thus imperative to examine the LiEP in Mewat. The section below gives a brief account of the region, the language and its people.

3.5 Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education: Concerns, Responses and Reflections – India’s Case

Schools in India claim to provide bi/multilingual education in line with the multilingual fabric of society. The TLF, as discussed above, is deployed to evidence this claim. However, as Mohanty (2006) insisted: “[E]ducation in India is only superficially multilingual, and it remains monolingual at an underlying level. The official three-languages formula is more abused and less used” (p. 279). Education does not necessarily extend to students’ mother tongue/s (MT) and is not truly multilingual in character. MTs are seldom part of schools’ educational frameworks across India, as in many regions of the world. According to the World Bank (2005), half of the world’s out-of-school children do not have access to the languages used in schools in their home lives.

This difference creates a disconnect between home languages and the languages used in schools and plays a crucial role in children’s access to, and retention in, education. The World Bank (2005) highlights exclusion and nonrespect of first languages in schools, stating “...this underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All: a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition” (p. 1).

The pivotal role of children’s MTs in education is further stressed by UNESCO (2003): “The choice of the language...is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education... Speakers of mother tongues, which are not the same as the national...language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the education system...” (p. 14). This is particularly true in India where of the 122 languages recorded, only 26 languages are used as MOI at the primary level (Census 2001). The few languages used as MOI rarely include minority languages.

This is despite several constitutional safeguards for the protection of linguistic minorities’ rights. For instance, Article 350 (A) of the Constitution stipulates that, “[I]t shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups” (Benedikter, 2009, p. 68). However, as remarked by Abbi (2009) in her review of constitutional rights for linguistic minority groups, these are merely statements on paper (p. 305).

One reason these statements are not carried out in practice is that responsibility for MOI in schools is left with state governments. As pointed out by Benedikter (2009), this creates “a certain margin of discretion for the State Governments in deciding on the recognition of local official languages” (p. 156). The so-called nonstandard varieties, including children’s MT are often supplanted by their standard variety, normally the official regional language, in the education sphere (Jhingran, 2009, p. 275). For most children, he argues the standard regional language is a second language rather than their MT, particularly in the early primary stage (p. 275). In other words, the MOI employed in schools is generally not the child’s MT. This practice violates Article 350 (A), which states that the primary education of the pupil must be in their MT (Benedikter, 2009, p. 142).

Use of MOI that learners do not speak or understand results in subtractive learning (second language learning at the expense of first language) for learners who do not speak the dominant language of the classroom (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, pp. 582–587). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) calls this “linguistic genocide” where efforts are directed at either actively killing a language or passively letting a language die by not supporting it (p. 312). Not only not using learners’ first language results in subtractive learning but also violates the linguistic human rights (LHR) of minority language speaking students. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) defines LHR by means of a formula: “language rights + human rights = linguistic human rights” (p. 484). Preventing the use of minority languages in education, whether directly or indirectly, is an important factor in Skutnabb-Kangas’ concept of linguistic genocide (p. 320), although not the only one. As will become clear in the Findings Chapters 5 and 6, schools employ various means to prevent the use of Mewati. Consistent with Skutnabb-Kangas theory, this situation contains the potential for linguistic genocide. It should be noted, however, that the broader aim of this research is not to discern the overall vitality of Mewati, or the extent to which it may be confronting a language death scenario. The question of the vitality of an entire language is beyond the scope of this thesis, the central organizing question of which is rather to determine what kind of LiEP the schools in question adhere to; and, what role(s) Mewati plays in these schools. Hence, this thesis will help establish the extent subtractive learning and submersion education is occurring in the case schools. This will hopefully create a stepping stone into future research about the vitality of Mewati.

Subtractive learning in the form of submersion education poses great challenges for learners in India, as elsewhere. According to Jhingran (2009), “almost 25% of primary school children face moderate to severe problems in the initial months and years of primary school because their home language differs from the school language” (p. 267). Amongst others, one such group is those “who speak a language that is considered a ‘dialect’ of the regional language” (Jhingran, 2009, p. 267). Exclusion of MTs in education not only affects students’ learning outcomes but also has greater consequences where it “limits access to resources and perpetuates inequality by depriving language communities of linguistic human rights, democratic participation, identity, self-efficacy and pride” (Mohanty et al., 2009, p. 291). It is for these reasons that a MT-based multilingual education (MLE henceforth) is greatly needed.

The need for MT in education was expressed as early as 1953, when a UNESCO committee noted many psychological, sociological and educational advantages of MT education (UNESCO, 1953, p. 11). In light of the theoretical arguments and evidence, Mohanty (2009) asked a valid question: “Why then are the mother tongues neglected despite persuasive evidence to the contrary?” (p. 5). One possible explanation is through factors not purely linguistic, but rather social, political and economic in nature.

This explanation is supported by Tsui and Tollefson (2004) when they contended that:

Medium-of-instruction policy determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities, and which groups are disenfranchised. It is therefore a key means of power (re)distribution and social (re)construction, as well as a key arena in which political conflicts among countries and ethnolinguistic, social and political groups are realized. (p. 2)

In post-independent India, the MOI became a point of contention between groups with different political interests. While established bureaucrats and professionals were in favor of retaining English as the MOI, the emerging elite favored empowering their own regional languages (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004, p. 12). They argue, this perpetuated and exacerbated social inequality between the middle-class elite who could benefit from English medium education and the masses who could not (p. 12). Sociopolitical and economic forces, therefore, have and continue to contribute towards making MT-based MLE difficult to practice in India.

One of the reasons attributed towards exclusion of MTs in education is that promotion of minority languages and ethnic diversity while formulating LiEP “might provoke conflict and disharmony” (Baker, 2011, p. 377). This argument is inconsistent with multilingual societies like India where linguistic diversity is generally seen as a resource rather than a problem reflecting the belief, as Baker (2011) mentioned, that leads to “better integration, harmony and social peace” (p. 377).

Mohanty et al. (2009) discussed another justification for exclusion of MTs which is that they lack script, leading to stigmatization as dialects. They noted that the underlying assumption is that languages claiming standardized scripts are more appropriate for educational and scientific use but this position fails to acknowledge that any language can be written in many scripts and one script can be used to write all languages (p. 284). Arguments are raised against use of minority languages regarding them as impoverished, inadequate and underdeveloped, hence, unfit for education (Mohanty et al., 2009, p. 284). However, as Annamalai (2004) persuasively argued, lack of use marginalizes them further, as “the development of language takes place through use, not prior to use” (p. 189).

It is normally believed that for linguistic minority groups to succeed academically, maximum exposure to the dominant language is required. Attention given to MTs in education is dismissed as “illogical” since it takes the focus away from the dominant language (Cummins, 2009, p. 20). This claim is countered by Cummins’ “interdependence principle”, that any development in a second or dominant language is based on growth in the MT or the first language. In the words of Cummins (2000), “academic proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language” (p. 173).

Neglect of MTs in education results not only in higher dropout, repetition rates and general academic underachievement but it also affects achievement in acquiring second and other languages. Cummins (2000) pointed out that there are now over 100 empirical studies confirming “a positive association between additive bilingualism [involving continued development and maintenance of the MT] and students’ linguistic, cognitive, or academic growth” (p. 37). A plethora of research supports MTs in education in addition to the theoretical support mentioned above. Owing to space constraints, it is difficult to individually include the

vast literature existing on MT-based MLE. However, empirical research carried out in India, illuminated the educational role MTs play.

As Mohanty et al. (2009) mentioned, in order to examine the effectiveness of MT-based MLE programs, two major studies were conducted in Andhra Pradesh to evaluate its efficacy (p. 295). Both of these studies revealed that the achievement of students in the MLE programs for all the eight tribal languages was significantly better than those in Telugu (official state language) medium schools in all school subjects. The MT-based MLE program resulted in improving basic competency in literacy and numeracy for all children, brought a rise in their school attendance and participation, enhanced parents' satisfaction and community involvement (Mohanty et al., 2009, p. 295).

Similarly, an evaluation was made of the MLE program in Orissa in 2008. The results showed that students in the MLE program at the end of Grade 1 performed better than those in the Oriya (official state language) medium schools and this held true for all the 10 tribal languages. These MLE schools like the previous ones in Andhra Pradesh demonstrated increase in student attendance and participation, encouraging community involvement and positive parental feedback and better teacher satisfaction (Mohanty et al., 2009, p. 295). To conclude, therefore, the above case shows several benefits of using MTs in education and illustrate that it provides the foundation on which the rights and linguistic, cognitive and academic growth of linguistic minority children is built. Therefore, the researcher makes a similar argument in the context of Mewat in that Mewati, the mother tongue of majority of the students, must be used in education, as stated at the outset of this study.

This chapter reviewed literature in relation to language planning and policy. It provided an historical overview of India's LiEP and highlighted the types, orientation and approaches of language planning and policy and located the research within Critical Language Policy. This chapter drew attention to the historical-structural approach to language planning relevant to this study and made a case for language as a right and language as a resource orientation for Mewati. Literature was then reviewed on the use of mother tongues in education, particularly the use of MT-based MLE in India, and in relation to this, an overview of some concerns, responses and reflections was provided. In the subsequent chapter, the methodology undertaken for this study is explained.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design featuring the contextual background of the field research, challenges faced during field work, methods of data collection, approach of sampling and data analysis. It highlights the position the researcher occupies and describes the two field sites where the research was undertaken. Finally, an overview is presented of the research participants. It is critical to acknowledge that this research has attempted to incorporate much of the data elicited from all the participants rather than including only a fraction of relevant data from a few. This is done so that a broader, richer and comprehensive account of all participants could be presented.

Contextual background

The researcher was provided with accommodation by an NGO, the Institute of Rural Research and Development. A school was available for observation within walking distance of the facilities. To anonymize the school, it will be henceforth known as School A. Critical to the research was a chance meeting with a group of coordinators and employees working at the local community radio station, recently initiated by the NGO. Being part of the local Meo community, these people understood its concerns deeply. The researcher established trust with radio station staff as a result of explaining the research topic and its importance to them. Of the many topics discussed with the radio station workers, the most important was their suggestion that an interview be conducted with a local Meo teacher, writer and activist who would later turn out to be extremely helpful for this study.

The second phase of data collection began after meeting with another NGO, the SRF Foundation, which was working in Mewat. SRF provided accommodation for data collection to take place in a residential community center for girls aged 11–14 who had never attended school, or left school at a young age, which was founded by the NGO. Access to this facility facilitated interaction with young Meo girls about their earlier experiences in government schools and their reasons for leaving them. It also allowed observations about their language usage patterns and their attitudes towards dominant languages like Hindi, Urdu and English. This provided further insight for the research and was useful when approaching School D.

The Researcher

This research is a qualitative study whereby “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). This makes it crucial for the researcher to introspectively evaluate their role in the research. It is important to clearly state the role and position of the researcher, which in this study included both insider and outsider researcher roles. The insider role is a result of having grown up in India, with an understanding of the cultural context, the ability to speak Hindi and Urdu and belonging to a teacher’s family (mother, aunt and uncle having worked/taught in government schools) which all helped teachers’ willingness to divulge data. Being a government school alumna played a crucial role in building personal connection. Teachers opened up more because the researcher was not the product of an elite private unaided school which would have been a barrier in approaching government schools and their teachers.

While the researcher’s comprehension of Mewati was reasonable due to the similarities it shares with Hindi, the researcher was an outsider as Mewati was not their native language and they did not belong to the Meo community. Also, every teacher interviewed knew the researcher was based in Australia and Mewat was not their home. This foreignness of the researcher made it easier for teachers (and Meos generally) to open up, knowing that participants’ anonymity would not be compromised. An outsider’s perspective also allowed for a more objective reflection about the environment and subjects of the research. Conscious of this outsider status, the researcher tried to overcome this by gaining an insight into Mewati culture and literature before entering the field. The researcher read literature written by Maya Shailram, an expert on Meo history and culture who has extensively researched the community. The researcher became aware of social, political and economic issues through NGO reports and newspaper articles. This knowledge made it easier to establish trust with Meo participants.

Throughout the fieldwork, the teachers and the general community in Mewat expressed surprise and curiosity upon meeting a researcher from outside the region. That the researcher was a woman and research was done unaccompanied evoked greater surprise as risks were taken in order to conduct research about Mewati language. This, they stated, showed seriousness on the researcher’s part and the commitment towards the study. This credibility helped strengthen ties with teachers, especially Meo teachers, which was evident in their

responses where they would freely discuss sensitive topics like ethnic, political and religious issues, issues of discrimination, and their concerns for the Mewati language.

The Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study approach for two primary reasons; firstly, the case study approach is useful at the exploratory phase of research when little is known about the phenomena in question (Yin, 2003, p. 9). As no prior study explored the LiEP of the schools in the region, and with very little information available on Mewati, a case study was considered the best strategy. Secondly, this approach is useful when research questions are oriented to addressing *how* and *why* (Yin, 2003, p. 9). As the first study exploring and explaining how Mewati is (not) used in classrooms and why that might be so, a case study approach is most appropriate.

This case study is based on comparative design where identical methods are applied to two or more cases (Bryman, 2004, p. 53). A comparative case study is considered most suitable as schools in India have different boards, textbooks, curricula, syllabi and media of instruction. Depending on the region and type of school, each follows a different language policy. In the state of Haryana, where this study is located, schools are broadly divided into Hindi-medium and English-medium schools and rural or urban schools. A comparative analysis between examples of these two types of schools is a logical starting point. The way this task is carried out is in the form of a multiple-case study. As Bryman (2004) contends, “Essentially, a multiple-case study or (multi-case study) occurs whenever the number of cases examined exceeds one” (p. 55). Accordingly, two types of schools were chosen, Hindi-medium/rural school(s) and an English-medium/urban school.

Challenges

This research presented many challenges. First, the environment of the study, rural Mewat, posed serious mobility issues due to the lack of transport. Second, a set of challenges were faced during the first stage of data collection in Ghaghas village. Hostility erupted among religious leaders leading to a protest rally. Seeing the tense situation prevailing in the region, I was advised by the NGO to pursue fieldwork elsewhere to avoid exposing myself to excessive personal risk. As a result, I had to replan my next phase of data collection. Third, the second phase of data collection, in Nuh, was also not without its problems. On the 29th of March, a riot broke out between the Haryana Police and the locals, only a few blocks away from where I stayed and conducted

research. A curfew caused a standstill amidst the violence (HT Reporter, 2012; IANS, 2012). These experiences posed great challenges to completing this research and caused abrupt interruptions, meaning I had to continuously assess, adapt and reassess my research plan. Though challenging, it made this research even more interesting and as a result I personally gathered a lot of strength and learned considerably from these experiences.

Description of Cases

Case 1 comprised of rural Schools A, B and C. From School A, the researcher collected detailed interviews with four non-Meo male teachers. There were no female teachers and no Meo teachers in the school. The entire teaching staff comprised of Hindus who were not from Mewat and did not speak Mewati. In order to allow for a Meo Muslim voice, data was also collected from two teachers who were local Muslim Meo teachers and spoke Mewati as their first language. These teachers were from Schools B and C. Both School B and School C were similar to School A in terms of school type, medium of instruction, textbook and curriculum, board of affiliation, infrastructure, student socioeconomic background and location. Case 2 comprised of urban School D. From School D, the researcher collected detailed interviews with three Meo teachers and one non-Meo teacher. The schools are described below.

4.1 Case 1–Rural Schools

School A

School A was an upper primary (Grades 1 to 8) government (public/state) school located in the village of Ghagas in Mewat and was wholly government funded. It was affiliated to the Board of School Education, Haryana. All teachers confirmed the official language policy of the school was Hindi. This school was built in 1925 and was therefore the oldest in the village and one of the oldest schools in Mewat. The school consisted of 8 teachers all of whom belonged to the non-Meo, non-Mewati speaking community who were transferred to the school from different parts of Haryana. This posed certain problems, one of which was that some teachers slept in a small room within the school premises itself. The teachers informed me that they typically would sleep on the ground.

The only exception to the other teachers, was the head teacher, who though Muslim and local to Mewat, was however, a non-Meo. Of the 8 teachers, 5 were employed as permanent teachers

while 3 were contract teachers. It was noticed a growing number of teachers were hired on a contract basis to fill in the shortage of teaching workforce. All the teachers interviewed as well as some of the general public with whom the researcher had informal conversations confirmed this. This contractualization of teachers had negative effects on teachers and consequently on education.

One of its direct effects was noticed when the researcher asked questions pertaining to teacher training. The contract teachers responded that their teaching status as “contract teachers” did not allow them to acquire training or attend workshops which are generally made mandatory by the government on a yearly basis for other teachers. This meant only those teachers who were hired on a permanent basis were able to attend in-service teacher training and workshops. Contractual status also seemed to cause a psychological impact on teachers with almost all of them confessing fear and anxiety concerning job security. This, they candidly admitted, also affected their teaching motivation. Many of the teachers expressed discontentment toward being away from their homes and families. Many teachers disclosed that they travelled 200–250km on weekends to visit their families. Almost all of them expressed a desire to be transferred back to their hometown but felt they were “trapped in Mewat”. The teachers further stated they had no choice but to follow the orders of the government and authorities.

All these factors, therefore, affected teachers’ psychological wellbeing, personal fulfillment, growth, motivation and ability to teach and therefore had crucial implications for teaching and learning outcomes. According to the teachers, 90% of school students were Meos with the total number of students ranging between 500 and 550. The average student-teacher ratio was approximately 60:1. This compares unfavorably to government guidelines set under the RTE Act which stipulates a teacher-student ratio of 30:1.

There was a severe shortage of desks and students were found sitting on the bare floor during the classes. The school also had no library. There were a few general magazines or books that students could read during spare time. The school also had no adequate playground equipment. Many of the classrooms were in total disrepair. All teachers complained of lack of resources in the case of School A as well as in government schools in rural areas in general. Teachers complained of the school being deprived of basic necessities. Teachers also complained of being overburdened by non-teaching tasks such as handling and supervising meals for the students,

monitoring construction work, vaccination programs and conducting census surveys. Additionally, they covered for the shortfall in teachers at the school with extra workload.

School B

A detailed interview was conducted with a Meo teacher from School B. The school had around 90% Meo students, 2 teachers in total and was located in the neighbouring village of Shahpur. It was a Hindi medium primary government school with 121 students, and was affiliated to the same state board as School A. The students came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, similar to School A.

School C

The researcher visited School C and found it similar to School A in that the school had almost the same number of students, teaching staff and infrastructure. It was also an upper primary school and suffered from shortage of desks and other facilities. This school was located in the village of Uleta and was a Hindi medium school affiliated to the state board like the other two schools above. Similar to School A and B, most school students were also Meos and came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The teacher interviewed from this school narrated similar stories about increased contractualization of teachers.

4.2 Case 2–Urban School

School D

School D was a senior secondary school (up to Grade 12) located in the district headquarter of Nuh, a relatively urbanized area in contrast to the rural settings of Schools A, B and C. Approximately 2,500 students attended School D, of which 80%–90% were estimated by teachers to be Meos. There were 53 teachers in total, meaning a 47:1 student:teacher ratio, significantly better than School A. According to Meo teachers who were interviewed from this school, Meo faculty members constituted around 8 to 9 of the total teaching staff of 53.

The infrastructure of this school was impressive and was significantly better than School A, (or Schools B and C and other rural government schools). School facilities included a library consisting of 8,125 books according to library records, two computer labs, Physics and Chemistry labs, a big playground with equipment as well as a large space for basketball and badminton courts.

Officials in School D boasted of being one of the best schools in Mewat producing high quality results each year. All the teachers interviewed along with the principal and the education officer mentioned that the official policy of the school was English. The school was funded by an autonomous agency created by the state of Haryana for creating basic infrastructure in the region.

To provide quality education, this English medium school affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) was established as a model for other schools in the region to follow. The school prided itself on being affiliated to the CBSE which is considered a prestige marker in India. This was evident in that the board outside the school read “English medium CBSE School”. This line was mentioned across all the documents obtained from the school, including students’ diary, prospectus and school magazine. Interestingly, teachers from all schools mentioned the board of education as being one of the key determinants concerning the prestige schools carry. Teachers shared the general perception that the CBSE board is more prestigious than the state boards such as the Board of Education, Haryana (HBSE), to which Schools A, B and C were affiliated.

In terms of textbooks and curricula, School D participants took pride in being associated with the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) which is involved in preparation and publication of textbooks and materials and is perceived as more prestigious than its state counterpart the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).

Students’ achievement records were printed on the walls and featured in the school magazine each year. The school also engaged in an “admission test” of students that took place even at the nursery level. Teachers confirmed during the interviews that the school had a strict admission procedure which students had to go through to ensure only the best students could get through. In this regard, this school differed with the rural schools. School D did share a similarity with other schools, in the hiring of contract teachers. One teacher explained that teachers could gain “regular” status only upon completion of 5 years in the school. The teachers mentioned that the only time they attended teacher training was during their induction but not afterwards. Therefore, teacher training for the contract staff was found lacking within all schools.

In conclusion, then, the schools shared a similarity in that the student body was majority Meo. In terms of differences, rural and urban schools differed across multiple dimensions: medium

of instruction (Hindi/English), boards of affiliation, curricula and textbooks (SCERT/NCERT), location (Rural/Urban), infrastructure and facilities (Poor/Good).

4.3 Data Collection Methods and the Process

Data collection methods used included detailed semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with teachers, field notes, photographs, documents and a focus group session with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) officials and policy makers. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted which equally represented the voices of both Meo and non-Meo teachers working across these schools. Data collection instruments were triangulated and included detailed field notes, memos, school documents, photographs, observation, in-depth individual interviews, and informal conversations with teachers, educational officer and authorities.

Multiple sources of data enhanced the validity and reliability of the research. However, the primary method for data collection was in-depth one-on-one interviews using an interview guide and a semi-structured approach. Bryman (2004) characterized such an approach where the “researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply” (p. 321). The interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 2 hours with most interviews lasting over an hour. The interview guide is attached as Appendix A.

Prior permission was sought to interview teachers and officials and record their responses. They were provided with a participant information sheet, attached as Appendix B, that outlined the aim of this research and how the information shared by them will be used. Prior to starting interviews, they were asked about a suitable venue and they agreed their workplace setting was the best choice. All interviews were audiorecorded then transcribed and translated by the researcher. In the beginning of the interview, all participants were required to review and sign the consent form attached as Appendix C. They were also asked about the language in which they would like to be interviewed.

Non-Meo teachers chose Hindi as their preferred language for interview since they claimed to know very little Mewati. The Meo teachers chose Hindi too. Only one non-Meo English teacher in School D used English along with Hindi as the interview progressed.

Before initiating the interviews, participants were assured about the confidentiality of their responses. To break the ice, the researcher had informal conversation sessions with the teachers

prior to interview. Throughout the field research, the researcher would chat during teachers' breaks and after school hours, occasionally sharing meals with participants, helping to build a friendly rapport.

School documents collected from School D included the annual school magazine and the annual student diary which contained the school rules and details on the timetable, examination patterns, school disciplinary activities and a list of important prayers, songs, quotes and thoughts. The diary was primarily in English but included a limited amount of Hindi and Urdu. The prospectus of the school was also obtained from the educational officer and an admission form was attached to this prospectus. The prospectus included details about the school, infrastructure and facilities along with the fee requirements and admission procedures. Both the prospectus and admission form were in English. Teachers from School A, B and C, on the other hand, hesitated to provide documents when requested. These documents were collected to see schools' preferred languages and implicit language policy.

Detailed field notes and memos were written on each subsequent visit and after every interview to note experiences, interesting incidents, thoughts, ideas, hunches, analytical insights and matters to reflect upon.

Many photographs were taken both inside and outside of the schools. The photographs of schools comprised pictures, maps and writing on the walls and that of blackboards and of classrooms in general. These photographs were taken to reflect on schools' implicit language choices and practices. The pictures taken outside of schools illuminated the prevalent language practices and usage across Mewat with the focus being on examining linguistic landscape of public spaces to further shed light on the roles different languages played in different contexts.

Landry and Bourhis (1997) define linguistic landscape as the usage of language in public space that could comprise of language of advertising billboards, commercial shop signs, placards, street names and any other displays of written language visible in the public sphere (p. 25). The photographs taken outside of schools included road signs, posters, commercial signs, private signs (those used by individuals), graffiti and religious signs. While the focus was on the photographs taken inside the school premises, the pictures taken outside helped in providing a general feel about the region, a broader picture and better insight regarding language use patterns.

During the fieldwork the researcher engaged in conversations with the local Meo community ranging from community radio station employees, religious clerics, shopkeepers, out of school children and the general public. This was done to gain a holistic perspective on the state of education in Mewat, and issues faced by Meos as a result, to assess their views about Mewati and to establish other concerns that the Meo community held with regard to education, language, literature, socioeconomic and political status.

This additional data was collected to shed light on the structural forces responsible for influencing language policies implemented in schools and their implications for the community and their language. This was critical for the overall interviewing process as it facilitated certain crucial questions driven by the local community itself. Notably however, only teachers formed part of the actual sample group. Although students' and parents' responses could have further provided an insight into this study, the focus primarily laid on teachers' perceptions towards Mewati, the institutional contexts in which they made their decisions, and how broader structural forces shaped those decisions. This is because the study concerned itself with LiEP in school, teachers' role in shaping it, and how that in turn interacts with neoliberalism.

Classes at School A were observed during the school visit to examine the medium of instruction used by teachers, their language teaching strategies and student-teacher interaction. The researcher collected data as a non-participant observer sitting at the back of the class taking notes. Class observation, however, was limited to less than two hours, primarily due to teacher unease about non-participant observation in class.

Though the researcher intended to observe classes at School D, the field visit clashed with the school examination session, meaning no observations could take place. While a general observation of the schools was made, owing to these limitations, observation is not a key data collection method, but it provided key information which was used to verify and check consistency of the earlier responses, acting as a guide to the future set of interview questions based on the observations made.

Historically, since inter-religious divisions between Hindus and Muslims are rife in India and in Mewat, particularly with the current Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in power, in order to keep an eye on how it affects the local Meo community, data was collected from various print and online news reports to gauge larger social, economic and political issues

faced by the community, their representation in media and how the local policies and politics continues to shape inter-ethnic relations in the region.

Additional sources of data included government documents, statistics, policy statements, reports by civil society organizations and academic journal articles. These facilitated exploration of the themes of increasing privatization and rights-based discourse employed by the government with regard to the RTE Act and how it interacts with neoliberalism. This in turn has an impact on LiEP adopted by schools and teachers in particular minority languages. These documents were supplemented with a focus group session with key actors working for the government's national flagship program SSA through which RTE is implemented.

A focus group method of data collection was chosen to interview SSA officials working for the government (and responsible for the functioning of government schools in Case 1). This provided rich data through a "combination of interview, group interaction and participant observation" (Plumer-D'Amato, 2008, p. 69) to verify Case 1 teachers' claims, to shed light on structural constraints faced by rural government schools and to throw light on the vision of SSA with regard to providing education and implementation of the RTE Act.

A focus group bridges the divide between conducting either an in-depth individual interview or a participant observation by bringing together the strengths of these two methods while limiting the shortcomings of both (Montell, 1999, p. 47). While an in-depth interview may provide the researcher an insight into an area of interest, it takes away the possibility to observe the phenomena in question as it naturally unfolds in action (Morgan & Spanish, 1984, pp. 259–260). Likewise, Morgan and Spanish (1984) argue, while participant observation does allow "greater ability to observe naturally occurring interaction", it also results in "lesser ability to pursue one's own topics of interest" (pp. 259–260). It is for this reason, a focus groups was also used as a technique to collect data because it combined the merits of the abovementioned two approaches.

Another advantage of a focus group is that it is useful when relatively little is known about an area (Morgan & Scannell, 1998, p. 52). Considering very little data is available on Mewati and, particularly, policy concerns regarding education in Mewat, a focus group seemed appropriate to collect data. Another reason why a focus group was chosen was because it involved capturing views and experiences of officials who were directly involved in making,

implementing and overseeing policy level decisions. A focus group thus could help bring to light similarities and differences to be found in officials' statements.

Morgan (1997) confirms this saying: "Group discussions provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from post hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee" (p. 10). The result of using a focus group thus is that participants "develop ideas collectively, bringing forward their own priorities and perspectives, to create theory grounded in the actual experience" (Smithson, 2008, p. 359).

Additionally, a focus group seemed an adequate strategy because it helped clarify and verify claims made by teachers in Case 1 (Case 2 being an elite school did not have much to do with SSA), regarding the functioning of SSA and their complaints with where it fell short. It was equally important, however, to gain an insight into SSA officials' perceptions regarding teachers, their actions and responsibilities to gauge if there was a mismatch between the two. Moreover, since SSA is a national flagship program that is also responsible for the implementation of the RTE Act, it was important to gain an insight into how it worked and solicit the views of those who were responsible for running it. Thus, employing a focus group consisting of six SSA officials in conjunction with ten in-depth individual interviews with teachers to collect data allowed what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called "constant comparative method of qualitative analysis" (as cited in Morgan & Spanish, 1984, p. 266).

To sum up, a focus group seemed like the best option: 1) to get multiple perspectives on an area that has relatively been left unexplored 2) to observe an interaction take place among participants, who differed across various dimensions, in real time 3) to enable a group discussion in which even contradictory views could emerge among participants so as to observe how they position themselves and, in the process, how they negotiated, formed consensus or disagreed with one another.

In this regard, a focus group session was conducted that lasted nearly three hours. It was digitally recorded. Permission was sought earlier from the participants prior to recording the session. The entire session was later translated and transcribed in full by the researcher. It comprised six SSA officials and was administered in participants' place of work (SSA administrative office) and in their natural setting. This was necessary because when conducting a focus group interview session, it is important to provide a "non-threatening environment" to

research participants where they could freely share their opinions (Krueger, 1994, p. 6). This was essential for this study considering it involved interviewing officials and policymakers who were responsible for and were representing government schools.

Considering some of the questions touched upon the status and functioning of these schools, their funding and provision of services, policy framework regarding SSA and the RTE Act, it was assumed if the government officials were to be approached individually, they would be reluctant to freely share their thoughts and opinions. Thus, a focus group provided a good opportunity to bring them together because it's particularly useful in the context of "individuals who are unwilling to talk without peer support" (Gorman & Clayton, 2005, p. 49) or those "who may be uncomfortable with individual interviews...[but] could be accessed in the safe and familiar context of their own turf, relations, and organizations" (Plaut, Landis, & Trevor, 1993, p. 216).

In order to allow for diversity of opinions, both Meo and non-Meo officials were included. Care was taken to include an equal number of Meo and non-Meo interviewees, three each, because of a tendency in focus groups when "some participants with strong personalities and/or similar views may dominate the discussion, while others may remain silent" (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 21). One way to minimize this limitation and balance the group dynamics was by ensuring equal number of participants belonging to different ethnic/linguistic/religious backgrounds. This ensured lively exchange between participants which even involved sharing contradictory views, which aside from making the discussion even richer and engaging, helped in providing prompts for further discussions and facilitated in bringing to the surface themes that were till then left unexplored.

4.4 Sampling Approach

The sampling approach employed involved purposeful sampling by selecting cases that could provide rich information (Patton, 2002). Information-rich cases are "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The sample consisted of an equal number of Meo and non-Meo teachers to ensure balance and to bring a variety of views from those who spoke Mewati as their mother tongue to those who did not.

Snowball sampling was also used as a sampling strategy for this study. This is a way to add new and possible participants by asking for recommendations from key participants (Patton, 2002, p. 194). A shortage of Meo government school teachers in School A was resolved by a recommendation from non-Meo School A teachers, which provided a solution through interviewing one Meo teacher from School B. Likewise, the recommendation of Meo community radio station employees led to a key teacher, writer, community member from School C. School B and C were also rural government schools and thus had identical characteristics as School A, enabling the generation of a single case (Case 1).

Sampling continued until informational redundancy was achieved. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, sample selection should continue “to the point of redundancy...If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sample units; thus, redundancy is the primary criterion” (p. 202). Table 1 below summarizes the characteristics of teachers interviewed. Pseudonyms have been used instead of the teachers’ real names to preserve confidentiality.

Table 1: Participant Overview

Teacher Names	School Type	Ethnic Background	Teaching Experience (years)	Academic Qualification	Grades Taught	Subjects Taught
Krishna	Rural A	Ahir	5	MA, BEd	6-8	English, Social Sciences, Science, Maths
Shastri	Rural A	Jat	1.5	Junior Basic Training (JBT)	1-5	English, Hindi, Maths, Environmental Studies (EVS)
Deep	Rural A	Jat	1	BSc, MSc	1-5	English, Hindi, Maths, EVS
Aseem	Rural A	Ahir	5	BA, BEd, JBT	1-5	English, Hindi, Maths, EVS
Rasul	Rural B	Meo	15 (8 in Rural B)	MA, BEd, JBT	1-5	English, Hindi, Maths, EVS
Aslam	Rural C	Meo	6	MA	1-5	English, Hindi, Maths, EVS

Vikram	Urban D	Jat	10 (5 in Urban D)	MA (English), BEd	11-12	English
Murid	Urban D	Meo	3	MCA, OCA	11-12	Computer Science
Qurban	Urban D	Meo	3	BA (Urdu), MA (Urdu), BEd	1-8	English, Hindi, Maths, EVS (1-5), Urdu (6-8)
Imran	Urban D	Meo	5	BSc, MSc (Physics), BEd	11-12	Physics

4.5 Data Analysis

Data collected from interviews was analyzed through comprehensive examination of transcripts. The hundreds of pages were all first transcribed and later translated and coded by the researcher. Artifacts collected from the schools, namely, the school magazine, students' diary and admission form, were subject to thorough document analysis. The intention was to ascertain what languages were used, for what purposes and the number of times each appeared in those documents. To carry out this task, a table was made where corresponding to each type of document, separate entries were noted. These entries were marked on the lines of the language used (Hindi, English or Urdu), the purpose it served and the page number on which they appeared. These were quantified to determine which language looked most dominant. This was carried out to uncover and reflect on schools' implicit language practices and policies.

As mentioned previously, several photographs were taken inside the schools. Additionally, detailed field notes and memos were written throughout the fieldwork. They guided not just the data collection process but also the analysis process. They were thoroughly analyzed and led to the emergence of many analytical categories.

To organize and structure the data, Spolsky's (2004) language policy framework was used to shed light on LiEP employed in schools. This included the three components of language practices, beliefs and management, as described in Chapter 1, each of which was elaborated upon across the two school types and their participants. This meant that each participant of each school was separated according to the three elements of Spolsky's (2004) model. The data was analyzed to develop categories, which emerged both from the framework and the data

itself. This included language practices of teachers in the classrooms, teachers' language beliefs in relation to different languages including Hindi, English, Urdu, Mewati among others and language management strategies employed by the teachers and school authorities to influence students' language practices and beliefs.

An integrated deductive and inductive analysis approach was used to analyze focus group and individual interview transcripts. While, Spolsky's model initially served as a basis for establishing LiEP adopted in schools, looking into teachers' beliefs and views as well as the contexts in which they worked led to key themes, concepts and categories that shed light on broader institutional, pedagogical and policy discourses that were shaped by neoliberalism. This latter part of the data analysis process was inductive and iterative in nature, requiring going back and forth between the coded dataset and resulting analytical interpretation.

Thus, this research employs two types of analysis: case analysis with a deductive approach and thematic analysis with an inductive approach. In order to address the first research question: "What language policy is followed by teachers in two types of schools?", the framework by Spolsky was used to explore not just the space a minority language variety Mewati occupies in schools but also teachers' attitude towards it and in comparison with other dominant languages. In order to address the second research question: "How the effects of neoliberalism in the current climate interacts with (minority) LiEP generally, and in the context of the RTE Act in India specifically?", a thematic framework approach was deemed most appropriate to analyze the data, identify key themes and explore the link between (minority) LiEP in schools and neoliberalism which has not received adequate attention.

The thematic framework analysis involved five analytical stages (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) that guided the research process from data collection, analysis and writing up the final report. These are listed below:

Familiarization: This stage involved getting familiar with the data. The researcher transcribed and translated the data, fully immersing themselves by listening to the audio recordings, reading and re-reading all the interview transcripts, fieldnotes and memos taken during the study in order to make sense of the data and later listed initial codes on the margins of all the transcripts. Figure 3 shows an example of the interview transcript with initial codes noted on the margins.

Researcher: What concerns do you think government school teachers like yourself have?

Rasul: The government school teachers have several concerns. Teachers feel under pressure to perform various tasks other than just teaching. For example, we must conduct census surveys, monitor mid-day meals, assist NGO people with polio drops and other vaccination campaigns, etc. **With all these jobs, the teachers get mentally disturbed.** We lose interest in teaching. If the government just asked us to focus on teaching alone, it would be better. But the government doesn't ask us our concerns. Rather, the policies get made in air-conditioned rooms without any consultation with teachers. Whereas, if anyone asked us or bothered to take our advice, we could inform them better.

Researcher: Do teachers get the support in terms of in-service training? What are your views on that?

Rasul: Only permanent teachers receive training. I went to attend one a few days ago. It lasted only for three days and they did not teach a single word. The training materials had nothing to do with the problems and concerns faced by teachers in a region like Mewat. The Haryana government and Indian government allocates a certain amount of fund for teacher training, out of which it gives some to a private firm like Edu-comp, which has a fixed training session and used fixed training materials which have nothing to do with teachers' concerns and the problems they face during the teaching session. This allocated fund is getting completely wasted and is not being used properly. It is being misused.

Additionally, in a school which already suffers from teacher shortage, this teacher training makes it harder for the other teachers (such as the contract ones) who get left behind and have to look after the school and manage students and then have to take extra classes to complete the syllabus because the other teachers are gone for over two weeks.

Prema Bakshi "Teachers feel under pressure"

Prema Bakshi Increased workload of teachers

Prema Bakshi 12 minutes ago
Leads to psychological stress

Reply Resolve

Prema Bakshi Effects teachers' motivation

Prema Bakshi Teachers feeling alienated from

Prema Bakshi Teachers perceive policy make

Prema Bakshi Contractual teachers being

Prema Bakshi Training materials not

Prema Bakshi Privatizing/outourcing teach

Prema Bakshi Mishandling/misappropriation

Prema Bakshi Teacher shortage

Prema Bakshi Contractual teachers being

Figure 3 – Excerpt from an interview with the Meo teacher named Rasul from the rural government school (Case A) with initial codes noted on the margins

Three types of memos, as per Strauss and Corbin (1990) in the Grounded Theory Method, namely: "code notes, theoretical notes, and operational notes" (p. 197), were written, coded and analyzed. An example of that is shown in Figure 4.

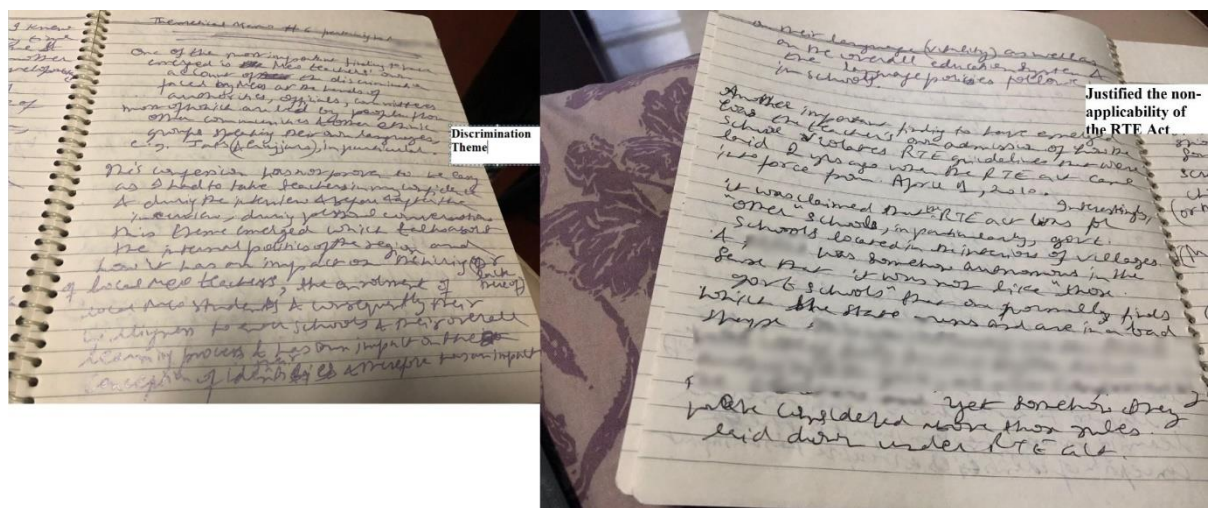


Figure 4 – Coding theoretical memo (Case 2)

Identifying a thematic framework: Identifying key issues, concepts and themes was made easier through a series of mechanisms, for instance, all participants in rural schools (Case 1), repeatedly invoking the issue of excessive workload that made them feel less valued by taking

away their time from teaching. This recurrent theme was labeled ‘teachers overburdened’. Later it was further refined and collapsed under the theme ‘shortage of teachers’ as it became clear this was the underlying cause. Other than what is said, or said too often, often what is not said, omitted or said non-verbally or through gestures (extra-linguistic factors) can signal power dynamics, tension or discomfort between participants. This was the case when participants from dominant and subordinated communities (non-Meo and Meo) were interviewed. Every Meo participant invoked the theme of discrimination and members of non-Meo group rejected their claim, while simultaneously being discriminatory towards their language, culture and ethnicity. This theme, noticed during observation and the interview process, when combined with the existing literature on Meos and the current tense socio-political relations between Meos and non-Meos (and between Muslims and Hindus), brought to the fore the theme of ‘discrimination’.

Thus, following the first stage of familiarization, key recurrent themes, concepts and categories were identified to construct a tentative thematic framework which underwent revision several times in the event any new themes emerged or if earlier ones required merging. This process was made easier using Microsoft OneNote which allowed storage and retrieval of data and helped organize a large volume of interview transcripts. New concepts and categories could easily be color-coded and highlighted, added, merged or refined, moved between pages within each section or across sections.

I created three separate color sections (interviews with Rural School Case 1 teachers, interviews with Urban School Case 2 teachers and focus group session with SSA officials). Within each section of two school cases, for instance, there were multiple pages, each representing a separate participant. Each page belonging to a participant had data coded with emerging themes and categories making the process of performing a within case and cross-case analysis easier. Figure 5 and 6 show the preliminary thematic framework that emerged, lists key themes and categories for Case 1 and Case 2 respectively as well as shows how the data was organized, retrieved and managed using Microsoft OneNote. Figure 7 demonstrates the final thematic framework that reflects how the effects of neoliberalism manifest themselves on three levels that influence minority LiEP.

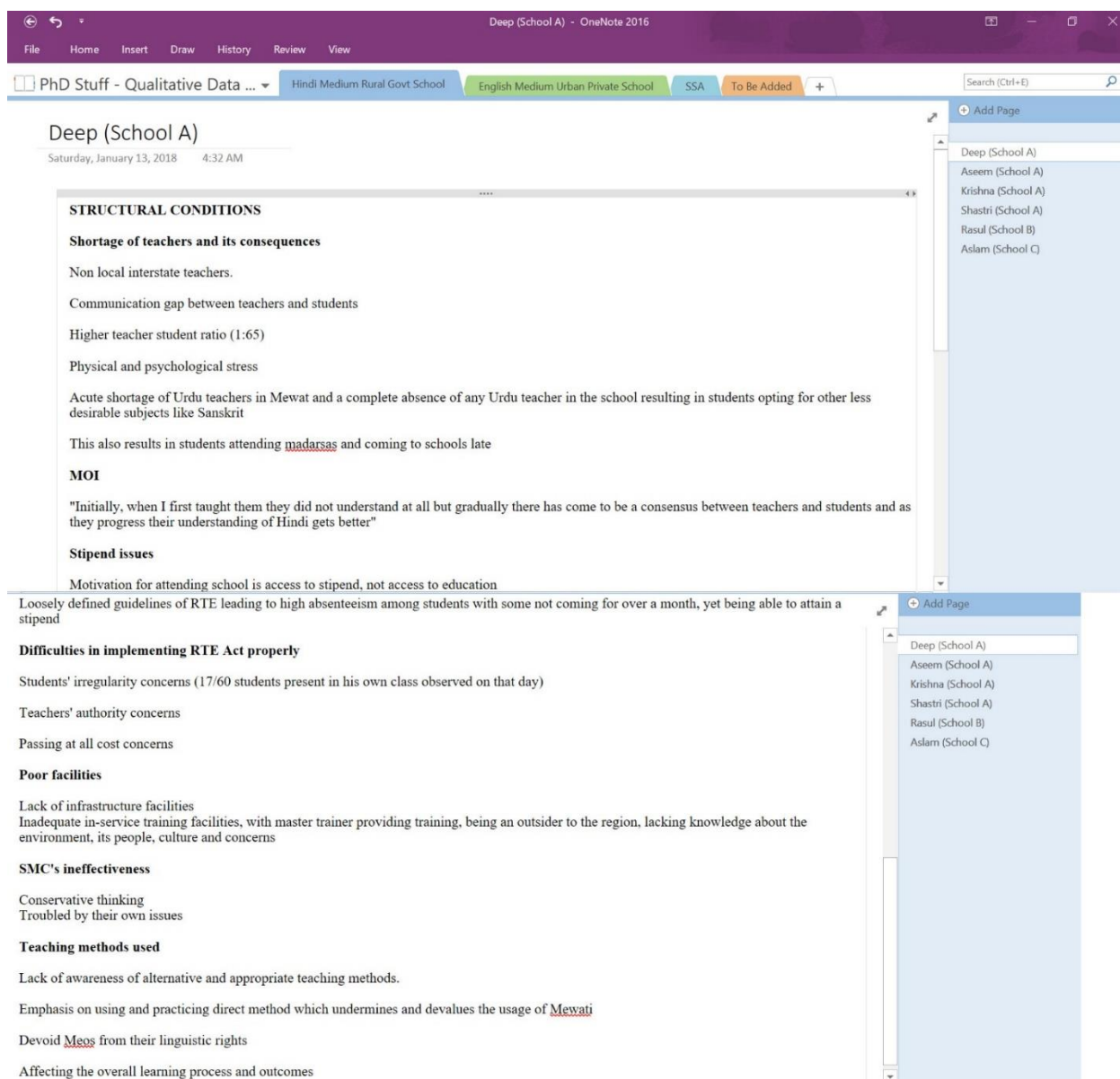


Figure 5 – Coding, managing and retrieving data in Microsoft OneNote: Case 1 rural government school non-Meo teacher

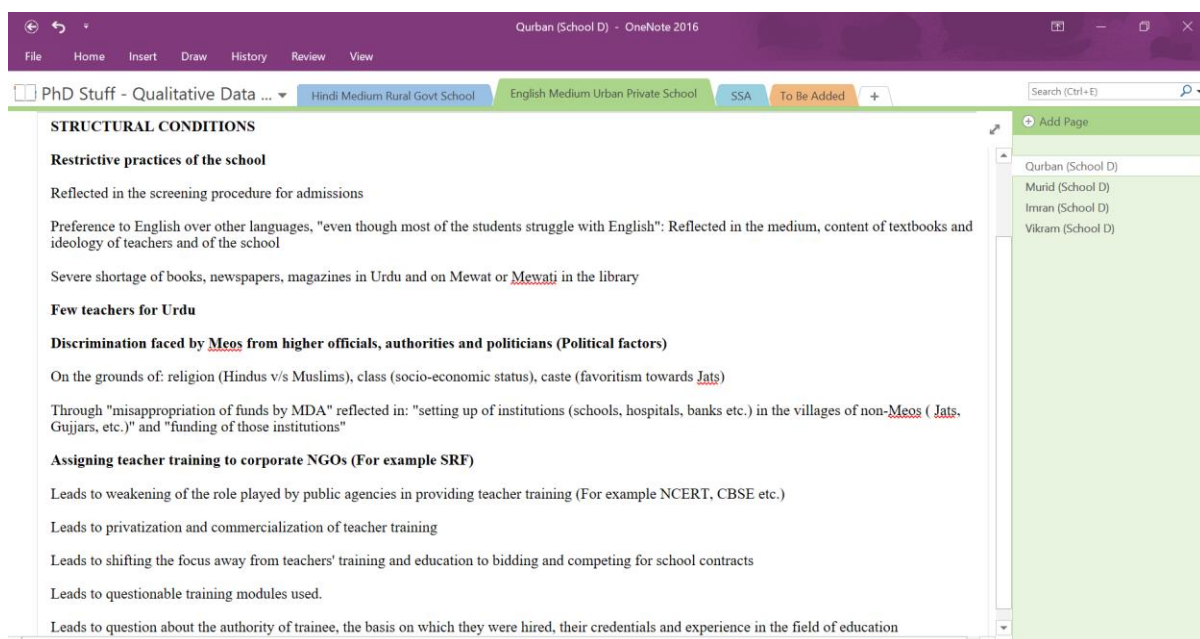


Figure 6 – Coding, managing and retrieving data in Microsoft OneNote: Case 2 urban private Meo school teacher

Color-Yellow==Case-A-(rural-government-school(s)); Color-Blue==Case-B-(urban-private-school); ¶

Color-Green==Common-themes-across-both-types-of-schools ¶

Institutional-level ¶

- → Shortage-of-teachers ¶
- → Ineffective-SMCs ¶
- → Inadequate-teacher-training ¶
- → Infrastructural-conditions ¶
- → Unavailability/late-delivery-of-books ¶
- → Recruitment-pattern-of-teachers ¶
- → Excessive-school-inspections ¶
- → Inadequate-teacher-training ¶

Pedagogical-level ¶

- → Teacher-centered-approach, mostly-exam-focused ¶
- → Lack-of-awareness-in-alternative-teaching-methods-and-pedagogy ¶
- → Lack-of-training-in-teaching-out-of-school/pushed-out-students ¶
- → Lack-of-training-in-teaching/designing-remedial-and-age-appropriate-syllabus/course-content ¶
- → Teachers-in-Case-A-not-so-enthusiastic-about-CCE, ¶
- → Teachers-in-Case-B-found-comparatively-more-enthusiastic ¶

Policy-level ¶

- → Dissatisfaction-with-the-RTE-Act ¶
- → Alienation-as-a-result-of-the-RTE-Act ¶
- → Unawareness-of-the-RTE-Act ¶
- → Justified-its-non-applicability ¶

Figure 7 – The thematic framework resulting from preliminary familiarization with data and initial coding

Indexing: Ritchie and Spencer (2002) describe indexing as “the process whereby the thematic framework or index is systematically applied to the data in their textual form” (p. 316). Once the final thematic framework emerged, key themes and sub-themes that were part of the tentative thematic framework were cross-checked against the data to ensure the coding process was consistent, rigorous and that no key themes were overlooked. For example, if “alienation” was an emergent candidate theme that was identified during initial stages of constructing thematic framework then all responses by teachers addressing alienation would be indexed as such. This indexing process would continue until all emergent themes had been reviewed, indexed and confirmed for their scope, relevance and effect. It was in this stage, similarly indexed responses would be grouped together, and erroneously indexed responses would be checked if they ought to be grouped under other themes. This was a fluid and iterative stage where the researcher continued to refine the thematic framework to ensure responses were indexed as accurately as possible and grouped logically under well-defined themes that addressed the research questions and were in line with the research aim before proceeding to the next stage.

Charting: The objective of charting is to present all instances of a theme in a chart or a table, so it is easier to locate and organize all the data surrounding a theme. These charts contained summaries along with key quotations that allowed for easy reference back to the original data. During the charting stage, “data are lifted from their original context and rearranged according to the appropriate thematic reference” (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 318). Two charting layouts are possible, either theme-based (for each individual theme across all participants) or case-based (for each individual participant across all themes). This study employed theme-based charting so as to make possible within case and cross-case comparison between Meo and non-Meo participants from the two types of schools (rural/government and urban/private) easier and notice if any patterns of similarities or differences existed.

Mapping and interpretation: Mind maps were used to map relationships between themes and sub-themes, seek explanations and interpret the findings to reflect the broader patterns of associations between three key themes that emerged during the analysis stage. These were, institutional, pedagogical and policy levels, that demonstrated how the effects of neoliberalism manifested themselves and interacted with teachers’ beliefs, actions and behavior, which in

turn, played a part in influencing LiEP and in particular the space Mewati occupied in those schools.

In summary, the entire data analysis process was carried out in two phases – within case analysis and cross-case analysis. The process was iterative and involved moving “back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). For phase 1, within case analysis, each case was treated as a “comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). Each case was investigated in detail to provide a thick description and is presented with supporting quotes by the participants. In within case analysis, care was also taken to account for the variation occurring within cases, namely Meo and non-Meo participants within each school. For phase 2, cross-case analysis, both the two cases (rural and urban school settings) were compared and contrasted “to build abstractions across cases” (Merriam, 1998, p. 195).

Finally, triangulation strengthened the findings of this study and provided a richer, well developed and holistic perspective as well as provided rigour to the analysis. As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest, “the use of multiple methods (or triangulation) reflects an attempt to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 4). Creswell (2002) defines this triangulation as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection” (p. 280).

In this study, triangulation was achieved through multiple methods of data collection and employing multiple sources of data from different participants based in different settings at different times. This helped ensure credibility of the findings. The advantage of using triangulation is best put across by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) when they declared that: “The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation” (p. 4).

This chapter described the research methodology employed by the researcher to guide this study. A description of data collection methods and procedures, sampling approach and data analysis was provided. The researcher’s position and challenges faced during the research were also explored. An overview of the participants and of the schools was presented. The next chapter will cover the findings that will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 5: Language in Education Policy Findings

This section will present findings related to the research question: “What kind of LiEP did the rural/government school(s) (Case 1) and urban/private school (Case 2) adhere to; and, what role(s), if any, did Mewati play in the overall language policy?” To approach these questions, a comprehensive model proposed by Spolsky (2004) was chosen as a framework, as well as a useful tool, to organize the data. As a result, the findings below are presented according to the three components of the Spolsky’s model: Language practices, beliefs and management.

5.1 Case 1–Rural School (School A)

Non-Meo Teachers: Krishna, Shastri, Deep and Aseem

Implicit or explicit language policy

In line with Shohamy’s (2006) distinction between the stated/explicit language policy and implicit language policy (p. 50), an effort was made to investigate school A’s LiEP. As mentioned in Chapter 4, School A teachers resisted providing any school documents when requested, which would have been useful further for investigating the school’s unstated language policy. However, of the four teachers interviewed from School A, Shastri, Deep and Aseem mentioned that the official language policy was the usage of Hindi. Although not explicitly stated in any written document, all teachers attributed the use of Hindi to the fact School A was a government school. A link was also observed between Hindi and national identity. As Aseem said:

It is India (*Hindustan*) so of course Hindi should be encouraged. The language policy of our school is that of Hindi which means ...teach Hindi, speak Hindi and teach through Hindi ...so our school is Hindi medium.

Teachers’ reasoning suggests that the type of school (rural government school) and a sense of nationalism are the two key factors that play a part in the adoption of Hindi as an implicit language policy in these schools.

5.1.1 Language Practices

Questions were asked to determine the medium of instruction (MOI) and language used in classroom/school to communicate with students and colleagues so as to gain an insight into the

language practices. An attempt was also made to ascertain the language students use to communicate with teachers. All teachers reported use of Hindi as MOI. However, they revealed Meo students struggled in speaking and understanding Hindi particularly in primary school. A key quotation exemplifying the language practice of teachers (and students) is from Krishna who remarked:

There is gap in communication between teachers and Meo students. Students especially at the primary level do not understand Hindi well enough. For example, we would say, *sar mein dard ho raho* (I have a headache), they won't understand this. So, they would say this as *moond bhatak raho ji* in Mewati [laughs]. For so many days, we had no idea what they meant.

This demonstrates a significant communication gap between teachers and students. Teachers admit seeking help from others as teachers struggled with Mewati. It also showed that students struggled with Hindi particularly in the initial years. This conversation also revealed teachers' attitudes in that Krishna was observed chuckling (as were the other teachers) when talking about variations between Hindi and Mewati. Likewise, Shastri stated:

There are many challenges faced when teaching solely in Hindi as students do not understand and learn properly. Students are not that competent in speaking and understanding Hindi particularly in the initial years. And since we lack competence and comprehension in Mewati, sometimes we even have to consult someone, so we understand a few words [laughs].

These statements show teachers and students face significant communication barriers which impact students' overall learning process and educational outcomes. This is even more alarming in Mewat where literacy levels are so low (44% per the 2001 Census). As to language used with students and colleagues, all teachers stated using Hindi. All non-Meo teachers belonged to other parts of Haryana and claimed to use Haryanvi with each other. When asked about the language used by students to communicate with teachers, all teachers stated that students communicated with them in Mewati especially at the primary level before shifting to Hindi at a later stage.

5.1.2 Language Beliefs

Each teacher was asked about their views on Mewati and individual languages that were part of the school curriculum and/or of the language repertoire of teachers. The aim of this exercise was to uncover teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding different languages. Beliefs both influence and derive from teaching practices (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14) and therefore will have a

significant effect on Mewati and the state of education more generally. Spolsky further argues, these beliefs may also form the basis of decisions concerning language management or a management policy may be put in place to confirm or modify these beliefs. As such, beliefs form the core of this research and hence an effort was made to elicit teachers' beliefs regarding all concerned languages. This meant teachers' beliefs regarding 'standard' languages like Hindi and English that were part of the school curriculum were solicited along with Urdu which, while offered as an optional subject to students in Grades 6 to 8, was absent from the schools owing to non-availability of teachers and materials.

Additionally, beliefs concerning teachers' own mother tongues were also collected. Haryanvi and Bagri are subsumed under Hindi (Census 2011) as 'dialects' and excluded from the school curriculum. Though, not the primary focus of the study, beliefs concerning these languages were nonetheless an important aspect to examine to shed light on teachers' views on minority languages in general.

Towards Hindi

Teachers were asked to give their opinion on Hindi and its relevance. While Krishna and Shastri equated Hindi with "our mother tongue (*hamaari maatra-bhaasha*)", Deep and Aseem regarded Hindi as "our national language (*hamaari raashta-bhaasha*)". Hindi was seen by all non-Meo teachers as a marker of Indian identity. One of the strongest supporters for teaching, learning and promoting Hindi was non-Meo teacher Aseem. He espoused Hindi as a symbol of nationalism:

Hindi should be given more emphasis as we are Indians (*Hindustanis*). It is our national language. Every administrative work should be done solely in Hindi. It should be made a truly international language, so it could be taught in foreign lands. [I] Wish for a time when other countries are forced to teach Hindi on their lands.

When asked if Hindi was already an international language and whether it was sufficiently promoted, he replied negatively:

More efforts are needed for its promotion nationally and globally. People focus more on English as their thought process is becoming too westernized. Hindi needs to be promoted more. Not satisfied with the current promotion of Hindi, only when we promote Hindi more, will it become international...By the way, I have done my B.Ed. from Hindi Prachar Sabha.

This was an interesting moment as the conversation slowly drifted to the premier institution Hindi Prachar Sabha which according to Aseem, aims at "promoting and spreading Hindi in

South India where people generally speak Tamil”. Aseem was asked about his experiences there to gain new insights into his views regarding promoting Hindi. Overall, he appeared pleased and proud of his association with the institution and noted “those who speak Hindi well there have a prestige of their own”. On the whole, a common strand ran through all these views by teachers which linked Hindi-Hindustan-Hindustani (language, nation and national identity).

School A’s non-Meo teachers emphasized ‘purity’ of Hindi and favored a highly Sanskritized form of Hindi. They strove for “Pure Hindi (*Shuddh Hindi*)” in the classroom, but acknowledged it posed problems for both children as well as for teachers themselves. As Krishna said: “We try to use pure Hindi, though students do not understand. So, what’s the use?”. Aseem stressed pure Hindi inside the classroom but remarked: “We try to speak pure Hindi, but no matter how hard we try, we cannot get rid of Haryanvi while speaking Hindi [laughs]...we fail to speak pure Hindi”.

Towards English

When teachers were asked their views about the English language and its relevance, Krishna regarded English an international language and he along with the other teachers considered that learning English was essential. Deep mentioned that English was a window to the world and guaranteed success. It was clear all teachers held a very positive attitude towards English and perceived its instrumental value, necessity for upward social mobility and international/global status.

Nevertheless, when teachers were asked about the role it occupied in the school, they all stated that it was taught only as a subject and that more emphasis was on Hindi as the latter was the sole MOI. When teachers were asked to rate their proficiency in English, all of them confessed it was “quite weak” including those who taught English as a subject.

Towards Urdu

All teachers were asked their views and perspectives on two issues: the current condition of Urdu and its relevance in schools and their attitudes and beliefs towards Urdu. In terms of the condition, Urdu occupied an interesting space in the visited rural government schools. Although there was an option to choose Urdu for the students from grades 6th to 8th (other available options included Sanskrit, Punjabi, drawing and physical education), all respondents

confirmed the acute shortage of Urdu teachers and materials. For instance, Deep stated that he had never seen an Urdu teacher in the whole of Mewat except in private schools or Islamic schools (*Madrasas*), even though teachers confirmed greater student interest in Urdu than other subjects. Teachers noted some students were proficient in Urdu because a reasonable number of children in Mewat were likely to learn Urdu at an early age under the guidance of religious teachers (*Maulvis*) working in local Mosques (*Masjids*). When asked what this shortage of Urdu language teachers and resources meant for students, they replied many students reluctantly opted for Sanskrit, whose teachers and books were more widely present in schools. As Deep reported, “students naturally opt for Sanskrit when there is no Urdu teacher in the school. So, they study Urdu in a mosque”. Nevertheless, School A’s non-Meo teachers were united in stating that the provision of Urdu teachers in the schools would not only ensure more Meo students would enroll and remain in school but doing so would also significantly increase the literacy rate among Meos.

When asked how teachers perceived student proficiency in Urdu and its relevance in schools, teachers suggested that it was good and providing Urdu in schools would only help Meos further. As Aseem explained:

Meo students are better in Urdu than even Hindi generally speaking, particularly in terms of reading abilities. We have noticed that their reading speed, accuracy and fluency is better while reading text in Urdu than Hindi...during cultural programs organised in school, we have noticed that they swiftly read poems and sing songs in Urdu fluently.

This implies teachers’ knowledge of students’ proficiency was largely based on observation of students during extracurricular activities or cultural programs held in the school.

With regard to teacher attitudes towards Urdu language, non-Meo Hindu teachers were asked who owned Urdu and if they thought it belonged to all. Asking this question was important as Urdu is generally (mis)understood as a Muslim language. However, all teachers agreed Urdu was a language that belonged to both Hindus and Muslims. Considering the importance usually attached to Urdu within the Muslim community across Mewat, non-Meo teachers suggested Urdu had a special role to play. Deep voiced his concern regarding Urdu and mentioned that the provision of Urdu teachers in government schools was necessary otherwise “the language would further marginalize and may even disappear”.

All teachers in some way or another stated that Urdu was a “sweet language”, rich in poetry and literature. To sum up, all teachers held a positive attitude towards Urdu and expressed

concerns over its non-availability in schools in Mewat where as they stressed, the majority of the population were Muslims. As the teachers noted, parents, community members and students alike have expressed a desire for Urdu to be taught in schools.

Towards Mewati

An attempt was made to collect teachers' beliefs regarding the local language variety. Some of the questions that were asked included:

- Should any resources be allocated by the government for the development of the language?
- Should Mewati be introduced as a MOI, at least in the primary stage, considering many teachers previously stated that students had difficulties in understanding and learning?
- Should Meo children be using the language at home/school?
- Do teachers think speaking Mewati was a hindrance for students' overall learning process?
- Any general views on Mewati other than already stated?

Non-Meo teachers held a more negative attitude towards Mewati than Meo teachers. An example was Krishna's views on Mewati as a "backward language (*picchdi bhaasha*)"; "abusive language (*gaali galoch bhaasha*)". Aseem said firmly: "It has no rich history and no literature". This comment from Aseem contrasted with Meo teachers from the other rural schools who stressed a rich past and oral tradition in Mewati. The extent of a negative attitude held by non-Meo teachers could be noticed through emphasis on the dialect-language (*boli-bhaasha*) distinction. In the middle of the interviews the researcher was stopped and 'corrected' several times by the non-Meo teachers. This incident occurred each time the researcher referred to Mewati as a language (*bhaasha*) and the non-Meo teachers asked the researcher to say dialect (*boli*) instead.

This dialect-language distinction was the reason teachers used to justify denial of resource allocation for Mewati's development. For instance, all non-Meo teachers held that no resource allocation was necessary with Deep stating: "It does not need any resource allocation; it is just a dialect (*boli*)".

Another justification for the marginalization of Mewati was social cohesion. As Aseem pointed out: "No need to allocate resources for its development. If done so, the Government will have to incur a heavy cost which will disrupt the social order". Administratively, Aseem suggested: "It will become a burden on the government". When asked if he thought Mewati could be an

optional subject he replied: “There is no need to introduce it as an optional subject as it lacks potential”.

Aseem, Krishna and Shastri even discouraged the use of Mewati at home by students, for instance, Shastri expressed: “It should not be used at home. At home, it should be replaced by Hindi. It should be discarded slowly”. Deep was the only exception maintaining: “Meos should use Mewati at home otherwise it will disappear, it is their boli afterall”. Among the chief reasons cited for discouragement of Mewati at home was that the continual use of Mewati would act as an impediment to learning Hindi.

Asked if they believed Mewati should be used in schools, Aseem and Shastri insisted that it should not by arguing that Mewati was “limited to a small region”. Shastri also noted that “it has no instrumental value”. Krishna and Shastri declared Mewati “unsuitable to be MOI” and asserted “Meo students should not use it in school as it is incompatible with the school environment”. Further, Aseem argued: “These children can understand Hindi and once they can do that, I don’t think there should be any problem”.

School A’s non-Meo teachers perceived the classroom use of Mewati as a hindrance rather than a resource except Deep who stressed: “I don’t see it as a hindrance effecting students’ learning. While speaking one’s mother tongue one does not think of an advantage or limitation”. Nonetheless, during the course of the interview, Deep did claim, “students can use Mewati in school until 4th or 5th grade then they should use Hindi”. Krishna, Shastri and Aseem however, were of the opinion that its use in classrooms would act as an impediment or obstruction. As Shastri stated: “It is an obstruction to Meos’ development”. Krishna also said: “It is a hindrance for students’ overall learning process”.

As seen from these responses, only one out of the four teachers interviewed from School A opined that Meos’ mother tongue was not a hindrance for their overall learning and that it should be maintained at home (albeit not used in school after the primary stage). Their responses suggested a shift from Mewati towards Hindi was seen as something to encourage. Overall, School A’s teachers held a negative attitude towards Mewati and seemed unaware of its oral tradition and literature. The teachers also lacked understanding of recent research pointing to advantages of using/accommodating students’ mother tongue in teaching and learning.

Towards Haryanvi and Bagri

School A's teachers spoke languages different to Mewati as their mother tongues (MT). These MTs were also minority languages and were subsumed under Hindi as "dialects" in the 2011 Census. It was necessary to gather their views on their own languages to see if they were in line with their perception of Mewati or if the teachers perceived their own MTs as superior. The responses suggested that the teachers also relegated their own MTs to "dialects". This was similar to their reaction to Mewati, they were reluctant to acknowledge their MTs as fully-fledged languages.

School A's teachers did, however, note that Mewati was "lesser" in prestige value than their own MTs. For instance, Deep whose MT was Bagri said: "Bagri sounds more respectful." Shastri, a Haryanvi speaker claimed: "Mewati is not even equivalent to pure Haryanvi". The reason that Haryanvi is spoken more widely in the state of Haryana as well as has an increasingly growing written literature in Devanagari could have played a part in the teachers' assessments.

When asked about their mother tongue and the language they spoke with their parents, siblings, wives and children, each responded that it was Hindi. When prompted further, they admitted it was "village variety (*dehati*)", before further admitting it was Haryanvi and Bagri. There was reluctance at first to even acknowledge their MTs.

Later on, all of them reported speaking mother tongues with parents and siblings, but Hindi ("pure Hindi" in Aseem's case) with wives and children. Shastri claimed his mother tongue "was a blockage to development" and perceived Hindi as an "improvement brought about by education". Having revealed their mother tongues, School A's teachers defended their position claiming: "After all, Hindi has now become everyone's mother tongue". The responses of non-Meo teachers suggested embarrassment and shame about their MTs and openness to shifting towards Hindi in the home domain. This attitude reflected and matched their views on minority languages including Mewati.

To conclude, a clear pattern of attitudes emerged. Hindi was associated with nation and nationalism. English was associated with international mobility and prestige. Urdu was seen as desirable but lacking in materials and resources to support its inclusion in schools. Mewati was seen negatively as a 'backward dialect', especially by non-Meo teachers, who viewed its

inclusion as a potential disruption to the social order. While non-Meo teachers viewed their own language varieties Haryanvi and Bagri as inferior to Hindi, they nonetheless viewed them as being superior to Mewati.

5.1.3 Language Management

The language management strategies employed by teachers and school officials play a role in influencing language practices and beliefs of students. The findings revealed the language management measures used by school teachers included using, striving for and encouraging students to use pure (*shuddh*) Hindi in the classroom. School A's teachers agreed to have used this strategy.

School A's non-Meo teachers used and emphasized the direct method of teaching inside the classroom, which meant taking no account of students' MT. The influence of this method was not limited to teaching and learning processes or outcomes but had far reaching consequences, modifying students' practices and beliefs. Deep, provided a typical example similar to the other teachers:

There are two types of methods for teaching students, direct method and bilingual method. We use direct method with students so that they will be good in Hindi or English. If we want to say to a student, "come here!" in English or "*yahaan aao!*" in Hindi, then he may not understand the first time, but after a few times and 5–7 days later, they will start to understand that it means teacher is calling them.

The management strategies used by School A's teachers included using and encouraging standard Hindi with the emphasis on pure/Sanskritized Hindi inside the classroom along with focus on the direct method of teaching.

5.2 Case 1–Rural School(s) (School B and C)

Meo Teachers: Rasul and Aslam

Implicit or explicit language policy

Rasul from School B reported he was not aware of his school having any explicit language policy. The school's emphasis on the use of Hindi reflected a covert or implicit language policy in line with the responses collected from the other teachers. Aslam from School C confirmed that the official language policy in his school was Hindi.

5.2.1 Language Practices

Both Meo teachers confirmed that they used Hindi as the MOI. They also revealed Meo students struggled in speaking and understanding Hindi, particularly during primary education. Both teachers agreed with School A teachers, stating Meo students struggled with speaking/comprehending Hindi. As Rasul put it:

When they [non-Meo] teachers teach, use their language, or Haryanvi language, for the first few years children just stare at them. The first two-three years just pass by with children figuring out what did teachers mean. They don't understand them fully...sometimes even we as teachers can't understand them, how would a child then?

When asked about the language teachers used with students and colleagues, both Meo teachers stated using Hindi with students and colleagues. The Meo teachers also reported using Mewati in addition to Hindi. When asked about the language students used to communicate with teachers, similar to School A, both teachers pointed out that students spoke Mewati especially at the primary level before shifting to Hindi later.

5.2.2 Language Beliefs

Towards Hindi

Aslam and Rasul both proclaimed Hindi as “our mother tongue (*hamaari maatra-bhaasha*)”. Hindi was attached to notions of self-respect and a marker of Indian identity. As Rasul mentioned: “Hindi is the identity of the nation on a global scale. Our self-respect is attached to Hindi. Hindi rules in our hearts and minds. Hindi flows in our veins”. Rasul, like teachers from School A, stressed using pure Hindi in class due to its instrumental value. As Rasul said, it was good for students in the long run in case they moved interstate or for securing government jobs. Aslam on the other hand did not pay as much attention to pure Hindi as the other teachers did.

Towards English

Aslam and Rasul both regarded English an international language. Aslam said no future without English was possible. Rasul reported English was important in the era of globalization, science and computers, that it opened doors to secure jobs in government, multinational corporations and for moving to other states. Like School A's teachers, Aslam and Rasul confessed that English had a limited role in the school compared to Hindi which was the sole

MOI. When asked to rate their proficiency in English, both Meo teachers also self-reported as quite weak.

Towards Urdu

School B and C teachers agreed with School A teachers that schools faced a severe shortage of Urdu teachers, textbooks and materials. They affirmed School A teachers' views about students' preference for Urdu over Sanskrit. However, due to the non-availability of Urdu in schools, students were forced to opt for Sanskrit instead. As Rasul said: "Most Meo students would prefer to choose Urdu over Sanskrit (if it's available) as it would be relatively easier for them. Usually, it is Hindu students who tend to opt for Sanskrit".

This is in line with Khalidi's (2004) report about the discriminatory attitude toward the inclusion of Urdu in schools in the state of Uttar Pradesh (p. 72). Khalidi asserted that students are forced to opt for Sanskrit due to the manipulation of the Three-Language-Formula among other factors. Throughout the interview, Rasul and Aslam maintained that Urdu had the potential to bring and retain more Meo students if made available. As Aslam stated:

Urdu can help in bringing and retaining Meos to schools. It can improve their literacy rate and increase students' regularity of attendance. Moreover, while Urdu belongs to all, Meos somehow tend to perceive Arabic and Urdu in religious light as a lot of their literature is written in Urdu.

School B and C teachers' opinions on Urdu were sought regarding its perceived association with Muslims. Since these teachers were Meo Muslims as compared with School A's non-Meo Hindus, their views were solicited for comparison. Both Aslam and Rasul saw Urdu as belonging to Hindus and Muslims. Both held a positive attitude towards its rich history and poetic tradition. One such response from Rasul was:

Urdu has rich literature, poetry and cultural legacy. Urdu is like honey (*shehad*). The sweetness (*mithaas*) that Urdu has is not to be found in any other language. Learning Urdu can be beneficial as you can teach or even travel across other countries. It must be introduced in schools considering it is Mewat.

Towards Mewati

Specific questions about the vitality of Mewati were asked of School B and C teachers. This was done firstly, to establish Mewati's perceived vitality by Meo teachers and to assess their concerns and, secondly, to observe their attitude towards Mewati.

The questions asked if they believed the language was in decline or if language shift was in progress and, if so, which language were Meos shifting to and did Mewati have any (oral) literature. The responses from School B and C teachers showed concern for Mewati. For instance, Aslam from School C replied: “Most Meos (elders and children) use mixed Mewati now with words borrowed from Hindi, Urdu, etc. Very few Meos can speak/understand typical Mewati. Typical (*Theth*) Mewati is being lost”. Aslam specifically expressed concern for Mewati’s oral literature and remarked: “There is less community involvement in saving Mewati. Its rich oral literature is vanishing and in danger. Mass media and modernization is responsible for this shift. If its literature is not protected, then the new generation might forget about its rich oral tradition”. Rasul also agreed with Aslam and mentioned: “Pure Mewati is only spoken by less than 5% speakers today. It is slowly declining with Hindi taking its place”. However, unlike Aslam, he said: “Mewati has no literature and is associated with illiteracy. Educated people prefer to speak other standard languages and not Mewati”. While Aslam held a positive attitude, praising Mewati’s oral history, literature and traditions, Rasul thought:

Mewati is a mixed variety (*boli*). Used for humour. It is like a porridge (*khichdi*²) with words borrowed from other languages. Mewati has harshness (*rukhaapan*) embedded in it and not sweetness (*mithaas*). It sounds as if one is insulting someone. People don’t like to speak Mewati because they think it is too rude sounding (*akkhad*).

After detailed interviews, both teachers showed concern towards Mewati’s vitality and preserving its history and culture. Aslam held a more positive attitude towards Mewati than Rasul, who saw Mewati as a “dialect” with negative connotations. School B and C teachers, however, hinted at a change Mewati was undergoing and seemed concerned as a result. Interestingly, when non-Meo teachers were asked if more Meos were shifting from Mewati, they suggested Meos were slowly shifting towards Hindi.

Meo teachers were asked questions to see if they valued Mewati and its use at home and in school. When asked if Mewati should be used at home, Aslam believed: “It should be used at home as it is our language and culture and needs to be preserved and others should also know about it so that the language would spread”. Rasul also agreed: “Meo children should speak the language at home because it reflects brotherhood, cultural legacy and oneness”.

² *Khichdi* is a rice-lentil-vegetable dish. The interviewed participants used this as a metaphor to describe a hybrid variety which mixes linguistic sources

However, when it was asked if they believed Mewati could be used in school, the responses were less definite/positive. For example, Aslam said: “Mewati can be used in the classroom to explain abstract concepts when Meo students have difficulty in understanding...in these circumstances, I use Mewati at times and they quickly understand”. This is to say that Aslam believed Mewati could be used, in a limited way, to explain difficult and abstract concepts.

Asked in what capacity Aslam would like to see Mewati in school, he indicated: “Perhaps, it could be included in the curriculum as an optional subject”. However, Aslam still thought that “using Mewati as a MOI would act as a hindrance for students as the language does not have any official status”. While not completely opposed to Mewati in education, and having expressed a positive attitude towards Mewati previously, Aslam still perceived its use in education as an obstacle.

These responses indicate, while Aslam held a positive attitude towards Mewati and its role in Meo identity, culture, oral traditions and history, there were apprehensions regarding its usage as classroom MOI. Rasul, however, disagreed with Mewati’s use as a MOI since Mewati: “...has no instrumental value. Not suitable for securing government or private jobs. Not beneficial for Meo students in any way when all competitive exams are in Hindi or English”. Rasul was also strictly against Mewati gaining any constitutional status declaring that “doing this will create constitutional problems and lead to regionalism”.

However, like Aslam, Rasul also believed that “resources should be allocated to develop its literature as oral tradition is filled with stories of Meos bravery and patriotism, but it has been kept hidden and needs to be brought to the public eye”. These views reflect that Rasul, like Aslam, stressed preservation and resource allocation for Mewati and its literature, however, he was firmly against its introduction in classroom as a MOI, whereas Aslam favored Mewati’s limited use.

To conclude, beliefs regarding Hindi were associated with nation and nationalism but also instrumental benefits. English was associated with globalization and social mobility. Urdu was seen positively, in terms of its intrinsic value as a rich language and its instrumental value in student retention, limited only by its lack of funding and resources. Meo teachers expressed concern for the vitality and preservation of Mewati but this did not extend to support for its classroom use.

5.2.3 Language Management

In terms of language management strategies, Rasul followed self-prohibition, refraining from using Mewati with colleagues and communicating in Hindi in front of students as an example, explaining: “Since students consider a teacher as their idol, we tend to communicate in Hindi only so that students may follow us”.

Rasul elaborated that his and the school’s emphasis was “making students read, write and speak pure (*shuddh*) Hindi”. To achieve this, “pure (*shuddh*) Hindi is used when communicating with students”. This is done “so that students get habitual in using *shuddh* Hindi so they can travel interstate and get jobs in future”. This measure was taken in anticipation of modifying students’ practices and consequently beliefs. Rasul extensively stressed purer (standard) Hindi, which he perceived as having instrumental value.

Conversely, Aslam was the only (Meo) rural school teacher who used management strategies favoring Mewati. Aslam attempted to resist the hegemony of regional and official languages (Haryanvi, Hindi, Urdu and English) in terms of the space these languages occupied in youth festivals and cultural programs, explaining the discriminatory practice of exclusively using dominant languages:

There are school competitions...youth festivals held in schools all across Haryana and are generally divided into two categories – general which includes events performed in Hindi/Urdu and regional which includes events performed in only one regional language – Haryanvi. So, if our students want to perform a drama or a musical event in Mewati, they would not be accepted. They would have to perform in either Haryanvi or Hindi or Urdu.

Aslam used promotion as a language management strategy to influence students’ practices and beliefs. He actively promoted Mewati usage in songs, poetry and other genres among students participating in intercultural events where all the schools of the region competed. The stated goal was to own and reclaim the linguistic and cultural identity of Meo students and to keep the language alive. When asked if as a Meo teacher he thought this exclusion was a discriminatory practice, he agreed. When prompted further, he replied as follows:

As a Meo teacher and someone who has great regard for Mewati oral literature, I actively encourage students to participate in dramas and events in Mewati and I help them in preparations myself even though I know that they would not be considered for the first place or be winners.

Aslam's conscious decision can be seen as a consequence of his positive attitude towards Mewati and his status as a known and respected community member for the work he does for Meos, the local language and its preservation. Moving beyond preservation, he noted his aim was not just to preserve the rich heritage of Mewati literature, history and folk stories but to revive them, stating: "We are fighting for our rights (*Hum apne haq ki ladaai lad rahein hain ji*)". Conscious promotion of Mewati was deployed, therefore, as a language management strategy by Aslam to alter students' practices and beliefs.

To conclude, rural government schools (Schools A, B and C) followed a monolingual language policy where Hindi played the dominant role, in line with its overt language policy. Mewati played a negligible role, used only by students to communicate with teachers in the early years of primary education before a later shift to Hindi. The only teachers reporting use of Mewati was during special cultural events organized by the school and during the weekly children's council (*bal sabha*) program. Both Meo (School B and C) and non-Meo (School A) teachers made little to no use of Mewati in the classroom. On the whole, teachers discouraged Mewati inside the classroom and perceived its use as an obstacle to students' development.

This section reported findings emerging from interviewing the participants from Case 1, rural government school(s). The findings were in relation to the LiEP and this was achieved by employing Spolsky's framework that examines language practices, beliefs and management strategies. Overall, the findings revealed the language policy pursued by teachers had very limited space for Mewati.

Nearly all teachers in Case 1 showed unfavorable attitudes towards using Mewati in the classroom, perceiving it an obstacle to students' development. While Meo teachers were sympathetic to Mewati preservation, they were reluctant to its use as MOI. Non-Meo teachers expressed negative views regarding Mewati.

Management strategies used to exclude Mewati from the classroom included explicit prohibition, self-prohibition, and using the direct method of teaching in Hindi. This exclusion of Mewati was particularly striking considering all teachers agreed that a significant communication barrier existed between them and students owing to the non-usage of Mewati inside the classroom, with students often remaining clueless as to what was taught often as late as the eighth grade. Nearly all teachers emphasized "standard/pure (*shuddh*) Hindi", linked it

to nationalism and followed a monolingual language policy with Hindi playing the dominant role.

The next section provides findings from an urban school to facilitate later comparison. This section presents the findings related to the research question: “What kind of LiEP did the urban/elite private school (Case 2) adhere to; and, what role(s), if any, did Mewati play in the school’s overall language policy?” These questions were answered by Spolsky’s (2004) model that was used as a framework and guiding tool to organize the data. The findings below thus are presented according to the three components of the Spolsky’s model: Language practices, beliefs and management.

5.3 Case 2–Urban School (School D)

Teachers: Vikram, Imran, Murid and Qurban

Implicit or explicit language policy

Teachers were asked to state the school’s language policy during interviews and informal conversations to determine the school’s language policy. This was done in conjunction with documents collected from the school. All four teachers interviewed from the school declared the school’s policy as English medium.

The documents collected (standard diary issued to students, school magazine and school prospectus) confirmed this. The school’s explicit English LiEP is clearly stated in its magazine where the vice-president’s message highlights the role English played in creating School D in an area such as Mewat, described in the magazine as “educationally very backward”. The school’s magazine states the school came into existence “to impart quality education through English medium CBSE schools”.

The explicit LiEP of English was confirmed in other documents such as the school’s admission form and prospectus, both written entirely in English. Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of the school’s diary for students revealed that while English was the dominant language, other languages also occupied space. Out of the 48 pages of the school diary, Hindi was used 7 times, Urdu 4 times and English occupied most pages.

The school’s annual magazine also used Hindi and Urdu beside English. This document was significant as the magazine was a common platform for students and faculty alike which helped

in “displaying their creativity through their academic contributions” (Editorial, p. 1). This meant the document could help reveal language preferences and practices of teachers, students and school officials. Of the total 100 pages, 41 pages were in Hindi, 47 pages were in English and 12 pages were in Urdu. Though the official policy of the school was to use English, Hindi and Urdu also occupy the school’s linguistic space. Nonetheless, teachers’ language practices would shed further light on the actual language policy.

5.3.1 Language Practices

For Spolsky, the language practice component forms the most important component of language policy. Spolsky (2009) argues that practices are the real policy, although respondents may be reluctant to admit it (p. 4). All four teachers admitted that they used both English and Hindi inside the classroom with the rare exception of using a few words of Mewati if able to do so, when all else failed. Since the only non-Meo teacher interviewed in School D, Vikram, admitted not knowing Mewati, his claim of use with students, is probably over-estimated.

Teachers were asked how many Meo teachers there were in the school, or how many knew Mewati and could speak it well. The teachers reported that it was about 10, only those who were Meos and locals were fluent in Mewati as their MT. Very few teachers could speak Mewati as most of them were not from Mewat.

When asked about classroom MOI, all teachers used the “bilingual method of teaching” and “both Hindi and English”. This was the standard response that every teacher gave. As the Meo teacher, Murid pointed out: “We use bilingual method. We don’t use Mewati. We use Hindi and English”.

When asked about the number of school students belonging to the Meo community, teachers responded that Meos constituted 80–90% of the student body. When asked what language they found Meo students using in the classroom/school, they responded students usually spoke Hindi. Imran, a Meo teacher from School D responded: “Students use Hindi the most in school and don’t use Mewati very much, perhaps with the exception of 1–2 words sometimes”. The lack of student preference for Mewati was attributed to the school’s socioeconomic composition (most students belonging to the middle class according to teachers) and the school’s overt English language policy.

Teachers were asked their language preferences with other colleagues and students outside the classrooms. All School D teachers confirmed Hindi use to communicate with students with the sole exception of non-Meo English teacher Vikram, who added English as well. When asked what language was used with colleagues, all but Qurban mentioned Hindi. He was the Meo Urdu teacher who claimed Urdu was the language he deployed with Meos and non-Meos alike. This statement suggested that he strongly affiliated with Urdu and also perceived it differently to Hindi. He could have easily said Hindi considering the similarities between Hindi and Urdu, thus indicating a conscious choice. His language beliefs, as would be seen later, would confirm this assumption. Other Meo teachers, Murid and Imran, admitted using Mewati with other Meo colleagues. Finally, the non-Meo teacher Vikram admitted using Haryanvi with a colleague who also spoke Haryanvi.

While the school's official policy is English, the actual language practices teachers engage in to communicate with students, both inside and outside the classroom, includes significant use of Hindi. In practice, therefore, there was a difference between the stated language policy and the actual language practices that take place in the classroom.

5.3.2 Language Beliefs

Towards Hindi

Unlike the rural school teachers, teachers in this school put less emphasis on Hindi. All teachers indicated Hindi played a limited role as English was the main language used for all official purposes. In the words of Vikram: "Hindi does not play much role in this school because English is used as a MOI and for all official purposes. Hindi is taught only as a subject". When asked about their language practices, they all admitted using a "bilingual method of teaching", using English and Hindi inside the classrooms.

It was noticed that while Hindi was referred to through terms such as "our mother tongue" and "our national language" by all teachers there was less stress upon linking it with the overall national identity as compared to the rural school teachers. For instance, while Meo teachers Imran and Murid also (mis)associated Hindi with non-Hindi speakers' "mother tongue" or "India's national language" (In reality, there is no national language – Hindi is regarded only

as an official language of the union), when they were asked to state their mother tongues, they reported Mewati (and not Hindi).

While there were positive attitudes towards Hindi, identifying it as a literary language as Qurban did or a language spoken by most people in India as Imran did, there was less correspondence observed between Hindi and the broader national identity and less emphasis on its propagation than in the rural schools.

Towards English

All teachers showed a highly positive attitude towards English. They referred to English as the international language, a language with high instrumental value for securing jobs in India and overseas, and a language that symbolized development. English was linked to high social status and literacy as elaborated by Murid: “When anyone speaks in English, people think that they are well educated. People get impressed.” English language was also seen as a way forward to modernity.

Non-Meo English teacher, Vikram, noted: “Without English, we will stay back in the world and remain backward”. Yet, all teachers, including Vikram (The English teacher), confessed it was difficult for students to cope with English, particularly those students belonging to rural areas, nonetheless saying that the school’s results, however, were “always good”.

Towards Urdu

The beliefs teachers held regarding Urdu were considered important to examine, particularly because it was offered by School D as a third language, unlike many schools in Mewat. All teachers held a positive attitude towards Urdu, referring to it as a language belonging to both Hindus and Muslims. The non-Meo teacher, Vikram, said: “No, I cannot say that a certain language belongs to a religion. Language is a language”. They all indicated its rich history and literature.

Meo Urdu teacher Qurban, felt deeply attached to Urdu: “Urdu is above all languages, even Hindi, for me”. He maintained: “Urdu is widely spoken in India and is the lingua franca of the nation” and reported it as “the most important language”. They all believed that more students were likely to attend schools if Urdu was offered and Urdu teachers were available and so were in favor of teaching Urdu. For instance, Qurban felt: “Urdu can bring more Meos to schools since they are Muslims”. This was similar to responses from other teachers in the rural schools.

Each teacher was asked their thoughts on students' preference for Urdu since Urdu was offered as a third language. All teachers suggested students enjoyed taking Urdu and most Meo students chose Urdu over Sanskrit at the upper primary level. Meo teacher Imran, indicated: "Students in this school are fonder of Urdu than Sanskrit or even Hindi since Sanskrit may not have much value for them, but Urdu helps them in reading Islamic books". Therefore, Urdu, had an instrumental value for students.

Murid shared the same sentiment and said: "Most students in this school, around 85%, opt for Urdu over Sanskrit. Children and parents both want Urdu to be taught in schools". The non-Meo teacher Vikram shared this opinion: "Considering that Mewat is a Muslim populated area, students are more comfortable with Urdu. Many students also persist with Urdu in the later grades by studying it as an additional subject at the secondary level".

While teachers' personal opinions, similar to teachers in the rural schools, reflected that Urdu did not belong to Meo Muslims alone, they also believed that Meos had more to gain from Urdu. Teachers believed so because of a deeper attachment with Urdu and because it had greater instrumental value for Meos (than Sanskrit).

Similar to teachers in the rural schools, all Meo teachers raised the shortage of Urdu teachers in schools across Mewat, including their own. They all agreed that the availability of Urdu and its teachers were key determinants in student enrolment/retention. Teachers desired recruitment of Urdu teachers, considering what they frequently referred to as, the social fabric of the region (a predominantly Muslim area).

Towards Mewati

As a non-Meo teacher, Vikram's responses were nonetheless more favorable towards Mewati than his counterparts in the rural schools. Asked if the state should allocate resources for Mewati he replied: "Government should allocate resources for Mewati as it does for other languages, spoken by other language groups".

When asked if it should be used in school as a MOI, he reported affirmatively: "Mewati should be used as a MOI as mother tongue is the best way to explain the depth of an idea". Despite this, he reported his skills in Mewati were "poor". During the interview he repeated his proficiency in Mewati was poor three times and admitted he knew "only a few certain words relevant for instruction in the classroom". However, he stressed he could understand Mewati

fully but was unable to speak it fluently since he was not from Mewat. Of the three Meo teachers interviewed at School D, two showed a relatively negative attitude towards Mewati (Imran and Qurban) with only one Meo teacher (Murid) holding a positive attitude.

When asked which language they used at home, Imran reported using Hindi with his wife and children. Qurban reluctantly declared using Mewati with his parents though stated using “only Urdu” with his children. In response to the questions, both agreed on a few things: a) Mewati had no instrumental value; b) any resource allocation efforts undertaken by the government would be a waste; c) children’s knowledge of Mewati is and would be a hindrance for children’s overall learning and development, d) the rare times when Mewati should be used is when students do not understand English, Hindi or Urdu, and in that case Mewati is/may be used “as a last resort”, and e) Mewati should not be employed as a MOI in the school.

The extent of the negative attitudes held by two of School D’s Meo teachers towards Mewati could be further gauged by some of their comments. For instance, Imran emphasized: “To educate oneself is to remove Meos from Mewati culture and Mewati language”. He further said: “Meo students should use Mewati in class only in limited capacity, in scenarios where, for instance, a child has recently left his village to join this school, otherwise not”.

Qurban was also against children using Mewati either at home or school. He stressed: “Meo students should not use Mewati at home. They should rather use Urdu or Hindi as they are literary and thus prestigious languages and widely understood”. He further associated children using Mewati at school with bad habits claiming: “Primary students end up speaking Mewati in the school usually due to the bad habit of using it at home with family members”. These statements reveal that these two Meo teachers from School D, like the rural school teachers, do not build on students understanding of Mewati or value it. It also shows that teachers are generally oblivious to the benefits of classroom mother tongue use and its role in teaching and learning.

In contrast, Murid held more positive beliefs towards Mewati. He noted Mewati had a rich oral literature and traditions to preserve. He stressed the need for greater resource allocation for the development of Mewati and emphasized it should be written so it could be preserved for future. Murid also believed Mewati could play a much bigger role in classrooms as Mewati is the local language of the region and most students are Mewati speakers. When asked what language he used for communication with parents, wife and children, he declared it was Mewati. He

underscored that “a sense of belongingness (*apnapan*) can only be achieved in one’s own language”.

When asked the role and relevance of Mewati in schools, Murid replied strongly: “Mewati should have a place in school books”. When asked in what capacity he would like to see Mewati, he responded: “It should be introduced as an optional subject along with the other subjects such as Sanskrit, Urdu and Punjabi from which students have to choose at the upper primary level”. This response of Murid was similar to that of Aslam from School C in that some form of Mewati’s use in schools was acceptable to both teachers.

Murid advocated for Mewati as a MOI for better communication. As he stated: “There exists a communication gap between non-local teachers and Meo students as children arriving from village in particular struggle to understand either pure Hindi or pure English”. This communication gap, he believed, caused students to hesitate to actively participate in class: “Students usually feel hesitant to ask questions to non-local teachers and find themselves at ease when asking local teachers in Mewati”.

When asked why students felt more comfortable among local teachers, Murid attributed it to shared linguistic and cultural identity insisting: “Meo students are more attached to local teachers as they both share the same language and culture and are generally less attached to non-locals”. Furthermore, “local Meo teachers understand students’ social and psychological problems better than non-Meo teachers”. He insisted on recruiting more local teachers.

One aspect where all three Meo teachers from School D expressed their concern, (like the two Meo teachers in Schools B and C) was in relation to Mewati’s vitality. They all believed “pure or typical (*Theth*) Mewati language was in decline”, especially among more educated and urban Meos. This could be debatable, as Spolsky (2004) mentions, purists regard borrowing a word from another language to be the first stage of language loss, which is not necessarily the case (p. 10). Further analysis into this matter, is beyond the scope of this study.

Another common aspect among Meo teachers from School B, C and D is their admission on students shifting from Mewati to Hindi later in schooling. As Qurban indicated: “Students speak Mewati until the primary level but as they progress towards higher classes, they start speaking Mewati less”. These teachers expressed concern for recruiting Meo teachers so that along with improving communication the overall literacy of the region could be improved.

Towards Haryanvi

Unlike the non-Meo participants in School A, Vikram, a non-Meo teacher from school D, exhibited a positive attitude towards his mother tongue, Haryanvi. When asked about the language used with parents, wife and children, Vikram reported Haryanvi. His thoughts on Haryanvi were asked to see how he perceived another minority language which was different to Mewati, and he replied: “Haryanvi is actually a dialect, vernacular of Hindi language. It has its own rich literature, has a unique sense of humour [laughs]. Its own music and dance form”. Nevertheless, he maintained that Haryanvi was merely a dialect of Hindi. Vikram’s concern for Haryanvi could be observed in his statement of distress toward its decline in public space (and claimed possible shift to Hindi) among Haryanvi speakers with the rise in education and modernization. He pointed out:

In the last few years, more and more people are leaving, instead of embracing, our language or the vernacular Haryanvi. This is because when we go to cities for work, for interviews, people do not think highly of Haryanvi. They think it is a country language. They do not find politeness in it. It’s not that it is a dull language either, just that it does not sound soft spoken. It is a commanding language.

To conclude, in relation to language beliefs regarding Hindi, teachers in School D demonstrated less association between Hindi and national identity. Hindi was stressed for its instrumental importance linking students’ current capabilities to the school’s stated English medium policy. Teachers accepted exclusive English use would not enable the school to function. Unsurprisingly for an English-medium school, teachers exhibited highly positive views about English, linking it with upward social mobility and prestige. Teachers also had positive views about Urdu, indicating both an emotional attachment and its ability to improve enrollment and retention. Generally speaking, the teachers (including Meo teachers) held negative attitudes towards Mewati and its use within the classroom, with more mixed views about its preservation and use elsewhere. The sole Haryanvi speaking non-Meo teacher held a positive attitude towards his language.

5.3.3 Language Management

One of the ways students’ language behaviour and practices were managed in the school included explicit instructions. As Qurban described: “Children speak to each other in Mewati, despite [us] instructing them not to”. Unlike the rural schools, Mewati was not used or

encouraged during cultural events in this elite school. This was confirmed by Murid, a Meo teacher from School D, when he said: “No emphasis is given on Mewati language (or on Meos) during cultural programs. Hindi and English get the most emphasis”.

Language socialization also plays a part. Teachers, higher educational authorities and the school itself actively influence and manage students’ beliefs and language practices, favoring English. This was best illustrated by the non-Meo English teacher from School D, Vikram:

My goal and the goal of school authorities, education department and CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) is one: to make students comfortable in English, to speak to them in English. A student can feel English or become English only when he thinks in English, language style is in English...everything in English. When we will feel everything in English, only then we will become aware of English.

The scope of this strategy is not simply limited to socialization through language but has a broader impact on intervening in the language practices and beliefs of students. In order to fully achieve this goal of language socialization, teachers used a self-prohibiting strategy for language management. Similar to the rural teachers, this meant refraining from MT use in front of students to set an example. This was captured best by Vikram: “The particular region in which this school is...Mewat, we cannot see it separately from the entity of Haryana. So, we also have to distance ourselves from using our vernaculars”.

Lastly, it was found the school used teacher recruitment criterion as a tool for language management. The school placed importance on hiring teachers who were proficient in English, (and Hindi or even Urdu) but not Mewati as Mewati was not part of the core agenda (policy) of the school. This conscious decision from the school had the potential to modify teachers’ and subsequently students’ language practices and beliefs. This is best exemplified by Vikram who reflected: “[When appointing teachers] authorities see how they [teachers] have the flow of speaking English. Two things the authority basically expects from us: First, a command over the subject; second, the flow of the language...English. And, the third thing...teaching pedagogy”.

In summary, School D’s language management strategies included explicit instructions, indifference towards inclusion of Mewati in extracurricular activities, active language socialization, self-prohibition, and teacher recruitment criteria.

The English medium school (School D) followed a bilingual language policy in which both Hindi and English played key roles. This was in contradiction to the overt English language

policy of the school. Mewati played a non-existent role in the school in that neither the students nor the teachers made use of it inside the classrooms. Teachers reported the non-use of Mewati even during cultural events and other school activities. On the whole, both Meo and non-Meo teachers in School D perceived Mewati as an obstacle and believed it would hinder students' academic progress.

This section reported findings that emerged from participant interviews from an urban elite school (Case 2). Spolsky's framework, including language practices, beliefs and management, was used to investigate the LiEP followed in the school. The findings revealed that Mewati was nearly absent from the school, with active management strategies directed to ensuring this.

In terms of overt language policy, the school prided itself on being English-medium. That said, Hindi and Urdu were essential parts of the school's linguistic landscape. Mewati, while spoken by most of the student population, was kept out of the school owing to its image as a rural dialect that did not correspond with the image the school was trying to project to upwardly mobile parents. Thus, while the school claimed to follow an English-only language policy, it followed a bilingual language policy with Hindi and English playing a key role.

The teachers in Case 1 and Case 2 exhibited some similarities and differences in their approaches to LiEPs. In terms of language practices, major similarities included the reliance on Hindi and the exclusion of students' L1 Mewati in the classroom. The major difference was a differential emphasis on the link between Hindi and national identity, while Case 1 teachers justified the use of Hindi on ideological grounds, Case 2 teachers tended to emphasize Hindi's instrumental value as a bridge to the English language. Regarding language beliefs, major similarities included the lionization of Hindi and English and the denigration of Mewati and to a lesser extent teachers' own language varieties. While Meo teachers in both cases spoke of a concern regarding the vitality and preservation of Mewati, non-Meo teachers generally did not even express this concern preferring the replacement of Mewati by Hindi even in the home domain. With regard to language management, there were similar management strategies including explicit and self-prohibition. While Case 1 adopted the direct method of teaching in Hindi, Case 2 used the bilingual teaching method to bridge Hindi and English.

The next chapter will synthesize the findings reported in this chapter that looked at which LiEP was in place in the two types of schools, make a cross-case comparison, draw implications of

using Spolsky's model and introduce a key theoretical concept called '(un/dys)consciousness' that emerged out of the findings from this study.

Chapter 6: Language in Education Policy

Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the preceding chapter. The discussion and analysis in this chapter begins by analyzing the language practices, beliefs and management strategies of participants from the two cases studied, separately, in order to gain a fuller understanding of each case. Following this, a cross-case analysis is carried out. Later, Spolsky's (2004) language policy model is examined in relation to the discussion with regard to the research questions and theoretical implications are drawn which are then discussed and analyzed. As a result, a key theoretical concept called '(un/dys) consciousness' emerges.

6.1 Case 1–Rural School(s)

An inextricable and inviolable link was found between Hindustan-Hindustani-Hindi, where Hindi was regarded as a national and linguistic identity “of all Indians (*Hindustanis*)” with teachers' beliefs espousing feelings of Hindi nationalism. This feeling was expressed by participants equating Hindi to “mother tongue (*matra-bhaasha*)” and “national language (*rashtra-bhaasha*)”. This finding confirms the ethnographic study of LaDousa (2006) who studied Hindi and English medium schools in Banaras commenting that “Hindi medium education derives its nationalistic, community-affirming ethos from the idea that Hindi is the “national language” or Indians' “mother tongue”” (p. 42).

This idea of Hindi as the “national language” repeated throughout by the teachers is particularly interesting as the Constitution of India (1950), Hindi is not the national language but is only an official language. The constitution does not specify a national language, only recognizing Hindi and English as co-official languages. The status of Hindi has been ambiguous from the early phase of nationalist struggle, but particularly after the end of colonial rule and the partition. Das Gupta (1970) notes that “semantic confusion” has persisted to this day where despite the best intentions of constitutional drafters' choice of “official language”, the status of Hindi has been ambiguous in the political and social discussions in India (p. 36).

Nevertheless, Hindi nationalist beliefs were internalized and normalized to the extent that teachers conceived an exclusivist language policy, Hindi only rule, as legitimate and beneficial for students' long-term interests. In the rural schools, Meo and non-Meo teachers espoused this notion with non-Meo teachers, expressing these views more firmly and sharply. School A's non-Meo teachers, for instance, staunchly supported Hindi, emphasized its purification, justified its hegemonic position as an ideal variety and a standard variety over other dialects, defended its use as MOI within schools and argued for more resource allocation for its development and spread.

This was interesting as none of the teachers spoke Hindi as their first language. Despite this, they perceived use of local dialects in the school curricula, teaching and learning practices as a hindrance for students in acquiring full competency in standard languages, particularly Hindi. This is striking as School A's teachers admitted students struggled to understand Hindi, posing serious learning problems. The communication gap was even more serious with non-Meo teachers. They confirmed comprehension problems between teachers and students, particularly at primary level. This was because School A's non-Meo teachers did not know Mewati and students did not know Hindi (or Haryanvi, spoken by most non-Meo teachers in both rural and urban schools). Additionally, Meo teachers (from School B and School C) faced similar problems when teaching in Hindi. Teachers justified their persistence in using Hindi and the resultant communication gap on the grounds that Mewati was merely a 'deviant derivative' of Hindi with students best served when taught exclusively in standard Hindi.

The use of standard Hindi contributed to this communication gap. Standard Hindi differs to varieties spoken by students, such as Mewati. This echoes Jhingran's (2009) argument that many primary school children in remote areas of India struggle in classrooms because they lack adequate language proficiency in standard varieties (pp. 264–265). Jhingran (2009) insists an overgeneralization is usually made about the multilingual nature of Indians which might be true for adults and older children but may not be true for young children, particularly those in remote areas (pp. 264–265).

The effects of this communication gap were not limited to teaching and learning outcomes but also had social-psychological impacts. Meo teachers from School B and C revealed many students suffered from anxiety, afraid to approach non-Meo teachers fearing misunderstanding.

Meo teachers indicated this anxiety is compounded by a lack of bond due to socio-cultural-religious differences.

In terms of language practice, School A was a Hindi monolingual school. This despite teachers, in principle, emphasizing multilingualism and perceiving it as a resource to be deployed. In practice non-Meo teachers looked down upon, and Meo teachers were skeptical of, using Mewati and other minority languages in classrooms. This is similar to Jhingran's claim regarding non-Indigenous teachers working in schools with Indigenous students. Problems for students were compounded when simultaneously coping with an unfamiliar language at school and alienation from teachers' attitude towards their languages and cultures (Jhingran, 2009, p. 268).

Teachers did (albeit hesitatingly) indicate use of some isolated Mewati phrases. However, non-Meo teachers in School A significantly overrated their Mewati comprehension due to similarities with Haryanvi, which they also used in class. Both sets of teachers regretted their occasional use of Haryanvi and Mewati. One reason School A's non-Meo teachers used some Haryanvi was their admitted lack of spoken proficiency in Mewati. Another motive was overemphasis of "pure (*shuddh*) Hindi", something teachers like Aseem "always strived for but struggled with because [they] couldn't get rid of [their] Haryanvi way of speaking/accent". Emphasis on the "purity" of Hindi was observed throughout the study indicating a nationalist tendency, as "purism is closely connected with national feeling" (Haugen, 1987, p. 87). Students, by admission of the teachers, struggled to understand Hindi at primary level as (standard) Hindi is not the language used at home. Teachers understood non-comprehension of Hindi as a natural and transitory phase that "children must go through before things make sense" (Aseem). Teachers took solace in the fact that by 6th to 8th standard, they start improving.

Language difficulties, however, alienate children who struggle for far too long during the initial years of primary and upper primary education. This is alarming considering 25% leave school before reaching the 5th grade and almost half leave before 8th grade (UNICEF, 2005). If this pattern is widespread, such alienation plays a role in the school dropout rate in Mewat. Teachers' views are a matter of grave concern because the initial years are the fundamental years for literacy and gaining education. The LiEP and language practices that exclude students' own languages, as is the case in School A, can result in alienation and

social/educational exclusion. This often results in children dropping-out or being pushed out “in an unresponsive system that systematically devalues them – their culture, their languages, and their identities” (Mohanty, 2009, p. 3). In remote and rural areas like Mewat where literacy rates are already low (54.08%) (Census, 2011), this is worrying.

Overall, teachers strived to teach in “standard Hindi” but used a “mix of languages” (School A teachers). The phrase “mix of languages” should not be overemphasized as Hindi was the most commonly used language, interspersed with the few words of Mewati teachers claimed to know. Nonetheless, there were not many great inconsistencies between the said language policy (Hindi) and actual practice (Hindi).

In terms of language beliefs, School A, B and C teachers believed minority languages carry no intrinsic, instrumental or educational value. Generally, School B and C’s Meo teachers were seen, at best, expressing concerns over the vitality of their language and loss of oral tradition and literature. While, School A’s non-Meo teachers showed disapproval toward Meo students’ continuing use of Mewati.

School B and C’s Meo teachers agreed some resources needed to be allocated for Mewati’s development, especially preserving its oral tradition rather than developing Mewati for classroom use. School A’s non-Meo teachers disagreed, believing it would be a waste. They claimed not only was Mewati irrelevant, it would worsen social cohesion. In totality, rural school teachers from Schools A, B and C perceived local languages, Mewati or even Haryanvi, as an obstacle rather than an asset for students’ development.

Contrary to these beliefs, several studies illustrate that minority languages or ‘dialects’ could aid the process of learning. Cheshire (2005), whose survey of recent literature on the use of nonstandard varieties declared that “they are not as detrimental to education success as might be thought” (p. 2346). Cheshire (2005) notes that even after 40 years of sociolinguistic research, ignorance and prejudice continue to thrive among teachers who hold deep stereotypes against nonstandard varieties, including their own speakers (p. 2346). All the rural school teachers held negative views and stereotypes regarding Mewati, terming it “rough”, “village like”, “an abusive sounding dialect”, “not fit to be called a language”, among other comments.

As for the other languages, Urdu, while available on paper as an optional subject at the upper primary level (Grade 6 to Grade 8), played virtually no role in the rural government schools

due to lack of teachers, materials and textbooks. This neglect of Urdu uncovered during this research confirms Jhingran's (2009) claim of Urdu's neglect in classrooms and textbooks (p. 274). Urdu's neglect occurs despite the fact that most students were Meo Muslims with significant exposure to Urdu in religious settings.

The non-availability of Urdu in schools has three drawbacks. Firstly, it deprives students from studying the subject, which by teachers' own admissions, Meo students are most keen on. Secondly, as all teachers reported, some of the students have existing proficiency/aptitude in Urdu owing to their prior and continuing exposure to the language learnt from mosques and Islamic schools. Thirdly, as all teachers confirmed, Urdu plays a decisive role in Mewat in enrollment and retention when it comes to choices parents and community members make.

As for English, rural school teachers reported, while important for socioeconomic mobility, its role was limited in rural government schools where it was only taught as a subject. As the teachers claimed, the main emphasis was finishing the syllabus on time. Therefore, English played a limited role. To sum up, Hindi was the only language that played a key role in teaching and learning activities and occupied a broader role in terms of the schools' language policy.

The use of Mewati was restricted and virtually nonexistent in that School A's non-Meo teachers reported their knowledge of spoken Mewati was limited to "a few words". School B and C's Meo teachers reported not using Mewati given the school's Hindi medium policy and because of teachers' own language beliefs. The Hindi-centric language policy of the schools thus contributed towards what Panda and Mohanty (2009) termed "subtractive-type, submersion education" (p. 301). Further, the ideology guiding School A (B and C) can be termed (Hindi) Nationalist language ideology with a largely monolingual language policy in place.

One way rural school teachers and authorities maintained LiEP was by means of managing languages. Teachers or school authorities deployed these strategies to intervene and modify the linguistic behavior of Meo students. Language management strategies, according to Spolsky (2004), are "any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management" (p. 5). Furthermore, Spolsky (2004) contended that language management is influenced by language beliefs and in turn influences practices. Seen in this light, the most common language management strategies used in the rural schools included: a) prohibition, explicit instructions given by teachers that students not

use Mewati in school; b) self-restraint, teachers prohibiting themselves from using their languages in front of students to “set a better example so students follow their lead”; and c) restrictive teaching method, using direct method of teaching inside the classroom with the complete exclusion of students’ mother tongue arguing that doing this would benefit students’ learning.

6.2 Case 2–Urban School

School D’s explicit language policy was English, overtly mentioned in the documents collected that included school prospectus, admission form, magazine and students’ diary. School D’s strong emphasis upon English could also be gauged by observing other physical artifacts including posters on display boards in the school. A thorough analysis was done on the newspapers available in school (mainly English) and the proportion and medium of books available in libraries (mostly English and Hindi). In addition to documents collected and analyzed, one-on-one detailed interviews with teachers confirmed the stated English language policy of the school. On the whole, all the teachers interviewed along with the principal and education officer lent support to the school’s English language policy claim. However, there appeared to be a discrepancy between the stated policy and actual practice.

While the school maintained its explicit English language policy, teachers confessed they actually followed a “bilingual language policy using both English and Hindi” inside the classrooms. One of the reasons for this approach was the perception that students may struggle if taught in English alone. Another reason was the demographics of Mewat and the fact the area was largely rural with most of its population still uneducated and many of the students being the first generation of students to attain any education. The school was particularly mindful of this fact, as evidenced by the school magazine where the principal’s message in Hindi read “many current students were forming part of the first generation of literate Mewatis” (p. 47). As such, Hindi was used by teachers to bridge the gap that would have otherwise existed if taught solely through English. This was because despite the differences, Mewati still shared some linguistic affinity with Hindi in ways it did not with English.

Interestingly though, teachers underplayed the role of Hindi by declaring that teaching Hindi was a formality and stressed that the real focus and value lay in using and teaching English. They reported the role of Hindi was confined to teaching it as a subject. However, this was not a true

picture of teachers' linguistic practices. In addition to teachers' language practices inside the classroom, Hindi was favored in school documents like student diaries and the school magazine and featured along with English. Teachers' undermining of Hindi's role was striking considering "the school taught it as students' first language, as their mother tongue" according to the teachers, and as written on student diaries issued by the school. The notion of teaching Hindi as MT when it is not MT is raised by Benson (2005) noting Pattanayak (2003) when she points out the exclusion of students' MTs and posits that the regional language (Hindi in this case) is usually taught as if it is the first language of the students (p. 15).

In terms of language practices, therefore, the findings revealed while the school's stated policy is English, actual practices and language use is not. However, regardless of the bilingual traits of the policy and the ample space it provides to other languages like Urdu and Sanskrit (as school subjects), it still fails to include Mewati. This bilingual language policy, therefore, is subtractive in nature since it does not include children's MT. As a result, Mewati continues to be marginalized in School D.

In terms of language beliefs, School D's teachers viewed Hindi positively and teachers in this school appeared to lack the Hindi nationalism that strongly characterized teachers in the rural schools. Conversely, English was unanimously regarded as an international language, with significant instrumental value and more importantly was part of the existential logic of the school as outlined in the school prospectus.

Besides academic excellence, one of the crucial objectives of the school authorities and teachers was to enhance students' proficiency in English. The overwhelming presence of English on display boards, newspapers, magazines, diaries, library books, were all evidence of the central space English occupied within the school. This fundamental role ascribed to English, influenced Meo parents' choices when selecting a school. Besides English, the provision of Urdu also significantly influenced parents' decision making.

This school boasted Urdu teachers, textbooks and materials, unlike School A which displayed an acute shortage of Urdu teachers in its school and was reflected in Mewat generally. As the school officials indicated, the provision of Urdu at the upper primary level with a possibility of studying it up to the secondary level guaranteed more Meos would enroll in their school. This belief was also shared by teachers in the rural schools, all of whom suggested that provision of Urdu could attract and retain more Meo students. There was also a reasonable

presence of Urdu in student diaries which ranged from notes for parents, national song, poem, to prayer. Additionally, the school's magazine where teachers and students contributed regularly also carved out a space for Urdu. These attempts and practices aimed at retaining Muslim students at the school.

However, when it came to making space for Meos' MT, the language was not considered appropriate by the teachers or school authorities nor was Mewati used inside the classrooms. Overall, teachers in School D were driven by a pragmatist globalism. Pragmatist because Hindi occupied a key role, not only used as a MOI along with English but also taught as students' "first language", as doing so satisfied a functional purpose. In comparison with Case 1, teachers did not indicate nationalist attitudes rather preferring Hindi as a path of least resistance to be deployed in the classroom. This was more possible because the school taught wealthier students with greater exposure to Hindi at home, owing to its prestige.

Their approach is also globalist for two reasons. Firstly, teachers perceived English, the overt language policy of the school, as an "international language". The provision of "quality English medium education" is the *raison d'être* for the school's existence and "what set it apart from others". Secondly, School D's language policy placed emphasis on languages, such as English and Urdu, to connect with more people. Thus, School D's ideology is also globalist, while deploying Hindi for pragmatic purposes.

The school's outlook could be best captured in the words of the school principal who quoted Gandhi to express the school's ethos: "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any" (School magazine, 2011–2012, p. 5). This pragmatic-globalist outlook, however, also caused the school to neglect Mewati as a language that fostered neither national nor international connection.

One way through which School D maintained its LiEP and/or reflected LiEP was by means of managing languages. Seen in this regard, the management strategies used by School D ranged from: a) prohibition, teachers' explicit instructions to students not to use Mewati; b) indifference, the school's indifference towards inclusion of Mewati in cultural events and extracurricular activities, c) active language socialization, as Vikram claimed the school's and teacher's agenda was to socialize students in a way so they can "think in English, feel English, speak English and become English". The school authorities and teachers were committed to

actively socializing students in dominant languages such as English (and to a lesser degree Hindi); d) self-restraint, teachers refrained from speaking in their own minority languages (Haryanvi, Mewati) in front of students “to set a better example so students follow their lead”; and e) teacher recruitment criterion, the school’s teacher recruitment criteria in which knowledge of English took center stage. Teachers repeatedly mentioned the relevance of being “good in English” in order to be hired due to the fact that it was an English medium school. All the teachers counted it as one of the most important factors that played a part in their recruitment and it was something that contributed to the prestige of their school. All of these strategies were aimed at modifying the language practices and/or ideologies of the Meo students and so significantly affected Mewati’s position within the school.

To summarize, nationalist (Schools A, B and C) and pragmatic-globalist (School D) were the ideologies of the respective schools. These ideologies, I argue, influenced to some extent the practices and choices made by the teachers inside the classrooms which ranged from mostly Hindi to both Hindi and English and for this reason could be located on a scale ranging, for the most part, from monolingualism to bilingualism respectively.

In terms of the central research question asked in this study: “What LiEP are in place two schools chosen and what role, if any, does Mewati play in the policy framework?”, it could be said that the rural schools reflected a largely monolingual, Hindi dominated LiEP. Whereas, the urban school showed by and large, a bilingual (Hindi-English) LiEP. Ultimately, both ideologies and their respective policies made little to no room for Mewati.

Most of the teachers, whether rural or urban, perceived Mewati as a problem and not a resource to be deployed for teaching and learning purposes. This is alarming as there is a close relationship between language, thought and intelligence. This is reflected in the words of Batibo (2005) in the claim, “It is through language that we conceptualize ideas, organize our thoughts and systematize our memory” (p. 36). The fact that language policies of both the schools (and possibly many others) continue to ignore, marginalize and suppress local varieties, warrants serious attention, both from the perspectives of linguistic human rights and the crucial role mother tongue varieties play in education and literacy.

6.3 Cross-Case Analysis

Having analyzed each case comprehensively, this section compares and contrasts both cases. As mentioned above, little to no space was created by rural and urban schools for Mewati. One factor contributing to non-usage of Mewati is the application of the three-language formula. State authorities and school administrations conflate the mother tongue of students (Mewati) with the official regional or state language (Hindi) (Vanishree, 2011, p. 350). The result is that Hindi is taught as the “first language” of students in both the rural and urban schools and by extension in other schools across Mewat. As a result, local varieties like Mewati struggle to be seen and heard. It could be safely said that both school types fail to make appropriate space for the local language, Mewati.

Secondly, the usual reason attributed to Mewati’s classroom non-use was its lack of development and script. This concern was also shared by Koul and Devaki (2000) who noted that minority languages lacking standardized scripts are excluded from education on the grounds of being less developed and are hence deemed ill-equipped to be languages of education (p. 121). However, as Mohanty (2009) argued, it is the gross social, educational, statutory, official and legal neglect of these minority languages in combination with the justification of the poverty of these languages with their so-called inadequacies by which the minority languages are weakened and disadvantage is brought about (p. 4).

Thirdly, teachers in all the schools opposed Mewati’s use in education on the ground that making space for local language varieties and cultures in education would pose a threat to the established educational system, administration, social cohesion and integration of the nation as well as would affect the socioeconomic and cognitive development of students. These concerns shared by the teachers regarding the use of minority languages in education have long been used to argue that MT-based education would be “disastrous for national cohesion and identity, and destabilizing for the very people for whom the education is provided” (Ouane, 2003, p. 62). However, as Ouane (2003) states “in reality, what exacerbates opposition is not the plurality of languages but conflicts of interest in conflicting messages” (p. 64). Pattanayak (as cited in Ouane, 2003) for instance, when commenting on linguistic conflicts in South Asia, argues that social cohesion, national unity or integrity is threatened not because of linguistic diversity (in education) but either due to the lack of any language policy or a language policy that is not at all in line with the actual ground realities (p. 64).

Fourthly, most teachers in every school were non-Meo teachers who migrated from other parts of the state to make up for the acute shortage of teachers in Mewat. These teachers did not speak Mewati as their first language. There were hardly any local Meo teachers. As such, most teachers lacked the proficiency in Mewati to use it well in the classroom. Thus, despite every teacher stressing the need and relevance of local teachers, the severe shortage persists. In conjunction with the fact that most students belonged to the (Muslim) minority religious group who were taught by the non-local majority religious group (Hindus), teachers who further belonged to the dominant ethnic groups (Jats) posed further problems for the students.

This linguistic and cultural barrier between teachers and students not only affects their interaction and therefore students' academic progress, but also inhibits minority students from empowerment. This view is shared by Cummins who notes "students from 'dominated' societal groups are 'empowered' or 'disabled' as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the school" (1995, p. 105).

Finally, one of the factors that played a major part in Mewati's exclusion was the prejudices held against Mewati and towards other minority languages dubbed as dialects, by both Meo and non-Meo school teachers across all of the schools. This research showed that despite years of sociolinguistic research indicating all nonstandard varieties are equally rule-governed, logical and well-formed systems as the standard varieties (e.g. Labov, 1969), prejudices still continue to exist among teachers.

As Chambers (2009) says, "prejudices based on dialect are as insidious as prejudices based on skin color, religion, or any other insubstantial attribute, and they have the same result. They unfairly limit self-fulfillment" (p. 268). These prejudices about language variation once absorbed by teachers are likely to do "pedagogical damage" (Wheeler, 2009, p. 179). In other words, these prejudices lead to teachers linking students' use of nonstandard varieties with that of their lack of school ability (Cunningham, 1976-77).

This was true in this study in that most teachers in both rural and urban schools held prejudices against Mewati and attributed Mewati as one of the causes for children's lack of ability. Teachers perceived Mewati as an obstacle rather than a resource, regarding Mewati as an impediment to students' cognitive and academic growth. Some teachers went as far as to suggest that students needed to stop using their language at home (and in schools) for their own benefit.

Such prejudices, as Baugh (2000) too noted regarding African American Vernacular English, reduces teacher expectations for the child's abilities. This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy as teacher expectations are reduced, student performance is diminished (Wheeler, 2009, p. 179). Therefore, the prejudices teachers were found to hold against minority languages labeled as dialects in general and Mewati in particular, may not just cause social, developmental and psychological damage to the student but could also have grave implications for students' education and economic life chances.

Rather than merely describe the existing state of affairs, the purpose of this research was to critically expose, question and challenge them. Therefore, an attempt was made throughout this study to look into the broader questions of access, power and injustice with an overall aim of social change. Thus, after having described earlier the language policies, practices and ideologies in place, I argue in line with Paulston (1994), that for any language policy to succeed, it is imperative to take into account the socio-cultural realities it finds itself in, the social context of language problems and especially the forces that contribute to language maintenance and shift (p. 4). One way this could be achieved in Mewat is by ensuring sufficient space for local identities, languages and cultures.

Among the many views expressed by the teachers, a tendency was found in teachers attempting to undermine students' home language while valorizing standard languages, perceiving students' home language, Mewati, as an obstacle. Teachers went as far as to say that students should stop using it. Views such as these can have serious impacts on students' cultural and linguistic heritage. Similar feelings were shared by Crippen and Widdowson (1978) when they argued that "by conducting education in the standard version of the language one might change the values of the learners, which bind them to their background and thereby cut them off from their cultural heritage" (p. 197). Moreover, teachers' views on the discouragement of Mewati stood in opposition to the fact that if learners' cognitive skills are allowed to be fully developed in their mother tongue, the learning of other subjects later on, along with the other languages, occurs more effectively (Cummins & Swain, 1986, pp. 97–98).

The idea that Mewati is considered a misfit in the education sphere has origins in teachers' conceptualizations of so-called dialects in that they consider them somehow simple and inferior. However, as Romaine (2000) maintained, it can be easily shown that dialects are just as structurally complex, and rule bound as standard languages and are equally capable of

expressing logical arguments as standard varieties (p. 214). Many studies have been carried out on the benefits and inclusion of minority languages or nonstandard varieties in education, such as Mewati, with many experts engaged in research on multiple literacies, biliteracies and local literacies at the forefront of supporting this end (Hornberger, 2002, 2004; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1994).

Papapavlou and Pavlou (2007) argued when schools exploit the literacy skills of students early (which are based on students' home language even when it is not the standard language) and teachers change their negative attitudes towards the dialect, then subsequent schooling can support the development of students' linguistic and intellectual skills (p. 266). Aside from the linguistic and intellectual skills development, the inclusion of students' home languages in schools provides dignity not just to the language but also to the speakers of those languages. As Annamalai (2005) pointed out, one of the central purposes of education is to give human dignity to people and this "dignity cannot be given by condemning the language the people speak and through it the culture the language represents" (p. 30).

6.4 Theoretical Implications of Spolsky's (2004) Model

This study used the model proposed by Spolsky (2004) which provided a thorough framework to recognize language policy in place. The framework may be limited by the fact that while it accounts for identifying language policy, it leaves little room for intervening or transforming the existing conditions in favor of minority languages and/or dialects. This point also finds resonance in Walsh's (2011) observation of another minority language, Irish, when he contended that the usefulness of the model "may be limited by the fact that it is less interventionist and didactic than models of language planning which commit themselves specifically to strengthening minority languages" (p. 132).

Walsh (2011) then went on to say that while the model provides a useful framework for analysis of interaction between practice, beliefs and management components it is less concerned with the promotion of minority languages (p. 133). This interaction of the said three components, however, facilitates the recognition and provides a thorough analysis of the LiEPs in place, the key aim of this research. Therefore, the model proposed by Spolsky (2004) provided a useful foundation for this study.

While Spolsky's (2004) model highlights and describes language beliefs, it does not concern itself with how well-informed the beliefs are and the possible ways they could be changed. It is here I argue that to understand the true nature of beliefs guiding language policy and gain better insights into the ways a transformation in favor of minority languages could take place, it is equally important to touch upon participants' consciousness of those beliefs as the beliefs themselves. During the course of this study, a central concept emerged out of and was grounded in the data which I called '(Un/Dys) Consciousness'.

6.5 (Un/Dys) Consciousness as a Key Concept

During data collection, coding and analysis, a key theme emerged around teachers' consciousness (or the lack of it) with regard to their views, prejudices and attitudes towards other languages and cultures, especially that of their students. This included their consciousness of contemporary teaching pedagogy, educational and linguistic research, and it became apparent that it could partly account for their language practices and beliefs.

As this study would reveal, reference to consciousness could help explain the grounds of teachers' beliefs and practices and how well informed they are, and also pave the way for intervention in favor of minority languages. In order to know more about '(un/dys) consciousness' and to see how it relates to teachers, some of the key findings that emerged with regard to this concept are discussed in the section below.

Of the first five findings, the first three below point towards the lack of consciousness on the part of teachers and revealed the fallacies that Phillipson (1992) noted in the context of English language teaching, however, it can easily be applied in the context of this study.

Firstly, there is the early start fallacy. Teachers of both school types believed the earlier students start learning standard languages like Hindi and English the better they would be. Secondly, maximum exposure fallacy, where teachers believed the more children are exposed to the standard languages such as Hindi and English the better the results will be. Consequently, the lesser they are exposed to Mewati, the better the outcomes will be. Thirdly, a subtractive fallacy where most teachers believed that more use of Mewati would lead to a drop in the quality of other standard languages like Hindi, English and even Urdu. Fourthly, one of the other key fallacies noticed is what I term written literature fallacy. There was a marked

difference between Meo and non-Meo teachers' perceptions of the role of Mewati literature. Meo teachers celebrated and identified with Mewati's rich historic oral traditions and literature. Non-Meo teachers admitted ignorance or refused to acknowledge the idea of Mewati literature. The findings revealed all non-Meo teachers perceived only written languages could claim to have literature and therefore prestige.

Most teachers, and non-Meo teachers particularly, failed to acknowledge Mewati had a rich and profound legacy of oral literature. Almost all of them were completely unaware of the existence of oral literature which played and continues to play a central role in Meo history, traditions and culture. Mayaram (2003a) when discussing Meo oral tradition and literature contended: "Orality has often been the linguistic associate of marginality" (p. 42). It is this unconsciousness and/or bias against the oral literature which considerably affected non-Meo teachers' beliefs regarding Mewati, its history and its speakers. This has implications for education in that since the majority of teachers belong to the non-Meo group teaching to students who are predominantly Meos, teachers' prejudices and ignorance with regard to students' history and literature interferes and restricts a healthy interaction and development of teacher-student relationship.

This study has brought to attention a rich Mewati oral literature, which almost all Meo participants took pride in (as did some of the other people in Mewat that the researcher interviewed) and the fact that a great amount of concern was expressed for its preservation and promotion. While it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into a discussion about Mewati's oral literature, future research could engage in corpus planning in order to develop written work based on its oral literature. Once done, this could be utilized for educational purposes which may also play a part in restoring Mewati's literature and maintaining it further.

Fifthly, one of the most significant fallacies noticed among teachers was the standard language ideology. Lippi-Green (2004) defined standard language ideology as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, non-varying spoken language" (p. 293). It is the idea that a standard language is somehow ethically or logically superior because of its monolithic and stable characteristics and therefore why nonstandard varieties should conform to this ideal type (Lippi-Green, 2004, p. 293). Throughout this research, it was noticed that all teachers placed a significant amount of emphasis on language-dialect distinction. They firmly believed in the idea that dialects were fundamentally different from standard languages and lower in prestige.

All teachers perceived the standard language Hindi to be the “correct” and “ideal” form and perceived Mewati to be the “deviant” and “substandard” form of the “proper Hindi”. The non-Meo teachers in School A, for instance, refused to even acknowledge Mewati as a language. The teachers stressed that Mewati was merely a “dialect” and as such it did not qualify to be called a language.

Standard language ideology looks at ways which could minimize language variation, seen as a deviant corrupting the ‘ideal’ form. This aspect was visible among the teachers who were found to share the belief that a common and uniform language was a better alternative for the Meo community. For instance, some non-Meo teachers emphasized that Meo students would be better off embracing Hindi. Likewise, some Meo teachers showed affinity towards Urdu and claimed Urdu as the preferred language Meos should switch to. When asked about their reasons, they cited that the Urdu speaking and Mewati speaking communities shared a commonality in terms of Islam. Some Meo teachers like Murid from School D and Aslam from School C, however, resisted this thought and perceived Urdu as a force responsible for Mewati’s growing shift. Either way, this tendency reflected that both ethnic groups, Meo as well as non-Meos, were keen on minimizing variation and looked upon more standard and uniform varieties in the form of Hindi and Urdu as Mewati’s ideal forms for future.

Finally, a key finding emerged that I call dysconscious ethnicism and linguicism. This draws on King’s (1991) work on dysconscious racism in critical race theory and Skutnabb-Kangas’s (1990) notice of other forms of racism such as ethnicism and linguicism. The latter forms are discrimination based on ethnicity and language. The notion of dysconsciousness was introduced by King (1991) who defined it as the “uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing social order of things as given” (p. 135). She added that dysconsciousness “is not the absence of consciousness (or unconsciousness) but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking” (p. 135).

King (1991) further defined dysconscious racism as uncritical ways of thinking “that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges” (p. 135), thereby maintaining and further perpetuating racial inequity. She argued this dysconsciousness played a part among her university students in terms of how they accounted for and interpreted the subject of racial inequity. A key theme that featured throughout this research was what King (1991) called the

impaired or distorted consciousness on the part of non-Meo teachers regarding ethnicism and linguicism, the uncritical acceptance of their privileges, of the status quo and tacit acceptance of dominant assumptions and the existing social order.

In contrast, Meo teachers were fully conscious of their place within the social order and the ongoing discrimination they felt in the social, economic, political and educational spheres. This was something which non-Meo teachers did not admit or critically explore. That non-Meo teachers did not perceive any disadvantage or inequity that Meo students (or for that matter Meo teachers) face in terms of their ethnicity (for belonging to a religious and cultural group which was not part of the mainstream) or language (for speaking a non-standard variety not valued in schools) and implicitly accepted dominant Hindi and Hindu norms and privileges, showed how dysconsciousness was exhibited by them.

Non-Meo teachers, for instance, accepted and advocated standard Hindi norms while failing to acknowledge the privilege that Hindi carried and their own role as teachers belonging to dominant Hindu communities. Non-Meo teachers accepted, in the words of King (1991), “certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs” that justified the social and linguistic advantages Hindi had “as a result of subordinating diverse others” (p. 135). They invariably attributed the current social, economic and educational problems and inequities concerning Meos, to Meos themselves. By holding Meos solely responsible for their own socioeconomic-political and educational problems, non-Meo teachers overlooked their own privileges which helped to sustain the status quo.

One of the mechanisms by which this was done was to blame Meos for choosing to remain in poverty and ignorance. This reasoning was used to explain illiteracy among Meo students as well as to justify the shortage of Meo teachers in the region. Non-Meo teachers also held Meo students responsible for not discarding Mewati, which they saw as an obstacle to education and development, and instead used it as a rationale to justify the current status of Meos. Non-Meo teachers tacitly accepted and justified their presence on the ground that “local teachers were just not good [qualified and trained] enough”. This assumption, however, ran contrary to Meo teachers’ perception that institutional prejudices and structural forces were responsible for the shortage of local teachers in Mewat.

Keeping in line with the historical-structural approach and to investigate the above point of dysconscious ethnicism and linguicism in more detail, an effort was made throughout to

examine the historical and structural forces at play in Mewat that could shed light on the issues of inter-ethnic relations, power and access. In light of the above, it is important to take into account the social and historical context of struggle between groups and the manner in which the dominant group treats the minority group. These factors themselves helped in achieving the subsidiary purposes underlying this study: 1) to uncover and critically analyze the fundamental ideologies and socio-political processes that informed and influenced LiEPs in the two schools, and 2) discover how these LiEPs, in turn, affected the position of Mewati.

6.6 Socio-Historical and Structural Forces

All the non-Meo teachers firmly believed that Meos faced no discrimination and had no ground to claim so. In contrast, all Meo teachers believed the community faced discrimination due to religion, socio-historical identity and ethnicity. Owing to their Muslim background, Meo teachers suggested they face ongoing discrimination at the hands of local authorities most of whom belong to the majority Hindu religion and other ethnically dominant communities such as Jats. This sentiment is best captured by the Meo teacher Aslam from School C, when he remarked:

There [Jat community & other dominant communities' areas] in each and single village, if 15 children have applied for the job then all of those 15 children will have a definite appointment. Whereas, in our case, out of 15 villages, one child gets an appointment, and that too with great difficulty...There is discrimination, we agree to it.

Other examples given by the Meo teachers included the general inadequacy or mishandling of funds allocated for Mewat's development. As the Meo teacher Qurban from School D claimed:

There, [non-Muslim areas] banks can be found and so can the hospitals while in Muslims' villages, none. Here there are no banks, no hospitals, no water, nothing. MDA (Mewat Development Agency) receives crores (ten million) of rupees from the Minorities commission...[pause] the officers who sit there are Jats, DC [Deputy Commissioner] is a Jat, CM [Chief Minister] is also a Jat, they spend funds according to their own choice. Politics keeps on occurring at the bureaucracy level.

Similar claims were made by all Meo teachers about bias against Mewat in terms of lack of development and against Meos in general, invoking strong emotions. As reflected in the above statements there is a general perception by Meo teachers of structural discrimination against the Meo community. Teachers also pointed to the shortage of local Meo teachers. In the majority Meo region, most teachers migrate from outside Mewat and belong to the Hindu, non-

Meo, non-Mewati speaking community. Meo teachers perceived themselves to face discrimination during recruitment processes. Aslam hinted at this by saying: “Many Meos have completed B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) and J.B.T (Junior Bachelor Training) but are still jobless”. Similarly, the Meo teacher Murid from School D noted:

Here the people in authority are usually Jats. How many of those [Meo teachers] here [in this school] are involved in the job of teaching? Eight or ten. And, even these have just joined, they were not there before. So, the appointments that take place... [pause] in that...[pause] usually one’s own people are given more preference.

All the Meo teachers raised the non-availability of Urdu teachers and text materials in schools. This despite that government schools are mandated to teach Urdu and that Urdu is offered as an optional subject, for which students and community members usually show a great degree of interest. As the Meo teacher Aslam from School C claimed:

Even though Sanskrit is provided along with other subjects for students to choose from, at the upper primary level in grades 6th to 8th, yet in most schools across Mewat, Sanskrit teacher is easily available. Each school has a Sanskrit teacher as the one who teaches Hindi can teach Sanskrit too, however, Urdu teachers are hard to find. When it comes to Urdu, they have to be specially appointed. All of this forces student to opt for Sanskrit instead.

Throughout this research, a common theme was the detailed discussions with Meo teachers about the historical stigma attached to the Meo community. Mayaram (2003a) noted that one reason Meos have been subjected to discrimination is the historical stigma attached to the Meo community, labelled as a “criminal tribe” in the colonial period, the effects of which persist to this day and have “left a permanent impress on popular, administrative, and academic imaging of the group” (p. 17). This was evident among all the Meo participants interviewed in the study, in that though they took great pride in their historic past, they were deeply saddened by their misrepresentation as a community and subsequent denial of space in historical books and records.

Meo participants claimed this social status has continued to marginalize the community and misrepresent them in the eyes of other community members, some of whose past has been glorified at the expense of Meos (a candid reference was made here towards Hindu Ahir and Yadav ethnic groups but particularly the Jats – to which most non-Meo teachers belong). Aslam suggested: “Meos’ place in history is not well recognized, and if at all it has been mentioned, it attaches the labels of thieves, dacoits and looters to Meos”. Mayaram (2003a)

wrote of the marginalization of Meo history in the broader Indian historical narrative (p. 128), and this view is confirmed by Aslam's comments and those of other teachers in the region.

The other basis by which Meo teachers claimed prejudice and discrimination was on the ground of inter-ethnic relations between politically and economically dominant Hindu Jats and the Muslim Meos. While both groups traditionally belong to pastoral-peasant communities (along with the other ethnic groups such as Hindu Ahirs and Gujars etc. mentioned by the participants), Meo teachers perceived that Jats occupied all the higher authority positions and dominated the labor market, including in education in Mewat.

In the cases studied, this theme emerged several times and this perception was borne out as there were few Meo teachers working in the schools. The competition for scarce economic-political resources along with belonging to different religious-ethnic-linguistic groups appeared to fuel inter-ethnic resentment and had implications for the educational sphere in Mewat.

It seems that a gap exists between the dysconsciousness of ethnicism and linguicism from non-Meo teachers and a perception (consciousness) of ethnolinguistic discrimination by Meo teachers. The aforementioned points, therefore, indicated the (un/dys) conscious assumptions that were behind teachers' beliefs and the ways in which these assumptions manifested themselves in teachers' language practices. To sum up, it is suggested that consciousness could be brought about at three levels:

Firstly, efforts have to be undertaken to raise teachers' consciousness toward their own beliefs. Teachers need to introspect and reflect on their own beliefs (biases and prejudices) critically before those beliefs could be challenged and negotiated in favor of minority languages.

Secondly, raising consciousness must be done at the intercultural level so non-Meo teachers could be made aware of the beliefs held by learners as well as their Meo colleagues, on the issues pertaining to their language, culture and history.

Thirdly, teachers' consciousness must be raised concerning the current pedagogical and sociolinguistic research so that teachers could make use of it. This study found that many teachers were unaware about contemporary pedagogical, educational and sociolinguistic research with many teachers lacking adequate pre and in-service teacher training while also possessing limited knowledge regarding a wide range of teaching methods and techniques.

In the end, it is not just the teachers but all educators, administrators and policymakers who would have to play an active part in order to bridge the gap that exists between learners' home and school languages so as to make education more meaningful, just and equitable.

This chapter presented discussion regarding one of the research questions of this study which looked at the LiEP in schools. From the analysis, it was concluded that the schools made no room for Mewati in their formal LiEPs and that the rural government school(s) in general followed a monolingual Hindi LiEP and the urban elite school pursued bilingual English-Hindi LiEP. A new theoretical concept in the form of '(Un/Dys) Consciousness' was proposed which facilitated in illustrating and uncovering the underlying assumptions made by teachers that could at least partly account for teachers' stated beliefs as well as potentially indicate the areas in which a meaningful intervention, in favor of minority languages such as Mewati, could be made. It was highlighted that Mewati suffers from teachers' deep-seated prejudices and a case was made in favor of introducing Mewati in schools. The next chapter reports the findings on the other research question this study attempts to address which deals with how the effects of neoliberalism manifest themselves in the educational domain, their interaction with LiEP and teacher cognition i.e. how teachers think, believe and act or make decisions inside the classroom.

Chapter 7: The Effects of Neoliberalism in Education – Findings

This chapter presents findings on the second research question: “How do the effects of neoliberalism in education interact with (minority) LiEP? More specifically, how do they shape teachers’ views, judgements, decision-making abilities and behavior inside the classroom?” Chapter 2 argued that the ongoing deterioration and segmentation of India’s education system was produced by neoliberalism in education. A crisis in public education was caused by cost-cutting measures including a reduction in public investment in education and increasing contractualization of teachers (Sadgopal, 2010; Venkatanarayanan, 2015). This was further compounded by ineffective school management committees (SMCs) (PROBE, 1999) instituted as a result of the state’s withdrawal from school governance. The effects of neoliberalism significantly constrain teachers’ decision-making abilities.

For the sake of clarity and consistency, the findings of each case, namely, rural (Case 1) and urban (Case 2) are presented separately in individual sections. This chapter first presents findings of Case 1 (interviews with rural school teachers) along with findings that emerged from conducting a focus group session with the SSA officials and policymakers responsible for implementing and monitoring the progress of the RTE Act. It sheds light on the daily institutional practices, affairs and concerns of rural schools and its teachers. The next section then presents findings in relation to Case 2 (interviews with urban school teachers).

In both cases, three key themes emerged, after coding and analyzing data, showing how LiEP was constrained by effects of neoliberalism on the institutional, policy and pedagogical levels. These themes overlapped, and in this chapter, they will be explored in detail for each case separately. Looking into each theme across both cases separately will later help in cross-case analysis as it will help in reflecting on similarities and differences across the two school cases, “draw[ing] a single set of cross-case conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 20) and in the process will help establish their relationship with previous findings and theories and provide answers on the current subject of inquiry. This will later be discussed in the Discussion chapter.

7.1 Case 1: Rural government school(s)

7.1.1 Theme 1: Institutional Level

All teacher participants complained of characteristics that are all too common across several rural government schools across India – neglect and infrastructure problems. These had a huge impact on their decision-making capacities and socio-psychological state. They played an instrumental role in the time teachers were able to devote to classroom teaching and in deciding strategies they could employ to match students’ needs and interests. These characteristics, as several scholars have noted, are typical of neoliberal influence in education wherein budget cuts and unsustainable work environments become the norm. Some of these structural constraints that affected teachers’ behavior at an institutional level were grouped as categories and are thus listed below.

Shortage of teachers

One of the recurring themes that came out of this study was the acute shortage of teachers in schools across Mewat, including in Case 1. Local Meo teachers and female teachers were few. This shortage of teachers in rural government schools led to several problems including high pupil-teacher ratio (as high as 70:1). This, of course, went against the rules set by the RTE Act (2009), where pupil-teacher ratios should be 30:1 at the primary level (Grade 1st to 5th) and 35:1 at the upper primary level (Grade 6th to 8th). Teachers were found to be teaching several classes all at once.

The large classes also meant that teachers spent most of their time on disciplinary and class management issues instead of teaching. During a few non-participant observations, students were seen not taking interest in the class, while teachers appeared not quite prepared for class. No teaching aids aside from the set textbook were followed. When asked how they prepare to teach several classes at once, several of them shrugged their shoulders and responded: “we manage”. The teacher shortage also meant teachers were forced to teach subjects they were not prepared for or not interested in. One of the teachers described this as follows:

I teach English and Social Science Studies in grades 6, 7 and 8 but due to teacher shortage I also teach Science and Mathematics. Even though I should be teaching two subjects but due to shortage of teachers in the middle grades [pauses]...there are only two teachers, when ideally, there should be three.

Krishna, Case 1

In particular, there was a severe shortage of Urdu teachers. This was particularly striking considering several teachers remarked that a significant number of Meo students had a prior familiarity with Urdu in some form or degree. Hence, they noted several Meo students would prefer Urdu over other subjects, but due to unavailability of teachers, textbooks and materials, students often couldn't. One of the teachers had this to say:

I have never seen any Urdu teacher in my life. You'd only find them in private schools, madrasas or universities. There are many people who know Urdu in Mewat, like our head teacher for instance, but they don't teach as a subject. Students will naturally opt for Sanskrit (at the upper primary level) when there is no teacher for Urdu. But there should be one.

Deep, Case 1

Similarly, another participant who was a local Meo teacher remarked:

Meo students are interested in opting for Urdu but teachers are never available. If a survey was done right now, many students would say they prefer Urdu.

Aslam, Case 1

The teacher shortage also led to teachers being overburdened with non-teaching tasks such as supervising students' mid-day meals, monitoring construction work inside school premises, collecting census data, surveying children and arranging for vaccination programs, performing disaster and relief management duties, being deployed as booth level officers during elections and thereby performing duties such as registering voters, maintaining and revising electoral rolls. The extent to which bureaucratic process and non-teaching tasks, take a toll on teachers is reflected in one teacher's comment:

Sometimes, there's a delay in supplying wheat, rice by the department in charge of providing mid-day meals, then the food must be individually purchased from the market by us. We then must show receipts to the government for reimbursement...How many things can a teacher alone take care of? Then there's the task of preparing and maintaining a register where everything is recorded, all the expenditure. One really has to focus. Then we must supervise children's meals. It's a full responsibility. For instance, recently there was an incident when something was found in a child's meal, a pebble or something, the matter became quite big, so the minister for education issued a letter specifying that at least one teacher had to monitor distribution of meals. So, a teacher must be responsible for this, then for purchasing food, then for maintaining a record that it's in the stock, that it was spent, then the current balance...even if one assumes, it's only one teacher in the end, that teacher will be busy doing these tasks alone.

Assem, Case 1

Teachers being overburdened with non-academic work further affected their motivation to teach, led to psychological stress and violated the RTE Act (2009) which says that other than elections, decennial census and disaster relief related duties, teachers shall not be deployed for other tasks. This only applies to central and state employees and thus government school

teachers. In contrast, elite private school teachers get to direct their attention to teaching alone. Arguably, this RTE norm disproportionately affects government school teachers who often serve in impoverished areas, often with less resources, coupled with severe teacher shortages. Thus, when teachers had to spend a significant portion of their time doing non-teaching tasks, it took the focus away from their work, often leaving them feeling stressed and less motivated to teach, as was confessed by all teacher participants in this study.

This was further exacerbated by the fact that most teachers found working in the rural government school(s) migrated from other regions in Haryana. Most of these teachers belonged to different ethnic, caste, religious and linguistic groups. They were mostly from Hindu Ahir and Jat backgrounds who spoke Haryanvi or a variety thereof. The local teachers were, of course, from a Meo background who spoke Mewati. During the interview, one of the first striking things was to see a mattress around the corner in a room inside the school premises. Upon further questioning, it was revealed by the teachers that it was a space where some of those who migrated from other regions slept. This provoked a discussion on various challenges faced by the non-local teachers.

Teachers began to narrate hardships they faced by staying away from families and friends. As they began to share stories, it broke the ice. Soon they started to discuss the toll it took on their personal (and teaching) lives. When asked on their reasons for being in Mewat, several of them reported they were “forcefully transferred” to Mewat and that they were likely to be there for several years due to teacher shortages. The teacher transfer mechanism not being transparent added to their frustration. What compounded matters was, depending on the status of a teacher (regular/contract), the transfer policy affected teachers differently. That said, obtaining a transfer was described as difficult by both types of teachers. Without exception, all non-local teachers found themselves “stuck” in Mewat and wanted “a way out”. Nearly all of them said they felt isolated and often travelled over 200 kilometers on a weekend to see their families. One of the non-local teachers describes it as follows:

I am from a district called Mahendragarh (south of Haryana) which is 150 kilometers away. Another colleague of ours, he comes from Hisar which is 250 kilometers away. But we have to live here. One who performs the duty by travelling 2 kilometers, while the other does the same by travelling 250 kilometers... There would be a difference then. There are all kinds of challenges we face. So, the government should give teachers the home districts they can work in so that the teachers can also teach well and feel satisfied.

Aseem, Case 1

Nearly all teachers who migrated from other regions felt ‘stuck’ in Mewat and perceived it as a ‘punishment post’. They expressed the desire to be transferred closer to home as being away affected their motivation to teach. However, they felt helpless in the absence of a clear and transparent transfer policy.

Additionally, this posting of non-Meo, non-Mewati speaking teachers in Mewat in turn had a significant impact on classroom MOI. Teachers remarked on the communication gap between non-Meo teachers and students, especially in the primary stage. Most of the students came from rural areas, were first-generation learners and spoke Mewati as their first language. The teachers, on the other hand, were mostly non-local teachers who preferred Hindi as the MOI.

All the teacher participants, Meos and non-Meos, confirmed that students – often till six to eight years – struggled with content and teacher instructions. However, teachers were quick to raise that things became “better” after a few years when students cleared the primary or upper primary level. It was as if they perceived the issue of non-comprehension as a ‘rite of passage’ and normalized the status quo by implying it was ‘natural’ or a ‘transitory’ phase. The communication gap that existed between non-Meo teachers and Meo students could be gauged by looking at fairly simple statements such as the one below:

There is a gap in communication between teachers and Meo students. Students, especially at the primary level, do not understand Hindi well enough. Krishna, Case 1

Another non-Meo teacher, Shastri, also echoed the same sentiment:

There are many challenges faced when teaching solely in Hindi as students do not understand and learn properly. Students are not that competent in speaking and understanding Hindi, particularly in the initial years. Moreover, since we lack competence and comprehension in Mewati, sometimes even we have to consult someone, so we understand a few words [laughs].

Similarly, the local Meo teacher, Rasul, confirmed this:

When they [non-Meo teachers] teach and they use their language or Haryanvi, for the first few years children just stare at them. The first two-three years just pass by with children trying to figure out what teachers even meant. The students don’t understand them fully...sometimes even we as teachers cannot understand them, how would children then?

The migration of non-local, non-Meo teachers also had a significant impact on the labor market and inter-ethnic politics in Mewat. There is a huge teacher shortage with many positions remaining vacant. Both Meo and non-Meo teachers attributed different reasons for this. Meo teachers cited discrimination from the (mostly non-Meo) administration. Their argument was

that qualified personnel were being prevented from taking up the vacant positions. Non-Meo teachers, by contrast, blamed Meos for the position they found themselves in, citing the ‘general backwardness’ of the Meo community as the reason the region does not produce many teachers. The general dynamic was one of mistrust and tension between ethnic, religious and caste groups.

Meo teachers complained of discrimination from a mostly non-Meo administration that largely included officials from the dominant Jat community. The fact that Jats (a relatively affluent caste) belong to the Hindu community and Meos to the Muslim community problematizes it further as religious tensions run high between these groups due to historical and socio-political reasons. In the last few decades, there has been a recent sharp rise in communal tension and political polarization between Hindus and Muslims across India, Mewat being no exception. For instance, when asked about their views on the question of discrimination, one Meo teacher had this to say:

Many Meos after having completed their B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) and JBT (Junior Basic Training) are still jobless. In every single village there (Hindu Jat dominated areas), if 15 young people have applied for a job then it’s almost certain that each one of them will at least get an appointment, whereas in our case, out of 15 villages, barely one person will get an appointment, if at all. Yes, we feel there is discrimination.

Aslam, Case 1

What became noticeable throughout the fieldwork was that larger issues surrounding land and agriculture contributed significantly to social inequities and differential development patterns noticed across different communities in Mewat. The question of land and development was important considering 90% of the people in the region lived in rural areas, and for Meos, being a pastoral-peasant community, it had a direct bearing on them. Meos lived in proximity to and shared close relations with other similar groups such as Jats, Gujjars and Ahirs, however, this relationship wasn’t without its share of issues.

Meos charged that these groups routinely received preferential treatment (in terms of securing jobs, getting a bigger land share, better facilities and development) from the Indian state, bureaucracy and high officials on account of their identity, especially their Hinduism. Non-Meos, on the other hand, rejected it outright and blamed Meos for their own failure. In a highly stratified society like India, this scenario, should not be surprising.

Haryana’s politics is mostly dominated by Jats at the top as an overwhelming number of MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) belong to the Jat community, whereas there are

a handful of MLAs who belong to the Meo community. So, there is hardly anyone in position of power who could represent us our issues. Aslam, Case 1

Of course, this presumes representation alone would lead to any substantial change, a debatable proposition. What is clear from the above account (as well as other Meos with whom the researcher spoke), is that inter-ethnic politics played a key role shaping the development of the region and perception of people. Inter-ethnic politics and the resulting communal tension became even more apparent during the fieldwork when a curfew like situation broke out. Depending on who one asked, the issue was narrated differently. That said, the clash was between non-local, Jat police officials and local Meo protestors.

In order to understand the tense relationship between Hindu Jats and Muslim Meos, one has to go back to 1992 and a historical event that adversely affected this relationship, not just between these two communities, but Hindus and Muslims across India. This event was the Babri Masjid Demolition. On 6th December 1992 in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana's neighboring state, a mob of Hindu zealots backed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, tore down a sixteenth-century mosque by alleging that it was the birthplace of Rama, according to Hindu mythology. Since then, the case has been ongoing leading to deep polarization between the two religious communities, as reported by *India Today* in its article titled "25 Years Since the Demolition of Babri Masjid: A Timeline of the Ayodhya Dispute" (2017).

Meos didn't report discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity/caste/class or religion alone, they also reported on the role of being labelled as a "criminal tribe" during the British rule and its resulting stigma (Mayaram, 2003a, p. 137). Post-independence, Meos were never fully able to shed the tag that was ascribed to them. Their Muslim identity in the largely Hindu dominant society – post-India's Partition and as a result of a religious and political divide between the two communities – further marginalized Meos' position by firmly entrenching the past "criminal tribe" tag. This is reflected in the popular perception of non-Meos about Meos, including in this study, the way the media represents Meos, and their representation in history.

One common complaint of Meos, throughout this study, was their negative historical portrayal. Both Meo teachers interviewed as part of Case 1 for instance, Rasul and Aslam, took issue with this. They felt during the crucial years of India's history, in particular, its freedom struggle, while Meos' role was systematically demonized or marginalized, other communities'

roles were glorified. Meo teachers thought it unfair, and that it had a negative effect on local students, reflected in the statement by a Meo teacher below:

I'm not satisfied with the history textbook. I believe it needs to be modified. Like other ethnic groups, Meos' contribution...their bravery and struggle against other regimes...too should be recognized. Meos' place in history is non-existent and even a scant attention that has been paid to them has portrayed them as 'thieves, dacoits and looters'. These labels have been attached to them. Instead of being called brave, labels like 'illiterate', 'uncivilized' and 'a community of fools' have been used against us throughout history. Aslam, Case 1

Meo teachers in Case 1 believed the Meo community had a rich history and that more was needed to reflect this positively. According to them, one way Mewati speaking students could feel empowered and valued in the classroom was if more Meo history in the textbooks could be included, especially to counter the prevalent bias against Meos and their near absence from textbooks. This suggestion, of course, was met with stiff resistance by non-Meo teachers, several of whom believed that neither the region, the people or its language had much to offer. This was most pronounced in their attitude towards Mewati.

Ineffective School Management Committees (SMCs)

In order to encourage community and parental involvement in the education of a child, the RTE Act (2009) provided for schools to form SMCs, the composition of which is 75% parents (of which 50% are to be the mothers), 25% member composition is further divided into 1/3 elected members from the local community, 1/3 teachers and 1/3 local educationists (if available) or students (if educationists are not available) (Thapa, 2012, p. 2).

Though well-intentioned, teacher participants confirmed SMCs were largely ineffective. Reasons included: irregularity among members of the committee, members being unaware of their rights, members feeling hesitant in exercising their rights, members not being able to show sufficient interest due to being troubled by their own day-to-day issues, insufficient meeting time (only once a month) and lastly, reluctance on the part of some of the committee members which was attributed to their traditional outlook.

One of the Meo teachers commented on SMCs as follows:

The concept of SMCs was designed to act as a link between the school and the community; to resolve problems relating to children; to encourage community and parental involvement, and though well intentioned, it hasn't given many rights to the parents, as they can't really make use of their rights strictly speaking. Several of them are simply unaware or are hesitant to exercise these rights. Aslam, Case 1

On the question of committee members feeling troubled by their own day-to-day issues and showing insufficient interest during the scheduled meeting, the Meo teacher further went on to say:

At times, they don't show much interest if the teacher wishes to talk to them about students not being regular, rather they start talking about their own concerns, like harvesting issues, their crops being spoilt etc. The committee members, in turn, tell teachers that our concerns are minor in comparison to theirs. Aslam, Case 1

Furthermore, teachers reported struggles with parents in the committee, whenever they raised the subject of children's progress. Often parents would retort in a pessimistic manner, as remarked by Aslam: "Sometimes, the parents would say, "So what? It's not like they're going to be doctors!"

Similarly, another teacher who belonged to a non-Meo community responded:

Parents are not bothered about prolonged leave of their children. We try to address the problem of student absenteeism by informing parents during SMC meetings, but they start responding with their own concerns related to their crops etc. We often have to deal with parents who say, "Master Ji (respected teacher), what's there in education? What will they achieve by studying? Deep, Case 1

Seen in this context, the rural government school teachers had to perform the role of counsellors in addition to teaching and non-teaching duties. In addition to the traditional outlook of the committee members, teachers also had to deal with their irregularity. A non-Meo teacher described the irregularity among committee members as the biggest challenge for teachers:

Several times we fix a meeting time and ask the parents to come, but they never show up. They do as they please. They do their own thing. So, we face problems at times. Amit, Case 1

Importantly, one of the objectives of SMCs, as envisioned by the RTE Act, was to activate parents as decision-makers and ensure teachers and schools were held accountable. However, as the participants noted, several of these parents are daily wage laborers and farmers who've never attained formal education themselves but have been entrusted to perform a substantial amount of administrative and supervisory duties such as preparing a school development plan, monitoring teacher attendance/performance, and managing school infrastructure. Teachers thus held that the parents lacked capacity to exercise their rights in the manner the RTE Act intended.

Unavailability/late delivery of books

One of the problems most reported by rural government school teachers was unavailability or late delivery of textbooks. When books were delivered, they were insufficient in number for the whole class. All teacher participants reported books made it to the school when the first half of the academic year had already passed, leaving them to teach unaided. This had catastrophic results as a set textbook, prescribed by state governments and boards, forms the most important teaching aid for Indian teachers. This was confirmed by teachers themselves in this study.

The late delivery of books posed problems by burdening teachers further, especially those who were undertrained, underpaid and underqualified for curriculum design. A Meo teacher shared his problem as follows:

The session starts in April and books get delivered sometimes in the months of September-October...at times even in December. Now you can imagine how we teach students for 6 months without books.

Rasul, Case 1

Another Meo teacher also supported Rasul's claim and added:

Sometimes, half of the session passes, and we don't have books or stationary...Additionally, students interested in Urdu are prevented from choosing it as textbooks aren't available. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a national level program with great influence. By not making provisions for Urdu and delivering only Hindi books, they privilege Hindi instead.

Aslam, Case 1

Similarly, a non-Meo teacher also had this to add:

One of the biggest challenges we face in our school, aside from teacher shortage and infrastructural concerns, is the late supply of books.

Krishna, Case 1

Overall, all teachers seemed frustrated that books often didn't make it to the school on time. They did not have a firm answer when asked how they coped with this challenge. In the end, this had an impact on students' learning and teachers' actions inside the class.

Infrastructural conditions

Visibly underfunded, Case 1 schools lacked basic amenities and facilities such as functioning classrooms, teaching/learning equipment, sports equipment and playground facilities, student desks, library, computer/science laboratory, clean drinking water and toilet facilities. Although this image of an underfunded rural government school is oft invoked in public media and popular perception, seeing it up close left a lasting impression. One of the most striking features

of the fieldwork was the state of the rural government schools in Mewat and the reluctance of teachers (almost a sense of shame) when I asked if I could see the school. Although the teachers were willing to be interviewed, they were visibly embarrassed, expressed unease and made excuses when probed on the lack of basic infrastructural facilities inside the school.

A noticeable thing upon entry to the school was students sitting on the ground in the sun. This seemed quite odd as the children lacked shelter during the winter season. When teachers were confronted, they tried their best to dodge the question and replied, “students like to sit in the sunshine”. However, after the interview during an informal conversation, one non-Meo teacher admitted the acute shortage of desks in rural government schools across Mewat and their school:

There is an acute shortage of desks in our school. We need desks to fit at least 600 of our students. But we have been waiting for over a year and we’ve heard nothing.

Deep, Case 1

Another local Meo teacher was brutally honest with the way things stood noting:

We don’t have enough desks where children can sit properly. Even the few desks that you see came not because of a government initiative but through a cooperation shown by American school children of Jordan Creek who raised funds to send some desks in this particular school after being notified by an NGO.

Aslam, Case 1

The testimonies of these teachers were confirmed, once the researcher observed classrooms with hardly had any desks inside, many of which were broken. Several of these classrooms had dust all around and seemed to have not been used for a while. The classrooms doors were locked from the outside, the locks were rusted and the windows broken, as depicted in Figures 8–10.



Figure 8 – A classroom picture from the inside (Case 1)



Figure 9 - A classroom picture from the outside (Case 1)



Figure 10 – Picture of the library (Case 1)

Teachers repeatedly complained of a limited supply of teaching/technological tools, aids and resources and things requiring repairs. For instance, a Meo teacher said:

Edusat systems (Haryana's much hyped satellite-based educational program launched with an intention to use ICT (information and communications technology) for distance learning and teaching purposes) are either wholly absent or lying defunct for years. There are teaching tools which have not been repaired, even after repeated attempts of sending applications to the required authorities.

Aslam, Case 1

The thing that made it worse, according to the teacher participants, was the nature and frequency of school inspections. Participants were unimpressed with how the school inspections took place, as they occurred infrequently. A non-Meo contract teacher when probed about the frequency and nature of the school inspection, as in how typically it happened, described it as follows:

It depends on the Block Education Officer being there... I've been in this school for the last 5 years and in this entire time, we've had one inspection. Generally, their work is to see if children's studies are going okay, teachers are coming on time, registers of mid-day meals are prepared, the school has drinking water facilities, the state of the classrooms, the state of the facilities being provided to children, if they are receiving books or not. They don't give a written report though, just a verbal feedback. The feedback is usually

regarding student absenteeism. Most of the children's families are either farmers or landowners. When it's work season, parents don't want to send their children to school. We are generally asked to motivate students to come to school.

Amit, Case 1

The teachers believed inspection officials paid more attention to students' attendance and the enrollment rate rather than what and how they were being taught in class. Teachers perceived this exercise as a mere "formality" and complained that officials neither showed interest in observing teachers' classes nor checking students' notebooks. No follow-up action on any teachers' complaints happened. Additionally, no written report on teachers' performance or general feedback was provided. This made teachers demotivated and unvalued, with no scope to improve. The teachers also complained inspection officials didn't pay adequate attention to infrastructure problems suffered by the school. From the interviews, it was clear that the teachers expected intervention by the higher authorities in this regard. A Meo teacher gave his overall opinion on school inspections as follows:

It has become a formality. The school inspectors won't go inside the classrooms and interact with students, or observe the classes, or ask them any questions, or see their copies. They just check the school registers, see the strength of students, to see where the teacher has committed an error...so they could take a bribe from them.

Aslam, Case 1

Another Meo teacher also talked about how school inspections were found lacking. He stressed upon the importance of inspections 'to keep teachers in check':

Teachers need to be monitored. Reward those who do good work...good teaching and punish those who do not, as doing so encourages teachers to teach well. Merely allowing teachers to teach under the assumption of good behavior, doesn't work in the long run.

Rasul, Case 1

The rural government school teachers were not against inspections, if done well. There was a widespread perception among them that English-medium urban, elite (private) schools run better because of, among other factors like better infrastructure, regular useful inspections keeping schools accountable. Whether school inspections result in better learning outcomes, however, is open to debate. To conclude, infrastructural constraints of various kinds and limitations within schools greatly affected Case 1 teachers' capacities and motivation to teach well.

Inadequate teacher training

Teachers revealed various flaws in the in-service teacher training program. Not only was the training found inadequate but also not relevant for the day-to-day concerns of the teachers. The

teachers revealed the state and central government were increasingly abdicating their responsibility to train teachers adequately and were starting to privatize and outsource teacher training responsibilities to NGOs and corporate firms instead. However, training materials used by NGOs and corporate firms did not address teachers' day-to-day concerns or their classroom difficulties. Additionally, these training materials had little relevance for the teachers in that they were not prepared with the local environment, its people or culture in mind. In the words of the local Meo teacher:

The training I attended recently lasted for three days and they didn't teach a single word. The training materials were not compatible with the problems school teachers face on a daily basis. The government of India and Haryana government allocate a certain amount of fund for providing teacher training. A substantial sum out of this fund goes to a private firm like Educomp Solutions Ltd which has a fixed training session and uses a fixed set of training materials. But these training materials that this firm uses have nothing to do with teachers' concerns and challenges they face during a session. This teacher training fund is totally getting wasted and is being misused.

Rasul, Case 1

Similarly, a non-Meo teacher lent support to Rasul's claim when he said:

A Master Trainer who is supposed to train teachers comes from another region. How would he know anything about this region? What language is spoken here, etc.? Training is only useful if implemented well. It's only useful if some local person provides the training. Only they will know the problems of the region and how best to address them.

Deep, Case 1

Even more troubling was to know that the in-service teacher training programs and workshops were not open to contract teachers. The lack of training meant contract teachers could not update their skills or seek professional development or help. This made them feel excluded, underappreciated and demotivated. Worse, it burdened the 'contract' teachers further. In the absence of the 'regular' teachers who were attending workshops and in-service training, they had to look after the school and perform their own teaching and other non-teaching duties and those of others.

A 'regular' Meo teacher who received his in-service training recently explained this as follows:

When the regular teachers are away for two weeks every year, the contract teachers manage the entire school. In some government schools, there are only two regular teachers. In such a scenario, both will be sent to attend a seminar or training, while the poor guest teacher will get left behind to look after the entire school. It's not like they aren't qualified, many have done JBT (Junior Basic Training), B.Ed., M.A. but can't benefit from government seminars. I suggested when they have worked at the school for a period of time, they should be entitled to training. What do we get training for? To learn about new teaching approaches and pedagogy. Why should the contract teachers be deprived of this? Do they not need to learn or be aware of it?

Aslam, Case 1

Similarly, another Meo teacher supported Aslam's statement:

A school that already faces a teacher shortage, this in-service training being allowed only for the regular teachers makes it hard for the contract teachers as they get left behind to look after the school as well as the students for the duration of the time (over two weeks) the regular teachers are away.

Rasul, Case 1

7.1.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical Level

Concerning pedagogy, several teachers in Case 1 could not elaborate on the teaching methods and pedagogy they used inside their classrooms. This included language teachers who were asked to reflect on the teaching approaches they employed and their reasons for doing so. When it came to the issue of new and alternative teaching methods or pedagogy, there was a lack of awareness among teachers. They also expressed concern over not having received adequate training in teaching out-of-school and pushed-out students or as the teachers called them "drop out students". When asked if they received any special training or had any special books, equipment, teaching aids or tools to help these students, they replied in the negative.

The teachers in Case 1 while aware of what was expected of them, (to employ a child-centered approach in the classroom as endorsed by the NCF (2005)), not only used a pedagogy that was more reflective of a teacher-centered approach, but lacked awareness of different or innovative teaching methods and strategies. A teacher, asked to comment on his teaching methods and technique, reacted as follows:

Researcher: "Which teaching methods do you use?"

Amit: "I only teach through Hindi."

[In the background another teacher intervenes and tries to help him out. "No no no. How do you teach your subject?"]

Amit: [long pause]

Researcher: "Suppose you're in a class and you're trying to explain something or when you're teaching a lesson, how do you go about it?"

Amit: "I prepare a background information and explain it through a story...when teaching Hindi and Environmental Studies subjects. Then I ask students some questions, if they can't answer then I tell them where in the chapter they could find those answers and show them 'here's the answer to the question'. These questions-answers can be found at the end of the lesson inside the book.

Researcher: "Do you think this teaching method is effective?"

Amit: "Yes, it's good for the children. They learn well."

The body language of the teacher suggested his explanation was an attempt to avoid judgement and save face. Not fully convinced with his answer (having observed how teachers taught in the school), when I further asked if he could provide an example and/or show a sample of how he prepared lectures, he failed to give an answer or provide a copy of the lesson plan. Nonetheless, the above example, was largely reflective of a teacher-centered approach in which a teacher speaks and a student listens, what Freire (1970) called the “banking model of education”. The approach used by the teacher above in practice, even if one assumed it to be real, still stood in direct opposition to the one prescribed by the NCF (2005) which called for “critical pedagogy”. Teachers’ responses, as illustrated above, indicated a textbook heavy, question-answer technique and traditional teacher-centered approach.

This teacher-centered approach reinforced the teacher-student hierarchy and differential power relations. This is similar to the traditional Indian ‘Guru-Shishya’ model of education in which teachers are held in high regard as sole possessors of knowledge, whose authority should not be questioned. Interestingly, all the teacher participants in Case 1 emphasized this model of education. For instance, a ‘guest/contract’ non-Meo teacher when asked who, according to him was a good student, replied:

A good student is the one who listens to their teacher; is obedient to his Guru; when the teacher says something, he listens attentively; when a homework is given, then he completes it. A not-so-good student is the one who does not come to the school regularly, like the one who comes once in every four or five days. I have several of those who only come once or twice in five or six days. They are not regular at all.

Krishna, Case 1

The teachers, however, never questioned why that might be the case and in this regard were found not self-reflective. By putting the blame squarely on students, teachers were not self-critical enough to acknowledge the role they or the school might have played in inadvertently demotivating the students.

In addition to the teachers’ views, another way the teacher-centered approach was most visible was through classroom environment and the seating arrangement, as revealed in Figures 11–13. Students’ voice was completely missing, including on display walls. While students sat outside on the floor facing the teacher in rows, segregated by gender, the teacher sat on a chair. The classroom observation as a non-participant observer revealed that while the teacher dominated most of the class time, the students remained passive. Unlike other seating arrangements, the circular one for instance, the fixed-row seating style reinforces the notion

that the teacher and students are not equal. This is because unlike in the former case, where the teacher sits alongside the students, in the latter, the teacher sits at the front instead. This influences the student-teacher relationship, teaching process and the overall learning outcome.



Figure 11 – Upper primary students sitting in rows on the floor (Case 1)



Figure 12 – Primary students sitting in rows on the floor (Case 1)



Figure 13 – Students sitting in rows on the floor facing teacher (Case 1)

Almost every teacher stated their preferred method of teaching was the “direct method”. In the case of the direct method, the emphasis is on using the target language as opposed to students’ first language (L1, from here on). In Case 1, Hindi was treated as students’ L1, of which Mewati, was considered a “mere dialect”. As such, most subjects were taught using Hindi as MOI. This practice remained the same when teaching the English subject. This was confirmed during a classroom observation, when teachers in the primary grade were seen teaching English through the traditional grammar translation method, instead of the direct method.

Vocabulary in English was learned through direct translation from Hindi in the form of isolated word lists. First, the teacher came up with a list of words in the target language (in this case English) and wrote them on the blackboard, followed by its ‘correct’ pronunciation in English by writing it in Hindi, followed by its accurate translation in Hindi. The students were then expected to read aloud and repeat what the teacher had said earlier. Thus, for instance, the teacher wrote this on the blackboard (Figure 14): “Member”–pronounced as *मेम्बर* (Hindi transliteration)–followed by meaning in Hindi *सदस्य*.

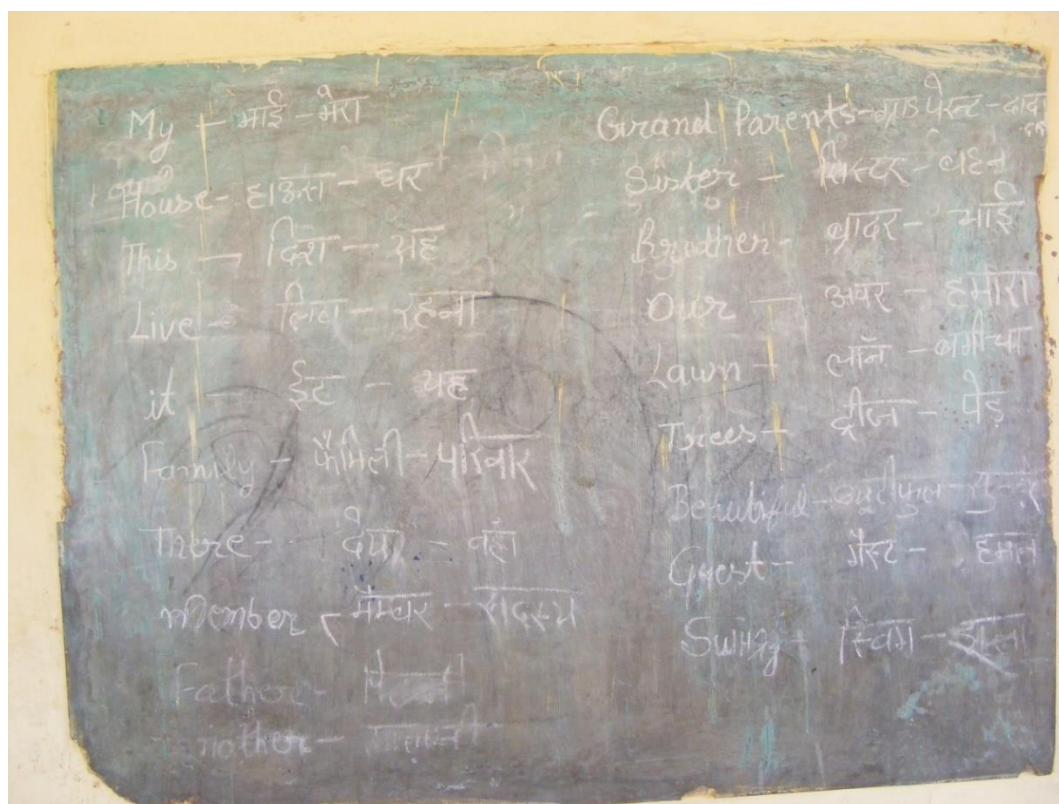


Figure 14 – A snapshot of English lecture

When probed during the interview, teachers admitted they frequently had to use Hindi inside the classroom when teaching English because a) the students would struggle if taught through English exclusively, and b) the teachers struggled with English themselves. When asked to rate their proficiency in English, they all confessed that it was “weak”. The teachers’ emphasis when teaching English was mostly on reading and writing skills as opposed to speaking and listening and accuracy rather than fluency. This was understandable considering the teachers openly admitted that they struggled with the latter skills themselves. They were also candid in their admitted lack of proficiency in English and to an extent in “pure Sanskritized (standard) Hindi”.

Error correction was frequently used as a feedback strategy. The focus was on “preventing students from making errors, as much as possible”. To ensure this, teachers either explicitly gave students the answer, or employed repetition drills, that arguably fostered memorization instead of creativity or critical thinking. To prevent students from making mistakes, teachers discouraged use of Mewati. Almost every teacher perceived Mewati as an obstacle and felt that its interference prevented students from attaining full accuracy and fluency in both Hindi and English. On several occasions though, the teachers did admit that using students’ L1 could be beneficial, if used judiciously, yet they were reluctant to acknowledge any benefits that could be accrued by using it.

Overall then, aspects such as teachers’ form-focused instruction, emphasis on using “pure” language and error-correction strategies were indicative of standard practices used in the grammar-translation method when teaching languages. Therefore, while teachers emphasized the direct method of teaching as an ideal approach, they used the grammar-translation method in class.

What made it complex, however, is that theoretically the grammar-translation method uses students’ L1 to teach the target language, but in this case, the teachers avoided using the L1. Hindi was treated as students’ L1, instead of Mewati, which meant students were learning a language that was already foreign to them (English) through a language they were not yet familiar with (Hindi). In conclusion, teachers exhibited a lack of cultural, sociolinguistic and pedagogical awareness when it came to recent developments in scholarship on using and integrating students’ L1 as a resource in the classroom.

This section demonstrates that while the grammar-translation method is widely considered ‘outmoded’, it is nonetheless widely utilized in Mewat (India). This highlights: 1) the discrepancy between teachers’ responses (direct method) and actual classroom practices (grammar translation method); 2) the discrepancy inherent in the manner the grammar translation method was employed by teachers (i.e. the method endorses the use of students’ L1 (Mewati) but teachers’ refusal to acknowledge Mewati as a language variety in its own right meant they excluded it and used in its place Hindi, under which it is subsumed); 3) the discrepancy between what is outlined in the NCF (2005) (constructivism and student-centered teaching methods) and what actually happens on the ground (rote memorization, drills and narrow focus on reading and writing alone as reflected by the use of the grammar translation method); 4) teachers’ pedagogical choices (including the use of the grammar translation method) were a result of and constrained by larger institutional factors that resulted from the effects of neoliberalism.

Overall, teachers’ pedagogical decisions in Case 1 should not be seen in isolation as these decisions often relate to the institutions in which teachers work. As is clear from Theme 1, the teachers in Case 1 were constrained by several institutional factors: large classes, teacher shortages, teachers being overburdened with non-teaching responsibilities, inadequate teacher training, unavailability or late delivery of books, migration, contractualization of teaching workforce and its resulting psychological impact. Therefore, teachers’ pedagogical decisions and actions are influenced by larger contextual and institutional constraints. As is evident then, there’s a close relationship between Theme 1 and Theme 2.

7.1.3 Theme 3: Policy Level

The third theme relates to the policy implications of the RTE Act (2009). The RTE Act, in turn, deals with institutional (Theme 1) and pedagogical (Theme 2) concerns. Thus, Theme 3 is connected to Theme 1 and Theme 2 revealing teachers’ concerns regarding the implementation of the RTE Act, highlighting their overall assessment of this Act.

Interviewed teachers expressed alienation from the entire decision-making process. The basis of teacher grievances was, it is they who know the ground reality and should be the ones included in decisions that had to do with teaching. Instead, they believed policymakers often made decisions without consulting them. Teachers felt that policies were imposed on them,

and they were forced to carry them out, without being given much support or encouragement. Thus, policymakers were perceived by the teachers as the ‘other’ and ‘elite’. For example, a Meo teacher, expressed his views:

Policies get made in air-conditioned rooms without consulting teachers. If the policymakers asked us or took our advice, we could inform them better about the ground realities.

Rasul, Case 1

Interviews also revealed they were dissatisfied with the RTE Act. Almost every teacher shared a similar sentiment, with concerns of Meo and non-Meo teachers not diverging sharply. Among the most cited concerns included the impact of RTE on: student retention, student assessment and confusion regarding the role of teachers. These will be looked at in detail below.

Student retention concerns

Most teachers attributed irregularity or absence among students to three causes: 1) agricultural work/household chores; 2) the primary motive for enrollment being a government stipend paid to lower socioeconomic background families; 3) lack of student motivation. Interestingly, none of the teachers mentioned teacher absenteeism, another commonly occurring problem, and teaching style as potential reasons for student absenteeism. This was somewhat expected as they were less likely to be self-critical and accepted this point during the interview. Nevertheless, children being asked to perform household duties like taking care of siblings or helping parents in the fields was one of the most reported reasons that explained student absenteeism. This was mentioned briefly earlier by Amit and Deep in Theme 1.

The teachers’ complaint regarding the RTE Act was that it does not adequately address the problem of student absenteeism. Rather, it passes the buck to teachers, giving them the additional responsibility of bringing children to schools. A non-Meo teacher shed light on student absenteeism, often resulting out of agricultural work/household duties, its effects on teachers and the consequent challenges:

Since students can’t be expelled anymore, what are we supposed to do? There were only 17 students today in my class, when there should be 60. When we ask the parents, they sent their children to fetch tomatoes and onions from the field. To bring those students back to my class, I have to send other students to the local mosque requesting it to use loudspeakers announcing they should come to school. I can’t go to every village asking parents to send their children to school. I can only go once a month because otherwise they would stop coming.

Deep, Case 1

Similarly, another teacher who belonged to the local Meo community said:

Seeing as we can't remove the name of a student who doesn't come regularly, we are only left with the option of either sending other students to enquire or personally taking the time out to go and visit the parents. All of this wastes a lot of teacher's time and effort. Aslam, Case 1

As several scholars and participants in this study have noted, one of the biggest problems with the RTE Act is that while it pays much attention to student enrollment, it does little to address student retention. One reason for this is the stipend acting as the primary motive for poor families to enroll their children, instead of education itself. One Meo teacher described as follows:

The government schools have become a site where students come to get a stipend, free uniform, free mid-day meals etc. They don't come here to study. Most students here are from poor families who cannot afford private schools' fees. At the primary level, boys who belong to the Scheduled Caste, Other Backward Castes, Below Poverty Line etc. are entitled to 75 rupees and girls for 150 rupees. This stipend amount increases to 100 and 200 rupees respectively in the middle grades. It's no longer a school...instead it has become a stable. Aslam, Case 1

Similarly, another teacher felt that stipend scheme failed to resolve the problem of student absenteeism:

Sometimes the students don't come for a month, they don't care, but when the time for stipend arrives, they are the first ones to line up. The parents end up using all the amount, not necessarily for their children's education. Hence, the government decided that now the amount will be transferred to the mother's account, instead of the father's. Yet, the money gets all used up. The system is bad. Deep, Case 1

All the teachers interviewed in this study believed a lack of interest among students was the driving force behind their absence from school. This lack of interest was led by students' and their families' belief, that the private English-medium schools provided better education than the rural Hindi-medium government schools, a widespread perception that is nonetheless debatable. This sharp divide between these two types of schools was one of the themes that consistently emerged throughout this study. A non-Meo teacher shed light on it as follows:

Because education is free here, parents don't bother, instead they suspect why is it so? Meanwhile, at a private school education costs 200 rupees so they ensure the child is paying attention. Here in Mewat, if you try to sell a mango for free, no one will take it. You can try it yourself and find out. People think, 'God knows why this person is selling it for free? For what purpose?', sell the same mango for 200 rupees, they will readily buy it thinking it's good. If we write a message for the parents in the student's notebook, 'Please ensure your child has a pencil', ten days will pass and still no pencil. But if their child is studying at a private school, even if the mother is illiterate, she will ask if the homework was done. Here, all children do is play and not work. 50% of students don't even bathe before coming to school. Deep, Case 1

As is evident from the above comment, teachers were quick to blame parents or students for lacking interest in rural government schools such as those in Case 1. They were reluctant to acknowledge how teachers may have shaped parents' and students' perception and choice. What they did acknowledge, however, was differential infrastructural conditions, medium of instruction, textbooks and boards of affiliation hierarchy i.e. central vs. state (NCERT vs SCERT, CBSE vs HBSE)—all these different mechanisms, played a part in influencing people's preference for urban private schools over rural government ones. As a Meo teacher confirmed:

They (elite private schools) are better funded, English-medium, have better textbooks and are affiliated to a prestigious board of education...over there, inspections are done routinely and rigorously, most of the students come from good socioeconomic background...whereas, in our government schools, most of the students come from below the poverty line.

Aslam, Case 1

That said, all teachers acknowledged the important role played by government schools in providing education to the most disadvantaged and poorest of children amidst tough competition from private schools. In the words of a Meo teacher:

The elite private schools, even the ones in Mewat, they take the 'cream' of the students. Whereas, we admit everyone in the 6–14 years range. We must teach everyone. Sometimes we have to teach slow learners, so people can't see our achievements. If we could do our admission as they do theirs i.e. by interviewing parents, screening procedure etc., then even we could show better results. But we teach all sorts of students, slow learners, physically challenged, as well as even those who do not wash their face in the morning and come straight to the school. The only difference between them and us is that they only teach the 'good students', while we teach all students.

Rasul, Case 1

Importantly, the term “private schools” covers a broad spectrum of schools in India, from low-cost to elite, for-profit to non-profit. In the past few decades, there has been a rise of low-cost private schools across India which, in the face of “crumbling government schools”, are marketed as a “viable option”. Several such schools are run by local NGOs whose presence was noticed in Mewat. A lengthy discussion on their viability, though, is beyond the scope of this study. Overall, teachers were found dissatisfied with the RTE Act, which did little to address issues of student retention and focused on student enrollment instead.

Student assessment concerns

The RTE Act introduced the ‘no detention policy’ which meant children could no longer be forced to repeat grades or expelled from school. This policy was introduced as when children leave a school, they leave schooling altogether. A major component of this is fear of examinations and failure, thus, the RTE Act introduced continuous and comprehensive

evaluations (CCE). The idea was for teachers to measure students' growth continuously, assess the progress they made throughout the year, so that teachers could intervene when required (NCF, 2005, p. 76). Teachers were now required to assess students in a holistic manner. The emphasis was on measuring students' all-round development. What wasn't made very clear though was how teachers were going to implement CCE. The findings indicated that not everyone was on board.

Two of the quotes below demonstrate (Meo) teachers' views regarding CCE.

Now the exam system is not there either. It's up to the teacher to assess a child, whether monthly or however and grade them. We cannot fail them either even if they haven't attained basic literacy skills of grade 1 and grade 2 or even if they haven't come to the school regularly. Still the teacher must pass them, so they can be in grade 3 or more. We are not okay with this. Aslam, Case 1

Not happy with not being able to take tests. It is true some students have been known to commit suicide but...it is the age of competition. Suicides are also done because one couldn't get married to the boy or girl they wanted etc. It is wrong to change the whole system because of a few cases of suicides. This will affect students, teachers and the whole education system. To me, it is totally wrong." Rasul, Case 1

In the absence of any clear guidelines then, teachers fell back to familiar methods of assessment. They also resisted grading students and preferred the older method of marking instead. They believed the new CCE policy complicated student assessment, burdened them with additional duties, and reduced the feeling of competition among students which in the long run, according to them, lowers the quality of education. Interviewed teachers disliked CCE and were in favor of changing it back to what it used to be: exam-based student assessments.

On the difference between grading and marking, one teacher said:

This grading system has also killed the feeling of competition. Say, we've given A+ grade to one student, ten more students also have A+ grade, so naturally, it will affect the good students. They will feel disappointed. It will not nurture competition among students. With the new policy, students know that there won't be any exams and they can't be failed. When you have no target, you have no achievement. Shastri, Case 1

Another teacher agreed and remarked:

Of course, the grading system translates to loss for the good students. Say, one student has scored 51% and the other 60%, both will have the same grade even though there's a difference of 9%. There's an obvious gap between the quality of two children. A student who's scored 60% will feel left out and be disappointed. That student will stop competing because they've been put at par with a lower scoring student. In this grading system,

students get lumped together...not many remain unique...special. The grading system is bad for students...competition is a good thing. It makes students work harder, improves their motivation and leads to better results.

Amit, Case 1

On being asked if he thought the older system was better, Amit replied:

This new approach (CCE) is not right. Exams should happen. Without exams, children won't feel pressure. Without pressure, children get too free. Now with the new rule, we can't even punish students. Children know they can't be expelled from the school and we can't fail them either. They know the teacher can't do anything. So, they don't fear anything. They don't come to the school anymore. With CCE, the feeling of competition has disappeared.

The above examples illustrate the extent to which the teachers stressed competition. The NCF (2005) however warned against it and suggested that: "It is important to allow making errors and mistakes to remain an integral part of the learning process and remove the fear of not achieving 'full marks'" and warned that "Schools that emphasise intense competitiveness must not be treated as examples by others, including state-run schools" (p. 86). Thus, teachers' views contradicted the ones described in the NCF (2005) document.

Another recently introduced concept was age-appropriate learning. Teachers were required to teach students from all backgrounds, including out of school students and older students, in a manner corresponding to their current stage of development. What the RTE Act didn't explain well enough was how it was going to take place with the prevalence of multigrade teaching, where a teacher is required to teach students from various grades all at once as is commonplace in several government schools across rural India. Teaching students from several grades all at once, poses a great deal of challenges, amplified by an additional requirement to teach students with varying and diverse needs, all while making sure each student progresses equally. Almost every teacher seemed unimpressed with this new change. To quote Amit:

I have not fully understood how a 12-year-old student, who's never been to a school before, gets an admission in grade 6 directly. According to the age, it's true that the student should be in that grade, but how will they manage? On the one hand, you have a student in grade 6, who's been studying from grade 1, and on the other hand, you have a student who's just recently been accepted, some of them are much older...Of course, there will be problems ahead, both for the student as well as for the teacher.

When asked what kind of problems it creates for the teacher, Amit went on to say:

Problems like...say, a student started learning English from the first grade, they will be able to read English fast, understand a lecture and memorize answers. But for that student who's newly joined grade 6...this will be like a curse for them. We will be teaching grade 1 content to that student. According to us (teacher-folk), there should be a separate class

for such students...a separate class for all the newly arrived, drop-out students. If that happens, it will be very good.

On being asked why this would be a good idea, Amit said:

Separate classes for such students will ensure they won't disturb the regular students because the approach of teaching them will be different. But for that to happen, there must be teachers too. For instance, I alone have to teach 92 students. Now will I teach these 92 students or give time to those 5 drop-outs? It's a challenge for a teacher to look after 92 students...by running around, he's trying his best. Even though as per the pupil-teacher ratio mentioned in the RTE Act, there should only be 30 students. By this logic, there should be three teachers teaching my class, when I'm the only one. Now in addition to this, I've been given these drop-out kids. It has increased teachers' workload. More teachers need to be recruited. There needs to be separate classes and a separate syllabus for these students.

Almost every teacher interviewed recommended separate classes for students who had missed early stages of education. This view goes against the spirit of the RTE Act, as the primary motive was to bridge the divide and bring all children to the same level where they could equally thrive. It also goes against the guidelines listed in the NCF (2005) which calls for a "nurturing an enabling environment" (p. 81).

The findings also indicated teachers were not informed of special training, such as designing age-appropriate syllabus, necessary to teach students with diverse needs. While the RTE Act mandated that any student be admitted to an age-appropriate class to be at a par with others, it did not fully equip teachers with the necessary skills and training to enable a student to reach an age-appropriate learning level. What was also missing was the textbooks themselves that teachers could use to help bring that change. As Amit remarked:

Special teaching has to be provided to students who've never attended schools and take admission late, for instance, a 12-year-old student would have to be admitted in grade 6 straightaway, but this poses problems for a teacher as we have to cover the whole syllabus of grade 1 till grade 6. Special books for these students...who are drop-outs or who've never attended schools...should be provided to schools, but they have not yet been delivered. I've encountered this problem myself...the books were unavailable. These books provide short cut syllabus. In the absence of any books then, teachers come up with stuff on their own, based on what they think is important. There is no set syllabus.

Another teacher in the background shook his head and added:

No policymaker is paying attention towards quality. Can a child, who has been grazing cows and buffalos for 8 years till now, sit next to another one in the eighth grade? You think he won't disturb the other students? No matter how good a teacher is, they can't bridge the gap of eight years...eight years of no school. These policies are being imposed on teachers without much thought. Much improvement in the RTE Act is needed. Shastri, Case

Thus, it is clear from the teachers' responses they had doubts regarding the CCE's viability whether on a theoretical or practical level. Teachers' disapproval defeats the purpose for which the CCE was brought into existence which was to measure student's progress in a continuous and comprehensive manner. This shows a mismatch between those who make policy decisions and teachers who must execute them.

Teachers' role concerns

While the RTE Act tried to shift the traditional image and role of teachers from knowledge disseminators to facilitators, in teachers' eyes, it undermined their authority and weakened their position. For some teachers being a teacher was synonymous with authority and power. They drew upon their own learning backgrounds to envision the learning environment they would like to create as teachers for their students. As one Meo teacher put it:

One of the reasons I wanted to be a teacher, aside from salary and respect of course, is because ... even as a child, I was told to do what the teacher said. Students listen to the teacher.

Rasul, Case 1

Being able to exert a degree of control in a familiar teacher-centered classroom, thus, was fundamental to teachers. The teachers already resented the 'no detention policy' mandated by the RTE Act, but worse for them was the "no corporal punishment policy". Below were some of the views expressed by the participants:

Now with this new policy, teachers can't even scold or threaten a child. If a student is leaving the classroom, then a teacher can't even stop them. Some form of control is necessary.

Deep, Case 1

The students fear nothing now. We can't fail any student until grade 8. Students know they can't be expelled, failed or punished. Therefore, they don't even come to school. The previous system was better. Now if a teacher even scolds a child, it can cause trouble. Nowadays even young students dare to challenge a teacher. So, we try to tactfully control these students...without punishing them...use any means necessary to cover the syllabus somehow and keep them disciplined...but this policy of the government is wrong. We can't exercise our control as before.

Amit, Case 1

Not being able to punish students, teachers argued, made their job even more challenging as they had fewer classroom management tools, making it hard to resolve students' disciplinary issues. The idea to help students through dialogue, or enable them to self-regulate their own behavior, urged by the NCF (2005, pp. 87–88), was seen as odd for most teachers. Some of them went as far as saying children learn best in fear or under pressure:

This ‘no punishment policy’ is bad for kids. There’s a local saying that ‘a child learns either out of fear or pleasure’. Because of this RTE Act, neither do these kids feel afraid anymore, nor do they study for pleasure. The pleasure for studying needs to be cultivated. They are young, at this age, children don’t feel like studying. So, they mostly study out of fear. But with no fear of exams, detention or punishment, they feel no pressure. Amit, Case 1

Similarly, a Meo teacher agreed with the above remark and said:

Either a child learns under pressure or out of pleasure. Now, the government doesn’t let us use pressure. How else are we supposed to teach? Aslam, Case 1

Another teacher blamed policymakers for not knowing what’s best for students and added:

These policymakers know nothing about the ground realities. All these policy frameworks...whether the RTE Act or anything else...they get made by IAS-IPS (Indian Administrative/Public Services) officers and other bureaucrats, whose own children study in elite private schools, under no pressure. These policymakers just want to visit abroad and say, “India is 100% literate”. They don’t care about quality. The fact is 60% of India’s population lives in the rural areas, and a child who comes from a village, learns to read and write under pressure. That’s what he knows. If you set him free, he will get distracted and won’t focus on studies. It is only under pressure he can perform well...quality can be ensured. Shastri, Case 1

The above responses called into question teachers’ role as adapters to learners’ needs and interests and showed that there exists a wide gap between the objectives and guidelines listed in the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005) and the local realities.

This section addressed how the effects of neoliberalism in education impacted teachers’ beliefs and behavior in class. It reported the findings associated with Case 1 and highlighted the three themes that emerged from data analysis: institutional, pedagogical and policy levels. It brought into focus the gaps that existed when it came to the implementation and effectiveness of the RTE Act. It revealed how teachers felt alienated from the policy formation process of key reforms such as the RTE Act as well as more broadly their disenchantment with the RTE Act in general.

It also uncovered infrastructural neglect suffered by rural government schools such as Case 1 and constraints where teachers work with minimal support and inadequate pedagogical training. This gets compounded with the rising trend of contractualization found among teachers owing to a shift towards privatization and cuts in public education that arose because of the World Bank and IMF imposed SAPs during India’s post-liberalization period in the 90s. Consequently, this sharpened the already existing divide between rural government Hindi-

medium schools such as Case 1 and urban elite English-medium private schools such as Case 2.

7.2 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) Officials

A focus group session was conducted with six officials from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) that included an equal number of Meo and non-Meo participants. Montell (1999) cautioned that in focus group interviews, “there is a greater likelihood that contradictory ideas will be expressed, and these can serve as prompts for discussions that address the issues in greater depth” (p. 49). This was certainly the case during the session, where it became apparent the participants had disagreements. Participants’ intensity, tone, facial expressions and body language were important parts of the data collection process. The ability to observe people as they interact and to ask questions when appropriate is one of the many advantages that focus groups offers.

Alshenqeeti (2014) reminds the researcher to observe interviewees’ “non-linguistic aspects” such as their “body language, gestures and other sources of ‘unsaid’ data, as they represent an interesting source of research information” (p. 42). Observing these non-linguistic aspects certainly turned out to be quite productive as it revealed microaggression on part of non-Meo officials when the topics of Mewati or Urdu were raised. This will be discussed below but, for the sake of clarity, the findings that emerged from the focus group session will be discussed in this chapter rather than the Discussion chapter for two reasons: 1) doing so helps to contextualize the conversation that followed, 2) unlike the teachers, the SSA officials and policymakers – though relevant – were not the primary participants for this study. The main findings in the end will be discussed in relation to the three themes that emerged from interviews with teachers.

One of the main findings emerging from the focus group discussion contradicted data collected earlier with individual teachers in Case 1. Rural government school teachers complained that officials were oblivious to their problems, but the focus group discussion with the officials revealed the officials were aware of teacher concerns and the institutional constraints they faced. Discussions with officials brought to light their knowledge and awareness regarding teachers’ complaints relating to non-teaching duties and responsibilities, teacher shortage, teacher transfers and lack of funding. Discussants talked at length about these issues and

showed empathy with teachers' concerns. They acknowledged several shortcomings that the teachers highlighted earlier but felt helpless in the face of increasing budget cuts and the contractualization of labor force. They candidly admitted to being contract workers themselves.

When the discussion turned to aspects for which SSA was directly responsible, but failed to deliver on, some of the officials became visibly defensive. One of the members in the focus group – R (pseudonym) – was an Engineer belonging to the Meo community and worked in the department responsible for school construction work. When the widely reported issue, noticed throughout this fieldwork, of poor infrastructure in rural government schools was raised that touched upon shortage of desks, lack of toilets and drinking water facilities, the reaction was to pass it off as a one-off incident. The general opinion being that things were worse off before but were comparatively better now (a claim countered by other discussants in the group). Similarly, when the issue of mid-day meal food handling (including storage, cooking and serving) or late delivery of textbooks or school uniforms was raised (as raised by all teachers in Case 1 during individual interviews), the tendency was to respond in a similar manner. Nonetheless, the officials conceded that bureaucratic and budgetary factors prevented proper functioning of the SSA.

This, however, did not deter some of the officials from vocally defending the state and its policies. This was especially the case with non-Meo officials, such as R1 and R3, who were not from the Mewat region. Some of their responses met stiff resistance by R4 and R5, both local senior Meo community members who had worked as teachers until recently in similar rural government schools in Mewat such as Case 1. One of them, R4 was still working as a primary teacher. They were thus self-critical and acutely aware of such issues as the following extract shows:

Interviewer: I went to several government schools earlier and the teachers routinely complained of infrastructural problems with construction work, lack of facilities and shortage of desks, etc. Your views?

[all respondents laugh; look at each other; points at R]

Other respondents: This is your question. Your department. You'll have to answer.

R: Madam, different schools have different problems. We can't say that all schools have such problems. Minor problems are to be found everywhere. If one thing goes faulty... it's like that saying, 'one rotten fish can contaminate the entire pond'.

R1: The school buildings we have now are better than before India's independence.

R: The mid-day meal program is also going well. Yes, there's a problem of storage and cooking etc. but that work is under construction right now...for now we're asking teachers to adjust somehow and schools to vacate a room if they don't use to make room for storage...

[gets interrupted by R4, a teacher himself]

R4: The real problem is for teachers. If for a month the school doesn't receive ration, then people in the village think teachers have sold off everything; that they are corrupt. They will not listen to you. Now who is responsible for this? On paper, it says the food has been sanctioned...on paper, says the government, that food supply will not be missed even for a day, but months go by and no food. Sometimes it's one and a half to two months and no wheat grain, no rice. Folks in the village blame teachers for colluding with contractors and say that a teacher is dishonest and corrupt. Teachers don't want this mid-day meal responsibility. It causes too much trouble for them...

[gets interrupted by official R1 who tries to shut him up as soon as he starts raising teachers' concerns]

R1: Master *ji*. Where are you taking this conversation? Her question was about how supportive SSA has been...and you are taking this elsewhere

(Important to mention here that this was not the case. The question I raised dealt specifically with the shortcomings of SSA and had nothing to do with how supportive it was).

[R4 seems to get the hint; smiles and stops]

R4: Oh sorry.

[With R4 having spilled the beans, R1 takes over]

R1: This is the problem, madam. These teachers can't give proper education because of these concerns. Half of their time gets wasted in supervising the construction work, the other half in monitoring mid-day meals or other such work.

Interviewer: What about the delivery of books? Do they get delivered on time?

All respondents: No. They don't.

R: It poses several problems for students because what happens is they receive books for, say, two subjects but not for others...they might come after a few months. Now, the student doesn't buy thinking these books will be delivered soon...but then it wastes a lot of their time.

R1: The delay happens because of printing.

R3: There's transport problem as well. There are no facilities for shipping, transporting here. 70%–80% locations of schools here is such that books can't be delivered easily...like some schools are in locations where one can only travel by bike or foot but not by car. Routes are narrow.

R: That is the thing though...why is it like that? Why is it that Mewat despite being only a few kilometers away from the national capital still has not been developed? Why is it that Gurgaon, right next to Mewat, has all the infrastructure and faces no such problem like Mewat does?

R1: This is why it was made a district. So that funds allocated for the region could be spent locally, as per its needs.

R3: Yes, the government can't be held responsible for this. It depends on the local people, parents and village council to ensure right education for the children. The government has done its part by allocating budget.

R4: Madam, I'll be direct. The whole thing is those in power have never thought about Mewat. Now we are sitting in the district headquarter [looks directly at other respondents and asks them], were there any middle schools here until recently? Any higher senior secondary schools? Now if this was the case for Nuh, you can well imagine the fate of other towns and villages.

R1 and R3: No madam, the government is allocating funds and doing the best it can.

R5: Madam, I believe in speaking the truth and think that we should accept when we are wrong [looks at other officials]. We need to stop making excuses and need to accept that things such as ration for mid-day meal, books and uniforms get late and do not arrive on time, and when they do, often do not cover all the children. This is the reality. The teachers sadly get blamed for all this as usually they are responsible for distributing these things. Simply put, the allocated budget in the current form does not cover all the kids.

The most interesting aspect about the group discussion, was the heated exchange that ensued between Meo and non-Meo officials. One of the key themes, prevalent throughout the group discussion (and indeed during individual interviews with the teachers earlier), was perceived discrimination faced by Meos. This was the most recurrent theme in all mixed-ethnic group settings. The tendency of non-Meo officials was to put the blame squarely on the Meo community, while the Meo officials tended to attribute larger structural, socio-historical and political factors at play for the lack of development and prejudice faced as a result.

While subjective and objective discrimination are two different things and are often hard to measure, what the research has indicated nonetheless, is that perceived discrimination may have an effect, materially and objectively. For example, Stefanska (2007) speaking for foreign migrants in the Polish labor market says, "perceived discrimination may have a negative effect on the situation on labour market. Due to the feeling of being discriminated (sic) (what might not take place) migrant may not seek promotion at work and therefore his career may not be as favorable as it could were it not for imaginary barriers" (p. 2).

Thus, the subjective discrimination as described by Meos, could have an effect on the local labor market situation. This discrimination theme was visible on two levels. Firstly, Meos' subjective account of it, as they perceived it and experienced it structurally (in terms of lack of development, infrastructure and facilities) and personally (discriminated against on the ground of their religion, ethnicity, class or language background during job hunting or in other institutional settings). Secondly, discrimination that was visible objectively, i.e. how non-Meo

discussants treated Meos in the discussion. By way of conversation analysis (non-Meo participants' turn-taking behavior, tone, intensity, gestures), the differential power relations between the two communities became evident.

First, a brief extract of the conversation where Meo officials R and R2 talked about the theme of experienced or perceived discrimination, which arose organically (as it did in the above extract). The discussion started with an open-ended question that asked what problems were faced by government schools in Mewat.

R: The main problem in our schools is that we don't have enough teachers. Housing and accommodation are a big problem. Clean drinking water is a big problem. Water is mostly saline here and not safe for drinking. Teachers who get transferred here also want to leave because of no residential facilities, among other things. Granted this is partially because Mewat is backward but also because the govt has played a role in keeping it backward. Being only 70 kilometers away from the capital, why haven't they done anything? It's like that saying, 'nearer the church, the farther from God'.

Interviewer: So, are you saying Meos are treated differently? Is there some sort of discrimination?

R2: Yes! [says emphatically] The sacrifices that we, as a community, have made for this nation, right from the 1857 mutiny till the independence movement, we feel we never got its reward.

R: There's also some difference between communities. Jats are politically dominant in Haryana; are more in number in all other districts. Most of the officials in positions of authority, including teachers, are from other regions. There's a teacher shortage here due to lack of awareness and literacy but partly also because people say, 'What good will come out of studying? It's not like we are going to get a job. We will get discriminated against [in a government job]'.

On the question of textbooks, if they represented Meos adequately, all non-Meo participants replied they were satisfied with the books as they were. On the other hand, Meo officials felt more was needed to make Meos feel included and highlight their historical contribution, both to rectify Meos' stigmatized image and to adapt the books to reflect the local environment.

The conversation surrounding this question, and mixed-ethnic focus group discussion in general, was important as it reflected not just participants' views but also power dynamics. Analyzing conversations can reveal a lot since "conversations both reflect and maintain social inequalities. They import hierarchical structures from larger society and help perpetuate them by creating inequalities in the ability to accomplish interactional goals" (Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989, p. 424).

The way non-Meo officials dominated the conversation by means of interruptions, turn-taking behavior and gestures, for instance, highlighted their status and power. To quote Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989):

Language use can tell us a great deal about the nature and extent of social inequality. It reflects the hierarchical social structure outside the group, while simultaneously providing the means through which that inequality is maintained. Differences by status in participation, conversational dominance, and adherence to turn taking norms create differences in our ability to get our ideas across to others. (p. 424)

The differences in status and power reflected through language is exhibited below:

Interviewer: Do you think these textbooks represent Meos well or adequately?

R1: No. The books are for the purpose of education, not representation.

R: No. These books are just...for the general purpose, to be used by everyone. Like, under RTE...the people in charge were just asked to come up with books as per the syllabus. [points at R4]. Master *ji* will tell you better.

R4: Well...the books remain the same wherever we go. They are not designed as per the local environment. Children can't tell you things about their local area. For example, recently on a tour the SSA team went to Delhi, we showed some pictures and they had no idea. Now, who is going to make them understand?

[R3 cuts him off in the middle, speaks in a dominating voice]

R3: Master *ji*, it's the ones who are visiting those places who feel bad. Now one goes to visit Qutub Minar, it is written right there that such and such Hindu temples were demolished in the process. Even today, one could see the Shiva Linga (symbol made of stone representing Hindu God) inside the premises...

[atmosphere gets tense, R4's voice gets shaky]

R4: Alright.... [pauses]...that's what I was saying...

[R sensing the tense situation comes in defense of R4 to somewhat diffuse the situation]

R: Madam, the general problem here is of awareness. Unlike in the cities, where children start going to school even in the pre-primary age and by the time they go to the school, they already know so much...because of their home environment...that provides a great back up support. Here the children know very little because their home environment is not that educational.

There are a few things to be noted in the above extract. Most significantly, how a simple observation shared by a Meo official quickly escalated into a religious powerplay. Drawing on his experience as a teacher, R4 made a broader pedagogical point. He argued that students should have culturally relevant study materials. He then argued even when students are shown culturally relevant examples such as the Qutub Minar (built during the Mughal period,

perceived as Muslim, and a UNESCO world heritage site) referenced in school textbooks, without knowledge or experience these examples are meaningless.

This comment generated religious tension, recalling Hindu-Muslim conflict that has been a persistent feature of postcolonial Indian history. Indian Muslims have long been made to carry the burden of two historical events: The rule of the Mughal Empire and the Partition of India in 1947. Muslims have long been held responsible for these historical events, generating questions about their loyalty to India. This is something that deeply troubled Meos as they continued to point this out throughout this fieldwork.

All the Meo participants in this study took immense pride that Hasan Khan Mewati (the then Meo ruler of Mewat) fought on the side of the Hindu Rajput ruler Rana Sanga against the Mughal emperor Babar. They consistently used this example to illustrate the courage, valor and loyalty of the Meo community towards the nation as well as a mark of Hindu-Muslim solidarity. This is supported by Meos' own oral tradition as described by Mayaram (2004, p. 29). However, they all emphasized that this aspect has been kept away from history books and broader public discourse. They noted that like other communities, they have contributed to India's history including its freedom struggle, but their contribution has not been duly recognized. At various points, Meos even aligned with Hindu Jats against the Mughal Empire. As Mayaram (1997) noted: "Interestingly, the Meos seem to have had far better relations with the Jat kingdom of Bharatpur than with the Mughals and their Rajput allies" (p. 143).

In a similar vein, while the effects of Partition on the Punjabi and Bengali communities have been well documented, its effects on the Meo community have not been so well recognized. Mayaram (1997) in her key essay, "Speech, Silence and the Making of Partition Violence in Mewat", shed light on this crucial issue in which she gave an account of how Partition affected the Meo community in the then princely states of Bharatpur and Alwar. She reported on how Meos were caught up in a state-sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign (p. 139) that resulted in the deaths of about 10,000 people in Alwar and 30,000 people in Bharatpur alone wherein most Meos resided (p. 129). The Partition also witnessed a large-scale displacement of Meos with several of them "driven out, killed, or banished to Pakistan" (Pandey, 2004, p. 39). Additionally, it affected inter-ethnic relations "between a dominant, land-holding community of Hindu Jats and a cultivating community of Muslim Meos", the effects of which still

reverberate today (Pandey, 2004, p. 39). What made matters worse is “after Partition, Meos lost land to Hindu and Sikh refugees” (Metcalf, 1999, p. 1283).

Since Meos professed a syncretic identity consisting of both Hindu and Muslim cultural practices and traditions, they became an easy target of a conflict that was fought along sectarian lines (Copland, 1998, p. 218, 1999, p. 125; Mayaram, 1997, p. 137; Moses, 2015, p. 44; Pandey, 2004, p. 39; Sharma & Vanjani, 1990, p. 1731). As Mayaram (1997) noted, during Partition, there was “no room for liminal categories” as its existence in the state’s view meant “blurring...the margins” and “def[ying] knowledge (as intelligence) and corrod[ing] control” (p. 161). Thus, to say that Partition had an impact on Meos and in terms of how others viewed them, and continue to view them today, would be an understatement.

Yet when it comes to popular perception, Meos and Muslims in general, continue to be seen in the stereotypical role of an aggressor, not fully deserving of state benefits or interest. The extent of public apathy towards Muslims is reflected in reports such as the landmark Sachar Committee Report (2006), one of the first studies undertaken that systematically reported on the “social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India” (p. 2), according to which, Muslims are amongst India’s most deprived and marginalized communities. According to this report, Muslims struggle on all socioeconomic indicators; experience prejudice and discrimination in schooling, housing, obtaining bank loans, securing jobs; suffer hate crimes and communal violence .

From the anti-Muslim Gujarat riots in 2002 that killed 1200 people and displaced several others (TNN, 2016) to the recent spate of attacks from 2014 onwards that included mob lynching carried out by far-right Hindu vigilante groups (Abraham & Rao, 2017), Muslims have been the target of some of the worst communal clashes in India. Yet myths, stereotypes and hardline views against Muslims continue to persist and this trend has further intensified with the rise of right-wing politics in India, in particular with the emergence of Hindu Nationalism and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), which attempts to rewrite history by distorting the truth, negating the Muslim past and delegitimizing its symbols of cultural legacy (Rauf, 2011, pp. 71–73).

The tendency to glorify the Hindu past finds its way into school textbooks, such as a recent case of a Rajasthan grade 10 social science textbook (Ahuja, 2017) whereby the ‘Muslim’ Mughal Emperor Akbar was defeated by the ‘Hindu’ Rajput king Maharana Pratap in the 16th century battle of Haldighati (even though all the historical evidence suggests otherwise).

Several scholars in the past have pointed to increasing communalization of school textbooks and appropriation of pedagogical programs by the far-right forces whose agenda is to demonize Muslims (Banerjee & Stober, 2016; Flaten, 2017; Guichard, 2010, 2013; Hasan, 2002; Kumar, 1990; Lall, 2005; Sundar, 2004).

The tendency of Hindu nationalist groups has been to construct a narrative that past monuments built by the ‘Islamic’ Mughal Empire were built on land where Hindu temples once existed. This leads to conspiracy theories, such as that the Taj Mahal used to be a Hindu temple called Tejo Mahalaya before it was destroyed by the Mughals, a claim without any legitimacy as reported by *Outlook* in its article “The Claim Taj Mahal is Tejo Mahalaya Temple Palace is ‘Concocted’ and ‘Self-Built’: Centre tells Agra Court, 2017”. Myths like these legitimize and perpetuate claims of Hindu ownership, that previously contributed to the demolition of the 16th century Babri Mosque – a long-standing dispute that has remained unresolved since 1992 – a case with far-reaching implications that further hampered relations between these two communities, the effects of which could be seen in Mewat to this day, as testified by all Meo participants in this study.

It is in this light the comment by a non-Meo, non-Muslim participant, R3, mentioning the presence of ‘Shiva Linga’ in Qutub Minar (an unfounded and dubious claim) and the resulting tension has to be seen. The constant reference to the past (even if unfounded) or an imagined myth created by the members of the dominant community is often invoked to either shame or force the members of minority and marginalized community into silence. When R3 interrupted, for instance, it soon led to a change in topic. A palpable change in Meo participants’ tone, intensity and facial expressions could be noticed: R and R4 couldn’t freely express their views or counter R3’s claim. The way R and R4 handled this situation was by either deploying pauses or conceding the ground to R3 so as to diffuse the prevailing tension in the room. This was indicative of power imbalance as well as broader inequalities that existed between members of the society.

Discrimination often manifests itself in subtle ways. This covert form of discrimination that involves mocking another person or the language they speak (as it was in this case), has been described as “microaggression”. The term was first coined by Chester Pierce in the 1970s to describe subtle forms where race-based discrimination occurred but has since then been expanded to explain discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, class and

religion (Sue, 2010). Sue (2010) describes microaggressions as “the everyday subtle and often automatic “put-downs” and insults” that could be “intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 5).

Microaggression differs from more overt forms of discrimination in that, often perpetrators are unaware they’ve caused harm (Sue, 2010, p. 5). The cumulative effect of microaggression throughout one’s life span has been reported to have detrimental consequences for the marginalized group: it affects their physical and mental well-being, impacts their self-esteem, causes anxiety and stress, induces anger and frustration, reduces life expectancy and denies the minority group access and full participation in education, employment and healthcare (Sue, 2010, p. 6).

It is in this context that an act of microaggression by a non-Meo participant (ethnically Punjabi), was observed when the topic of Urdu and Meos’ affiliation with it arose. Before delving into it further, it is important to mention that throughout the fieldwork, all Meo participants including school teachers as well as SSA officials, expressed positive views towards Urdu. They highlighted the significant role Urdu could play if introduced early as part of the school curriculum in Mewat. Although linguistically similar to Hindi, Urdu has been a highly politicized language since the post-Partition of India. While in the early 19th century differences between Hindi and Urdu were largely about the use of different scripts i.e. Devanagari and Perso-Arabic respectively, by the 20th century Urdu became a key symbol of Islam and Muslim cultural identity (Brass, 2005, pp. 127–136). Since then the use of Urdu has often been the subject of much debate. In the recent years, and in particular with the rise of the BJP, it has been denied use in school textbooks (Sharma, 2016), streets (Katiyar, 2017) and parliament (PTI, 2017).

The topic which invited microaggression initially started with Meo participants discussing the problems students faced, especially at a primary level, and with students struggling to follow teachers in the classroom. As most of the teachers migrated from other districts and spoke Haryanvi, students struggle to understand them, as per the Meo discussants. This key finding was also shared earlier by all the teachers previously interviewed and thus it highlighted that Meo policy officials were aware of things on the ground. This could be partly attributed to Meo discussants’ own experience as learners. Overall, it was noticed there was a tendency

among non-Meo participants to speak over Meos; to speak on their behalf. This was especially the case whenever Meos tried to voice their concerns or expressed their affiliation towards Mewati or Urdu. One of the ways this was achieved by non-Meo participants was through constant interruptions, speaking in a dominating voice, mocking and making indirect comments. An excerpt of the conversation illustrating this issue is presented below.

R2: Here students struggle to understand their teachers who speak Haryanvi. For instance, a Jat teacher who's come from, say, Rohtak district is here simply because he failed to get a posting in his home district. So, he will be teaching grudgingly, and that too in Haryanvi that most young students would never be able to understand. Whereas, if we had more local teachers, they could readily make children understand everything by using Mewati.

R: Yes. Think about this. A child learns everything in his home language. His parents give him the best tools. Then he comes to the school and realizes that he barely understands or recognizes the teachers' language. Most students here till the fifth grade have no clue.

Interviewer: So, the students struggle because of Jat and other teachers speaking different languages?

R2: Forget the students. Even teachers struggle. I'd give an example. In the nearby elite English-medium school, the governor said they will be recruiting teachers but only those who could speak English well enough. That excluded many Meos from applying for the post of teachers. But then, it also made students' lives difficult because they started mugging up everything.

R: Yes, out of fear, a student rote learns everything. It's not like he could ask his parents. They too are local. If he approaches his father, the father might ask was he not at the school? Did he run away? Why did he not ask his teacher? If he approaches the teacher, then he'd feel scared because there's that hesitation. So, the children can't feel open in that environment...it should be a friendly environment.

Interviewer: So, there's difference between Haryanvi and Mewati.

Both R and R2: Yes, for children, a significant difference. Poles apart.

[R1 interrupts]

R1: The mother language of all these is Sanskrit though.

[The interviewer directs the question to R and R2]

Interviewer: Do you agree with this statement?

[R1 interrupts again]

R1: Yes. The mother language of all languages is Sanskrit. Through Sanskrit these all emerged.

R: The mother tongue...[pauses]...Hindi emerged out of Sanskrit...was developed through Sanskrit...

[R1 interrupts again]

R1: All languages came out of Sanskrit.

Interviewer: Urdu? Urdu also?

R1: All.

Both R and R2: Urdu is different.

R1: Urdu is a back to front language. [laughs]

Both R and R2: Urdu came out of Farsi (Persian).

[R1 repeats; this time louder]

R1: Urdu is a back to front language.

R: Different country...[pauses]

R2: Politics played a role.

R: It emerged during the period of the Mughal Empire when...

[R1 interrupts again while R and R2 were trying to explain; speaks in the background]

R1: They have it differently... Urdu is a back to front language [laughs]

As could be seen from the above excerpt, as the Meo participants (R and R2) began to narrate the problems faced by local students owing to differences in their language and that of their teachers, the non-Meo participant (R1) intervenes to suppress those differences by claiming all languages, could trace their origin ultimately to Sanskrit. This included Haryanvi and Mewati, languages that were the focus of the discussion up until that moment, posing problems for local students, as per the Meo participants. Sensing this was a controversial claim, I directed the question specifically to R and R2 in order to gain their perspective. However, the non-Meo participant R1 began to speak on behalf of R and R2. Then when R and R2's response contradicted R1, the latter started to mock Urdu knowing full well that both R and R2 expressed positive views regarding it earlier in the discussion. When R1's attempt at gaining the floor failed the first time, he constantly interrupted throughout the exchange until he was heard.

Using humor for microaggression is effective, because as Platt and Lenzen (2013) note, it makes the experience "socially acceptable" (p. 1025). While the perpetrator could at any time term the whole incident as a 'joke', the recipient on the other hand finds it extremely hard to respond to it for the fear of being either misunderstood or having their experiences invalidated or devalued, which may only silence them further (Platt & Lenzen, 2013, p. 1025). Moreover, since humor plays a key part in "creating positive affect and social bonds" and helps to form "group cohesiveness", it leads to a "dilemma" on the part of the recipient in that it leaves them with no choice but either risk losing it or "tacitly accepting an undesirable or inappropriate attitude" (Mulvey, Palmer, & Abrams, 2016, p. 1380).

The above extract also indicated while Meo participants acknowledged not using or allowing Mewati in the classroom leads to non-comprehension on the part of students, further

discourages their morale and induces anxiety, as the conversation unfolded, they indicated as R put it, “Mewati was more or less Hindi’s deviant form”. This is similar to how some of the Meo teachers earlier described Mewati. That said, the Meo discussants were sympathetic to the idea of using Mewati as an “optional subject” in the primary grade (as were the other Meo teachers interviewed earlier) so as to introduce students to the history of Mewat, its folk legends and to help ensure smooth transitioning to standard Hindi. They stressed upon its judicious use for it could help students to “understand basic concepts” as R and R2 put it. This contrasted with the non-Meo participants who thought using Mewati as a medium of instruction would be of not much use. All discussants, Meos as well as non-Meos, however, believed in the idea of a “single national language”. Hindi, according to them, was the best choice that could fulfil that role (though they were open to any). The officials perceived linguistic diversity as a ‘problem’ to be managed. This came up during the discussion on their thoughts about Hindi:

R: Hindi should be made compulsory all over India.

R1: You can pick any country and see for yourself that there’s only one language it usually has as its official language. Otherwise the person grows old just by learning other languages [laughs]. I went to Tamil Nadu, there’s Tamil. I went to Bengal, there’s Bengali. With so many languages...one gets rather confused. Then, the one who is wise learns German, and leaves the country altogether. [laughs]

R: I’ll give you an example. Generally, I can speak Hindi and English. But when I was doing a job in Bombay, there they had Marathi language. I never studied Marathi in my school, so there was a lot of problems I faced there. Me and the other engineer...we both struggled a lot and they could not understand English well enough. It is in this context, I say, like each region has its own language and Hindi is our national language...a majority language...or any language could be appointed...

R1: Any language

R: ...that could be easily learnt, even if there’s other language that is a better option, but there should be a single language that people can use to communicate because ultimately a language is a communication medium.

From the group discussion, it also emerged that several SSA officials were also unsatisfied contract workers.

Overall, the focus group discussion laid bare several hurdles and shortcomings in the system, uncovered the way policy decisions are made as well as provided an insight into policy officials' views regarding language, the RTE Act and educational issues in Mewat.

7.2.1 Theme 1: Institutional Level

At the institutional level the discussants admitted, reluctantly at first, to several of the shortcomings noted by teachers including infrastructural problems relating to construction of school buildings, lack of drinking water facilities, toilets, and cooking and storage space for mid-day meals as well as late delivery of books and uniforms, ineffective SMCs, shortage of teachers and rural government school teachers over burdened with non-teaching responsibilities. This finding highlighted that those working in the SSA were largely aware of things on the ground and teachers' concerns, but there was a disconnect between the two which led to teachers believing that officials and policymakers were either unaware or uninterested in teachers' or schools' affairs.

The theme that consistently appeared throughout all the interviews with teachers, appeared with focus group discussants too, and this was the inter-ethnic division between Meos and non-Meos; and inter-religious division between Muslims and Hindus. While Meos claimed prejudice and discrimination, non-Meos were found denying it. This had important implications because institutional discrimination can affect not just individuals but society as a whole. The inter-ethnic divisions and perceived discrimination experienced by Meo teachers also had potential implications for students' educational performance and schools in general, especially for the disadvantaged schools, where "a number of studies note that ethnic divisions are most common" (Willoughby, 2007, p. 256). However, as Willoughby (2007) noted, "There is mounting evidence that suggests ethnic divisions are themselves symptomatic of these groups feeling neglected and disenfranchised within the school system" (p. 256).

7.2.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical Level

At the pedagogical level, the officials' approach to teaching didn't depart much from the current model as is practised across schools in India. Unlike the values and vision described in the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005) which talks about creating a roadmap for student-centered education where students' autonomy and critical thinking skills are to be

valued, the discussion with officials (barring R4 and R5 to an extent) mostly reflected a teacher-centered approach to education.

7.2.3 Theme 3: Policy Level

At the policy level, officials favored the RTE Act and justified it claiming that though inconvenient for teachers in its present state, it was largely good for students. This view was at odds with teachers who believed it had several loopholes that needed to be tightened for it to be relevant even for students.

This section explored an extremely complex set of dynamics, all of which contribute to the exclusion of Mewati from the classroom. Several factors are the products of neoliberalism. SSA policymakers confirmed institutional neglect, funding pressures, increased non-teaching workloads among teachers, and the generalized contractualization of staff including the policymakers themselves. Additionally, other factors contributed to this process including inter-ethnic dynamics and discrimination against Meos and Mewati.

Similar to Case 1 Meo teachers, Meo policymakers emphasized the preservation of Mewati while considering it unsuitable as a taught subject, perceiving it as a deviant form of Hindi. While the Meo policymakers saw a lack of culturally appropriate materials and the general communication barrier between non-Meo teachers and students as a concern, this did not lead to a desire to endorse Mewati's classroom use as a MOI. Also, policymakers like Case 1 teachers stressed a teacher-centered approach as opposed to the student-centered approach endorsed by the NCF (2005). Whereas Case 1 teachers had claimed policymakers were unaware of their concerns, SSA policymakers demonstrated significant awareness of teachers' constraints.

The next section will report findings of Case 2 to explore how it differed from Case 1.

7.3 Case 2: Urban private school

7.3.1 Theme 1: Institutional Level

Unlike Case 1, Case 2 did not suffer from severe institutional constraints such as shortage of teachers, unavailability or late delivery of books and infrastructural conditions. A few pictures of the school are presented in Figures 15–17 below.



Figure 15 – A picture of the library (from the school’s website)



Figure 16 – A picture of the school from the outside (Case 2)



Figure 17 – A picture of the Science lab (from the school’s website)

While the nature of problems the school in Case 2 faced might have been different, it did face certain challenges which are listed below.

Recruitment pattern of teachers

Teachers confirmed that being an English-medium school, teachers were hired on the basis of their English-speaking ability. All respondents noted, one of the main criteria in order to be recruited was “good command over English”. As a school that prided itself on being ‘English-medium’, this criterion was non-negotiable. As an English teacher described below:

When we are appointed for the teaching post, the authorities see how good the teachers are when it comes to their flow in English. They basically want two things from us. First is command over the subject. Second is the flow of the language...English. And the third thing is teaching pedagogy...whichever...child psychology etc. Vikram, Case 2

This English-focused recruitment criteria, however, resulted in a large influx of non-Meo teachers into Mewat’s labor market. This had similar implications, like it did in Case 1, for local Meo teachers in that they became a minority in the school setting. That said, they were found to be more in numbers in Case 2 than Case 1. Like in Case 1, the overwhelming presence of non-Meo teachers in Case 2 played a role in influencing the MOI as most knew very little Mewati.

Similar to Case 1, the inter-ethnic politics and issues of perceived discrimination came to the fore. While non-Meo teachers felt that Meos didn’t generally face any discrimination, Meos felt otherwise. The non-Meo teachers in Case 2 admitted limited knowledge about the region,

its people or local language. Meo teachers felt having a degree of local knowledge gave them an edge over their non-Meo teacher counterparts because several local students who came from rural areas were first-generation learners and only spoke Mewati. As a Meo teacher described:

The local children feel more attached to us because they can communicate with us in their local tongue. They hesitate to ask questions to teachers who come from outside. Even for us, it takes 2–3 years before we fully understand them [laughs]. So, for students, it's even harder...it takes a couple of years...before the students can fully follow these teachers. Murid, Case 2

Although more in number in the urban school (Case 2) than the rural one (Case 1), Meo teachers still reported daily discrimination as well as during the recruitment rounds based on (as discussed earlier in Case 1): their ethnic/caste/class background, religion, past stigmatized tag during the British rule (“criminal tribe”). During the course of the fieldwork, several non-Meo teachers rejected Meos’ claims of discrimination on the ground that they were in the majority in Mewat. Murid, the local Meo teacher, shared his perspective on that as follows:

The majority is not the question. Everything has to do with who makes the rules? Who has the power? Who sits in those selection committees? I’m not talking about this school alone. The Meo community definitely faces discrimination. The few Meo teachers you see today, even they were only appointed 3–4 years ago. Most of those who sit in these committees prefer their own... other forward castes, Jats because Jats are the dominant caste in Haryana. There is some tension among communities, I wouldn’t deny that. Not with Jats alone, but others too. I would say administrative corruption is the problem. Administrators think of Meos as backward, illiterate people who don’t understand their rights, so they harass us. So many times, I’ve been at the receiving end of it myself and that’s when I’m a teacher. It’s worse for those who are at the bottom.

Similarly, on the question if Meos face any discrimination and to gain a perspective on the inter-ethnic dynamics between communities in Mewat and its effects on the local Meo population, another Meo teacher commented:

Discrimination is a reality. In this region...there are more Muslims...so...[pauses] Recently, a delegation from the Minority Commission visited, I won’t take any names, but just like the MDA (Mewat Development Authority) built this school, the same way funds are allocated for other aspects of Meos’ welfare since Mewat is one of the most backward regions in the country. The funds get used for other communities, non-Muslim ones like Gujjars and Jats on their villages...so, the delegation that recently visited, had a meeting with our District Commissioner and toured some villages, finding a noticeable gap between Muslim and non-Muslim villages. The Minority commission does allocate some money...but it should be spent on minorities then. Why are you spending it on non-Muslims? There they have banks, hospitals. Whereas in Muslim villages, you hardly find any bank, hospital, drinking water facilities. The Minority commission sends a lot of money to the MDA but...[pauses]...the officers are Jats, the District Commissioner is a Jat, the Chief Minister is a Jat, they spend the money accordingly. Qurban, Case 2

Another Meo teacher felt that affirmative action policies in education and employment fuels the inter-ethnic divide in the region.

At the state level, discrimination happens. The Haryana government has classified Meos as OBC (Other Backward Class). For the purposes of reservation (affirmative action), we are a part of the OBC-B block category or BCB (Backward Class B) which includes the 5 castes: Meo, Gujjar, Saini, Lodha and Ahir/Yadav. Other caste members get selected to fill vacancies. Then Meos ask, ‘Why have you included us in the reservation list at all, if we are going to get zero benefits?’ At that time, one gets the impression of discrimination. If 11% of jobs are reserved, the government could divide it into 5 equal parts, avoiding the situation where the other communities get the lion’s share and Meos end up with a 1% share. Yadavs and Gujjars get most of the OBC jobs. Imran, Case 2

When asked to comment on the relations between Jats and Meos, the two communities who often come into contact in Mewat, share much in common in terms of kinship structures and past occupation, yet have asymmetrical and differential power relations. He had this to say:

“Jats and Meos share occupation as pastoralists/peasants, yet Jats have significant privileges that Meos don’t. There’s more of them and they are well spread out across Haryana, while Meos are largely confined to Mewat. Historically, from British rule onwards, a Jat Regiment has been part of the Indian Army...Jats have carried some clout. Discrimination has increased...The Chief Minister is a Jat, the Indian Administrative Services officers are mostly Jats, rarely you’d find a Meo public servant. Recently, 2 young Meos topped the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) exams with one appearing as a General category candidate. He wanted to prove he could be selected based on merit and topped the exam, got selected and even got the appointment letter. A court case happened when some General category people took offence, protested and asked, ‘why did he appear in the General category instead of OBC? why is he interfering and making his way on our side?’ After this objection, he totally withdrew from everything. Today he’s sitting at home. This is a 2010 incident.”

As the above comments illustrate, Meo teachers were conscious of the divide that existed between different communities in the region and were vocal about their experiences that included both overt and covert discrimination. This not only affected teachers’ workplace participation or performance but also had broad implications beyond the sphere of teaching. Additionally, it raised questions concerning representation and diversity in that how important it is to have a teaching workforce that is broadly representative of the local student body it serves.

Inadequate teacher training

Like Case 1, Case 2 contract teachers admitted receiving insufficient training and that for them it was “not mandatory”. They reported that while they received “basic induction training” when joining the school, they did not receive any in-service training. That said, as was the case in

Case 1, the respondents noted that teacher training responsibilities were increasingly being outsourced to corporate firms or local NGOs instead of being undertaken by the government institutions themselves. This was reflective of the growing trend of corporatization and privatization of teacher training responsibilities.

Excessive school inspections

Unlike Case 1 where school inspections were neither regular nor rigorous, Case 2 was the opposite in that school inspections happened rather too often and were rigorous in character. The “surprise inspections”, as Vikram informed, “kept teachers on their toes”. The teachers noted, being an elite school run privately with a proximity to the Education Officer’s headquarters meant that inspections happened too often to “monitor teachers” and to “keep them accountable” so as to “not be like rural government schools”. A Meo teacher explained:

Since the Education Officer’s headquarter is so close, they visit once in every 15 days. Then, we have the Commissioner who is the Chairman and the Deputy Commissioner who is the Vice Chairman, they also visit approximately 3 times (possibly more) in 1 year. Our principal also inspects classrooms routinely. Inspections happen too often.

Qurban, Case 2

While another Meo teacher who taught Computer Science remarked:

Inspections happen 6–7 times and are done by people from the committee including Chairman, Vice Chairman as well as by government officials. They inspect classrooms, supervise teachers’ lectures, visit computer labs and interact with students.

Murid, Case 2

While comparing the regularity and strictness with which inspections happen in urban elite private schools such as Case 2 to that of rural government schools such as Case 1, a Meo teacher remarks:

There they don’t have routine inspections. Just for the sake of formality...on paper they have one. But here, it’s not like that. We have regular inspections every now and then. You will never have a situation when you’ll find the teacher is absent here. Last year for instance, a teacher entered their class 2 minutes late, but our Principal upon finding out, marked that teacher came ‘half late’ meaning when half of the period was finished, even though they were late for only 2 minutes. Thus, every teacher is mindful of that and so we all come on time. It is for this reason parents want their children to take admission in our school.

Imran, Case 2

Teachers’ responses made clear that ‘surveillance style’ inspections worked as a disciplining force to ensure accountability, however, they also reported that this put them under a great deal of stress. They failed to indicate if they received adequate support from the administration and the extent to which periodic inspections made their teaching effective.

7.3.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical Level

One commonality shared by most teachers in both Case 1 and Case 2 was their avoidance of students' L1, Mewati. Instead, Hindi was taught as students' L1 in both cases, despite teachers' admission of students struggling with the language, especially in the earlier grades. While the school in Case 2 professed to be English medium (as it said on its notice board in Figure 18) and English did seem to dominate the school's linguistic landscape (Figure 19), the teachers candidly revealed that in practice, they used both English and Hindi inside the classrooms, as the exclusive use of English was 'not an option'.



Figure 18 – The school notice board displaying the board of affiliation (CBSE) and MOI (English) (Case 2)

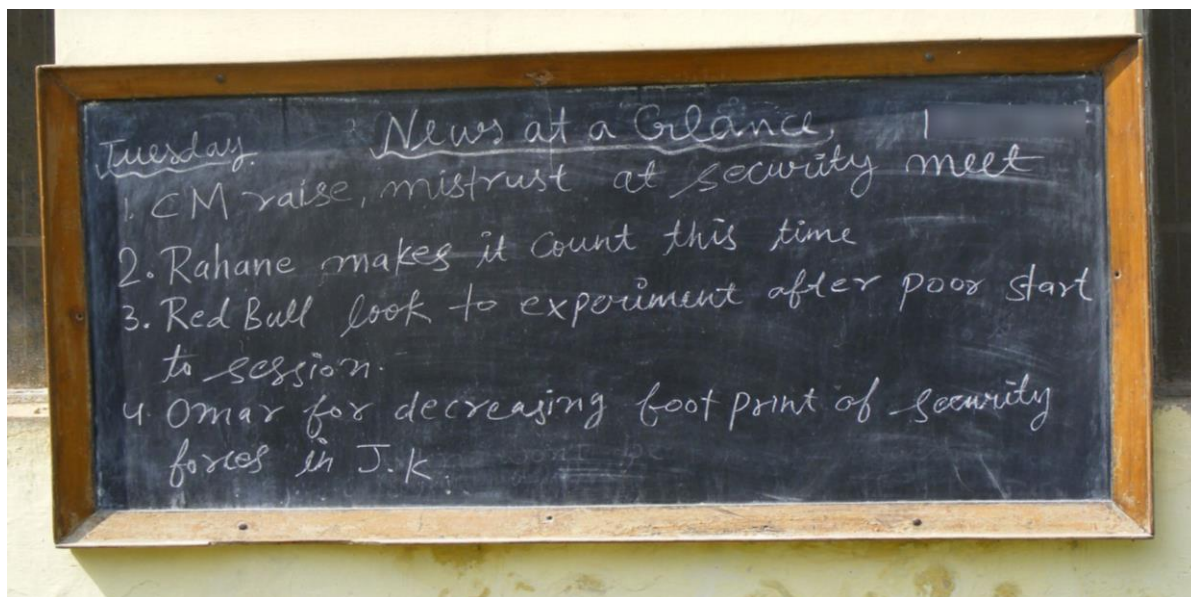


Figure 19 – The school's news board (Case 2)

That said, unlike Case 1 where Hindi dominated, and Urdu was not available, Case 2 was more multilingual in character, owing to the presence of Urdu, among other languages, such as English, Hindi and Sanskrit. Urdu was consistently promoted in the students' diary, school magazine and brochure. Students were free to study it as a school subject and to use it to express themselves in the school magazine. The presence of several languages co-existing – in particular, Urdu with its textbooks, materials and teachers – played a key part in changing not just the linguistic landscape of the school but also in influencing teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices: a case in point, their insistence on using “bilingual method” both English and Hindi.

Moreover, Case 2 teachers were far more open and accepting towards Urdu than some of their counterpart (non-Meo) teachers in Case 1. The school principal and teachers admitted that the inclusion of Urdu as a subject to be taught as well as the availability of Urdu teachers was a deliberate decision on part of the elite private school so that more families sent their children to the school. Another way Case 2 teachers differed from their Case 1 counterparts was in their attitude towards CCE as a new assessment reform strategy. They were found far more welcoming towards CCE than Case 1 teachers and had more positive things to say about it. As is clear from a teacher's response below:

Our school is not like theirs [rural government schools]. There is no CCE there. They conduct an exam twice at six months interval...it's a mere formality...and that's it. Evaluation is done...finished. Here we do evaluation in a systematic way. We continuously evaluate a child...day wise, week wise, month wise. Vikram, Case 2

In one respect Case 2 teachers were somewhat similar to Case 1 teachers, being less familiar with alternative teaching methods and pedagogies catering to different learners and learning styles, particularly first-generation learners, of which there were many. The teachers also admitted to not being well-versed with teaching out of school and pushed-out students and not having obtained relevant training in designing remedial course content or syllabus that was more responsive to students' needs. Aside from inadequate teacher training, the training curriculum and modules were also partly to be blamed for teachers' lack of awareness as they failed to keep pace with the current scholarship and trends in teaching practices as noted by several teachers themselves.

That said, the teachers' responses in Case 2 indicated that they were relatively better than teachers in Case 1 in adapting their teaching method according to different circumstances,

student ability and their developmental learning stage. As the following response from an English teacher demonstrates:

The last session was a good one. I had a good batch of students. This session is not so good. This time around I have poor students. So, in the current scenario, we use bilingual method (English and Hindi both). One of the main methods is a grammar translation method. You must have heard. That we keep it for poor students...for weaker students. That method is extremely beneficial. But for a good batch of students...direct method.

Vikram, Case 2

While the “direct method” in the response above might have been the ideal choice of the English teacher – or for that matter every other teacher interviewed – the extent to which it was actually employed in the classroom is debatable. This was because of Vikram’s (and every other teacher’s) own admission that the instruction was carried out using the “bilingual method”. The use of students’ L1, Mewati, was not seen favorably and as a result was largely neglected, a finding shared by both Case 1 and Case 2. In both cases, most teachers believed that teaching/learning through Mewati carried no instrumental benefits, or worse still, doing so would potentially harm the children in the long run.

The pedagogical choices adopted by the teachers, however, were partially guided by students’ socioeconomic background and the class character of the school in that most of the students relatively belonged to the upper strata, as is often the case with those who attend elite private schools in urban areas, and were better positioned to possess the linguistic and cultural capital of the school. This meant that their learning trajectory was somewhat different to those attending rural government schools.

Nonetheless, the approach to teaching was still largely teacher-centered, textbook-dominant and exam-oriented. In Case 2, the main objective of the school – as reported by all teachers and principal during the interview and informal conversation – was on student achievement and performance. To achieve this goal, great emphasis was given on frequent inspections (as told earlier in Theme 1–Case 2). This often, however, leads to a ‘teaching to the test’ tendency on part of teachers which further encourages teacher-centered instruction model. Thus, Case 2 and Case 1 were similar in their embrace of teacher-centered approach which went against what NCF (2005) and RTE Act (2009) prescribed.

There were a few ways, however, through which teacher-centeredness was challenged. Unlike Case 1 where students’ voice failed to register its presence inside the school and on its walls,

in Case 2, the school's walls were filled with students' posters and projects (in both English and Hindi – Figure 20) and the school proudly displayed their achievements (Figure 21) and acknowledged their cultural backgrounds (Figure 22). Additionally, unlike Case 1 where students sat in rows on the floor facing the teacher who sat on a chair (thereby reinforcing the traditional hierarchical relations between students and teachers), Case 2's seating arrangement wasn't so blatantly hierarchical, as the students had proper desks to sit at.



Figure 20 – The display board representing posters and projects made by students (Case 2)

AISSE (X) LIST OF TOPPERS			
SL No.	NAME OF THE STUDENT	% OF MARKS OBTAINED	YEAR
1.		88	2001-02
2.		81.2	2002-03
3.		82.8	2003-04
4.		87.8	2004-05
5.		88.6	2005-06
6.		88.4	2006-07
7.		90.8	2007-08
8.		92	2008-09
9.		87.4	2009-10

AISSE(XII) TOPPERS LIST				
SL No.	NAME OF THE STUDENT	STREAM	% OF MARKS OBTAINED	YEAR
1.		COMMERCE	86.4	2006-07
2.		SCIENCE	76.4	2006-07
3.		COMMERCE	79.6	2007-08
4.		SCIENCE	82.2	2007-08
5.		SCIENCE	89	2008-09
6.		COMMERCE	77.6	2008-09
7.		ARTS	82.6	2008-09
8.		SCIENCE	73.6	2009-10
9.		ARTS	75	2009-10
10.		SCIENCE	86.6	2010-11
11.		COMMERCE	90.2	2010-11
12.		ARTS	90.2	2010-11

Figure 21 – The school board displaying students’ achievements (Case 2)



Figure 22 – School’s walls showing “glimpses of Mewat” (Case 2)

To sum up then, one of the ways the school in Case 2 legitimized its hegemony and built its reputation among the Meo student body and their families was through symbolic capital, recognition and prestige. This came from various sources such as a screening procedure for students and violation of the RTE rules in general. This relates to the third theme, the policy level, which is discussed below.

7.3.3 Theme 3: Policy Level

When the teachers were asked to comment on the RTE Act and if it had any effects on their school, they responded in two ways: 1) they were not well aware, or 2) justified its non-applicability. Almost all the teachers interviewed in Case 2 said they knew little about the RTE Act. As the English teacher, Vikram, confirmed: “RTE...[pauses]...this is a latest concept. Madam, I have no update about that.”

The otherization of rural government schools and the lack of knowledge on the part of teachers was most noticeable when some of them bluntly implied that the RTE Act was “only for rural government schools where the poor children studied”, as reported by Imran. Upon further probing, the teachers justified its non-applicability to their school on these grounds: 1) different language policy (English-medium) 2) different admission policy (screening procedure used for students) 3) a lack of faith in disadvantaged students’ ability to ‘adjust’ to the school environment.

The school’s language policy was invoked by the teachers as a potential reason why the RTE Act could not be applicable as they believed ‘it was only for the Hindi-medium schools’. The teachers’ responses implied the school’s elite English-medium status exempted it from RTE guidelines. The other reason was the specific admission policy, that according to the teachers, helped explain why the RTE Act was not applicable to their school. This admission policy was the screening procedure used by the school which meant that children, as young as pre-primary age, first had to take a test in order to be admitted into the school. As the Meo teacher remarked:

The RTE Act is only applicable to those rural government schools, madam because.... (hesitates)... there only poor children study and education is compulsory. I mean, here too, we provide education...[pauses]...compulsory it is...but madam here the admission process is based on a test and that means we can’t provide education to everyone...here it is through an entrance exam. We won’t take everyone.

Imran, Case 2

Similarly, another Meo teacher remarked:

The RTE Act is only for the rural schools...government schools...here we don't go by that. We do it through an entrance exam, so the school's standard could be maintained. Here, there are a few seats but those wanting an admission are more. There's a generally a long queue. We can't admit all so only the good students get in. Mubarak, Case 2

Denying admission or holding a screening procedure, however, went against Section 13(1) of the RTE Act. The school in Case 2 was no different and was openly seen flouting this rule as Figure 23 demonstrates.

LIST OF QUALIFIED STUDENTS IN ENTRANCE TEST HELD ON 10.12.12 CLASS-KG

S.No	STUDENT'S NAME	FATHER'S NAME
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		

LIST OF QUALIFIED STUDENTS IN ENTRANCE TEST HELD ON 10.12.12 CLASS-VI

S.No	NAME	FATHER'S NAME
1		Sh. [redacted]
2		Sh. [redacted]
3		Sh. [redacted]
4		Sh. [redacted]
5		Sh. [redacted]
6		Sh. [redacted]
7		Sh. [redacted]
8		Sh. [redacted]
9		Sh. [redacted]
10		Sh. [redacted]
11		Sh. [redacted]
12		Sh. [redacted]
13		Sh. [redacted]
14		Sh. [redacted]
15		Sh. [redacted]
16		Sh. [redacted]
17		Sh. [redacted]
18		Sh. [redacted]
19		Sh. [redacted]
20		Sh. [redacted]
21		Sh. [redacted]
22		Sh. [redacted]
23		Sh. [redacted]
24		Sh. [redacted]
25		Sh. [redacted]
26		Sh. [redacted]
27		Sh. [redacted]
28		Sh. [redacted]
29		Sh. [redacted]
30		Sh. [redacted]

LIST OF QUALIFIED STUDENTS IN ENTRANCE TEST HELD ON 10.12.12 CLASS-II

S.No	STUDENT'S NAME	FATHER'S NAME
1		Sh. [redacted]
2		Sh. [redacted]
3		Sh. [redacted]
4		Sh. [redacted]
5		Sh. [redacted]
6		Sh. [redacted]
7		Sh. [redacted]
8		Sh. [redacted]
9		Sh. [redacted]
10		Sh. [redacted]
11		Sh. [redacted]
12		Sh. [redacted]
13		Sh. [redacted]
14		Sh. [redacted]
15		Sh. [redacted]
16		Sh. [redacted]
17		Sh. [redacted]
18		Sh. [redacted]
19		Sh. [redacted]
20		Sh. [redacted]
21		Sh. [redacted]
22		Sh. [redacted]
23		Sh. [redacted]
24		Sh. [redacted]
25		Sh. [redacted]
26		Sh. [redacted]
27		Sh. [redacted]
28		Sh. [redacted]
29		Sh. [redacted]
30		Sh. [redacted]

Figure 23 – Screening Procedure (Case 2)

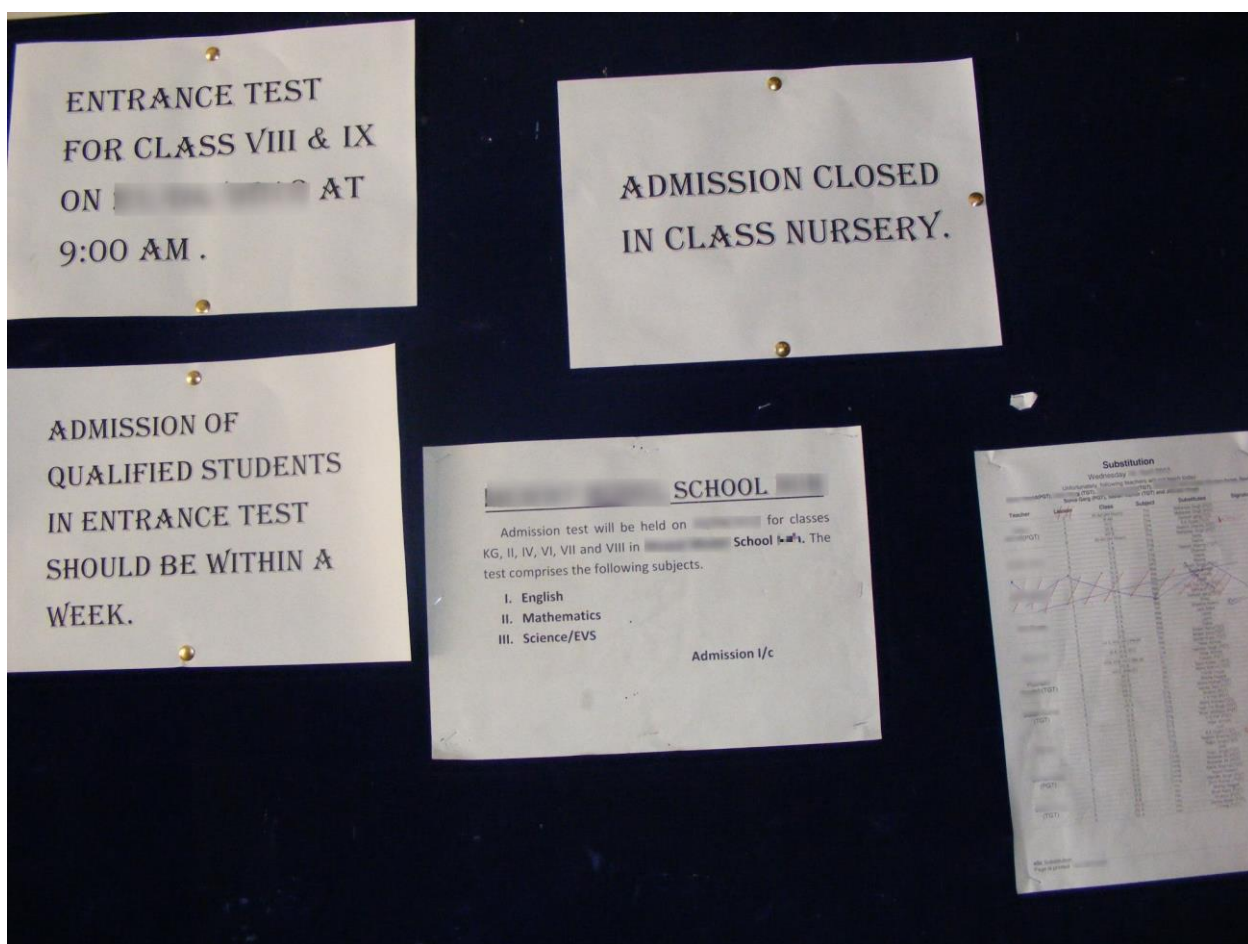


Figure 24 – Notice board declaring admission dates (Case 2)

Having policies such as screening procedures in place ensured the school was in a position to include certain students (those with “merit” as the teachers conveyed) while excluding others who came from weaker sections and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This meant teachers in Case 2 were in a somewhat easier position than those in Case 1 as better infrastructural facilities at an institutional level and screening procedure at a policy level impacted how teachers operated in the classroom and as such influenced things on a pedagogical level.

Aside from justifying the use of a screening procedure to admit “meritorious” students, another way the teachers justified certain students’ exclusion from their school especially of those belonging to the disadvantaged groups (something the RTE Act clearly disapproves as per Section 13) was by claiming that some students fail to adjust to the school environment, particularly, out-of-school students who are known to cause “distraction” for other “regular” students. To illustrate, a Meo teacher named Mubarak was found the most informed about the

RTE Act among all the teachers interviewed in Case 2, but even he showed his reservations against the RTE Act in the manner below:

This whole idea that children can be admitted into any age-appropriate class from grade 1 to grade 8, even if they've never attended a school before...this will bring down the standard of education. This is because a child who cannot even write an alphabet will be admitted straight into the 6th grade. How is a teacher supposed to teach this child along with others? This will result in the suffering of other students. The teacher won't be able to pay attention to this student and then this will lead to the student dropping out after maybe 1–2 years. Then this government tells teachers not to fail them either. This will lead to 100% literacy on paper, but no new knowledge will be acquired. The student will know nothing about Science or Mathematics but will only have a marksheet to show that will say that he or she has passed the 10th standard, that they have now graduated. The students will face more problems because of this policy. The student will take this marksheet along for an interview and will not be selected. This will further discourage the student. They might even commit suicide.

Mubarak, Case 2

The above extract shows teachers across schools failed to see the relevance of policies including (but not limited to) no detention till grade 9 and admitting children in school according to age appropriate class. In this regard, Case 2 teachers had much in common with Case 1 teachers in that they mostly held unfavorable views towards the RTE Act or had reservations regarding its implementation and were found ill-equipped to carry out the duties laid out in the Act.

This section reported the findings, in relation to Case 2, on how the effects of neoliberalism in education manifested themselves on the institutional, pedagogical and policy levels – the key three broad themes that emerged from data analysis. Much like Case 1, it was noticed that there were gaps in how policies were formed at the top and how they were received, negotiated and executed on the ground by teachers. Most teachers in Case 2 admitted to not being fully aware regarding the RTE Act, while others denied the possibility that it could be applicable to their school on grounds of it being too 'elite'. As such, teachers were found justifying its non-applicability and believed that English-medium private schools, such as theirs, should be exempted from many of the stipulations of the RTE Act. Instead of the RBD that apparently underlies the RTE Act and that its proponents advocate, teachers in Case 2 however, were seen advocating for the HCT with their emphasis on 'parents' choice' to 'invest in education' of their children. This approach where education is primarily seen as an economic investment is consistent with the philosophy of neoliberalism.

At an institutional level, Case 2 didn't suffer from the same infrastructural constraints and neglect as Case 1 in that neither the school lacked any resources, nor its teachers were overburdened with non-teaching tasks. However, just as Case 1, it also showed a tendency to hire teachers on contract with most of them having migrated from other regions who spoke little to no Mewati and thus complained of students not being able to understand them in the initial grades.

Rigorous and regular school inspections was one way Case 2 differed from Case 1 at an institutional level. This was done to ensure 'accountability'—a common feature of neoliberal governance – as a result of which, however, teachers complained of anxiety. This, combined with their contract status, further added to their psychological stress. In this regard, nearly all teachers in Case 1 and Case 2 were found to be subjected to ensuring accountability (though with different results) without any support.

At a pedagogical level, teachers in Case 2 didn't differ much from Case 1 in terms of their knowledge or training. Unlike what the NCF (2005) and RTE Act (2009) expected of teachers i.e. to engage in a learner-centered pedagogy, teachers were found to be clinging to the traditional teacher-directed pedagogy. Likewise, the contract teachers in Case 2, much like Case 1, were denied in-service training. The regular teachers also admitted not receiving adequate in-service training. The teachers in Case 2, much like Case 1, complained of being exposed to rigid and outmoded training materials that had very little relevance to their day-to-day classroom concerns.

Another similarity shared between the two cases was an outsourcing of teacher training and workshops to corporate firms and NGOs. This was the gradual outcome of a neoliberal policy shift as the state that used to be the main provider of teacher training slowly moved towards delegating this responsibility to the private sector. The encroachment of private sector extends beyond the provision of in-service teacher training to setting up alternative teacher training institutes responsible for preparing teachers to teach for all levels of schooling. The next chapter will synthesize and discuss the findings in relation to the research question(s), literature reviewed, and frameworks employed in this study.

Chapter 8: The Effects of Neoliberalism in Education

– Discussion

This chapter presents a synthesis of the findings and literature discussed in the preceding chapter to address the research question(s) this study set out to answer. I first begin by discussing the three key themes that emerged from the two cases studied in relation to the research question(s) by first analyzing them separately for each case (within case analysis), before moving onto cross-case analysis.

Following this, implications are drawn from the findings and discussed in relation to teachers' beliefs and contextual factors, the two key variables responsible for influencing LiEP, teachers' actions, decision-making skills and their professional lives. Thereafter, the theoretical framework of bounded rationality that helped explain teacher cognition and behavior is discussed. This is followed by a discussion on its implications for research and practice. The next section addresses the limitations of the study and proposes possible ways to overcome them and alternative ways to gain a better understanding. Finally, the last section highlights contributions to knowledge made by this study.

8.1 Case 1–Rural School(s)

8.1.1 Theme 1: Institutional Level

Like several rural government schools, Case 1 schools suffered from severe infrastructural constraints and general neglect. Visibly underfunded, the schools lacked basic facilities, teachers seemed jaded and were found teaching large classes comprised of unmotivated students with teachers spending most of their time on behavior management. Teacher shortages in the region meant most teachers migrated from other regions and had little knowledge about Mewat, Meos or Mewati and held negative attitudes towards the local population, culture and language. This led to communication gaps between local Meo students and non-Meo teachers which further hampered teaching and learning processes and outcomes.

Teacher shortages were used to justify hiring teachers on contract who could be readily available to teach the local rural student population, but this resulted in dissatisfaction among teachers who found themselves “stuck” in Mewat and were looking for a “way out”. De, Dreze

and Kumar (1999) talked about the “unwanted postings and arbitrary transfers” and mentioned how this could affect the morale and enthusiasm of even the most committed teachers since they see it as a “constant threat” as they end up spending “a great deal of time and energy trying to avoid undesirable transfers, lobbying for preferred postings, and building up influential connections to play the transfer game” (p. 61). Psychological stress combined with multigrade teaching (with no proper training) and being forced to engage in non-teaching tasks such as supervising construction work, monitoring mid-day meals, census work further led to discontent among teachers.

Teachers’ work was further made complicated with SMCs not functioning effectively with members not attending the meetings regularly, not exercising their rights effectively, troubled by their own issues as farmers and workers, among other reasons cited by teachers. This is similar to what Alexander (2001) noted about decentralization programs in the form of SMCs which, though hailed for its ‘community participation’ initiatives, struggle to implement on the ground as community members neither have the capacity nor the resources to fully participate in the affairs that concern them (p. 316). Additionally, another limitation of decentralization initiatives such as SMCs is that they are often “difficult to monitor and evaluate” (Alexander, 2001, p. 316). This problem was much too commonly reported by teachers in Case 1. One of the other ways accountability was to be ensured was by means of school inspections which happened rather infrequently. No detailed written feedback was provided. As per the teachers, the focus was more on student enrollment rather than on teaching and learning. Hardly any attention was given to infrastructural problems suffered by the school.

The account given by all the teachers in Case 1 regarding school inspections is similar to the one given by De et al. (1999) who in their prominent work on “Public Report on Basic Education” noted: “Faced with this work overload, inspectors and their superiors concentrate on what they see as the priority, such as the maintenance of school registers. Once again, the quality of teaching is out of focus...” (p. 91). Participants’ responses in Case 1 were similar in nature to those provided by participants in De et al.’s (1999) study. All the teachers in rural government school(s) believed elite private schools drew their legitimacy from better infrastructural conditions and being held accountable by means of regular inspections.

However, it is worth pointing out that while the inspection system has been cited as a solution to “alleviate [teacher] absenteeism” (Bajaj, 2012, p. 36) and used as an “accountability mechanism”

(De et al., 1999, p. 90), Ghosh (2011) reminded us that in its present form, it suffers from several limitations and is in need of a complete “revamp” (p. 134). She pointed out that there are only a handful of inspectors in charge of inspecting a large body of schools that are spread over multiple locations (p. 134). Rather than simply calling for “expanding the system”, Ghosh (2011) called for more “meaningful monitoring” to an already “overburdened and inadequate” inspection system (p. 134).

Aside from increasing the number of inspectors, making them accountable to the local community members and stakeholders in the area, providing them with better means to travel, communication aids and other provisions that help them to perform their tasks, Ghosh (2011) urged for broader participation from the local stakeholders in school monitoring, asked for clear division to be made between school inspection and school administration, the data (relating to the date on which the inspection occurred, the criteria used and the result) to be made publicly available, and called for broadening the inspection criteria to include not just “infrastructure, facilities and teacher presence, but also minimum standards for quality” (p. 134).

Similarly, De et al. (1999) called for improvement in accountability measures by suggesting that they must be there in some form but argue they must be complemented with greater support mechanisms for teachers to work effectively (p. 89). Relying on any one of these measures alone, De et al. (1999) argued, will not lead to enhancements in teaching standards, as they “are best seen as complimentary and mutually reinforcing” (p. 64). From teachers’ responses it was clear that the school inspectors neither gave feedback on teachers’ performance nor responded to their repeated requests and complaints. It is for this reason, De et al. (1999) reminded us that “inspectors can do much more than breathe down the neck of teachers, for instance by ensuring that teachers’ complaints are heard and by advising them on teaching methods” (p. 89). However, findings from Case 1 revealed that inspectors did neither of those things which further affected teachers’ motivation to teach in a functioning and productive environment.

These infrastructural constraints when combined with unavailability or late delivery of books (confirmed by SSA officials during the focus group interview session) made teachers’ jobs even more difficult given teachers in Case 1 relied heavily on textbooks to ‘complete the syllabus’ which was seen as the overall goal. This of course went against the spirit of NCF (2005) and RTE (2009) which laid more emphasis on child-centered pedagogy and a focus away from

relying on textbooks so much. This was predictable given the absence of adequate teacher-training facilities revealed in Case 1 with contract teachers admitting not even being allowed to receive in-service training. Regular teachers felt alienated and dissatisfied with the current status of teacher training curriculum and workshops offered by NGOs and corporate firms that were previously offered by the state. Under the neoliberal framework, teacher training is yet another responsibility of the state that has been delegated to corporate firms and NGOs.

This denial of in-service teacher training to contract teachers, however, further helped in perpetuating and reinforcing the already existing hierarchy and sharp divide between them and the regular teachers. This division meant that it was harder for teachers to come together on an issue, wage a collective struggle or form a common trade union. This divide between teachers was very apparent throughout the fieldwork. For instance, there was a stark difference when it came to the demeanor, mannerisms and body language of teachers who were on still on contract and those who were not. In contrast to the regular teachers, the contract teachers were timid in their demeanor and less likely to express their views openly. They had no social security benefits, were underpaid, undertrained and underqualified. The job concerns of these two kinds of teachers also varied greatly. While the regular teachers felt more secure in their jobs, the contract teachers felt insecure, and this when combined with their lack of in-service training, made them somewhat unprepared to face the classroom.

Overall, all the above factors greatly affected teachers' motivation and capacity to teach effectively. This, however, should not be surprising as De et al. (1999), while surveying similar rural government schools during the influential PROBE study, remarked: "A teacher trapped in a ramshackle village school, surrounded by disgruntled parents, irregular pupils and overbearing inspectors, can hardly be expected to work with any enthusiasm" (p. 63). That said, institutional factors that lead to disempowering teachers cannot explain everything. Teachers' behavior inside the classroom isn't just guided by institutional factors – their own teaching behavior also played a significant part. De et al. (1999) made the same case when they said: "Yet, the deterioration of teaching standards has gone much too far to be explained by the disempowerment factor alone" (p. 63). In the next section, I discuss how pedagogical factors play a role in influencing teachers' actions and decisions.

8.1.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical Level

In order to improve the quality of teaching in schools across India and as part of the RTE Act (2009), the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) decided to set minimum standards for teaching and professional qualifications for teachers to be eligible for recruitment in 2011. While the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) was made mandatory for teachers to be eligible for recruitment in any central government school, those affiliated to CBSE (Central Board of School Education) could either recruit teachers based on CTET or the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) conducted by the appropriate state government. The minimum qualifying score for the CTET is 60%, while for the TET conducted by a state government, there's a relaxation policy in that the NCTE allows the school management committee (i.e. government, government aided, unaided, local bodies) to allow concessions for a candidate from an affirmative action category.

The failure of teacher education programs and teacher training institutes in equipping teachers with the necessary skills that are expected of them could be gauged by the fact that over 87% of aspiring teachers failed in 2011 when the CTET was first held (Chaudhari, 2012). In the subsequent year, over 99% of aspiring teachers failed to clear the test (Gohain, 2013). In 2014, over 98% of aspirant teachers failed to pass the CTET (Gohain, 2014). Over the years, the pass percentage has consistently declined with educationists describing the situation as “alarming” as per *The Times of India* report, and “a wake-up call for the quality of BEd degree being granted in the country” (Gohain, 2013).

This is serious because despite having obtained qualifications such as a Diploma in Education (D.Ed.) or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), only a handful of teachers have been able to qualify by the test that is meant for teachers opting to teach in the primary (Grade 1 to 5) or elementary (Grade 6 to 8) level. The former Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal also voiced this concern in 2012, the period during which this data was collected, where he expressed concern regarding the poor quality of teacher education and the surge of private training institutions “which have mushroomed throughout” India, far outnumbering the government institutions (PTI, 2012). Quoting Sibal, the *DNA* report stated, “there are only 1,178 government teacher training institutes while there are as many as 12,689 private ones” (PTI, 2012). Expressing concern over the standard of teacher training imparted in these institutions, he said

in the upper house of the parliament: “Results show that those who have BA degrees and B.Ed. degrees are not even able to pass the TET (Teacher Eligibility Test)”.

Neoliberalism encourages privatization and there’s no guarantee that private institutions, several of which are unregulated, imparting pre-service teacher education will be any good. Speaking of teacher training institutes, Batra (2013) argued that they “operate in closed spaces, intellectually impoverished environments that actively discourage engagement with new ideas and perspectives” (p. 142). In the state of Haryana, where this study was located, a report by the Joint Review Mission for Haryana State in 2013 concluded that “teacher education faculty and preservice teachers at District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs; government teacher training colleges where the D.Ed. curriculum is taught; there is one in every district) were inadequately prepared to acclimatize to changing education policies in the country” (Tejani, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, the report stated the manner in which pedagogical knowledge was being imparted to pre-service teachers, continued to remain “traditional” and called for a “continuous professional development of teachers, teacher educators, institutions and its leadership” (Tejani, 2015, p. 4). Thus, any discussion on teaching pedagogy must consider teachers’ own perceptions of readiness, their state of awareness and preparedness to teach and their willingness to reflect upon and act according to students’ interests and needs.

On a pedagogical level it was observed and teachers candidly admitted following a teacher-centered approach to education while fully aware it was not in line with what the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) endorsed, which was a more child-centered approach. The NCF (2005) stated clearly: “‘Child-centred’ pedagogy means giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices, and their active participation” (p. 13). In order to highlight the difference between what’s recommended on policy documents and what usually gets practiced, a brief introduction on NCF (2005) is necessary.

In India, the NCF is prepared by the National Council on Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The NCERT is an apex national-level body which advises central and state governments on academic issues, lays down guidelines for regulating teachers’ education, and is entrusted with the responsibility of preparing syllabus for Grades 1 to 12. New textbooks are prepared based on this syllabus. Every five years, the NCF is renewed, usually coinciding with the parliamentary elections. Thus, curriculum design in India can be a politically charged affair and thus a lot of rests on which political party is in power.

In 2004, an alliance of secular parties led by Congress came into power after defeating the Hindu nationalist BJP. It appointed Krishna Kumar, an eminent Indian educationist and academic, as the Director of NCERT. It was under him, the NCF (2005) came into effect, and was lauded for its ‘constructivist’ vision which would allow children to use their ability to think, reason and thus, in the process construct their own reality (Balagopalan, 2009, p. 138). NCF (2005) marked a departure from some of the previous curriculum frameworks in that it specifically emphasized a more “child-centred pedagogy” as opposed to the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy that has historically been the norm in India and as was practised by teachers in Case 1.

When asked to comment on teaching methods or pedagogy used inside the classroom, several teachers were either caught off-guard and struggled to explain or describe an approach which was reflective of, as noted by Freire (1970), the “banking model of education”, where the teacher speaks and students listen. This stood in direct opposition to the one prescribed by the NCF (2005) which called for “critical pedagogy”. The NCF (2005) endorsed the view: “Students are not just young people for whom adults should devise solutions” (p. 22). Teachers’ responses in Case 1 indicated a heavy reliance on textbooks, ritualistic and mechanical ways of using question-answer techniques that included the students listening passively as the teachers talked for the most part.

Aside from teachers’ beliefs and practices, seating arrangements also reflected a teacher-centered approach. As Falout (2014) mentioned, the circular seating arrangement affects the “interpersonal dynamics” between students and teachers (p. 282) “with overall positive effects on learning, emotions, and wellbeing” (p. 275). Furthermore, Peterson (2010) cautioned, seating arrangements such as the one witnessed in Case 1 that are reflective of the teacher-centered approach, “sometimes these things that appear to be invisible are part of a “hidden curriculum” and carry powerful messages to students” (p. 140).

Additionally, students’ voices were completely missing in Case 1 as there were no works of students displayed on the walls, unlike as was seen in Case 2. Peterson (2010), for instance, reminded us that the way a classroom is organized reveals a lot about how a teacher views their students and teaching itself, particularly, having students’ works displayed on the walls “can serve as an affirmation of the importance of student voice” in the classroom (p. 140). Seen in this regard, the classrooms and the rural school(s) in general were not reflective of students’

cultural and linguistic backgrounds. No local artifacts were on display to help bridge the divide between students' home and school environments.

Ultimately, the way a classroom is organized has a huge impact on the way the teacher gives a lecture, the student sees themselves, engages with the text and the teacher, and how the student collaborates with their peers. Classroom organization, then, affects not just the teaching and learning process but the outcome as well. Talking about classroom management and organization, Stronge, Tucker, and Hindman (2004) for instance, had this to say: "Classroom management and organization are intertwined. While rules and routines influence student behavior, classroom organization affects the physical elements of the classroom, making it a more productive environment for its users. How the classroom environment is organized influences the behavior in it" (p. 68). When seen in this regard, teachers' actions and the approach adopted towards teaching should not come as a surprise.

Overall, teachers' views and practices stood in direct opposition to a child-centered classroom and the constructivist approach envisioned by the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005). While the teachers acknowledged the new direction the RTE Act wanted them to move, they idealized the traditional model of education. This was most noticeable in their implied stance and silent opposition to certain aspects of the RTE Act such as 'no detention' and 'no corporal punishment' policies, that according to them, undermined teachers' authority and took away their right to punish students, without which they believed some students may never improve or learn. How this interaction between teaching pedagogy and policy with regard to the RTE Act unfolded will be discussed more in detail below in the 'policy level' theme.

During the interviews, the teachers also shared their frustration at teaching large classes, particularly those which involved teaching out-of-school or 'drop-out' kids, with not much institutional and administrative support. This combined with the multigrade teaching, a practice introduced as part of educational reforms by international financial institutions to save education cost and reduce public expenditure and government deficit (Imaniriho, 2015, p. 47), meant that teachers had to teach kids who differed along several dimensions: late arrivals, out-of-school, pushed-out, children with disabilities, among others.

What was apparent was teachers' lack of training in teaching these children. What was also noticeable was their lack of training in designing remedial and age-appropriate lesson plans,

syllabus and course content. When asked if they received any training in this regard, they all said: “no”. This went against the NCF (2005) which said:

In places where multigrade schools have been established in order to facilitate access to primary schooling, teachers need special training in managing such classrooms, which must be conducted by those who have experience in classroom management and organisation for these classes. Prescriptions on how to manage, without the support of appropriate materials, or guidance in planning units and topics, does little to assist teachers whose experience and imagination is completely oriented to the monograde setting. (p. 111)

The findings, however, echoed Iredale’s (1996) assertion that in the context of the Global South, neither teachers nor teacher trainers are fully equipped and trained to take part in multigrade teaching (p. 13). Looking at the role of the World Bank which co-sponsored the Jomtien Conference (1990) and citing how little key documents such as the *World Declaration on Education for All* and *Framework for Action* had to say on the question of teacher education, he unravels the state of teacher training institutions in developing countries and their inability to train teachers in the intended manner.

A common response by all teachers interviewed in Case 1 was their reluctance and outright prohibition of allowing students’ L1, Mewati, in the classroom despite candidly admitting that there existed a communication barrier between the two and students often struggled to follow teachers, often as late as until grade 8. Teachers seemed unaware of the vast literature that suggests using students’ L1 inside the classroom to help affirm students’ linguistic and cultural identity, acquire literacy skills, and develop an ability where students can engage critically and creatively with not just the text but any larger issues affecting them or others generally (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

When learners can follow teachers and teachers respect learners’ freedom of expression, it makes the learning process easier and leads to a better outcome by helping students become autonomous learners, one of the goals as mentioned in the NCF (2005). It reduces stress and makes students less anxious. This is crucial because the lack of comprehension and pressure to perform in high-stakes tests such as the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (Grade 10) and the Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate (Grade 12) Examinations, commonly known as boards exams, often leads to a range of widespread educational problems across

India, including rote-learning, exam-induced psychological stress and anxiety, and suicides (Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2014). Realizing this, the RTE Act (2009) seemingly attempted to alleviate these problems by introducing some of the changes. The teachers, however, were either dissatisfied or felt alienated because of the emergence of this Act. This is discussed below.

8.1.3 Theme 3: Policy Level

All teachers believed that the RTE Act (2009) failed to address teachers' concerns and in particular failed to retain students (with teachers claiming emphasis on enrollment), assessing students (teacher seemed dissatisfied with and untrained in using the newly introduced continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) and were in favor of reintroducing the old system) and defining teachers' roles clearly (with teachers claiming they were overburdened with teaching and other non-teaching tasks and that the RTE Act challenged teachers' authority by centering students, their grievances and taking away teachers' right to punish or fail them, thanks to the 'no corporal punishment' and 'no detention policy'). Interestingly enough, the 'no detention policy' as part of the RTE Act (2009) that mandated students could no longer be held back by schools in a grade until they complete grade 8 so as to create a stress-free environment was scrapped by the federal government in July 2018 amidst heated public debates among educationists and policymakers, leaving it up to individual states to decide if they wish to continue with the provision (Nanda, 2018). Behind this lay the (mistaken) assumption that if students were automatically promoted to the next grade, there would be no incentive for them to exert any effort. Additionally, many schools failed to conduct regular evaluations of students as part of the CCE requirements, the main aim of which was to provide information to teachers and parents regarding the progress of students (Ahsan, Banerjee, & Hari, 2018, p. 7).

One of the reasons CCE was brought into existence was for "diagnosis, remediation and enhancing of learning" (NCF, 2005, p. 115), however, almost every teacher reported that the old system of "pass and fail" should be brought back as it was "much simpler". Almost all teachers believed out-of-school children should be separated from the "regular students" or else they would be a cause for "distraction". This view goes against the spirit of NCF (2005) which called for "nurturing an enabling environment" (p. 81). Criticizing the 'no detention policy' of the RTE Act (2009), teachers stressed upon competition and how this alone ensures excellence.

Prioritizing competition over cooperation by teachers went against the values prescribed in the NCF (2005) which warned against “excessive emphasis on competitiveness and individual achievement” as doing so can distort “social relations within schools, adversely affecting peer relations and undermining values such as cooperation and sensitivity to others” (pp. 85-86).

While both the NCF (2005) and RTE Act (2009) tried to change the teachers’ role and image by redefining how they have been traditionally perceived as disseminators of knowledge to facilitators of knowledge, responses from teachers indicated that they were not pleased and had concerns because teachers believed it challenged their authority and that ‘students were not afraid of them anymore’. Teachers held onto conventional wisdom that ‘children learn best under pressure or in fear’ and the idea of helping students through dialogue or enabling them to self-regulate their own behavior (NCF, 2005, pp. 87-88), seemed odd to most teachers. Thus, a wide gap was noted between what the RTE Act (2009) intended and on the ground reality.

It is for this reason teachers felt alienated and believed policies such as the RTE Act (2009) were imposed on them from the top without ever consulting them beforehand. This is not surprising considering under neoliberalism, teachers often feel removed and alienated from their labor as well as the overall decision-making process (Harvie, 2006, p. 10). Thus, teachers in Case 1 were not too satisfied with the RTE Act (2009). For any policy to be successful, it is imperative to take local actors into account. In order to see how the counterpart to Case 1 fared, Case 2 is looked in detail below.

8.2 Case 2–Urban School

8.2.1 Theme 1: Institutional Level

In terms of infrastructure, unlike Case 1 school(s), the Case 2 school did not suffer from infrastructural neglect. This aligns with Desai, Dubey, Vanneman, and Banerji (2009) who noted that aided elite private schools (government aided but privately managed) tend to be substantially better funded with better infrastructure than government schools (p. 16). Along with better infrastructure, an adequate teaching workforce ensured that Case 2 differed from Case 1 in significant ways. One of the important implications being that teachers in Case 2 were able to focus on teaching tasks alone rather than being forced to engage in non-teaching tasks or being burdened with managing large classes which tends to lead to teachers spending

more time on handling student disciplinary issues and takes away time from teaching and tends to affect learning outcomes (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Richards & Pennington, 1998; Spada & Massey, 1992).

While the Case 2 school did not suffer from teacher shortages, as was seen in Case 1 school(s), it was similar in some respects, in that migration was the norm with most teachers belonging to non-Meo groups. This further intensified inter-ethnic politics with Meo teachers reporting discrimination during the recruitment process. The recruitment criteria of the school favored English-speaking teachers over those who were only proficient in Hindi or Mewati. This further affected the communication gap found between teachers and students. The management and teachers in Case 2, however, boasted of being an ‘English-medium school’. It is this appeal that draws most students and parents to elite private schools in India. As Desai et al. (2009) confirmed, one of the main attractions of elite private schools in India lies in their promise of providing an English-medium education (p. 15).

That said, this does not guarantee that teachers in elite private schools, such as Case 2, would necessarily be better trained than any other school, such as Case 1 school(s). This was shown with teachers in Case 2 admitting that not much emphasis was laid on regular teacher training by the school and that they did not receive sufficient in-service training. This is similar to Desai et al.’s (2009) claim: “Private school teachers are more likely to have a college degree but less likely to have received teacher training than government schools. Part of this difference may be that employment in government schools is conditional on a training certificate” (p. 16). While this may be true, the findings of this study indicate that, with contractualization among teachers in both private and government schools, contract teachers are being kept away from receiving in-service training. This combined with no job security, lesser wages, easier to hire and fire approach, budget cuts and the rising trend of outsourcing of teacher training services by the state and national governments to NGOs and private firms, there are even lesser incentives to train teachers, as per the dominant neoliberal logic of the state.

One of the other ways teachers are kept ‘in line’ and English-medium private elite schools continue to draw their legitimacy, is by emphasizing accountability through excessive and rigorous inspections, as was seen in Case 2, but was reportedly missing in Case 1. However, this surveillance style monitoring of teachers is symptomatic of, as Mills and McGregor (2014) argued, “regimes of efficiency, productivity, performativity, and ‘normalization’ favored by

neoliberalism” (p. 87). As a matter of fact, Kumar (2012) reminded us: “these years have witnessed a contrary trajectory which has brought the teacher under the surveillance regime of CCTV cameras and biometric attendance” (p. 20).

That said, it is not to suggest that accountability is not necessary, but as Perryman (2006, p. 150) insisted, the mechanism with which accountability is ensured and the way it is pursued needs to be investigated and not uncritically accepted. Thus, Perryman (2006) questioned this increasing culture of accountability in education, where it is seen “unquestionably [as] ‘a good thing’ ... with any critics of the regime seen as being against progress” (p. 149). Critics such as Lonsdale and Parsons (1998) maintained: “The exercise of school inspection [is] one of improvement through threat and fear, an intentionally disciplining role” (p. 110).

Using the idea of ‘panoptic performativity’ to describe school inspection, Perryman (2006) explained it as “a regime in which frequency of inspection and the sense of being perpetually under surveillance leads to teachers performing in ways dictated by the discourse of inspection in order to escape the regime” (p. 148). This is to say that to pass the inspection test, “the school becomes focused around performing for inspection” (Perryman, 2009, p. 611) and teachers teach lessons “to a rigidly prescribed routine” (Perryman, 2006, p. 148). One of the consequences of this then could be teachers engaging in ‘teaching to the test’ (Ehren & Shackleton, 2014, p. 10). Thus, excessive school inspections, in themselves, may not ensure learning per se. Some of its (unintended) consequences that have been reported, aside from teaching to the test, are increases in the levels of teachers’ stress, lack of willingness to experiment and innovate on part of schools, schools attempting to ‘game’ the system by means of showing false documents, excluding weak students from performing in tests and shielding weak teachers from being examined in order to be assessed favorably by the inspector (De Wolf & Janssens, 2007, pp. 382–383).

From the teachers’ responses, it was clear that frequent school inspections worked as a disciplining force and as an accountability measure, but what was not so clear was the amount of support provided, since for schools to work effectively, Fullan (1991) advised the need for both. Fullan (1991) believed that the combination of support and pressure, used in a judicious manner, may bring about the desired change, raise educational standards and act as a better accountability measure since “pressure without support leads to resistance and alienation:

support without pressure leads to drift or waste of resources” (p. 91). As such, there’s a need to view responses by teachers in Case 2 in a broad context.

8.2.2 Theme 2: Pedagogical Level

Similar to Case 1, Case 2 teachers followed a traditional teacher-centered approach, relied on textbooks and emphasized ‘completion of syllabus’ as their main goal. Student achievement and performance were the main objectives, as reported by all the teachers and school principal and made visible on school walls, but this has been reported to lead to ‘teach to the test’ tendency on the part of teachers which further encourages a teacher-centered instruction model. This embodied Martin Haberman’s (1991) concept of “pedagogy of poverty” i.e. [urban] “classrooms that emphasize control over curiosity and content over critical thinking” (Beaton & Mayo Jr., 2016, p. 226), a typical outcome of neoliberal influence on education. This also went against the spirit of NCF (2005) which particularly laid emphasis on “child-centered pedagogy” (p. 13) and “critical pedagogy” (p. 22). Seen in this regard, Case 2 didn’t differ significantly from Case 1.

8.2.3 Theme 3: Policy Level

One of the ways English-medium elite private schools such as Case 2 ensured the goals of student achievement and performance were met was by circumventing the RTE Act. When asked to comment on the RTE Act, the teachers remarked they were either unaware or justified its non-applicability claiming that it would interfere with the school’s right to screen students based on their ‘merit’ or ‘class background’.

What the teachers seemed unaware of, however, was that this was in strict violation of Section 13(1) of the RTE Act which clearly mentions:

No school or person shall, while admitting a child, collect any capitation fee and subject the child or his or her parents or guardian to any screening procedure. If a school subjects a child to screening procedure, it shall be punishable with a fine up to Rs 25,000 for the first contravention and Rs 50,000 for each subsequent contraventions.

This was done to make the admission process non-discriminatory, fair and transparent. This practice, however, is not that uncommon as a report by the *Hindustan Times* in 2012 suggested that over “95% Schools Don’t Comply with RTE Guidelines”.

Another report by the *Financial Express* entitled “Despite RTE Act Prohibiting it, Schools Continue to Test/Interview Students & Parents”, confirmed the rampant use of screening procedures in private aided and unaided schools to exclude students, especially those belonging to marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds (Gaur, 2016). The report remarked, “in the six years of the working of this law, there is a shocking gulf between the law on paper and the reality on the ground” (Gaur, 2016).

One of the key sticking points of the RTE Act (2009) that all private schools have shown strong opposition to, is Section 12 that mandates 25% reservation of the entry-level seats for children belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups with the Indian government offering to cover the per-child cost or school-cost, whichever is lower (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2009, Section 12, subsection c). The teachers and school principal in Case 2 also opposed this provision and justified exclusion of students from weaker socioeconomic background on the basis that these students would not be able to ‘adjust’ to the school environment. Case 2 was no different in this regard than other schools in that it led to several “unsuccessful litigations from private schools” (Chudgar & Creed, 2014, p. 5) where they could be seen “locking horns with State governments over their perceived autonomy vis-à-vis obligations outlined in the RTE Act” (Gaur, 2017).

Regardless of the noise made by private elite schools on the question of reservation, the fact, however, is that most of these seats are lying vacant, remaining unclaimed by parents as many disadvantaged parents either remain uninformed (Chudgar & Creed, 2014, p. 5) or are simply denied by schools (Padnekar, 2017). It is in this context that the reluctance on the part of teachers in Case 2, when asked to comment on this aspect of the RTE Act (2009), was most noticeable. Many chose to either not comment by declaring they had no knowledge concerning it, or when probed further, showed complete disapproval of the reservation policy by asserting it came into conflict with the school’s right to maintain ‘autonomy’.

Thus, exclusion of students not considered ‘meritorious’ enough was justified on the grounds of neoliberal discourse of ‘autonomy’ under which private schools would have the right to exclude students from marginalized socioeconomic backgrounds. Clause 12 of the RTE Act that mandates private schools to reserve 25% of seats for students from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds is essentially a “de facto voucher system” promoted by the Indian state that ensures the transfer of further public funds to private schools (which in some cases are already

aided like Case 2) to offset the cost incurred that comes with educating a child at a private school (Thapliyal, 2015, p. 97).

In the name of giving parents the ‘choice’ to choose schools, it further undermines the public education system because instead of improving access and quality of education provided in government schools, it promotes privatization, legitimates abdication of the state’s responsibility to provide equitable quality of free education and further perpetuates segregation of students that are already segregated along class/caste lines. Additionally, there are no studies to show that it leads to better ‘learning outcomes’ (even in places where it may, it’s attributed to the socioeconomic background of students rather than the quality of education provided per se) (Majumdar & Mooij, 2011).

Furthermore, when private schools such as Case 2 are subsidized with public money, this “can increase social stratification and rural-urban divisions” with ethnic minority students being “ghettoized” in government schools that underperform in comparison to their private school counterparts (Alexander, 2001, p. 310). The World Bank is among the leading international institutions responsible for funding education projects in the Global South and for the trend of subsidizing private schools with public money. Thus, its role—along with the IMF—in influencing education in developing countries such as India has been “controversial” (Alexander, 2001, p. 310). Under the neoliberal framework, this gap between government schools and private schools has widened and the role of multilateral organizations such as the World Bank has been crucial in that while it has advocated for reducing social expenditure for public schools, it has simultaneously argued for privatization or private school education (Klees, 2008, p. 322). Thus, any discussion on elite private schools such as Case 2 (or government schools such as Case 1) will be incomplete without contextualizing them within the broader framework of neoliberalism.

8.3 Cross-Case Analysis

After having discussed each case individually, this section will compare and contrast the two cases in order to understand how the effects of neoliberalism (manifested in institutional, pedagogical and policy levels) interacted with minority LiEP and how it affected teachers’ views, judgements, decision-making abilities and behavior inside the classroom. A visual representation of the key themes of both cases is presented in Figure 25.



Figure 25 – A visual representation of key themes across both cases

The way the effects of neoliberalism manifested themselves at the institutional level in the two types of schools chosen for this study was clear by how they differed along funding, management and accountability dimensions. While the rural government school(s) (Case 1) suffered from inadequate funding, neglect and failure in ensuring accountability, the urban private school (Case 2), on the other hand, was funded adequately and received substantial funding from the government by means of grants including land on a concessional rate, was privately managed (i.e. allowed to get away by not constituting SMC with representatives from parents and local authority in the name of ‘autonomy’, with the result that it was not answerable to the community in ways Case 1 was), additionally, the school was noticed charging capitation fees as well as holding a screening procedure for students for admission, both practices being in violation of the RTE Act) and focused excessively on accountability by means of surveillance and periodic school inspections.

The way the effects of neoliberalism manifested themselves at the pedagogical level was similar in both types of schools. Teachers in both school types adopted a traditional textbook reliant, exam focused, teacher-centered approach, with the exception that in Case 2, teachers seemed better prepared and relatively enthusiastic towards CCE than Case 1 teachers. The lack of training regarding teaching out-of-school and ‘drop-out’ or pushed-out students and designing remedial or age-appropriate syllabus was found to be the same across teachers in both types of schools. This was especially critical given the new guidelines under the RTE Act (2009) that requires teachers to teach students who may have never attended school before, belong to different age groups and weaker socioeconomic backgrounds. The lack of awareness when it came to alternative teaching methods and strategies also shone through across teachers in both types of schools, but this was not unexpected considering the lack of emphasis on teacher training, the content and correspondence between teacher training materials and teachers’ day-to-day concerns in both types of schools.

In both rural government and urban private schools, the trend was to not provide training to contract teachers and outsource teacher training work to NGOs and corporate firms. The increasing contractualization of the teaching workforce and withdrawal of government involvement in teacher training represents a transferal of responsibility from the government to market forces and could arguably be seen as part of a wider project of privatizing and marketizing education. This is consistent with Sadgopal (2006) who put forward that this

outcome, facilitated by the Indian state and led by global financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, is not random but part of a “well-designed” neoliberal project (p. 93). Furthermore, as Alexander (2001) noted, handing over the provision of educational services to private actors and NGOs does not necessarily guarantee effective outcomes as their specialization primarily lies in “small-scale innovation” instead of “high-quality formal educational services on a large scale with financial accountability” (p. 310).

There is a massive gap between what gets said in the policy documents such as the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005) and what actually happens on the ground. As the findings of this study reveal, the reality was much different to what the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005) (two key educational reforms that theoretically attempted to push forward new ethos) envisaged: critical pedagogy will take prominence over textbook-centered/driven pedagogy, education will be child-friendly and constructivist in nature, teacher education will link theory and practice and the role of the teacher will be that of a facilitator or co-constructor of knowledge rather than of a disseminator. While the RTE Act (2009) ostensibly makes use of the RBD, the results of this study echoed what Robeyns (2006) warned, that much of it remained just on paper with no accountability in place (p. 76). The findings of this study highlighted what Bajaj (2014) called the “productive plasticity of rights talk” (p. 66) and how it has been employed by the RTE Act (2009) to not much effect, as is clear from various reports such as the India Exclusion Report (2014) and ASER (2012), that highlight its failure in implementation as well as outcome.

It has been widely suggested by educationists globally that for any policy to be effective, it has to take account of local actors and their beliefs. The findings revealed that while Case 1 teachers were on the whole dissatisfied with the RTE Act (2009), felt excluded, devalued and alienated from the policy formulation process, Case 2 teachers were found either unaware or justified its non-applicability to their school on the ground of its elite status. In the case of the latter, teachers were seen justifying how the RTE Act was not applicable to their school because it was “an English medium school” and by extension elite, and the Act was thus only for the “backward rural government schools”. This is not surprising considering “neoliberalism is premised upon the identification of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Runswick-Cole, Lawthom, & Goodley, 2016, p. 258), where ‘us’ represents the “neoliberal ideal type” and ‘them’ represents the “others” (Runswick-Cole, 2014, p. 1124).

The way the effects of neoliberalism manifested themselves at the policy level was visible by the Indian state not supporting Hindi-medium rural government schools and its teachers by means of adequate funding, teacher training and hearing their grievances all while simultaneously providing a thriving space for English-medium elite private schools (and to a degree its teachers) to flourish by means of transferring public funds to private schools that are exempt from the same accountability mechanisms that are put in place for rural government schools (and its teachers).

The focus group session with government officials and policymakers working for the SSA further confirmed the difficulties encountered at the policy level, flaws within the RTE Act and an increasing trend towards privatization, contractualization and deregulation. This has significant implications for education to ensure equitable quality of education is provided to all; for teachers and teacher education as well as the overall context within which teaching and learning takes place.

One of the other key themes to have emerged throughout this study was the vocal manner in which Meo participants discussed the (perceived) discrimination, non-Meo participants' rejection of this claim and the resulting tension that ensued following this discussion. The focus group session brought this to the surface – as did the prior individual interviews with teachers from both cases. The focus group included an equal number of members from both dominant (Hindu non-Meo) and non-dominant (Muslim Meo) communities. The inter-ethnic politics between the two communities and socio-cultural-historical-political factors that gave rise to this tension played a significant part in influencing the local labor market situation, officials' and teachers' beliefs, policies, and its implementation on the ground as well as mutual respect and trust between the members of these two communities.

A political climate where the perception of discrimination along caste, tribal and ethno-religious lines frames the context of the cases. These differences, whether real or perceived, significantly predate neoliberalism. The long run nature of these problems are a serious obstacle to inter-ethnic harmony but more specifically a serious obstacle to Mewati gaining any space in the educational setting.

8.4 Implications of the Study

This section provides an insight into the implications drawn based on the findings of this study, particularly with regard to teachers' beliefs and contextual factors, two variables that play a significant part in influencing LiEP, teachers' decision-making processes, pedagogical practices, classroom interactions, teaching effectiveness and professional lives.

8.4.1 Teachers' Beliefs

It was apparent that nearly all teachers in both cases agreed that not using students' L1 Mewati caused problems and impeded communication, yet they persisted with disallowing its use inside the classroom despite admitting that doing so posed acute educational problems for Mewati speaking students to the extent that it severely affected student-teacher interaction, students' motivation and performance. This finding then warranted a question: "Why did teachers continue to follow the same teaching strategy that was known to not work as well as they would have hoped?"

Teachers' beliefs had a lot to do with that decision. Nearly all teachers held unfavorable views towards Mewati, refused to acknowledge Mewati as a language in its own right or that it could be used as a resource in education. Pajares (1992) noted that beliefs could "strongly influence perception" as well as behavior (p. 326) and stated that its filtering effect "ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing" (p. 325). But what makes beliefs complicated is their interconnectedness in terms of their relation to other beliefs (Rokeach, 1968) and the fact that they exist in clusters, with each belief cluster separated from others, "with a protective shield, that prevents any cross fertilization among them or any confrontation between them" (Green, 1971, p. 47). This makes it possible to hold contradictory or inconsistent beliefs simultaneously.

One of the reasons teachers are less likely to part ways from earlier held beliefs is because beliefs are formed early in life, and with time, they become hard to change (Pajares, 1992, p. 317). Thus, Nisbett and Ross (1980) argued, people are resistant to change their beliefs even in the face of evidence of them holding contradictory beliefs (as cited in Pajares, 1992, p. 317). Nonetheless, if any change must occur, as in the case of teachers holding negative views towards students' mother tongues – as they did towards Mewati – then teachers' beliefs cannot go unchallenged and need to be altered (Pajares, 1992, p. 321). Teachers must be made aware

of any underlying tacit assumptions, attitudes and beliefs as they play a significant part in the decision-making, teaching and learning processes.

What makes beliefs complicated is that they are often hard to distinguish from knowledge, i.e. how to establish where knowledge ends and where belief begins (Pajares, 1992, p. 309). Pajares (1992) cautioned, beliefs could be “an unreliable guide to the nature of reality” (p. 310). This is because, as Nespor (1987) remarked, unlike knowledge, beliefs could be held in the absence of any general or group consensus with no regard to validity, appropriateness or internal consistency of those beliefs (as cited in Pajares, 1992, p. 311). That said, according to Pajares (1992), beliefs are far more influential than knowledge when it comes to “determining how individuals organise and define problems and are stronger predictors of behaviour” (p. 311).

S. Borg (2006) argued that in the field of teacher cognition, teachers’ beliefs have received little attention in comparison to teachers’ knowledge. One of the reasons for this is as Pajares (1992) suggested, “the construct of educational beliefs is itself broad and encompassing... is diffuse and ungainly, too difficult to operationalize, too context free” (p. 316). In order to provide conceptual clarity, therefore, Pajares (1992) advised that researchers should clearly mention “beliefs about”. Thus, this research is an attempt to add to the literature on teachers’ beliefs about a language variety called Mewati and its use (or lack thereof) inside the classroom.

8.4.2 Contextual Factors

Contextual factors play a key role in modifying teachers’ beliefs and affecting how they make decisions (Bailey, 1996; Crookes & Arakaki 1999; Johnson 1996; Richards & Pennington 1998; Spada & Massey 1992). Several studies have examined contextual factors – not all contextual settings however – particularly those more representative of the global scenario have been made the focus of teacher cognition inquiry i.e. the way teachers think, believe and make decisions. S. Borg (2003) called for exploring settings, such as classrooms, which are part of state schools, where non-native teachers teach syllabuses that are to a large extent prescribed (Borg, S., 2003, p. 98). S. Borg (2003) claimed, much of the research that has taken place till now, drawing links between cognition and context, has been conducted in settings which are not necessarily ‘typical’ in a global sense (p. 94). Much of the research has been focused on adult learners in small classes in universities or private institutions (S. Borg, 2003, p. 94). Citing a massive gap in teacher

cognition literature, S. Borg (2003) remarked in all the research he had reviewed earlier, hardly any such study reflected the above characteristics (p. 94).

Burns (1996) also called for “greater attention to the social and institutional contexts of classrooms”, if one intended to understand what it is that language teachers do (as cited in Borg, S., 2003, p. 98). This study attempted to bridge this gap by looking into the role played by contextual factors in a setting that is broadly more representative of the Global South and one that has not been given much attention in the teacher cognition literature.

Noting the role played by contextual factors, the findings of this study indicated, for instance, that Case 1 participants complained of: teacher shortages, contractualization, heavy workload, large classes with a high pupil-teacher ratio, lack of resources, inadequate in-service training, unmotivated students, school policies excluding teachers’ input, being assigned non-teaching tasks such as handling and supervising students’ mid-day meals, monitoring construction work, helping in vaccination programs, conducting census surveys, helping in election booths, relief and disaster management. Case 2 participants, on the other hand, also complained of a heavy teaching workload (though not so many non-teaching duties as their rural government school counterparts complained of), large classes and inflexible school policies.

All these characteristics were symptomatic of neoliberalism and how it affects teachers’ professional lives and decision-making skills on the ground. As S. Borg (2003) stated, context can conflict with cognition and constrain what teachers do (p. 94). The role contextual factors play in (facilitating or hindering) teachers’ decision-making process could best be illustrated by looking at the context of Mewat where there exists an acute shortage of teachers (The Tribune, 2015). Under the neoliberal model, to ‘rectify’ this teacher shortage, less expenditure is spent and contractualization of the teaching force across India is the norm. The result is underqualified, untrained (or undertrained) and underpaid teachers who are increasingly being hired on a short-term contract basis with no job guarantee (Sadgopal, 2006, p. 115).

Many of the participants interviewed in this study included “contract teachers”. On being asked if they attended workshops/seminars for professional development or received any in-service training, for example, nearly all of them answered in the negative saying they “were not allowed to”, as only “regular” or “permanent teachers” could lay any claim to in-service-training. This inadequacy of in-service training is noted by Chudgar (2013), who pointed out that according to the data collected in 2010–2011, only close to 30% of teachers nationally reported having

received any in-service training if at all in the previous year (p. 67). In the case of Haryana, for instance, where the fieldwork for this study took place, only 1% of teachers reported having received any in-service training in the previous year (Chudgar, 2013, p. 67). In contrast to the government schools, private schools fare even worse, where only 1% or 2% of total teachers reported having received any in-service training (Chudgar, 2013, p. 67).

What's alarming though is the state of teacher education in India and the type of training teachers currently are exposed to (both pre-service and in-service). As Ghosh (2011) claimed, a very significant number of school teachers in India receive no in-service training at all (p. 135). Ghosh (2011) highlighted the mushrooming of private training institutes across India, which are insufficiently monitored or regulated, and provide pre-service training, with limited or no practical exposure (not much different from what is usually the case with standard B.Ed. courses) (p. 135).

According to Ghosh (2011), the problems of in-service training lie in their "inadequate quantity, uneven quality, outdated syllabi, and poor management" (p. 135). Ghosh stated many teacher training institutes are "currently understaffed, demoralized, and incapable of giving good quality training to teachers", partly because the teacher training positions are left to bureaucrats with no teaching or pedagogic experience who think of this as a punishment posting (p. 135). Furthermore, even in the case when regular in-service training is imparted, Ghosh claimed, there is no way of finding the actual impact of these training courses on teachers or teaching-learning processes in the classroom (p. 135). The findings of this study confirmed what Ghosh (2011) had said earlier.

Nearly all teachers interviewed in this study confirmed not having received adequate, training that is responsive to their needs. On the occasions where teachers did receive some training, they complained of being exposed to rigid and outdated training materials that were incompatible with the problems they faced on the ground and were in turn taught by those who had little to no classroom teaching experience. Also, in line with Ghosh's (2011) claim was that not only did bureaucrats and officials serving in the SSA (part of the focus group) but also non-Meo migrant teachers considered working in Mewat as a punishment post. Several migrant teachers (and officials) candidly confessed that working in a remote and rural area such as Mewat greatly affected their motivation and that they were "passing their time" waiting for the right opportunity to come along so they could move out of the region. This was

compounded by the absence of any transparent transfer policy, as informed by teachers, and a system marred with corruption, lobbying and heavy political interference. This finding was in line with other studies that also reported the same (Beteille, 2015; Beteille, Kingdon & Muzammil, 2017; Chudgar & Pippin, 2013).

Therefore, by looking at the accounts of participants interviewed in this study as well as the supporting literature, it could be gauged how teacher education in its present state – along with broader contextual factors of the school – plays a part in affecting the way teachers make decisions. However, the question arises that in the presence of so many structural constraints and conditions (characterized by neoliberalism) and with the resulting contradictions, how *rational* then, could these teachers' decisions be? The idea is not to suggest that teachers are incapable of making rational decisions but that not all decisions could be termed *rational*, given teachers' own admission of failing to consider individual needs, capacities and potential of students. Instead, as exemplified by the findings of this study, teachers are “boundedly rational” (Lee & Porter, 1993, p. 397). In agreement with Lee and Porter (1993), I argue that the framework of bounded rationality, though not without limitations, provides an excellent framework to understand human cognition and behavior (p. 397).

8.4.3 Implications of Bounded Rationality as a Theoretical Concept for Research and Practice

S. Borg (2003) while commenting on the impact of teacher cognition (i.e. “what teachers know, believe, and think”) on teachers' professional lives, argued mainstream educational research in the preceding 25 years has finally recognized its impact and the findings generated from various studies point to a fact that is “now largely uncontested”. He noted that “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (p. 81). Much like S. Borg (2003), Bonvin (2003) claimed, “teachers make rational decisions within the context of what they believe” (p. 290).

From viewing teachers as technicians to rational decision makers, the current trend has also shifted to seeing them as constructivists or reflective sense-makers (Borg, S., 2006, p. 15). For instance, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) used “midwife” as a metaphor to describe the role of a teacher when seen from the perspective of constructivism. As Belenky et al. commented: “The midwife-teacher's first concern is to preserve the student's fragile

newborn thoughts, to see that they are born with their truth intact...Midwife-teachers focus not on their own knowledge (as the lecturer does) but on the students' knowledge. They contribute when needed, but it is always clear that the baby is not theirs, but the student's" (p. 218).

Seen from the constructivist lens, to help students construct meaning, teachers act more as 'facilitators' rather than the only source of 'disseminators of true knowledge' (Oldfather, Bonds, & Bray, 1994, p. 13). Under the traditional "banking model" (Friere 1970), teachers' role was "to 'fill' the students by making deposits of information which the teacher considers to constitute true knowledge" (p. 63). Students' role was "to store the deposits" (Oldfather et al., 1994, p. 6). The findings of this study revealed that while the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005) hoped teachers would shift from the banking model to constructivism, the banking model persisted in both cases.

The current literature on teacher cognition and teacher education emphasizes teachers' new role as constructivists who co-construct meaning along with students on the basis of their experience. In the process, they continuously reflect upon their actions and behavior. This is in contrast to their previous role, where teachers were seen as technicians, "who assesses the needs of the learner and then presents the "correct" prescribed sequence of objectives in the "correct" instructional mode" (Fosnot, 1989, p. 18).

This is radically different to constructivist teaching which "typically involves more student centered, active learning experiences, more student-student and student-teacher interaction, and more work with concrete materials and in solving realistic problems" (Winitzky & Kauchak, 1997, pp. 62–63). This is in stark contrast to the position and role of teachers, demonstrated in this study. The conditions in this case were complex school environments, the typical characteristics of which included: teacher-centered classrooms, unmotivated students (and teachers), a communication barrier between students and teachers, large classes (with disciplinary problems), heavy workloads, state-controlled set syllabus and curriculum, examination pressure, and lack of resources. As Richards and Pennington (1998) argued:

Such factors discourage experimentation and innovation, and encourage a 'safe' strategy of sticking close to prescribed materials and familiar teaching approaches. Without any relief from these factors and without any reward for innovating in the face of them, the teachers would naturally be led back toward a conservative teaching approach to align themselves with the characteristics of the existing teaching context. (pp. 187–188)

These social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and classroom, therefore, shape teachers' practices (Borg, S., 2003, p. 94). The characteristics described above are quite typical in the Global South and are found to have a bearing on the way teachers think and make decisions. Jennings-Wray (1980) compared the situation of teachers in developed countries like Britain and America to those in the Global South and highlighted a significant difference regarding influence and constraints on teachers' decision-making. While the British teacher, more than their American counterpart, asserted their autonomy and independence of institutional influence, the West Indian teacher accepted the institutional authority and perceived their role as a curriculum implementer rather than as a curriculum decision-maker (Jennings-Wray, 1980, p. 238). Furthermore, while the West Indian teachers experienced lack of autonomy in curriculum decision-making, policy, motivation and job satisfaction constraints, British and American teachers perceived themselves as operating under few constraints (Jennings-Wray, 1980, p. 241). For teachers to play a more active part in curriculum decision making, it has been argued that they need to be granted more power. However, Jennings-Wray (1980) raised an important question in this regard: "Do teachers in the West Indies perceive their role as curriculum decision-makers?", and answered, "At this point in time, it would seem not" (p. 232).

The quality of teacher education provided by educational institutions in any country plays a critical part in deciding the provision of quality education in that country (Jennings-Wray, 1980, p. 231). Citing the problems with teacher education in the West Indies, Jennings-Wray (1980) then asked whether "teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and qualities" could be produced under such conditions "that would equip them to educate for change" (p. 231). Jennings-Wray (1980) mentioned that it has indeed been argued that "teachers in the present teacher education system in the West Indies are being prepared as 'gatekeepers' and for 'systems maintenance' rather than as promoters and developers of the full potential of the students for the change process" (pp. 231–232). This is often attributed to teachers' reluctance towards change and their tendency to cling to familiar practices they have become accustomed to (Jennings-Wray, 1984, p. 41). That said, Jennings-Wray (1984) made the case that teachers are never "passive consumers" but rather "pragmatic skeptics", whose real concern is to do with attending to students' immediate needs rather than accomplishing long-term goals (p. 42).

Jennings-Wray (1984), however, suggested that for any change to occur, teacher participation and involvement is the key and they must be included at all phases of planning, development and implementation (p. 42). This sentiment was shared by Kerr (1969) who on writing about curriculum change in developing countries made the same claim that: “Curriculum development cannot proceed unless the teachers are available and willing to participate” (p. 4). Jennings-Wray (1984) declared: “There is much research evidence, in fact, to show that teachers involved in the curriculum planning process have more favourable attitudes towards the implementation of curricular programmes than those not so involved” (p. 42).

During this study, several teachers complained of being left out when it came to make critical policy decisions which were made in a top-down fashion. This was best illustrated in the words of a native Mewati speaking teacher Rasul in Case 1 who remarked: “Policies get made by bureaucrats and elites sitting in air-conditioned rooms without any consultation with teachers”. Nevertheless, Jennings-Wray (1984) questioned the extent to which “an already all too harassed teacher should take on the additional task of a dynamic role in curriculum development “and to what extent such demands on teachers, though important, are justified (p. 43). On the question of change and innovation in general, and teacher involvement in curriculum change in particular, in Jamaica (but could be extended to other similar contexts like India), Jennings-Wray (1984) raised questions about the realism of teachers acting as *rational utility maximizers* [emphasis mine] capable of adopting significant classroom innovations in the context of the Global South (p. 42). Therefore, in light of the findings that emerged from this study, Jennings-Wray’s (1980) previous concerns, and in particular Jennings-Wray’s (1984) above extract, is crucial on two accounts:

a) These arguments succinctly explain the conditions and constraints under which teachers in the Global South operate (including a setting such as Mewat in India). Jamaican primary school teachers, for instance, “pose[d] far greater constraints on their teaching than their counterparts in Britain and the United States” (Jennings-Wray, 1984, p. 43). Jennings-Wray (1984) then went on to argue, it is these very constraints which may account for teachers appearing as “obstructionists” (p. 43).

b) These arguments question the extent to which some teachers can be seen as “rational adopters”. Considering the “internal and external pressures” schools in the Global South

routinely have to bear, they imply a curtailing effect on teachers' capacity to function as "agents of change" (Jennings-Wray, 1984, p. 43).

The findings of this study confirmed many concerns shared by Jennings-Wray (1980, p. 240), in that teachers in Mewat, similar to those in Jamaica, worked in difficult conditions and with severe constraints, complained of a lack of professional training and showed lack of confidence in their competence. Seen in this light then, a case is made that teachers acted more as "boundedly rational" (Lee & Porter, 1990, 1993), given the limits imposed by structural constraints and conditions. This goes against the current trend of seeing teachers primarily as 'rational' and 'constructivist' in nature.

This claim finds resonance in the study conducted by Dyer, Choksi, Awasty, Iyer, Moyade, Nigam and Purohit (2002) on District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). Dyer et al. discussed the need for a new democratic approach to teacher education in India, critiqued the existing teacher training model for its failure "to put together theory and practice in a coherent way, meaning that teachers emerge neither as reflective practitioners nor as fully competent professionals" (Davies, 2002, p. 259). If current teachers are any indication of the teacher training model practised in India, claims made by Dyer et al. (2002) were consistent with the findings that emerged from this study.

The current study then used the concept of bounded rationality which acknowledges that teachers may not always make fully rational decisions. Its power lies in explaining how and why teachers make the decisions they do. As Lee and Porter (1990) pointed out, it "focuses on understanding why – why teachers (and also students) think and act in the ways that they do – from the perspective of teachers' thought processes" (p. 164). Therefore, the bounded rationality concept was used because it helped in best capturing teachers' tacit assumptions and considered the impact of internal and external pressures on the decisions they made.

Bounded rationality explains "why, in the face of uncertainty and complexity in the real-world situation, humans are to be satisfiers, rather than maximizers or optimizers (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 169). Thus, why teachers in complex and uncertain classroom situations, who may have no alternative, are likely to be satisfiers, behaving rationally within the limitation of their cognitive capacities (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 169). Teachers, to cope with the complexities of the classrooms, actively construct a simplified mental model of the real-life situation, within

the boundaries of their cognitive capacities, and settle for a satisfactory solution, behaving consistently according to it (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 164).

In the context of the present study, therefore, bounded rationality helped explain teachers' language choices that were partly based on their beliefs. For Kagan (1992), teachers' beliefs lie "at the very heart of teaching" (p. 85). Similarly, Pajares (1992) noting the centrality of beliefs asserted that they are the "best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (p. 307). Teachers' decision-making processes and outcomes can best be studied only when contextual factors along with beliefs and practices are taken into account, something this study aimed to accomplish.

This chapter discussed the findings in relation to the research question that examined how the effects of neoliberalism in education interacted with LiEP in school(s). This involved a focus on teachers' beliefs and actions inside the classroom with specific reference to the newly introduced RTE Act. The RTE Act purportedly makes uses of RBD, however, in the present neoliberal climate, is equally guided by HCT. The chapter first discussed findings in relation to two schools alongside the three themes separately before focusing on the outcomes of cross-case analysis. This was then followed by a discussion on the implications that could be drawn from this study, particularly regarding teachers' beliefs and contextual factors, both of which it was argued shaped teachers' actions inside the classroom, as is evident from much of the teacher cognition literature.

The discussion then moved to the analytical framework of bounded rationality which was proposed as a result of the findings that emerged from this study. It made a case that broader contextual factors, that include complex socio-historical realities as well as the reality of current neoliberal times, and teachers' prior beliefs, affect teachers' choices and judgements inside the classroom in ways that might not be fully consistent with much of the global scholarship on teacher cognition or national discourse on education in terms of what is expected of teachers as per the two key Indian interventions and reforms, i.e. the RTE Act (2009) and NCF (2005). Much of the teacher cognition literature, at times, idealizes teachers as individuals making complex but rational decisions in the context in which they work and sees them as constructivists who routinely act by reflecting on their practices. This however was not the case, as this study demonstrated. The implications of bounded rationality as a

theoretical concept for research and practice as a result was then briefly discussed. Following this is the final chapter that draws the overall conclusions from this study.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study set out to examine LiEP in the Indian state of Haryana and to explore the role of minority languages or ‘dialects’ such as Mewati as the MOI in schools across the Mewat district. Spolsky’s (2004) model of language policy was employed for this purpose. This model framed an examination of schools’ language in education policies – explicit and implicit, teachers’ language practices, beliefs and ideologies, and language management strategies, through comparative case studies of two types of schools (rural government and urban private). In carrying out the study, both Meo as well as non-Meo teachers were included in the sample. A comparison of teachers’ practices, beliefs, and management strategies was made to identify potential similarities and differences between teachers. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding into how teachers comprehended, negotiated and applied LiEPs within classrooms. In particular, the study sought to know more about how the current neoliberal climate interacts with LiEP and teachers’ decision-making skills, beliefs and actions inside classrooms.

The two key questions this study asked were:

- What LiEP was in place in two types of schools – urban (private) and rural (government)? What role, if any, did Mewati play in the policy framework?
- How did the effects of neoliberalism manifest themselves in the educational domain, specifically in the context of the RTE Act, and interact with LiEP? In other words, how did the effects of neoliberalism in education shape teachers’ classroom decisions, beliefs and actions (teacher cognition)?

Based on the evidence adduced, this study found that teachers in the rural schools followed a largely Hindi monolingual LiEP and espoused a more ‘nationalist’ ideology while teachers in the urban school followed for the most part a Hindi-English bilingual LiEP and espoused a more pragmatic globalist outlook. Overall, the LiEPs followed by both schools actively marginalized Mewati. Teachers in both schools continued to perceive the use of Mewati as a problem. Arguably, this study makes a case in favor of the use of Mewati in education, especially in the early years of education. The use of Mewati in the early years of education would help in improving enrolment and retention rates, addressing the literacy gap, helping

students engage in education, strengthening their cultural identity and affirming their linguistic rights.

This study has also shown how the current dominant neoliberal framework, under which most policies come to be designed, often leads to different outcomes for different schools. The only one factor that remained constant was that of marginalization of students' home language, in this case, Mewati, that was relegated to the status of a 'dialect' and not deemed worthy of use within the classroom by nearly all teachers. Taking the RTE Act as an example of a neoliberal education reform, this study has called into question both its implementation and effectiveness. It did so by focusing on teachers' views, beliefs and schools' practices as well as critically exploring how the Act lent itself to be applied differently across different schools, leading to different outcomes, both for teachers and students. The study concluded that the RTE Act (2009), hailed as a new policy solution which was supposed to be "inclusive" and "responsive to students' needs", has been silent on the question of providing an equitable quality of education.

9.1 Contributions to Knowledge

This thesis is a significant and original study that makes major theoretical and empirical contributions to the discourse and praxis of language in education policy and teacher cognition. Drawing on new data from a Global Southern context, the study both augments previous teacher cognition research hailing from the Global North and also contributes new insights from the Southern perspective.

The singular most important contribution of this thesis is that it draws attention to the importance of the political economy dimension in shaping teachers' lives and decisions. This line of enquiry in the fields of LiEP and teacher cognition research had so far not been adequately pursued. This thesis, therefore, hopes to be one of the pioneering studies that pushes the envelope toward a new trajectory taking into account the role of the political economy and neoliberalism in informing education policies, practices and problems, particularly with regard to minority languages. In doing so, it unpacks how policies are made; problematizes and contributes to conceptualizations of 'rights'; unveils discourses of contestation concerning what passes for 'language'; and helps explain how and why teachers make the decisions they do inside the classroom.

Furthermore, this thesis has made a case to bring social class into focus, which has so far been overlooked in applied linguistics scholarship. This “erasure” of social class in applied linguistics research has been documented by Block (2014), who argued that to date it has largely been ignored or marginalized in the disciplines of sociolinguistics, bi/multilingualism and second language acquisition and learning (p. ix). Consequently, one of the key contributions of this interdisciplinary study lies in bringing into focus the relevance of social class as a key construct in applied linguistics research.

I argued that any discussion of LiEP, education policy reforms or teacher cognition is incomplete without a discussion of political economy and social class. This is because social class permeates all aspects of educational contexts, policies and practices and thus has significant implications for schools, students, teachers and teaching. I argued, class composition of students determines, to a great degree, outcomes for schools in terms of the level of support and funding they receive from the government. For instance, government schools attended by students from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds are largely neglected while elite private schools attended by students from relatively wealthy backgrounds are well-funded. Similarly, social class also shapes outcomes for students in terms of access to and performance in education depending on their socioeconomic position. Likewise, class position of teachers influences their instructional and classroom management style. Depending on which class position teachers belong to, they expect students to behave the same and/or thereby choose their behavior management strategy accordingly (Grossman, 2004, p. 100). In other words, teachers are more tolerant of the behavior of those students who share similar backgrounds to them than those who do not (Grossman, 2004, p. 98). Also, a students’ social class has implications for teaching in that teachers’ attitude towards and perception of students is influenced by students’ class background.

This thesis also contributes to our knowledge regarding teachers’ beliefs, biases and assumptions about the use of minority language varieties, and how that in turn influences their choices and practices. The earlier research in the field of language teaching focused on studying the “best method” or “best approach” to teaching languages that would result in “best outcomes” (Woods, 1996, p. 4). One of the overall goals was to measure teacher effectiveness. However, as Woods (1996) mentioned: “None of the findings of these studies have been accepted in the field as unambiguous, and with few undebated results, these attempts to

compare methods quantitatively eventually died out” (p. 5). Woods (1996) went on to say that despite all these years, there has been “relatively little research on what the second language teacher brings to the process of second language learning” (p. 2).

Citing Larsen-Freeman (1991), Woods (1996) noted that a theory of second language teaching has still not been developed (p. 2). Woods (1996) further argued: “The role of the teachers has remained a relatively peripheral component of language teaching research through the years, and of current theories of classroom second language acquisition” (p. 2). Freeman and Richards (1996) also agreed and argued, to get a better understanding of language teachers’ behavior, their approach to teaching or to improve their practice, it is essential to know about language teachers: to investigate the conceptions, beliefs and knowledge they hold (p. 1).

This study has uncovered several themes in relation to teachers’ decisions in classrooms; their beliefs and sources of those beliefs, the interaction of context and cognition and how teachers understand and define the nature of language and its role in education. Ultimately, for any change to occur concerning teachers’ practices or beliefs, what teachers learn during teacher education is vital. The findings of this study demonstrated teachers’ negative attitudes towards students’ first language Mewati. They considered its use as an obstacle while simultaneously admitting that not allowing it in classroom posed problems in learning. The study thus recommends confronting teachers’ biases and negative stereotypes held towards stigmatized language varieties, inviting them to self-reflect and including dialect awareness as part of a teacher education curricula.

This may challenge their pre-existing beliefs, and possibly become a cause of further confusion. However, that may not be necessarily such a bad thing. As Reiman (1999) stated concerning teacher education: “Disequilibrium needs to be better understood as a central process in teacher development and teacher reflective activity. Substantial learning occurs in periods of conflict, confusion, surprise, and over long periods of time” (p. 610). Thus, this study makes a valuable contribution in teacher education literature by shedding light on teachers’ roles, beliefs and decision-making skills. In terms of teachers’ roles, they acted more as disseminators of knowledge rather than facilitators. In terms of beliefs, teachers’ views suggested a behaviourist rather than a constructivist understanding of learning. In terms of decision-making, teachers’ decisions were found to be influenced and constrained by contextual and attitudinal factors, thereby limiting their capacity to act as rational

professionals, and instead were described at best as acting as boundedly rational. This is contrary to the idealized image often invoked in much of teacher cognition scholarship and as advocated by India's NCF (2005), that views teachers as rational professionals, reflective sensemakers and constructivists. This is not to say that teachers aren't or can't be those things, but that broader structural forces restrict them from playing that role, especially in the context of the Global South.

The teacher cognition literature has indicated that teachers' actions are guided more than just by the theory they receive in teacher education courses and that teachers do not act just by merely putting the theory into practice. Therefore, knowing the way teachers think, hold beliefs and make decisions can help teacher educators gain insight into the world of teachers and help them better prepare for their role (Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 5).

Furthermore, this study highlights the impact of social and contextual factors on teacher cognition. In particular, the increasing trend of contractualization among teachers, increase in workload (including non-teaching tasks) and insufficient training opportunities, all of which has been fuelled by neoliberalism, and thus has direct implications for policy procedures, education, teachers' professional development and their socio-psychological wellbeing. Constrained by these contextual factors, teachers' capacity to innovate, self-reflect or indeed use a constructivist approach for learning was severely affected. An environment that is responsive to students' needs, interests and their socio-cultural realities requires institutional support and resources. Moreover, teachers need to be professionally trained and equipped with the tools necessary in order to make that happen. Thus, in order for teachers to support students' language varieties that are traditionally excluded from the school domain, one must take into account the impact of socioeconomic structures, a point this thesis has tried to make.

Finally, this study sheds some light on possible sources of teachers' "boundedness" (Lee & Porter, 1993, p. 397). By using bounded rationality as a conceptual framework guiding this study, the findings have significant implications for practice, in particular, "teacher learning and teacher change" (Lee & Porter, 1993, p. 407). Since for any behavioral change or teacher change to occur, the mental model of the teacher first has to be directly confronted, as such, bounded rationality provides a useful framework for understanding the nature of the relationship between teacher thinking and beliefs and teacher behavior in complex social

settings such as classrooms. Although, as Lee and Porter (1990) remind us, this is not always easy to achieve (p. 167).

One of the most significant contributions of this study has been its use of bounded rationality as a conceptual framework applied in the context of (minority) LiEP and its usefulness to help explain, “why human behavior that appears irrational might, in fact, be rational within the limitations of cognitive capacities” (Lee & Porter, 1990, p. 169). This is to say, why teachers continued to disallow the use of Mewati inside the classroom, knowing full well that this comes in the way of student comprehension and teaching outcome. This behavior of teachers while striking and somewhat irrational from students’ perspectives, might be entirely rational to teachers when considering the complexity of their classroom. As Lee and Porter (1990) remarked, “the issue of rationality requires subjective judgements” (p. 167). They argued, it is difficult to decide what kind of behavior is rational, considering many forms of behaviors could be judged just as rational concerning a situation. Noting this limitation of the concept, Lee and Porter (1990) concluded then: “The concept of bounded rationality does not designate how to make these decisions” (p. 167). This comparative case study has shown teachers’ possible sources of boundedness and how they impacted their decision-making choices. By using this case study as an example, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate how bounded rationality, though limited, could still be used as a framework to gain an insight into teachers’ decision-making processes regarding minority language use in classrooms.

One of the major contributions of this thesis is to the field of critical language policy research. It fills a gap by researching a language variety on which no serious research has been carried out to date (Gusain, 2003, p. 3). This thesis is the first sociolinguistic study undertaken on Mewati in Mewat. This study contributes towards the area of sociology of minority languages in India. As Bhatt and Mahboob (2008) observed: “The literature on minority languages in South Asia is surprisingly small, especially in the area of the sociology of minority languages (Paulston 1994): the perspective that allows us to ascertain whether and how the declining role of these languages is generally associated with issues of power and control, education and literacy, and demography, development, and planning” (p. 150). What this thesis has done is to contribute toward closing this knowledge gap by exploring a vernacular language variety, the politics surrounding it and its association with power in the arena of education and literacy.

Another contribution of this thesis lies in the fact that there have been few studies, if any, which have integrated and explored all three components of Spolsky's (2004) model, particularly in the context of India, and specifically with regard to minority languages and/or dialects. In this respect, this study demonstrated the way this model could be applied and possibly extended not only in terms of ascertaining LiEP but also informing policy about minority languages.

The concept of '(Un/Dys) Consciousness' proposed in this thesis (see Section 6.5, Chapter 6) is a new alternative lens that was developed to better understand the issue of prejudiced beliefs and attitudes held by teachers belonging to the dominant community. It helped explain how non-Meo, non-Mewati-speaking teachers maintained and reinforced dominant norms and views regarding standard languages such as Hindi and English and contributed to the perpetuation of discriminatory views and practices regarding Mewati. This had implications for non-Meo teachers' interaction and interpersonal relationships with Meo teachers and students alike, as holding such biased views regarding a language variety and its speakers affected inter-ethnic trust in the region. As a result, this inter-ethnic tension between the two communities was felt throughout the fieldwork and became a central theme during the interviews and observations.

The findings of this research are relevant to language and education policy developers, teachers, educators and other officials. It reveals the current LiEPs as adopted in schools, its limitations and the gap between stated policy and actual practice. This research may also inform education policy reforms by the Indian government, the Haryana (Mewat) government and other non-governmental organizations working on mother tongue-based education programs in minority languages. In other words, it may help them to make informed decisions as to how best to incorporate Mewati or other minority languages within the LiEP to build on children's existing skills and knowledge.

The findings of this study also hold promise for contributing toward improving teacher education and training programs in Mewat and other comparable contexts in India and internationally. The views of teachers who participated in this project indicated a lack of sensitivity to dialect diversity, equality and maintenance. This study, therefore, makes a pressing appeal to teacher educators and trainers to make appropriate changes in their programs to inform and educate teachers regarding these issues.

9.2 Recommendations

There are ten recommendations that can be drawn from this study. These recommendations stemmed directly from the findings of this comparative case study research and are as follows:

1) Teachers place an extensive emphasis on the demarcation between languages (*bhaasha*) and dialects (*boli*). There are some deep-seated prejudices, biases and stereotypes regarding varieties labelled as ‘dialects’ in the minds of teachers. Appropriate steps must be taken in this direction (e.g. by introducing changes in teacher education and training programs etc.) so as to inform and transform teachers’ views.

2) There is a significant communication gap, particularly in the early years of primary education, between teachers and students which affects students’ learning and cognitive development which has significant bearing on their motivation, self-confidence and psychological wellbeing. Most students’ mother tongue, Mewati, finds no space in schools’ LiEP and is replaced by standard Hindi which poses serious problems in students’ understanding.

The fact that language policies of both rural and urban schools continue to ignore, marginalize and suppress the local varieties warrants serious attention, both from the perspectives of linguistic human rights as well as the crucial role mother tongue varieties play in education and literacy.

This study makes a pressing argument in favor of introducing Mewati in education, at least during the primary level so as to build on learners’ prior language, knowledge and experiences. This research makes a case that the local language Mewati should be seen not only as Meos’ linguistic right but as a useful resource which would help in providing and furthering a truly multilingual education and would also be in line with the vision and spirit of the Three-Language Formula which was originally created toward achieving this goal.

3) There is a shortage of teachers in general and particularly an acute shortage of local Mewati speaking teachers in schools. Nearly all teachers in this study stressed upon recruiting more local teachers who could speak Mewati fluently. This study makes a case in favor of recruiting and training local teachers who could be potential role models and/or engage better with the local students inside and outside classrooms.

4) All teachers pointed to the serious shortage of Urdu teachers, materials and textbooks across Mewat. This study presses for introducing more Urdu teachers (materials and textbooks) as well as presses for Urdu to be used in schools.

5) There is a shortage of female teachers, particularly in the remote areas. This is especially alarming as in an area like Mewat where girls' literacy is exceptionally low especially within the Meo community (estimated between 1.76% and 2.13% in 2001), it is imperative to have local female teachers within the schools. There is a substantial amount of research which shows that recruiting female teachers leads to increases in girls' enrollment, retention and overall literacy outcomes (Herz, Subbarao, Habib, & Raney, 1991; World Bank, 2001). Female teachers, in particular, are able to address girls' security concerns and serve as key role models (UNICEF 2001).

6) Increasing contractualization of teachers in schools, including government schools across Mewat, has led to a situation where teachers recruited are generally underqualified, underexperienced, undertrained, undermotivated, and underpaid. This has direct implications for education, policy procedures, and teachers' professional and socio-psychological wellbeing. This finding of this study revealed that only those teachers who were regularly employed were given an opportunity to attain any in-service training or any professional development opportunities.

Members of the teaching staff hired on a contract basis were denied teacher training. This study recommends that schools must ensure providing adequate and appropriate in-service teacher training and must make it available to all teachers, regardless of their employment status. It is suggested that all teachers must be supported with professional development opportunities to learn more about the local dialect of the region.

The study also recommends that teachers should be supported with education/training programs that focus on dialect diversity and dialect awareness and appropriate ways in which the local varieties could be respected, incorporated and promoted in classrooms. This is important because the provision of education programs focusing on dialect diversity and dialect awareness would ideally help in resolving current problems in which minority students are marginalized and their language practices stereotyped both in and out of classrooms.

7) Many teachers followed and believed in what Phillipson (1992) termed as early start, maximum exposure and subtractive fallacies which have direct implications for Mewati, literacy and students' academic progress as all these beliefs undermined and discouraged the use of Mewati in classrooms. This study recommends that teacher education and teachers' training programs need to be tailored in a manner that incorporates contemporary pedagogical, educational and sociolinguistic research so that teachers are better informed.

8) The majority of teachers, particularly in the rural government schools, complained of feelings of isolation and frustration from being excluded from key policymaking decisions. All teachers in the rural government schools, for instance, perceived themselves as mere passive agents, what Shohamy (2006) conceived of as "soldiers of the system" carrying out "orders by internalizing the policy ideology and its agendas" (p. 78).

All teachers expressed their frustration in carrying out tasks that they had been instructed to from authorities at the top. As the Meo teacher Rasul articulated: "Policies get made in an air-conditioned room without consultation with teachers who are working on the ground. If any of them [policy makers] asked us or took our advice, we would inform them better".

Teachers may be "fundamental to the language and literacy educational policymaking process" as they "interpret and modify received policies" (Evans & Hornberger, 2005, p. 99). However, this study extensively documented the dysconscious ethnicism and linguisticism exhibited by many teachers along with various structural constraints. These factors limit their capacities to inform the policy process in a way that would improve teaching and learning outcomes. Therefore, care must be taken regarding any proposal to increase the participatory nature of the policymaking process until these structural and attitudinal constraints are resolved.

9) There was a mismatch between policies enforced from the top and how they were implemented on the ground with teachers either not being completely aware of them or showing their disapproval, as was the case with the RTE Act (2009). It is recommended that in order for policies such as the RTE Act to have any impact, teachers have to play an active role in ensuring not just its implementation but also realizing the intended premise behind its introduction in the first place.

10) It was found that teachers lacked training in CCE and delivering the student-centered education that the NCF (2005) and RTE Act (2009) expected of them. The dominant teaching,

assessment and evaluation model continued to be traditional teacher-centered, textbook reliant and exam-oriented with teachers either lacking necessary training, motivation or support to innovate, reflect and adapt their teaching practices to meet students' learning needs and preferences.

9.3 Suggestions for Future Research

It would be interesting to get students' perspectives on the current LiEPs and their attitude towards Mewati as well as other languages. It would also be interesting to look into the challenges students face in education, how a language plays a part and how students negotiate through different languages inside the classrooms. Meo teachers constantly expressed a concern regarding the decline of usage of Mewati, the possible language shift in progress and loss of "pure Mewati". Further research is needed in this direction to examine if Mewati is undergoing a language shift or is likely to, and if so, how it could be maintained.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

This research investigated teachers' practices, beliefs and LiEPs within the schools; meaning findings apply only to the schools studied and cannot be generalized without additional research. Additionally, the lack of Meo teachers in School A necessitated the use of additional data from school B and C, complicating the case study. Additionally, the fieldwork coincided with the school examination period which meant that teachers were limited in their availability and classroom observations could not be conducted. Due to unforeseen events, limited resources and time constraints, therefore, teachers' classroom practices could not be observed. As such, only teachers' reported practices, as opposed to actual practices, were included. This meant when investigating questions on teachers' language practices within classroom, the data relied on teachers' self-reports. It is suggested that any future research should take this into account.

9.5 Concluding Words

Minority languages such as Mewati face continued prejudice and stigmatization in the education domain and beyond. This study has shown that within the broader LiEP, minority

languages labeled as ‘non-standard’ varieties or ‘dialects’ continue to be excluded thus resulting in serious problems for both children and teachers alike. Most concerning was that teachers appeared to have internalized these prejudices, in turn actively reinforcing them through the education system. The maintenance, development and vitality of Mewati is severely threatened. Mother tongue-based multilingual education would not only contribute towards students’ educational, linguistic and cognitive growth but will also ensure the development and maintenance of Mewati. Without access to education in their mother tongue, generations of minority language speakers in India will continue to face social hardship from the time they enter a school with dire consequences for educational outcomes and prospects for future career pathways.

This study has called into question the role of broader structural and institutional factors in affecting teachers’ judgements, beliefs and classroom practices. There has been a dramatic shift in the field of education and teacher cognition and in the way teachers and the teaching enterprise are viewed. The perception of teachers has changed significantly, from mere technicians, who act in accordance with training, to rational decision-makers, who act on their feet in uncertain and complex settings. Likewise, there has also been a change in the paradigm used to understand teaching. Whereas in the past, the banking model viewed teachers as the sole disseminators of knowledge, the current orientation is one where teachers are not the sole disseminators of knowledge. Instead, under the presently dominant constructivist model, teachers co-construct knowledge along with students making sense of complex situations and interactions through routine reflection. Constructivism is considered an ideal orientation to teaching under which teachers are seen as rational decision-makers. Using the concept of bounded rationality and by focusing on teachers’ beliefs and contextual factors, this study argued that teachers do not always self-reflect and make entirely rational decisions, particularly concerning minority language education policy in the Global South.

Contrary to how teachers are broadly conceptualized in the teacher cognition literature, this study demonstrated that teachers may not always be reflective practitioners or constructivists who make fully rational decisions. This finding also showed the loopholes in India’s two recent key reforms – NCF (2005) and RTE Act (2009) – that urged teachers to play a transformational role without fully taking into account teachers’ prior beliefs and contextual factors in which they work.

This study called into question the implementation and effectiveness of the RTE Act. It made a case that while the RTE Act ostensibly employs RBD, under the neoliberal climate and in its present form however, it is guided by both HCT and RBD ideologies running in parallel simultaneously. To achieve this, the role of international financial institutions and donor agencies such as the World Bank and IMF along with the role of the Indian state in the early 90s when it first liberalized its economy was investigated in detail. This was done to reflect on the forces and factors that led to the emergence of the RTE Act and its subsequent impact on teachers' actions inside the classroom. It was argued that if LiEP, teaching and learning outcomes and implementation of the RTE Act are to be effective, then teachers' perceptions and current ground realities shaped by the neoliberal climate, must be taken into account. In conclusion, this study drew attention to the continued tension between teacher cognition, LiEP, and the pervasive impact of neoliberalism on teachers' capacity in implementing education policy reforms (such as the RTE Act).

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Appendices

10.1 Appendix A



Interview guide

The following questions serve as a guide only. The iteration of each question will vary depending on the conversation I will be having with each interviewee and the nature of their response to earlier questions.

Questions for School Teachers

- 1) Tell me about this school - when was it founded, what board does it come under, how does the funding occur, how does the hiring process of teachers and admission of students occur, what is the fee structure like, what are teachers' salaries, what kind of students come to this school, what is the total number of students and staff in school, what is an average pupil-teacher ratio in the class, what subjects do teachers teach, how many teachers are local Mewati speaking Meos, what other facilities does the school provide etc.
- 2) Which language(s) do you speak in school with teachers, principal, administrative staff and students in the classroom? Which language(s) do you speak at home with your spouse and children or parents and siblings (if not married)?
- 3) Do you use any amount of Mewati in school? If yes, in what occasions and to what extent? How would you judge your proficiency in Mewati?
- 4) What is your educational and teaching background? Why did you choose to be a teacher?
- 5) What is the official language policy of the school?
- 6) What are your thoughts on Hindi language? What are your thoughts on English language?
- 7) What are your thoughts on Mewati? Do you think Mewati should be used as a medium of instruction (MOI) in schools? If yes, why and at what level? If no, why not?
- 8) Do you think that Meo students should use Mewati in school? Home? Why/why not?
- 9) Which language(s) do you think Meo students generally use in school with teachers, staff members and fellow mates? Which language(s) do you think Meo students use at home with their family?
- 10) Do you think that the usage of local variety, Mewati in the classroom can help in explaining abstract and complex concepts? If yes, do you use this strategy in your classroom? If not, then what other strategy do you use? What teaching method do you use to teach?

- 11) How would you rate Meo students' proficiency in spoken and written Hindi and English? Why do you think it is so?
- 12) What kind of challenges have you faced while teaching in the classroom?
- 13) For those students who speak Mewati at home or in school, do you think it acts as an advantage or hindrance for them in the overall learning process? Why/why not?
- 14) What are your thoughts on Urdu? Do you think it belongs to Muslims (as commonly perceived) or all? Why/why not?
- 15) Do you think Urdu should be introduced in schools as an optional subject for Meo Muslim students who may like to attain education through Urdu? Why/why not?
- 16) What are your thoughts on the present curriculum of the school or the class that you teach in?
- 17) Who sets the curriculum? Who sets the examination papers? Which subjects are in Hindi and English? Why do you think that is?
- 18) What books do you use and who publishes them? Are you satisfied with those books? What changes, if any, would you like to see in those books?
- 19) Do you think they are representative of the Meo community with regard to their religion, language and culture? If not, what changes can be made to make them more representative?
- 20) How important English is for Meo students outside classroom? How important Hindi is for them? Is Hindi equally important as English or lesser important? Why are they important?
- 21) Does this school provide any space for the use of Mewati or its culture e.g. during school functions, etc? If not, why? If yes, how? Does the school actively promote Mewati? On what occasions?
- 22) Why do you think Meo parents choose to send their children to your this school?
- 23) What kind of problems or challenges does a government school like this face?
- 24) What challenges do you face as a school teacher teaching in Mewat?
- 25) What kind of provisions are provided by the school with regard to in-service training and/or workshops to teachers? How important do you think is it for a teacher?
- 26) What problems do you observe occurring in your class to Meo students when they attempt to learn your subject? Why do you think this learning difficulty occurs? How do you attempt to address this issue?
- 27) What according to you makes one a good student and what does not? What are the objectives of this school?
- 28) Do you believe that resources should be allocated for the development of Mewati? Why/why not?
- 29) Do you feel Meos are discriminated against in schools and generally? If yes then why do you think it is?
- 30) Is there anything else that you would like to share that we haven't talked about?

Questions for SSA officials

- 1) Tell me about your role and what SSA does, its strengths and weaknesses.
- 2) Are you satisfied with the RTE Act? Why/why not?
- 3) What, according to you, are teachers' main concerns and how does SSA help them or fail to help them in overcoming those challenges?
- 4) What are your views on Mewati and its potential use in the classroom?
- 5) What are your views on Hindi, Urdu and English?
- 6) How would you describe Meos' current educational concerns and teacher shortage in the region?
- 7) What are the problems faced by government schools and how does SSA resolve them?
- 8) How would you describe inter-ethnic dynamics in Mewat?
- 9) What are your views on teachers' concerns regarding late delivery of books, uniforms, and infrastructural problems faced by government schools?
- 10) What concerns do you have as SSA officials?

10.2 Appendix B



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INFORMATION SHEET for PARTICIPANTS

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

My name is Perna Bakshi and I am conducting this research as part of my PhD in the School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences at the University of New England. My supervisors are Dr Finex Ndhlovu and Dr Cindy Schneider.

Research Project	Neoliberal Language in Education in Mewat: Politics, Policy and Practitioners
Aim of the research	The research aims to explore the current language-in-Education policy in schools across Mewat and the educational problems that the region continues to face.
Interview	I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you at Mewat. The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours. With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to see one.
Confidentiality	Any personal details gathered in the course of the study will remain confidential. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results. All names will be replaced by pseudonyms; this will ensure your anonymity. If you agree I would like to quote some of your responses. This will also be done in a way to ensure that you are not identifiable.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and without needing to provide an explanation.
Questions	The interview questions will not be of a sensitive nature: rather they are general, and will enable me to enhance my knowledge of the region of Mewat and its language variety Mewati, in particular.
Use of information	I will use information from the interview as part of my doctoral thesis, which I expect to complete in June 2019. Information from the interview may also be used in academic journal

	articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, I will safeguard your identity by presenting the information in a way that will not allow you to be identified.
Upsetting issues	It is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact your local Community Health Centre or Lifeline on 13 11 14.
Storage of information	I will keep all hardcopy notes and recordings of the interviews in a locked cabinet in my office at the University of New England's School of Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences. Any electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer in the same location. Only the research team will have access to the data.
Disposal of information	All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.
Approval	This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No....., Valid to .././....).
Contact details	Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at pbakshi@myune.edu.au or by phone on +853 6280 3345. You may also contact my supervisors'. My Principal supervisor's name is Dr Finex Ndhlovu and he/she can be contacted by email at fndhlovu@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 2133 and my Co-supervisor's name is Dr Cindy Schneider and his/her email address is Cindy.Schneider@une.edu.au and phone number is 02 6773 2483.
Complaints	Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact: Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou Research Ethics Officer Research Services University of New England Armidale, NSW 2351 Tel: (02) 6773 3449 Email: ethics@une.edu.au Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you. regards, Prerna Bakshi

10.3 Appendix C



CONSENT FORM for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Neoliberal Language in Education in Mewat: Politics, Policy and Practitioners

I, ..., have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

Yes/N

☐

I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

Yes/N

☐

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be quoted and published using a pseudonym.

Yes/N

☐

I agree to be identified in this research.

Yes/N

☐

I agree to having my interview audio recorded and transcribed.

Yes/N

☐

I would like to receive a copy of the transcription of the interview.

Yes/N

☐

I am older than 18 years of age.

Yes/N

☐

.....	
Participant	Date

.....	
Researcher	Date